



AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

THE NOVEL AS PRODUCT AND SHAPER OF  
CULTURES: A CULTURAL, HISTORICAL, AND LITERARY  
READING OF BORIS PASTERNAK'S *DOCTOR ZHIVAGO*,  
ALEJO CARPENTIER'S *EXPLOSION IN A CATHEDRAL*,  
AND NAGUIB MAHFOUZ' *PALACE WALK*

by  
MERILIN DANY EKZARKOVA

A thesis  
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Arts  
to the department of English Literature  
of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences  
at the American University of Beirut

Beirut, Lebanon  
April 2017

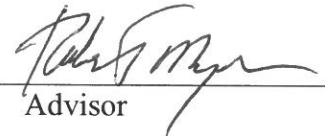
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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my advisor Dr. Robert Myers for his time, continuous support of my research, his patience, motivation, enthusiasm, and immense knowledge. His guidance greatly helped me in the research and writing of this thesis.

I would also like to thank my thesis committee: Dr. Sonja Mejcher-Atassi and Dr. Adam Waterman for their time, encouragement and insightful comments.

My sincere thanks also goes to Dr. Amy Alice Zenger, whose class “Issues in Literacy” was the main inspiration for this work, and Dr. James Hodapp for the opportunities he gave me, as well as all of the professors at American University of Beirut English Department whose classes and knowledge inspired me to pursue my studies and write this project.

I also thank Peter Vincent for his assistance in this project and for taking the time to provide encouragement and support. I am likewise grateful to my friends, Sally Zaatiti, Myriam Abou Younes, Nathalie Itani, Karen Chalhoub, Joelle Al Maasari, Nadine Al Alam, Chris Rezk, Yassin Abboud, and Marita Faddoul, for their care, spiritual support and precious friendships.

I would like to thank my mother Elena Ekzarkova for giving birth to me in the first place and for her help in this project, my father Dany El-Chartouny for always drawing my attention to the undeniable importance of books and for supporting me in spirit throughout my life, my sister, Sylvia Ekzarkova, for her unconditional love and support, and my fiancée, Khalil Karam, for his love, kindness, and help.

I am grateful to Dr. Maryam Ghandour for providing me the opportunity to work with her, for her friendship, wisdom, and guidance. I would not have been able to pursue my studies were it not for her encouragements. I would also like to extend my thanks to Miled Rizk for his generosity, and for standing by my sister and myself when we had no one to turn to.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my late grandmother Hayat El-Chartouny, who was more generous, kind, supportive, and understanding of me than I deserved. I would not be the person I am today if it were not for her love and encouragement.

## AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Merilin Dany Ekzarkova for Master of Arts  
Major: English Literature

Title: The Novel as Product and Shaper of Cultures: A Cultural, Historical, and Literary Reading of Boris Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago*, Alejo Carpentier's *Explosion in a Cathedral*, and Naguib Mahfouz' *Palace Walk*

This study examines the English translations of three significant historical novels written during the 1950s by three major novelists from three different cultures and traditions all dealing with revolutions and their aftermath, (Доктор Живáго) *Doctor Zhivago*, by Boris Pasternak (1957); *El Siglo De Las Luces* (literally *The Century of Lights*, translated to English as *Explosion in a Cathedral*), by Alejo Carpentier (1962); and (بين القصرين) *Palace Walk* by Naguib Mahfouz (1956). This study looks at these works within a cultural, historical, and literary theoretical framework as reflections and critiques of the political, cultural, and historical circumstances that produced them. By reading these novels as cultural products of society, this study first suggest that literature is not merely a practice of aesthetics but rather a vital means by which society investigates and understands itself. Second, this study suggests that these three literary works are both responses to, and manifestations of, some of the profound changes and crises taking place globally during the 1950s, for example, the Cold War, Nikita Krushchev's 1956 "secret speech" revealing the extent of Joseph Stalin's crimes, the coup d'état that brought Gamal Abdel Nasser to power in 1952, the Suez Crisis in 1956, and the Cuban Revolution in 1959. Of particular interest is why these novelists chose the historical moments they did as counterpoints to current crises and why all three opted to render periods of revolution and profound social change. Third, this study looks at the responses to these works, especially *Doctor Zhivago*, and discuss the ways in which works such as these not only constitute aesthetic manifestations of the crises in the moments they were written in, but also actively enter into and shape the discourse about current events by incorporating literary and historical perspectives into contemporary debates. It also examines *Explosion in a Cathedral* and the introduction of Carpentier's novel *The Kingdom of This World* also set in the Caribbean, and their profound influence on Gabriel García Márquez, especially his novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Additionally, Carpentier's introduction was central to shaping the so-called "magical realist" style of writing that became prevalent in Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s, and later in a number of other literary traditions. Fourth, the study addresses the issue of translation, and, in the case of *Doctor Zhivago* and *Palace Walk*, cinematic adaptation, as key components in the dissemination of these texts to a much larger worldwide audience. In that sense, these three manuscripts, all of which were

profoundly influential within their linguistic traditions, can be seen as harbingers of a trend toward what is currently called "world literature." Through this analysis of the cultural context, the historical moments portrayed in these novels and the moments in which they were written, the reception of these works and their roles in shaping social, historical and political as well as literary discourse, this study also hopes to encourage the broadening of the exchange of discourses among the fields of the humanities—specifically literature—and various other fields of study. In this way, this thesis hopes to generate more complex, compassionate, and useful dialogues and interactions among several cultures.

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

This study will look at English translations of three significant historical novels written during the 1950s by three major novelists from three different cultures and traditions all dealing with revolutions and their aftermath, (Доктор Живаго) *Doctor Zhivago*, by Boris Pasternak (1957); *El Siglo De Las Luces* (literally *The Century of Lights*, translated to English as *Explosion in a Cathedral*), by Alejo Carpentier (1962); and (بين القصرين) *Palace Walk* by Naguib Mahfouz (1956). This study will look at these works within a cultural, historical, and literary theoretical framework as reflections and critiques of the political, cultural, and historical circumstances that produced them. By reading these novels as cultural products of society, this study will first suggest that literature is not merely a practice of aesthetics but rather a vital means by which society investigates and understands itself. Second, this study will look at these three literary works both as responses to, and manifestations of, some of the profound changes and crises taking place globally during the 1950s, for example, the Cold War, Nikita Khrushchev's 1956 "secret speech" revealing the extent of Joseph Stalin's crimes, the coup d'état that brought Gamal Abdel Nasser to power in 1952, the Suez Crisis in 1956, and the Cuban Revolution in 1959. Of particular interest will be why these novelists chose the historical moments they did as counterpoints to current crises and why all three opted to render periods of revolution and profound social change. Third, this study will look at the responses to these works, especially *Doctor Zhivago*, and discuss the ways in which works such as these not only constitute

aesthetic manifestations of the crises in the moments they were written in, but also actively enter into and shape the discourse about current events by incorporating literary and historical perspectives into contemporary debates. It will also examine *Explosion in a Cathedral* and the introduction of Carpentier's novel *The Kingdom of This World*, also set in the Caribbean, and their profound influence on Gabriel García Márquez, especially his novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Additionally, Carpentier's introduction was central to shaping the so-called "magical realist" style of writing that became prevalent in Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s, and later in a number of other literary traditions. Fourth, the study will address the issue of translation, and, in the case of *Doctor Zhivago* and *Palace Walk*, cinematic adaptation, as key components in the dissemination of these texts to a much larger worldwide audience. In that sense, these three manuscripts, all of which were profoundly influential within their linguistic traditions, can be seen as harbingers of a trend toward what is currently called "world literature." Through this analysis of the cultural context, the historical moments portrayed in these novels and the moments in which they were written, the reception of these works and their roles in shaping social, historical and political as well as literary discourse, this study also hopes to encourage the broadening of the exchange of discourses among the fields of the humanities—specifically literature—and various other fields of study. In this way, this thesis hopes to generate more complex, compassionate, and useful dialogues and interactions among several cultures.

To develop the main argument of this thesis, the historical, cultural, and social frameworks that produced the novels will be described and elaborated as they relate specifically to the novels, after which the novels will be read and analyzed through a historical, cultural and literary lens. First, because the novels were all published around

the same period 1956-1962, a common historical and cultural background unites them. Additionally, the three novels describe particular revolutions and the aftermaths of these revolutions. Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago* draws from and critiques principally the October revolution of 1917 (although the novel covers a significant revolutionary period prior to the Bolshevik Revolution), Carpentier's *Explosion in a Cathedral* demonstrates the influence of the French Revolution in the Caribbean, and Mahfouz's *Palace Walk* is set between WWI and 1919, the year of the Egyptian Nationalist revolution. These revolutions and the literary renderings of them all draw to some extent upon the French Revolution of 1789 as a historical event and on renderings of it both in literary works such as, for example, *Danton's Death*, by Georg Büchner, and in the versions of historical texts such as Jules Michelet's *History of the French Revolution*. As Hayden White and others have made clear the historiographical writing about the French Revolution was itself profoundly informed by existing literary models.

Moreover, since the novels used in this thesis, *Doctor Zhivago* (originally in Russian), *Explosion in a Cathedral* (originally in Spanish), and *Palace Walk* (originally in Arabic), are read and analyzed in translation, translation theory will be employed to discuss key aspects of the modes of transmission. The English language obviously has national and ideological implications, precisely because of its association with Western hegemonic ideology. Therefore, it is important to evaluate the influence of translation on these works. This process will help clarify the kind of new discourse generated and the new meanings that have resulted, as well as establish a political, national, and ideological line of inquiry. This analysis is particularly relevant in the case of *Doctor Zhivago*, which was smuggled out of the U.S.S.R. after publication was forbidden there and originally published in an Italian translation. It was only through its English

translation that the novel became widely available. The novel received enormous publicity through the successful film adaptation of the novel, also in English. Moreover, the U.S government appears to have seen the novel as an important ideological weapon in the Cold War and to have actively promoted its translation and dissemination. Moreover, there were accusations in the U.S.S.R. at the time that the U.S. government lobbied the Nobel Committee to award Pasternak the Nobel Prize, which it did (although he was forced to reject it by the U.S.S.R, and did not receive it until 1958). The novel did not appear in the U.S.S.R. in Russian (or any other language) until the 1980s.

Having established a common ground, and taken into account the translation factor, the three novels will be read and examined separately through a historical, cultural, and literary theoretical framework, to determine the ways in which the novels are products and shapers of the societies that produced them. I will draw on Georg Lukacs' study of the historical novel and Hayden White's theories of the influence of literary models on historiographical writing to establish a firm connection between literature and history. I will also use Bakhtin, Milner, and Swingewood's works in cultural studies and theory to set a line of connection between culture and literature, specifically how literature functions within culture and vice-versa. Finally, I will use Bakhtin, among other literary theorists, as a means of engaging in analysis of these literary texts as social and cultural products as well as literary texts. I will also draw on world literature theories concerning world cultures and history theory. Finally, I will summarize the main points that have emerged from a comparative analysis of the three novels, and I will briefly discuss the circulation of the texts. In so doing, I hope to promote a conversation in which the influence of literature can be acknowledged as

relating to the world in a more concrete way.

### **A. The Novel as a Historical, Cultural and Literary Product of Society**

The study of literature is not solely based on text. In other words, what literature students do in classrooms is not read "stories," highlight figurative elements and talk about their favorite passages. If anything, this fundamental analysis of text is almost eliminated as the students climb the academic ladder. Studying literature entails an understanding that the text does not exist on its own, that reading any novel cannot be usefully accomplished if various external and internal elements are not considered. Elements such as the context of which the text has appeared and is read, the kind of discourse that the text's context creates, its characters, themes, and readership must be addressed by literature to analyze the new kinds of meanings and changes the text reflects and (or) produces in society. Additionally, since no text exists on its own, each discourse generated creates a ripple effect, reaching out to other texts and other discourses, producing a channel of continuous dialogue between the texts and the discourses they produce. Theories ranging from literary, to cognitive and political among others are used to frame the text so as to understand the conversation generated on a larger scale (Roche, 8). This is to say that reading the text through various political, cultural, historical and literary lenses makes the conversation generated by this text a global one. Consequently, the study of literature is not only the study of literary discourses, but also a study of the political, cultural, sociological, and even environmental discourses that interact with and pervade the literary text. However, although studies of literature necessarily include an understanding of various other fields, these fields tend to ignore the significant influence of literature in their spheres.

Politics, history, sociology, and even more scientific fields, only extremely rarely take into consideration the value of including literature in their respective studies. This oversight has resulted in their discourse being narrowly limited to their areas. As part of the process of renegotiating the role literature plays in other fields, the historical novels in this study—all of which deal with political revolutions—will be examined as historical, cultural and political products of their times.

As previously elaborated literature acts as a bridge linking various areas of study, such as politics, culture, history, and so forth. In bringing together these different fields, literature becomes a space where these areas intertwine in discourse for the purpose of change. As a field involved in social change, literature travels in the form of the novel. Indeed, the novel is more concerned with reaching beyond local audiences (Cudjoe, 1). For instance, in the case of revolution or struggle, the novel, which tends to be written post- factum, provides a mechanism through which the legacy of the revolution is understood and re-evaluated. Society itself, at this post-revolutionary stage, struggles to deal with the aftermath of the revolution and struggles to find an outlet through which it can dissect, reevaluate and reiterate the events that have unfolded. The novel provides a suitable vehicle through which communication between past and present might occur (Cudjoe, 1). Many writers and literary theorists—through their methodology, technique, and style—have helped to advance the understanding of social constructs and struggles. Furthermore, the novel has helped dissect these struggles and identify them on a larger political and economic scale, making them relevant globally for fields such as economics, social studies, science, politics, etc. (Cudjoe, 19). For Cudjoe, the novel creates a mirror upon which forms of life are reflected only to be transformed through this reflection (Cudjoe, 19). Thus, the novel

creates a space in which various forms of life are renegotiated on an individual human level.

To examine the novels in this thesis as historical, cultural, and political products of their times, it is important to clarify how the novel bridges the gap between history, culture, and literature. Since the novels analyzed in this study examine specific periods of revolution, they are inevitably set within a historical framework. However, within this context, the novel does not act as a product drawing from history, but rather as one that shapes and creates history. The amalgamation of both literature and history was first observed during the nineteenth century when theories of the long-standing "objectivity" of historiography came under scrutiny (White, 52). The historical text was seen as inexorably including elements of interpretation visible through aesthetic choices of plot structures by the historian writer, as a means of which he/she was able to evaluate the different meanings of the various types of events (55). As such, the historical text deviated from what was assumed to be a "scientific" form and was interpreted through a more literary lens. This approach, White argues, "is not to be considered as nonscientific or antiscientific. A "narrative" explanation in history qualifies as a contribution to our objective knowledge of the world because it is empirical and subject to techniques of verification and disconfirmation in the same way that theories in science are" (55). In other words, the literariness of the historical text is not one that discredits the information presented, but rather one that allows for the understanding that events, as they are happening in life, are "resolved into a "multitude of individual psychic moments" (Lévi-Strauss as qtd by White, 55). Literature, in the form of the novel, allows for a deeper examination of these individual events as they function within larger schemas.



Consequently, in the historian's attempt to write the historical narrative, they have to resort to interpretation of various events or "stories" in a larger "plot" to reveal a "recognizable structure of relationships of a specifically mythical sort" (White, 58). Accordingly, history mirrors fiction and thus the novel. The element of fiction or myth in the historical narrative, as specified by White, is one that allows for a qualitative as well as quantitative assessment of the "stories" presented (59). Therefore, the historical narrative and the novel operate on the same literary ground. Interpretation, and hence the subjectivity of the historian serves to place the "stories" within a coherent plot framework. As a result, historical narratives become "verbal fictions, the contents of which are as much invented as found, and the forms of which have more in common with their counterparts in literature than they have with those in the sciences" (82). Therefore, the novel and the historical narrative emulate one another in their construction of meaning through interpretation. Furthermore, both narratives seek to evaluate such understanding by casting individual events in the form of stories (90). Indeed, the historical narrative "does not reproduce the events it describes; it tells us in what direction to think about events..." (91). In a similar vein, the novel invites the reader to consider the various "sets of relationships that those events can be demonstrated to figure" (94). Thus the novel finds its footing within history and history within literature in the form of the novel. White additionally argues that the aim of the historian is the same as that of the novelist, "to provide a verbal image of reality" (122). This image may be transmitted through imaginary events in the novel, and "real" events in the historical narrative. However, both forms of transmission rely on elements of fiction and both serve a similar purpose, as mentioned above (125). Hence, the novel becomes a historical novel, as much as it is a literary novel (Lukacs, 15). In addition to

the novel being a historical narrative, the novel also acts as a vehicle where culture, as an event, is revised and critiqued.

According to Raymond Williams in *Culture and Society 1870-1950*, changes in life and thought during the late eighteenth century to early nineteenth century could be looked at through five words: Industry, Democracy, Class, Art, and Culture (xiii-xvi). The words "art" and "culture" are of primary interest for this study, although, as will be revealed, these five words all intersect and act simultaneously on a larger common plateau. Culture, according to Williams, developed several meanings during the eighteenth century, and it was not until the nineteenth century that culture shifted from being defined as a "culture of" to "culture" as a thing in itself (xvi). However, most importantly, culture came to mean both "the general state of intellectual development in society as a whole" and later "the general body of arts." Both of these interpretations of culture suggest that art (which includes literature and therefore the novel) is useful in evaluating or interpreting the "intellectual development in society" (xvi). The various definitions of culture evolved in reaction to the political and social events of the time (the French Revolution played a vital part in altering this definition, as will be elaborated in the coming chapters) (xvii). Concurrently, changes in art, and literature specifically, were also taking place. During the nineteenth century, the production of art became significantly more industrialized. Art functioned not as an aesthetic pass-time, but rather as a product circulated in the market for political as well as social purposes, indeed, Williams argues that, "The novel, in particular, had quickly become a commodity" (35). As a product, the novel then played an important economic role, and as a commodity interacting with the public, the novel was a vehicle through which a wide range of human experiences was symbolized (47). Accordingly, the novel became

intimately and inherently symbolic of a "way of life," thus becoming necessarily a cultural event through this function (130). Art was used as an element in cultural and, therefore, social and political thinking, as a means by which "social quality" could be measured (131). It is important to clarify that art and culture are not one and the same, nor is literature (as an art form) the same as history. Rather literature, culture, and history are all, to quote Williams, "applications, in particular directions, of a fundamental conviction"(135). The separate but coinciding applications of history and culture are in fact elaborated upon in the novel. Accordingly, the novel creates a parallel spatiotemporal world in which the "real" world may be critiqued.

It is important to acknowledge that the historical novels discussed in this study elaborate on historical events that took place years before their publication. Indeed, *Doctor Zhivago* describes revolutionary events that encompassed the first Russian Revolution of 1905, the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, and the civil war between the Reds and Whites. *Explosion in a Cathedral* describes various revolutions in the Caribbean, mainly focusing on the Haitian Revolution of 1791, while *Palace Walk* is set during the beginning of the Egyptian nationalist revolution of 1919. Although these historical works were published and written years after these events, the context within which these novels were published plays a significant role in clarifying the historical timing. Thus while the authors' "references are to the past, their concern is with the present and the future" (Williams, 155). The Cold War, Nikita Khrushchev's 1956 "secret speech" revealing the extent of Joseph Stalin's crimes, the coup d'état that brought Gamal Abdel Nasser to power in 1952, the Suez Crisis in 1956, and the Cuban Revolution in 1959 are events during which the novels analyzed in this thesis were published. Additionally, these events influenced the topics of these novels in many

ways, which will be discussed later in this work. For the purposes of this introduction, I should add that I am interested in evaluating the means by which the historical novel is able to transcend the linearity of time and space and become, as Bakhtin specifies, "not only composed of a sequence of diegetic events and speech acts but also—and perhaps even primarily—of the construction of a particular fictional world or chronotope" (Bakhtin, 4 (1986)).

If novels are to be analyzed and seen through the lens of history, culture, and politics, then the elements of time and space are unavoidable, especially since they are related to history. Bakhtin argues that in the fictional world, as in the physical, the events that transpire cannot be separated from preceding events (4). The latter only has meaning "...when something else with which it [the event] can be compared reveals a change in time and space" (Holquist qtd, 5). Considering the historical background of the three novels by Pasternak, Carpentier, and Mahfouz, and the framework within which they appear, it is then reasonable to assume that an understanding of the present in which the novels exist can only be accomplished and have meaning in relation to the earlier events. In this way, the change in time and space provides grounds for the analysis that the historical novel seeks to effect. Consequently, the novel creates common areas where "the boundaries of these areas [supposedly non-literary areas] are not absolute..." (13). Finally, the novel also allows for the historical and public social events to be observable through personal and deeply private experiences. In this way the "graphically visible markers of historical time as well as of biographical and everyday time are concentrated and condensed; at the same time, they are intertwined with each other in the tightest possible fashion... The epoch becomes not only a graphically visible [space] but a narratively visible [time]" (78). In observing historical events as

they are revealed through the private experiences of the characters, the novel creates the possibility of examining the past, present, and future as linked and not separate chronologies (Morson and Emerson 1990 as qtd, 78), and each depends on the other to give meaning to events (Bakhtin, 94).

## **B. The Common Catalyst: The French Revolution and The New Novel**

The three novels discussed in this study are directly or indirectly related to the French Revolution of 1789. The 1789 revolution shone a light on the question of nationalism and influenced the revolutions discussed in these novels. This question triggered a new kind of historical era and therefore analysis. The relationship between literature and history (elaborated on previously) revealed a new historical and ideological literature. The history of the French Revolution will not be discussed in detail in this study. Instead, I will focus in this section on the influence and effect that this revolution had on the historical and revolutionary novel.

The Age of Enlightenment, as Lukacs states, "was in its main trend, an ideological preparation of the French revolution" (17). However, the French Revolution turned this ideology into a mass historical experience. In order to uphold such historical ideology of equality, fraternity, and liberty, the French revolutionaries sought to convince and control the masses through means of propaganda (21). This propaganda was enforced through literature, brochures, and newspapers for example, and aimed to shift the collective individual experiences of the revolutionaries to a mass national platform (21). Nationalist literature did not exclude the individual experience; it advocated that the individual should see his/her experience as part of a shared national reality. In this way, the average citizen's experience was more concretely mirrored in the

historical events that took place during his/her life.

The French Revolution made the individual metonymic of the general historical nationalist event, and hence the individual experience was now a historical one. Therefore, the French Revolution resulted in the creation of the historical novel (29). Subsequently, historical events although visible on a mass scale, continued to unfold as a result of other isolated events that were described in political and historical narratives. These narratives eventually developed into a literary genre; the historical novel. An example is Jules Michelet's *History of the French Revolution*. Completed during 1867 Michelet's work took almost 30 years to finish. This extensive 19-volume work is primarily a historical text and a hybrid of historiography and literature since it incorporates both literary forms and historical events. In this work, Michelet writes a type of biography of the French nation through individual experiences. The narrative discusses events during, prior and after the French Revolution in an entirely subjective tone, although the information provided is one solidly based in facts. Indeed, the entire "novel," if one is to call it that, is spread across a rigorous factual spatiotemporal framework; however, the manner by which the events that transpired within the latter are examined is undeniably affective. For instance, in this passage from Book I: "April to July 1789", Chapter VII: "Taking of the Bastille, July 14th, 1789", "The Bastille Invaded by the People":

“The crowd was enraged, blind, drunk with the very sense of their danger. And yet they killed but one man in the fortress. They spared their enemies the Swiss, whom their smock- frocks caused to pass for servants or prisoners; but they ill-treated and wounded their friends the Invalids. They wished to have annihilated the Bastille; they pelted and broke to pieces the two captives of the dial; they ran

up to the stones, and tore their hands in dragging them away. They hastened to the dungeons to deliver the prisoners: two had become mass. One, frightened by the noise, wants to defend himself and was quite astonished when those who had battered down his door threw themselves into his arms and bathed him with their tears. Another whose beard had reached his waist, inquired about the health of Louis XV, believing him to be still reigning” (Michelet, 157).

This passage is part of a large segment detailing the day the French citizens stormed the Bastille. In this sense, the novel is undeniably historical, but Michelet does not limit himself to merely recounting the historical events. He embellishes his narrative by interpreting these events through individual experiences. Such interpretation renders the historical event in rhetorical modes similar to those of the novel. Even the chapter titles in Michelet's historical novel allow us to discern patterns of the historical novel visually. Consider the following from the same section as above:

“To be forgotten

The Jesuits directing the Bastille

Clerks directing the Bastille

The Bastille the prison of the mind

The regulations become more and more sever

Case of Latude

The Philanthropists weep but do nothing...” (vi).

The chapters do not exceed two pages in length and describe seemingly individual events or stories that develop into a larger plot: The history of the French Revolution.

Swingewood in *The Novel and Revolution* additionally argues that "since the end of the eighteenth century the novel has been practiced largely by social groups

whose economic and social existence has been shaped by the development of the capitalist division of labor..." (33). Indeed, the French Revolution was a revolution against existing classes and particularly against divisions of labor. As such the novel was no longer a work of fiction as it examined accurate and real historical events. Instead, the novel became a more "realistic" model; one that verbally demonstrated the values instilled by the revolution and evaluated them through various lenses (36). The individual was no longer separated from the constantly evolving society, culture, economy, and history. On the contrary, as a citizen of a united nation they were intimately involved with these applications (46). Consequently, it is the individual him/her/themself who is the catalyst for change and the revolution, particularly as an engaged member of the nation (49). Thus when novels describe stories of individuals, they also concretize through rhetorical forms stories of the nation, and in this way, the novel becomes a reflective and refractive surface of interaction between individuals as political and social beings within a cultural, historical and literary framework.

### **C. Translation: The Case of *Doctor Zhivago***

The three novels discussed in this thesis are read and analyzed in translation. *Explosion in a Cathedral*, by Alejo Carpentier, originally *El Siglo de Las Luces* (*The Century of Lights*) was published in Spanish in 1962, and in English in 1963. (بين القصرين) [Bayn al Qasrayn] *Palace Walk* was originally published in Arabic in 1956 and English in 1990. *Doctor Zhivago*, although written in Russian, was originally published in Italian in 1957, then in English in 1958 and finally published in its original Russian 30 years later, in 1987. Thus since these works are examined in translation, it is vital for the purpose of this study to clarify the effect of translation on the interpretation



of these novels. Also, translating these works into English had significant social, political as well as economic influences on their circulation as texts, on the authors themselves and the reception of these texts, as will be demonstrated in the case of *Doctor Zhivago*.

A novel, as stated previously, is extensively linked to the socio-cultural environment that produced it (Munday, 43). Consequently, when the novel is translated in a new language, the socio-cultural and political connotations of that language necessarily have repercussions on the interpretation of the novel. Language, in this way, operates as a "social semiotic" (Halliday as qtd by Munday, 43). It is "a social practice determined by social structures" (Fairclough, as qtd, 43). For instance, in the case of *Doctor Zhivago*, whose work was already known to be difficult to translate, was additionally translated "at great speed" due to the delicate and covert circumstances of its publication (Slater, 2010). In translating this work hastily Max Hayward and Manya Harari—the first translators to translate the novel in question from Russian to English in 1958—were forced to reread and effectively rewrite the novel in a language that was determined by their own social structures. For instance, expressions which are specifically understood in the contexts of Russian social structures such as: "мне напливатз на..." (mnye naplivat na) (p.68 in the Russian version of the novel) (literally meaning I spit on, but conveying more a sense of nonchalance: "I could care less, I don't give a damn about...") or "он махнул рукой" (on makhnoul roukoi) (p.102 in the Russian version of the novel) (literally meaning he waved his hand, but in Russian language it refers more to giving up), are translated literally in the English version of the novel " "As God is my witness, I'd spit on you all" (p.73 in the English translation of Hayward and Harari) and "They saw no one will open and they waved

their hand and left” (87). Additionally, colloquial expressions (such as the one mentioned here) and others have also been either literally translated, or have been replaced with expressions in English. Accordingly, in translation, the translator, his position determined by his/her nationalist social structures, is forced to include new historical, political, and cultural interpretations of the novel. Through translation, the ideology of the novel encompassing society, discourse and cognition is altered by the translator into a new ideology (Van Dijk as qtd, 45), which derives both from the translator him/herself, and the language of translation. Additionally, "just as the conscious choices made by the author direct the reader, so the conscious choices made by the translator serve to channel the reader towards similar choices, similarly to the novel (Venuti, as qtd, 45). Nevertheless, the personal ideology of the translator (which is in turn the ideology of his/her background, society, etc.) necessarily interferes with that of the original text (45) by rearranging "signifying systems and difference, [that] are pivotal in constructing, and deconstructing, the subject [identify of the "I" within discourse']" (Ellis and Brown eds. Easthope et.al, as qtd by Oakley-Brown, 48). To point out the interference of the translator's personal ideology is not to suggest that translation necessarily affects the novel negatively. On the contrary, the novel circulates significantly through translation. Also, translation allows for its subject (in this case subject of the novel being translated) to be renegotiated in a new political, historical, and cultural framework, thereby generating new interpretations of the story and new interpretations of humanity as a whole (Emig, as qtd, 202).

When it comes to the English language specifically, translating these political, revolutionary works into English carries with it significant ideological implications influencing the readers' interpretations of the novels. English as a language has been

globalized and has overpowered all other languages, in fact, it is by far the most translated-into language (Young, 204). Additionally, English is in and of itself a “hybrid compound of the languages of Europe: just as with Conrad’s Kurtz, all Europe went into the making of it” (204). Consequently, the English language on its own is already an amalgamation of social structures determined by various social practices and understood differently in each of these social structures. As such the choice in language “can never be separated from cultural, religious and class or caste issues” (205). Thinking of language in this context, the reader, as well as the translator, then finds him/herself “engaged in a constant process of cultural translation” (209), and in this way in a constant process of renegotiating the novels’ ideologies. This can be seen by examining the translation of the novels’ titles; the original title of Alejo Carpentier’s novel is *El Siglo de Las Luces*, literally meaning the century of the lights. Though Carpentier refers and situates his novel during the age of enlightenment, however, he does not name his novel: The Age of Enlightenment, but rather *The Century of the Lights*. The title implies a certain outlook on the age of revolutions and Enlightenment during which the novel in question is set. In reading the title, the readers’ expectations are different from when they read *Explosion in a Cathedral* (the title of the painting that hangs in Esteban’s room. The painting reoccurs several times throughout the novel, and ends by referring to it). Additionally, though Mahfouz’ Cairo Trilogy books are named after actual streets in Cairo: (بين القصرين) *Bayn al-Qasrayn* (قصر الشوق) *Qasr al-Shawq*, and (السكرية) *Al-Sukkariyya*, however, under the direction of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, who prior to becoming the first Lady worked as editor at Doubleday, these titles were literally translated to English as *Palace Walk*, *Palace of Desire*, and *Sugar Street*. By removing the titles from the names of these Egyptian streets, the novels are then removed from

their cultural, historical and political context. Thus the choice in language is in and of itself has political, historical, and cultural implications. In the case of *Doctor Zhivago*, the use of English as the language of translation had both national and ideological repercussions for the novel.

Boris Pasternak began writing *Doctor Zhivago* in 1948 hoping to publish it in Russia in 1956. However, Pasternak, having submitted the manuscript to *Novi Mir*—a prominent literary journal—retrieved the manuscript several months later only to find that it had been rejected. The novel was also sent back with extensive notes highlighting passages that were deemed harmful to the established system. A letter, some twenty-two pages in length, was also added to the edited draft suggesting that the novel is extensively revised and any references to the failure of the party or its corruption deleted (cia.gov). The letter was published in 1958 at a time when Pasternak was awarded the Nobel Prize (MIT). The Soviet authorities "wished to justify the measures they had taken against the author [Pasternak] and his work"(MIT). The letter begins as follows:

“Boris Leonidovich!

We, the writers of this letter, have read the manuscript of your novel *Doctor Zhivago*, submitted by you to *Novyi Mir*, and want to express openly to you all our thoughts that grew out of this reading. They are alarming and grave thoughts.

We realize that if it were simply a matter of "likes or dislikes," a matter of taste or even of radical but purely artistic differences, you might not be interested in such esthetics quabbles. "Yes, yes!" or "No, no!" you might say. "The magazine has rejected the manuscript; so much the worse for the magazine, but the artist

continues to believe in its esthetic worth."

However, in this instance, the question is a more complex one. The thing that alarmed us in your novel is something that neither the editors nor the author could change by partial deletions or corrections: we are concerned here with the very spirit of the novel, with its pathos and with the author's view of life as that view really is or, in any case, as it is formed in the mind of the reader. We feel it is our direct duty to speak to you about this as people to whose views you may or may not attach importance, but whose collective opinion you have no grounds for considering prejudiced and which, therefore, is at least worth hearing out" (Current Digest of Soviet Press, 648).

In the introduction above, it becomes clear that Novy Mir and the Soviet authorities (since they were involved in all aspects of life) found a problem with the ideology of the novel and not anything related to the form, style or others. It was specifically the "spirit" of the novel one, a spirit they believe is:

“a [the] spirit of nonacceptance of the socialist revolution. The pathos of your novel is the pathos of the assertion that the October Revolution and Civil War and the social changes that followed them brought the people nothing but suffering and destroyed the Russian intelligentsia either physically or morally. The author's views on our country's past and, above all, on the first decade after the October Revolution (since, if one omits the epilogue, the end of the novel coincides precisely with the end of that decade) which emerge in systematic form from the novel boil down to the statement that the October Revolution was a mistake, that participation in it by that segment of the intelligentsia that supported it was an irreparable disaster, and that everything that followed from it

was evil” (649).

The authors of the letter, of which there were five, then proceed to disseminate in detail the various passages and themes they found to be problematic and incorrect.

They especially found an issue with the character of Doctor Zhivago:

“It is our view that Doctor Zhivago is, in fact, the incarnation of a definite type of Russian intellectual of that day, a man fond of talking about the sufferings of the people and able to discuss them, but unable to cure those sufferings in either the literal or the figurative sense of the word. He is the type of man consumed with a sense of his own singularity, his intrinsic value, a man far removed from the people and ready to betray them in difficult times, to cut himself off from their sufferings and their cause. He is the type of the "highly intellectual" Philistine, tame when left alone but capable in thought as well as in deed of inflicting any wrong whatsoever on the people just as soon as he feels the slightest wrong whatsoever on the people just as soon as he feels the slightest wrong—real or imagined has been done to him” (653).

The authors continue to state that Pasternak’s choice to give Zhivago a voice heard above others “those who hold differing views exist in the novel” is indicative of a preference toward a minority bourgeois intelligentsia that Pasternak had. Indeed, throughout the letter, the authors stress that Pasternak’s novel is simply the experience of a minority during the revolution and not the majority’s. The authors then proceed to dissect various passages in the novel that they found to be unjust and historically incorrect. However, in quoting long passages from the novel, the authorities also gave the Russian public their first glimpse of the novel (648). The letter concludes:

“As unpleasant as it has been for us, we have had to call things by their proper

names in our letter to you. We feel that your novel is profoundly unjust, that it lacks objectivity in its depiction of the revolution, the Civil War and the post-revolutionary years, that it is profoundly anti-democratic and alien to any conceivable understanding of the interests of the people. All this, by and large, stems from your position as a man who strives to show in his novel not only that the October Socialist Revolution had no positive importance in the history of our people and of mankind but that, on the contrary, it brought nothing but evil and misfortune.

As people whose position is diametrically opposed to yours, we naturally feel that publication of your novel in the magazine *Novyi Mir* is out of the question.

As concerns the bitterness with which you wrote your novel—leaving aside, for a moment, your ideological position as such—we would, recalling that in the past you have written things that differ greatly from the views you now express, like to remind you in the words that your own heroine addresses to Doctor Zhivago: "You have changed. You used to judge the revolution less harshly, without bitterness."

But the main thing, of course, is not the bitterness, because this is merely an accompaniment to ideas that have been refuted by history, bankrupt ideas that are doomed to perish. If you are still capable of thinking seriously about this, then give it some thought. In spite of everything, that is what we would like.

We are returning your manuscript of the novel *Doctor Zhivago*" (666).

This letter demonstrates the importance that Soviet authorities placed on the novel's ideology, and therefore refused to publish the novel if this ideology remains unchanged.

Once Pasternak received the letter he was ready to accept the fact that his novel

would never be published in Russia unless it was completely rewritten to fit a socialist agenda. Nevertheless, that same year, Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, a member of the Italian Communist party, who owned an Italian publishing firm, came to Russia seeking works worthy of international attention. He had heard of Pasternak's work, and he immediately tried to convince Pasternak to publish the novel in Italy. Since the novel had already created considerable controversy, and since Pasternak was aware that his novel would not pass censorship, he handed the novel to Feltrinelli saying: "you've invited me to my own execution" (Teleky). As a translator himself, Pasternak was aware of the implications of publishing his work outside Russia had. Indeed, his words to Feltrinelli, suggest the dangers for a writer of having his or her literary work, which had already been censored in Russia, translated and published outside the country, particularly during the height of the Cold War. In the fall of 1957, *Il Dottore Zivago* made its debut, translated from Russian into Italian. By that time the novel had caused uproar within Russia and beyond. His fellow writers and the KGB harassed Pasternak constantly, tried to persuade him to sign documents renouncing the novel and confessing his regret. Pasternak refused to sign any documents thus endangering both his and his partner, Olga Ivinskaya's life. (Teleky).

Meanwhile, news of Pasternak's revolutionary book reached the CIA, which saw the novel as a "weapon" to undermine the Soviet Union (cia.gov). According to the CIA chief of the Russian Division, "Pasternak's humanistic message—that every person is entitled to a private life and deserves respect as a human being, irrespective of the extent of his political loyalty or contribution to the state—poses a fundamental challenge to the Soviet ethic of sacrifice of the individual to the Communist system" (cia.gov). As a result, in January 1958, the CIA obtained rolls of film containing images



of the Russian original, which had been smuggled into Britain from Italy (cia.gov). The CIA then proceeded to fund the English translation. The Dutch General Intelligence and Security Service were contacted in order to facilitate the printing of the novel in The Hague (cia.gov) with the message, “[the novel should] be published in a maximum number of foreign editions, for maximum free world distribution and acclaim and consideration for such honor[s] as the Nobel prize.” (cia.gov). Since the United States Secret Services during Eisenhower's presidency were adamant that the CIA's involvement in publishing the novel should be entirely covert, the CIA did not allow the novel to be first published or printed in the United States. Instead, the CIA resorted to various other channels for the printing and circulation of the novel.

Once Dutch Intelligence Services agreed, an English translation of *Doctor Zhivago*, began to circulate in large quantities (over 1000 copies were made and distributed to the CIA, Frankfurt, Paris and Brussels). Several copies were specifically sent to Brussels, which was then home to the first international world book fair. Over 43 nations were participating, including the Soviet Union and the United States. In fact, 16,000 Soviet citizens received visas to attend this event. Their presence provided the CIA with a tempting opportunity to distribute the book to those behind the “iron curtain” (cia.gov).

However, as the operation was still top secret, the CIA could not simply display *Doctor Zhivago* openly as part of the U.S. exhibition, so the CIA resorted to “an unlikely partner”: The Vatican (cia.gov). The Holy See reserved a pavilion in Brussels “run by Russian émigrés” that served as a base from which books, articles, and pamphlets related to the state's suppression of Christianity were distributed (cia.gov). The CIA provided several hundred copies in the original Russian to the Holy See

library, and the latter was entirely successful in their mission. Indeed, according to the CIA, “The book’s blue linen covers were found littering the fairgrounds. Some who got the novel were ripping off the cover, dividing the pages, and stuffing them into their pockets to make the book easier to hide.” One news report at the time said that the Russian émigrés [of the Vatican], surrounded a caravan of Soviet buses, throwing copies of the book into their open windows” (cia.gov).

News of the book being published and of it also being published in its original language quickly reached Pasternak who wrote to friends in Paris: “Is it true that *Doctor Zhivago* appeared in the original?” (Couvee and Flinn, April 5, 2014). Once the first thousand copies were quickly distributed, the CIA commissioned the printing of an additional 7,000 copies to be distributed in the Soviet Union, as well as worldwide. The Agency had to print these copies in the United States, but it still could not stamp copies of the novel with its logo for fear of being exposed. Therefore, to protect its involvement, the CIA stamped these works as published by "Société d'Édition et d'Impression Mondiale, a nonexistent French publisher" (cia.gov).

As many as 10 million copies of various books, including *Doctor Zhivago*, were used as propaganda weapons in an attempt to undermine the supposed enemies of the United States. According to the CIA, “books [copies of *Doctor Zhivago*] were sent to the Russian prisoners in Afghanistan, foisted on Russian trucks in Iran, and offered to Russian sailors in the Canary Islands...” (cia.gov). *Doctor Zhivago* was a platform from which "...not only the basic theme of the book itself [be discussed] [...] but also the plight of the individual communist society” (Couvee and Flinn, April 5, 2014).

It was not until late 1958 that the novel appeared in the United States where it stayed at on the top of the New York Times bestseller list for over ten weeks and led to

Pasternak's Nobel Prize nomination. Upon hearing of his nomination, Pasternak was thrilled. However, pressured by the Soviet government, as well as the Soviet Writer's Union, Pasternak was forced to reject the prize and forbidden from traveling to retrieve it (Couvee and Flinn, April 5, 2014). Pasternak's nomination and the repercussions of the international publication of his novel had a devastating effect on him and Olga Ivinskaya, his partner in life. He was banished from the Soviet Writers Union and spent the rest of his life in internal exile until his death in 1960, while Olga was imprisoned in the Gulag in Siberia. It was not until 1987, during Mikhail Gorbachev's "democratic reform," that Pasternak (who had passed away years ago) was readmitted to the Writers Union and his book was published officially in Russia.

Although *Doctor Zhivago* was translated into several languages, it was not until the novel was translated into English that it was internationally recognized and that Pasternak was nominated for a Nobel Prize. The English translation allowed the novel to include altogether new historical, political and cultural ideology relating to the Cold War and US hegemonic ideology. The social and political conditions in the Soviet Union in 1956 forced Pasternak to accept that his novel's first publication would not be in his mother tongue. Therefore, translation played a pivotal role in the circulation of the novel, in the re-interpretation of specifically Russian subject matter on a worldwide scale, in addition to a renegotiation of the novel's ideology. Similarly, the translation of both *El Siglo de Las Luces* and *Bayn al Qasrayn* had ideological implications at the political, historical and cultural levels. These works influenced the circulation and interpretation of their ideologies as disseminated by the authors. Additionally, the translation of these works into English and other languages brought Mahfouz and Carpentier as well as Pasternak to the attention of a new global audience. This will be

elaborated upon in the coming chapters.

## CHAPTER II

### *DOCTOR ZHIVAGO AND THE SHATTERING OF THE REVOLUTIONARY DREAM*

#### **A. A Brief History of the Russian Novel and *Doctor Zhivago***

Since the early nineteenth century, Russian literature and Russian writers have been consciously and actively involved in politics (Jones, 57). After the death of Peter The Great in 1725, Russian writers assumed a "distinct ideological position" (57) by vigorously engaging in political life. Since Russian writers were extremely political in their position and their writing, this resulted in literature being strictly subjected to monitoring and control as a social, cultural, and political weapon (57). Indeed, as Jones states, "The minor writer I. F. Bogdanovich could even propose that writers be dressed in uniform and given ranks commensurate with the distinction of their service to the state" (57), as a consequence, writers were exposed to exile, imprisonment, and execution based on their literary productions (57).

The engagement of Russian writers in political life was not always a result of their intentions but often resulted from their obligation to participate in the political discourse (57). In the case of Tolstoy, for instance, Nekrasov a fellow writer, stressed the importance of participating in Russian society: "You will do still more when you understand that in our country the role of a writer is above all the role of a teacher and, as far as possible, an intercessor for the mute and oppressed" (Nekrasov as qtd, 57). Despite Tolstoy's wish to remain outside of politics, he soon found it impossible. Indeed, Tolstoy's writing led the editor of *New Age* (*Novoe Vremia*) ("the leading conservative journal") to say, "We have two tsars, Nicholas II and Lev Tolstoi. Nicholas II can do nothing with Tolstoi, cannot

shake his throne, whereas Tolstoi without any doubt is shaking the throne of Nicholas and his dynasty” (Suvorin as qtd, 57). The coming of the French Revolution steered the already political Russian writing in an altogether new direction, giving rise to a new genre of literature, the realistic novel. Although, the French Revolution was at first viewed as an event that was removed from the Russian context, and one resulting from a "tendency towards violence" that was thought to be characteristic of Western civilization (Shlapentokh, 133), however, when the situation in the Russian Empire worsened as a result of its involvement in WWI, the escalation of scarcity and the increasing social divide led Russian radicals to increasingly view violence and the French revolutionary model as the only way out of the existing system (135). The Jacobinic system was especially admired as a tool of the people, for the people. This growing admiration, in turn, led to the Russian Revolution of 1905, and it was at this time that French revolutionary ideology and discourse were the most popular (136).

The 1905 Revolution was a great shock for the Russian monarchy, which fearing an outcome similar to that of the French monarchy took to analyzing the French Revolution. The Russian monarchists began considering what means of could be utilized to avoid the rise of a Russian guillotine, while the rebels were increasingly drawn to the French revolutionary model of 1789. Thus the 1905 Revolution created a split between left and right; On the one hand, many agreed that the French model, if correctly adopted, could result in a compromise between the crown and the people, on the other hand, the violence and brutality that the French revolution caused stirred fear amongst the liberals (138). Regardless of these various views, the 1905 Revolution, influenced by the events of 1789, changed Russian politics, history, and literature forever. Marxism established itself among various groups, and although influenced heavily by the French revolutionary model and the

activities and ideas of the Jacobins, the Russian revolutionaries continued to distance themselves from the brutal side of the French revolution.

As the events of 1905 led to the establishment of a new temporary constitution, a group of radical leftists remained discontent, and led by Lenin, initiated the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 to take full control of the Russian territory and its people. Despite the significant influence of the French Revolution—indeed Lenin himself drew comparisons between the Jacobins and the Communists—the aspect of violence of the French revolution remained a key topic (139). Bolshevik leaders, including Lenin, wrote articles and speeches reassuring the people that “imitation of the good example [of the French revolution] does not mean copying it... The Jacobins of the twentieth century would not guillotine the capitalists...” (Lenin as qtd, 139), instead, “the proletariat revolution would compel them to work for it” (Lenin as qtd, 140). Nevertheless, the influence of the French revolution was undeniable. For instance, the Marseillaise played a major role in “the theatrical display of the February revolution's noble greatness” (Shlapentokh, 35). Additionally, stories run in various publications drew heavily on the French revolution by comparing both revolutions and instilling the fear that the new Bolshevik state could instigate the terror of the Jacobin. However, soon after the Bolsheviks overthrew the Tsar and took power, an army of right-wing counter-revolutionaries known as the “Whites” rose against the “Reds” (Bolsheviks) leading to a civil war. This civil war between the Reds and the Whites caused the Jacobinic terror to find its counterpart in the Russian revolution (141). Lenin succumbed to violence and in fact “guillotined” (which is to say used violence and not the guillotine itself as a tool) the Soviet's state enemies. The reference to the Jacobin terror shifted from being a counterpoint to being a justification of Bolshevik activities in 1918 (45). French books such as *History of the French Revolution*, by Michelet, among others, were used to justify the

necessity of the Bolsheviks to resort to violence. The French revolution thus presented itself as both a parallel and counter-parallel model affecting Russian political life and in this manner Russia's literary circles. The French revolution took the Russian novel even more into the political sphere, and consequently literary works such as *What is to be done?* by Chernyshevskii (1863), Lermontov's *A Hero of Our Time* that explored individual stories set against the backdrop of historical events were highly praised. Not all writers had embraced this political role in the second half of the nineteenth century as Chernyshevskii and Lemontov had. As a result, many wrote historical type novels as opposed to political works. Among these writers were Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy (65). Both artists drew on the irrationality of human behavior and refused to explain this behavior within a political context (65). Despite such resistance, the political theme kept intruding on the novel (66).

Although the Bolshevik revolution of 1917 was a positive and welcomed change for the Russians, however, with the rise of rebels opposing the Reds, the Bolshevik state opted for a totalitarian type of regime (67). Censorship of literary works was especially heightened, and although this did not slow down literature and political activism (in fact writers were drawn even more to criticizing the new Russian system by creating works that highlighted the negative sides of Bolshevism, works that were "apolitical" in the sense that they "did not have a focused political point of view" (67)), the state, however, did not allow such anti-party activist works to remain unchallenged. Consequently, the party established its "right to guide literature" (67) by setting up the centralized All-Union Association of Proletarian Writers (VAPP) (67). This then divided the Russian writers into two camps, "In the balance was the view of literature as presenting a true representation of reality, and the opposing view that literature should be prescriptive, set forth models of behavior and be an auxiliary to the policy of "changing the world" at the heart of Stalin's first Five-Year Plan



(1928-1933)" (67). In other words, the arguments were not based on whether or not the novel should be political, but rather on how the novel was to exhibit its politic-ness. The Bolshevik state sought control over the content of literature, creating various unions of writers, indeed, "Political dogmatism now dictated the content of Russian novels" (67). Thus the Bolshevik revolution played an important role in regards to both the content and circulation of the Russian novel.

Stalin's arrival to power led "acceptable" literature to only be political and only pro-state (68). With his death in 1953 "policies associated with him began to decompose" (68). However, it was not until Khrushchev's secret speech in 1956 at the Twentieth Party Congressional that "de-Stalinization" became more openly celebrated in the Russian novel (68). The "de-Stalinization" movement was carried out mostly through the publication of memoirs and diaries published in the Literary Journal "Novy Mir" (New World). The idea of a single nationalistic hero was slowly deteriorating, and instead, voices of the ordinary people were being heard (68). This journal ("Novy Mir"), which saw itself as a champion of the memoir was the same journal that—ironically—rejected the publication of *Doctor Zhivago* in 1956. The latter was considered by the government (and "Novy Mir") to be correcting Russia's revolutionary amnesia; the novel shared "in the apparent trivialities of day-to-day existence rather than a concern with significant events and personalities" (68), hence *Doctor Zhivago* made a political statement. In many ways, the Russian novel became progressively more focused on the "particulars of experience," rendering the Russian novel more ideological (113), while retaining its position as an active form of political discourse. In other words, the novel became more self-aware and invested in dismantling its subject matter because they existed beyond the formal historical margins and in the "philosophy of the time" in which history did not follow a plot, but rather time and space appeared as fields

of possibilities. Consequently, the Russian novel, although remaining primarily realistic, embraced the romantic imagination. It is within this context and these events that *Doctor Zhivago* was written. Indeed, Pasternak explored the romantic aesthetic in many of his works, starting with his autobiographical work: *Safe Conduct* (1931). Despite Pasternak's claim that he had "purged the Romantic style" from his novels (114), one could argue that although *Doctor Zhivago* is Romantic in many ways, it nonetheless remained a Realistic novel primarily. This predominantly Realistic style will be elaborated further in the following section, titled "*Doctor Zhivago* From a Historical, Cultural and Literary Perspective.

### ***B. Doctor Zhivago* from a Historical, Cultural and Literary Perspective**

*Doctor Zhivago* recounts the story of Yuri Zhivago, a medical doctor in twentieth-century Russia. The novel opens with the death of Yuri's mother in 1901. Since his father committed suicide, Zhivago is raised by his uncle Nikolay (Kolya as his is referred to in the novel, an endearing term for Nikolay). The novel follows Yuri's life as he studies to be a medical doctor, marries his first wife Tanya and has a son, Sasha. The novel also tells the story of Lara in parallel to that of Yuri. Yuri meets Lara briefly twice before he speaks to her while stationed as an army doctor in a small town. The second time Yuri meets Lara, she tries to shoot Komarovsky, an older man with whom she has been having an affair. Instead, Lara wounds a prosecutor and Komarovsky manages to get her acquitted of any charges. Later, Lara marries her childhood friend, Pasha, and has a daughter Katya. However, with time Pasha changes and becomes more and more politicized until, finally, he decides to enroll in the army during the civil war of 1918. About a year later, Lara, not receiving any news of Pasha, decides to head west to find him and enlists as a nurse. She

finds Yuri, and they have their first conversation on Yuri's last day. Lara fascinates Yuri, but he must leave and return to his family in Moscow.

Times are difficult, and the family cannot keep living in Moscow, so they decide to move east to Varykino, where Tanya's family owned a private estate. A few years later, Yuri is sitting in the library of the town of Yuratin (near Varykino), and there he sees Lara again. Their connection culminates in an affair lasting a couple of months. Finally, Yuri, feeling guilty for having betrayed his wife and decides to break off the relationship. However, on his way to Lara, he begins to reconsider and finally decides that he will instead pursue the relationship. On his way to Lara, he is captured by the Brotherhood of the Forest, an insurgent group, and conscripted as a medical officer. Yuri remains the captive of the army until he finally manages to escape and returns to Yuratin to find Lara. There he and Lara spend a few months in hiding. Meanwhile, Yuri's family has traveled to Europe, and Lara discovers that her husband is still alive and wanted by the authorities for his anti-party activities. Yuri's half-brother appears intermittently in the novel and helps Yuri survive in the increasingly challenging and dangerous conditions of the new Russian state. However, his help is not enough to allow Yuri, Lara, and Katya to remain in Yuratin. Yuri and Lara become wanted by the authorities for no particular reason other than being suspected of anti-party activities. Consequently, they escape to Yuri's old home in Varykino. Before they leave, Komarovsky manages to find them, warns them of the danger they are facing and encourages them to take his offer instead and escape out of Russia. However, both Yuri and Lara are reluctant to accept his help, especially since Komarovsky has harmed both of them at one point or another in their lives (Lara was forced into being his mistress, and Yuri's father committed suicide because of Komarovsky). Thus they refuse his help and instead move to Varykino.

They remain there for several months until finally, Komarovsky returns. This time Lara is eager to leave this stolen home; however, she refuses to do so without Yuri. Komarovsky convinces Yuri to trick Lara into believing that he is leaving with her if only to save Lara's daughter. So Yuri agrees to Komarovsky's plan and sends Lara and Katya along with Komarovsky, while he remains in Varykino. Yuri hides from the world in his old home and is unable to summon the courage to leave despite his unhappiness. Then one night he hears someone coming into the house. Pasha, Lara's husband, enters, sees Zhivago and immediately recognizes him. The two spend the entire night discussing their lives, and the revolution as well as Lara. Finally, at dawn, Pasha steps out of the house and shoots himself. Yuri, no longer able to stay in the house, buries Pasha and leaves for Moscow. He finds a job and an apartment where he meets the landlords' daughter Marina. Yuri and Marina marry and have two children. However, Yuri still remembers his old family and slowly begins to reconnect with Tanya and his son Sasha through correspondence. He then leaves his second family and goes into hiding. Yuri gets a new job and a new apartment, and although Marina continues to look for him, she is unsuccessful. Then one day, on his way to work, Yuri sees Lara boarding the train, and in his attempt to catch up to her, he dies of a heart attack. Lara attends Yuri's funeral, and there she meets Yuri's half-brother. She asks him for ways to find the whereabouts of a child given away to strangers; however, Evgraf (Yuri's half-brother) is unable to help. Lara finally disappears. The final chapters of the novel are seen through the eyes of Misha and Nicki, Yuri's uncle and his friend. Both are now soldiers in World War II, and in one of the camps, they meet Tanya, a peculiar laundry girl who shares with them her story. Consequently, they find out that she is the daughter of Lara and Yuri.

The events of *Doctor Zhivago* are spread across some of the most significant

events in Russian history, the first Russian Revolution of 1905, the Bolshevik revolution of 1917, and the civil war of 1918. These events are seen and, indeed, developed through the experiences of the characters in the novel. Nevertheless, *Doctor Zhivago* does not incorporate history, in the sense that the historical events in the novel are mere background. Rather the narrative unfolds within historical events and vice-versa, as such the novel is heavily drawing from the realist genre. Indeed, although Pasternak began writing *Doctor Zhivago* in 1948, his writing deeply echoed nineteenth-century realism (as was previously stated, nineteenth-century realism came out of the French Revolution and invited a "weaving of historical and socio-public events together with the personal and even deeply private side of life") (Bakhtin, 78).

For instance, Chapter 2, entitled "A Girl from a Different World," begins:

"The war with Japan was not yet over when it was unexpectedly overshadowed by other events. Waves of revolution swept across Russia, each greater and more extraordinary than the last. It was at this time that Amalia Karlovan Guishar, the widow of a Belgian engineer and herself a Russianized Frenchwoman, arrived in Moscow from the Urals with her two children –her son Rodin and her daughter Larisa" (Pasternak, 21).

In the passage above, Lara (Larisa)'s introduction is disclosed through a historical and political climate. In other words, the narrator makes clear that the circumstances that bring Lara and her family to Russia are both external political and historical events (war with Japan), as well as internal (waves of revolutions sweeping across Russia c. 1905). Indeed, this entire chapter sets the novel as both a historical and a realist work:

"That autumn there was unrest among the railway workers. The men on the Moscow- Kaza line went on strike, and those of the Moscow- Brest line were

expected to join them. The decision to strike had been taken, but the strike committee was still arguing about the date. Everyone on the railway knew that a strike was coming and only a pretext was needed for it to begin" (30).

It is later revealed that "the pretext" for the strike to begin will be the fight between Tiverzin, one of the railway workers, and Khudoleyev, a foreman, which will drive Tiverzin in his fury to sound the alarm that will set off the strike:

"It was not until later that Tiverzin learned of the decision take by the strike committee after he had left the underground shelter with Antipov, to begin the strike that very night. [...] Sat the moment when the whistle of the engine repair shop blew, and though coming from the very depths of Tiverzin's soul hoarsely at first and then gradually clearing, a crowd was already moving from the depot and the freight yard. [...] More and more people joined the crowd. The railway workers were on strike" (Pasternak, 26).

Consequently, the strike that was shaped into the 1905 revolution was not used by the author as a background for Tiverzin's actions. Rather, the historical events of the railway protests were triggered from "the depths of Tiverzin's soul." The historical realist narrative that is *Doctor Zhivago* seeks to progressively make sense of the historical events by channeling them through familiar forms (characters and stories in the novel). As such the private lives and stories within the larger plot of the novel all function as metonymic devices re-explaining larger [historical] events (White (1928), 98).

Accordingly, in writing a novel that seems to narrate the story of one man, Yuri Zhivago, Pasternak sets his character in the midst of a visibly graphic historical space and a narratively visible time (Bakhtin as qtd, 78). Although the novel's space and time are constructed by the novelist, this image of a reality within the novel is, "meant to correspond

in its general outline to some domain of human experience which is no less "real" than that referred to by the historian" (White (1928), 122). As a historical novel, *Doctor Zhivago* mirrors real time and space through its plot. The plot presents the various metonymic personal stories in a structural and chronological manner, whereby the stories that transpire are not random, but reflective of real time and space. Moreover, because the narrative is confined to its plot, and because the time and space of the narrative are identifiable with a real historical event, the fictional world created in the novel, and indeed the protagonist's evolution, actions, and behavior, become influenced, but not ruled, by those historical and social events in the fictional world as they relate to the real historical time and space (Bakhtin as qtd, 79). Nevertheless, characters in a realist novel maintain a capacity to surprise (Bakhtin as qtd, 79). As the narrative unfolds within history, the former provides the ability to read time (as created within the novel) "in the spatial whole of the world" (Hannon, as qtd, 81) which is to say that the novel's various events show the development of historical space and narrative time as it mirrors real time and space (Hannon as qtd, 81). A key feature of *Doctor Zhivago*, as a historical narrative and a realist novel, is its focus on the individual within the nation. In this way, the novel unveiled a new kind of ideology, one that disrupted the illusion of nationalism (which had resulted from the Revolution). In Chapter 4, "The Hour of the Inevitable," Zhivago, now an army doctor, is stationed in a small town called Melyuzeyevo and acts as head of the division. After the Tsar of Russia visits his unit, Zhivago and his childhood friend Misha Gordon (who also enlisted) engage in a conversation regarding the events of the war (that of the Russian monarchy against the peasants, before the Bolshevik revolution of 1917):

"When the gospel says that in the Kingdom of God there are neither Jews nor Gentiles, does it merely mean that all are equal in the sight of God? No—the Gospel

wasn't needed for that—the Greek philosophers, The Roman moralists, and the Hebrew prophets had known this long before. But it said: In that new way of living and new form of society which is born of the heart and which is called the Kingdom of Heaven, there are no nations, there are only individuals” (Pasternak, 104).

Through a seemingly private dialogue between two individuals, the novelist can renegotiate history not as an event in itself, but rather as performed through individuals as a "human activity" (Swingewood, 49). By drawing attention to the fact that man is at the center of historical and political ideology, the novel creates a space that allows the reader to contemplate the struggles and conflicts that prevent the characters from being recognized as social and historical beings (50).

In addition to being a historical realist novel, *Doctor Zhivago* also incorporates elements of Symbolism and Romanticism. Russian Symbolism came with the decline of nineteenth-century Realism, and "it was argued, went far beyond the realists' descriptions of an external, objective world in portraying not the mundane surface of events but 'the phenomena of the human spirit'" (63). This Romantic style can be seen in the novel through the references to religion. For instance, in Chapter 5: "Farewell to the old," Yuri and Lara have their first full conversation one night before Lara leaves to go back to her daughter. While Lara is ironing, Yuri comes in to clear up any misconceptions that she may have about his intentions, although, in reality, he has come to clear his up conscience:

"Last night I was watching the meeting in the square. An extraordinary sight! Mother Russia is on the move, she can't stand-still, she's restless and she can't find rest, she's talking, and she can't stop. And it isn't as if only people were talking. Star and trees meet and converse, flowers talk philosophy at night, stone houses hold



meetings. It makes you think of the Gospel, doesn't it? The days of the apostles.

Remember St. Paul? You will speak with tongues and you will prophesy. Pray for the gift of understanding." (Pasternak, 124).

By reverting to Symbolism, the novelist views the experiences and events of life "not as something 'out there' in the external world" but rather as an inward experience (Swingewood, 64). Additionally, *Doctor Zhivago* can be seen through a romantic lens. Indeed, through this novel Pasternak "offers a poet-hero [Yuri Zhivago] who, like his real-life counterparts, Maiakovskii and Esenin, partakes of the Orphic-Christian myth. Iurii Zhivago "needs philistinism" in the best Romantic tradition" (Fusso, 125). Romanticism and Symbolism in the novel intertwine in the sense that they are both expressed through religion and nature. As the novel progresses, Yuri moves further and further away from medicine and into writing his poetry.

His poems (available at the end of the novel) echo words of the Bible, for instance in "Garden of Gethsemane" Yuri writes:

"Furthest away was someone's garden plot.

He left his disciples outside in the stone fence

Saying, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death;

Tarry ye here, and watch with me" (Pasternak, 455).

Romanticism and Symbolism function in much the same way as realism, both draw attention to the private, the individual, rather than the nation. The novelist uses these forms as tools through which the characters express their frustrations or at times merely their thoughts vis-à-vis the historical events in the novel.

The Bolshevik Revolution is announced towards the end of chapter 5 in the novel, and its aftermath is discussed in Chapter 6: "The Moscow encampment." In this chapter the

ideology of the revolution as “situationally congruent (i.e. generally accepting of the social status quo)” (Mannheim as qtd by White, (1978), 68) is challenged and seen instead as being “situationally transcendent (i.e. critical of the status quo and oriented towards its transformation or dissolution)” (Mannheim as qtd by White, (1978), 68). Once the Bolsheviks had succeeded in their revolution, the novel could no longer be “an individual undertaking, independent of the common cause of the proletariat” (Lenin as qtd by Swingewood, 74). The novelist and, therefore, the novel had to become “‘engineer[s] of [the] human soul,’ practically molding his [the novelists’] art for the good of the cause” (Stalin as qtd by Swingewood, 72). As such, the subject of the novel could not be outside of the nation, rather the subject of *Doctor Zhivago* challenged such a nationalist situationally congruent ideology by showing Yuri, his family, as well as the population of Russia, as struggling in the aftermath of the revolution:

"Let's go. So you too have heard of there's a bad time ahead –hardships, dangers, anything might happen."

“They say there won’t be any firewood or water, or light. They’ll abolish money. No supplies will be coming in....”

Indeed, Yuri and the characters in the novel are portrayed as enthusiastic and hopeful about the revolution before its beginning:

"During the revolution, it will seem to you, as it seemed to us at the front, that life has stopped, that there is nothing going on in the world except killing and dying. If we live long enough to read the chronicles and memoirs of this period, we shall realize that in these five or ten years we have experienced more than other people do in a century. I do not know whether the people will rise of themselves and advance spontaneously like a tide, or whether everything will be done in the name of the

people. [...] –after people have pulled each other's hair and smashed the dishes they rack their brains trying to figure out who started it. What is truly great is without beginning, like the universe." (Pasternak, 153).

In this passage, Yuri is among friends and is described as giving a speech “quite unexpectedly to himself” (Pasternak, 153). Even his address to others becomes a process of reflection. In describing Yuri’s act as a process of thought, the style of the novel as a combination of historical, realist, and romantic is solidified. Indeed, it is through Yuri’s public inner dialogue that the “experience” of the revolution is revealed. Already the novel challenges established nationalist ideology by drawing attention to the individual as the center of events and not the nation. However, the novel further challenges the “situationally congruent” ideology by describing the aftermath of the revolution:

"The people in the cities were as helpless as children in the face of the unknown – that unknown which swept every established habit aside and left nothing but desolation in its wake, although it was itself the offspring of the city and the creation of city- dwellers. All around, people continued to deceive themselves, to talk endlessly. Everyday life struggled on, by force of habit, limping and shuffling. But the doctor saw life as it was. It was clear to him that it was under sentence. He looked upon himself and his milieu as doomed. Ordeals were ahead, perhaps death. Their days were counted and running out before his eyes" (Pasternak, 155).

In this passage, it becomes clear that the euphoria of the revolution is dwindling and that the characters are faced with a strikingly different reality from that which was described in previous chapters. In this way, as a historical novel, *Doctor Zhivago* becomes a situationally transcendent ideological, historical novel. Its ideology challenges the nationalist ideology established by the ruling party. The historical novel also challenges the very ideology of the

revolution itself, in addition to the nationalist ideology the latter sought to enforce:

"When the revolution woke him [the peasant] up, he decided that his century-old dream was coming true –his dream of living on his land by the work of his hands, incomplete independence and with no obligations to anyone. Instead, he found he had only exchanged the oppression of the former state for the new, much harsher yoke of the revolutionary superstate" (Pasternak, 187).

The Revolution of 1917 presented a hope for a unified and liberated nation, and, as was previously mentioned, in its attempt to unify the nation, the Party forgot the individual and focused only on the cause. The novel seeks to draw attention to the realities of the new way of life using the individual as a metonymic tool for the re-interpretation of historical events. In the novel, Yuri, although intensively involved in the war and revolutions, continues to "[not] see much difference between Bolsheviks and other socialists" (Pasternak, 281). By writing a character who is apathetic to the Party's cause and, as a doctor, sympathetic to the individual, the character can draw the attention of the reader toward the forgotten individual.

In renegotiating nationalist, hegemonic ideology, *Doctor Zhivago* challenges the cultural dogma of this same ideology. Indeed art and social criticism (which the novel is heavily invested in) "are inherently and essentially related, not because one follows from the other, but because both are applications, in particular directions of a fundamental conviction" (Williams, 135), and because a key factor in the development of the idea of culture is "that the art of a period is closely and necessarily related to the generally prevalent 'way of life'" (Williams, 130). *Doctor Zhivago* as a literary artifact (i.e. work of art), and one —as a historical work— invested in challenging and renegotiating the hegemony and ideology of the new 'way of life,' can be seen as a cultural novel in addition

to a historical and literary work. The novel recounts history as individuals experience it, thus questioning history through stories. History is then the way in which these events are interpreted in the form of a narrative. As previously discussed, art plays an important role in the formation and interpretation of history. However, to quote Morris, "There is no salvation in art for art's sake" (Morris as qtd by Williams, 153). Moreover, since "the cause of art is the cause of the people" (Morris as qtd, 154), art becomes a means by which value is provided, and in discussing the value of culture in its [art's] time. By describing the events related to the various political orders (socialist, communist, monarchist) *Doctor Zhivago*, and indeed literature as a form of art generally, allows the reader to re-evaluate the value of these orders through the individual experiences of the characters. "It is," writes Williams, "through experience of and attention to such values that the wider common reorganization can be initiated and maintained" (Williams, 247). These experiences act on various political, social, physical, anthropological, and other levels. As a body that incorporates these experiences, culture is then itself re-evaluated. As such, the novel presents a critique of cultural, as well as historical, values (257). For instance, in Chapter 13, "Opposite the House of Sculptures," Yuri, having escaped from the Brotherhood of the Forest, searches and finds Lara still in Yuratin. There they both live for some time, and she informs him of what has happened while he was in captivity:

"Ah, that's hard to answer. I'll tell you. But it's strange that I, an ordinary woman, should explain to you, who are so wise, what is happening to human life in general and life in Russia, and why families get broken up, including yours and mine. Ah, it isn't a matter of individuals, of being alike or different in temperament, of loving or no loving! All customs and traditions, all our way of life, everything to do with home and order, has crumbled into dust in the general upheaval and reorganization

of society. The whole human way of life has been destroyed and ruined. All that's left is the naked human soul stripped to the last shred, for which nothing has changed because it was always cold and shivering and reaching out to its nearest neighbor, as cold and lonely as itself. You and I are like Adam and Eve, the first two people on earth who at the beginning of the world had nothing to cover themselves with –and now at the end of it, we are just as naked and homeless. And you and I are the last remembrances of all that immeasurable greatness which has been created in the world in all the thousands of years between then and us, and it is in memory of all those vanished marvels that we live and love and weep and cling to one another" (Pasternak, 335).

In this passage, Lara interprets the events of the Civil War of 1918 and the following victory over the Reds not merely as historical events, but as a cultural experience affecting “the whole human way of life.” In this way, to quote Bakhtin, culture becomes “an activity with political and moral ends and objectives” (Bakhtin, 5). The Civil War and the rise of the Soviet state unfold in the novel as cultural (not to mention historical) events. The novel renegotiates these events and draws attention to their values as experienced by individuals.

### **C. Conclusion**

This chapter has discussed the history of the Russian novel briefly and has shown that the Russian novel has been an ideological weapon since the eighteenth century. This weapon was used to criticize and challenge existing hegemonies. Once the Reds were victorious, and the Soviet Union was established, the role of literature became "future-oriented, committed to an inevitable, progressive transformation of society; the writer's duty

is less to such subjective dictates of art as sincerity, rather to an immanent purpose in history laid down authoritatively by the state and its bureaucrats and reinforced by a vast apparatus of police repression" (Swingewood, 73). However, for novelists, this weapon became one with which the historical events of the twentieth century in Russia could be re-interpreted and re-evaluated through a realist, symbolic and romantic lens, as in the case of *Doctor Zhivago*. As a historical novel, *Doctor Zhivago* created a space in which historical events could be experienced not as nationalist events, but rather as personal experiences. In doing so, this novel challenged the established ideology. Lenin, among other leaders, emphasized the need for all ideology to serve the needs of the state and to raise class-consciousness (Swingewood, 91). Furthermore, because *Doctor Zhivago* challenged social, political and historical hegemonic ideology, the novel presented the characters as evaluating these events. In other words, in re-interpreting these events through individual stories, the novel became a tool with which the individual could measure the value of these events. Therefore, *Doctor Zhivago*, as a historical, literary and cultural analysis, may be seen as both a product of and shaper of the society, culture, and history that produced it.

While the Soviet state was reeling after the death of Stalin in 1953, on the other side of the world, the Cuban Revolution was beginning. Although relations between Latin America and Russia had existed prior to the 1950s, principally due to Lenin's interest in the "masses of people in Mexico, in their relation to the United States, whether there was a strong movement in the United States" (Gómez as qtd. by Bain, 4), the Soviets took particular interest in Cuba after the Cuban Revolution (Bain, 4). With Stalin's death and Nikita Khrushchev's speech at the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in February 1956, the Russian state sought "much more of a global presence" (Bain, 4). Khrushchev himself recognized the Cuban Revolution in his speech:

“The awakening of the African peoples has begun,” he said. “The national liberation movement has gained strength in Brazil, Chile and other Latin American countries” (Khrushchev as qtd, 4). With an ideological battle starting between Russia and the U.S. (i.e., the Cold War), the victory of Cuban communism was seen as crucial in the victory of Russia over the U.S. Khrushchev himself developed a close, personal relationship with the Cuban revolutionary leader Fidel Castro as a means of showing the US that “the correlation of forces was moving in favor of the Soviet Union” (6). With the Cold War advancing, Russia sought to establish its cultural influence and erected The Cuban-Soviet Cultural Exchange Institution in 1945, “and from August 1945 until February 1952 it published the monthly journal *Cuba y la URSS*” (14). Pro-Soviet literature continued to be disseminated widely on the island. Furthermore, several reports between the KGB and the Cuban Secret Police existed since 1949, suggesting that the KGB were active in Cuba before the Revolution (15). Additionally, the Soviet state had also shown a vested interest in Cuban sugar before the Cuban Revolution, especially in the aftermath of the Russian Civil War, which had depleted various essential resources in the Russian state (17). Although the trade of sugar never took place, “Soviet interest in trade with Latin America that was not just the result of self-help; it also demonstrated Moscow’s realist desire to use commerce to increase its presence in the Developing World and thus reduce American influence” (17). It is therefore clear that Russia and Cuba maintained political and commercial relations before the Cuban Revolution. However, the Cuban Revolution served to render these associations very relevant in ideological terms, especially in the context of the Cold War. It is against this backdrop that Alejo Carpentier began to write his novel *Explosion in a Cathedral*.



## CHAPTER III

### *EXPLOSION IN A CATHEDRAL:* REVISITING THE CARIBBEAN REVOLUTIONARY NOVEL

#### **A. A Brief History of the Latin American Novel and El Siglo De Las Luces**

The events of *Explosion in a Cathedral* center primarily on the Haitian revolution of 1791 and the French revolution of 1789, however, they also describe the influence that the so-called Age of Enlightenment of the eighteenth century had on various areas of the Caribbean. To understand the historical, political, as well as racial ideology outlined in *Explosion in a Cathedral* this section will examine the influence of the Enlightenment in the Caribbean, and briefly, describe the events of the Haitian revolution. The age of enlightenment engendered a conviction "that the world needed to be altered and that alteration was possible through human interaction" (Knight, 229). The revolutions that took place in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, including, but not limited to the Haitian Revolution of 1791, were influenced by this conviction (229). Advances in chemistry, physics, and various sciences also took place during the Enlightenment (229). Such advances extended to various fields, such as the military, communication, and others (229). Moreover, because of the emphasis on scientific inquiry, significant developments in agriculture, specifically sugar plantations (in the case of Cuba) were achieved (243). The Haitian Revolution, inspired by the Enlightenment promoted economic growth and helped to "diversify exports" (243). Most importantly, the events of the French Revolution fueled to an extent by the age of enlightenment, brought about the age of political revolutions. As was previously elaborated, the French Revolution released a wave of nationalism all over the world,

causing nations to rise and colonies to fall (230). This nationalism continued throughout the nineteenth-century, giving rise to a Caribbean novel in Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, that dealt with: “the need to forge a national identity” (Luis, 125). The Caribbean novel in Cuba during the nineteenth century influenced by the events of both the French and subsequently the Haitian Revolution, addressed themes of slavery and nationalism (Luis, 125).

The Haitian Revolution, which, to quote Knight, was “an outgrowth of the metropolitan French Revolution”(230), resulted in Haiti being the first colony to declare its independence and the first colony to be entirely free of any slaveholding communities (230). In the eighteenth century, Saint-Domingue was considered as the most prized of the French colonies: "It dominated the world sugar market and had the largest concentration of African slaves in the New World" (Aliano, 15). Inspired by the events of 1789, the white creole inhabitants began deliberating whether the Haitian colony should be independent (15). In an attempt to further their quest for independence, a wealthy Creole, Vincent Ogé, motivated by the ideals of the French revolution and by the Declaration of Independence—which declared all men equal under the law—requested from the white colonial governors the institution of these rights for the black and Creole inhabitants of the island. The French white colonialists on hearing his request had him publicly impaled. Oge's request prompted the black population to rebel against the colonial oppressors in 1791. The British and Spanish, hearing of unrest in Saint-Domingue and seeking its riches, attacked the Island c.1794 (27). In an attempt to defend the island, Toussaint L'Ouverture, a self-educated former slave declared himself governor and maintained control of the population thereby forcing the French to recognize him as governor (25). However, the rebellions on the

island continued, and the black inhabitants became increasingly angrier toward the white population. L'Ouverture himself was known for his abhorrence of non-black citizens and would incur the most violent en masse executions of the white, black or Creole inhabitants who dared to oppose the rebellion (27). With the situation in Saint Domingue worsening under Toussaint's governance, Napoleon rescinded L'Ouverture's governance, ordered his arrest, and he was sent back to France where he died in prison in 1803 (25). Meanwhile, in Saint Domingue the death of the new French governor Leclerc gave the black populations the opportunity to seize control of the island and declare independence in 1804 (27). With this declaration, centuries of American and Transatlantic slave trades and practices began to crumble (230). Although the disintegration of slavery was slow, it was persistent. In 1807 the British ended their participation in the transatlantic slave trade and prosecuted "those who continued to traffic in human cargoes across the Atlantic" (230). Such changes ushered in an age of political, social, and economic revolution. These revolutions served to undermine the power of empires such as those of the Spanish and British. Accordingly, the significance of the Haitian revolution lies in its thoroughness and its multifaceted expansion (235). It was a social, political, as well as historical, revolution, in the sense that it encompassed all aspects of Haitian life (235). According to Knight, "It was the most thorough revolution in history" (235). The Haitian rebels took liberty, equality, and fraternity beyond mere political slogans and sought to establish their new nation following these ideals (235). The abolition of slavery, as well as the declaration of all men –black and otherwise— as free and "[the] citizens of the new Republic as black" (234) had immense repercussions in various Caribbean islands and the United States (234). The revolution in Haiti was not restricted to class or politics, but instead

significantly altered individual aspects of society and fashioned new ideologies of race, equality, and nationalism, among others (235). Indeed: "To some extent, the political changes mirrored the changing social situation, and the social situation resulted from the fortuitous combination of geographical size, topography, population, and colonial relationship"(235).

The Age of Enlightenment, the French Revolution, and the Haitian Revolution also influenced Cuba, among other Latin American nations. In fact, Havana, as a "garrison city," and one with several ports, was heavily influenced by the changes in the Caribbean (235), especially since Cuba "reflected Spanish society a good deal more than did most parts of Spanish America" (235). In striving to mirror Spanish society, Cuban society built a noble class (235), and to maintain this class, Cuba was unable to: "provide the sort of occupational differentiation within the white sector that satisfied the growing needs of a dynamic community. Occupations and skills were of necessity randomly distributed" (236). Thus slavery was unavoidably necessary for Cuban nobles to maintain their status, whereby "Spanish law excluded non-whites from the professions or service in the upper layers of the imperial bureaucracy"(236). The declaration of the Haitian colony as a free republic governed by black citizens was naturally threatening for the Cuban elite (236), and as slow as the effect of the Haitian revolution was, it set in motion the wheels of the abolition of slavery in Cuba which was the "next to the last state to abolish slavery in the Americas" in 1886 (230). The age of revolutions also played a vital role in influencing intellectual life by dividing Caribbean societies into ones that would continue to reflect microcosms of their previous colonizers, such as Jamaica, and others that would "articulate an especially vigorous self-consciousness," such as Cuba (239). In fact, the age of enlightenment (which

triggered the age of revolutions) was especially influential in Cuba mainly because it drove the Spanish colonials to take a vested interest in the education of their colonial subjects, unlike the English colonials (240). The Spanish instilled a "more rigorous[ly] scientific curriculum in Cuba—as is seen in the introductory chapters of *Explosion in a Cathedral*— and in placing education altogether: “under the control of local political authorities” (242). Consequently, the education of the individual in Cuba was much more political than it was in the non-Spanish colonies in the Caribbean.

The interweaving of politics and the literary aspect of the Caribbean and Latin American life can be explained through the very term of “Latin America”; since it was first coined by the French to justify their colonial project in the Western Hemisphere after the Napoleonic invasion of the Iberian Peninsula in 1807” (Kristal, I). This term remained controversial until the twentieth century, when Latin American intellectuals saw Latin American as referring to a process where “pasts are invented and recovered as the various literary genres are rehearsed” (2). In fact Latin American writers of the twentieth century such as García Márquez, Vargas Llosa, Carlos Fuentes, Alejo Carpentier and others: “willfully rewrote historical or anthropological works in the fiber of their novels to stress real, imagined, ironic, or playful continuities with the Spanish, Portuguese, indigenous, or African heritage of the heterogeneous populations that comprise their visions of Latin America” (3). Hence by writing historical novels, these writers were able to negotiate the entire canon of Latin American literature and draw attention to its multi-dimensionality (3). In this sense, Latin American literature came to encompass various regional kinds of literature such as: "the Andean novel, the Caribbean novel, the Brazilian novel, and the Central American novel" (3).

As a political, historical and cultural movement, Latin American literature was

profoundly influenced by the surrounding climate in the twentieth century, specifically the Cuban Revolution of 1953-1959. Castro's rise to power "transformed society, culture, and literature" and divided the literary community between writers who supported the new regime, and those who opposed it (Luis, 132). Events triggered by the new Cuban regime, such as the Cuban Missile Crisis, Castro's threat to "export communism" served to draw attention to Cuban and Latin American literature. Such attention established literature as "a weapon against Western imperialism" (132). This revolution was "held by most at the time in Latin America to be an exemplary nationalist and anti-imperialist movement that seemed to demand an intellectual and practical commitment and offered the utopian promise of uniting the artistic and political vanguards" (King, 59). Cuba, in particular, acted as a literary hub where writers received awards for their works (59). Indeed, literature played a major role in the years prior, during, and after the Cuban revolution. Castro "favored literary organizations that controlled the interpretation of literary production," and in his attempt to further control this interpretation, "The Union of Writers and Artists of Cuba (UNEAC), and Casa de Las Américas" were created to promote literature. In fact, Vargas Llosa in his Rómulo Gallegos award speech in 1967 stated that, "Literature is a Fire" (King, 60). It is clear here that the Cuban communist government extensively mirrored the Soviet government in its cultural policies. The latter also considered literature as a weapon and sought to control its interpretation and circulation through Unions. The importance of Latin American literature in the context of ideological warfare was made manifest by the 1960s Boom of the Latin American novel championed by the Latin American novelists themselves (Kristal, 8). The Cuban Revolution had brought about significant demographic and urbanizing changes as well

as awakened the middle class, from which the Latin American novel drew most of its readership (King, 61). Small publishing houses and regional publishers would go to great lengths to circulate works by Latin American authors such as García Márquez, Julio Cortázar, Vargas Llosa and others (62). The Boom attracted U.S., as well as international attention. As the Cold War was being waged, the rise of a new neighboring communist nation was not desirable for the United States. Meanwhile, in Cuba, the literary circle was forced into political ideology, as manifested by the literary journal *Mundo Nuevo* (New World) (In Spanish the name is identical to the prominent Russian literary journal, “Novy Mir”). The journal primarily highlighted contemporary novelists who were significantly engaged in "ideological disputes," in addition to "chim[ing] with the U.S. Cold War support of literary modernism” (63).

One of the most important writers of the Boom period was Alejo Carpentier, the Cuban writer and musicologist (64). Alejo Carpentier was chiefly "responsible for the exploration of the apparently fantastic elements in Latin American reality." In fact, he "pioneered the mode of writing fiction that came to be known as "magical realism" (Kristal, 9). Although Carpentier did not use this term specifically, he did "identify the concept in the original prolog to his novel *El Reino de Este Mundo* (*The Kingdom of this World*, 1949)” (9). In the prologue, Carpentier describes his visit to historical landmarks in Haiti, "I was moved to compare the marvelous reality I had recently experienced with that exhausting attempt to invoke the marvelous which has characterized certain European kinds of literature of the last thirty years” (Carpentier, *The Kingdom of This World*, prologue). In his amazement of Haitian history and landscape, Carpentier identified Latin America, in parallel, as "a place where the real has the feel of the marvelous" (Kristal, 9). This prolog was the harbinger of "Lo Real Maravilloso" which

inspired writers such as Gabriel García Márquez in his writing of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. His framing of the concept made Carpentier one of the most innovative interpreters of Latin American culture and identity. By drawing on heterogeneous cultures, Carpentier was questioning the notion of a single Latin American identity and highlighting the need to appreciate of the various regional and international elements that make up this identity (King, 68). In this way, Carpentier prompted the movement known as the Latin American Boom.

The end of the Boom came with the end of the optimism of "imaginative proximity of social revolution" (King, 76). Military dictatorships grew in various Latin American countries such as Brazil (1964 coup), Bolivia (Hugo Banzer 1971-1978), and Chile (Pinochet in 1973), among others. In the difficult regional circumstances, Cuba became a country where intellectual life came to an era of "ideological austerity" throughout the 1970s (King, 76). In fact Cuba played an important role in the dwindling of the Boom ideology in the seventies. The economic embargo, counterrevolutionary violence, in addition to its cultural and political isolation (76) contributed to the decline of literary optimism. Although many Latin American writers supported the state, the incarceration, and subsequent public humiliation (through a "show trial") of the poet Heberto Padilla led to the beginning of disenchantment with the Cuban regime. Members of the literary community famously wrote two open letters addressed to Castro in defense of the freedom of writers. The latter replied by "castigating bourgeois intellectuals who were the lackeys of imperialism and agents of the CIA" (77). The abasement of a member of the literary community resulted in the appearance of a "testimonial [of] literature, [in which] the function of the writer as a transmitter of social concerns" was further emphasized.



## ***B. Explosion in a Cathedral Through a Historical, Cultural and Literary Lens***

The historical context of *Explosion in a Cathedral* is life in Cuba and other islands of the Caribbean at the time of the French Revolution c.1789-1809 (Webb, 87). The novel opens with the death of a wealthy merchant, father of Sofia and Carlos, and uncle to of Esteban, who had to live with the siblings since he was young because of his health. After the death of their father, the three orphans withdraw to their mansion and create a world of their own. Then Victor Hugues, a man claiming to be a wealthy merchant, enters their lives. Victor arrives uninvited and remains with Esteban, Sofia, and Carlos for some time, sharing stories of his travels and exploits. Meanwhile, Esteban's condition worsens, and the family begins to prepare for his death. However, Victor brings Doctor Ogé, a black physician, to examine Esteban. Sofia is at first reluctant to accept the fact that a man of color may be able to heal her cousin (whom she considers a brother), but Ogé succeeds in healing Esteban. As the story progresses, it is revealed that Victor and Ogé are both freemasons. The Cuban authorities set out to arrest them, but Esteban (now completely healed), Sofia, and Carlos help them escape from Cuba to Haiti. Halfway to Port Au Prince, news of the French Revolution reaches Esteban and Sofia (Carlos had left them to go back to Cuba). Esteban, Ogé, and Victor decide it is safer for Sofia to return to Cuba while they continue their journey.

The story then resumes with Victor and Esteban [Ogé having remained in Haiti], Victor becomes a revolutionary leader, and Esteban works with him as his translator in their many travels and exploits in France and the Caribbean. He changes from a man loyal to the values of the Enlightenment to a man blinded by his ideals. Seeking to establish these ideals in other Caribbean countries, Victor resorts to increasingly violent means and reinstates slavery. Meanwhile, Esteban, who at first also actively engaged in

the struggle for the French revolution, slowly becomes disillusioned, especially after his travels. Finally, Esteban manages to return to Cuba and Sofia and Carlos in 1799. Carlos becomes a merchant and takes over his father's business, while Sofia marries Carlos' business partner and seems happy in her new role. Meanwhile, Esteban feels alienated from his family and attempts to reconnect with Sofia by making sexual advances towards her, which she immediately rejects. Later, Jorge, Sofia's husband, falls ill and succumbs to his illness. A few months after his death, Sofia leaves on a ship to meet with Victor Hugues, despite Esteban and Carlos' protests. The final chapters focus on Sofia and Victor's life together. Although at first Sofia is entranced with the man Victor has become, eventually she becomes disillusioned with revolutionary ideas and leaves Victor after he reinstates slavery. The story ends with a brief description of Sofia and Esteban's lives together in Spain, as recounted by Carlos. Although Carlos is not entirely sure, he believes that Sofia and Esteban died in the Spanish city while participating in a protest (Webb, 88).

*Explosion in a Cathedral* was, as stated in the previous section, written during the Cold War and in many ways helped to initiate the Latin American Boom, although it takes place prior, during and after the French revolution of 1789. Nevertheless, in narrating past historical events (the French and Haitian Revolutions), the novel allows the reader to reinterpret the novel's present (the Cold War). As such, the protagonists of the novel are constantly negotiating their positions vis-à-vis the historical events in the novel (Janzen, 283). The protagonists struggle to interpret and understand their identity and their position with the historical events and political causes (Janzen, 284). As previously mentioned, the role of the Latin American writer in the new communist state was extremely political as such Carpentier "felt [he] had the political and institutional

support to practice the work of writing as [he] understood it” (284). Indeed, in post-revolutionary Cuba, writers were viewed as “messengers whose function was to reiterate and reinforce for the masses the government’s emancipatory vision” (285). Carpentier exemplified this role in his positions as the general sub-director of culture, member of the National Council of Culture, head of the commission of editions for the national publishing house, vice-president of the union of writers and artists, in addition to his position as a teacher of the history of culture. Carpentier also directed two magazines (Carpentier as qtd, 291). Although Carpentier was a friend of Castro and a supporter of the left, his work became increasingly subject to "state-mandated strictures" (285). Considering that Carpentier preferred writing novels that were historical in scope, censorship limited the novel's interpretation of history if this interpretation failed to comply with the agenda of the state (285). Thus taking into consideration the theme and century of Carpentier’s novel and the circumstances during which he wrote his work (censorship, political upheaval...), it can be suggested that *Explosion in a Cathedral* investigates and reinterprets the promise of a revolution of liberation (286). Indeed, the novel dramatizes an eighteenth-century Caribbean slave uprising, in which those who were marginalized were excluded from promises of the Enlightenment and sought to reclaim their right to liberty, and that the Cuban revolution, as well as the Cold War, brought to light a new type of oppression. In this way, the position of the novelist himself is: "a historically specific position” (286), and since the novel seeks to direct the reader toward a new perspective vis-à-vis historical events, the novel has significant elements that mark it as a historical work.

As a historical novel, *Explosion in a Cathedral* “disrupts Eurocentric historical narratives of the Caribbean in which European terms and models consistently fail to

reference a Caribbean reality” (287). In this way, the novel rewrites history and gives voice to those who were silenced in the process of attaining victory (Benjamin as qtd, 287). Benjamin argues that the only “politically responsible” way to write history happens in calling attention to the “perspective and experience of the observer” (Benjamin as qtd, 288). In this way, the past is no longer a unified event, but rather a composite of various stories that create meaning only as the observer narrates them. Hence, in reflexively narrating historical events through individuals, the oppressed past is brought to light (Benjamin as qtd, 288). In bringing to light this oppressed past, the novel questions the ideology of the historical, cultural, and political time, which can be seen in *Explosion in a Cathedral* through the main protagonist Esteban. For instance, while Ogé and Hugues argue about the ideology of the Enlightenment and the upcoming French Revolution, Esteban becomes entranced by the hope of the French Revolution.

“Humanity is divided into two classes, the oppressors, and the oppressed. Habit, necessity, and lack of leisure prevent the majority of the oppressed from becoming aware of their condition; when they do become aware of it, civil war will break out.” The terms liberty, happiness, equality, human dignity, and the very mysterious one of class war, coined by a Scottish economist, recurred continually in this reckless exposition, and were used to prove the imminence of a great conflagration, which to-night Esteban accepted as a necessary purification, as an Apocalypse which he longed to witness as soon as possible, so that he might start to live his life as a man in a new world.

[...]

Esteban suddenly felt that he had been living like a blind man on the fringe of the most exciting realities, and had failed to be aware of the one thing worth

attention at that moment.

[...]

To talk of revolutions, to imagine revolutions, to place oneself mentally in the midst of a revolution, is in some small degree to become master of the world.

Those who talk of revolutions find themselves drive to making them.” (emphasis in the original) (Carpentier, 70-71).

Here the French revolution is seen as a movement that will bring hope, equality, and justice to all humanity, not only to the French. Esteban’s eagerness and excitement channel the nationalist ideology of the French Revolution. He is impatient to participate and experience this historical event to be fulfilled as an individual "so that he might start to live his life as a man in a new world" (Carpentier, 70). Later, Hugues and Ogé are exposed as Freemasons and must escape Cuba. Through a series of events (described at the beginning of this section), Esteban and Hugues are the only ones who arrive in France to witness the beginning of the French Revolution. Hugues, as well as Esteban, become actively engaged in the revolution:

“Thrown back on his own resources, Esteban allowed himself to be set in motion by the rhythm of each day—following the drums of a detachment of guardsmen, penetrating into a political club, or losing himself in an impromptu demonstration. He was more French than any of them, more revolutionary than those who were taking part in the Revolution, always clamoring for drastic measures, draconian punishments, exemplary penalties. He read extremist newspapers and listened to the most implacable orators. Any rumor that spoke of counter-revolutionary plot would fetch him into the street, armed with the first kitchen knife he had been able to lay his hands on. To the great annoyance of the

proprietress of the hotel, he had appeared one morning followed by all the children of the district, dragging the branch of a fir tree, which he planted in the courtyard, to represent a new Tree of Liberty. One day he took the floor in a Jacobin Club, and astonished those present with the suggestion that all they had to do was carry the Revolution into the New World was to inculcate the ideal of Liberty among the Jesuits who had been expelled from the Spanish dominions overseas and were now wandering in Italy and Poland” (Carpentier, 96).

As is seen in this passage, history unfolds through Esteban's individual story and his active engagement in the cataclysmic events transpiring. In the novel, the characters' actions create the historical and cultural events that occurred in real time and space. As the story proceeds, Esteban comes to realize that there are many “historical planes of experience” (Janzen, 296):

“His disgrace [Colonel Martinez De Ballestros] was the consequence of a drive against foreigners, which had begun in Paris and was now reaching this frontier area: “They’ve discredited the masons, and now they’re turning on the best friends the Revolution has got.” It was rumored that the Abbé Marchena was in hiding and being hunted, and might be guillotined at any moment: “A man who has done so much for Liberty.”

[...]

“Go carefully, my friend, because you are a foreigner too. A few months from now it will be a crime in France to be a foreigner.

[...]

Everything here is coming to mean its opposite. They make us translate The Declaration of the Rights of Man into Spanish, and out of its seventeen

principles, they violate twelve every day” (emphasis in the original) (Carpentier, 111).

This dialogue takes place a few months after the French Revolution. Here, the multiple perspectives of the same historical event—that of the French Revolution—are shown through dialogue between Esteban and Colonel Martinez De Ballesteros. The history of the oppressed begins to show itself as the history of the victorious is reevaluated.

Indeed, although prior and during the French, Revolution Esteban had been a firm believer in its cause, through experiences and dialogue with other characters Esteban reveals "[...] the relationship - even the disjunction - between the revolutionary version of history he disseminates and competing for historical narratives (Janzen, 296). The opposing views of revolutionary history (those of the victorious and the oppressed) are further emphasized by contrasting Esteban with Victor Hugues. Throughout the novel, Hugues refuses to adhere to a different historical narrative than that of the victors:

"Anyone who is disloyal to the Jacobins is being disloyal to the Republic and the cause of liberty," he said. But Esteban made a slight gesture of irritation, not because of the phrase itself, but because it was one which Collot D'Herbois often used, and an ex- actor, grown increasingly fond of the bottle, seemed to him the last man to be dictating the norms of revolutionary morality. Incapable of suppressing this objection, he uttered it without raising his eyes.

"You may be right," said Victor, "Collot does drink too much, but he's a good patriot" (Carpentier, 122).

In this passage, Hugues is unable to see the many faces of oppression, as shown in his quoting Collot D'Herbois, a French actor and revolutionary, who during the reign of Terror of the Jacobins guillotined more than a thousand people in Lyon. Hugues is

blinded by the ideology of the revolution and concerned only with a rigid historical narrative. In juxtaposing Hugues's rigid adherence to a single historical narrative against Esteban's flexible and multi-faceted perspectives regarding historical events, a stark distinction between theory, ideology and practice are disclosed (Janzen, 296).

As the story progresses, Victor becomes a personification of the ideology of the Enlightenment, however, in his quest to uphold this ideology his actions become self-serving (Webb, 93). Hugues and Esteban travel to Guadeloupe, where Hugues plans to defeat the British and spread the revolution. Esteban is hired by Hugues as a clerk and a translator charged with translating the Declaration of the Rights of Man, and the pamphlets that the writers on board write. However, although Victor's purpose is to abolish slavery and bring justice to the colony, Esteban notices the presence of the guillotine on board:

"So that was traveling with us too!" exclaimed Esteban.

"Inevitably," said Victor Hugues, turning back to his cabin. "That and the printing-press are the most essential things we've got on board, apart from the cannon."

"Words and blood go together," said Esteban."(Carpentier, 124).

In his work as a translator and negotiator, Esteban "is constantly aware of the slippage between words and their referents" (Janzen, 298). Esteban's profession reflects his role in the novel as a means through which history is revised and re-interpreted differently, or translated. His position allows him to "occupy a Utopian space that makes possible intellectual critique"(Serra as qtd by Janzen, 298). Esteban's actions and ideas are constantly ones through which Hugues' and the surrounding historical events unfold and are interpreted, as well as ones through which the value of writing and reading is



communicated. For instance, on his last day in Paramaribo, Esteban, who is carrying leaflets announcing the abolition of slavery, witness's groups of slaves who, guilty of desertion, have been sentenced to have their left legs amputated:

“[Esteban] And since the sentence must be cleanly and scientifically carried out, without resort to archaic methods belonging to the age of barbarism and which might cause excessive suffering or endanger the prisoners' lives, the nine slaves had been bought to the best surgeon in Paramaribo, so that he could carry out the court's verdict, saw in hand.

“They cut off arms as well,” said Doctor Grueber, “when a slave lifts his hand against his master.”

[...]

"We're the worst monsters in all Creation," he [Esteban] repeated to himself angrily; he felt furious with himself and capable of setting fire to the building, had he had the means of doing so.

As the Amazon started downstream, in the central current of the Surinam, Esteban threw several packages over the gunwale, down into a fishing canoe rowed by black men. “Read these,” he shouted to them. “Or if you can't read, then find someone who can read them for you.” (emphasis in the original)

(Carpentier, 241).

In these passages, the stark contrast between the ideology of the Revolution manifested by the pamphlets announcing the abolition of slavery, and the practice of this ideology as manifested by the amputation of the slaves' legs as a result of their disobedience, is further highlighted in the way that the punishment is performed. Indeed, it becomes clear that oppression has not replaced by equality, liberty, or fraternity. Instead, it is

now exercised in a less barbaric and more civilized way as is demonstrated by the amputation of the slaves' legs by the "best surgeon in Surinam." Although previously Esteban had planned to throw the pamphlets in the river, upon seeing the horrific scene of the slaves' punishment, he deems it vital that the pamphlets be given to those who are oppressed, and he throws the packages containing the pamphlets to the black sailors. In this way "the pamphlets' relevance, his actions suggest, is determined not by their origin but by their immediate context" (Janzen, 299). That is, the pamphlets had no value before he witnessed the punishment, they only became valuable once Esteban moved them out of the context of the single historical narrative, and threw them into the Blacks' boat (representing the oppressed). Consequently, through the subject (Esteban)'s perspective and experience, the novel re-examines historical events drawing attention to an oppressed history. In this manner, the novel drives the reader to re-examine the meaning of historical events and their ideology.

Moreover, as a novel dealing with history of the oppressed, particularly Haitian revolutionary history (among other histories), *Explosion in a Cathedral* "explores the dilemma of what constitutes American history" (Echevarría, 546). Indeed, before Carpentier's novel, Blacks appeared only as "individual characters" and not as agents or citizens of a nation of their own (Echevarría, 548). In writing Black characters in his works, Carpentier showed the importance of this marginalized and oppressed community in writing Latin American history (Echevarría, 548). In *Explosion in a Cathedral*, it is through Black characters that the historical events unfold. As such this marginalized community upsets history and "the myths of its centrality" (Echevarría, 552). In the novel *Ogé*, the black doctor who treats Esteban first instigates the disturbance of the myth of centrality. Thus in healing Esteban, *Ogé* allows him to regain

his mobility and agency. Secondly, when Hugues returns to Le Cap where his store is and finds that Blacks burned it to the ground and in this way the Blacks thrust him [Hugues] into political action.

In the novel, the subject acts as a "fully embodied, singular rather than generic, and always in the process of becoming, taking the experience of the concrete, historically situated person as its point of departure" (Bakhtin, 25). Bakhtin refers to this understanding of the subject as "architectonics" (25). Bakhtin's theory of the architectonic suggests that the human subject becomes a center from which "valuation, assertions, and deeds come forth" (24). Furthermore, this subject only exists, as it relates to other subjects and as it reacts to centripetal and centrifugal forces ("in reference to historical formations of language and culture") (25). Hence the subject becomes architectonic i.e. existing in connection with the socio-linguistic architecture of time and space. Taking into consideration Bakhtin's interpretation of culture as "an activity with political and moral ends and objectives" (Bakhtin as qtd by Hirschkop, 5) and the architectonic subject, this subject then becomes a vehicle through which culture, as well as history, is renegotiated. An architectonic individual cannot experience him/herself from within, just as a human cannot see him/herself from behind. In other words, a human is invisible to him/herself and visible only through the other (Bakhtin as qtd, 28). Hence, Esteban's experience and his interaction with time and space are only visible because they are narrated by a narrator, and because of what he experiences is to other subjects. Additionally considering the distinction between Esteban and Hugues, both subjects offer a different form of interpretation within their time and space, which creates a larger framework for the renegotiation of the historical events that transpire within the novel's time and space. In using the novel as a form through which the

architectonic subject reinterprets history, the subject exposes his experience in time and space to the gaze of others (Montaigne, as qtd, 38). In other words, Esteban's experience becomes visible because it is artistically rendered in a novel, whereby art is "that part of ourselves accessible to the gaze of others, the deliberate work that we interpose between ourselves and the outside world" (Starobinski, Montaigne in Motion, 90–91, as qtd, 38). Since art is one of the means through which culture is examined, therefore, the novel (literature is a form of art) "attribute[s] a unique and stable identity to that which has a thousand faces" (Starobinski, Montaigne in Motion, as qtd, 38). In other words, as a realist novel, *Explosion in a Cathedral* focuses on individual characters and stories.

However, the realist novel highlights the unique and stable identity only as this identity interacts with the other in a specific time-space continuum. Consequently, in using the architectonic subject as a "unique and stable identity" within the novel, the individual becomes metonymic of "a thousand faces" or other architectonic individuals set in a similar or different time and space, therefore allowing the reader to understand the larger historical and cultural context. This "unique and stable identity" is represented in the novel through the architectonic subject: Esteban. To quote Bakhtin, "human subjectivity—psychological and ethical— emerges architectonically in and from the tensile relations of narrative and dialogue, rhythm, and loophole, aesthetics, and ethics—the "two movements" that meet in the human subject in an oppositional and complementary relationship (AH, 91)"(Bakhtin, 47). Therefore, the narration becomes essential for man to visualize his subjectivity, which, Bakhtin suggests, is "deeply embedded in human culture"(Bakhtin, 48) and represented in the form of the novel. Thus the novel is: "a distinctive form of intersubjectivity, a unique and unprecedented communicative structure," wherein the "'inter' separating subjects is not a limitation but

the very condition of meaningful utterance” (Bakhtin as qtd, 56). In this manner, the novel shifts from philosophy and aesthetics to social critique (Bakhtin as qtd, 56). Furthermore, that which distinguishes literature from nonliterature is a process of “defamiliarization” (Shklovsky as qtd, 57). The novel, as a historical work of literature seeks to “make-strange” cultural events that have become transparent and in this way make us (as readers) recognize an otherness (Shklovsky as qtd, 58). Consequently, *Explosion in a Cathedral*, as a work of literature and a novel seeks to make strange the familiar historical and cultural narrative through the architectonic subject of Esteban. In making the narrative unfamiliar to the reader, the novel forces him/her to reconsider familiar interpretations of culture and history, and to reconsider—especially in the context of this novel—the role that subalterns play in the formation of history.

### **C. Conclusion**

This chapter has first briefly examined the history of the Latin American and Caribbean novels prior and during the Latin American Boom. It has also shown that during the Cuban revolution of 1953 the Latin American novel, similar to the Russian novel during the revolutionary period (1917 Bolshevik revolution, 1918 civil war), was seen as a weapon for ideological warfare. The Age of Enlightenment had a significant influence on the course of the Latin American novel since it ushered in an age of revolutions that engendered a Latin American novel that was inherently more political. It was in fact specifically the idea of nationalism promoted by the French Revolution that gave rise to the Caribbean novel. Although problematic, the term Latin America, which grouped together various and diverse countries, became widely used. But, by mainly writing historical novels, Latin American writer such as García Márquez, Vargas

Llosa, Carlos Fuentes and Alejo Carpentier, were able to renegotiate the problematic of a homogenous Latin America. Discussion of a heterogeneous history was encouraged by Carpentier's notion of magical realism, which resulted in the beginning of the Latin American Boom. Thus Carpentier's contributions to literature were highly influential, especially considering that *Explosion in a Cathedral* is the first to incorporate Black subjects as characters through which Caribbean and American history unfold. This chapter also discusses the fact that *Explosion in a Cathedral* was written during the Cold War, at a time when Cuban authorities used the novel as an ideological weapon. Although Carpentier tried to remove himself from the highly ideologized scene, *Explosion in a Cathedral* represents, in many ways, an extremely political renegotiation of history and politics. As a historical novel, *Explosion in a Cathedral* highlights an oppressed Black-centered history through a cultural and architectonic subject. In other words, the novel unravels the subject as he (and she—Sofia becomes the novel's protagonist towards the end) interacts in space and time in order to interpret the other, and since space and time exist through the individual, the architectonic subject allows the novel to reinterpret the culture and history at the time the novel was published as well.

Versions of the notion of magical realism that Carpentier codifies in the prolog of *The Kingdom of This World* had, of course, existed in other cultures and literary traditions. Indeed, the term “magical realism” has been used after the fact to characterize certain traditions of Arabic literature, specifically the storytelling techniques of *One Thousand and One Nights* (Abdel Nasser, 185). Not surprisingly, this work—along with Carpentier's essay and novels, works of anthropology by Levi-Strauss and others, the ideas of European surrealists, and various other sources--was a

significant influence on several Latin American writers, most notably Gabriel García Márquez in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Although not directly associated with magical realism, the renowned Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges was also heavily influenced by various Arabic and Islamic texts, among them *One Thousand and One Nights* (187). Thus, shortly after Carpentier wrote his prolog to *The Kingdom of this World*, the Latin American literary community became increasingly interested in *One Thousand and One Nights*, which has subsequently been described as sharing some features with Latin American "magical realism." In the mid-1950s, as the Cuban Revolution—which would serve as one of the sources for Carpentier's historical novel *Explosion in a Cathedral*, and would, in turn, serve as one of the sources for Marquez's magical realist historical novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude*—was slowly beginning to take shape. Meanwhile, in Northern Africa, Gamal Abdel Nasser overthrew the Monarchy and took control of Egypt in 1952. A few years later, specifically in 1956, Nasser announced a new constitution after the nationalization of the Suez Canal in 1956 and was declared the second President of Egypt. It was during these historical circumstances that Naguib wrote *The Cairo Trilogy*.

## CHAPTER IV

### *PALACE WALK AND THE ARAB NATIONALIST REVOLUTION*

#### **A. A Brief History of Palace Walk and the Arabic Novel**

The contemporary Arab novel finds its roots in *Al-Nahdah*, a cultural renaissance movement that began in the nineteenth century (Allen, 11). The movement of *Al-Nahdah*, literally meaning “the rise” (in other words an Arab renaissance) resulted in part from the increasing translation of Western literature by Arab writers and translators, such as the translation of works by Voltaire, Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy, and others. Subsequently, imitation and adaptation of these translated works stimulated the rediscovery and reshaping of traditional Arab fiction into modern Arab literature (17). The contact with the West was significant in the development of the contemporary Arabic novel. Such contact was the product of European colonial interest in the Maghreb region (the region extending from the Atlantic Ocean to the Arabian Gulf) (18). In 1830 France colonized Algeria, and in this process, the French managed to invade every aspect of Algerian culture and social structure (18). In 1881 the French also occupied Tunisia, and this occupation was also not restricted to a military invasion, rather it extended to French involvement in the deepest cultural, political, economic, and societal structures of the colonized country (19). In the case of Egypt, “the meeting of East and West was at its most brusque” (19). The Egyptians first came face to face with Europe when Napoleon invaded Egypt in 1798, and later in 1882 when the British colonized Egypt (19). Consequently, the influence of the West in various countries of the Arab world played a major role in Arab culture and history, which influenced



contemporary Arab literature.

The development of the novel in Egypt finds its roots in translation and the press (21). Al- Tahtawi, an Egyptian scholar, played a vital role in bringing about the Arabic novel through translation and the press (newspapers and magazines) (21). Al- Tahtawi was one of the young Egyptians sent by the Ottoman governor of Egypt (after the withdrawal of the French) to study the French army lifestyle in France (20). Once Al-Tahtawi's mission was complete, he returned to Egypt, where he wrote a book on the French and later translated several French literary works including Voltaire, Moliere, and others (21). Later these translated works influenced various literary works written by Al- Tahtawi's pupils (21). Consequently, in addition to his work in translation, which brought Western literature to the attention of Egyptians, he also “set in motion an important facet in the development of an indigenous fictional tradition by “egyptianising” their plots and characters, thus paving the way first for attempts at imitation and later for the development of the novel genre” (21). Additionally, Al-Tahtawi's contribution in the early formation of the novel resulted in the emergence of an Egyptian press (21). The Egyptian press was “a haven of safety and freedom of expression” through the press” (21) for a large number of Christian Syrian refugees who escaped to Egypt in the wake of the Aleppo massacre of 1850 in Syria. These refugees also brought with them a knowledge of classical language and literature, as well as “early experiments in fiction and drama” (21).

The vital role of the press in reviving contemporary Arab literature and Arab cultural awareness was triggered with opposition to foreign domination and rise of nationalist sentiments were being heard (22). In addition to being platforms for nationalist political debates, newspapers and journals were the first outlets through

which works of fiction were published (22). Naguib Mahfouz himself took advantage of newspapers and journals to introduce his new works to the public (22). Novels, articles, short stories, and drawings were published in journals and newspapers long before they could be distributed through separate publishing outlets (23). The press played a major role in the dissemination of the first Egyptian novels because the country lacked a market for the novel (22)—Even during the 1940's, Naguib Mahfouz kept a civil service job while he wrote novels and short stories (by then he was the best-known writer in the region) (23)—consequently, the press was critical in providing both a stable income for Egyptian writers, as well as a market for readers (23).

Although *Al- Nahdah* spread in various Arab countries (including those located in northern Africa, such as Egypt), historical events such as the civil war in Syria in the 1850's, the increase of censorship in countries other than Egypt—the British colonizers, unlike the French, were more concerned with financial and administrative matters in Egypt than on with education and culture—and the geographical centrality of Egypt rendered it “a major focal point of literary activity at the end of the nineteenth century and during the first decades of the twentieth century” (24). In this manner, Egypt was pivotal in “the early development of the novelistic tradition in Arabic” (24).

The rise of nationalist sentiment resulted in increasing interest in the history and culture of the nation. Thus many writers started writing historical novels. The historical novel allowed writers to “acquaint their readership with aspects of the history of Arabs and Islam (as a means of encouraging and fostering a new cultural awareness)” (25). Indeed, the historical novel had been among the first genres of the novel to be translated in Egypt, and since the translations were significantly popular among readers, it was natural that Arab writers returned to this genre to: “awaken readers' sense of national

pride... and to provide them, by recalling past glories, with an inspiration and model in their search for a national identity” (Hafez as qtd, 25-26). The First World War gave rise to a more radical sense of nationalism and more fierce resistance to foreign oppression that translated itself into the historical novel (28). In other words, Arab writers found the present of their own time problematic (British Occupation, WWI...) and sought to analyze these problems by investigating parallel historical past events through the historical novel (28). Following WWI Egypt, among various other countries, attempted to achieve independence (78). Revolutions presented writers with material for, "fiction that attempts to describe the complex issues involved in each country's struggle for self- determination (78).

Naguib Mahfouz was inspired by the interwar years (WWI and WWII) during which the 1919 Egyptian nationalist revolution and the 1952 revolution—which brought Gamal Abdul Nasser to power—had taken place (79). Mahfouz wrote several novels, among them his famous Cairo Trilogy: *Palace Walk* (1956) which he began writing in 1990, *Palace of Desire* (1957), and *Sugar Street* (1957). These novels provided a "vivid account of the many political, social, and intellectual conflicts of the interwar years" (79). The Trilogy describes the path of the Egyptian people to independence and its aftermath (79). It supposedly took Mahfouz five years to complete the research for the Trilogy, and when the three novels were published, they "moved [the novel] genre in Arabic to a completely new plateau of achievement" in the Arab world (112). The Trilogy novels were published in post-revolutionary Egypt and considering that these novels examined the era from WWI until 1953, the novels functioned as reflections and reinterpretations of the process of independence (114). Furthermore, they established Mahfouz's reputation as a novelist and were recognized by the Arab literary community

as having established the novel as a medium that advocates for change; “[the novel was] an especially useful agent of the moral imagination...the literary form which most directly reveals to us the complexity, the difficulty, and the interest of life in society, and best instructs us in our human variety and contradiction” (Trilling as qtd, 113-114). These works were first published in newspapers, like many of Mahfouz’s works, including the controversial novel [*Awlad Haratina*] *Children of the Alley* (1959) (115). *Children of the Alley* was an ambitious work that examines the role of violence as a framework within which to revise the role of religion in society (a topic that interested Mahfouz greatly) (115). The publication of *Children of the Alley* in 1959 resulted in the issuing of a formal ban on publishing in Egypt and endangered Mahfouz’ life because of allegations of sacrilege against the author and the book. (115). The work was published in book form first in Lebanon in 1967, and copies were then sent to Cairo and various Arab cities.

In 1988 Mahfouz was nominated for a Nobel Prize in literature for the Trilogy, and *Children of the Alley*. His nomination coincided with the death sentence issued by Imam Khomeini against Salman Rushdie for his book *Satanic Verses* (115). Because of his health, Mahfouz was not able to accept the prize in person, he was, however, asked to comment on the death sentence. Mahfouz defended Rushdie's freedom as a writer and was himself sentenced to death by a popular extremist preacher in Egypt (116). Although Mahfouz later stated that the contents of Rushdie's work were "distasteful in the extreme" (115), it was Mahfouz' contributions to the Egyptian and Arab literary scene that paved the way for other Arab writers to write works that defied religious, political, or social ideology (116). In 1994, Mahfouz was stabbed in the neck by an Islamic religious extremist because of his contributions to literature, particularly

*Children of the Alley*. Indeed, his works were highly influential in defying such ideology and in their defiance gave the reading public the opportunity to revisit the established ideology. Consequently, Mahfouz is “the founder of the mature tradition of the novel in Arabic” (120). Furthermore, Mahfouz’ novels allowed for “the historical moment[s] and the novel genre were ideally linked” (120).

### **B. *Palace Walk* Through a Historical, Cultural and Literary Lens Perspective**

*Palace Walk* is the first volume of Naguib Mahfouz' *Cairo Trilogy*. The novel examines the life of the Abd al-Jawad family in the period during WWI and the 1919 Egyptian nationalist revolution. Ahmad Abd al-Jawad, a successful shopkeeper, father of Yasin, Fahmy, Kamal, Khadija and Aisha, and husband of Amina, his second wife (mother of Yasin, Kamal, Khadija, and Aisha) runs a very strict household. Ahmad is dominant and austere with his family; he forbids Amina to leave the house and treats his children with the utmost severity. Despite being strict with his family and a devout Muslim, Ahmad enjoys drinking, singing, dancing, and the company of women. In fact, Ahmad comes home drunk every night, but this does not bother Amina, who believes that her husband, as a Muslim man, is right in all his actions and decisions, while she, as a devout Muslim woman, should always obey and follow her husband silently. Most of the novel describes the routine of the Abd al-Jawad family: Ahmad goes to work every morning where he is liked very much by his co-workers for his sense of humor—a side he keeps well hidden from his family—and respected for his business; Kamal goes to school; Fahmy is a student of law; while Yasin, his son from his first wife, occupies a governmental position.

Amina, Khadija, and Aisha, however, remain at home. Yasin, who is Amina's

stepson, has lived with his father since he was nine. His relationship with his biological mother is complicated because she has been married several times. Yasin finds her behavior deplorable and has ignored her for most of his adult life, convincing himself that Amina is the only mother he needs. However, Yasin later hears that his mother is getting married again. He feels ashamed, disappointed, and worried about his inheritance from his mother's side. Although he has not spoken to her for many years, Yasin tries to convince his mother not to remarry, but he fails. In an attempt to forget his mother's behavior and the shame he believes she has brought upon him, Yasin, without knowing it, takes after his father and begins to drink and enjoy the company of women secretly. In fact, while visiting a dancer, Yasin discovers the second life his father leads outside the home.

In an attempt to control his son, al-Sayyid Abd al-Jawad decides to marry him off to his close friend's daughter Zaynab. Yasin is at first enthusiastic about the marriage, but after one a month of marriage he loses interest in his wife and spends most of his time drinking, dancing, and enjoying the company of women. Meanwhile, Zaynab—much to the surprise of Amina—refuses to accept that her husband comes home drunk every night while she remains sequestered at home. She and Yasin constantly quarrel about his behavior. Finally, Zaynab, now pregnant with Yasin's child, leaves the Abd al-Jawad household after she catches Yasin raping her housekeeper.

Yasin's step-sister Aisha is sixteen and incredibly beautiful, although skinny, unlike her sister Khadija, who is described as having a desirable, plump figure, a large nose, and an unappealing face. Khadija is twenty, and much to the family's disappointment she is still unmarried. Khadija continually fights with her sister and brothers, who mock her appearance. The daughters, like their mother, are completely

isolated from the external world. They help their mother with her chores and plan for the day that they will find a husband. Although traditionally the elder sister should be married before the younger can wed, al-Sayyid Abd al- Jawad is later persuaded to marry off Aisha first. Khadija is married to a man she has met while visiting Aisha in her new home. Soon external events begin to unfolding and altering the lives of the family.

News of Saad Zaghlul's and the Egyptian delegation's efforts to regain Egyptian independence from the British reaches the country. Rising nationalist sentiment results in several protests across Cairo. These protests become more violent when the Egyptians hear that Saad Zaghlul has been sent into exile for his actions. As a law student, Fahmy feels he has a duty towards his country and becomes increasingly, but secretly, involved in the revolutionary movement. To control the increasing number of demonstrations, the English set up tents on the street where the Abd al- Jawad's family lives.

Although the colonial English and Australians are frequently and subtly mentioned in the novel, their influence becomes more visible with the rise of nationalist sentiment and protests, as the occupiers became a daily part of the characters' lives. Slowly every member of the family (except Khadija and Aisha who now live in different homes) becomes more politically engaged. Each reacts differently to the British occupiers; Kamal, the youngest, befriends them and while Yasin admires them, Fahmy tries to conceal his resentment and active participation in the protests against the colonizers. He is able to conceal his actions until one day when he joins his father and Yasin for prayer in the mosque. Yasin's once friendly relations with the British puts the Abd al-Jawad family under suspicion of treason. The attendees at the mosque become

enraged at the suspicion that the family might be collaborating with the colonial occupiers, until one man recognizes Fahmy as one of the nationalist protest leaders, and saves Ahmad and his sons from being murdered for treason. Having found out the truth about Fahmy's actions, al-Sayyid Abd al-Jawad commands him to renounce the revolution, but Fahmy refuses.

Although Al- Sayyid Abd al- Jawad is furious at his disobedience, he admires Fahmy for his nationalism and convictions, but he hides his feelings from Fahmy and refuses to speak to him. Meanwhile, the increasing protests halt of normal life, and the entire country is mobilized, and the protests had forced the British to reconsider the protectorate status of Egypt. The hope for a free nation mobilizes a larger mass of Egyptians. Shortly before the end, Fahmy, who has heard that the British are close to ending the occupation, appears leading a peaceful protest. Like the rest of the population, he is full of hope for a newly independent Egypt—but he is suddenly shot by a British soldier. The novel ends with his father receiving the news of his assassination.

In this novel, historical events unfold through various actions and interactions among the family members. Al- Sayyid Abd al-Jawad's character can be seen as a parallel to that of the external world in the sense that he represents a duality of severity in private and boundlessness outside of the house; Ahmad's character is different inside his house and with his family than it is outside of this context. This duality in his character parallels the novel's representation of both private family life and the external world. In analyzing the ways in which external historical events unfold and permeate the private lives of the characters, the novelist “demystifies how the hegemonies related to race, gender, class, religion, and social success work [and] de-effectuates them from a



deeply humane perspective in the novel, which appears to be a simple familial story on the surface” (Sazzad, 196). The family’s interaction with the outside world:

“illuminat[es] Egypt’s modern history, society, and culture by vividly inscribing Cairo's life, atmosphere, and rhythm in the narrative texture” (196). Furthermore, in analyzing individual characters in depth, the novel also challenges individual conceptions of gender, religion, and society. For instance, in the below passage Yasin has gone to visit his biological mother to convince her not to remarry. Yasin feels that his mother's independent attitude is insulting to his honor:

"She let her back collapse against the sofa cushion. She cast him a look combining censure with an appeal for affection. She asked, “What’s wrong with a woman remarrying after she gets divorced?”

He felt the fires of anger flaming through his veins, but the only apparent effect was the closing and tightening of his lips. She still made it seem so simple when she talked, as though she was convinced of the certainty of her innocence.

She asked what's wrong with a woman getting married after she had been divorced. Fine, there was nothing wrong with some woman remarrying after her divorce, but if that woman was his mother, then it was a different story, a very different story" (Mahfouz, 117).

Through Yasin's thoughts, the novel examines patriarchy and gender norms in society. As the individual is metonymic of the nation, in examining the individual, the novel examines and questions the ideologies of the nation. *Palace Walk* is also a historical novel because of it: “diagnoses the imprisoning reality of a colonized country” (Sazaad, 187).

Indeed, *Palace Walk* revisits colonial reality through the individual lives of the

family members. For example, the character of Al- Sayyid Ahmad Abd al- Jawad, as both a disciplinarian and a drunkard, can be seen as contrasting the divide between ruler and ruled on the national level. Another way in which the relationship between of colonized and colonizer can be seen in the novel is in the fact that Amina, Aisha, and Khadija are not allowed to leave the confines of their home; they are nearly captives of Ahmad. It may be, therefore, inferred that the family and their home function as metonymies for the larger Egyptian social, political, cultural and historical reality. The story foregrounds its historical context from the beginning:

“He proceeded to discuss household matters with her. He told her he had directed a merchant he knew to buy up a reserve of clarified butter, wheat, and cheese for the house. He attacked the rise in prices and the scarcity of necessary commodities caused by this war, which had been giving the world a pounding for the past three years. As always when he mentioned the war, he began cursing the Australian troops who had spread through the city like locusts, destroying the land.

The truth was that he had a special reason for resenting the Australians. Their tyranny separated him from the Ezbekiya Garden entertainment district, which he had abandoned in defeat, except for a few rare opportunities he could snatch. He could not stand to expose himself to soldiers who openly plundered people of their possessions and took pleasure in abusing and insulting them without restraint” (Mahfouz, 12)

In this passage al- Sayyid Abd al- Jawad has come home drunk and is engaged in a conversation with his wife about the day and other “household matters. However, in this seemingly private discussion of matters concerning the characters’ lives, Ahmad also

discusses the effect that the war (WWI) has on the market, the cost of living, and, most importantly, the cultural climate. Furthermore, by revealing the actual reason why Ahmad resents the Australians the narrator also reveals the way Australian occupiers treat Egyptians. In this way, the personal and the public are shown as inextricable.

*Palace Walk* opens in 1917, a period of transition between the beginning of the end of the Ottoman control of Egypt and the British takeover. Thus, the novel happens within history, and this history is then renegotiated through the characters and the events of the novel. The link between the novel and history can be seen in the first chapters when the Fahmy and his siblings are discussing the events of WWI:

“Fahmy replied with anxious longing, “Every war has an end. This war has got to end.

I don’t think the Germans will lose.”

“This is what we pray to God will happen, but what will you say if we discover the Germans are just the way the English Describe them?”

As the debate caught fire and grew more intense, Fahmy raised his voice and said, "The important thing is to rid ourselves of the nightmare of the English and for the caliphate to return to its previous grandeur. Then we will find the way prepared or us.”

Khadija interrupted their conversation to ask, "Why do you love the Germans when they're the ones who sent a Zeppelin to drop bombs on us" (Mahfouz, 57).

In this dialogue, the historical events that defined the 1917-1919 era are revealed to the reader. Additionally, the dialogues and reflections of the characters narrated by the author in the novel serve to renegotiate the implications that these events have. For instance, in the passage above, Fahmy and Yasin argue that the restoration of Ottoman

rule in Egypt would be more beneficial, but Khadija's question challenges her brother's position (198).

In addition to historical events, *Palace Walk* also treats the European ideology of racial superiority. The British assumed that their people were "the best in the world at governing others" (Berridge, 422) which naturally influenced British officials and soldiers in Egypt. For instance, the British colonizers believed that "Egyptians 'lack the strenuousness and the progressive spirit which would characterize any equally intelligent race tilling a less bounteous soil and breathing a more bracing atmosphere . . . Such a race will not of itself develop great men or new ideas, or take a leading part in the progress of mankind. But under proper guidance, it is capable of enjoying much simple content'" (Milner as qtd, 422). This ideology of racial superiority can be seen in the novel when Yasin encounters a British soldier:

"The soldier had asked for a match and smiled. Yes, he had smiled. Yasin had been so astonished to see him smile that he had encountered difficulty in what he had wanted until the soldier repeated his request.

[...]

Yasin had not yet recovered from the impact of that magical smile. Now here was "thank you." It was like a glass of beer a person drinks to refresh himself when he has had enough whiskey. It filled Yasin with gratitude and pride.

[...]

Yasin proceeded to the house with almost reeling with joy. What good luck he had ... An Englishmen—not an Australian or an Indian—had smiled at him and thanked him... An Englishmen— in other words, the kind of man he imagined to embody all the perfections of the human race. Yasin probably detested the

English as all Egyptians did, but deep inside he respected and venerated them so much that he frequently imagined they were made of different stuff than the rest of mankind. This man had smiled and thanked him... Yasin had answered him correctly, imitating English pronunciation so far as his mouth would allow. He had succeeded splendidly and had merited the man's thanks" (Mahfouz, 402-403).

Yasin's interaction with the British soldier both reinforces and questions the British ideology of racial superiority. Consequently, the characters' experiences are used as a platform from which ideology, which had been constructed through the history of British colonialism, is renegotiated.

In many ways, history operates in the novel through interpretation (White (1928), 51). This interpretation happens on the individual level in *Palace Walk*. To quote Levi-Strauss, "Any historical episode—in a revolution or a war, for example—can be resolved into a "multitude of individual psychic moments" (as qtd by White (1928), 55). In other words, the novel addresses the historical consciousness of the time, and ipso facto renegotiates this consciousness (81). *Palace Walk*, as a historical novel also addresses the issue of political and social hegemony. Indeed, the novel is involved with an equivalent relationship between the specific and the general (Swingewood, 31). In its analysis of this twin correlation between family and the nation, the novel "remains an autonomous whole with its specific nature influenced but not determined by the socio-historical context" (31). In *Palace Walk* this autonomy can be seen in the passage below:

"Yasin said, "The two who got something from the war are the English and Sultan Fuad. Without it, the former could never have dreamed of getting rid of

the Germans, and the latter could never have dreamed of ascending the throne of Egypt." He was quiet for a moment and then continued merrily: "And there's a third party whose luck was equal to theirs. She's the bride who never dreamed of finding a husband" (Mahfouz, 325).

Here Yasin and his stepsisters and brothers are discussing the wedding of Khadija, and then their discussion turns into a conversation about the end of the war. This passage shows first the correlation between the family, represented by the upcoming marriage of Khadija, and the public i.e. the historical circumstances that are unfolding concurrently. Furthermore, although Yasin is reinterpreting historical events, however, the novel remains an autonomous work, as is evidenced by his bringing together the historical events and Khadija's upcoming marriage. Additionally, the novel uses this autonomy to criticize these events as seen by Yasin's use of irony.

As a historical novel, *Palace Walk* also investigates cultural ideology where culture is understood as a political activity (Bakhtin, 4). Indeed, Mahfouz himself argues that "politics are entwined in the lives and actions of my characters, as is religion, and perhaps—even—the spirit of humanity" (Mahfouz 2011: 295 as qtd by Sazaad, 207). It is through the interactions between the individuals in the novel that political, cultural, and historical ideologies are revised. For instance, when news of the Wafd (a political party that was among the first to lead the Egyptian fight to independence) led by Saad Zaghlul spreads throughout Egypt, Fahmy and Yasin discuss Saad as an individual and not as a separate character in history or culture:

"What do you know about them?"

With the resentment of a person who wished these men were members of the National Party, Fahmy replied, "Sa'd Zaghlul is Vice President of the

Legislative Assembly and Abd al- Aziz Fahmy and Ali Sha'rawi are members of it. The truth is, I don't know anything else about the last two. As for Sa'd, I don't see anything wrong with him, based on what many of my fellow students who are nationalists tell me. They disagree about him a lot" (Mahfouz, 329).

The individual that is Sa'd Zaghlul is seen and discussed through the eyes of Yasin and Fahmy not as separated from these characters, but rather as a political character whose actions intertwine with (and create) the historical and cultural events of the Wafdist party and the lives of the Abd al- Jawad family members. Thus, Sa'd, and the Wafd's actions are not presented in the novel as external to the characters' lives, rather they are reinterpreted through dialogue among the characters as well as narration:

“His mother was overcome by astonishment and asked Fahmy, “They’re going to the land of the English to ask them to get out of Egypt? This is in very bad taste. How could you visit me in my house if you’re wanting to throw me out of yours?”

[...]

He turned toward his brother to continue their interrupted conversation: "They both have a point, although they might have expressed it more clearly. Tell me, brother what can Sa'd do against a nation that now considers itself the unrivaled mistress of the world?" (Mahfouz, 330)

By now Fahmy had become fully engaged in the Egyptian Nationalist movement, but his mother Amina offers an opposite perspective of the movement's ideology. Amina views the English as separated from the nation and brings them into the intimate space of home and family. Indeed she thinks of the English soldiers as men and women who have mothers like the Egyptians (Mahfouz, 330). But Amina is limited by her seclusion

Because she is a female confined to her home, she is only able to negotiate the culture and history of the nation from her limited perspective, whereas Fahmy, as a man, can negotiate cultural and historical events from an external perspective since he can move between the private and the public sphere. As a political activist, Fahmy can also offer an insider's perspective into the historical events as they unfold through his actions and in the novel:

“Monday morning began with a general strike and a demonstration in which all the schools participated, carrying their banners, together with untold throngs of citizens. Egypt had come back to life. It was a new country. Its citizens rushed to crowd into the streets to prepare for battle with an anger that had been concealed for a long time. Fahmy threw himself into the swarms of people with intoxicating happiness and enthusiasm, like a displaced person rediscovering his family after a long separation” (Mahfouz, 366).

It is through Fahmy that the novel sheds light on the significantly historical, cultural and political moment of the 1919 nationalist revolution. It is through Fahmy, his actions, his thoughts, and his dialogue with various other characters that the historical and cultural events unfold and that the reader gains insight into them. In laying out, this platform for interpretation (i.e. in placing Fahmy's character at the center of the ideology dominated in the novel) the political, social, historical and cultural find common footing rendering the novel a "universal horizon" (Jameson as qtd by Greenberg, 207). In other words, the novel: “sees its horizon of applicability only on a historical or universal level” (Jameson as qtd, 207).

*Palace Walk* was published in the midst of the Cold War between the Soviet Union and the United States, and during the Suez Canal crisis when Israeli, British and



French forces sought to regain control of the Suez Canal by invading Egypt. This action, however, only served to heighten nationalist sentiment and render Nasser more popular than he had previously been, especially after he nationalized the Suez Canal in 1956. These political tensions proved to the Egyptian people that the path to independence would be neither easy, nor quick. They also demonstrated, as Mahfouz himself argued, that ideologies must be challenged if the institutions are to be changed (Mahfouz as qtd by Sazaad, 201). The challenge of established nationalist ideology is what he accomplishes in *Palace Walk*. The novel's close examination of the dual and analogous space of the family and the nation demonstrates that the family, and thus the individual, cannot be separated from the nation, that one exists in the other. As such historical events are renegotiated and reinterpreted through the characters' interactions with one another, as well as with their actions in the context of the nation.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

#### **A. General Summary and Notes on The Algerian Revolution**

This study has focused on historical, cultural, and literary readings of *Doctor Zhivago* by Boris Pasternak (1957); *Explosion in a Cathedral*, by Alejo Carpentier (1962); and *Palace Walk*, by Naguib Mahfouz (1956). In the introduction I presented the hypothesis as well as clarified the aim, which is twofold: to read these novels within a historical, cultural, and literary framework, and by so doing to make clear that they are simultaneously products and shapers of the political, cultural and historical circumstances that produced them, and to demonstrate that literature is not a practice of strictly aesthetics, but rather a political, cultural, and historical activity used to renegotiate and reinterpret social ideology. Moreover, since all of these works are about and were written during significant historical events, they can be fruitfully analyzed as responses to and readings of global crises happening during the 1950s. The general aim of this study has been to broaden the margins confining literature to its aesthetic role, and, through the analysis of three novels, to demonstrate how literary works enter into and shape historical, cultural, and political discourse in society. Before beginning a historical, cultural, and literary reading of the three novels, I established the novel as the most compact form of literature in which culture, politics, history, and aesthetics meet. Using Hayden White's theories of metahistory, as well as Luckas' ideas concerning the historical novel, I deduced that the novel also acts as a historical narrative in which real-life historical events are reinterpreted within a particular historical time and space created in the novel. I then proceeded to use Raymond Williams to

demonstrate that the novel as an art form is useful in revisiting the culture of society. Moreover, Bakhtin's theories of the literary chronotope were used to propose that a relationship beyond time and space exists between the continuum these novels are writing about and the time and space that these novels were published in. Since *Doctor Zhivago* (1957), *Explosion in a Cathedral* (1962), and *Palace Walk* (1956) all discuss revolutions that were heavily influenced by the French Revolution, the impact of 1789 was elaborated on in the introduction, specifically concerning literature and the novel. In other words, I was not concerned with the specific events of the French Revolution, but rather the effect that the French Revolution had on literature, specifically regarding laying the ground for the emergence of the realist and historical novel as well as focusing attention on the individual within the nation.

Another important factor discussed in the introduction is translation. The three historical novels used in this study were read in English as translated from their original languages: Russian, Spanish, and Arabic. These translations certainly had an effect on my interpretation of the novel. Using theories by Munday, Teleky, Ellis, and Brown among others, I interpreted translation as a process of construction and deconstruction of ideology through language. The case of translation of *Doctor Zhivago* was used as an example to demonstrate the impact that translation had on both the ideology of the novel, as well as its circulation.

All chapters in this thesis were divided into three sections: a brief history of the development of the novel as a form in the country in which the novel was written, a short history of the novel, a historical, cultural, and literary analysis of the novel, and finally concluding notes. The first chapter revisited the history of the Russian novel, as well as established Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago* as a historical, cultural, and literary work that was

vital in revisiting the revolutionary ideology in Russia during the twentieth century as it related to the individual. *Doctor Zhivago* also played an important role in renegotiating nationalist ideology and in bringing this ideology into consideration during the Cold War (which was when the novel was published). The second chapter investigated briefly the history of the Latin American novel, as well as the significant role that Alejo Carpentier played in elaborating the concept of magical realism that serves as a stylistic formula for Latin American novels during the so-called Boom. Significantly, Alejo Carpentier's novel *Explosion in a Cathedral* was the first to give a non-Eurocentric historic account of Black Caribbean peoples as well as to highlight the important role they played in shaping the history of the region. In the second section, *Explosion in a Cathedral* was read through a historical, cultural, and literary lens, so as to offer a sense of its pivotal role in revisiting Caribbean revolutionary history and culture. Since the novel was published toward the end of the Cuban Revolution and during the Cold War, it too was essential in offering a critical perspective of the nationalist, historical, and cultural ideology of its time. The third and final chapter explored Naguib Mahfouz' *Palace Walk*, the first novel in his Trilogy. This chapter also examined the beginnings of the modern Arabic novel, as well as the climate within which Mahfouz wrote and published his work. A historical, cultural, and literary reading of the novel followed. As a work published during the Suez Canal crisis and turbulent times in Egypt (Nasser's ascension to power, the Cold War, etc.), *Palace Walk* can be seen as textual reexamination and reinterpretation of Egyptian social, political, historical, and cultural ideology.

These revolutionary novels played an important role both as reflections and critiques of the various historical and cultural circumstances they narrate, as well as products and shapers of those circumstances that produced them. In this way, the novels discussed in this

study transcend the rigid temporal and spatial constructs of past, present, and future, and instead perform within their space-time continuum. In considering these works as transcending the confines of *real* time and space, the ideology which the novels convey is then analogous to that of the novel's present (i.e. the present during which they were written and published). This is to say that the novels as revolutionary and historical works are not confined in their reinterpretation to their space and time, but as ideological works, they may also be read as manifestations of contemporary events in the 1950s (the time of the publication of the novels in this study) and historical events more generally.

These novels were published between 1956 and 1962. During these years, the Algerian peoples revolted against French colonialism and sought to regain their independence. This movement was not confined to Algeria but was a movement that was influenced by other international events such as the Cold War, the Cuban Revolution, and the Egyptian Revolution. The Algerian decolonization movement started in 1954 and lasted until 1962 and thus coincides with the beginnings of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union. The Algerian War of Independence is but one of the numerous historical events during the 1954 to 1962 era that is linked to the historical circumstances that helped to produce the novels studied here. Indeed, once the Algerian nationalist movement was underway, several hundred countries met at the United Nations to discuss the Algerian independence. During the meeting, Nikita Khrushchev "embraced Belkacem Krim, the foreign minister of the Gouvernement Provisoire de La Republique Algerienne (GPRA)" this constituted a "de facto recognition of the provisional government and pledged all possible aid" to the Algerian independent government (Connelly, 221). As Ferhat Abbas, the provisional president of the Algerian Republic addressed the UN with his request for "Chinese 'volunteers' to aid in accomplishing the independence, Eisenhower, and the UN

Council agreed that: "if communist regulars infiltrated Algeria, the United States would be bound by the North Atlantic Treaty to come to the aid of French President Charles de Gaulle and his beleaguered government" (221). Algeria appeared at the onset of becoming a Cold War Playground (221). However, Cold War ideology infiltrating Algeria's quest for independence did not come as a surprise for the GPRA. In fact, to quote Connelly: "years before the Algerians launched their fight for independence, they had planned to harness the Cold War to their cause" (222).

Leaders of the Algerian opposition movement exploited the tense relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union. Ait Ahmed, for instance, the founder and leader of the nationalist Algerian movement, decreed that "Even if the Americans would never be allies, he would exploit their rivalry with the Soviets to undermine their alliance with France" (Ahmed as qtd, 222). Meanwhile, in Egypt, Nasser who was previously an ardent supporter of Ait Ahmed and the Algerian Independence movement was now on the brink of war with Israel due to the situation in the Gaza strip. Realizing the power that the French had in their ability to destabilize the region, Nasser's help to the Algerian revolutionary movement declined significantly (222). It was not until c. 1955 that Egypt increased its aid to Algeria in support of the independence movements which led the French to believe that: " [it was] Nasser's ultimate ambition "to re-create the Empire of Islam around Egypt" (Mollet as qtd, 227). When Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal, the French used this as an opportunity to strike against Nasser and weaken his support of the Algerian independence movement (227). The situation in Algeria was becoming more and more dangerous and threatened: "a complete breakup of the Western alliance" (Eisenhower as qtd, 230). Eisenhower was reluctant to include US forces in the Algerian battle.

However, the US feared that the Algerians would then turn to the Soviet Union for aid.

Meanwhile, the Soviets were also reluctant to invest more than their votes in the UN for the Algerians due to the imminent Paris summit, and the unsettled question of Berlin, where the Russians were relying on the vote of the French in their favor (227). Thus the Algerians used the opposing forces of the U.S. and the Soviet Union in their favor to undermine the position of France and gain its independence. Although the Cold War's role in the independence of Algeria was small, however, it was significant in rendering the anti-colonial movements in Algeria a global and international struggle (239). Thus considering the international scene of the 1950s as an ideological battleground, the function of the works discussed in this thesis as products and shapers of such nationalist and historical ideology, becomes more poignant and vital in renegotiating such ideologies as they relate to the historical, cultural, and political climate. Accordingly, it can be suggested that these works function as harbingers of World Literature.

## **B. Harbingers of "World Literature"**

The nineteenth century triggered "the age of accelerated globalization" (56). The events of the French Revolution of 1789 gave rise to nationalism and an increasing hostility among nations developed. Literature during that time, as was elaborated on in this thesis, was concerned with national ideology as it affected and was performed by the individual. As such the increasing tensions among nations resulted in some of the first contributions to comparative and world literature in an attempt to overcome these international conflicts (56). Hence art acted on both a private and world level, "with a view to a synthesis between the personal (i.e. subjective) viewpoint and inner (i.e. objective) order in the material" (63). Consequently, art created a space in which the possibility of interpreting the self and the other was possible, but also in which differences between the self and the other could be

negotiated (70). Following the French Revolution, the concept of freedom and its implications became a global topic of interest. This concern with the concept of freedom, in turn, made interpretations of the self and the other global concerns, which in turn gave rise to world literature. In this way, world literature was and is concerned with the "formulation of principles that are meant to have global applications" (UN Charter as qtd, 72). World literature in the context of this study is understood as a body encompassing "all literary works that circulate beyond their culture of origin, either in translation or in their original language" (Damroch, 4). The novels in this study have indeed gone beyond their audiences and cultures, *Doctor Zhivago*, and *Explosion in a Cathedral* were both published outside of their original cultures (see previous chapters), while *Palace Walk* has been translated into over 50 languages. More importantly, these works continue to be actively present both within and beyond their languages and cultures through translation and cinematic adaptation (4). Furthermore, World literature in this context is seen not as literature, which takes an interest in resolving the idea of cultural difference as "other" (Reiss, 111). Instead, what world literature seeks to do is posit that "cultural categories mingle and float." As a form of literature, the novel "elaborates patterns [of economic and political relations]" (136), whereby the novel provides a gate to reinterpreting cultural, historical, and social differences (136). Consequently, if one views *Doctor Zhivago*, *Explosion in a Cathedral*, and *Palace Walk*, as ideological works concerned with such reinterpretation, and as works commonly set within a climate of ideological warfare, these works may also be seen as presaging world literature. Additionally, World literature is not limited to the body of works of literature but rather more concerned with the "mode of circulation and of reading" (5) of these works. This mode of circulation and of reading, as was seen in previous chapters (and as will be elaborated on in this section) is ideological and political, thus these works have



gone beyond their literariness and have circulated into a broader cultural, historical, and political context (6). As works that were written and published during one of the most critical times in history, and as works that described events aimed at reexamining the aforementioned climate, thus these works as classics, evolving canons of masterpieces and as opening windows on the world during a historic time that changed the world as we know it can be seen as heralding World literature (Damroch, 13). Moreover, as forerunners of World literature in a new era, these novel remain rooted in their “local applications” (22), which is to say that these novels examine the international political and historical climate by creating a space for the reinterpretation of their respective local culture, politics, history etc.

Circulation of the works of Pasternak, Carpentier, and Mahfouz established these works as harbingers of world literature. In the case of the texts discussed in this study, their circulation beyond the scope of their nations was made possible through translation. The works of Pasternak, Carpentier, and Mahfouz demonstrate how history and culture unfold through individual interaction. Indeed, individual interactions “are shaped by, and themselves shape and influence, larger cultural histories and norms” (Emig, 167). This adaptation in itself already contains elements of transposition and indeed translation (167). Thus translation is not so much a means of communication as it serves “to further a notion of self” (169), which is to say that translation becomes a practice in reinterpreting the self in relation to an “other” of the self. Thus translation functions in the space between the self and the other, not as an element aiming to bring them together, but rather as a means of “translation of one set of signifiers into another code” (178). Ultimately, translation serves as a reinterpretation of the existence of this space between the self and the other, as well as a renegotiation of the self and the other. Since the relationship between the self and the other is in constant flux, therefore, translation as a process is continuously fluctuating and "must

indeed retain difference to function at all" (179).

Since the case of the translation and publication of *Doctor Zhivago* has been treated in detail in the introduction of this study, I will focus only briefly on it here and then discuss the translation and circulation of *Explosion in a Cathedral* and *Palace Walk*. Of particular interest will be the status of these works as early examples of world literature and their connections through ideology and the historical period in which they were written and published. A vital aspect of the increased circulation of *Doctor Zhivago* was the novel's adaptation into a Hollywood film. The film was directed by David Lean and was released in 1965, starring Omar Sharif and Julie Christie (Wallace, 43). Because of the novel's extensive reliance on narration, the film adaptation relied on narration by Alec Guinness (43). Lean had previously directed *Lawrence of Arabia*, the film that brought Omar Sharif to the attention of Hollywood. Although Sharif had already read *Doctor Zhivago* and was very interested in participating in the making of a film version, he originally auditioned for the role of Lara's husband, Pasha. Lean, however, thought it more suitable to cast Sharif in the lead role (Teleky). Since the novel was banned in Russia, most of the film's shooting took place in Spain, where Lean had shot *Lawrence of Arabia*. Although the film made a profit of over 100 million dollars and is the eighth-highest grossing film of all time, the film was criticized for romanticizing the Revolution and focusing on the love affair between Yuri and Lara instead of the politic aspect of the novel (Teleky). It is, perhaps ironically, this aspect of the film that made it appealing to the American and Canadian public. In fact, the film brought the novel *Doctor Zhivago* to the attention of an entirely new international audience. This new attention, in addition to the already political, historical, and cultural circumstances of the publication and translation of the novel made it a so-called "box office" success. Nonetheless, the film's Hollywood success was only possible by stripping

the novel of its political and historical aspect, and instead by romanticizing the events through the eyes of a poet. Still, the making of this film and the circumstances of its distribution were in many ways dictated by the international political climate. Cold War tensions continued after the Cuban missile crisis of 1962 and increasing U.S. involvement in Vietnam under President Johnson. These circumstances served to generate a conversation regarding the political ideology of the Revolution and the role that Hollywood plays in undermining the political, and thereby, the larger complex historical, political, and cultural relations among nations.

As previously elaborated, the Soviet Union encouraged the representation of politics in literature only if this representation was pro-communist. With the beginning of the Cold War, a "cultural project" also began in the U.S. that discouraged the inclusion of politics in literature unless these politics were anti-communist (Cohn, 81). Not only were the two sides in the Cold War concerned with the political ideology of novels, members of the U.S. government and elite also developed an increasing interest in the novels produced by the so-called Boom writers in Latin American literature (82). These novels by well-known Latin American writers were fairly rapidly translated into English and published extensively in the U.S. during this period (82). While the U.S. embraced Latin American literature's focus on magical realism, the Latin American sphere experienced a surge in social and political activism that, not surprisingly, was manifested in the literature (82). Obviously, the Cold War and the Cuban Revolution's ties to Soviet Russia complicated the presence of Latin American literature in the U.S. (83). Latin American writers who were suspected of communist affiliation such as Gabriel García Márquez, and even those who did not support Communist Cuba, such as Borges, had difficulty entering the U.S. (83). Although Boom writers had a strong base of middle-class readers in various Latin American countries, it was

only through translation and circulation of their works in the U.S, and later into various other countries, that the Latin American novel became the Boom movement (83). Politics and the world historical and cultural climate obviously affected the circulation of the Latin American novel. In U.S. publishing circles, however, "political orientation seemed to be of relatively little concern" (83). Indeed, editors rejected political works based mostly on how these politics would affect sales of the novel (83). Nevertheless, in the U.S. generally, the same events that caused concern for the government made Latin American writers even more popular in the U.S. market (83).

The first novel by Carpentier to be published in the U.S. was *The Lost Steps* in 1953. Knopf, Inc., was considered to be the major publisher for Latin American works. In fact, this company published most of Carpentier's works excluding *Explosion in a Cathedral*. Despite the critical acclaim of *The Lost Steps*, however, the publication of this novel was overshadowed by several major political events such as the Russian bombing of Budapest, which put a violent end to the Hungarian Revolution, which in turn exacerbated the Cold War (87). Sales of Carpentier's first novel were low in the U.S. but were higher in the U.K. where the novel was also published almost simultaneously (88). Obviously, circulation of the novel was significantly influenced by the ongoing world political climate. In an attempt to redeem their sales, Knopf resumed translating *The Kingdom of This World* (which it had set in motion before the publication of *The Lost Steps*) (88). The company was enthusiastic about the translation of *The Kingdom of This World*; "The sales will be neither quick nor high, but this is a.) a book we could proudly offer to discriminating readers and b.) a property likely to hold its value and its place on our list for some time to come (Weinstock as qtd, 88). Despite this enthusiasm, Carpentier's novel was seen as "lacking universal appeal," which is to say that it highlighted too well "the corruption of Western civilization

against the redemptive powers of primitive cultures”(89). Finally, Carpentier presented Knopf Inc. with his novel *Explosion in a Cathedral* to be translated and published in the U.S. in 1963, after coming out in Mexico in 1962 in the original Spanish (this was due to the increasing censorship by the Cuban government. Carpentier did not risk publishing his novel first in Cuba for fear of it being rejected.). Carpentier was originally keen to translate *Explosion in a Cathedral* to English and to publish it in the U.S., stating “if the novel meets my expectations; it could be a true success in the United States. I believe that I've come across a topic that is exciting and that has a universal projection”(Carpentier as qtd, 89). However, when Knopf finally had the chance to read *Explosion in a Cathedral* they wrote back to Carpentier, "I just don't think there is a market for this sort of half-philosophical, half-historical novel. If we want to publish Carpentier at a loss, this is the golden opportunity”(reader at Knopf Inc, as qtd, 90). Knopf Inc. turned down *Explosion in a Cathedral*, and Little Brown, another publishing company later published the novel in 1963 (90).

With the establishment of Castro's government, literature came under severe scrutiny and censorship (as was previously mentioned see Chapter 2: “A brief history of the *Latin American novel and Explosion in a Cathedral*”). Latin American writers were divided between those who supported the communist government and those who opposed it. However, this decision was not limited only to Cuba, but as a result of Cold War politics, the literary community was now divided on an international ideological level (99). The division of Latin American writers resulted in Latin American literature becoming even more popular as "part of a generalized national concern with the region" (100), and consequently, it became easier to find publishers of Latin American works translated into English. Facilitation of the publication of works censored by the Communist Cuban and

Russian government was undertaken by the U.S. government as a form of ideological warfare against the Soviet Union. In this way, the publication of Latin American novels was “deeply rooted in Cold War politics” (100). The global repercussions of the Cold War and the Cuban Revolution both played a part in the circulation of Carpentier’s novels since they were clearly political and historical and had international implications. Also, the global climate played a role in the translation of Carpentier's work into English. Munday asserts that “any study of the translation into English of political texts from Latin America must inevitably take into account the relative strength of the two languages and most particularly the power of the United States that lies behind the English language”(Munday, 152).

Naguib Mahfouz’ s *Palace Walk* was first published in Egypt in 1956. The entire Trilogy (of which *Palace Walk* is the first part) was critically acclaimed in Egypt and won the Egyptian state prize (Stock, 136). However, despite being extremely well known in Egypt and the Arab world (most of his fame rose after the publication of the Trilogy), it was not until Mahfouz’s Nobel Prize award in 1988 that he became internationally recognized (136). Indeed, Mahfouz was told that “when his award was announced in Stockholm, "A silence fell, and many wondered who I was"(Mahfouz as qtd, 136). Following his Nobel Prize award, which due to health reasons he was not able to accept in person, Mahfouz's book sales increased significantly (137). Shortly after he was awarded the Nobel Prize, *Palace Walk*, among others, was translated into over twenty-five languages and distributed worldwide (137). The Cairo Trilogy specifically was translated into Hebrew between 1981-1987 before it was translated into English in 1990. The increased circulation of the work of Mahfouz, which also increased his prominence after his Nobel Prize, resulted in "the state's exploitation of his status"(Abou Ela, 340). In other words, Mahfouz' s position as an acclaimed, and now an international writer, helped Egypt to reinforce "state nationalism,"

especially considering the international Cold War climate, and the relations between Egypt and Israel (340). Mahfouz was the means that would allow the Egyptian state to participate in "the wave of globalization", and he would strengthen Egypt's relations with the U.S. specifically. I previously noted that the U.S. favored non-political art during the Cold War, and indeed the nomination of Mahfouz for a Nobel Prize was encouraged because Mahfouz supposedly "avoid[ed] any overt political role all his life" (Stock, 341). However, Mahfouz himself has argued that politics remains a fundamental element in all his writing (342). Mahfouz's role as an international writer was politically exploited by the Egyptian State. Mahfouz "became the national poster child for Egyptian State cultural achievement" (343). He was associated with any cultural events in Egypt (even if he was not participating) and President Mubarak took special care to highlight Mahfouz' importance by arranging for a ceremony for Mahfouz instead of his Nobel Prize, during which Mahfouz was given the Egyptian Medal of achievement (343). Following his Nobel Prize, Mahfouz became increasingly, although unwillingly, associated with the post-Nasserist regime so much so that "a group fervently opposed to the Mubarak regime felt compelled to try to kill the author" (343). It should be noted additionally, that Mahfouz's *The Children of The Alley* was also a key factor in his attempted assassination (see Chapter 3). Mahfouz's attempted assassination was presented in Egyptian press with pictures and images of the Sphinx' and the pyramids with the words:

"Whoever has tried to strike down Naguib Mahfouz, tried to smash one of Egypt's pyramids. For Naguib Mahfouz was not an individual, but rather one of the symbols of Egypt. He was a sun that lit up this country, a flag elevated over its flags, a great professor among its professors.

He was not just an individual, but rather a nation [umah]. He was a generation and a

renaissance [nahdah] that raised our heads collectively. . . . For this wound in the neck of Naguib Mahfouz is the blood of us all, and this wound will abide in our hearts for all time. . . .

He never used his pen to raise up a ruler but rather to raise up all of Egypt. . . . The blade that plunged into Naguib Mahfouz's neck will not kill him, for this type of great man does not die even if we bury him in the dirt. Naguib will live as long as the Arabic language lives, as long as we have something called Arabic literature"(Al-Ahram as qtd, 344).

It is clear that the circulation of Mahfouz' works led to his status as an emblem used by the Egyptian state to solidify its acceptance of Western ideology and its position as a "globalized" nation. Another element that helped to increase circulation of Mahfouz's *Palace Walk* was its adaptation into film by Hassan Al Imam. In fact, the entire Cairo Trilogy was adapted into film by Al-Imam during the late 1960s.

In conclusion, the circulation of these three texts in the form of novels in translation and other cases as films was mediated by the global political, historical and cultural climate in which they were produced and appeared. Moreover, the circulation itself has made the authors international literary figures, and their texts works of world literature that respond to and inform global ideological concerns. When one considers the impact that these novels and their circulation have had on the international circumstances of the time in which they were produced and beyond, as well as the effects of global political and cultural circumstances on the novels themselves, it becomes clear that works of literature such as these three novels must be seen not only as aesthetic texts but also as products and shapers of cultures.



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