



The Spoilt City

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It is 1940, and Guy and Harriet Pringle and their friends in the English colony in Bucharest find their position growing ever more precarious. The "phony war" is over and invasion by the Germans is an ever-present threat.

The Spoilt City Details

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Author : Olivia Manning

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From Reader Review The Spoilt City for online ebook

CQM says

More excellent stuff from Manning as she continues to follow the English colony in Bucharest. Still centered around Harriet and her husband Guy, this time things are even more serious as the German war machine begins its steady advance and the Iron Guardists begin to take a grip on the country. The characters of the first book are all still in place and the tensions of living right in the middle of a neutral country gradually drifting towards the axis powers through circumstances and self preservation are captured brilliantly.

James says

The second book in Manning's Balkan trilogy continues Guy and Harriet's unhappy time in Romania. Achingly dull lives are lived in wilful ignorance of the deteriorating political situation, the heating up of the phoney stage of WW II, and the supplanting of the British by the Germans. While all this happens ordinary lives with ordinary problems continue unabated. While I will need to read the third part to be absolutely sure I think this very ordinariness is by a weird kind of alchemy moving from the dull in book 1 to dull but worthy in book 2 will become splendid in the last of the trilogy.

Diane Barnes says

So this second book in the trilogy ends with Harriet in Athens and Guy left in Rumania to take care of business. There is no school and no department left to take care of, but Guy Pringle remains as obtuse as ever, choosing to ignore reality and pretend that things are normal. Harriet has come to some conclusions about marriage in general and hers in particular.

The Spoilt City takes us further into the German Occupation of Bucharest, and fleshes out some of the characters introduced in The Great Fortune. I'm growing very fond of Harriet, and Guy is growing on me (a little). Now on to the final book. I'm pretty sure I'll like Athens much better than Bucharest.

Susan says

This is the second volume in Olivia Manning's Balkan Trilogy, following on from "The Great Fortune." Harriet and Guy Pringle married shortly before the outbreak of WWII and are now in Bucharest, where Guy works in the English department of the University. The uncertainty surrounding Romania in the first novel is even more pronounced at the beginning of this book. Rumours and suspicions abound and the English are viewed as likely losers of the war. Harriet begins to long for safety, but Guy refuses to accept that he will have to leave and, to Harriet's exasperation, throws himself wholeheartedly into organising the summer school at the University.

Many of the characters in the first book also appear here. Yakimov, always on his uppers and installed in the

Pringle's spare room, is disgruntled and depressed. When Guy and Harriet come across Sasha Drucker; the son of a wealthy Jewish businessman whose ruin is the talk of the city, the pair take him in too. Sasha has deserted from the army and Harriet is concerned that Yakimov will inform someone if he knows, so he has to stay in hiding. She is right to worry – Yakimov is concerned solely with his own well-being and is the least discreet person imaginable. When he goes to visit Cluj, he is so out of touch with events, that he imagines he can visit his old friend Fredi von Flugel; now a Nazi. His bravado and bragging may well have unpleasant repercussions for the very people who took him in when he had nowhere else to turn.

Meanwhile, revolution is in the air. As Bucharest experiences upheaval, martial law and shortages, the British await the arrival of Professor Pinkrose; invited by Guy's boss, Inchcape, to – almost unbelievably – give a lecture. Harriet begins to despair that neither Guy, nor Inchcape, are prepared to accept the danger they could be in and have their heads firmly in the sand about current events. Bucharest now has a strong German presence, the Blitz has begun back home and getting to safety may soon be impossible. You really do feel for Harriet in this book – Guy is always so concerned with everyone else that he barely has time to consider how Harriet feels and she remains isolated and worried. Before the end of this volume, she has some difficult decisions to make about the future. The third book in the trilogy is “Friends and Heroes,” and I look forward to reading on to find out what happens to Harriet.

Ioana says

Afirm cu sinceritate că interesul meu pentru cărurile de război a crescut considerabil odată cu parcurgerea celor două volume care fac parte din „Trilogia Balcanică” și care sunt dedicate atât luptei pentru supraviețuire, războiului, cât și dragostei și relațiilor dintre oameni.

Aceste file de poveste pline de învățătură și mînte în care cititorul își poate descoperi propriul trecut și istoria care a marcat destinul tuturor oamenilor de pe acest pământ, fie ei români, englezi, americani, japonezi sau nemți; în fine, acel trecut glorios și patat cu sănătatea a mii de oameni mai mult sau mai puțin vinovați, toate acele sacrificii frăcute în numele dreptății și toate asuprările de care a avut parte poporul nostru, toate acestea ar trebui cunoscute de tinerii din ziua de azi, iar cel mai la îndemâna mod prin care această pot face o incursiune înapoi în timp și istorie îl reprezentă lectura cărărilor lăsatelor în urmă de către diversi scriitori care au trăit pe pielea lor schimbările și terorile aduse de război, scriitori precum Olivia Manning.

A doua carte a „Trilogiei Balcanice” cuprinde patru personaje reprezentative prin titlurile lor (Cutremurul, Căpitanul, Revoluția, Raidul) care fac referire la cele mai importante momente descrise de-a lungul paginilor.

Volumul de față debutează cu frământările englezilor generate de decăderea marii puteri protectoare, Marea Britanie, nouă săptămâni a germanilor și cu pierderea suferită de România care se vede forțată să renunțe la Basarabia și Bucovina, care sunt luate de Rusia, sacrificându-se astfel pentru a menține pacea în Europa de Est.

„După orele de încordare și incertitudine, acceptarea ultimatumului adusese nu numai dezamăgire, ci și urare. Însemna, pe lângă altele, că în București viața va continua ca până acum. Nimeni nu va fi obligat să moară pentru o cauză disperată.”

Recenzia completa o puteti citi aici: <http://twistinmysobriety-alexablogsp...>

Al says

The second book of the Balkan trilogy, and equal to or better than the first. The collapse of Rumania continues, and the disparate English colony in Bucharest crumbles. The psychological mismatch between Harriet and Guy Pringle becomes increasingly obvious and painful, culminating in their de facto separation. At the same time, Guy's Quixotic character and oblivious self confidence lead him down a dangerous road. There's more action in this book, and a heightening sense of doom. Just a wonderful read.

Violet wells says

One thing staunchly autobiographical novels reveal is how unlike a novel individual lives are. Because if our lives have a plot it probably takes an entire lifetime to work out what it is! It's fascinating here to spot which characters Manning has elaborated to inscribe some narrative drive into the book. Obvious candidate is Prince Yakimov, probably a character she knew but to whom she imparts more agency than he probably had in real life. Even so, these books don't have a great deal of plot. They're more like studies of character under pressure. Few come out of this trial well, most notably the buffoon of a husband who I suspect might have filed for divorce after reading this novel.

A slightly irritating factor is these three books are not separate novels. You couldn't read the second without having read the first but Manning keeps inserting prosaic recaps for those who didn't read the first book. I gave the first instalment four stars so I'll give this one three because both merit 3.5 in my eyes.

Chrissie says

Having completed The Great Fortune, immediately followed by The Spoilt City, I am now off to the third of The Balkan Trilogy, that is to say Friends and Heroes. Once you start you simply cannot stop. This trilogy should be seen as one book. I have read a lot about WW2, but this book has engagingly filled me in on the fall of Romania to the Germans, which had been a gaping hole!

Maybe this is one of those books that should be listened to rather than read? The narration by Harriet Walter, the acclaimed English stage and screen actress, is topnotch. She does all three of the audiobooks that make up the trilogy. Her impersonations of French, Germans, Russians and Romanians I find superb. Both the men and women are well narrated. You can easily identify who is speaking.

Except.....reading the book in the paper format is probably captivating too. Manning's writing is special! I would even call it exceptional. Stunning depictions of places and people! I must point out, you don't read this book only for the history; you read it for its wonderful character portrayals.

I read a bit about the author. This trilogy has autobiographical content. Manning is in fact telling of her own life experiences! This is from the author's page at GR:

In August 1939 she married R.D. Smith ("Reggie"), a British Council lecturer posted in Bucharest, Romania, and subsequently in Greece, Egypt and Palestine as the Nazis over-ran Eastern Europe. Her experiences

formed the basis for her best known work, the six novels making up "The Balkan Trilogy" and "The Levant Trilogy," known collectively as Fortunes of War.

No wonder this feels real. The story is based on real life. What she describes is what she saw, experienced and felt. She does this with talent. The story makes me wonder if the relationship between Harriet and Guy Pringle, the two newlyweds of the story, correctly reflects Olivia's own relationship with her husband Reggie?! There is a lot to think about here. Olivia /Harriet is astute in her observations and understanding of human behavior.

I don't want to write more now. I have to get back to the story. I'll write a complete review of the trilogy on completion of the third book.

My review of the first book: <https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>

Hollybery says

The second installment in the superb series of books by Olivia Manning about the English caught up in World War II. I have read and listened to these books many times, and count them among my favorites. The memorable characters from the first book return with even greater nuance. They are all deeply fascinating, even if you would not enjoy living with them. The setting and situation is extremely interesting. Superb writing.

Alice says

Things are getting nastier in Rumania and the British are deciding whether to stay or go. On to book 3!

Anne says

This second book of the series moves a little away from relationships and into action. The characters are more deeply developed and I actually began to like them and feel sympathy for them. I'm excited now to move to book 3

Marita says

Read my review here:
<https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>

Colin says

The account of british expats in Romania and (later) Greece continues with the noose tightening on Europe. She writes characters incredibly well. They really feel alive. This is a thing I seldom comment on in book reviews, so you know when I do mention it, it must be true!

Ali says

In The Spoilt City; Olivia Manning continues the story of Guy and Harriet Pringle, Yakimov, Inchcape, Clarence Lawson and co that she began in The Great Fortune. Picking up where the previous novel ended, the city of Bucharest is increasingly a city beset with uncertainty – the so called phoney war is over, and German invasion seems a greater possibility than ever. Olivia Manning writes beautifully about the city of Bucharest in the summer of 1940.

“As the sunset threw its reds and purples across the sky, the waiting crowds grew restless. Time was passing. Those in the square had been mostly men of the working classes. With evening, women appeared, their light clothes glimmering in the twilight. The first breath of cool air brought the prosperous Rumanians out for the promenade. Though they walked from habit into the Calea Victoriei and the Boulevard Carol, they were drawn back again and again to the square, the centre of tension.

When Guy returned from the University, Harriet said they must eat quickly, then go out and discover what was happening.”

The position of English people appears to be more precarious than it was – and as some people begin to leave the Pringles stay on. Guy is determined to hang on to his job in the English department at the university – insisting he must wait to be reassigned and can't just abandon his post. Harriet is more concerned about their position, and watches Guy holding on to a job that is daily becoming less and less required, with frustration. Guy's students are dwindling in number and Harriet isn't convinced, that the summer school, Guy is planning is a very good idea.

<https://heavenali.wordpress.com/2017/...>

tonia peckover says

Second book in the Balkan Trilogy - as intriguing and interesting as the first installment. Manning's characters are so maddening and human in the face of WWII. Of course, they don't know what's coming like the reader does, but their blithe, confident obliviousness is a little too close to home for me some days.
