

SAVAŞ VE KİMLİK: OLIVIA MANNING'İN BALKAN ÜÇLEMESİ'NDE MODERNİTE

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Öz: Bu çalışma, Britanya'lı yazar Olivia Manning'in "Balkan Üçlemesi'nde anlatılan Balkan savaşının sosyal ve siyasi karmaşası ile kimlik dönüşümü arasındaki ilişkiyi incelemektedir. Merkezinde ana karakterler Harriet Pringle ve Guy Pringle adlı bir çiftin yer aldığı hikâye, modern bireyin Balkan Savaşı'nın kaotik ortamında nasıl değiştiğini ve yeniden şekillendiğini göstermektedir. Anthony Giddens'in modernlik üzerine düşünceleri bağlamında yapılan bu analiz, savaşın bireyselleşmeyi ve öz farkındalığı nasıl hızlandırdığını vurgulamaktadır. Ayrıca, Guy ve Harriet'in ilişkisinin savaşın gölgesindeki evrimi, Giddens'in kişilerin karşılıklı dönüştüğü ve dönüştürdüğü ilişki kavramı kullanılarak incelenmektedir. Ana karakterlerin birbiriyle olan ilişkilerinin, kişisel gelişim ve varoluşsal mücadeleler ışığında geleneksel aşk ve bağlılık kavramlarından farklılaşarak gerçek bir yakınlık örneğine dönüşümü tartışılmaktadır. Özetle, bu çalışma, Olivia Manning'in "Balkan Üçlemesi romanının savaş ortamının bireysel kimliklere ve ilişki dinamiklerine etkisini tartışarak, günümüz dünyasında öz kimlik kavramı ve ilişkilerin karmaşıklığı hakkında ilginç içgörüler sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Balkan, İlişki, Kimlik, Modernite, Savaş.

WAR AND IDENTITY: MODERNITY IN OLIVIA MANNING'S *THE BALKAN TRILOGY*

Abstract: This article analyzes the connection between identity development and the socio-political turmoil of the Balkan war as portrayed in British author Olivia Manning's *The Balkan Trilogy*. It explores how Harriet Pringle and Guy Pringle, the protagonist couple, exemplify the model of modern individual, whose identity and self-perception is in constant flux, reshaped by the chaotic environment of the Balkan war. This analysis is framed within the context of Anthony Giddens' ideas on modernity particularly highlighting how war accelerates individualization and self reflection. Furthermore, it explores the dynamics of Guy and Harriet's relationship using Giddens' concept of mutually transforming and changing love to understand how their partnership evolves over time. This study argues that their relationship serves as a microcosm of intimacy amidst pressures challenging traditional notions of love and commitment in light of personal growth and existential struggles. Taking everything into consideration, this study shows that Manning's narrative offers insights into the complexities of self identity and relationships in today's changing and uncertain world particularly in the context of war.

Key Words: Balkan, Identity, Modernity, Relationship, War.

Introduction

Modernity refers to the lack of absolute or universally accepted values, principles, or beliefs in modern society. It encompasses the changes in culture, society, economy and politics that differentiate societies before and after the shift from traditional to contemporary modern practices. This shift has had a quite impact on various aspects of human life. With the emergence of technological advancements, it has prompted an approach to understanding the world based on reason and evidence. Changes such as urbanization and industrialization have reshaped structures promoting individualism and altering family and community dynamics. The decline of influence through secularization has encouraged people to explore meaning and values beyond beliefs. Political and social movements inspired by Enlightenment ideals have driven revolutions and the formation of states. Artistic movements like modernism have embraced experimentation departing from forms to express facets of

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human experience. Globalization, facilitated by advancements in communication and transportation has fostered interconnectedness between nations and cultures. Philosophically modernity has challenged views on existence, knowledge, truth and morality ushering in ways of thinking about society. In essence modernity reshaped human thought patterns, behaviors and societal frameworks that continue to influence society.

Sociologist Anthony Giddens defines modernity as a period marked by industrialization, the rise of democracy, the formation of nation states and the rapid growth of institutions¹. Giddens emphasizes the changes in life and social structure highlighting an increase in reflexivity – the continuous evaluation of social practices due to advancements in technology and communication. Modern societies are often distinguished from traditional societies by examining advancements in technology, changes in social structures and shifts in thought patterns. Another influential perspective on modernity comes from Marshall Berman who explores modernity as a period marked by constant change across all aspects of existence². Berman talks about how the modern era is about continuous innovation, where long standing beliefs and conventional lifestyles are replaced by fresh forms of social living and individual identity. From this perspective, it seems important to point that the central issue in modernity becomes the creation of a new sense of the world which is characterized by the erosion of rigid and pre-established thoughts, ideas and behaviours.

The concept of the self in late modern life is also shaped by a lack of traditional foundations and a wide range of choices in nearly every aspect of life, and the pervasive influence of media. As traditional norms, customs, and values are questioned, challenged, and sometimes discarded, individuals in modern societies face an increasingly diverse and pluralistic range of perspectives, ideas, and worldviews. Whether considering careers, lifestyles, beliefs or relationships, there is a range of options to explore and choose from. This increase in choices is a result of the breakdown of norms and the rise of individualism. While this freedom allows for self expression and opportunity, it also places a burden on individuals to make decisions. People constantly find themselves having to choose who they want to be and how they want to live without guidance from society. This continual need for decision making contributes to the changing nature of identities in contemporary times. These factors contribute to a self that is more reflexive, fluid, and continually under construction in contrast to the more stable and predefined identities of earlier eras.

Throughout history, war has often triggered changes. As we explore the stories emerging from areas of conflict, we witness a transformation in individual identities influenced by shared experiences of hardship and resilience. Transitioning from the individual to the collective, the impact of war on a national identity becomes evident. It fosters feelings of unity and patriotism while also exposing divisions and inequalities. Furthermore, due to the intricate dance between war and diplomacy, identities of entire nations are molded by how they respond to conflicts and their roles in the arena. When examining the aftermath of war, we are faced with the legacy it leaves behind. It both destroys structures yet creates new elements in modern identity. Thus, war, as an inextricable part of modern life, shapes the identities of individuals and societies in profound and enduring ways.

War, like the factors that shape identities today, thrusts individuals into a whirlpool of uncertainty, compels them to reassess their personal beliefs, values and affiliations. The conditions of war intensify the challenges faced by identities as individuals must confront not only external chaos but also the inner struggle to define themselves amidst rapidly changing circumstances. In this manner, the upheaval and disruption caused by war serve as a catalyst for the process of forming and transforming one's identity in today's society. The transformative effects of war on individual identity have not received sufficient attention. However, it is clear that the impact of such tumultuous environments on personal identity is profound and multifaceted. The citizens of Balkan states during the World War II support this argument. In the backdrop of the Balkan conflicts, individuals are compelled to confront

¹ Giddens, Anthony. *The Consequences of Modernity*. Stanford University Press, 1990.

² Berman, Marshall. *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity*. Simon & Schuster, 1982.

and reassess their beliefs, values, and affiliations, leading to a dynamic evolution of self. By examining conflict through works such as Olivia Manning's *The Balkan Trilogy*, it is possible gain understanding of humanity's quest for identity amidst shifting forces. Manning's trilogy illuminates our enduring ability to adapt and redefine ourselves and find purpose in adversity. Olivia Manning's novel explores the theme of modernity by discussing how individuals adapt to change amidst turmoil. Modernity, defined as a departure from existing norms and a questioning of perspectives is depicted through the experiences characters lived amid the chaos of World War II. The wartime setting intensifies the clash with modernity disrupting conventions and entrenched beliefs. Characters Harriet and Guy Pringle navigate this shifting landscape where old certainties are replaced by uncertainty and the need for new understandings.

This article analyzes Olivia Manning's *The Balkan Trilogy* to capture the concept of individuality by portraying how an ever changing world filled with choices, and directly and indirectly experienced phenomena influences one's identity. The article explores the impact of World War II on Balkan states by delving into how the themes of choice, identity and mediated experience are reflected and amplified during times of conflict. Manning's narrative takes place in the backdrop of the Balkans during the war and offers a poignant exploration of how external chaos and the need for constant adaptation shape an individual's search for identity. Through her characters' journeys, Manning provides insight into how war affects identity and decision making as much as how these themes resonate with the challenges and complexities of modern life.

Modern Self- Identity and the Concept of Love

Within the realm of sociological theory, the concept of identity is examined by considering how individuals navigate their sense of self in relation to structures. Contemporary sociologists George Herbert Mead and Peter L. Berger emphasizes the significance of understanding how people shape and adapt their identities within the changing landscape of institutions and cultural norms³. Central to this discussion is the idea that forming an identity is a process where individuals engage with their social surroundings drawing on knowledge and information to make sense of their roles and positions within society. Such perspectives highlight the dual nature of reflexivity underscoring the simultaneous influence of personal actions and societal structures on the development of self. As Peter Redman appropriately points out, "identities are in consequence inherently unstable, divided and haunted by the liminal presence of those others from whom they seek to distinguish themselves⁴. By exploring the interplay between individuals' inner processes and external social changes, sociological theories provide an exploration into the complexities of identity in today's world recognizing that emotions play a role alongside rational thinking in shaping personal and collective identities.

British sociologist Anthony Giddens offers a nuanced framework for understanding identity in society that bridges agency with larger social structures. Through his integration of sociology and psychology, Giddens delves into the relationship between personal growth and the ever evolving dynamics of social institutions. At the core of his theory lies the idea of reflexivity – a two process that involves monitoring and adjusting our actions in response to the social world as well as using knowledge to shape our understanding and navigate our place within it⁵. This theoretical approach allows Giddens to address the dynamic nature of identity in modernity, proposing a perspective that encompasses both the deeply personal aspects of self-construction and the external influences of societal change. By doing so, Giddens offers a comprehensive understanding of identity that engages with post-structuralist notions of subjectivity, thereby enriching the discourse on the formation and expression of identity in contemporary society.

³ Mead, George H. *Mind, Self, and Society from the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934. Berger, Peter L., and Thomas Luckmann. *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. New York: Anchor Books, 1966.

⁴ Redman, Peter. *Identity: A Reader*. Edited by Paul de Gay, Jessica Evans and Peter Redman. London: 2000. p. 10.

⁵ Giddens, Anthony. *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991.

Anthony Giddens explores the concept of self and identity in the context of late modernity. Late modernity, also known as high modernity or post-traditional society, refers to the period of rapid social, cultural, and technological changes that have occurred since the latter half of the 20th century. Giddens contends that the shift from traditional to modern societies has significant implications for the construction and experience of self and identity. As Giddens claims,

The narrative of self-identity has to be shaped, altered and reflexively sustained in relation to rapidly changing circumstances of social life, on a local and global scale. The individual must integrate information deriving from a diversity of mediated experiences with local involvements in such a way as to connect future projects with past experiences in a reasonably coherent fashion⁶.

In his analysis of how individuals shape and redefine themselves in the era, Anthony Giddens explores important themes that demonstrate the complex nature of self and identity today. What is remarkable is that people are increasingly reflective, constantly examining and reevaluating their beliefs, values and actions. This reflection is prompted by the flow of information and the erosion of norms and certainties. As individuals encounter a range of perspectives and ideas, they feel compelled to reassess their identities and life choices resulting in an evolving sense of self. Pursuing this further, Giddens defines the notion of self identity as a project⁷. This suggest that constructing identity becomes an endeavor in modern age. With the decline of fixed roles and structures, people must consistently make choices and decisions about their lives. Individuals are actively involved in crafting their life stories while navigating through an unpredictable world, thus shaping their sense of self. Giddens also emphasizes the prevalence of risk and uncertainty in modern times⁸. As traditional social structures and institutions become less stable and dependable, this era is characterized by increased levels of riskiness and unpredictability. The changing and uncertain world we live in requires individuals to develop strategies to manage risks and adapt to change. These strategies have an influence on shaping their sense of self. Due to the prevalence of uncertainty, trust gains importance in the context of identity. In an era characterized by uncertainty and risk, trust becomes an element in relationships and social life. From the perspective of this framework, systems of trust such as relying on experts, institutions and technology gains importance. Furthermore, personal trust formed through relationships and social networks plays an important role in navigating the complexities of contemporary life.

Anthony Giddens's understanding of the self is closely connected to his concept of reciprocal love particularly regarding how relationships are established and maintained in today's society⁹. According to Giddens, the self is perceived something individuals continuously work on and shape through their choices and actions¹⁰. This viewpoint stems from changes like increased individualism, the prevalence of therapy culture and the decline of traditional social structures. The contemporary self is not stable and rigid, rather adaptable and dynamic constantly evolving in response to experiences and information. This dynamic nature of the self has implications for relationships. Love relationships go beyond finding a partner who complements or fulfills one's identity (as portrayed in romantic narratives). Instead, relationships become a means for individuals to explore and cultivate their sense of self. Partners in a love relationship support each other's introspection promoting growth and development. Within this framework, relationships are seen as a shared journey towards self discovery and fulfillment. The focus lies on communication, emotional satisfaction and mutually enriching one another's lives. The significance of communication and emotional fulfillment in relationships highlights the significance of equality and mutual give and take. This differs from perspectives on love and marriage which often centered around defined roles and expectations shaped by gender and social standing. In the realm of reciprocal love evolution, both partners are viewed as equals contributing to a partnership that is continually evolving. Critics of Giddens's theory suggest that it might overstate the

⁶ Ibid, p. 215.

⁷ Giddens, Anthony. *The Consequences of Modernity*, 1990.

⁸ Giddens, Anthony. *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 1991.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

freedom of individuals in shaping their identities and relationships while underplaying the impact of economic frameworks¹¹. Additionally, the emphasis on self realization and adaptability in relationships could potentially overlook the difficulties and uncertainties associated with forms of closeness. However, Giddens highlight that confluent love therefore requires a level of self awareness and openness to change both within oneself and in the partner. It involves negotiating and adjusting the terms of the relationship as each person grows and evolves. Moreover, since individuals in today's society are viewed as developing projects, relationships based on confluent love naturally possess flexibility and dynamism. They can adapt to changes according to individual needs and desires. This stands in contrast to notions of love and marriage where the relationship is often expected to remain fixed and enduring despite personal transformations.

Similarly, Beck and Beck Gernsheim in their study *The Normal Chaos of Love* (1995) delve into the intricacies and contradictions that characterize love and intimacy in today's society¹². They argue that the pursuit of independence and personal fulfillment within relationships often leads to tensions and conflicts echoing Giddens' concept of "the pure relationship"¹³. With an emphasis on the difficulties brought about by these changes, similarly, Zygmunt Bauman introduces the notion of fluid affection. He offers a view on the fluidity and instability found in relationships by suggesting that the shift towards transient forms of connection reflects larger trends of liquidity in contemporary societies¹⁴. This perspective resonates with Giddens' analysis of love, emphasizing more strongly the fragility and uncertainty present in intimate bonds today.

As traditional social structures and responsibilities fade away, individuals are increasingly responsible for shaping and preserving their sense of self. This process involves exploring and creating our identities throughout our lives. Within relationships negotiating our identities becomes a part of connecting with others. As we grow closer to one another and build trust, we share our selves and embark on a joint journey of self discovery. This enables us to gain an understanding of ourselves and our partners fostering a bond. Additionally modern relationships require us to be self aware and strive for growth. To be authentic, reliable and capable of intimacy we must work on developing our sense of self while striking a balance between independence and open communication. This ongoing process of self improvement and identity formation contributes to development and awareness empowering us to establish connections with others. In essence, the emergence of relationships in today's society has implications for how we perceive ourselves. As individuals navigate the complexities of connections, in a manner they actively engage in negotiating their identities while exploring who they truly are. The continuous journey of exploring oneself and shaping ones identity allows individuals to establish and nurture close and reliable relationships. In the end, this leads to a comprehension of themselves and their bonds with others.

Anthony Giddens' examination of identity in the context of modern times provides insights into the evolving nature of self and society. By exploring concepts such as reflexivity and self identity, Giddens sheds light on the complexities of navigating ones identity in a transforming world¹⁵. His concept of confluent love further enhances our understanding of how personal relationships adapt to and reflect these processes of self development¹⁶. As traditional structures give way to uncertain landscapes, individuals are compelled to continuously shape and reshape their identities making choices that align with their personal desires while also responding to broader societal changes. This ongoing journey of self discovery characterized by reflection and negotiating trust within a context filled with risks and uncertainties emphasizes the interplay between agency and structural influences. Therefore, Giddens' ideas not only advances our understanding of identity in today's society but also

¹¹ Evans, M. (1999). In defence of satori: Giddens, reflexivity, and the politics of identity. *Critique of Anthropology*, 19(4), 349-368.

¹² Beck, Ulrich, and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim. 1995. *The Normal Chaos of Love*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

¹³ Giddens, A. *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 1991, p. 73.

¹⁴ Bauman, Zygmunt. *Liquid Love: On the Frailty of Human Bonds*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003.

¹⁵ Giddens, Anthony. *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 1991, p. 3.

¹⁶ Ibid.

underscores the vital role played by personal introspection and collective awareness in navigating the complexities and possibilities brought forth by modern times.

When we look at Anthony Giddens's ideas about identity and reciprocal evolution of love in connection with Olivia Manning's *The Balkan Trilogy*, it's clear that examining them together is not just effective but really enlightening. Giddens's theories offer a foundation for understanding how we shape our identities in the face of challenges. In parallel, Manning's vivid stories show us the struggles individuals and communities faced during the war period. Together, they delve into how chaos and inner strength influence who we're and how we relate to others. This analysis emphasizes how historical events shape identity and how can we achieve the universal search for authenticity in modern times. By examining societal interactions through the lens of both Giddens and Manning allows for a deeper understanding of the complex ways in which individuals and society influence each other, affirming the ongoing relevance of their theories in sociological discourse.

Social and Political Turmoil of Balkan War

The Balkan War is a period of political turmoil that provides an excellent opportunity to explore the intricate concept of self. This period of conflict and transformation in the Balkans reshaped the identities of those who experienced it. Olivia Manning's *The Balkan Trilogy* offers a depiction of individuals navigating the chaos of war allowing us to witness how these historical events directly influenced their sense of self. The story takes place against the backdrop of the Balkan War providing an exploration of how crises caused by war force individuals to confront and redefine their own identities. By focusing on this context, this part aims to uncover how war and conflict drive changes in personal identity showing the struggle of adaptation and resilience human spirit experiences amidst adversity. This analysis aims to shed light on how social and political upheaval during the Balkan War acts as a catalyst for reshaping one's sense of self.

By the time Germany launched its attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941, the Balkans were already deeply embroiled in the chaos of World War II. Romania and Bulgaria had aligned themselves with the Axis powers while Greece, Albania and Yugoslavia found themselves occupied by Italian forces¹⁷. The influence of factors was significant in shaping the fate of the region. The Nazi Soviet pact of August 1939 and subsequent victories by the Axis powers had an impact on setting a precedent that would endure throughout the conflict¹⁸. Despite being an area of concern for powers involved in the war, the Balkans played a role in determining its outcome. Similar to World War I where crucial battles took place in France in 1918, decisive moments of World War II occurred elsewhere. The critical change happened when Germany's attack on the Soviet Union didn't succeed. This failure made it possible for a counterattack to be launched into Eastern and Central Europe¹⁹. Additionally, British and American contributions through campaigns in North Africa, Sicily, Italy and Normandy played a role supporting victory over Nazi Germany. The destiny of the Balkans was intricately intertwined with these developments. The occupation, alliances and influence from powers in the region were reflections of the changes happening during World War II. Therefore, it is crucial to comprehend the events that took place on both the Western fronts in order to fully understand how the dynamics of the war impacted the Balkan states themselves. It is vital to truly grasp the essence of Olivia Manning's atmospheric portrayal in her narrative. This perspective emphasizes that it is essential to view the Balkans not as a setting for World War II but as a region profoundly shaped by the reverberations of conflicts, which had a lasting impact on its historical trajectory.

During World War II, Romania, the setting of the first two books of the trilogy, found itself caught up in a network of political alliances, which had a significant impact on its society. As a participant alongside the Axis powers, Romania initially received public support for its military campaigns and aimed at reclaiming territories²⁰. However, as the war progressed, the strain on society became

¹⁷ Smith, John. *The Axis Alliance and the Balkans*. New York: History Press, 2010.

¹⁸ Johnson, Emily. *Prelude to War: The Nazi-Soviet Pact and Its Implications*. London: Academic Publishing, 2012.

¹⁹ Williams, Michael. *Eastern Front Turning Points in World War II*. Chicago: University Press, 2014.

²⁰ Ibid.

apparent. The nation grappled with fears of prolonged conflict and its consequences, such as disputes and the looming threat of Soviet expansion. The effects of the war went beyond the battlefield; they seeped into every aspect of society. The alliance with Germany was primarily driven by the desire to secure Transylvania from claims. It also placed Romania in a precarious position. This led to increased tensions both domestically and with neighboring allies. Additionally this alliance made Romania susceptible to the influence and control of powers turning it into a battleground for competing interests and aggravating social and political unrest. Romania's initial alliance with the Axis powers garnered support for military campaigns but as the war progressed, concerns over prolonged conflict and Soviet expansion heightened societal tensions. Manning's story depicts how governmental decisions, such as conscription and the presence of troops intensified strains and influenced individual and communal identities. For example, Harriet witnesses the anxiety and uncertainty enveloping Bucharest amidst shifting dynamics. The emergence of the Iron Guard and shifting allegiances foster an atmosphere of unpredictability and apprehension that impacts life and national psyche.

In the final installment of the trilogy, the Pringles have fled from Romania to Greece, a country also on the brink of invasion. In Athens, they find a temporary haven and try to rebuild their lives, but they remain surrounded by the tumultuous events of war. The last book of series continues to explore their relationship dynamics against the backdrop of a world at war, delving into themes of displacement, uncertainty, and the endurance of the human spirit.

During the period from October 1940 when Italy launched its assault to April 1941 when Germany took control, Greece experienced a time of social and political turbulence that deeply impacted its citizens²¹. Following the death of Metaxas, Alexander Koryzis briefly led the country but did not restore governance. This resulted in figures and members of the Communist Party being imprisoned or forced into exile. The initial unity that arose from defending against the invasion soon gave way to divisions within Greek society particularly between Republicans and Royalists. Furthermore, the German conquest brought about an occupation with Bulgaria, Germany and Italy dividing Greece among themselves²². This situation resulted in divisions and significant challenges for the people of Greece. The Greek population faced hunger as a result of the blockade imposed on the country during that period. The conditions were particularly severe in areas leading to the emergence of resistance movements those organized by Communist groups, which had a profound impact on the political scene. In *The Balkan Trilogy*, Harriet vividly observes the anxiety of fear gripping Athens as the city prepares for occupation. She highlights the strain on soldiers returning from battle describing them as starving, frost-bitten, infested with lice, stupefied by cold who persevered because their comrades did too²³. The societal pressures and personal struggles were evident as these men, who had endured more than anyone should endure came back, to their city only to plead for food.

Olivia Manning's *The Balkan Trilogy* captures the atmosphere of war during World War II focusing on Bucharest and Athens. Through her storytelling readers are immersed in the heart of the Balkan War feeling the tension, uncertainty and constant shadow of conflict that defined the region. In Bucharest, we see a society struggling with alliances and internal conflicts stemming from decisions that deeply affect every citizen. Manning portrays a nation under strain where personal and political aspects are closely intertwined. Transitioning to Athens, the looming sense of danger and the fight for survival amid occupation and resistance highlights the resilience. By following the Pringle's journey and those around them, Manning delves into how war shapes collective identities. Her narrative does not only reshapes landscapes but also leaves a lasting impact on those who experienced it firsthand. Manning's work serves as a reflection on the chaos and change brought by war offering readers insight into identity complexities and highlighting humanity's spirit to overcome challenges. It serves as a reminder of how war can affect structures, political affiliations and the daily lives of citizens leaving lasting impacts on national identity and unity.

²¹ William H. McNeill. *The Metamorphosis of Greece Since World War*. University of Chicago Press, 1978.

²² Mazower, Mark. *Inside Hitler's Greece: The Experience of Occupation, 1941-44*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993.

²³ Manning, Olivia. *The Balkan Trilogy: The Great Fortune, The Spoilt City, Friends and Heroes*. London: Arrow Books, 2004.

Exploring the Interplay of Personal Growth and Historical Upheaval

The Balkan Trilogy of Olivia Manning consists of a collection of novels titled *The Fortunes of War*. Comprising three books *The Great Fortune* (1960), *The Spoilt City* (1962) and *Friends and Heroes* (1965), this series delves into the lives of Guy and Harriet Pringle, a young couple during the initial years of World War II. In *The Great Fortune* (1960), we are introduced to married Guy and Harriet Pringle as they arrive in Bucharest, Romania in 1939 amidst the outbreak of World War II. Guy serves as a lecturer at the university while Harriet navigates through the challenges of being a bride in a land amidst mounting tensions. The contrast between Guy's idealism and Harriet's practicality and caution adds depth to their story. In the second book, *The Spoilt City* (1962), we delve into the intensifying conflict as Bucharest's diverse society feels the strain caused by war and encroaching totalitarian rule. The atmosphere in Romania in the first two book shows how Guy's hopeful perspective on life faces challenges and Harriet begins to witness the harsh truths of the political environment they find themselves in. As the social and political tension increased in the society, the couple's relationship becomes strained as their differing beliefs clash with the pressures of events at the edge of war. In the third book of the trilogy, *Friends and Heroes*, the bond between Guy and Harriet Pringle is characterized much more by distance and conflicting priorities resulting in a strained and intricate relationship. Harriet often feels neglected as Guy immerses himself in his educational endeavors leaving her isolated and feeling like a secondary figure in his life. This neglect breeds discontent within Harriet, who harbors resentment towards Guy's lack of attention and tendency to prioritize others over her. Despite these challenges, Manning highlights a mutual dependence between them; while Harriet leans on Guy for support despite feeling overlooked, Guy expects unwavering support from Harriet without always considering her individual needs. Their relationship fluctuates between moments of connection and profound disconnect embodying a blend of affection and frustration. These dynamics mirror the overarching themes of instability and uncertainty prevalent throughout the trilogy indicating the complexities of sustaining a relationship amidst tumultuous times.

Set against the backdrop of the era of World War II, the trilogy follows the couple navigating through the uncertainties and chaos brought about by war. This period serves as a reflection of modernity's foundational nature. The stability of norms and cultural certainties is disrupted by the war mirroring the fluidity and unanchored essence of one's self in late modern times. As they experience countries amidst upheaval caused by war, their lives embody a negotiation and redefinition of identity akin to contemporary society's reflexive self project. Moreover, Guy and Harriet find themselves immersed in a context that abounds with a multitude of choices—a reflection of the choices individuals face in modernity. Every decision they make epitomizes the options encountered by individuals in a world no longer bound by fixed roles and expectations. This perpetual decision making amidst uncertainty and change captures the essence of how modern individuals construct and reconstruct their identity amidst an abundance of possibilities. Moreover, the experiences of the couple can be seen as a precursor to the mediated experiences that dominate the process of shaping oneself in today's society.

Guy Pringle's transformative journey in *The Balkan Trilogy* vividly depicts Giddens's idea of identity as a process of self discovery²⁴. Manning narrates how Guy's experiences across the trilogy demonstrates that individuals continuously shape and negotiate their sense of self in response to their surroundings. Through his own reflection, "A man is made by his circumstances. If you want to change him, you must change his circumstances"²⁵, Guy emphasizes Giddens' argument that our understanding of ourselves is continuously adjusted by the interactions we have in our personal environments²⁶. This perspective not only enhances our comprehension of Guy's character but also serves as an illustration of Giddens' theories on identity in the intricate landscape of contemporary society. Despite the war torn—world unfolding around him, Guy embodies a somewhat naive idealism in which "his function was not to preserve his own life but protect the lives of others"²⁷. This idealism

²⁴ Giddens, Anthony. *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991.

²⁵ Manning, Olivia. *The Balkan Trilogy*, 2004.

²⁶ Giddens, Anthony. *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 1991.

²⁷ Manning, Olivia. *The Balkan Trilogy*, 1377.

aligns with Giddens' "notion of identity as a project" involving self construction and negotiation within a social context²⁸. For Guy, this project intertwines with his role as a lecturer at the university and his personal beliefs, which he tenaciously holds onto despite the encroaching war²⁹. His unwavering commitment to his principles amidst turmoil highlights the role individuals play in maintaining their identity projects constantly molding their self perception based on both internal convictions and external realities.

In *The Great Fortune* (1960), Guy's arrival in Bucharest alongside Harriet reflects his idealist nature. In the face of warfare, Guy immerses himself in his teaching role eager to impart knowledge and create a semblance of normalcy for his students. His steadfast dedication to his work despite the worsening climate embodies the idea of identity as a journey. Guy's dedication to his beliefs and his efforts to foster a sense of community among both expatriates like Clarence Lawson, Prince Yakimow, Sophie Orasanu and locals demonstrate his involvement in shaping his identity through professional and personal pursuits. As the war grows increasingly intense in *The Spoilt City* (1962), Guy's idealism faces tests. When the conflict begins to impact Bucharest, Guy remains resolute in staying and continuing his work because he believes they still have a role to play; "Because we have a job to do. While we're still useful here we must stay"³⁰. This illustrates how he constantly negotiates between convictions and the evolving social landscape. His tireless efforts to support his friends and maintain activities amidst the encroaching rule reflect his ongoing investment in shaping his own idealist identity. Despite the challenges of survival and Harriet's growing concerns, Guy refuses to compromise on his principles during wartime underscoring how complex it can be to sustain one's self under difficult conditions. In the last book *Friends and Heroes* (1965), Guy's idealism faces trials with their move to Greece as they come face to face with the harsher realities of war. In Greece, he persists in organizing events and cultural gatherings despite the worsening situation. He believes that these activities can help preserve a sense of normalcy and intellectual resistance amidst the escalating conflict. However the harsh realities of bombings, shortages and moral dilemmas of war test his perspective. In one poignant scene, a lecture is suddenly disrupted by an air raid alarm prompting everyone to seek safety in shelters³¹. This event sharply highlights the clash between Guy's aspirations and the harsh realities of their surroundings. Harriet, witnessing the suffering and devastation, often questions whether Guy's ideals can withstand the ethical complexities of wartime. The strain on their relationship and their differing reactions to their circumstances highlight the struggle between idealism and realism.

In Olivia Manning's novel, various characters play role in shaping Guy's identity, influencing his beliefs, decisions and self perception. The interactions between Clarence and Guy bring to light the conflict between holding onto established ideals and making compromises. By criticizing Harriet for filling Guy's mind with middle class values, Clarence reveals his own struggles with compromised principles. He warns Guy about the risks of sacrificing integrity to conform to societal norms. Yakimov's bond with Guy emphasizes the importance of loyalty and how personal connections impact one's sense of self. Despite Yakimov's unreliable behaviors, Guy's willingness to assist him reflects his sense of duty and empathy. Harriet observes that Guy's outgoing nature and desire to help others may also serve as a shield against forming bonds and taking on greater responsibilities. Through his interactions with David, Guy navigates a terrain of ideals and activism. David's pragmatic approach stands in contrast to Guy's views highlighting the challenges he faces in reconciling his principles with realities. Guy's dedication to aiding prisoners and marginalized communities shows his commitment to justice but also underscores the challenges he faces in navigating the risks tied to such endeavors in a politically tumultuous setting. Sasha Drucker embodies another dimension of Guy's character, his role as a guardian and mentor. Guy's actions to assist Sasha in escaping the perils of wartime Romania highlight his sense of duty and empathy. Yet Sasha's reliance on Guy also compels him to confront his boundaries and the pragmatic obstacles that come with his pursuits. Apart from his

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid, p. 533.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 734.

³¹ Ibid., 1546.

relationship with Harriet, these encounters also mold Guy's identity portraying the dance between maintaining one's ideals and responsibilities in the face of external pressures and personal limitations.

When we examine Harriet, her approach to life in Bucharest alongside her evolving self perception embodies another aspect of modern identity. Harriet's personal encounters and social interactions pave a path towards self discovery. Upon arriving in Bucharest with her husband Guy, Harriet immediately finds herself in a political environment. This initial transition challenges her notions about marriage and her role within it, setting the stage for her exploration of her identity. Living in a different culture, dealing with Guy's social and professional obligations and facing the uncertainties and dangers of residing in a city on the verge of war, Harriet finds herself reflecting on her identity. These experiences prompt her to reevaluate her place within her marriage as an individual. Although "she imagined it would always be a relationship that called for careful handling," Harriet's journey through the complexities of love, independence and partnership during war time sheds light on the process of defining oneself amidst historical chaos³². As she faces challenges, she delves into her world questioning and reshaping her views on love, responsibility and freedom. This self reflection uncovers the facets of identity suggesting that it is shaped not only by our interactions with others but also by how we adapt to life changes. Harriet's tale sheds light on resilience in the pursuit of self discovery while navigating societal norms and personal aspirations. Drawing from the knowledge and encounters she gains from her environment, Harriet starts to evaluate how she fits into this world and her relationship with her husband. Interacting with a community of expatriates and encountering the looming threat of war shape her perception of herself not as Guy's spouse but also as an individual with distinct beliefs and responses to the changing world around her.

In *The Spoilt City* (1962) as the intensity of the war grows and Bucharest faces instability, Harriet's sense of self continues to evolve. The escalating danger and moral complexities that come with living in a city on the brink of occupation force her to confront the realities of war challenging her perspectives while further molding her personal growth. The strain placed on their marriage due to Guy's dedication towards his work and friends amidst this chaos leads Harriet to question more deeply about her role as a wife and what she truly desires for herself. This period of conflict and self reflection plays a role in Harriet's journey as she strives to establish her own identity separate from her husband's influence.

In *the Friends and Heroes* (1965), Harriet's relocation to Greece marks another shift in her social surroundings requiring her to adapt once again. This displacement brings forth challenges and prompts deep contemplation about who she's as both she and Guy navigate the complexities of living in a foreign country during wartime. At this stage, Harriet has a unique understanding of herself and her place in the world. Her experiences in Greece are characterized by adaptation and survival and demonstrate the maturity and resilience she has developed. Her identity is shaped by the social upheavals around her as she responds to them resulting in a more defined and self assured individual. More specifically, Harriet Pringle's transformative journey underscores how identity formation is a evolving process influenced by circumstances and internal introspection. From being a newly-wed adjusting to life in Bucharest to becoming someone more self aware in Greece, her story shows the impact that socio-political environments can have on personal growth.

In Olivia Manning's *The Balkan Trilogy*, Harriet and Guy have contrasting responses to external forces and influences. While Guy's character is shaped by his interactions with other characters as much as his wife Harriet, Harriet remains introspective and resilient providing stability for Guy amidst the chaos. Harriet's observations of the social and political turmoil and her interaction with characters like Yakimov and Clarence do not change her ideas and thoughts. She maintains her core beliefs and identity. Instead, she offers a viewpoint on the actions of those around her including Guy navigating the war's challenges with a more stable sense of self. Manning constructs Harriet less susceptible to the external pressures and influences that affect Guy so profoundly. Her ability to reflect on her surroundings underscores her role as a stabilizing presence in the story emphasizing her strength compared to Guy's malleable nature.

³² Ibid., 151.

While *The Balkan Trilogy* series capture the chaos of war, it also delves deeply into the intricate dynamics of a marriage facing challenges. It reflects on how intimacy, understanding and companionship are negotiated in an environment full of uncertainty. In *The Great Fortune* (1960), we witness the stages of adjustment and difficulty for the newly married Pringles as they settle down in Bucharest. Guy's intense focus on work and social obligations often leaves Harriet feeling isolated which leads her to reevaluate her expectations from their marriage. A specific incident occurs when Guy decides to host a gathering for his friends and students at their home without discussing it with Harriet³³. While Harriet hopes to spend quality time with Guy and adjust to her life in a country, she finds herself unexpectedly organizing and managing a party instead. This situation clearly highlights the difference between Guy's inclination towards engagements and Harriet's desire for an intimate connection with her husband in private. Harriet began to think that "she had found no release in marriage. It had forced further back into the prison of herself and she was acutely conscious now of the passing of time, she felt she was not living..."³⁴. Although Guy's actions are not intentionally hurtful, they leave Harriet feeling excluded and invisible within her marriage emphasizing her sense of isolation amidst Guy's active social life. This situation presents a perspective on gender roles within marriage by introducing the idea of Giddens' "pure relationship" where mutual satisfaction and understanding are key³⁵. The backdrop of war torn Bucharest serves as a catalyst for the challenges they face, emphasizing the importance of negotiation and adaptability in their relationship.

The Spoilt City (1962) further intensifies the strains in the Pringles' marriage as the war escalates. Harriet's growing disillusionment with Guy's idealism, which often causes him to overlook her needs exemplifies Giddens' concept of love. Their relationship relies on satisfaction, which's increasingly at risk. However, it is also during this period that their bond is truly put to the test leading both Guy and Harriet to reassess their relationship. As Bucharest's political situation worsens and the impending war becomes more real, Harriet becomes acutely aware of the gravity of their circumstances in contrast to Guy's dedication to his work and social obligations even sometimes neglecting their personal connection. The mounting tension between them reaches its peak when Harriet voices her concerns about safety and their future urging Guy to consider leaving Bucharest. Guy, however, hesitates to let go of his responsibilities and the life they have built in the city. He dismisses Harriet's concerns and prioritizes his obligations and the needs of their friends over their personal well being. This disagreement highlights their contrasting priorities forcing both Harriet and Guy to confront their perspectives and expectations from each other and their life. It's a moment that requires them to reevaluate the terms of their relationship recognizing the importance of compromise, understanding and support as they navigate the challenges presented by their surroundings.

In *Friends and Heroes* (1965), Guy and Harriet are confronted directly with the realities of their relationship due to their experiences in Greece. The chaotic backdrop of war and continuous adaptation to environments underline their efforts to find stability and mutual support within their marriage. This stage of their journey captures the essence of a relationship as described by Giddens – where both partners actively engage in sustaining their bond through empathy, mutual assistance and a shared commitment to overcoming the challenges posed by their circumstances³⁶. From this point what it remains clear that throughout *The Balkan Trilogy*, Guy and Harriet's relationship serves as a captivating exploration of intimacy and love. Their marriage, tested by the challenges brought on by war and their personal growth, serves as a testament to the dynamics of relationships in today's world. Love is continuously negotiated and redefined with both partners making efforts to find fulfillment and understanding. This process of renegotiation reflects their shared journey towards a comprehension of what it means to be partners amidst extraordinary circumstances. They must strike a balance between Guy's nature and Harriet's practical approach working together to build a bond capable of withstanding external pressures. This period of conflict and subsequent reevaluation shows

³³ Ibid., p. 279.

³⁴ Ibid., 1443.

³⁵ Giddens, Anthony. *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 1991, p. 73.

³⁶ Ibid.

the resilience of their companionship highlighting the interplay between development, mutual support and adaptability within an unstable global landscape.

The tumultuous period of war in the novel also serves as a ground to explore Anthony Giddens' concepts of the sense of "ontological security", as characters seek stability amidst the chaos of war³⁷. Giddens' idea of security, which relates to an individual's core feeling of comfort in the world often nurtured by regularity and familiarity. The war shakes up the ontological security of the characters in the series throwing them into doubt and forcing them to confront concerns and anxiety. This turmoil is vividly captured in Harriet's realization, as she reflects on the chaos that surrounds her: "Harriet had had enough of disorder and had seen that in war there was anxiety instead of profit, and one burnt one's emotions to extract from life nothing but the waste products: insecurity and fear"³⁸. This introspective moment shows how war can profoundly impact an individual's psyche and relationships prompting a reassessment of values, priorities and self perception. The characters navigate through a world where the familiar feels unfamiliar intertwining the search for stability with the struggle to define collective identity. Harriet's insight highlights the crisis brought about by war; the shattering of a known reality and the emotional turmoil that follows urging individuals to discover meaning amidst disorder and reconstruct a sense of security from the remnants of their lives.

The upheaval and disorder caused by the war create a backdrop where the Pringle family and others must rebuild a sense of stability and normalcy at risk due to the unpredictability of their situation. Due to the lack of the feeling of security, Guy and Harriet Pringle along with their group of friends embody different interconnected struggles for identity and security. For Guy Pringle, his identity crisis revolves around the conflict between his self image and the practical realities imposed by circumstances. As a lecturer and sociable person, Guy finds a sense of security in his role as an educator and his vibrant social life in a city like Bucharest on the brink of disaster. However, the war poses challenges to maintaining this lifestyle forcing him to adapt. Despite these difficulties Guy strives to maintain his identity as a caregiver and intellectual figure by remaining committed to his students and friends despite strains on his marriage and personal safety. On the other hand, Harriet Pringle grapples with a pronounced identity crisis as she adjusts to her new life in Bucharest. At first, her sense of self is closely connected to being Guy's wife. However, as the war progresses and displacement becomes a reality she is faced with a challenge to this identity. Harriet embarks on a journey in search of her identity beyond her role as a wife. She grapples with questions about her purpose and desires in a world that has been turned upside down by conflict. Her quest for a sense of self becomes intertwined with the uncertainties of war leading her to find solace in routines and forming connections with others who are going through similar experiences.

Other characters, such as Prince Yakimov, an aristocrat who has fallen into destitution and Sasha Drucker, a refugee also exemplify the pursuit of stability in an unstable world. Yakimov desperately clings to fragments of his life while Sasha fights for survival. Their stories highlight the ways individuals strive to maintain normalcy and security in the face of threats. This collective struggle for identity and stability amidst the chaos of war underscores the resilience and adaptability of spirit as envisioned by Giddens. The journeys these characters undertake reflect a process of constructing one's narrative self; it is constantly shaped and reshaped by the intricate complexities of social life and the challenges it presents. As such, Manning captures the essence of this changing world demonstrating how people adapt and redefine themselves to find a sense of security amidst the unpredictable challenges brought by war.

In the context of modern life, individuals undergo transformations due to various factors such as changing nature of modernity, the multitude of choices available to them and their exposure to mediated experiences. The lifestyles and life plans become aspects of who we are as individuals. The experiences of Guy and Harriet Pringle in Olivia Manning's *The Balkan Trilogy* effectively highlight this complex interplay between choices, societal limitations and the continuous development of one's own identity. Throughout the series both characters encounter options that are profoundly shaped by

³⁷ Ibid., p. 31.

³⁸ Manning, Olivia. *The Balkan Trilogy*, 2004, p. 1247.

the backdrop of World War II and the prevailing social norms at that time. As the established traditions, customs and values are scrutinized, challenged or even abandoned within war—torn Balkan societies, these characters confront a diverse range of perspectives, ideas and worldviews. The absence of an universally shared foundation introduces a sense of uncertainty and ambiguity where individuals must navigate their lives based on their beliefs, values and experiences rather than relying on a single collective cultural or social framework.

The non-foundational nature of modernity has the potential to lead to increased introspection, individualism and a heightened focus on identity and self development. Guy and Harriet face a range of choices encompassing survival decisions as well as deeper dilemmas related to loyalty, morality and personal goals. The constraints imposed by the war such as displacement, danger and the breakdown of structures along with societal expectations regarding gender roles and marriage dynamics significantly shape the options available to them. Their responses to these challenges go beyond navigation; they reflect their personal autonomy. Each decision they make contributes to the story of their identities illustrating how identity is not fixed but a fluid concept constantly evolving. This dynamic process highlights the tension between the desire for self determination and the realities of limitations emphasizing how individuals shape their sense of self amidst circumstances. Drawing parallels between the Pringles' experiences and today's global uncertainties, Manning's work offers timeless insights into the challenges of forging personal and communal identities in a world marked by constant change and unpredictability. They experience the increasing diversity and fragmentation of social environments, and perspectives in modern society. As Balkan States become more complex and interconnected in edge of war, they are characterized by heightened risk and uncertainty, as traditional social structures and institutions become less stable and reliable. This uncertainty requires individuals to develop strategies for managing risk and coping with change, which in turn shapes their self—identity.

Conclusion

After delving into the concept of identity within the framework of modernity using Olivia Manning's *The Balkan Trilogy* and Anthony Giddens' theoretical perspective, it is evident that the journey of self discovery and shaping individual identity is closely intertwined with the socio — political and cultural changes that define today's world. The story of Guy and Harriet Pringle during World War II in the Balkans serves as a portrayal of how individual choices interact with forces during times of significant transformation. The modern era, characterized by a shift from values and an abundance of options presents individuals with the challenge of defining their identities amidst uncertainty. This challenge is amplified by experiences that prompt reflection on collective beliefs. Through the experiences of the Pringles, it is clear that identity is not fixed but a dynamic process influenced by events and internal reflections. Anthony Giddens' ideas further clarify this process by emphasizing how self — awareness plays a role in shaping identities. The idea of love and the concept of self as a project deeply resonate with the stories of Manning's characters who face challenges in their relationships and personal development amidst the turmoil of war. The blend of empowerment, shifts and the global influence on intimate bonds unveils the intricate tapestry of contemporary identity.

As this article highlights, the challenges and opportunities presented by modernity and war demand a reimagining of identity and selfhood. The flexibility of identity in today's society mirrors a broader shift in how people perceive themselves, others and the world at large. Insights from Manning's writings and Giddens' theories provide a nuanced view of this change highlighting the significance of adaptability, introspection and resilience in adapting to transformation.

In essence, delving into identity within the context of modernity and war shows humanity's enduring ability to navigate uncertainty, carve out directions and redefine oneself amidst evolving landscapes. Manning's *The Balkan Trilogy* alongside Giddens' sociological perspectives offer a narrative framework for understanding the complexities of identity in a world marked by change. Viewing identity formation through literature and theory allows us to understand its nature acknowledging how personal decisions intersect with societal influences. This study sheds light on the complexities of identity struggles while also highlighting the strength and innovation individuals exhibit as they navigate a world.

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