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HILDEBRAND OCTOPUSSY AND VIEW THUNDERBALL
THE NEW YORK YOU DIE ME SERVICE
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007 LOVED

THE 007TH CHAPTER

A SERIES OF LITERARY MUSINGS
VOLUME ONE: HAPPENSTANCE
IAN FLEMING AND 'AS IAN FLEMING'
BY JACQUES I. M. STEWART

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THE MAN

WITH 15 WORD CLOUDS BY HEIKO BAUMANN

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VOLUME ONE: HAPPENSTANCE

IAN FLEMING AND 'AS IAN FLEMING'

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WITH 15 WORD CLOUDS BY HEIKO BAUMANN

A COMMANDERBOND.NET BOOK

Jacques I. M. Stewart

**The 007th Chapter –
a series of literary musings
Volume One: Happenstance –
Ian Fleming and ‘as Ian Fleming’**

with 15 word clouds by Heiko Baumann

A Commanderbond.net ebook

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Cover design, illustrations, layout and typesetting by Heiko Baumann

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This is not
a serious
experiment.

It resolves
nothing, and
proves less.
In seeking
to establish
what the
007th Chap-
ters of the

Bond books

could expose as the core
ingredients of such enterprises,
come not expecting truth or revela-
tion. It is better to travel hopefully than to
arrive. The only fact that can be asserted of
these brainbursts is that they are my opinions,
but I might be lying about that, to tell the truth
(or not). Nor are these pieces intended as a guide
for aspiring writers of Bond – be they “official” or
fan fiction. The latter category will glean noth-
ing from this exercise; the Bond novels tend to
have right good spelling and grammar. Plots.
Characters. Big words. As far as those
charged with filling remainder shops
with licensed literary 007 go, they
might just get depressed.

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The 007th Chapter

Volume One: Happenstance

*In memory of Ian Fleming, without whom
the fictional characters of James Bond and
Jacques Stewart would not have been created.*

This eBook was originally released in May
2015 to commemorate one hundred years
since Ian Fleming's 007th Birthday.

I come to bury Fleming, not to praise him.

[illegible]

Jacques Stewart was born in 1973 and educated at Eton. After a brief period at Top Man at Guildford he went abroad to waste his education. In 1994, having failed to be crowned Emperor of All Cress, he joined a Fiat Punto to a tree and amputated his left foot. During both Gulf Wars, he watched them on the telly. His wartime experiences provided him with first-hand knowledge of his expanding waistline.

After the wars he continued as a self-employed menace with a private income. He bought his house, House, in Oxfordshire and there at the age of forty he wrote The 007th Minute, a meretricious e-book bitching about the films featuring Commander James Bond. By the time of his death in 2744, seven people had downloaded it and one had even finished it, disappointed. Dr No, the first film featuring James Bond and starring Sean Connery, was released in 1962 and is one he actually quite likes and the Bond films continue to be huge international successes despite what he or any other anonymous human dust on the internet types about them. He is also the author of the magical children's book You Were A Mistake.

The opinions of Jacques Stewart were immediately recognised as total pus by his contemporaries 007izkewl, iluvpiersbrosmam and downloadtransformersfourherehotbabes. With the invention of James Bond, Ian Fleming created the greatest British fictional icon of the late twentieth century.

That, you already knew.

This is not a serious experiment.

It resolves nothing, and proves less. In seeking to establish what the 007th Chapters of the Bond books could expose as the core ingredients of such enterprises, come not expecting truth or revelation. It is better to travel hopefully than to arrive. The only fact that can be asserted of these brainbursts is that they are my opinions, but I might be lying about that, to tell the truth (or not). Nor are these pieces intended as a guide for aspiring writers of Bond – be they “official” or fan fiction. The latter category will glean nothing from this exercise; the Bond novels tend to have right good spelling and grammar. Plots. Characters. Big words. As far as those charged with filling remainder shops with licensed literary 007 go, they might just get depressed.

However, if you’re familiar with the Copyright, Design and Patents Act 1988 (it’s a page-turner: crammed to overflow with hot babes and the car chase is fab), you’ll be aware that copyright in literary works persists until 31 December of the seventieth year after the author’s death. Accordingly, in principle anyway, on 1 January 2035, it’s open season on Ian Fleming’s works. *In principle*. It might be tricky – you’re welcome to try, if you’re still around and, as with the man himself, fancy litigation as a retirement plan. There’s the small matter of the continuation novels and short stories, evidently created to better the cultural life of Planet Earth and not just preserve intellectual property rights (God forbid: *tchoh!*) and the equally splendid situation that the books now come with the deathly warning that James Bond and 007 are registered trademarks of Danjaq LLC, used under licence by IFP (kind of them). Trademark protection only lasts ten years, but critically it’s *renewable* (whereas, in so many ways, Ian Fleming is not, however many grave-based revolutions it is claimed he performs on hearing (despite being heavily death) of a blond Bond or an invisible car). Given the

happy-go-lucky good-natured attitude to their intellectual property that Danjaq have often demonstrated to fan websites, one suspects they'll send the form in on time.

I suppose that doesn't technically stop someone from using the text of (picking one *entirely* at random) Thunderball and changing the name and number – seemed to be the heart of the McClory argument, that – but one would doubt both the sanity and the point. I'm in no position to judge either, though, as will rapidly emerge.

Insofar as there's any structure to the venture, let's play Goldfinger:

VOLUME ONE: *Happenstance* will concentrate on the Flemings;

VOLUME TWO: *Coincidence* on the Gardners; and

VOLUME THREE: *Enemy Action, Although It's Actually Extremely Damaging Friendly Fire, What the Bloody Hell Are IFP Thinking?* on the likes of Benson, Higson, Deaver and Boyd, and probably Horowitz if I can bother myself with it.

Knowing full well that I have been faulty on Faulks, amiss on Amis and ungood on Wood and [something para-rhyming with Pearson (nothing para- rhymes with Pearson)] on Pearson, my views on their efforts must wait until these eBook versions although those who read these pieces on the Commanderbond.net website could have made a pretty accurate guess. As a clue, the overall structure may follow the classic dramatic arc of a first bit where everything's sunshiny and delicious; middle part, all dark and horrible and nasty, and stuff goes *very* wrong; third act, heroically back to form. Not too confident about that last one, frankly, but let's get going.

For the 007th Chapter experiment, I'm concentrating on the actual chapter itself as a snapshot of written Bond. Whilst, as with the 007th Minute exercise on the films, I could digress into laboured re-

THE 007TH CHAPTER

views of the remainder of the (de)merits of the product, that would necessitate having to read them all, and I have neither the time nor the patience nor (when it comes to more than a handful of the non-Fleming output) the absence of dignity.

All “quotes” from texts are, unless otherwise stated or completely made up in the pursuit of a specious point, copyright Ian Fleming Publications Limited.

THE 007TH CHAPTER – CASINO ROYALE: ROUGE ET NOIR

The blood of angry men; the dark of ages past.

Sorry, wrong *thing*.

An internal chapter, both in that it takes place largely indoors and also because we are invited to consider Bond’s attitude to gambling and women and luck: nutshell 007. There’s not much action *per se*, but it does deliver of two particular terraforming moments – meeting Leiter, and devising the Martini.

Insofar as staples of a Bond novel come, the hanging around casinos may be considered a given, but from memory much (in)activity tends also to be set in hotels: I recall the Gardners being irritatingly devoted to this. As a first glance of Bond’s hotel routines, this one’s startling in that he orders up a male Swedish masseur who, melting the tensions in Bond’s body (oh, yumster of *fnarr*), relaxes him nicely. Hmm. Ah, the days before multi-channel pay-perve-view. God alone knows how he claimed *that* on expenses.

The Fleming capacity to get the adjectives creamingly spot-on hits a bulls-eye with “still twanging nerves”. What else *could* they

do, and how else could Bond's innate violence be described? Fleming is an amusingly punchy writer and although it's easy to assume this comes of a training in the requirement to describe by a deadline within a given column-length of words, it's an easy assumption that I shall be making.

"Bond had always been a gambler". The detail, the theory and attitude described (at length) in the chapter delivers a prime example of creator and creation being on a par. In other incidents of this and other books, Bond's actions are attempts to outrage, but it's difficult to read the analysis of the gambler here as anything other than the writer directly addressing his audience, the fictional "James Bond" and the "story" merely the means of so doing. More monograph than monologue, it is initially easy to flick through it to get to the next bit of "James Bond Does X", but to do so misses the opportunity to read this *ite lide* in an upper-middle-class insouciant drawl, pausing only to light one's fortieth Turkish cigarette of breakfast-time. Directly addressing his audience, the author momentarily puts Bond into the background and unleashes his *Weltanschauung*. It happens throughout the book – Chapter 20 may as well be Fleming sitting up in bed pontificating about the nature of good and evil – and one could be drawn to the conclusion that all Casino Royale actually is, is a vehicle for Fleming to get his madcap personal theories across in a palatable manner that people would actually *buy* – guns, girl, gambling, torture and eating avocado for pudding – rather than have a dissolute, venerally diseased ex-pat journalist backed by family money write his philosophy "straight". What we've been given is *Ian Fleming: My Struggle* dressed in a borrowed velvet gown and served with plenty of toast.

A trite and well-used observation, perhaps, that Bond is fused to Fleming but it does begin to undermine, even so early as this, the frailty at the heart of the Bonds not written by Ian Fleming. Perhaps –

perhaps – Amis aside, do we “feel” anything of their authors themselves coming through the writing? Do John Gardner and Raymond Benson deliver the views of John Gardner and Raymond Benson? Is Sebastian Faulks doing anything other than giving us mockingly Fleming-lite views (and therefore rendering Devil May Care ever more curious as a “celebration” of Ian Fleming)? When Gardner invents his own hero in Captain Boldman and invests him with dull mannerisms, is there anything of John Gardner *there*? I’d hate to think so – in his interviews he didn’t come across as a stodgy Colonel Blimp with a penchant for chicken pie, crepe-soled shoes and Janet Reger underwear. Perhaps this is why the affection for Disney in *Never Send Flowers* really jars; not so much that James Bond “wouldn’t think that” (whyever not? He’s thick) but it’s nakedly the author bursting off the page and giving a view and it happens so very rarely in the Gardners, a disconcerting fourth-wall breach of an otherwise sealed world of alliterative names, weapon-fetishism, crimson fireballs and loop-the-loop traitors.

What can we make of Raymond Benson’s worldview through his Bonds? Admittedly, he was stuck with articulating the Brosnan-Bond, which was an unholy mess of a character that couldn’t be acted, never mind written. I suppose that time he has Bond eat Tex-Mex might be close, but that’s still incident rather than any particular opportunity to give us of the *echt* Raymond. One has seen numerous times when the continuation authors have remarked/whined defensively that they’re not Ian Fleming: that’s not my point. Are they actually *themselves*? Faulks, Boyd, Amis – these are not reticent writers by any means, all delivering small-p political and equally tiny-p philosophical material in other works – but you’d struggle to guess it from their Bonds. Arguably, Mr Deaver did produce something closer in tone to his other works, and he does appear to have faced criticism that *Carte Blanche*

is too much a Jeffery Deaver than a James Bond. Damned if you do... etc. I'm not offering a solution here, merely suggesting that giving the next author, erm, *carte blanche* to deliver [insert name here]'s James Bond might add some sparkle to the nakedly commercial issuing of "Some More Bond For Dollars". Just have to pick the right author. Whatever its curiosities of judgment, at least this Mr Deaver's effort is that author's James Bond and should be celebrated.

If not actually read.

"Bond had always been a gambler". Sticking with this, another thought emerges. Is Bond first-and-foremost a gambler rather than a spy? The views "he" is given to express about gambling are *univer-*
sally more enthused than the ennui-dripped asides he makes about his ostensible profession. Is the popular perceived focus of the character slightly askew: this is not a super-duper turbo-spy who enjoys high-living, *part* of which is gambling, but actually a committed and able gambler with a resented occupation? Seems a slightly healthier psyche, frankly. Is there a missing clause within the sentence reading "*(and not always a spy)*"? Is the first long hour of the Craig Casino Royale a million miles away from this? Were Casino Royale to have been the only Bond adventure, is it not a justifiable conclusion that its hero – John Band or something, not sure, it's obscure and out-of-print – is a professional gambler rather than a tremendously able and committed secret agent? It's a tale of gambling, not espionage. I accept that to get Bond into the position of facing off against Le Chiffre, the plot mechanic requires the spy stuff to get going, as does the concluding tragedy – but little else. Aware though I am that the first chapter is called "The Secret Agent", one suspects at this stage – before he realised where the money lay and thereafter having to contrive *ridiculous* adventure stories such as Goldfinger – Fleming's aim was an outrageous tale of high-stakes, vividly-described

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gambling. It's in those passages that the loving detail emerges, and in this 007th Chapter more than most. The fight between Bond and Le Chiffre is as players, not spies. Perhaps if this had been a series about card-sense Jimmy Bond rather than Bond, James Bond Fights A Giant Squid, it wouldn't have lasted.

Meanwhile, James Bond is hanging around the Hotel Splendide waiting for his dad to stop going *on and on* about his theory of luck. Be careful what you wish for, matey – his roulette theory's next.

“Bond saw luck as a woman, to be softly wooed or brutally ravaged, never pandered to or pursued.” What a little charmer. Does he ever truly act on this, though? Internally “brave” thinking but the book Bond tends towards chivalry – if not going out of his way to woo, exactly – rather than brutal ravaging. All talk, and still not quite right in the head, but he never does come “good” on these thoughts, fortunately. I suspect there may be the odd slap here and there, but is there anything quite as brutal as ConneryBond in Goldfinger's barn or the scene where Nice Uncle Roger smacks Maud Adams about? Come to think of it, what is the plot of *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* other than pandering to and pursuing the incredibly annoying Tracy? Closer to “home”, the relationship with Vesper? I suppose one could argue that such howling inconsistencies with this lunatic view demonstrates character development, although one recalls similar views expressed in later books and with the likes of Pussy Galore, the attitude gets measurably worse. When it comes to acting on these thoughts, fortunately he's all trousers and no mouth.

“But he was honest enough to admit that he had never yet been made to suffer by cards or by women.” Oh, spoiler *A-Lert*. Rather puts Double or Die and By Royal Command in their respective places but it is probably best not to worry about such things too much otherwise this could get even more contrived than it already is.

As the chapter progresses, the glee in the detail of Bond's routine shines through. Couple of fundamentals emerge. Firstly, the nth degree of detail is journalistic eyeballing; this much is a given. Consider, though, what type of journalism it is: this is *travel writing*, not just a journey through places, but the things, the attitudes, the people of an alien and aspirational fantasyland, just across the gunmetal Channel and still out of reach. Thrilling Cities be damned: he was doing it all the time, guiding us through a heightened reality realm of wish-fulfilment. This is, of course, the core weakness of all the continuations: many have better stories than Fleming (the plot of *Goldfinger*, for example, is inane) but none of them carry you around on their shoulders as much as he does, letting your childish eyes gawp at all the magical *stuff*. More darkly, it's a world slightly out of reach to all, and most of all to its creator, only achievable through the expression of his imagination; there's a dissatisfied *desperation* in Fleming, tangible in passages such as this. Perhaps it's only human nature, to only achieve fulfilment through fantasy.

Is it simply a game for rich young boys to play? The colour of the world is changing, day by day...

Secondly, this Bond is not a sloppy man; arguably he's OCD and that of course manifests itself in other ways, such as his dinner orders, the upcoming recipe for the Martini and his breakfast habits, which veer towards prissiness. No wonder "slightly slovenly" Tiffany Case couldn't bear it after a while, and one does wonder what the Bond/diVincenzo union would actually have been like, her off her nut and spending money neither of them had, him quietly adjusting the towels and stirring his eggs. I'm not suggesting anything about the Anne Rothermere/Ian Fleming marriage here: Not. At. All. There is fun to be had in the detail, and evidently Fleming is in his element telling us how Bond approaches his gambling, which

does help us get an insight into this overcontrolling maniac. This is a man of set ways – it's not abundantly clear that the experiences of the book change him or have him lighten up at all thereafter – and one wonders whether anyone so predictable would really be any good as a secret agent. You'd see him coming a mile off – he's the one in the Sea Island cotton short sleeved shirt and the knitted silk tie, brushing marmaladed toastcrumbs off himself. Not a good look for a Leningrad winter. Sociopathic fusspot; all they had to do was threaten to drop one of his eggcups and he'd have had a right old thrombie. Don't even think about giving him *raspberry* jam. Interesting characteristic – the film Bond seems considerably more lax in his mannerisms and routines, although one could argue that the laboured coffee-making in *Live and Let Die* is arguable proof that Roger Moore was playing James Bond after all. Unclear what this ever-so-slightly-anal-even-discounting-the-homoerotic-under-tones Book Bond would make of Daniel Craig talking whilst eating or The Actor Piers Brognog wearing a cravat, other than to pass out in panic.

“As he seemed to be in luck [*albeit unclear whether a-woo or a-ravage at this juncture*], one or two pilot fish started to swim with the shark.” Oh Ian, you big old softy: we know who you fan-cy.

“Bond – James Bond.” Flirting with a nice young blond American who thanks him for “the ride”, Bond stumbles into an iconic moment, and there's more of the “classic” Bond dross in here than perhaps its reputation suggests. Despite assertions elsewhere to the contrary, I think by Mr Benson, *Q* is mentioned in *Casino Royale*, towards the end of chapter 3, thus rendering the blame for his sheer mouth-drying splendour at the foot of the books rather than the films. Now we have the backsy-forwardsy-attention seeking name intro, and as these two bachelors proceed to compliment

each other and head off for a stiff one, we get the Martini. Served, rather oddly, in a deep champagne goblet. Well, *that's* not camp, is it? I suppose this thrustingly heterosexual confection was intended to outrage the reader, stuck in drizzly austerity Britain and rationing his own spit. If you want to make this game interactive, and too much/any reading hurts your eyes/brain, at this point watch the bit in Casino Royale where Our Blue-Eyed Blond Boy delivers the lines – it's spot on. Bond intends to patent the drink when he can “think of a good name”. Not actually possible under the CDPA – this Bond, he's full of bollocks, isn't he? In Leiter's dreams, anyway – and so far as a name goes, how about “Mental Gaybo”? “OC-Deep Throat”?

Had you been there tonight, you might know how it feels, to be struck to the bone in a moment of breathless delight.

Bone. Fnarr.

Bond, having ably demonstrated that he knows how to pleasure a barman – look, I'm not the one writing this filth – engineers the reaction “Gosh!” from Mass'r Leiter. I plead ignorance here, but is that a common American expression? Strikes me as being a bit British, slightly “Crumbs!” or “Crivens!” or “Cor!”. I expect I'm wrong, but I've never heard the Americans of my acquaintance – lovely people, all: such nice teeth – use the expression, even when my nakedness would have given them just cause.

Bond likes his “large and strong” and hates small portions of anything, “especially when they taste bad”. Oh, you *riot*. Just stop! The drink comes (can this be right?) as “pale golden”, about which I'm writing nothing, because the joke I was going to make was only going to be vile. But in keeping with where this scene's *patently* trolling towards, bruising of the shaker and all. Additionally, Bond

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knows filthy French, which cannot be a *huge* surprise in “context”. It’s more “colourful” than musical theatre, this. I’m struggling for a suitable show, however.

“But Leiter was still interested in Bond’s drink. ‘You certainly think things out,’ he said with amusement...” Don’t worry Felix, you’ve *pulled*. Don’t overdo it; try not to sound overkeen. However, bear in mind what an expensive date this Bond man is – it was your round and he practically drank the bar dry. When it’s his turn to buy the drinks, just screech “Cham-Pagne!” and see how he reacts. Word of advice: if at some point he suggests making you breakfast, *run*. He gets so weird about that.

“...so I’m particularly glad you didn’t get blown to glory.” Oh, get a room. I’m not making this up. Single man has massage, dresses up right fancy, delivers of his dismissive views of women, hangs around with an athletic blond chap who plies him with the second gayest of all the gay drinks (second only to Guinness). If this were the only bit of James Bond you ever read, you’d be amazed it wasn’t banned. Oh, let them talk and let the haters hate. This is a fateful meeting!

Had you been there tonight, you might also have known, how the world may be changed in just one burst of light! And what was right seems wrong, and what was wrong, seems right.

Soooo right.

Yes, I know I’m looking at this through jaded/juvenile 2014-ey eyes but they’re the only ones I have so I guess you’re going to have to help me with “the coping”.

During the subsequent conversation Leiter basically gives himself up to Bond as his underling, which is a) munchable of thought and b) seems to chime pretty well with the attitude to Leiter and

the United States generally in the films: helping hands. Fnarr. Leaving this unutterably puerile – albeit heavily suggested – avenue aside, at face value the conversation between Bond and Leiter does express a cynicism about world politics and the spy game that the simpler/simplistic films have tended to avoid in order to grasp money. That'll return.

Meanwhile, back at the subtext, Bond indulges in a reverie about the fineness of good Americans and the particular qualities of Texans. Practising the line in his head before delivery, one supposes, and at least it avoids having to contemplate where we now are on the Woo-/Ravage-ometer. Play it cool, James: he passed your test in buying you the World's most expensive drink with barely a flutter of the eyelids. He's a keeper. He also dresses like Frank Sinatra, which is an interesting contemporaneous pop-culture reference and is it really any better than referencing Harry Potter or The Rolling Stones, as later authors have been wont to do and for which they have received criticism? For half a page Bond effectively eyes-up Feel Licks Leiter and I'm pretty sure (cannot be bothered looking) that subsequent female characters of Bond's acquaintance are similarly blessed with a "wide wry mouth" and/or "grey eyes [...with] a feline slant", albeit I can't now recall whether any came with "the jack-knife quality of a falcon", whatever that might be. Not that one eyeballs falcons on a regular basis, but I'm not totally sold on the avian toolshed metaphor. That said, a number of birds I've known have been right old hoes.

"A mop of straw-coloured hair lent his face a boyish look which closer examination contradicted." Remember to tell the police that. Leiter speaks "quite openly" – ooh, *innee bold?* – about his "duties in Paris" – the mind boggles although you can guess the direction in which it boggleth. And now it's hotel time.

THE 007TH CHAPTER

The incident of the thwarted bomb, the damage observed by Bond and Leiter, one assumes has its parallel in the extended Miami Airport chase sequence of the 2006 film, albeit in the book the miscreants accidentally blow themselves up. Insofar as it's only a light parallel, that's definitely one of those "Unused Fleming" things that could work its way into one of the films at some point. I was half-expecting it in the film's café sequence with Mathis and slightly disappointed that it didn't occur as this would have saved an undignified cameo from one of the producers and a very clunky reference to Photoshop. Albeit no clunkier than suggesting that Leiter is channeling Sinatra (and that's a positively obscene thought).

The discussion about the concierge – some deft writing to sashay from one conversation into another without anyone really noticing – is more high-living detail, delivering unto a rain-soaked readership the need to know such a thing, and bunging in the odd maharajah for good measure. The chapter is sybaritic to the nth degree. Bond gambles milles and milles and milles of francs (about 10p), he has a rough massage from a strapping Swede, he drinks vodka cocktails with a comely chap who has "speed and strength in him", with luck, and now he arranges to meet his new chum back at the Casino – ooh, second date! All this must have outraged. Does leave one wondering about that passage (fn... *no*) in *The Man with the Golden Gun* where, with Bond reLeitering the flame, the language and habits of spies and homosexuals are paralleled. This 007th Chapter demonstrates that they'd been at it like (jack) knives for *years*.

More sensibly, what has the chapter laid down as Bondnovel ingredients, albeit ingredients slightly less precisely articulated than Double-OCD's drinks order? Questionable attitude to women, look-but-don't-touch aspiration, high-living just beyond the

reach of all of us, Felix Leiter, Bond James Bond, precision instrument, undercurrent of violence? Seems like a good start. As a 007th Chapter, this one has relentless detail propelling a short chapter forward, a handful of time-barred cultural references and questionable American-English idiom. And there we were thinking Carte Blanche was *rubbish*.

JAMES BOND WILL RETURN IN THE 007TH CHAPTER OF
LIVE AND LET DIE. JACQUES STEWART HAS ORDERED A MASSEUR
FOR THREE O'CLOCK. MRS JIM IS VISITING FRIENDS AND AN
OLD MAN NEEDS COMPANY NOW AND AGAIN.

[illegible]

*S*ense of adventure. (My emphasis).

I'm fibbing – can't take the credit. Not my emphasis at all. The very first sentence of the Bond "thing" directly appeals to sense or, more precisely, the scents. Wiser minds than mine write of a Fleming *Sweep*; I prefer a *Feel*, and that's not an invitation. Oh, put it *away*.

Even just over one book in, one can unimaginatively deduce that Ian Fleming is a sensual writer, and not so much in the commonly adopted sexualised understanding of "sensual", despite this 007th chapter of *Live and Let Die* concluding with a 20-stone Negro, having leatherstrapped a man to a chair (an act described at excitable length), proceeding to whip a witch with an ivory riding-crop whilst a voodoo scarecrow leers on. Might have been yer average Tuesday round Goldeneye way but is an unusual domestic encounter for most, I'd wager, and would doubtless justify police intervention. I mean – *ivory*. Tsk!

A swift rubber of Bridge it is not. That's in the next one.

Usually at its strongest when he's neglecting the tedium of "plot", look at where the detail frequently – if not, admittedly, universally – lies, in engaging the base senses. How often Fleming lets his descriptions fly towards (say) food and drink – the enjoyment of both the descriptions of the menus and the experiences of the tastes – and elsewhere, be it places or people or flowers, birds and weapons: the smell, the touch, the sound. The sickly zoo smell of Oddjob. Recognising countless perfumes and soaps. The sight of Honeychile Ryder emerging naked from the sea. Cars are not a means of getting to destinations but a sensual destination in themselves, an immersion in a highly tactile experience; there are very few passages of Bond driving when he's not totally engaged in the sweat, the smoke, the blast of wind in the face, the supercharged sound of it. The "touch" of a carpet beater. Guns and engines don't fire; they *roar*. That the sex never goes – never *needs* to go – beyond the first erotic touches. All five senses engaged in a midnight wander through Blofeld's Garden of Death. As atmosphere, it's thermosphere, so heightened is the delivery.

Sensational.

Literally.

Then, the trick emerges, and the trap is set for those unwise enough to follow. The easy perception is that Fleming does "detail"; ooh, lots of "detail" in Fleming, there is. The failing is not acknowledging that he knew when to let it go, only wanting to describe those things that interested him. Once he has you by the senses, once you are immersed by his drowning you in the sights and the scent and smoke and sweat of wherever he's placed you – Northern France, Japan, Istanbul, Jamaica, matters not – he can step back and leave you to wallow, enblissed floating. There's a key example of this in the 007th chapter of *Live and Let Die*. He's led us, whirling, through

a turbo-fictionalised Harlem for a couple of chapters, soaking in its juices, and here, so drenched are we, we'll just imbibe without question that Mr Big has a pistol masked by a drawer keyhole. We have been prepared for the ludicrous.

“Again, there was nothing absurd about this gun. Rather painstaking, perhaps, but, he had to admit, technically sound.”

Come off it, no it's *NOT*. And yet, we gulp it down. It's only later do we question what we've been spiked with. That is *trust*. Perhaps a trust abused, but you take it at the time, giggling slightly. There is *no* explanation of how this gun works. There doesn't need to be. Your Clancys, your Lee Childs, closer to home your Gardners and Bensons, would tell us that the protagonist takes only an atosecond to work out – if not an atosecond to describe, unfortunately – how it was a Sillitoe-Bumpluck point 660 with a Horace flange and dingadong buttress and forty leveret hosiery and some such boring, boring *unnecessariness*. The skill is that one needs to know when *not* to describe, when to stop fact getting in the way of a good story. So convinced are these others that you would doubt what they say, they clobber you over the head with neanderthal factual detail to nail misguided veracity onto a patently farcical enterprise, thereby ironically undermining its allure, its success, rather than promoting it. Desensitising is counterproductive as a seduction technique: ask any lorry driver. It's possible that Fleming was too idle to describe it “properly”; equally so that he rightly considered anyone actually interested in guns as a wee bit mental. Still, the evidence suggests that Bond is not about *relentless* description of every frickin' thing. It's about knowing when the trigger doesn't need to be pulled. Probably because it patently wouldn't work.

Damn damn damn damn.

THE 007TH CHAPTER

Once you've been seduced, once he's touched you, you can only give in and just snort it all up. Otherwise you'd realise that this is a tale in which one man threatens to shoot another with his *desk*.

THE 007TH CHAPTER – LIVE AND LET DIE: MISTER BIG

In the realm of the senses...

Gosh! Fastidious gentleman gambler/demented pedantic psychopath and harbourer of extreme views James Bond (trademark, Danjaq LLC) 007 (trademark, Danjaq LLC) returns, and he's in a bit of a pickle and no mistake. Our first 007th Chapter gave us our hero (picky), his lifestyle (camp), his theories (...challenging) and his bestest lovely chum (what rumours?). This time around, we get peril, the grotesque, the villain and the girl. The experiment could stop now, but I know that will only please you, so onward with drivel (trademark, me).

Odd staccato opening paragraph, punches of very short sentences, glimpses, snapshots, a (literal) passage of time. Shaky-cam, jump-cut editing. Oh, just complain rather than marvel.

Ah, time to deal with the voodoo god in the room, the door having been opened by a "negro in evening dress" speaking in a curious patois. Live and Let Die, the Bond novel that comes with its own burning cross, a wildly offensive paranoid racist screed setting the Civil Rights movement back a thousand years, embarrassingly prejudiced and uncomfortable to read. But no – or "Shaddap" – say others: it is merely of its time and one cannot judge it by current societal norms.

I don't think it's either of those things, which are ultimately two sides of the same Edward IV Rose Noble hallmarked with "these

are genuine opinions that you either excuse or you don't". They're not, are they? Just as James Bond's actions are beyond the limit – mashed up nadgers, boiled alive in a steam-shaft, bits eaten out of him by a barracuda; if real, he'd be dead – so are his *reactions*. The whole enterprise is fictional. Why would one accept the physical action as impossible fantasy and not the rest of it? As extreme as the fights are the views, and the depiction of the world. Why would Fleming stop at exaggerating what Bond does and not also apply that absurdity to what he *thinks*? Why should it be any different to accept – be it in the 1950s, the 1980s or the 2010s – that James Bond is a diverting concept because he does things I cannot possibly do, or have done, than to accept – be it in the 1950s, the 1980s or the 2010s – that James Bond is a diverting concept because he observes things I cannot possibly see, or have seen?

It's no more a truthful insight into, or emanation of, the 1950s as it is of the 1450s. Just as breaking Bond's finger, or keelhauling him, or having him crawl through tarantulas or kicking him to near-death with footer boots or shoving a buzzsaw between his legs are all there to mischievously shock, so is this sort of stuff. Fleming may well be giving us lurid details of a place and a time, but they're both ones he's *made up*. As with the lead character, start it in realism and push it beyond. Is this "Harlem" any more real than the fictional Royale-les-Eaux, a flamboyantly idealised recreation of initially genuine experiences?

James Bond is an unreal character and therefore the only convincing milieu for him is one of equivalent fabrication. What he does is not real; nor is what he thinks, or sees. The author is fan-fictionalising *himself*, fetishising his physical self beyond depressingly limiting human capacity; the relentless smoking, the over-drinking, the capacity to love and leave 'em and be admired for it and not have

caught a nasty, human, enfeebling disease from all or any of these activities. Similarly, he's indulging in fantasy views that the norms of frail social reality hold him back from expressing lest he incite some sort of race war. In mind and deed, the character demonstrates parallels of fantasy. A life *sensationalised*, everything – every action, every thought – turned up to 11 and beyond.

I don't want Bond's world tangible, to have these things within my grasp, because they're joyously comic. Fleming accentuating his experiences to put this supercharged version even beyond his own reach – ultimately, his frustration – is my entertainment. I neither want nor *need* James Bond to be “real” or tell me anything precisely accurate about tradecraft or the social mores of the times in which it's set. The author is fleeing from the disappointment of himself, and I'm happy to join him. He has to make it unreal to make his escape and escape the blubbery arms of the soft life from dragging him back. I don't need James Bond brought down to my level. I'm well aware that Fleming on occasion has Bond eating ham sandwiches and skulking around a damp London, but he escapes to adventure soon enough, and adventure escalates the senses. This is not a world within the experience of the contemporaneous reader; it's not a world within anyone's *experience*. As such, for example, I don't get Bond in a SAAB. Too easily achieved. My mother drove a SAAB. My gardener (no pun intended) currently does, although I understand that he's looking to trade up to a bicycle. Would driving a SAAB render me James Bond, or simply make the domestic help?

Criticising the “Harlem” of Live and Let Die as racist is as credible as criticising Narnia for having a poor public transport infrastructure, or Slytherin house for being total bastards, or believing that what someone writes about themselves on the internet is somehow real or that by arguing with such persons you are in receipt of

their genuinely held views. Ian Fleming had no internet on which to exaggerate his worldview in order to puckishly provoke people he'd never met. His only recourse was to publish, sell several million copies and allow his heirs to live well. I'm "sensing" that he probably won that one.

Likewise, defending it as "of its time" persists in the delusion that *Live and Let Die* is a documentary or sociological record, either of the place it depicts or the views it expresses. Dissecting a fantasy seems pointless. Ultimately, it's a joke. It might not be a very wise joke, nor a very funny one, but it's no more a study of the genuine nature of the period and place – or the genuine view of the author – than *Batman* is a realistic depiction of the life of an orphaned paedophile. Or that that's a realistic opinion of *Batman*. I appreciate that "but it was only a joke" is the empty defence of the racist, or sexist, or homophobe – all of which labels have been applied to Ian Fleming at one time or another – and that's why I put my observation no higher than an *argument*, not a conclusion. I do think it's *arguable*.

The distinguishing factor – you may think this too thin to pass muster – is that in the "racist joke", the ostensible joker is passing observation on things as they are in a subliminal assertion of superiority, of mock: *Live and Let Die* is a record of things as they never were, never have been, and its descriptions are of *fascination* at what is fictionalised. I suspect even if this view has merit, it's difficult to reconcile it with the stuff about Koreans and Zer Beastly Hun that infiltrates later books. Ian Fleming may well have been a racist and expressed racist views, but the depiction of race in *Live and Let Die* is so lavish, so cartoonish, so *engaged* and full of curiosity, of the same nature as his depictions of Japan or the undersea world, that I don't take it as a racist text. It's where he's blunter and less imaginative that I find it much harder to – if this is the word – tolerate.

I accept that likening it to his observations of the Technicolor underwater realm is to compare this “Harlem” to the animal kingdom and thereby make it an inappropriate allusion at a surface level, but I’m prepared to argue that the general spirit, the intention of the presentation, is in parallel.

I seem to recall that towards the end of the book, Fleming has Mr Big self-indulge about being the first of the great Negro criminals. One benevolent reading of that is that Fleming is stating that there weren’t any prior to 1954, which is jolly unracist of him and not what Fox News beams into my brain as da troot. A less gentle reading is that the race is peculiarly susceptible to Communist interference, which tends to swing the paravane the other way. Still, the whole of Great Britain was taken in by Sir Hugo Drax, so nobody’s perfect.

Being of the international beige persuasion myself, if only since birth, it took me a while to reconcile myself to this book, and given the opportunity now to freely articulate my view of it at *its strongest*, the frailty of my “defence” may expose that I still have yet to. Being a spineless hypocritical liberal, live and let live unless you say something I don’t like, I wonder if I would be quite so sanguine about it were I lolling about in a parallel dimension where its Live and Let Die didn’t depict “Negro” villains but women, or homosexuals or the Welsh (Llive and Llet Dai) and dealt with them in an equivalent manner. I would admit that the slightness of my proposition might well be exposed and not withstand a similar depiction of, say, a villain with Down’s Syndrome or equivalent. I haven’t yet averred whether I think the references to “those clumsy black apes” or describing a dancer’s face as “chienne” (bit steep, that) is nice – it isn’t; it’s jawdropping, pejorative and outrageous caricature. I’m only explaining it; I’m not excusing it. *Ah*, you might say (if you had

the temerity to interrupt *me*), you there, yes *you*, you in Uncle Jim's Cabin, do you not realise that's how extremists thrive, lofty disinterested disdain of the flaneur treating them as buffoons, and then suddenly tomorrow belongs to them, or never dies, whatever, and they're in power? To which I respond: *Aw, honey; dey ain't no use tryin' tuh git mad at me. Ah done nuthen tuh give yuh reacsion tuch ack dat way. Guess ah jist nacherlly gits tahd listen' at yuh. Whyn't yuh hush yo mouff'n let me 'joy mahself 'n peace 'n qui-yet.*

Preposterous. And really rather exhausting. *Ectually*. All pretty puerile.

"Puerile? Perhaps, after all, not to be dismissed so easily."

On reflection, is it sane to be offended by something so *evidently* exaggerated? Or by a handful of (off) colour references but not by the *incredible* amounts of physical violence in the book inflicted no matter one's skin; sticks and stones... and sharks may break/chew my bones but words will never hurt me. No saner than anyone seeking to rely on its deranged sentiments as justifiable or fair comment, or the basis of a view we need to which we need to give heed. It's plainly unfair comment and it's plainly fantastical. In this hypersensed world, it's the type of sense called "non". To react offended is to invest it – and anyone expressing themselves this way – with far too much credibility. It's only uncomfortable if you impose upon it that there should have been a tangible comfort drawn and Fleming was *obliged* to give us reality. That was never going to happen. The author wants us shaken up, witnesses to an alien world; only then will we buy what's actually happening here: mediumistic hotties, man-eating sharks, voodoo death cults and pirate treasure. So extreme is it that the fact there's a demon standing in the room throughout the chapter is just noted incident rather than completely bloody ridiculous.

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Rant over. I may have exaggerated my view. Seemed wholly appropriate, in the circs.

Aaaaand... we're back in the room, where...

"...Mr Big sat looking quietly at them." One wonders how he could look *noisily*. Anyway, they're meeting in a library so, y'know, *Ssssh!* Bond has a nice sit down in a swanky leather and tubular steel chair that Solitaire foresaw as becoming all the rage for set design by 1973. Handy person to have around, that, when you're thinking of redoing the lounge.

"Bond at once realised that the photographs had conveyed nothing of this man, nothing of the power and the intellect which seemed to radiate from him..."

Yeah, I get that a lot, too.

Mr Big, the great black communist, the last chapter's *rouge et noir* turning tricks once more. What we're all getting is a regulation Fleming mutant, with his "over-size" features, and "football" head, presumably the association variety rather than the throwy-egg one. Everything's been inflated and insanely out of proportion so far, so why not this guy? The manner of the description – the eyes far apart in a huge head on a huge body – leads one to speculate whether the way the similar (ish...) character in the film dies is unforgiveable sacrilege, or actually a very sly homage, albeit one with a comedy farty noise flurped all over it. A ghastly misfit, then, bulging and huge and animalistic and awe-inspiring, with (ahem) *golden eyes*. Oh, har de har har, Ian old lad. Swift glance suggests he's not one of the good guys, then.

Second in a long line of Fleming grotesques, ugliness equating to villainy, one's aesthetic sense engaged and repulsed in equal measure. Not just in the physicals – we're invited to react just as disfa-

vourably to the man's vanity, the showiness of the diamond studs as offensive as the absence of eyelashes or [insert German title for *The Living Daylights*... *here*]. Obviously Bond has *his* potentially debilitating affectations and that's one manifestation of the parallels Le Chiffre was at pains to point out in the last book, but Fleming excuses those, even if they're just as unlikely and just as daft. Send a hyperbolized loony to catch a hyperbolized loony. It is arguable that in pointing so readily at the freakshow there's much of the school bully in the manner in which Fleming lingers on the physical aberrations and unedifying personal habits of Bond's foes – this is expressly acknowledged in Bond's subsequent taunting of Drax – but, again, the deformities are so exaggerated and pumped-up, it's hard not to laugh at the nerve of it. He's not picking on realistic afflictions, just as he's not picking on real, um, "Negroes".

"The smell of the room was neutral". Diminish one sense, more than one with Bond's arms starting numb, but accentuate another – the chapter is primarily about the visual, on three bases. Firstly, in scene-setting. The expansive description of the distorted Mr Big aside, there's a long passage about the lair, lined with "bookshelves, packed with books" (as opposed to – what?), a contrast between the comfort zone traditional depiction of the library of a millionaire and unsettling us all by decorating it with a voodoo erection; *not* the sort of thing one usually sees at Cliveden, unless The Rolling Stones or Pat Robertson are in town. Solitaire gets her own leeringly OTT description, a brutally unsubtle white/black juxtaposition. Also, lest we forget, a syncretic monster with a "gold knob" (fnarr) kicking about, just to remind us that Bond has descended from [Quentin Tarantino's Most Favourite Special Naughty Word] Heaven, via Table Z, to a particular vision of Hell, several interpretations of "criminal underworld" liberally flung around.

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Secondly, consider how much of this chapter is about sight, and the eyes. Bond and Mr Big spend considerable time simply scrutinising each other, likewise Solitaire and Bond. The attendant henchpersons' whites of the eye bloat when in the presence of their demon. The eye of the desk-gun threatens. Mr Big has blazing, animal (yeah, yeah, *golden*) eyes with their own mild deformity of an absence of brows and eyelashes, eyes that can go opaque when in thought. The villain has seen through Bond and Leiter's cover story. Solitaire, oversensed via the luxury of second sight, demonstrates her skill through observing the captive's eyes and her initial allying signal to Bond is through her "alight and disdainful" eyes alone. Her reaction to being whipped is similarly only ocular, eyes blazing and then opaque in a manner that suggests she and the villain are indeed spiritually joined, or their mutual creator is a bit lazy. Mr Big expressly states that he has "not seen" a member of the secret service since the War, rather than "not met". Just look at the wordcloud for this 007th Chapter – eyes feature big here, and not just those bulging at the sight of Baron Samedi. Whilst towards the end of the chapter there's some "touching" of both the brutal and sexualised variety (some of it in the same swish of the riding-crop), the eyes have it.

Thirdly, perhaps most contentiously, Fleming lets the mind's eye see unsettling things, deliberately provoking us when, having described the respective physical attributes of Mr Big (impressive but loathsome) and Solitaire (impressive and *vair naice*), he causally invites us to contemplate their children and, by implication, renders our imagination witnesses to the manner and means of (re)production. Tickling out the reader's prejudices: I can't see (o-ho!) any other reason to even mention this. Oh Ian, you big old naughty. Is it this "Harlem" and its inhabitants being mocked, or the reader?

For all of this, throughout the chapter Bond is a monument to cool reason – *you*, reader, might be disturbed and thrilled but James Bond takes it all in his stride, or at least until Solitaire turns up. It's only at the end of the chapter that Bond experiences excitement and a thrill, and it's nothing to do with his mission; just turned by a pretty face and a nicely valleyed arrangement of breasts. Again, a sense similar to that in the 007th chapter of *Casino Royale*, that the job itself is not the thrill. Where the excitement emerges is in the ancillary stuff that comes with such a role: in the previous book, gambling and in this one, the opportunity to meet hot babes. His attitude to having his life threatened is remarkably nonchalant, as is the effort he can bother putting into his cover story (which he proceeds to blow on the first page of the next chapter, anyway). The “spy” job is *totally* incidental to the benefits-in-kind. Whereas other Bond authors may have delivered more coherent and carefully-constructed tales of espionage, more doubtful whether they put life and experience first, and spying and all that silly guff very much a bothersome second? Well, we'll see.

“I found her in a cabaret in Haiti, where she was born”. Her mother's novel twist on the old ping-pong ball act, then. Yet more exaggeration still in the suggestion that Solitaire is *telepathic* – the film may be daft in places, but even that stops at suggesting that she's only pretty good at interpreting carrrrddss. I can't recall in the rest of the book whether we witness her exercising her specialness on anyone other than Bond (whom she plainly fancies rotten as this 007th chapter makes abundantly clear) and it's therefore not a totally honest demonstration. Does she read Felix Leiter's mind? Ah, probably best not. Bit of a sewer. She doesn't seem to bother reading the minds of the men who shove her into a crate, for example. Why not? I'm always suspicious of callers, stood there pretending

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to serve court papers or claiming they're my children when it's evident they're trying to rope me into their crackpot religion; that one with the talking snake sounds daft. Towards the end of the book Fleming bothers to remember her "powers" as risking giving away Bond's escape plan through fear-of-death hysterics, but as they've just been menaced for a solid half-chapter by Mr Big promising oblivion, it's no more foresight than anyone would have in the circumstances. She's a total fraud.

A lover who *can read your mind*? Uh-oh. Not surprising Bond drops her asap.

Solitaire's physicals besport unusual descriptions. The delicate and finely cut jawline shows an iron will "repeated in the straight, pointed nose". Eh? The face has a "lack of compromise". Uh? Vivid, no doubt; punchy, oh yes. Actually meaning anything – questionable. Still, she does have a wide, sensual (ha!) mouth, with a hint of cruelty, which all sounds eerily familiar for Bond in meeting his perfect woman, slightly narcissistic really, and overall, it's the face of "a daughter of a French Colonial slave-owner". Pick the irony out of that one.

The brief, violent assault the black man unleashes upon the white woman with the black hair wearing the white dress with a (presumably) white ivory riding-crop at least gives us some (bizarre) action in an otherwise sedentary chapter, and suggests a couple of points. Firstly, if she is anything more than a cabaret act and *is* actually telepathic, surely Solitaire should have foreseen the blow coming and ducked? No wonder Mr Big's upset: he's been had. Secondly, albeit it's a different context to, and point in, the film, there's a credible enough parallel between the respective scenes that demonstrates a) Eon was more faithful to the spirit of the book than comedy Sheriffs may suggest and b) what an underrated performance Mr Kotto

gave. As for the “thong” whistling through the air, a hilarious image in a modern context, I suspect that’s simply the passage of time decaying the primary meaning of a word. Similarly, the cheerful and friendly Felix Leiter seems very gay.

And yet, Mr Big doesn’t seem too bothered. Next chapter in, he’ll bang on about his boredom, which one could already have guessed at given that he’s named one of his henchpersons “McThing”, which is shocking laziness. Despite all his ostensible Spooky McDook awareness of everything that’s going on, he seems to ignore the stuff about Solitaire making the knave of hearts kiss the queen of spades. Queen of SPADES. Yeah: shock and awe subtlety-bomb, that. Well done, Ian. Bet you coughed up a lung chortling at that one. Do hope so. Whatever it was, I hope it hurt. Better get to the end of the chapter quickly otherwise I might *rapidly* revise my earlier theory about whether Fleming was a racist...

...but not my view of the overall intention, the pounding delivery of sensual atmospherics. Other passages in the book, other 007th chapters, may emphasise the sounds or smells of a place or person or incident, but this one’s about seeing. What one can get away with.

JAMES BOND WILL RETURN IN THE 007TH
CHAPTER OF MOONRAKER. JACQUES STEWART
SHALL NOW RETIRE TO SLIP ON HIS LEMON-
COLOURED GLOVES AND POLISH HIS GOLD KNOB.

MOONRAKER

THE QUICKNESS OF THE HAND

round
sadism
saw waiting
greed
first
EXECUTION
deal
two
chair
good
waited
snobbery
Queen
took
moment
might
almost
voice
night
table
honours
room
club
partner
Basildon
knew
made
trick
led
King
across
ACE
looked
EYES
Knave
class M.
slowly
back
right
Diamonds
put
along
got
card
Spades
rubber
face
hands
one
last
stood
Hearts
to
picked
just
bet
play
game

In an act of stool-loosening snobbery, in 1957 Ian Fleming wrote a financial-suicide note to CBS.

“In hard covers my books are written for and appeal principally to an “A” readership, but they have all been reprinted in paperbacks, both in England and in America and it appears that the “B” and “C” classes find them equally readable, although one might have thought that the sophistication of the background and detail would be outside their experience and in part incomprehensible.”

A modest missive, amusingly provocative in using the letters ABC when writing to a competitor, and a curious proposition when “the background and detail” of *Live and Let Die* I would suggest is beyond *anyone’s* experience, unless they’ve eaten too much cheese before beddy-bye. Slightly thick – a.k.a. “C” – letter to write to a maker of television, that most plebian of media, even if hindsight rewards him with Eon Productions hoving into view. It’s unclear why he considered Bs and Cs incapable of tackling hardback books, unless he feared their using them as trays from which to eat their gristleslop whilst... watching television.

THE 007TH CHAPTER

Perhaps I'm being literal rather than literary. Insofar as the 007th Chapters so far have slipped us this Class A drug, it's been roulette, fancy drinks, very wild gambling, very mild spycraft, intensity of sensual experience, nice blond American lads, telepathic lovelies and exaggeration heaped on exaggeration, so even using those as a rough shapshot of what he asserts, his claim has potential.

The 007th Chapter of Moonraker renders it unarguably true.

I've never played Bridge. Nor have I looked up how to. No, tell a lie; in shoving this rot together I browsed Wikipedia's explanation but couldn't grasp the rules, much like Rugby Union or An Argument with Mrs Jim. Like those, it is "in part, incomprehensible". Must be getting C-nile. This absence of experience isn't "not wanting" to know; it's not *needing* to. Trepidation, though, when it dawned on me that the game of Bridge against Sir Hugo Drax would feature in this experiment in modelling an exemplar Bond novel. Not in the nature of what occurs: Bond bests the villain at his own crooked game, and as this happens in several others – Goldfinger, Zero Minus Ten, Devil May Care to name a few – it establishes itself as an ingredient as habitual as those suggested by the previous two 007th chapters. It's just that I haven't the foggiest idea what's going on. Accordingly, this piece could bear witness to the stultifyingly under-informed (hello) commenting upon a matter about which they're shamelessly inarticulate. Perhaps no change there, then (ooh, you *bitch*), but with particular reference to my relationship with Bridge, think Fox News and European politics, Piers Morgan and American politics, or internet message boards and both. It appears to involve carrrrrrds. Well, turbo-Yay with double cream, I s'pose.

Without suggesting it of everyone, I suspect I'm not alone, either at the time or now, in feeling shut out by the Bridge game. It's some-

thing of a dilemma: do I want Ian Fleming to explain every detail to me, to indulge my All C-ing Eye, in the same way as – say – Mr Benson’s *High Time to Kill* explains the very, very (very) basics of golf? Or am I happy enough to accept that Fleming is writing for those in the know and, for the rest of us grubby saps, he renders whatever-the-Hell-it-is terribly exciting, pounding along to an ending one may or may not understand. You there, you Bs and Cs, stand straight when I’m addressing you; just do try to *keep up*, yes? You run along at Fleming’s pace, understood?

Contemplating the quote at the head of this nonsense once more, perhaps there is more humility than first appears. The reason the Bs and Cs buy your stuff, Ian old freckle, is because you convey it with such impact. He’ll write it with efficient momentum so you don’t drop off, a terribly underrated skill of his given that one reaches the end of the chapter excited but without knowing why, but he’s not going to pander to your baser lives by stopping to explain it as if you were a child, or a woman. The pains taken to explain Baccarat in *Casino Royale* is through the narrative device of Vesper Lynd not knowing the game; all the players in the *Moonraker* situation are familiar with how to play, so it would be artificial to pause and narrate the rule-book. You just get sadistic teases of comprehension now and again but suddenly, it’s gone, once more out of your brain’s yearning grasp, leaving you chasing the words, chasing the game until, your senses captured, you reach the climax, exhausted, a bit sweaty and cross-eyed and gleeful. [Dubious sexual metaphor – *here*]. Aspiration by alienation, colossal snobbery against his *reader*.

Alternatively, what Bond does might be technically impossible so Fleming hasn’t given the full detail because there isn’t any and he was too bored to make it work. I prefer the first theory, largely because it feeds the next one.

Which is: the chapter is *not* about Bridge. It's is a gaudy display of humungous snobbery in "club"land, the sort of ferocious clubbing requiring a blunt instrument (guess who). The whisky and soda drops when the ugly, buck-toothed truth dawns: there is no credible evidence *whatsoever* of Drax's cheating. I know he admits it later when ranting himself into ridicule as the world's first openly Communist Nazi, but blinded by hindsight, or absence of foresight not to read that bit lest it undermine my point, the evidence present at the time of the game itself is lissomely thin. Bond swallows it because M *instructs him* Drax is a cheat; his blessed club is "suspicious" – woo-hoo – and, since Bond isn't the freest of thinkers, he's primed as a weapon by these scions of society to simply look for the worst in Drax. Bond, telling M precisely what M wants to hear, is rarely more manipulated by his masters, than here. The silver cigarette-case is suspicious, but it's circumstantial not conclusive: there's still no direct evidence, and the key prosecution witness is a corrupted man *primed to believe the worst*, a loaded gun with a history of substance abuse who then proceeds to get off his noddle on Benzedrine and non-vintage champagne. It doesn't promise watertight reliability or safety of the conviction. Particularly the non-vintage champagne bit.

The protracted preparation for tearing Drax apart satisfies two of the frequent criticisms of Fleming's work: snobbery and sadism. The third, sex, is absent, unless the "Hugger" stuff is leading somewhere. The ruthless old bastards of Blades have decided they don't like Drax – he may have amused at first, but now they're tired of the noisy oaf who is not one of their own but *happens to be better than them*, the rampage of New Money right through their ostensible standards; he had the temerity to approach *The Queen*, damn the man – and they are going to unleash their pet yobbo to destroy him.

Excusing the carrrrddds pun, these are trumped-up charges. Devil May Care comes in for criticism for having M inflict Bond on Dr Gorner on flimsy grounds; this is not markedly different. Mr Faulks may have been writing more “as” Ian Fleming than one immediately thought.

Bond is simply (blunt) instrumental in the takedown. They don’t sully their own hands; unleash the *prole*. You there, Shouty Ginge, we’re going to *get* you. You and your little Jewish chum, Meyer. All of this, this is *our* game sunshine, our world, and we’re not going to allow you in. We’re going to Grand Slam the door behind Drax, sending him straight back to “the Liverpool docks, or wherever he came from”. If I were treated like this, I’d be tempted to plunge a nuke right down their wobbly gullets, too. It’s a shame that Drax does turn out to be just another loony Russian/Nazi/wha’evah. He’s much more interesting as a victim of class snobbery and the school and social bullying meted out by the “good guys”. Is Fleming deftly slipping us this card, whilst on the surface giving us all a jolly good laugh at the demento-Kraut? I do wonder how much of Drax’s revelatory tirade against the English isn’t echt Fleming-Think (the sentiments have to come from somewhere), forcing his hand into making the villain completely mad by the end lest the author’s mockery of his milieu be too easily spotted, resulting in his lovely clubbing chums never letting *him* back in, either. Vivid though the eventual wartime backstory is, would Drax have been any less colourful a villain if there wasn’t any of the madness about his personality change, he was indeed an Englishman after all and it had been *purely* the lifetime of snooty bullying that had driven him to it, class war rather than a cold one? If not persuaded, can’t I tempt you into evaluating this argument by dangling that we’d have been spared Die Another Day, that way?

THE 007TH CHAPTER

The irony of Drax's observations about requiring the "façade" of a gentleman is punched home in this 007th Chapter: for all of them, it's façade. There's no such thing as a gentleman. Avoiding public exposure of suspected cheating is not to protect Drax, about whom they care not one damn, but to protect their own reputations. They cover up the abhorrent villainy at the end, too, for the same reason. Bond is the dispensable hired help for both. These are not nice persons. The gentility of the surroundings masks utter cruelty, a quiet brutality. It's time to scrape the pooh from the shoe, and we've got just the right pliant stooge to do it for us. No, he's not a *member*. Lord, no. Should it go wrong we can deny him, just as we would were he caught by a foreign government.

"Useless, idle, decadent fools, hiding beneath your bloody white cliffs while other people fight your battles". ~~Ian Fleming~~ Sir Hugo Drax.

No-one appears to complain that the people and the rituals of the society on show here look as inherently savage or as open to ridicule as anything written of the "Negro" world in *Live and Let Die*. This may be because Fleming's motives are different, I've read far too much into it and he isn't seeking to expose in the manner suggested above. However, so blunt and punchy does the writing get towards the end of this 007th Chapter, plain evidence of an intention to depict this ostensibly genteel game as having the violent impact of a gunfought duel, the quickness of the hand in drawing the weapons – it's only a short hop from that to contemplating the merciless conspiracy against Drax, however many chandeliers and lamb cutlets one flings about. The later business with the rocket etc., this lot just bring upon themselves. They really are their own worst enemy. Well, apart from the whacked-out loon with the moustache fetish, "obv".

And if you think I'm doing a "Bond made this rubber (fnarr) too hot to handle (ho-ho!)" joke, you're better off ignoring this sentence.

THE 007TH CHAPTER – MOONRAKER: THE QUICKNESS OF THE HAND

Ah, Meyer. Already identified by M as "Nice chap. Jew." Um, OK. Given that he's granted few if any additional aspects to his personality, it's a touch uncomfers, that. *Interesting* companion for Drax given the villain's true history, I suppose, although that of itself is a sweeping generalisation. Definite impression that we're witness to a Max Meyer, having infiltrated this world of Porterfields, Grimleys and Lords Basildon, more than a little spineless whilst so doing, cringing and miserable, about to be *crushed*. I wonder what this Mr Fleming is trying to tell us by making Meyer the weakest of the quartet around the table, albeit I do such wondering in some despair.

More interesting, and less dodgy, Fleming gives us Meyer's *direct thoughts*, rather than Bond's interpretation of what the man might be thinking. This happens a few times between Meyer and Basildon, Drax even, and it's a notable device, distancing us from the relentless focus of BondBondBond, Fleming trying out another character for size. Ostensibly, it rounds the character of Bond to have others' impressions of him and their reactions to what he does, not just those of Fleming or Bond himself. Admittedly phoney, as it's the narrator putting thoughts into their minds, but a distinct technique. Additionally, this is Fleming giving us an "in", the ordinary player caught up in the lunatic gamble, albeit Meyer puts the pathetic into empathetic. Perhaps, alternatively, this is Fleming bored with only writing about bloody James Bond. First to admit I haven't re-read the Flemings thoroughly, but so far in the two-and-a-bit novels, have

THE 007TH CHAPTER

we seen this approach used in scenes *where Bond is present*? I'm not *sure* we have. Pretty certain everything to date has emanated from Bond himself. We haven't had, say, what Felix Leiter thinks (just as well: obscene). Are we lying on our tea-trays hurtling down the slippery slope to The Spy who Loved Me? All the major players are given first person thoughts and reactions, even M who otherwise remains – despite our having found out his first name – as secret and unknowable as ever. That might be the joke.

"[Bond] knew exactly what he had to do, and when, and was glad that the moment of decision had come." Come on, he's only playing carrrrrds, not preparing to kill a man...oh, I *get it* now.

The paragraph or two about the ghosts of dead gamblers approving of the “rough justice” raises another potential touchstone of Bond: referencing the supernatural. We’ve just been through a novel where this is front and centre, but from memory it’s also reasonably frequent that Fleming invests his villains with eeriness of adjective or demeanour and, these particular passages taken at their most literal, James Bond would appear to believe in ghosts. Perhaps it’s going too far to suggest it’s so unshakeable a belief to manifest itself as a *major* character trait but despite his ostensible theory of luck as articulated in the 007th Chapter of Casino Royale, he’s patently a superstitious man. Little else explains the routine and unvarying garb and breakfasts, beyond mental disease. There’s an argument that this fragment of the Bond persona is exploited by the villain at the start of Mr Benson’s DoubleShot by hurling the ghost of Tracy his way, or throughout the nightmarish (interpret that how you wish) Never Send Flowers; there are, I am sure, other examples.

Bond's reflections as he stares around the grand room simply add to blunt analogy: "triumph", "smoke", "honours", "cries of victory and defeat"; this is a warzone and, just in case you were uncon-

vinced, in due course Basildon will walk over from his game to this battlefield. “For Bond, who loved gambling, it was the most exciting spectacle in the world”. I suggested in the Casino Royale piece that Bond is gambler first and “superspy” by ancillary accident, expressing no great enthusiasm for the role beyond its opportunities to allow him to live well and, indeed, do the sort of thing on show in this chapter. On reflection, it’s too blunt to suggest these as *distinct* parts of his make-up. He loves gambling because it is an outlet for his innate violence even if no-one dies. Except socially, which is more lingeringly sadistic than any gunshot wound. Tracy is rescued from it; Drax, tortured.

“Had he and Meyer got the clubs?” ... “Would Drax try and force him too high and risk a double?” No good asking me, old darling. Not a Scooby. Struggle a bit with Buckaroo, to be honest.

Amusing imagery with Bond’s waving of his white handkerchief not being in surrender, but the signal to attack. “The trap was set”. Erm, I *think*. We’re not told actually how he does palm the fixed deck of cards; presumably we have to rely on the chapter’s title for an explanation. Bond has nothing but “five clubs to the ace, queen, ten, and eight small diamonds to the queen”. OK, so – that’s... bad or somefink? Dunno. More predictably in my line is the one about Bond almost feeling Drax “stiffen”. You C what I did there? It does seem to be the case that Drax has a lot of the carrrrddds with the pretty pictures on them, although probably not pictures as pretty as that set I acquired in Antwerp when I was fifteen. Bond’s capacity to “almost” feel is, presumably, a by-product of his chemically sharpened senses; we rely on the author to sharpen ours.

“He took an almost cruel interest in watching the greedy fish come to the lure.” Almost cruel? *Almost*? Whole chapter is an exercise in unutterably cruel violence.

Lovely bit of braggart rudeness from Drax, just to remind us all why we're gathered here today, and helping to justify the absolute clubbing (on many levels) that Bond is about to unleash. Equally smashing, the sharp description of Bond's performance in being "nearly very drunk". May have another ingredient of "Bond" right there – rarely uses disguises but is a decent enough actor to pass muster? The Sir Hilary Bray stuff lasts a reasonable amount of time, after all. There may not be that much difference between spies, gamblers, actors, gentlemen – all require pretence. We might be veering dangerously close to Never Send Flowers again, so best halt the thought and return to the game.

"Er – seven clubs". 007 clubs. Right round the head, that'll teach you some manners. Whack. Whack. Whack.

Whack.

Whack. Whack.

Whack. Sir Hugo getting whacked by government assassin James Bond. Not that Drax doesn't deserve it; he's so *whack*.

Greedy, too. The hairy heel of Achilles of most of the Bond villainy, surely? If not their absolute undoing, then at least a sore that Bond can sadistically press, just as here. Exploiting Le Chiffre's desperate money-grabbing, distracting Grant, buying Goldfinger's interest – there will be others. Sometimes it's not lust for *money* – Blofeld's undoing is an avaricious social-climbing – and on other occasions it's more amusing than sinister, such as with Largo's treasure hunt being the cover-story for even greater greed. Whilst there are passages in some of the books when Bond is contemplating his own finances, it's out of concern for personal security – with the occasional expensive treat – rather than grasping for more. He gambles for the thrill, not for the winnings. Bond may indulge from time to

time in six of the deadly sins to a greater or lesser extent (possibly little envy; the obsessive breakfast is evidently pride, however) but what sets him apart – if ultimately little else – from his antagonists is that he isn't inflicted with the seventh, greed, presumably because he knows how it can be exploited, having done so himself on a number of occasions. Insofar as the character embodies a morality, it may lie there. lashings of wrath, lust, sloth and gluttony, though, to compensate for greed's absence.

A swift series of paragraphs provides the other players' attitudes to Bond's apparent foolhardiness, and although they are much as expected (albeit M's "strangulated" voice suggests even he thinks it's going too far), the first-person thought – at least for Drax and Meyer – rather than Bond's guess at what they would be thinking, heightens the emotion of what happens, and what will. Drax's eventual rage – both at the end of the chapter and towards the end of the book – is more impactful, more palpable, because we've spent a little time in that great ginger head of his. Not a technique unique to Ian Fleming, of course, but he's unafraid to immediately change it. Having immersed us into the individuals with one authorial trick, hopping from brain to brain, straightaway we get another that drags us to an opposite pole; the diagram that shows us what (most of) the participants don't know.

Reading the chapter through, it's amusing that for such a sedentary occasion, how pushed and pulled around the action the reader is: with the diagram, we're raised above it. The mind's eye camera is never still, the editing from style to style is all choppychangey. Oh, Quantum of Solace, you Flemingy old lovely. Arguably all writing – especially fiction – requires manipulation of the reader but here it's positively manhandling, the quickness of the (typing) hand altering the perspectives to keep us engaged. The diagram is a notable exam-

ple: Fleming could just have prosed the players' hands, simply telling us what each had. Straightforward enough. But a) there's been plenty of that already, so it would risk the tedium of repetition and b) it's cavalier, storytelling bravado – cheek, even – to stop writing and draw us a picture instead.

Seems to often go unacknowledged how adventurously written these adventure stories are, at least the first half-dozen or so. In a couple of books' time, we have a tale in which James Bond doesn't appear for ten chapters. *Casino Royale's* structure is unusual, the adventure over by two-thirds through. Here, we have a polite pastime injected with violent metaphor and structural playfulness to liven things up. Even the more superficially straightforward narratives of *Live and Let Die* and *Diamonds are Forever* have their authorial experiments. For the one, a supersensed descent into a vision of Hell; the other, a wide-eyed celebratory road-trip meshing the two major contributions of the USA to popular fiction: the gangster story and the Western. Not to say the later books are bland, *The Spy who Loved Me* and *You Only Live Twice* are anything but, but the likes of *Dr No*, *Thunderball* and *OHMSS* strike me as more "normal" in their structural novelty and ambition. I may, of course, reach a different conclusion once I reach their respective 007th chapters but I'm happy enough concluding that this *Moonraker* one does demonstrate a tangible element of a Bond novel – a fearlessness to muck about with expectations of narrative. If that holds, it may indeed be that those continuation novels that come with the slightly devastating backhanded compliment of "experimental" – the likes of *The Man from Barbarossa*, *COLD*, *Doubleshot* or (with its peculiar pace and weird ending) *Solo* – whatever their merits (or otherwise) as immediately engaging reads, hold truer to being attempts at Bond novels than some of their "easier" brethren.

“Then, in between clearing trumps, finessing of course against Drax, he would play two rounds of diamonds, trumping them in dummy and catching Drax’s ace and king in the process.” Well, I’ll take your word for it, old love. Just in case we’re more cromagnonly BC-shaped in our cultural evolution, and haven’t appreciated the point, “It was sheer murder”, a sadistic whipping of “thirteen separate lashes”, all a very “terrible punishment”. Potentially a miscarriage of justice on the strength of the evidence to date, but what the hell: he’s greedy, noisy and vulgar and has to be thrashed to within an inch of his life, the ill-mannered brute. Even when “Bond trumped on the table...” they don’t throw *him* out. Still, that’s Benzedrine for you and he *did* have asparagus earlier in the evening.

Bringing his A-game, Fleming likens Bond’s behaviour to the manner of the chess champion Paul Morphy. I had to look him up. Feeling even more C, all of a sudden, or wearing a hat with a huge letter D emblazoned on it. In part, incomprehensible. More wholly comprehensible is the efficient, rat-a-tat manner in which Fleming brings the lengthy persecution to its conclusion, spitting out the final hands as viciously as Drax’s allegation against Bond, a fair comment that only earns him a further whiplashing from Basildon. They really do have it in for this guy. Still, he’s no help to himself, with his look of contemptuous triumph that Bond finds “curiously disturbing”, as if any of the rest of the man isn’t. With his inhuman elements of splayed teeth, oddly scornful expressions and deeply sinister method of saying goodnight, as he scuttles away to die another day, Sir Hugo Drax would be even unhappier knowing that his killer payoff was wasted on as C a villain as Kamal Khan.

Insofar as Drax is taught a lesson by this incident, it appears to be *If you were having second thoughts prior to tonight about nuking London, don’t: they’re swine and deserve everything they’re going to get.*

THE 007TH CHAPTER

So, true to the form already emerging in these 007th chapters, we have a villain with a body as warped as his psyche, we have grand living for which to yearn and the picking-apart of a group of people that is both forensic and exaggerated at the same time, looking through a “magnifying” glass in every sense. What this one also demonstrates is that this list of *what* is done, engaging as they are, is accompanied by something of equal, if not greater, significance in a Bond’s make-up, exemplified in the turning of mystifying incident into exciting brutality. Take the word as you will.

Execution.

JAMES BOND WILL RETURN IN THE 007TH CHAPTER
OF DIAMONDS ARE FOREVER. JACQUES STEWART
ONCE HAD A LOT OF QUEENS IN HIS HAND BUT
THAT’S [MASSIVELY LIBELLOUS]. ER... YAHTZEE?

DIAMONDS ARE FOREVER

china eyes contrast good

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Yes big

SHADY TREE

gave round now
knife back
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room
across
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ulcers

Bond

pocket

shoulders

Travel, it is claimed, broadens the mind.

Certainly thins the wallet, even in these days of budget airlines that oblige one to sit next to corpulent scutters who would otherwise be ape-crouched in their cobbled streets, lower jaws overflowing with greasy, pie-flecked drool and jabbing fat C fingers skywards in awe at t'Magic Silver Demon Bird. Evidently travel hasn't broadened *my* mind however emaciated my purse, and it's even more expensive if you try it in the style of James Bond when living in an age of austerity. We're all in it together. Apart from *him*. There are moments of great luxury in the life of a secret agent, etc. As a hard-pressed British tax avoider, there's something objectionable about it.

The first really continent-trotting adventure, Bond shuttling about all over the place, at every turn diamonds and sassy broads and snapbrim Americana and car chases and Stratocruisers and dangling out of portholes and blowing people out of an African sky, *Diamonds are Forever* is a hymn to good-to-wild living wordliness in a bay of plenty. A rub-your-nose-in-it exercise for a time when the British reader could only gape a-dazzled at the sybaritic spectacle, the book would be a welcome distraction from the drizzle, the stench of carbolic and the scrabbling around the rubble, fighting off spavined wolves for the last sliver of corned beef. Published only a couple of years after the end of food rationing, it is timed beautifully – teasingly – for eyes and bellies hungry for sating. Even now, reading out loud to the local Food Bank queue this book's provocative, leerily juicy descriptions of what Bond masticates, you'd start a riot, or drown in the tsunami of saliva.

Travel, then, broadens the gut.

What larks this supercharged vision of a British ideal has, observing the manners (such as exist) and mannerisms of the Zoo.S.A., stealing the Americans' women, our fictional hero taking on their gangsters and cowboys – which is, of course, *all these jumpstarts actually are* – and soundly thrashing them at their own games. Can't have these trumped-up colonial sorts pinching the diamonds from Sierra Leone, bladdy outrage, when we were going to invest those in education, healthcare and transport infrastructure for its people (honest we were). Time to give these Yanks a bladdy good hiding, put them in their bladdy place. And eat their lovely, lovely food. The Empire strikes back.

James Bond takes on the Mob and wins. He's not really such a wonderful spy, but winning lots of money and a gal, he's a fabulous guy. Bursting with excess of thought and deed, outrageous and idiosyncratic characters, violent spats of incident at various points around the world with characterful moments of observation and reflection, this could well have been the epitome of all that had come before and the core set-text of the Bond novel. Except it doesn't seem to come with that reputation. Of the initial quintet of *varied* approaches to writing James Bond "spy" stories – five distinctly different books – before being killed off and resurrected as a super-adventurer for Dr No to OHMSS, this one appears popularly considered to be the least of them. A spy story without a spy, more of a tough-talking, episodic police procedural, absent any momentum. Despite an arresting high concept – James Bond vs. The Mafia – the argument runs that it feels forced and dragged out, unfocused and nowhere near as entertaining as the material that preceded it. A perception of never catching fire; an uncut gem, if you will/really must.

There seem to be two widely-held views why. Firstly, that too much of not very much happens. There's a hell of a lot of incident here, action and settings described to within an inch of their lives, much more going on than (say) *Casino Royale*, but little glue bringing them together. The first and third books have limited locations and more time to wallow in them. Whilst *Live and Let Die* moves from New York to Florida to Jamaica, this is because of sustained cat-and-rat *pursuit*; conversely, in this one, there's no explicit danger beyond an atmosphere of generalised menace requiring Bond to suddenly shift from location to location (and on occasion it is Bond himself who brings on the danger by acting recklessly). It's hard to say where *Diamonds are Forever* finds Bond "based". Whilst it may be Las Vegas, as much of interest (and written duration) happens on the Queen Elizabeth; equally so New York. A series of vignettes either violent or descriptive or romantic, or all three at once, impactful themselves individually, lose something when it comes to sticking them together: it lacks a clear centre of gravity. 007 in New York could easily be dropped into the middle of it and not disrupt the tale too much. This is difficult to deny, but query whether it really is a thematic weakness. The movement is constant, a pipeline, the flow of people as much as of the diamonds themselves.

The second perception of the frailties of the novel is not wholly unconnected to the first; the villains. More precisely, the lack of a grand scheme for Bond to foil. Bond smuggles himself into *The Spangled Mob's* daily affairs and proves a relatively minor inconvenience but it's one of few occasions when James Bond arriving on their scene doesn't incredibly fortuitously also coincide with the villain(s) launching some fantastic plan, devised to relieve themselves of the tedium and lack of challenge of their ordinary, daily mischief. The Spangs just don't seem interested in Bond, which undermines our

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reliant interest in *them* compared to – say – Drax or Le Chiffre. Whereas Bond’s interference would launch crazed autobiographical monologues in others, the Spangs just want him *dead*. Where’s a Death Laser from Space when you need one?

It is amazing how often Bond turns up uninvited when something *huge* is about to occur. How uncanny. On such occasions, killing off the big boss foils the single grand project and one is left to assume that the minor villainy originally investigated somehow crumbles too. On reflection, Mr Big’s network would obviously be taken over (I do hope it was by McThing), cheating at Blades will not have stopped and Crab Key would need someone to shift all that bird pooh. Here, the villains just regroup and, with their brief cameo in Goldfinger making The Spangled Mob the first “return” bad guys in the series, tend to amplify that James Bond has *absolutely no impact*. Standing out amongst the early books, this is one where he arguably fails. Perhaps “lack of overall success” is closer, but it’s hard to call it a complete “win”. That’s quite bold, and more worldly-wise than stopping the lunatic shouting Nazi or giving the supernatural Negroids a jolly good smack. Bond is good at stopping ludicrous over-ambition, but he’s a Big Time Charlie, a luxury player for the great occasion but not bringing much to the game otherwise. The crimes of the Mob do not – cannot – end with the death of any one particular “big” man, whereas the three previous schemes, and those to come, fall when their megavillain does. Here there’s more of a fatalistic sense that so long as diamonds are forever, so are the crimes related to them. No one evil individual is in control: it’s the diamonds that run things, shoving people around like (golf) balls.

Following this argument through, what we have here is the author dropping Bond into a more (um... relatively) realistic environment than one populated by whacked-out commie Jeermans and their V2

“Plus”, or High Voodoo Priests of the Undead, or a little bubble of overstated significance around the Baccarat table. Not to suggest Fleming isn’t pushing things – Wint and Kidd, the mudboiling, Tiffany Case’s OTT-misery lifestory, Bond crawling about on the outside of an ocean liner – but it’s a reduction in fantasy of atmosphere, the Bond novels dipping a toe into a real (ish) situation that would later find itself non-fictionalised. It’s just as experimental as the other four novels in this first run – James Bond intervenes in “real crime”, rather than inherently implausible ones. There’s an immediate counter-argument that one doesn’t want Bond involved in such things, one does crave voodoo demons and missile-toppling and hypnotising dolly birds about chickens, and what it may succeed in demonstrating by its ostensible failure is that such a heightened character as Bond just doesn’t fit a more realistic situation. Bring on the Giant Squid and the Garden of Death. However, I’m prepared to give it a pass for at least *trying*.

I put all that no higher than “arguable”. However, where I think *Diamonds are Forever* genuinely succeeds is with Tiffany Case, Fleming’s first substantial female lead and the first time he tries to establish something approaching a relationship. There’s not much to Gala Brand other than requiring someone to rescue; Vesper Lynd is a plot device exemplar in misogyny and Solitaire is – despite huge promise – wafer-thin and, dare I say it, dull, which is an unusual attribute for a telepathic witch. Whilst the Tiffany Case-history is all over the park, ridiculous in several respects, she’s by far the most diverting of Fleming’s women to date, or at all, and whilst one may not completely admire Fleming’s attitudes around her, there is at least a character on show, allowing James Bond to be more developed in response/reaction. Peculiarly, her changeable nature is not a million miles from that of the similarly crazy mixed-up kid that

THE 007TH CHAPTER

Bond ends up marrying, both burrdds with a wing down and backstories of tragedy and abuse. Is Tracy simply a doomed and rather pathetic attempt to recapture what he had with this earlier version? You might not buy this infliction of continuity, but I'm happy to as it helps reconcile OHMSSBond's baffling attraction to an otherwise exceptionally irritating *brat*.

Perhaps better in individual moments, observations and characters than as a sustained narrative, I think Diamonds are Forever is unfairly maligned (and believe me, there's some very unfair maligning of my own to do in 007th Chapters to come). Insofar as broadly exemplifying anything about the Bond series, it plainly demonstrates one trend: after Moonraker, one must come back down to Earth with an episodic, patchy adventure and a villain without a masterplan.

That seems to happen a lot.

THE 007TH CHAPTER – DIAMONDS ARE FOREVER: 'SHADY' TREE

After a transatlantic crossing, the pleasurable rituals of the journey loving played out over the course of most of a chapter *as if that might just be the point*, a disinfected James Bond has just landed in New York. Presumably Bond's just filled in his little green card declaring that no, he wasn't responsible for the persecution of the Jewish between 1933 and 1945. It's just as well it doesn't ask about anyone else, as he's done plenty of that (and persists in his ludicrous views about "the colour problem" later on). Onwards to the nine-hour queue in immigration with the reward of the most sinister and hostile welcome on Earth. Give me your huddled masses, yearning

for a wee. As long as they don't have a preposterously overstated "English" accent, a French/Scottish name and a complexion not necessarily indigenous to the climates of any of those places. That just seems to confuse and annoy them. Garnish this tantalising casserole with an uppity demeanour and it's just hours – and hours – and hours – of endless fun. Next time, might bring along the Italian wife and see if that achieves for me the motherlode of a full cavity probing from a strapping lad. Do hope so.

Except none of this happens to Bond (the book's "realism" only goes so far). There's a definite critical undertone to the overlay of a laudatory depiction of the USA, not least here with the ease in which Bond gets through Customs. Pointed criticism is evident in the description of the sweaty "good-living" (also known as fat, also also known as Norman Burton was perfect casting) Customs officer who saunters "lazily", putting the wildly idle into Idlewild, is rubbish at golf and is more interested in Bond's handicap than examining his luggage thoroughly; they're not subtle and the plain suggestion is that with practices so lax, this lot get everything they deserve, although admittedly the British end wasn't any better. Slightly uncomfortable implication these days given more recent events, but it is interesting to see Fleming pressing some sores, despite evident admiration for the place; this is not the only example. Returning to one's own experiences for a moment, lengthy interrogation at US Customs about one's handicap does run true. Meeting travellers doesn't really broaden the mind.

Interesting that Bond's first thought when running through alternative names for Tiffany is "Zarathustra", a philosophical allusion rather than something more likely/prosaic such as Zimmerman or Zachary or the like, and one slyly playing up to Bond's general allure as *Übermensch*. The previous book gave us a picture of Bond's

home life: this one so far has drawn out further his cultural one. The earlier scene with Tiffany Case's record collection is also telling in this regard. This is not the sole-purpose unthinking weapon of mass destruction lobotomised troglodyte that some would claim 007 to be. Bond demonstrates literary and artistic pretensions throughout the Fleming novels – presumably to appeal to the As – not least as an unpublished author, and from memory this awareness of art, philosophy and music, snobbery with violence, is something that Mr Gardner runs with, to a certain degree anyway.

The “Peter Franks” stuff got itself dropped pretty quickly, didn't it? More so than in the film, which was obviously made before the invention of the, y'know, *photograph*.

Back to the Casino Royale toolshed of descriptive metaphor with the “hatchet-faced” man who wears appalling garb and carries a gun in his pocket. It definitely is a gun because he doesn't seem particularly pleased to see Bond. “Typical, thought Bond. Mike Hammer routine. These American gangsters were too obvious.” Oh har-de-har har, Ian old freckle. Bit meta, non? “They had read too many horror comics and seen too many films.” So here comes a thunderingly realistic character who won't be sullied by appearing in mass-populist films and... um... One has to assume all this is self-aware wit, and at least it's funnier than the crass banter between government assassin James Bond and his new golfing chum about “shooting”. Whatever his other merits as a writer, Fleming's jokes are few and far between.

Fortunately.

“The cheerless prairie of Idlewild...” Yes, yes, James Bond has landed in the (Idle) Wild West. There's a new Sheriff in town. We get it. Possibly trying a bit too hard now, darling. Time to get the story moving. If there is one.

“He wondered how soon he would be able to throw some weight about.” Challenging paragraph where Bond is contemplating – and realising – his position in all this, perhaps some recognition that he is showy, both hunter and gatherer of attention, displeased at staying “small”. The reluctance of having to “get used to the idea” doesn’t stick; often in this book, when the action comes, it is Bond who instigates it (usually unwisely, just to get things moving and keep his/our interest up). Show pony; attention-seeking twerp. Agent provocateur, indeed. Something even more dangerous than the diamonds has just entered the country. Still, as La Rochefoucauld observed, humility is the worst form of conceit. A notable little daydreamt journey through Bond’s dangerous vanity and rampant ego, to pass the time on the journey through Manhattan. The author unafraid to openly criticise the morality of his hero? Not as if it’s the first time. History is moving pretty quickly these days – more quickly than this traffic anyway – and the heroes and villains keep on changing parts.

Slightly curious – clumsy? – immediate repetition in successive sentences of the “black marble” “elegant shop-front” at which Bond eventually arrives, but defter is a small description within the same incident, a man stepping from the “pavement”. A few paragraphs on, this will change to a “sidewalk” without authorial comment upon nor explanation of the term. The chapter occasionally flirts between American English and British idiom and expression (outside of the dialogue, which is probably massively unrealistic); we’ve had a sedan, rather than a saloon, for example, again without seeking to clarify that this is “the American word for it”. A number of possible interpretations come to mind. Firstly, laziness. Secondly, the book’s being written for an audience that would be sophisticated enough to know these things, therefore sav-

ing the trouble of explaining it (which is still laziness, albeit a variety winningly infused with snobbery). Thirdly, this is the author demonstrating his comfort in pulling away from a classic “British Adventure Hero” style of narrative into a more worldly one, confident in his handling of what he’s up to; as his character has travelled, so has he. Fourthly, a textual representation of a notion that James Bond is comfortable with both the USA and Britain, but is not wholly of either nation, operating slightly at a distance to the two (which gives him plenty of opportunity to pass comment – both positive and negative – on each). The fifth is that this sort of thing renders the book sellable in both without having to go to the bother and expense of separate editions, but that’s a dull – if the least contrived – reason. Possibly a combination of these. Something to mull over, anyway, as we follow Bond walking from room to room to room, without much of particular interest happening in any of them other than to note that there’s deliberate contrasting going on between the Hatton Garden scenes of a couple of chapters ago, and this scruffier equivalent on West 46th Street, with the delicious onomatopoeia of its brass spittoon.

Ah, the hench with the hunch, Michael ‘Shady’ Tree, a vivid Fleming grotesque. Alongside giving the leading lady some character, Fleming unleashes memorable *second-string* villainy in this one. Tee-Hee, The Robber, Krebs and various Le Chiffre goons et cetera have had their moments, but ‘Shady’ Tree and Wint & Kidd are the most impactful henchpersons to date (arguably completely at the expense of the Spangs). “Bond didn’t remember having seen a red-haired hunchback before.” Apart from wondering why the word is “didn’t” rather than “couldn’t”, it seems a bit rich of Fleming to have chastised the comic-book approach earlier when he chooses to present us with this exaggerated Dick Tracy cartoon goon, squeaky

of voice and china of eye, short and humpy and big-eared, barrel-chested and no-necked. Anyone who suggests he's played by Daniel Craig is heading for a firm smack on the bottoy.

Do red-heads get a fair showing in the Bonds? I've a feeling it tends to be a danger signal, like Drax and this malformed caricature, who is described in the narrative by his shape more than by his name. I might be wrong in that – happy to be corrected – but of all the folks Fleming cheerfully weighs into in his works, strikes me that the ginger/auburn/strawberry blonde/no, it *is* ginger don't get their equivalent of (say) Quarrel balancing out (well, -ish to “very poorly”) the attitudes in Live and Let Die or Tanaka and Kissy “compensating” for various very sinister Asiatic persons, or Felix Leiter for Wint & Kidd. Come to think of it, not sure the Germans get a terribly good press, either, but the red-headed, and for that matter the “short”, seem an oddly-victimised league. Welcome to the playground. We can't all be Victor Ludorum (twice), you nasty old *git*.

“I like to have a good look at the people we employ, Mr Bond...” And yet, despite this, still not in possession of a photograph of *the actual Peter Franks*? Plot-hole you could drive a Studillac “sedan” through, then. “Rocky, get those balls out of the bag and cut them open.” Ouch – much worse than anything Le Chiffre did with the carpet beater. Ye gods and little godlets, that's going to *hurt*. The subsequent “legerdemain” (a Prefect's word for “trick”) with the throwing knife amplifies the threat of the character reasonably enough as a Bad Ass Quasimodo but leaves one wondering what he's hiding in his hump: a tommy gun? Shergar? He's patently a bad sort because he refers to golf clubs as “sticks” which is frightfully uncouth.

The business with the glass of milk is an odd little detail, but it's not surprising that “the hunchback” pulls a face of distaste when

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drinking it; it's a very hot day so it's probably gone off. Suggesting ulcers, Bond pokes away at Tree in that unkindly, mocking-the-afflicted *Urbemensch* way of his: illness is weakness, frailty, and yet Bond can smoke and drink as much as he wants because he's made of stronger, more wholesome stuff. Yay him.

"Put those balls on the table where I can see what you're doing..." "Coming, boss." You can't put gems like that before a putrid mind like mine and expect to escape without any touching, stroking and undressing of it. The conceit with the golf balls hiding the stones is an amusing one although, again, a bit of a plot hole: why would you bring brand new golf balls with you, instead of (say) buying them once in the country? Another winner for the slovenly ways of the Customs guys, there.

The back and forth between "the hunchback" – oh Ian, he has a name, and a mother, and probably played with a ball as a child – and Bond is revealing insofar as Bond seems slightly out of his depth in this world, beyond his usual comfort zone of being slightly super, bit bossy and in control of things, and contemplates that he has seriously underestimated these people, despite the fact that nothing they have said or done could have led him to that false conclusion. The reference to the Bridge game at The Savoy amuses in reflecting on the fact that Blades definitely wouldn't have let this freak anywhere near. I mean – an *American*. Pretty unlikely Bond would have deigned to be seen with him, either. He's a bit funny like that. The plan to give Bond his money (rather than, say, just killing him) and the hard logic of not having him swan around with oodles of cash, both appear sensible and credible, a sense and credibility that Bond blows once in Las Vegas and beats the house, presumably because he hasn't been getting enough attention and has to that point been a bit-part player in this fragment of his life story. The im-

mediate acceptance by Tree of Bond as who he says he is, is harder to swallow, but there's been enough sitting around chatting so we need to get on the road to Saratoga pretty damned soon, and "into the gangster world – with a bang". There's nothing remotely bloody suspicious about the manner in which Bond pushes, and pushes, and pushes. Tree seems to take it largely in his stride; anyone else would get the hump.

Tree's "china eyes" merit a number of repeat references, which strike a chord of memory in how Le Chiffre's eyes were described, and other than their capacity to be glazed, presumably are there as a counterpart to the hardness of the AFRICAN NON-CONFLICT TOTALLY LEGITIMATELY BRITISH DIAMONDS that Tree spends a fair part of the chapter pushing into an assortment of geometrical shapes (albeit not a diamond formation, as that would be slightly too coy). The set-up of the Shy Smile short story – basically what each of the book's loosely strung-together but largely independent incidents is – sounds clever but as I know as much about betting on the gee-gees as I do Bridge, I'm just going to have to (confidently) rely on Fleming to write me through that when I get to it.

Slight suspicion that Fleming pulls a punch when Tree shrugs his shoulders "resignedly" in not poking at "the hunchback" once more and telling us all what a grotesque sight that would be. Still, at least he's given the man "an indignant squeak" and a "short, shrill laugh", which doesn't play up to Leprechaun/troll stereotyping one bit. 'Shady', we just adored your act. What taste, what style. Later to be described in savagely patronising manner by Bond as "harmless, rather likeable", it's only in comparison to some even more upsettingly unpleasant people Bond happens across. Not getting much "likeable" out of 'Shady' Tree here. Still, I recall that he survives. Not totally sure about that: call it a hunch.

We depart with Tree giving Bond his telephone number in Wisconsin (? Do they have telephones there?) and Bond noting the details of the horse-fixing plot in his notebook, which he hasn't been using up to this point and is presumably produced following some legerdemain of his own, and wondering what this particular 007th Chapter has given us insofar as "Building Bond" is concerned. Possibly some complacency on the author's part in having abandoned his thesaurus and thereby repeating himself, or a tendency to cheaply use physical disability to discomfort the reader, but neither are positive attributes with which to saunter lazily away. "Colourful" henchpeople, comfort in using foreign idiom to amplify the atmosphere of "having travelled" and being in an alien environment, confidence in trying pastiche (whether it's *successful* is another matter), smart ideas for criminal schemes and a keen friendly-critical "cruel to be kind" eye. That'll do.

The trouble is, now four diverging books in, and as Raymond Chandler is said to have observed following the publication of this one, it is very hard to determine now what type of writer Fleming is *actually trying to be*. Diamonds are Forever is markedly different to its immediate predecessor, and whilst it shares some locations and characters with Live and Let Die, their respective executions of atmosphere and plot mechanics are wholly dissimilar. With the next one completely throwing respect for standard narrative structure from the train, the first five James Bonds possess startlingly different dynamics, moods and strengths (and weaknesses). Undoubtedly unafraid to try new things, but an overall restlessness shines through, as if the ambition to write the spy novel to end all spy novels was still beyond Fleming's grasp, each change of direction still not satisfying him, however much it may entertain us. It might be only at the end of the first five that it's actually been achieved; will come

back to this. Whilst I embrace their inconsistency as variety belying a common perception that all Bonds are equal, inconsistent is what they are. Dr No, Goldfinger, Thunderball and (despite its ending) OHMSS feel more cohesive, more uniformly within a “series” or style. That may be to their benefit or to their detriment, depending what it is one demands from Fleming.

One last try then. If it’s still not quite coming together, may as well kill him off.

JAMES BOND WON’T RETURN IN THE 007TH CHAPTER OF
FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE, BECAUSE HE’S NOT IN IT. JACQUES
STEWART IS STILL WAITING IN THE QUEUE AT IMMIGRATION.
COME ON. GET YOUR PASSPORT OUT BEFORE YOU APPROACH
THE DESK, YOU STUPID OLD SOD. LOOK AT YOU, RUMMAGING
IN YOUR JACKET ONLY NOW. GIVE ME STRENGTH. GO ON,
CLUB HIM ONE AND BAG HIM OFF TO GITMO.

THE WIZARD OF ICE

FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE

like structure table
punctuation looked
minutes animal nothing plain-clothes
иош red clock face hand
game Comrade lips
must paranoia slowly umpire
General G. thought head
three big SMERSH made
hoggish man two
Д.Д.С. Moscow Colonel
Makharov handed coldly
D.D.C. Klebb pendulum also
five short door move Champion go
ruthless pig bait
back ONE
spectators Chess sat mirror
inside MUCH time mind киеш
eyes parrot mouth шент
Kroistein шоман

Not that it matters, but a great deal of the background to this piffle is inaccurate.

Where would we be without James Bond? Before you bother me with “You do know he’s fictional, don’t you? We’d be exactly where we are, you meretricious clown”, I’m happy – no, overjoyed – to put on record that I am aware of it. Thank you. Well done on “meretricious”, by the way. Such a scrumptious word.

Never interrupt me again.

If *From Russia with Love* has a purpose beyond entertaining us with underdressed women all a-grapple, together with gleefully-grasped opportunities for Ian Fleming to be *fabulously* rude about ugly people, it is in pointedly inviting us to consider our dilemma, were James Bond forever face-down in the carpet of the Paris Ritz.

I suspect the answer to be extrapolated is “a Soviet colony, if you don’t buck your ideas up”.

Perhaps the most common observation about this book – apart from *Phwoaaar! Lezzas and gypsies*, which is undeniably very common (sorry) – is about its structure. In particular, the risk of encouraging boredom/bafflement in the impatient B/C reader with all the foreignistan-speak and by not immediately introducing our favourite overfastidious psychotic bigot. *Y*b**nna mat!*, you might say (if fluent in asterisk), what’s Peter Fleming’s little brother – Alan? – doing now? First he said an avocado was pudding, when everyone knows it’s a badger’s egg, then he taught one to speak like a (cover the dog’s ears, dear) *Negroid* – try that in Derry & Toms and see how far you get – and latterly he thought we’d indulge his turning it *American*, as appealing as their reprehensible remake of football or the abuse they mete out to innocent words like “aluminium”, “pants”, “pussy” and “fanny”. Now he’s not even put James Bond in it at all! I won’t stand for it, it’s... ooh, a neuter porcine murderess in pink satin knickers. ‘Scuse me a minute; feeling a sudden urge to be non-*kulturny*.

Spend half the time banging on about a threat, *build* and build and build and then introduce said menace halfway through and gawp in horror at how – through *immense* luck and contrivance – he gets close to winning but at the last minute he is stabbed and crashes down. Still, he was being beastly to little Judi Dench, wasn’t he? Depending on whose side you take, *From Russia with*

Love demonstrates a similar structure to one seen in (say) *Dr No*: we get to know the goodies first and they spend ages talking about how rotten the villain is and how he must be destroyed. Then the bad guy stumbles in, leaving us in thrall to how he nearly wins, so much so that everything comes down to a desperate conclusion in which he is finally vanquished and drowns in guano/headlong hits the wine-red floor. All we have here is a comedy reversal of an adventure norm. The mission briefing, the loveable cast of colourful scamps and the loonbag ladykiller with his odd little ways just happen to be Russian/Irish rather than British. I suggested in an earlier one of these that Fleming wasn't an amusing writer. This, however, is one of his better jokes.

History is moving pretty quickly these days and the heroes and villains keep on changing parts, etc.

The structure is critical if what (I believe) Fleming intends to work, can. He's scaring us. He needs us to swallow that the Russians are this determined, this meticulous, this horrid. Admittedly, with some (very) minor balancing sentiments from minor characters aside, the conspirators are invariably unpleasant and not the decent, well-meaning snobs of the British Establishment. Arguably, these Russians are more honest about what a grubby little trade it is in which they find themselves, rather than the chandeliers-and-Bridge crowd kicking around *Blades*, all dressed up as "gentlemen", as if that'll prevent the bomb from dropping. This crowd of beastly Commies have – need – no such pretence. A blemished mirror is being held up, and although one can read it as how much more decent "we" are at this spying malarkey, I tend to take it as intentional criticism. When Bond mucks up, he gets a mild rebuke from M, and then an invitation to dinner; when this lot fail, they're *shot*. That's how ruthless the Russians are, how devious, how they treat their own people never mind

THE 007TH CHAPTER

us, and they're only a few hours away. They might already be here, if you let that bastard Gaitskell in. Don't park your tanks on my lawn, Hugh, nor anything else in my wife for that matter.

Having told us in the preface that there are real officials who meet for purposes similar to the ones written about, Fleming demonstrates that the best the British can do to resist these true-to-life machinations emanating from number 13 Sretenka Ulitsa is unleash a fictional, none-too-bright drunkard who, even though he's super, still can't get through it unscathed. If you didn't have my James Bond, you lot, yes you, sitting there all high-and-mighty and sniffy about what I've been trying to tell you, and you had to use a *real* person against the likes of General G. and Kronsteen, you're doomed. All you have is Commander Crabb, not Commander Bond and even my superman nearly dies. Wake up; to arms! The Russians are coming, and this is what they're like. It's spectacularly paranoid to imagine them not just under the bed but in them as well, and few will come with a black velvet ribbon around the neck. Piano wire round yours, perhaps. When they do arrive from Russia, it won't be with love. That's why I've heroically run off to Jamaica and taken your pal Rothermere's wife with me, so stick that up your marrowbone and good luck to you all.

Ultimately, it's a propaganda piece lightly dusted with blistering lovelies and sexual deviancy, much like the first draft of The Communist Party Manifesto before the jokes were removed and Engels had a change of heart about all those car chases. A shift from having Drax lay into the British – well, he *would* say those things, wouldn't he? – much of the dialogue between Bond and Kerim Bey is overtly barbed about a) how much of a threat the Russians actually are and b) how unprepared the British are for them, really and c) how the Soviets have weapons of mass destruction capable of being launched in 45 minutes.

The first two, anyway. This is not the blinkered Union Flag-waving of many Eon films, although *Skyfall* comes close: a surface-level jolly adventure with the Bond saving the day that is quietly, but determinedly, prodding the open wound about how ready the country really is to cope with live threats, getting by (barely) on making it up as one goes along and trusting to dumb luck. Savagely exposing how exposed the nation is, exploited by its pretensions towards eccentricity by the willingness to walk into an colossally obvious trap because it'll be an adventure, Britain's weaknesses are capable of being horribly turned against it if it's not very, *very* careful. In due course, Burgess and Maclean get a mention in this book and it's none too subtle a reference when it happens. A lot of the opening is an exercise in picking Britain apart, far more brutally than any sentiment expressed about the Dark Races in *Live and Let Die*, and those ideas have come from somewhere in the author's mind. It's not an anti-British piece, though; these are the scared sentiments of a patriot who wants us equally fearful and needing to toughen up to meet the threat, to stand tall and face it all, together. Albeit a patriot who buggered off to the West Indies and left us to it.

Dark thoughts rise about why this book was so revered by President Kennedy, according to that famous list of his favourite reads. On the one hand, *if* he ever read it, he enjoyed it as lighthearted fiction, on which level the book is grubbily satisfying adolescent amusement, and putting it on the list give a pal of his a sales boost, which isn't remotely corrupt. Alternatively, with its claims of veracity in depicting the ruthlessness of the Russians, it helps exaggerate one's foe in the minds of the populace now encouraged to read the book, which is important for keeping them docile and in check and the opportunity to spend, without too much objection, their tax

money on whizzbangs from your family's arms dealing pals rather than repairing the potholes in the roads or putting half-a-dozen more Customs Officers on duty (****ing immigration queue: apologies to those practising their conversational asterisk). I wonder if he thought there was any truth in it? The Scarlet and the Black aside (rouge et noir... tingalings a bell...) the other books on that list were factual or (auto-) biography, and the Stendahl is intentional social commentary. Whilst John Buchan appears *twice*, they're non-fiction rather than anything Hannay. Other than not wanting the President to appear worthy and dull – I mean, The Emergence of Lincoln doesn't have many scorching gypsy women and bloodthirsty lesbians, Mrs Lincoln aside – From Russia with Love's inclusion on the list seems readily explicable, if for slightly disturbing, manipulative and sinister reasons. With all the books expounding a political philosophy, it fits. Although if you think I'm only having a go at JFK because the administration at the airhovel now bearing his name is rampagingly inadequate, I couldn't immediately contradict you. Anyway, he can't sue; he's dead (I think).

As a spy story, it's one of the few in the Fleming series. As an adventure with persons exotic both of appearance and character to titillate us in scenes of overseasoned description, balanced with bothering with a plot this time, it's probably the strongest. As a horror story offering us no redemptive solace at all by appearing to kill off the one man who can stop it, it's bloody terrifying. Next time, Ian my lovely honeysuckle, how about taking us well away from it, perhaps a nice holiday in your favourite part of the world, and give us a medically impossible loony, space rockets, venomous centipedes, a nudey nature child and a truculent mutant cephalopod?

Ta.

THE 007TH CHAPTER – FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE: THE WIZARD OF ICE

Is that a pun on The Wizard of Oz? We're definitely not in Kansas (the clue being "chess" rather than "Klan burning") and we *will* shortly be meeting up with a (very) wicked witch who appears to be a Friend of Dorothy. More amusing – a challenge to be less – is that it's utterly butterfly that the 007th chapter of From Russia with Love shares much with the 007th minute of the film, Kronsteen's pawn show interruptus. I suspect it's no more than editing coincidence, but fun nonetheless.

The image of the chess clock peering over the table like a sea-monster is an unexpected one, but vivid, tremendously eerie and ever-so-Fleming. His habitual use of nature's brutes as anthropomorphised threat metaphors continues with "Kronsteen sat motionless and erect, as malevolently inscrutable as a parrot." Ah, the birds of the West Indies, and we've encountered this avian style of description before (and will see it again), particularly when it comes to that jack-knife falcon Felix Leiter with his "hawk-like" features, despite the CIA having more than enough hawks already. Shame it's only a descriptive image; were Kronsteen *actually* a parrot he could at least have a nibble on the "worm-like" vein throbbing at his temple.

Oddly for a villain – or at least for this book – Kronsteen escapes both justice and a spiteful Fleming description – he's not a "Fle-minger", as t'were. He has a big head and a bulging brow, which given some of the freaks otherwise on show doesn't amount to much, unless we're meant to draw both suspicion and our breath at descriptions of the "pursed lips", "slanting black eyes" and the "pout of hauteur and disdain". Doubtless he's a mongrel hotchpotch of various European races, because they all are (bad people, not par-

rots). Tell a lie; in a little while his hand is likened to the “pincers of a pink crab”, which presumably is similar to having a monkey’s paw. He’s getting off lightly; the animal comparisons shortly visited upon Klebb are immeasurably crueller.

Hindsight bingo! “The spectre of a false move...” He said SPECTRE, he did. That’s like the film. It is. It *is*.

There’s almost another zoological image when we’re told that Kronsteen’s game is likened to “a man eating fish”, and given what we have been told so far, one starts thinking sharks and pirhanas and those nibbly pedicure minnow things that cretins use. But, no! Witness, my darlings, the importance of punctuation: the missing hyphen is not insignificant. He really does mean “a” man eating “a” fish. That said, considering how expertly (I *think*) he’s tearing this Makharov guy apart, likening Kronsteen to a peckish barracuda isn’t too far off. Swings both ways, and the audiobook version must be slightly perplexing at this point. Equally perplexing is whether it’s “From Russia, with Love” or “From Russia with Love”. I suppose it’s only right to go with the Chopping cover’s comma, despite seeing/owning plenty of other editions without it, and it’s bereft of its punctuation in places such as IFP’s website. Perhaps it’s that first edition art that’s the anomaly.

“Kronsteen had introduced a brilliant twist into the Meran Variation of the Queen’s Gambit Declined.” Oh *had* he? Good lad. Well done. The Meran Variation, eh? Fancy! Hmm. Readily exposing my colossal ignorance again, my knowledge of chess on a par with that of Bridge, although now I know that one can sweat away a pound of weight in two hours ten minutes because it’s a Real Sport and not a Superannuated Parlour Game. Would save a lot on the monthly gym subscription if I can lose that much weight in that amount of time simply by sitting on my backside and occasionally manipulating a

couple of bishops and assorted members of the Royal Family. Fleming does suggest that such moves are capable of engendering mass debate, “all over Russia for weeks to come”. Poor loves will be *knackered*. Still, it might put them off annexing other countries for a while.

Interesting play by Fleming himself to have wound us all up with the cliffhanger in the previous chapter of the decision to *Kill! Bond! Now!* and yet, despite the change of location, we’re *still* not getting any James Bond; instead, chess. Yay. Shifting the pieces into place with his own risky Gambit Variation, before going in for the kill, one supposes. Stylistically, the chess match is interesting as, nature parallels aside – and Makharov is given a bullseye with his guts “writhing in agony like an eel pierced with a spear” – it’s tersely written, short and punchy sentences mimicking both the ticking clock and the increasing tension resulting from Kronsteen’s defiance of his orders, a metaphoric struggle of life and death turning horribly real for him. When the stress of both is released from writer and character later in the chapter, Fleming and Kronsteen relax and join forces to let fly with the most flamboyantly offensive description of Klebb. Fleming’s playing with structures and tempo within the space of a handful of paragraphs; there’s a symphonic quality to the writing. One may want to consider how flat – competent, accurately detailed and full of incident but energetically *flat* – many continuations are. This stuff tangibly undulates. Back to that idea of the Fleming Feel, the bravery – bravado, perhaps – to buckle a swash in *how* as well as what he writes.

So, this Makharov Johnny is the “Champion of Georgia”, eh? And yet it *is* most definitely chess and not a Klan burning. Wrong Georgia?

The insubordination of Kronsteen is a diverting little character flourish. Up to now, the Russians have been uniformly ghastly and therefore the threat behind the message commanding him to attend,

and the consequences of disobeying it, do not need spelling out. The man is putting himself at risk and we are meant to – sympathise? At least, appreciate danger may come his way. Despite his representation as a cold fish parrot, and given that it's all his scheme anyway, he's oddly the most human of all of the grotesques amongst the principal villains. He's almost *normal*, in comparison to PsychoKlebb and her pet proto-Werewolf. Even has a wife and kids, although he doesn't think very highly of them. Maybe it's another manifestation of Fleming's *point*: Bond can give the circus sideshow baddies a damned good thrashing because he's as comic-book as they are, but he can't get anywhere near the *real* danger to Britain which is this chap, who I've made more realistic because he's *exactly the sort of person they have*. And he survives. There you were feeling engaged by him and his disobedience. I'm telling Senator McCarthy on you. Don't need to look too far for a witch to hunt, though: there's the mother of all hags coming up in a couple of pages.

Scared, yet? Bloody should be.

Not wanting to turn this into “compare the books to the films”, which is pointless, but as the “007th” of each on this occasion covers similar ground, it's amusing that the film retains the manner in which Kronsteen “coldly and rudely” exits the match in victory. Don't quite get the feeling from the film that Kronsteen is impressed – let alone scared – by either Klebb or Blofeld in the same way the character in the novel is patently discomfited by having ignored the immediacy of General G.'s summons, but that internal conflict may have been tricky to get across and, in any event, it takes a fair old time in the film before we first encounter Bond (the trick of the pre-credits aside) so that Kronsteen and his chess appear (reasonably) faithfully at all is some achievement. Doubtless “these days” it would all be CGI and Kronsteen would have to let the Wookie win.

The copy I'm flicking through to "research" (ha!) this spurious rubbish – it's the Richie Fahey pulp cover (no comma) with the nice lady in her stockings, as strangely drawn as I am to her – suggests that outside the tournament hall there's a "ZIK" saloon, rather than a ZIL. As all editions to hand suggest the same thing, I'm taking this as deliberate rather than a typo. Pretty sure someone would have picked up on it before now. Live and learn, eh? Never heard of those before, but then years of marriage and several children have successfully reinforced (daily) my lack of omniscience. As, for that matter, does trying to understand Bridge and chess. And cars. Cress, women, Pokemon, the purpose of Canada and why anyone with an IQ above 3 would ever see fit to use Wingdings. Admittedly, that's about it.

Clever little bugger, this Kronsteen (and that's why you should be more frightened of him than the bachelorette neuter pigbitch and her catstrangling freakshow chum). Splendid defence of total outmanoeuvre he puts up to the unspoken court-martial and heinous charge of dereliction of duty. "If, with only three minutes to go, I had received a message that my wife was being murdered outside the door of the Tournament Hall, I would not have raised a finger to save her." Know how that feels. Goes a tad further than I would with the astonishingly callous remark that he "shall have to put a child in hospital for a week to support the story". Amidst all the knuckle dusters, bookguns, hordes of sweatmoistened Romany strumpets, Garboesque beauties and circus sideshow acts (on both sides, oddly) this comes across as *What a total bastard*, and the most shocking of the lot. A throwaway comment, but an upsettingly arresting one. I think we're meant to feel it. This is the sort of person the Russians have, reader dear. James Bond is a daffy old dollop of dopey sentimentality in comparison, and he's basically the best we've got.

Run.

“Kronsteen would repay him with the full coin of his mind.” A moment ago, it was worth diamonds. Socialists just don’t know how to keep an economy stable, do they? Living to die another day, he reviews Bond’s file and we’ve been entertained with its fuller content in an earlier chapter, during which we were told that 007 has worked for the Secret Service since 1938. This renders foolish anyone looking for continuity in (say) the Gardners and the Bensons, with their penchant for using political figures and incidents contemporaneous to the dates of their discharge. Just as well that these writers came up with their own undernourished dullard invertebrate nearly-men in Captain Boldman and Commander The Actor Pierrs Bronsnon respectively, so it didn’t matter too much.

“Weakness for women (therefore not homosexual, thought Kronsteen)”. Yes, that’s exactly how that one works. Seems an oversight not to draw any equally generalised conclusions from the choosy breakfast/penchant for perfumed soaps/rampant misogyny/lovely American chum with the conveniently well-designed hook. “Drinks (but nothing is said about drugs)”. Well, we know better, so nurr to you. “Success to be achieved within three months.” I wonder if that’s a SMART objective, albeit I suspect that General G.’s career development review process doesn’t adhere too rigorously to prevailing employment legislation.

And now... a solid ten paragraphs of outlandish, dementedly extravagant description of the abnormal Rosa Klebb. Starting fairly calmly – in comparison, almost flatteringly – with “pale moist lips”, within a blink we’re given “the nicotine-stained fur over the mouth”, and it’s suddenly open season on the dreadful old bag. “Dreadful?” Well, yes. Mouth jabbering away like a puppet, delivering a hoarse and flat voice, this is – despite the unconvincing protestation of the observer’s lack of interest – a no-punches-pulled character assassination. It gets even worse in the next couple of chapters, if I recall correctly.

“Kronsteen was not interested in human beings – not even in his own children.” Yep, noticed that. In a long passage that places him as “neuter” in emotion as he assesses Klebb is in sexual persuasion, Fleming bothers to go explicit with something we guessed, that the character sees people as pawns, etc. Query whether this needed spelling out, other than to ramp up even further why we should be terrified of this man – his utter disfavour for human life and complete lack of care about “good” and “bad” being on the same level as whether one draws to play white or black. Quite whether it is a wholly coherent philosophy is moot, given its ostensible emotional detachment as the player of these human pieces and yet “one had to understand their individual characteristics”, but it does fit, on reflection. It’s “understand”, not “like”, “admire” nor “appreciate”. “And, of course, people’s lives and behaviour would be partly conditioned by physical strengths and weaknesses”. This is true of Fleming’s villains to date, all bent out of shape, be it mind or body or both – apart from this guy, who appears unafflicted, and quietly gets on with being the most dangerous one yet.

“...it was as well to refresh the memory...” of Klebb, and so he does. It’s always cringe-inducing when characters sold to us as long-standing acquaintances suddenly start reflecting on the length and/or quality of their friendship for our coincidental entertainment via conversations no-one ever has because they *already know*

– “Tell me, how long have we been friends?” “Nine years” “Nine years, is it really that long?” “Yes” “Well, with that now announced, no need for us to convincingly act that this may have been the case. Nine years, eh? Well, well, well. Remove yourself from my dog” –

and it does come across slightly jarring that Kronsteen would pick Klebb apart for the hundredth time just when we happen to be looking over his shoulder, but it would have been a short chapter other-

wise, there's rudeness to be delivered to bulk it all up and by gum, it's top-drawer abuse.

Running through his theory of humanity – self-preservation, the sex instinct and the herd mentality – that suggests Kronsteen has spent time as a British private schoolboy/centre-half for Blackburn Rovers/a Christmas guest at Sandringham, we have the ruthlessness of the self-preservation first, the historical placing of Rosa Klebb at specific historical dates and incidents not simply because they were contemporaneous but they were so horrible as events they build the character. Again, the fallacy of updating Bond into the 80s and beyond with the implication – is it more overt than that? – that adventures such as this one happened reasonably closely beforehand. No: Klebb's critical characteristic of survival is formed directly by her experiences in the Spanish War, with POUM and the clutching for power post-Beria. Her time is fixed and critical to her nature and this nature of hers is itself critical to what develops over the course of the next few chapters. She did not – cannot – happen in the (say) 1970s. It would dismantle her scaffolding and render her empty and unconvincing. It'd be like lifting Tiger Tanaka from his specific time and his formative incidents and blithely plonking him in a book set nearly forty years later and... oh. A character created to tip-toe negotiate around the minor issue of wartime enmity developing into pragmatic alliance, stripped of meaningful purpose for the sake of a specious reference.

Anyway, thank you Professor History. It's time for Dr Kinky to come hither and splay his wares. "She was a neuter". Das Klebb, for whom sex is "nothing more than an itch" and for whom "the instrument" (the mind somersaults) was of no importance. "Sexual neutrality was the essence of coldness in an individual. It was a great and wonderful thing to be born with". Blimey. *Envious*, Kronsteen?

The subversion of Klebb's sexual character is paralleled by equivalent subversion to a romantic norm in rendering her an object of desire not because of allure but because of its complete absence.

Is what's being set up here a comparison to Bond, whose capacity for survival, sexual practices and lone-wolfishness are well-known to the reader both coming in and having been analysed in the chapters preceding? As much as the superhuman – and slightly supernatural – Grant is established as the physical threat, there's amusement to be drawn – deliberately intended? – in having Bond compared to *Klebb*. Is his cold attitude to sex – at least that espoused in *Casino Royale* – really *that* far removed from hers? At the end of the book, he ends up rug-munching too. Bond is likewise a product of formative fixed points in time, and not evidently a pack animal. I only raise it as a thought: patently, Bond's demonstrations of these three key attributes we are meant to admire, and Klebb's to loathe. Kronsteen may well be right – just pawns, all, “good” and “bad” are meaningless as distinguishing factors. History is moving pretty quickly these days... no, I've done that one already, haven't I? Alternatively the author's too lazy to create too many different character types, but it's politer to think of it as by design.

The greater difference is that Klebb relies on plans; Bond on *luck*. There's a vein of anti-intellectualism running through this one, pulsing worm-like at its temple. The “cleverest” character, Kronsteen, is a villain, and whilst Bond has guile and is physically resourceful, he's not called upon to be terribly intelligent to foil the scheme. It's a solid joke that the intricacy of chapter upon chapter of careful planning is undone by a big punch-up and a bullet hitting a cigarette case, which was probably a terrible old cliché even in 1957. Rather than a well-planned, overthought gambit, it's chance that wins the day. The triumph of Luck (in which we were told, in *Casino Royale*, Bond

does not believe) over The Plan. Admittedly, at the end good fortune runs out, but that's just reinforcing the point: Britain cannot ride its luck forever, especially with its last great hope incapacitated.

“...temperamentally, she would be a phlegmatic – imperturbable, tolerant of pain, sluggish. Laziness would be her besetting vice...” *The blubbery arms of the soft life had Rosa Klebb round the neck and they were slowly strangling her. She was a woman of war and when, for a long period, there was no war, her spirit went into a decline...* That noted (and noted largely to start an argument, if not follow one through), there's not too much of Bond's prissy shampoo fixation in the description of Klebb's routine, with its gougingly impolite observation of the “warm, hoggish bed” and “slovenly, even dirty” private habits vividly suggesting that the scent and smoke and sweat of Rosa Klebb is nauseating at any time of the day. Hasn't even got round to describing her physically, yet. Basically, she's a pig, as much of the animal kingdom as Kronsteen (or anyone subjected to a right old Fleminging) but a different, more swinish beast than he. Welcome to Animal Farm.

Late forties. Short. Five foot four. Squat. Dumpy arms. Short neck. Thick legs. Drab. The devil knows what her breasts are like (well, lucky old devil). A badly packed sandbag. Big pear-shaped hips. Figure like a 'cello. Not sure any of that helps her body-image. But she's got such a lovely personality. We haven't stopped there. Thinning orange hair in a tight, obscene (?) bun. Yellow-brown eyes. Large-pored nose. The wet trap of a mouth. Pale, thick chicken's skin scragged in folds. Big peasant ears, hard dimpled fists like knobkerries (fnarr), a big bundle of bosom. Coldness, cruelty and strength. A hot little morsel and no mistake. Fleming misses a trick by not giving her trotters. Needs a makeover; possibly an abundance of self-esteem issues, poor old sow. Perhaps she just hasn't met the right

man or woman or boar to bring her out of her shell, lure her from her sty. She may not have (visible) scars but Fleming is afflicting her with ugliness, and equating that to evil is a bounteous seam running through the faultlines of his work. No oil painting himself – have you seen his *teeth*? – the school of writing in which Ian Fleming enrolled is one that can't manage its bullying problem.

Kronsteen's eyes are now "fathomless brown pools" – weren't they black and slanted, before? Maybe he does have a macabre physical ailment after all.

The reference to Fouché is an interesting parallel to draw, and makes one wonder about Kronsteen's wisdom as he's not a flattering person with whom to be compared, although of what we know of General G., it's completely fair. One, perhaps, for the As in Fleming's audience to understand and shudder at the thought that the Russians have an equivalent. Don't worry, you Bs and Cs out there, if this was, in part, incomprehensible – lezzas and gypises coming soon. There's a hot babe in the next chapter, too.

"The English pride themselves on their eccentricity." We know what comes after pride, don't we? Headlong down to the wine-red floor, old loves. Vanity is letting these Russians devise such traps. Change your ways, or they'll change them for you. Arm yourself, because no-one else here will save you. Certainly not James Bond, because I'm about to kill him off. I'm prepared to ditch the complacency and become ruthless – what about *you*?

With James Bond achieving oblivion by the end of the book, it seems a sound point to pause and reflect on the findings of this loose experiment thus far. It's definitely arguable that each of the 007th Chapters to date has, to a greater or lesser extent, demonstrated distinct attributes for a *written* Bond. International travel beyond the

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reader's potential, absurdly overafflicted villains disguising lunatic opinions and pejorative attitudes, high-level gamesmanship, racing-changes up and down the pace of writing, chewable atmospheric, animalistic personalities, vicarious living in a world of drab denial. The constant appeal to the senses. The smell, the sweat, the smoke. A challenge for whoever dares follow. Why *bother*?

If it *had* stopped here, where would we be? Apart from an outpost of the Greater Soviet Empire. Five distinctive books, as pulled out of regular shape as some of the villains they contain, but each set in a heightened reality, or (as here) a claim to it. When Bond comes out of hospital, it's time to realise that they weren't listening to you, damn them to their fate and leave all that behind, to recuperate in tropical fantasy.

JAMES BOND WILL RETURN IN THE 007TH
CHAPTER OF DR NO. JACQUES STEWART
○●●● ☒□◆ □●●● ◆≡≡≡✦.

breakfast ennui two boat took Sunbeam
nose Quarrel back swell
mile way long
savage bows grey head made
night like deep yards road
take Bond water went
across reef changed good right paddle
sand beside now think softly just
going waves looked last
breakdown Crab Key sea house
got put Scouser one away began black came
yo fish
towards go heavy car surf find
slowly beach places
Cap'n heavy find
PASSAGE

"Well, everybody needs a hobby."

"So what's yours?"

"Resurrection."

"I'm sorry, did you just say 'erection'?"

Oh, you I like. Bip."

[Gurns a very silly face]

Deleted scene: Skyfall (2012)

Back to life; back to reality. Or *not*. An altered state, anyway. Having tumbled/crumbled, a medically incapable and psychologically semi-detached James Bond's fitness is openly criticised, so an under-impressed M banishes him to ~~Shanghai~~ Jamaica to redeem himself against a villain with a terrible reputation telegraphed far in advance of meeting him. So far, so ~~The Man with Golden Gun~~ Dr No. Patterns emerge, which is a kindly way of suggesting that there's a finite amount of originality that "James Bond" can sustain.

What makes you think it's his first time?

Resurrected from a near-death experience, 007 emerges *changed*. At least, there's a marked shift in the attitude towards him, not least from folks one would expect to be on his side. Including his biographer. Those who criticise Skyfall as having shoved the formative Bond of the first two Craigs too far forward, depicting him in decrepitude, ignore that barely six stories in Fleming is *much* harder on his creation than post-2006 Eon Productions is yet to be. Arguably, the current run of films are close enough to the spirit (if not the letter) of what was written that the equally clapped-out cliché of going "back to Fleming" might be justifiable. Fleming Bond is a burnt-out case early on, too. Pieces himself together to win the day but, from hereon in, invariably at a corrosively permanent physical and/or psychological cost. To an extent this is evident in the run of five films scripted by Messrs. Purvis and Wade, so it's not just the "Craig era"; the last three films, however, have made it manifestly critical to what's going on, rather than nailgunning the idea artlessly onto an unforgiving grimslick of exhausted "characters", grotty puns and relentless explosions happening regardless.

Albeit with *mild* erosion of the Casino Royale paragon – his impetuosity in Diamonds are Forever, his accidental brute force and luck succeeding in From Russia with or without Comma – the Bond of the first five novels is *prima facie* a competent man whom we are invited/required to admire, lest the fallacy of the wish-fulfilment enterprise collapse. Not without flaws, certainly, but tending towards the classically "heroic". The man introduced in 1953 is a tank-tough archetype with habits and pleasures intended to engender post-War envy; despite a jaundiced view of his trade, a *success*. The character flourishes of the third, fourth and fifth books are not presented as egotistical faults nor manifestations of defective reason. To an extent, the end of From Russia with Love shows the fluke finally expir-

ing and an invitation to the reader to reflect on how precarious – and unlikely – his previous successes were; how long can luck (believed in or not) continue, before shaming ~~Skyfall~~ downfall? How close to failure *has he always been?* I'd argue that such contemplation only arises after reading *this* book: the reason From Russia with Love's ending is a "shock" is because up to then, we're not expecting Bond to fail. Now, we can't be quite so confident of his success. The series pivoted and crashed down, too. Put the same ending on (say) Thunderball and it'd be no surprise at all.

Bond's aptitude – neither previously seriously doubted – is regularly questioned throughout the second batch of books. Still an author fictionalising himself, but moving from a frustrated writer idealising an impregnable, perfect version, towards an avatar itself struggling to overcome enfeebling human affliction, the real enemy however many cat-masticating Koreans and loony pseudo-Counts check in. It's no longer the case that "these things simply do not affect Bond"; now it's "they do, they *hurt*, and he just about gets by". Bond's capacity for failure, his vulnerability (physical and mental) and likelihood of *dwindling*, are the single consistent defining character points for the remainder of Fleming's novels. This book and Thunderball start with him as a wreck, a grand old ship being hauled away ignominiously (...etc), the moral of The Spy who Loved Me (other than *Don't* do that again) is that he's not a man to admire, and the shotgun marriage towards the end of this period tips him over the edge. Even Goldfinger, which might be perceived (reasonably) as bucking the trend as a parody anomaly with its impossible scheme, insanely unlikely actions by the villain and "non-religious lesbian-curing", starts with Bond contemplating himself and the filth of his profession, with the remainder an exercise in exposing it to ridicule. Fleming has turned the critical eye developed in his first five books, inward. His habit of lashing

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out at freaks remains, but he's not afraid to give Mr Shiny Wonderful a Brooklyn stomping too. Wonder if Fleming actually liked *anyone*, other than his mates Jim, Jack and Johnnie – Beam, Daniels and Walker – and that smelly trio Chester Fields, Benson Andhedges and (with many apologies in advance) Luke E. Strike.

It's a popular complaint amongst the denizens of internet shout-holes that we were served a tadge too much M through the medium of Dench, at best a hyper-critical headmistress, at worst a meddlesome old ratbag who got what she deserved. Fair enough, in the first five Flemings, M is peripheral, sending Kal-El out to do good, and although he gets more than his usual half-dozen lines in Moonraker (and we learn his first name), it's only because a Non-U plebhead like Bond couldn't have slipped past the Blades doorman without him. However, from Dr No onwards, there's a notable increase in M's presence and whilst, granted, there was no buddy-trip to Bond's boyhood bivouac, at one point 007 does spend Christmas day with the old stinker. Most notably, M's attitude towards Bond is increasingly underwhelmed and, starting with Dr No, a fair old slab of any interaction he has with 007 is "being cruel to be kind". Relentlessly picking away, one half expects Bond to lamp him one but doubtless this new, frayed, Bond would foul it up and collapse in a heap, weighed down by a cirrhotic liver and just so many *problems*. Do we think this "Gareth" person is going to be different? He was nass-Ty to Bond even before conspiring evilly to get himself more pow-ah.

Starting with Dr No and up to and including the first fistful of chapters of The Man with the Golden Gun, this second life is not the world of the first five books. Hidden within a ludicrous sci-fi dragon-slaying princess-saving fable garnished with birdy pooh-pooh, rocket-toppling, miffed squid, lashings of hot tarantulas, undereducated nature-girl sea-nymphs and hook-handed sinoworms

with their hearts firmly in the wrong place, Fleming takes the opportunity to both de- and re-construct his main character, and hasn't finished by the book's end. The remaining novels of the period – and several of the short stories – continue to cast doubt, breaking Bond down until he suffers the mother of all breakdowns and has to be re-rebooted, starting all over again *all over again* in The Man with the Golden Gun, an exploitable zombie lobotomised back into competence by his own side.

This second phase of the Bond universe starts with a lead character who is incompetent, in disgrace, a failure, and continues to chip away at him until he must fall once more, albeit that time from a weather balloon. Literally, a fallen idol. A pivoty one, anyway. Not to assert Bonds 1-5 are without their reflective moments, but these tend to be carpetbeaten away so Bond can heroically save the Empire and bash deformed Fuzzy-Wuzzies. Whilst there are still superficial heroics going on in v2.0, the greater interest comes in having these performed by an increasingly fragile man. One could speculate fruitlessly (so I will) about this change of heart in characterising the lead, shifting from a cold, hard man who is so superhuman his bollocks can withstand a relentless mashing, to someone frailer with the constant potential to cock things up badly. How much tension can be created if all one gets is Superman? How boring must that be to ~~watch~~ write? Having introduced us to the hero's capacity to bodge, the ingrained possibility going forwards of Bond *failing* provides additional tension. If his writer can leave him as good as dead, all bets are off. Subsequent villains' threats are exacerbated by our increased awareness of Bond's intrinsic weaknesses (and solid undermining by his own side). An invulnerable hero can only interest so many times, and all the invisible cars in the world can't camouflage it forever. Amusing though it is that the film of Dr No

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jettisons the allegations of incompetence in favour of establishing a Teflon iconography, at least Fleming had the good grace/sense to realise the wipe-clean superhero couldn't be of sustainable interest after only four years, rather than persisting with forty increasingly tedious ones. The crease-free non-stick Bond remains imprisoned by Halle Berry on a Welsh cliff-top dead on a French hotel carpet, and a more troubled one has taken his place.

Anyway, matters not; it's only a codename.

THE 007TH CHAPTER – DR NO: NIGHT PASSAGE

I'd forgotten how soon within the novel Bond and Quarrel sail to Crab Key, roughly a third in, when the film by comparison spends ages plumping a *slight* tale with the likes of Professor Dent, a slightly shoddy car chase and a brace of lovelies to knob. Movie might have run about forty-five minutes if it had followed the book more faithfully. Might not have had much of a series that way, so probably just as well. That journey, later. As we join the (in)action, the reader and Quarrel are being driven by Bond directly at a bus, presumably 007 getting itchy because there hasn't been much activity thus far. Much more relaxed pace of Bondlife, this one, presumably deliberately capturing the high-octane lifestyle of rural Jamaica, the beautiful wilderness. For all the overarching tropical atmosphere – so lustrously described one doesn't so much read this book as sweat it – and the zoo of unnatural nightmarish wonders, it's a *talky* novel. Save for the opening murders, damn all movement to date, unless one includes Bond finding out how acidic the contents of his tummy are after killing a centipede with his shoe (which he fetched himself: Not. A. Racist.). On which...

“...what do you know about centipedes?” Not sure where we’re going with this, Antoninus. Do you consider the eating of oysters to be moral and the eating of snails to be immoral? Tell me about your night passage. It’s probably not that sort of conversation, albeit Quarrel is more of a chum this time around and less of Live and Let Die’s personal-trainer/skivvy. Does seem a shame that the film replaced the tropical centipede with a tarantula, although on balance that’s a more immediately recognisable metonym for toxic menace for an audience unaware of the other creature and Fu Manchu’s stunningly “coincidental” habit for using them. If I’d have been Sax Rohmer, I’d have sued although if I’d have been Sax Rohmer, I’d have been brutally racist; have you read his stuff? It’s *jawdropping*. Makes this book look like the minutes of a Truth and Reconciliation hearing.

I’d like to suggest Quarrel knows a lot about these centipedes. I’d like to, but it’s bloody difficult as he affects the most preposterous vocal tic since the increasingly peculiar DeNiro person tried to say the word “Hereford” in that Ronin film, or The Actor Piers Brumdrum opened his cakehole to emit anything other than breath. Notably, in response to something along the lines of “Dey hoperates mos’ly at night”, Bond dodges a question about having seen one, presumably because he hasn’t understood a bleedin’ word. Fine, it might enhance the atmos to have phonetic recital of islander-speak, but it’s irritating to have to read it three times for gist, and one can’t shake a feeling of the author making mock. When Fleming eventually gives Bond Scottish roots by indulging in an uncannily lucrative coincidence of being able to sell books off the back of some films, he doesn’t have Bond shlur his speech, does he, although – fairy nuff – May expresses herself in a pantomime *Donald-where’s-yer-troosers* “Scots” manner, even down to a deep-fried whiff, possibly on account of age. Query whether characterisation has tipped too far into caricature.

“He had also not told Quarrel about the fruit.” Yeah, don’t do that. You’ll never know what he would say in response. Literally. You’d be there all blimmin’ day trying to work it out, it’d distract you so much you’d actually hit the next bus along, and you need to hurry up and murder a bloke who embodies all those attributes that you find so endearing – a physically handicapped Asian German.

“Dese hinsecks love de holes and de crannies. Dey not love de clean places.” Oh, put a sock in it, you outrageous stereotype. Is it any worse than the stuff from *Live and Let Die* that I was prepared to let pass on the basis of an argument, now looking waffer then, that the depiction was so exaggerated that no-one could take it seriously as social comment? Probably not, but it’s wearisome nonetheless. Doubtless it enhances the local colour, intention of pun at your discretion. Knowing that part of the world well, I’m confident that I’ve never heard anyone speak like that, unless they’re uncouthly masticating at the same time. This business of “I tell do police dey stole de car if dey don’t”, in relation to the decoys in Bond’s Sunbeam, I can’t help but hear delivered in a Liverpudlian accent. Dey do dough, don’t dey dough? The inability to pronounce the “t” in “hinsecks” is another clue. He’s a *Scouser*. From now on, that’s how Quarrel *must* sound, if only to make him marginally more bearable and considerably more amusing. Wonder how I got onto that? Must have been the stuff about the stolen car.

The oxymoron of the “savage, peaceful scene” at Stony Hill is on the one hand an engaging passage of description of the writer’s back yard with its dusty shafts of gold lancing into the plunging valley (fnarr), on the other terrifically self-indulgent given that little has happened yet. Cannot avoid wondering about the use of the word “savage” either: I wonder what Mr Fleming is saying about these people and their lives? I’m not wondering about it for very long, though, in case I get annoyed.

“I’se bin puzzlin’ an Ah cain’t seem to figger hout yo game”. S’easy, Quarrel. Taccchtics. Steeeevie G kichhks der ball, it goes in der goal like, dat’s ace, we aw get bevved an’ we’re made up we do dough don’t we dough, La’? “Dat so?” said Quarrel unemotionally. ‘Who you tink done hit?’” Prob’ly de Bizzieees. Etc. De do do do, de da da da, is all I want to say to you.

“First of all I want you to get me absolutely fit – the way you trained me the last time I was here. Remember?” Oh, we do. Ah, *continuity*. Insofar as this 007th Chapter activity is seeking to identify the DNA of a Bond novel, here’s something that hasn’t been that prevalent so far in the books outwith the use of M and the American boyf: re-using characters and referencing past incidents. On this occasion, it’s Live and Let Die Another Day. This book commenced with the aftermath of the previous one’s carpet-chewing, and continues now to mine such history as engineered to date. Embedding Bond’s world with a supporting cast, or laziness to fall back on old routines? Not easy to decide. Obviously, insofar as Fleming did it himself, it’s accordingly fine in principle for the continuation authors to do the same, although credibility takes a crash-dive when characters realistically decades-dead suddenly pop up again. If credibility’s ever an ingredient of a Bond. Giant squid pops into the mind, at that juncture. I should probably stop moaning. Still, it’s only four years since Quarrel’s first appearance, rather than, y’know, *forty*...

“Ah kin do dat ting.” Eh? Yer wha’? What do you call a Liverpudlian in a white tracksuit? *The bride*. If you see a Scouser on a bike, why shouldn’t you swerve your car to hit him? *It’s probably your bike*. No Ian, you can’t change “Scouser” for “Cayman Islander” because that’d be racist whereas making unamusing jokes about the populace of Liverpewl... isn’t. Somehow. Perhaps in a hundred years’ time, people will jab angrily with their webbed flippers at

this nonsense as evidence of racism against the abandoned, scorched atoll of Merseyside. Some may defend it as “of its time”, or would if their mouths hadn’t mutated shut. All will wonder why their forebears wasted time with it instead of stopping the water running out, growing more food and preventing the US President and his husband from nuking Cambridge in 2038, magnificent idea though that was. You might think this nonsense about Quarrel – was there ever a name more Scouse? – is a feeble and offensive conceit but if you’re not convinced by the rock-hard anthropology of the dialect, then how about the dodgy conspiracy of fixing of life insurance for a generous sum despite the stunningly fraudulent material non-disclosure of a trip to the deadly, freak-laden island of Dr Moreau No? Well, it wouldn’t do to indulge in cheap stereotyping for the sake of time-passing light entertainment, would it? Dat’s right, cap’n. “Now then, how shall we go? Canoe?” No, La – we’ll go by de Ferry. Cross de Merrrrseeee. ‘Cos dis land’s der place I love.

Edition I’m using (it’s the US 2002 Fahey cover) lacks the closing punctuation at the end of Bond’s comment *So as to have fresh water and be able to get down to the sea to fish*. Hmm. First they remove the previous book’s comma, then they take your speech marks. Before you know it, they’ll break your hyphen then come past midnight for your colon a.k.a your night passage. A dastardly scheme to punctuate us all that they call *Ellipsis*. Must have got that from somewhere.

“They went through the little town and on round the headland to Morgan’s Harbour. It was just as Jim remembered – the sugar loaf of the inflatable banana boats rising out of the overcrowded bay, the drunks drawn up beside the mounds of empty beer cans, the distant boom of the all night disco-Theque which had so nearly been his grave. Jim, his mind full of very bad memories, took the car down

the littered side road and through the landfill site in the middle of which the gaunt ruin of the old Whore House stood up like a stranded skip.” In short: Morgan’s Harbour – total *dump*. Curious how they end up at a bungalow outside Port Maria – a white single storey affair – with a lawn to the sea’s edge. We know someone with a place just like that, don’t we? Write what you know and all that, but possibly a bit *too* close to home? At least he didn’t call it Shamelady, I s’pose. The research for this chapter can’t have stretched beyond a morning wander around the garden and then bashing out 2,000 words of filler before a liquid lunch.

Contemplating his past, and padding the chapter with non-eventful content, Bond’s mind turns to Solitaire. “What had happened to her? Where was she?” Selfish moo; she could have written or, being *psychic* (yeah, right), got the Ouija board out and Oui-mailed him. This Bond doesn’t care to remember (or, as he’s getting on, can’t), but it’s suggested she’s still out there, somewhere, and accordingly could have been fair game for a Continuationerist. John Gardner might have made her a shock traitor who becomes a shock untraitor and then in an anticipated twist turns out to be a unshock traitor all along, except she was an unshock untraitor (I *think*). Head hurts: make it stop. Young Mr Benson might have had Bond playing solitaire on his laptop, because he’s such a modern guy and knows computers and ting, telling us the rules in mandible-grindingly basic detail and then proclaiming “It reminded him of a woman he had known of the same name, much as his passion for playing dominoes did; *do you see what I did there?*” Yep; more than once too often, old fudge.

“Brusquely Bond turned and walked back into the house, driving the phantoms away from him.” And presumably headlong smack into an oncoming bus. Still, end of reference. There for a moment, and gone. Not the basis of a significant plot development, nor os-

tensible justification for the book as a whole. A phantom, rather than a SPECTRE. Right, brekky time and setting a punishing exercise that seems to involve quite a lot of kip. “After breakfast the routine began”. With *sunbathing*. Lazy sod. Going for the burn, but perhaps the wrong type.

The disaster that befalls the two decoys in the Sunbeam is open to a couple of interpretations: firstly, that Dr No is an unstoppable menace; secondly, that Bond is slipping and getting a touch raddled because the deceit was so easily seen through that it’s exposed in the national press. Clown. The telegram from Pleydell-Smith, however, is only open to one interpretation: that the man knows how much cyanide it takes to kill a horse. Still, with independence just around the corner one has to fill the long, hot Kingston afternoons somehow. Seems a cruel way to dispose of a noble beast; I thought they just rode them into fences at Aintree which, for those blissfully unaware, is in... um... Liverpool. Oh blimmin’ spoonbills, I think I need diversity awareness training. This book’s such a bad influence, although the sex, snobbery and sadism promised by the notorious Paul Johnson review are so conspicuous by their absence I’m having to add them in as I rattle along.

Describing the canoe as “a blunt instrument” bears resonance and amusement, as does the image of Bond “...chafing to get out of the stable and on to the track.” A thoroughbred, then. Not an old donkey. Still, whatever you are, don’t go near that Pleydell-Smith nutter and certainly never let him offer you “a drink”. Less amusing is that Bond is wearing jeans. *Christ*. Doubtless more practical than a dinner jacket but there’s still something troubling about the image.

“He admitted to himself that this adventure excited him. It had the right ingredients – physical exertion, mystery, and a ruthless enemy.” Hm – bit metacognitive that, no? Puts the book beyond the embitt-

tered fingertips of the “reviewer” by having the hero review it himself. A dishonest resume of the plot to date – physical exertion and mystery have been pretty low-level – and it comes across as trying to convince the reader of its merits just in case one wasn’t wholly sold, like the sort of person who relentlessly bangs on about their famous sense of humour despite considerable evidence to the contrary; that’d be Scousers again. *I’m sorry*. Hi everyone, I’m Jim, and it’s been nine words since my last ~~drink~~ unwarranted remark about the fine city of Liverpool and all who fail in her. *I’m sorry*. Hi everyone, I’m Jim and it’s been ten words since... Anyway, the instant review of Dr No by *someone actually appearing in it* does emit another mutated gene of the Bonds: winking self-awareness to try to render it critic-proof. No wonder that Mr Johnson was so upset. It can only get worse. Bond’s bitterness at his treatment by M is only going to deteriorate, too. The start of *The Man with the Golden Gun* was merely acceleration of the inevitable. Bit rich to gnaw at M for sending him on a “holiday in the sun” when that’s all he’s doing, currently.

“The sun blazed beautifully into its grave.” Smashing. There we were, pottering around the author’s home and getting nowhere fast, and then he gently unleashes something like that. As the melancholy of the tropical dusk sets in, the creatures come out to play. A Fleming staple, the beauty and violence of the natural world juxtaposed with, and interrupted by, the blander human brutality of Bond choosing which gun to take (and, notably, not picking the Walther PPK). “Was it over-insurance to take all this metal on what might only be a tropical picnic?” Well, a) you’ve certainly changed your tune on the morality of insurance from a few paragraphs ago and b) Operation Ellipsis strikes again with an errant “he” rather than “be” – or at least in the version I’m gawping at, mystified. Enough to give one the hebejebees.

And now, after all those exhausting bacon breakfasts and days of sunbathing, we're going to watch Bond sit in the garden at sunset and get pissed: what autobiography? The sinister march of the shadows across the lawn to envelop him: what metaphor? Bond downs at least a quarter of a pint, but probably closer to half, of bourbon without noticing it: what complete bloody alcoholic? Still, those fireflies were flashing their "sexual morse" at him, the slags, and at one point he pours "another big slug" into his glass; less toxic than a centipede, but still an odd thing to do. He's so *strange*. Suggests the whole thing, raucously sexualised nature here and with serious weirdness to come, might all be the hallucinations of a man still dying on a wine-red floor.

So, slightly drunk, Bond finds himself having to sail many miles to ~~The Isle of Man~~ Crab Key. Solid plan. Yet again, against man's folly, nature raises its objections, via conflicting currents and coral trees bared like fangs and (...um) niggerheads. "The wood was already beginning to bite into his buttocks and his back" He's got wood, up his botty? Hee hee hee. "It crossed his mind that it was going to be the hell of a long and uncomfortable night". Depends what floats your boat, my darling. A pastoral interlude in all the *furious* action of the chapter so far, paddling away, staring at the stars and the "cluster of lights that would be Port Maria." That or a godforsaken party boat overcrammed with lacrimose pubescents and awash with sweaty puke. Still, the passage about "the pulse of the sleeping sea", with Bond wondering about all the dangerous creatures of its depths, is rather beautiful albeit a dead giveaway that Fleming is getting relaxed and all too happy to digress, displacement activity for moving things forward, which would expose the story as *not very much*. However, the notion that all it would take would be a wave to capsize them into the maws of the deep-sea

creatures does continue the idea of contemplating Bond's vulnerability, with 007 well aware of it. The curious, discordant natural analogies are firmly in place too: Crab Key in shadow is likened to "a giant swimming rat", which one the one hand is spot-on, but on the other a pretty unusual way to describe an island. Punchy and memorable and suitably revolting, though.

Once beached and the boat hidden we leave Bond, having both wondered at and struggled against the animal kingdom for much of the chapter, absorbed into it, asleep. The novel in which Bond goes back to nature and nature's not too keen on the idea, this chapter (of several) exemplifies some positives, some negatives, of the Bond series. On the upside, the opportunity for Fleming to write, with detail, passion and conviction, about the savagery and beauty of the natural world and Bond battling the true environment in which he finds himself – and it's not the silly constructs of tradecraft and the world of man's devising. James Bond contemplates nature, and we are invited to contemplate his. Less encouraging is a developing tendency to digress into hobbies to disguise a thinnish story – Goldfinger's yet more culpable of this – and relying on previous incidents for narrative. Jamaica's a big enough place; Bond doesn't *have* to go back to Beau Desert. Query whether the story needs to be in Jamaica at all, save for the convenience for Fleming of a few days spent working from home. Reads as the most densely, weightily uberambient so far, but also in certain respects the most *idle*, albeit the typesetting errors doubtless aren't the author's fault. Perhaps "idling" is a fairer word as there is juicy stuff throughout the novel about the character of James Bond and why he's a bit crap, but one cannot avoid a feeling of distracted complacency creeping in, an ennui hard to shake. Possibly all the sunshine and booze.

THE 007TH CHAPTER

The history of the continuations tends to point to the adoption of one of these attributes above the other. Here's a clue: the remaindershop Bonds weren't published by National Geographic. The sinister march of continuity and self-referencing across the lawn, about to envelop. It's not the first time it's happened. It sure as hell won't be the last.

T'riffic.

JAMES BOND WILL RETURN IN THE 007TH
CHAPTER OF GOLDFINGER. JACQUES STEWART
ONCE HAD A CAR THAT WENT INVISIBLE. THREE
GUESSES WHERE THAT HAPPENED. ECTUALLY, IT
WAS IN MANCHESTER BUT, Y'KNOW, NEAR ENOUGH.

[illegible]

Why write?

To make money? Presumably. Not all do. Fewer should. Colossal drivels out there. In here, too, although you get this for free. Like roadkill, or the ‘flu.

To influence? Goldfinger was my first exposure to anything Bond. Made me the creature I am today. I blame Ian Fleming rather than take any individual responsibility.

To better the world with the outflow of their creativity and express the innermost innermost of their tortured, yearning souls? Arguable, albeit pretentiously.

To annoy, and have a right old go at people they don’t like so narrative credibility can go boil its bum in Bovril? On the evidence of this novel, undeniable. Insofar as applying to these pieces too, see “influence”, above.

THE 007TH CHAPTER

The 007th Chapter of the 007th book. If one believes weirdo Black Magic demented claptrap, this “lucky number seven” stuff promises good fortune. It’s no more weird, blackly magical nor demented as claptrap than the belief that spits diametrically opposed propositions about a man marrying another man (a heinous obscenity) and a man marrying his own rib (obviously totally unmental and the basis of a secure family unit). Should you choose to be offended by that, you’ve probably come to the right place, and definitely so if you:

- are Korean and/or
- smell of “zoo” and/or
- drive slowly, be it in either/both the motoring or golfing context and/or
- are Mexican and/or
- are teetotal and/or
- are a pansified Italian and/or
- are around five foot tall and/or
- are euphemistically probably Jewish despite unconvincing protestations to the contrary and/or
- are fat and/or
- are Chinese and/or
- are wealthy and/or
- [... is there anyone *interesting* left? If you’ve been playing along with “and” rather than “or”, we definitely need to meet; you sound scrumptious]

That’s only the first few chapters, and before we’re dipped in chocolate and thrown to the lesbians. On and on this (relatively) long

novel goes, with practically everyone who ever lived getting a kick in the Penfolds. Few escape without (at least) a sideways barb, Fleming injecting into the book all the bitterness of his colossally difficult struggle, that “wealthy layabout elitist journalist drinks his private income and exploits well-connected wife’s literary contacts so he can afford to pretend that all he’s interested in is tropical fish rather than the vulgarity of the “being seen to *try*” specie of colossally difficult struggle”. Long, stony road from underprivilege, that. With, let’s be kind, *rampagingly feeble* plotting and extensive pastoral interludes extolling the latest enthusiasm, be it bullion-smuggling, golf, curable lesbians or exuberant xenophobia, it’s the grumpiest of the books, in many ways unappealing misanthropy, and needing a good shave. I know I bang on unedited, but, y’know, *influence*.

In much the same way as (say) *Die Another Day* might be a good “James Bond film” because it contains the usual things but is a disastrous “film” when stacked up against anything outside the series, with its slothful pace, threadbare non-plot and appalling attitudes, *Goldfinger* is a ghastly novel when compared beyond its own kind, in which company it arguably polishes up reasonably well. It definitely has all the requisites exemplified in the 007th Chapters so far, and a few more that go towards building a Fleming Bond archetype:

- Attitudes promulgated to provoke
- High-living (with associated disdain), rich food (with associated disgust) and carrrrdds (with associated... um... excitement, possibly, I dunno)
- Foreigner-baiting, “exaggeration of an attitude that couldn’t possibly be held and is therefore a joke” beginning to wane as an excuse for unrepentant, attention-seeking racism

THE 007TH CHAPTER

- British Establishment snobbery (not wholly disconnected from the above)
- Fewer bursts than one might expect of savage action interrupting lengthy digressions on “stuff”
- A none-too-disciplined attitude towards having it *convince*; just rumbling towards the bits that interested the writer, and glossing over the rest with a practised aloofness
- A nice drawing
- Women! Know your place. Basically, a victim of childhood abuse who ends up dead, submissive or cured, or a combination of these
- Ridiculous female names. Vesper. Solitaire. Gala. Tiffany Case. Romanova (given its context, it seems *absurd*). Pussy Galore. Jill.
- Physical freaks *roundly* sneerbullied by a schoolboy athlete
- American gangster clichés
- The prospect of 007’s genitals accruing significant damage
- Bond’s contemplation of his job, his income and disillusion with both
- Hey everyone! It’s the United States! They have *food*
- Slightly half-hearted, at-a-distance-and-can’t-really-be-bothered dipping of the toe into the waters of tradecraft, in this instance with the Identicraft and the Homer, in comparison to ages spent eating crabs, being lectured to about gold and roughly forty pages setting up and playing golf
- Nihilistic fatalism – the first chapter with its conclusion that everyone dies anyway is tremendously bleak

- Structure games – the Happenstance etc... is funny, and Bond being held captive for so long is a departure from an adventure norm, where the hero fights his way out within seconds
- Product-placement. Relentless product placement
- Gentleman's sports described at length, at which the cheat is himself cheated
- Name-checking one's acquaintances, in this case the likes of Blackwell, Blackwell's cousin's husband Mr Goldfinger, Raymond Chandler and Alfred Blacking/Whiting. How droll
- Bond relying on total fluke such as hiding the message in the 'plane's loo and Goldfinger's *baffling* decision not to butcher him into cutlets but instead recruit him as a P.A following a distinctly homoerotic interview process requiring an oiled-up half-naked mute bodybuilder masseur and buzzsaw-up-the-fudgegun. Fifty Shades of Gold
- James Bond being passive and clumsy. Fancy getting yourself caught like that
- Returning characters (Du Pont, the Spangled Mob and a questionable Felix Leiter cameo seemingly for the hell of it)
- The savagery of the animal kingdom; the patently subhuman zoological specimen of Oddjob being fed a cat being a "highlight"
- Substantial sexual deviancy, in multiple manifestations
- Ham sandwiches with plenty of mustard (not wholly disconnected from the above, if in the right mood)
- Knocking around Kent and the posh bits of London
- The pesky Russians exploiting a hangover from World War II

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- Bond investigating X – Major Tallon’s murder, Strangeways’ murder, gold smuggling – turning into exposing a lunatic masterplan with dubious scientific veracity but probably terribly exciting nonetheless
- ‘Planes, trains and automobiles, the latter driven thuggishly.

I’m happy to assert this list as keystone Fleming Bond, despite risking meaning the 007th Chapter exercise is done. Oh, cheer not: there may yet be attributes to ascertain, but that run-through brings all the previous books into this one whole. On the one hand, that makes *Goldfinger* a dream Bond book – it’s got *everything*. Trouble is, that renders it as bloated as its eponymous villain. If written by someone else, it would be lampoon, tipping the individual ridiculous attributes into excess. Emanating from the original author, it’s hard to avoid the smell and smoke and sweat of indulged self-parody, one that was bound to sell and no-one had the guts – or the financial desire – to tell him to simmer it down a nadge. This is as far as it could go and the strain shows, I fear, particularly in narrative credibility. The traditional legerdemain of papering over lacunae with extensive description of peripheral incident (e.g. golf) now looks diversionary and idle rather than daffy and charming.

Whilst books and short stories yet to come may take one or more of these elements further, I’m pretty confident nothing left to come includes them *all* to the extent that this does. Just as with *GoldenEye* and *Die Another Day* it’s a Greatest Hits package to keep the fans immediately sated but once the superficial thrill of first encounter dissipates, we’re left wondering whether it hasn’t cheated us by emitting little that was fresh. Fortunately, the remaining Flemings don’t go down this route but, despite the books from 1960 to the end containing much of interest and novelty, a fondness for short stories and borrowing other people’s work may suggest that the excess and overkill

of Goldfinger exhausted (or bored) him. The film version is readily – if lazily – seen as the Bond archetype, a model for the films that followed (for good or ill); the book, conversely, exemplifies written Bond of the 1950s but query whether it was too rich a feast of the stale.

If, as happened to me, this was the first one you read, eminently possible due to a famous title, you might – as also happened to me, initially – consider other Flemings lesser because they didn't include all "the stuff". A similar phenomenon is observable with folks for whom their first Bond film was that merciless slog of reheated guff *GoldenEye*, when required to contemplate (say) *The Living Daylights* or *Quantum of Solace*. Without wanting to provoke an argument about the films, insofar as the books went I was mistaken. Because it has everything, *Goldfinger* is the weaker for it, leaking at the seals. Appealing characters, some (albeit not much) suspense but a directionless, complacent amble through overblown crowd-pleasing. When that happens with the films, people demand "they now need to make a *For Your Eyes Only*".

Good idea.

THE 007TH CHAPTER – GOLDFINGER: THOUGHTS IN A DB III

Hanging around the Bank of England, Bond spies five-pound notes being unloaded, probably something Fleming observed in his research but no-one advised him that he didn't have to tell us about it. The perception that there was no-one prepared to tell him when to stop pervades this novel, overstuffed yet underwhelming. The problem is that *everything* has to have an opinion attached to it now. Give us a break, man. Give us a plot, come to think of it. It all comes to

a halt far too often so that Ian can tell us what he *thinks* about X, about Y, about Z. I recall being at a family wedding, listening to a decrepit aunt bang on acidly about everything anyone else mentioned, until it got to the point where I had to ask her whether there was anything or anyone she *did* like, as it would be so much swifter for the rest of us. The monologue dried up as much as she was.

Gleefully embracing Old Fartdom, Bond steadfastly dismisses progress and whines about the notes' redesign, moaning that "They look like any other country's money", which doesn't quell the impression of his sinister pig-ignorant cultural insularity. What about those new 5 pence pieces? Eee, just like buttons. So fiddly and me fingers are all arthritic. Never know what the money is, these days. I blame that Europe. Man at bingo – Noel, you know Noel, slightly slitty-eyed and one of them, you know, those (*sotto voce*) ho-mo-sex-u-als, I've nothing against them, me, but I wouldn't trust one with me cushions – anyway, he told me that Europe wants to ban clothespegs, gravel and shelves. Who won the War, then? Flamin' liberty, it really is.

Colonel Smithers' revelation that the changes were due to Reichsbank forgeries doesn't dampen authorial enthusiasm for blaming The Hun for everything wrong with the World today. See – told you. *Europe*. They drive on the wrong side and can't speak English proper. Now the currency plates are in the hands of the Russians, so it's the usual Russo-German conspiracy *again*. Can't trust 'em. No, it's not that I'm one of them racials – I love curry, once had one of them paellas (didn't like it) and I live in a cul-de-sac, can't get much more unracist than that – but they're all wrong 'uns, mark my words. Open up one of them Russian dolls and they're full of grenades. That's how they smuggle them in, along with their unemployed come to take our jobs; my friend Noel told me that, in that way those people *have*. Now, I'm not against that lot – such nice teeth – but it's such a shame.

I know the type well. Not being funny, like, but they're a direct consequence of giving votes to women and 'sex equality'. Pansies of both sexes are everywhere... herd of unhappy sexual misfits...

...no, sorry, I can't continue. It's making me sweat, coldly. Mr Fleming, to paraphrase Bond's attitude – I'm sorry for your views, but I have no time for them. I accept that the observations on homosexuality aren't in the chapter under scrutiny, but the slope down to that Hell is well paved by the reactionary attitude to the currency. Not that the one immediately leads to the other, but there's a consistency of peevish sourness. Is this Bond man fit to be a hero? The hard, detached, colder – perhaps more sketchy – Bond of earlier books seems to develop into an embittered bigot the more the author reveals of him. Is there a feasible counter-argument that Fleming is making Bond so unlikeable here – in this 007th Chapter, he doesn't come across well, either – to challenge our idolising him? Fleming so tired of the man he wants to destroy him? Look at the Bs and Cs – I make Bond vile, and they still buy it. Will no-one rid me of this turbulent Bond? Heroes and villains all mixed up, etc etc etc. I'm not sure that washes, this time. Can't convince myself that this is anything other than the author seeping through the page, the golf club drunken bore, so sure of a captive audience because he's written another bestseller, abusing the platform and freedom that success brought him by delivering tired anecdotes, minor embellishments but at heart the same old thing and, via the medium of casual splenetic prejudice, venomously berating women, foreigners and – bloody hell – “pansies”. Oh, you mustn't mind Ian; it's just his little way. The schoolyard victimisation may explain why this appealed to an eleven-year-old me. It's not a children's book, but it is a childish one. Reading it now, one wonders why the Flemings have a reputation as more “adult” than the films; uncomfortably ill-informed tirades such as this expose them as pitifully juvenile.

On the basis few escape his wrath, Fleming is an equal-opportunities extremist, but this stuff about gender equality leading to homosexuality is so ignorant it's disappointing for a well-travelled, well-educated man to express it. You catch Gay by giving women the vote. *Riiiigght*. It's not that he has to like it, of course he doesn't, but the dislike could be based on something that isn't *ludicrous*. Much like the spare rib thing. If this is the best justification his prejudice can hide behind... Surprised he doesn't blame the Germans; missed opportunity. This isn't the amused anthropological raconteur wandering around Harlem or Las Vegas or the Caribbean reef, telling us tall tales of the indigenous populace: it's straight (pun... intended?) contempt with a foundation in utter rubbish. It might, of course, be no more than a provocative joke; given the absurdity it's difficult to credit that anyone *really* believed this. Socially, Fleming welcomed homosexuals into his intimate circle, so it could just be a baity (albeit spectacularly mean-spirited) wind-up. How gaily we laughed. Oh Ian, you are a card. Bond's frequent liaisons with women sporting boyish posteriors, and the creation of Felix Leiter as occasional recreational unrequited bi candy for him, renders such views open to allegations of protesteth too much, denial. It also makes James Bond look *really thick*, objectionably so. Ah well, impossible fictional character thinks equally impossible fictional thoughts; not sure why I take offence, but there's a tarnish to Bond now that undermines his appeal and makes him not just a darker character but an actively *unpleasant* one. Can't change it, and perhaps it has antiquity on its side as a document of its time, that time being The Time of the Stupid Embarrassing Gits.

Interesting depiction of M as looking a bit beaten around. Chapter 5, "Night Duty", pulled few punches in suggesting that the service was shabby and the work frustrating, even raising the prospect of shutting down the Double-O section and, as with the previous

book, it's of interest to note the increasing office politics, pressures on M and the involvement of the SIS staff in the stories. There's some payoff to this; M's anxieties of *For Your Eyes Only* or his protective attitudes of *You Only Live Twice* and *The Man with the Golden Gun* – in the teeth of actions by Bond justifiably deserving the opposite – would ring hollow had the character not been built up in preceding books. Bit of a worry that he's a member of a club that in its time has harboured at least two supervillains and the head of the British Secret Service; whiff of scandal about that.

“Germans didn't have much gold after the war.” This is because Major Dexter Smythe nicked it. “Look where they've got in ten years.” Yes, the Germans again. They haven't been mentioned for at least three paragraphs. Let. It. Go. “Bond said thoughtfully, ‘I wouldn't get anywhere sucking up to him...’ “. Blimey, even Bond's on the turn. Emmeline Pankhurst, I blame *you*. “I wouldn't think he's an easy man to fool.” Of Goldfinger. Of the man who hires you, and the sister of a girl he murdered, as secretaries despite the anorexic cover-story and presumably because there's no-one else on Earth who can type and hand round drinks although, fair's fair, neither are within the barely-housetrained Oddjob's skillset. Of the man who doesn't check you out with SMERSH until *after* you've foiled his plan instead of immediately upon being humiliated in Miami. Of the man who thinks he can physically steal beeeelions of bullllllion when, despite such lengthy pains to try to convince his gang (and us) that it can be done in time, it simply *can't*. Of the man someone sharp saw coming a mile off when they sold him a (ahem) fallout-free “clean” atomic bomb that he can keep in “a carton”. No, Jimbles, he's a *total clown*. This one's going to be easy, so you can afford to spend ages of pages trying his – and our – patience. “D'you know, 007, I wouldn't be at all surprised if Goldfinger doesn't turn out to be the foreign banker, the treasurer so

THE 007TH CHAPTER

to speak, of SMERSH.” No, well we wouldn’t either. Be more surprising if he wasn’t. Get on with it, then.

Sorry, no more story until we get through this traffic jam. Bond, driving like an idiot, all racing-changes mashing the gearbox, hits the “inevitable traffic crawl through Rochester”. Odd for a cash-strapped M to be whining about wasted resource in Bond playing golf and yet have a motor pool brimful of Jags and Aston Martins. One aspect this 007th Chapter gives us is the seed of iconography by putting Bond in a begadgeted Aston and it’s curious that the film versions have never gone for the lights that change colours to foil or assist night-time pursuit, which seem far more practical than a limited number of revolving licence-plates: what good are those, anyway? It’s still a *highly* conspicuous car and the steering wheel remains on the ~~correct~~ British side. Doubtless something this expensive and flashy does suit the cover of “a well to-do, rather adventurous young (?) man with a taste for the good, the fast things of life”, a label-fetishist who enjoys his golf, is under-par intellectually, hurls a specced-up Aston Martin around in a viciously irresponsible way and will in due course drink Rose d’Anjou *by the pint*. James Bond: Premiership footballer. A twerpish lout, displaying appalling manners in jumping the queue and shaking *his* fist at the slower, careful driver.

What a horrid, horrid man.

Once again, as with Sir Hugo Drax, M has suggested a theory and Bond – because he’s exploitable and thick – has taken it as fact. Goldfinger *is* in league with the Russians, and that’s that. British Intelligence, eh? British Guessing, “more like”. ‘Mazingly, turns out to be true, and that’s kind, taking pity on the poor reader otherwise the lengthy, practically baseless speculation about how Goldfinger must operate and what he gains by his involvement with the Soviets would have been more redundant filler. “The Russians were notoriously in-

competent payers of their men.” Oh, be nice for once in your life, yeah? “Goldfinger was not making the money for himself. He was making it for the conquest of the world!” Calm down, love. It’ll only fuel your road rage further. Anyway, when financial collapses come, it’s invariably via incompetence rather than masterplans. Granted, sitting around waiting for banks to throw money at sub-prime scruff-bags over several years doesn’t make a thriller, but then neither does this dawdling through the estuaryside of Kent. *Come onnnnnnnnn....*

A consistent theme of the books appears in the contemplation of Goldfinger’s vanity, etching the “Z” into the gold bars, being the start of the villain’s downfall and raising suspicion; a consistent theme of *this* book is Bond’s summation of Colonel Smithers as “a dull dog”; how *rude*. Horribly ungrateful guest. Man even let you smoke his cigarette, but you’d probably only blame Emily Davison for that. “[T]he cheap bungaloid world of the holiday lands...” Look, mate, not everyone can afford your international jet-set lifestyle. Why bother protecting these places if you think so little of them?

“And here was Bond, launched against this man by a series of flukes...” You don’t say. Similar to the previous 007th Chapter, a creeping self-awareness is idling across the lawn. Does the author admitting that it’s all unlikely deflate the critic all-too-ready to accuse the same, future-proofing the tale against wastrels like me picking it apart? *Don’t bore me in telling me it’s rubbish because I’ve already told you. Calm down. Cigarette? Pint of wine?* The expression that comes to mind is that one about eating cake and yet still having it. “How often in his profession had it been the same – the tiny acorn of coincidence that soared into the mighty oak whose branches darkened the sky.” Requisite – and reassuringly florid – natural imagery aside, the real question is “how often in *this series?*”, with a follow-up of “how much longer can he get away with it?”. Proposed answer

is – thus far, and no further. It's readily apparent that Bond hasn't even checked that Goldfinger is actually available to play golf; he's just leapt into his battleship-grey penis metaphor and relied on coincidence turning up trumps once again and – how utterly amazing – it does. The book's out of control. Still, I suppose its reliance on coincidence only goes to emphasise how loyal to Fleming Skyfall's series of impossible events is. Watch that observation stretch until it snaps.

Seem to recall that later it's suggested that the "sky-blue Ford Popular with large yellow ears (eh?)" currently legitimately pootling along, is driven by Oddjob. Just as well Bond doesn't know there's a Korean at the wheel, otherwise he would have to force it into a hedge, shoot it up with the Colt .45 from the "trick compartment" under his seat and then, I dunno, wee on it. As it stands, his behaviour is already reprehensible, despite the oxymoronic – or just moronic – "polite jabs" on the horn. "The Ford Popular was doing its forty. Why should anyone want to go more than that respectable speed?" Why indeed? Pussy-chewer he may be, but at least Oddjob's a courteous driver, unlike Bond, swerving about, blasting the horn and trying to muscle the Ford aside. You're not going to get there any quicker, y'know. It's only *golf*. Look at me in the big flash car. Ooh, get her. "He changed down and contemptuously slammed the DB III past on the inside. Silly bastard!" True.

More redundant sightseeing – and wartime-hangover with the Super Sabres coming in to land – and finally Bond resolves "No hanging about", a decision way overdue. My Fahey 2002 editions maintain their quality control in telling me "Be took the next right-hand turn..." although given the loutish swerving, it's remarkable that the typing's been otherwise accurate. Nice – if timewasting – detail about Bond's accommodation and lunch noted, he "drove slowly over to the Royal St Marks at Sandwich", pretty unlikely unless

there were no other vehicles to bully. One wonders why he was hurrying earlier, unless he had an uncontrollable craving for a delicious ham sandwich. What an eccentric person.

“Why, if it isn’t Mr James!” Ah, the noble cringing deference of the grip-winding classes, those cheery below-stairs serving folk whose wives have no forenames and call their offspring Cecil. “There had been a time in his teens when he had played two rounds a day every day of the week at St Marks.” Sounds expensive, that, and questionable whether the Higsons covered this; seemed to be more about fighting alligators and mad scientists than 36 holes daily of sticky-ball-hit. Equally questionable is Blacking’s desire to have “always wanted to take him in hand”. Blimey, they’re *everywhere*. You be careful, young Bond, especially if he offers to regrip your Mashie Niblick.

Bond’s handicap – other than being a boorish drunken prejudiced roadhog thug – is discussed in detail, although for those wanting more insight into 007’s lifestyle will doubtless be cheered; I just want him to start killing more than time. Unclear what the implication is in relation to these “tough, cheery men” plying Bond with booze after a round at Huntercombe or wherever, although as the drinks are double kummels it’s doubtless only to compliment him on his balls, discuss holes they’ve known, perhaps set up a threesome for next time out, query the flexibility of his shaft and finally pump him for information about his strokeplay and follow-through. A direct consequence of giving votes to women. At least Bond’s safe here: the real Royal St Georges only permits entry to male members. As t’were.

“Who’s this chap you’re playing with?” (*fnarr*) “A Mr Goldfinger, sir.” Well, *there’s* a coincidence. In da hole! What a birdie! Touch-down! (Is this right?) Etc. Goldfinger’s also a nine handicap: will the flukes never stop? Better not, otherwise the story ends. “Alfred obviously found it difficult to believe that anyone knew Mr Goldfinger.”

Bless his simple unsophisticated servile ways. The bits and pieces about Goldfinger improving his lie provide local colour but by now we're *expecting* him to be a cheat – it's practically all we know of the man for certain, Bond's speculating aside – so how is this news? "He might think I'd been trying to keep him to myself, or something." OK, just pretend that's a tee in your pocket rather than your being pleased to see him. Women voting, eh? Who knows what Bond would have made of *Margaret Thatcher*, other than as the ultimate sorry outcome of gay liberation? The only person on Earth who would, I'd wager.

Bond and his chum have a chat about getting fresh wood, and we scuttle from this sordid episode to watch the Silver Ghost – subject in due course to a tragic dismemberment in the service of an appalling but inevitable pun – rumble along the drive and, in the time it takes to roll half a mile, Fleming seizes the opportunity to indulge in gleeful car porn, making the Rolls sound wonderful and casting doubt on 007's judgment of Goldfinger: surely anyone driven about in a behemoth quite so magisterial isn't going to be abundantly impressed by Bond's flashy nouveau gitmobile? "It was almost as if they were driving a hearse". Subtle. It's not as if Fleming's not *trying* to represent Goldfinger as a deadly threat, but it's all talk. He starts and then remains flatly detached, aloof and unthreatening throughout and although it's in the text that he's a laid-back kinda guy, bored even, it only serves the book's absence of urgency and menace. There are tense passages – Oddjob features in all of them – but like the villain, the book's flab hinders its energy.

We leave 007 manhandling a putter and it's just as well that the chapter ends because doubtless he was about to attack Alfred with it, for having the temerity to have the word "black" in his name. Never mind women members, we're definitely not allowing one of *those* in here.

One can see why some folk might not take to all that is “James Bond”, were this book their first (perhaps, only) exposure. It’s not a comfortable read, more careless than carefree and, for those lured in by the lighthearted films, it strikes an embittered tone. Not so much a thundering spy epic as a thin slice of mechanical recovered meat served as a gourmet blowout due to (il)liberal lardy dollops of rich pastimes and indigestible prejudices; fatty, soggy and increasingly tasteless, and trying too hard to disguise a lack of inherent quality of product with overdone sauce. What its 007th Chapter positively contributes – the Aston Martin, some insight into Bond’s formative years, more autobiographical amusement (the flatness of Bond’s swing doubtless borrowed from his creator) – doesn’t on this occasion outweigh a suspicion that Goldfinger as a whole subtracts more from Bond than it adds. This is a great pity; easily twenty-five years since I last read it, it confirms that one shouldn’t meet one’s heroes. Especially not if he’s driving like a tit.

Apologies if this one was over-opinionated but, as suggested, I was influenced. Corrupted. Hopefully just a phase I’m going through but there’s an all-woman shortlist in this constituency, so who knows?

JAMES BOND WILL RETURN IN THE 007TH PARAGRAPHS OF
FOR YOUR EYES ONLY. JACQUES STEWART IS PRETTY SURE
THE COLLECTIVE NOUN FOR UNHAPPY SEXUAL MISFITS ISN’T
“A HERD OF”. SUGGESTS “A CAMBRIDGE OF”, INSTEAD.

Krest coming name morning business just big

FROM A VIEW TO A KILL

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FOR YOUR EYES ONLY

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THE HILDEBRANDT RARITY

What's on television? You might be wondering the same. Touch harsh considering you've only read a dozen words. C'mon, Babycakes, make an effort and stick it out. You'll make an old man very happy.

What's *not* on telly is James Bond; at least, not in an original capacity. Ah me, my salad days, those dappled sprigs of youth long-mildewed at the back of the 'fridge alongside the quince jelly and the postman's head, a time when a Bond film on tv was a gleesome treat, a highlight of a week already brimful with the underappreciated sunshines of First-World childhood freedom and parental love. Even in one's teenage years, a Bank Holiday or – especially thrilling – a past-bedtime *school night* Bond would dissolve my truculent rebellion and pretence of liking poor garb, hair worn below the collar and horrid music.

Progress may have benefits – I now tolerate the wheel, and my loom-smashing days have ceased – but I can’t help feeling that direct access to Bond films via multitudes of electrical thingy (and corresponding immediate opportunity to bitch about them anonymously) has eroded the pleasure of seeing how ITV had butchered a film, lest it corrupt impressionable minds into hollowing out a local volcano, cultivating an additional nipple or flying jetpacks without a helmet. My offspring can up/down/sideload the things immediately (along with stuff I’d prefer not to know about) and the special scarcity of Bond – and equivalent scarcity of good behaviour on my part allowing me to watch it – evaporates. Instantly available, there’s nothing of the (harmlessly) illicit about them any more, presumably why ITV has the temerity to show *Licence to Kill* at 4 p.m. on a Sunday afternoon, an extraordinarily irresponsible act given that there might be people watching. For that “film”, no butchering’s enough. Mid-afternoon schedule fillers, because we can get them by so many other means, the lustre dwindles. A direct consequence of giving votes to women and ‘sex equality’.

What *could have been* on television are these stories, although *Quantum of Solace* needs energising to render it watchable; I’d suggest shaking the camera about. Apparently unwavering in a belief that 007 was fit for tv despite the *Card Sense* Jimmy Bond shambles, and doubtless associated with the marvellously snobby letter to CBS about Bond’s appeal to poorly-educated Bs and Cs, 1958’s aborted thirteen-episode Bond series finds itself novelised two years on. The clever/lazy trick of adapting abandoned projects Fleming would pull again with *Thunderball*, albeit “quite a” poor decision with a corrosive legacy. Whilst it would have been a shame to have *some* of these tales lie abandoned in first-draft screenplays, the practice suggests increasing frustration in replenishing both ideas and authorial interest the more vocal the demand for annualised Bond became.

More benevolently, the short-story format trims the outré excess that dragged Goldfinger down, the brevity emphasising the duality of high living and low killing without pausing for wheezy deliverance of tart opinion. To an extent this succeeds: From a View to a Kill and The Hildebrand Rarity are contained, terse yet characterful admixtures of business and pleasure, with only occasional hiccoughs of pastoral digression, sexual unrealpolitik and dodgy racial observation. For Your Eyes Only sprawls slightly (not totally convinced why it shifts to Canada other than giving Ivar Bryce's farmhouse a role, presumably jealous that a thinly-disguised Goldeneye kept appearing) but is blessed with a terrific conclusion. Risico is as loose as Ms. Baum herself but again delivers a stirring set-piece with the Lido minefield chase, something missing from the 1981 film (along with pace) although it would have required Uncle Roger to *run* and, given that film's aura of "underage", would have been a different minefield to traverse; one littered with yewtrees.

Quantum of Solace is anomalous, and I'd guess it wasn't one of the telemovies, although it gives ~~Eon Productions~~ Ian Fleming opportunity to do other (better?) than the restrictive regime of "James Bond" and send a love letter to W. Somerset Maugham and *quite* the opposite to Mrs F. at the same time. I admire most of what he produced, but Fleming himself could be a toxic measles. Writing that can't have impressed the wife, nor could From Russia with Love's fixing of 12th August as a day on which Bond finds himself thoroughly bored by the prospect of what it brings, utterly coincidentally Caspar Fleming's birthday. Gee, thanks Dad. That it turned out to be Fleming's deathdate, when the blubbery arms of the soft life caught up with him, is probably karma, along with being *very* weird. I'm not averring that one has to be a vindictive

old chisel to write Bond “properly”, although Messrs. Benson and Deaver (inter alia) appear to be splendid, kindly chaps but their contributions... hmm...

Mid-period Bond – 1959 to 1962 – delivers four *odd* books, each offering different things to varying degrees of success, searching for settled identity, striving to establish where Bond goes, the cash cow’s milk at risk of turning sour if Goldfinger’s tone were to demonstrate a trend. The sequence has a parallel. Starts with a story delivering crowd-pleasing tics, an Aston Martin and (unworkable) economic meltdown devised by a British citizen of Eastern European heritage in league with Russians; an adventure that has, on reflection, dated pretty badly. This is followed by an episodic affair in which Bond rides a motorcycle, provokes marital jealousy and spends time in Paris. Next one has 007 starting off unfit for service, something something something about stolen nukes and a conclusion justifying a submarine. Finally, in a wild but wisdomless last gasp, going utterly, utterly mad and unleashing ~~Madonna and an invisible car~~ a female narrator, Bond a bit-part-player in his own life story and secondary to curious artistic decisions. All existing to satisfy the obligation to produce James Bond material, but swerving wildly in the pursuit of a consistent approach. A whiff of going through the motions before roaring back with three tales in which Bond falls in love and is bereaved, goes a bit odd (personally and structurally) in the pursuit of revenge and then, having been missing presumed dead, is sent on an impossible mission against a potentially homosexual foe. So – Fleming’s patchy run of Goldfinger to The Spy who Loved Me inclusive = the Brosnans? OK, so this is wretchedly strained, but that’s in keeping with the Bonds at this juncture, treading water and – whilst not unentertaining and sporadically magical – muddled in moving forward coherently. James Bond’s there, lovely to see him, but hazy what he’s there *for*.

An alternative view is that these books' variations, rather than bored attempts to realign, show confidence by an author whose stuff sells regardless, adventurously upholding his underappreciated penchant for experimenting, and the For Your Eyes Only collection is a microcosm of his *seriously* underestimated breadth, capable of demonstrating five differing characteristics of written 007. Insofar as establishing ingredients of a Bond through spot-testing the seventh chapters was the excuse for this smug prolix dross, there's a bijou problemette here. For Your Eyes Only has no chapters. If the experiment is worth inflicting, a solution lies in channel-surfing the episodes. Let's go with paragraphs 1 to 7 of From a View to a Kill; 8 to 14 of For Your Eyes Only; 15 to 21 of Quantum of Solace, with 22 to 28 and 29 to 35 of Risico and The Hildebrand Rarity respectively, to polish us off. This might not work, being too short a selection to demonstrate "range", or five manifestations of it but, with another portmanteau to come, even this approach might leave insufficient prose to carve into for the likes of the extremely/mercifully brief 007 in New York. That might prove headachey but I'll burn that bridge when I get to it. Sometimes you have to take the rough with the smooth.

You'll definitely make an old man very happy, doing that.

THE FIRST 007TH PARAGRAPHS – FROM A VIEW TO A KILL

"The eyes behind the wide black rubber goggles were cold as flint..."

The contrived 007th Chapter model means that it hasn't considered Fleming's techniques in "beginning". Only thrice does he open with the words "James Bond", and only one novel starts like that. Habitual to have abstract scene setting and if, one were looking to establish a "model", it's that. "Writing as Ian Fleming" has a rainy

THE 007TH PARAGRAPHS

night in Paris, so at least in opening, Devil May Care shows promise. Direct speech is rare, non-existent in the novels unless one counts *The Spy who Loved Me*. Bond directly speaking is even rarer; *Quantum of Solace* exhibits its exceptional soul once more.

On occasion, as here and with (say) *Moonraker*, we're dropped into action already underway, that may or may not involve Bond; here, not. At least, given the tombstone teeth and whitish gums, one hopes not, unless he's been necking pints of wine *again*. The imminent twist that this is a villain is unsurprising given the descriptions of the eyes, both as above and as dark and unwavering gun muzzles (twice), and of the requisite reference to nature's savagery in the attacking paws of the gauntlets. Still, short story, can't hang around and the opening paragraph adheres to that mission statement with its vivid rendition of pursuit at speed and its effects on the face, and ever-present death danger in the "hurtling flesh and metal". The thrill of the hunt is in the chase: appropriate, given the title's derivation.

The Luger on the petrol tank – questionable health and safety – reassures that Fleming hasn't abandoned tickling wartime prejudices, which becomes explicit later on with Bond's surprise – and M's disquiet – at intelligence staff in SHAPE trying German as a lifestyle choice.

Standard Fleming in juxtaposing nature with man's artificial violence imposing itself upon it, the motorcyclists spending a pleasant morning on a forest road, similar to the one in the "dissimilar" film where a stuntman fatly flings himself from a horse onto a Rolls Royce. In due course, the polluting machinations of man will be given away by an *artificial* rose. Equally obligatory is the contemplation of eggs for brekky. Essentially two furious but brief action scenes punctuated by musings on the environment and terse reflections on post-War decay and who's to blame (clue: probably Germany), *From a View to a Kill* is indelibly Fleming, hard to mistake it as work by any other

writer including those following him, and gives him little opportunity to be as unnecessarily embittered and ‘orrible as the last novel.

That *said*, query whether it’s reading too much into the dispatch-riders’ names – Albert, Sid, Wally – to point an unclipped Luger at *potential* class snobbery as one hurtles through the prose at howling speed. Equally, whether the reference to “the little frog bit in the canteen” is critical of the thinking of this courier class, or endorsement. In due course, Double/Oh/Seven, Fleming/Bond/Fleming, will be no more polite about French women nor Paris as a whole, the city having been pawned to “the scum of the world”, amongst them Russians, Roumanians, Bulgars and – here they come, right on cue, how efficient – the Germans. Not one to harbour a grudge, then. Even Milton Krest, the archetype of archetypical Ugly American, gets a German background. Probably not for me to criticise: “What did you do in the War, Daddy?” Nothing; wasn’t born, but maybe I should appreciate more my opportunity to have been, given the policies of some participants. Perhaps this is partly what gave Bond contemporary appeal, tapping post-War insecurity with terrible experiences still fresh memories. So many Flemings have war references – hard to think of one that doesn’t, offhand – that this material, comfortable or not, goes underacknowledged in making the 007 series what it is. I’m not saying one *must* experience war to write “James Bond” but the cultural legacy of WWII upon Bond’s character seems studiously circumvented by most continuationists, Mr Boyd aside, presumably avoiding prosecution for instigating conflict themselves or because it’d be preposterous in (say) 1994. Defeats me why Mr Deaver made his spayed do-gooder Bond an Afghanistan veteran when he makes nothing of it. Of that conflict, Fleming Bond would have come armed with “views”, although these may have resulted in Fatwa so just as well that we’ll never know them.

THE 007TH PARAGRAPHS

Whatever the merits of the views expressed, their potency and proliferation confirms the tales – and, accordingly, the lead – as time-barred. SHAPE, the fallout of the Castro revolution, SS thugs in hiding, decayed Colonial living, land-mines on the Lido and the novelty of an air-conditioned yacht: it's not the 1990s, is it?

"His face, undistorted by the wind, had set into blunt, hard, perhaps Slav lines." Well, *of course*. Foreign face. "Bad". I don't/can't recall if Mr Faulks "writing as" impersonated this provocative characteristic, although it's expressly "writing as" *not* "writing like": will send a dispatch in due course. This one's not long for this world, even though it's uncertain that the one shot threatened will work since the assassin is performing an unwise "no hands" trick, contrary to the Highway Code, but then so is murdering fellow road-users (probably). As the motorcyclist commences his crash, and the story its crash-dive into how Bond mislaid his virginity, suspicious Romany types and statutory rudeness about the French, this cliff-hanger is an appropriate place for a ~~station~~ ad break.

In lieu of product placement, pass me one of the –Y*b**mma mat!* – eleven remotes kicking around the room and let's see what's on the next channel...

THE SECOND 007TH PARAGRAPHS – FOR YOUR EYES ONLY
"Rackets, union funds, Government money – God knows..."

End of era, the shadows of the old world no defence against invading change. Into an idyll of streamertails and other birds of the West Indies, tea-time sandwiches made with Patum Peperium a.k.a. Gentleman's Relish (oh, grow up), bougainvillaea, citrus groves and

fine acres of lawn, spreads the carcinogen of human politics and the ugly, unnatural spits of violence that accompany it.

Eavesdropping on conversation one imagines as a hot topic for the author and his ilk, we're witnesses to expository dialogue from this Colonel Havelock (Ret.) – "Tim", no less – bemoaning the influx of vulgar cash-rich Cubans of dubious means buying Jamaican real estate and thus forcing out longstanding British families of the purest backgrounds who nobly, so nobly, grasp the huge wedges of cash bunged at them and bugger off. Written now, it could replace "Jamaica" with "London" and "Cubans" with "Russian billionaires" and achieve a similar sentiment. The Havelocks having apparently been *in situ* since Cromwell's time; the snobbery of, and suspicion by, old money regarding new – Blades, Colonel Smithers, all that crowd – holds fast as a Bond norm.

More unusual, it's interesting that the thoughts are not wholly anti-Castro and, ultimately, it's not Communists who disrupt the peace of Content. In the next story, Bond sympathises *with* the rebels, despite instructions to bomb their boats. Whilst that's distinctly disruptive of the anticipated, less so is that Major Gonzales is in league with – oh surprise sur-frickin'-prise – a German.

"Thank God Judy likes the place". The personal angle to the story beds in, and unexpectedly reinforced later on with M's revelation at having been Timmy's best man in Malta in 1925, which would make him very jolly old when Bond encounters him at a party in The Facts of Death in 1998. The ensuing passage with Bond contemplating M's conflict between duty and revenge, and M's mood swings, is visceral insight into the impotence of power and the grey areas corrupting the role, and crying out to be filmed – Bond reluctant to accept a mission personal to M – although arguably already suggested with TWINE and Skyfall. Pity Bond doesn't know the differ-

THE 007TH PARAGRAPHS

ence between “hanged” and “hung”, though. One’s for people, the other’s for game, although there’s not going to be much meat on the little bleeders currently flying around the hibiscus. Perhaps quasi-naturalist Fleming wasn’t keen on the shooting season: The Glorious 12th August and all that... ah.

“Agatha, a huge blue-black Negress...” an efficient description saddling-up three Fleming hobby-horses: race, gender and bloaters. There I was expecting a “Negress” to be pale and ginger. Silly old me. As for “quadroon”, and one in servitude, unfortunate resonances leak through. *Oh brave new world, That has such people in it!* Come to think of it, in Brave New World they might actually have been octoroons. Someone’s only gone and mashed the guava bottles again! I mean, what a huge bloody problem. Mrs Havelock reaches a conclusion based on her knowledge of Jamaica which suggests it ain’t Tim what dood it. Presumably, when she gets shot apart, we’re meant to feel outraged, not cheering that the vile presumptive old bitch is dead now. Implicitly negative racial profiling about criminal tendency abounds; hang on, how did we end up watching Fox News?

Quick, change the channel.

THE THIRD 007TH PARAGRAPHS – QUANTUM OF SOLACE

“The Governor examined the end of his cigar...”

Ah, Armchair Theatre does Tales of the Unexpected. Much more relaxing. Feeling teatimey. May I press you to some Gentleman’s Relish? What do you mean you’re “calling the police”?

Quantum of Solace: different, innit? No Germans, for a start. After a couple of cheery morsels in which From a View to a Kill

laments man's inhumanity to nature and *For Your Eyes Only* contemplates that nothing and nobody lives forever, not even guava bottles, now we get a giddy tale replete with *joie de vivre* in which Ian Fleming delivers a cruel and melancholy confessional about his marriages (real, and to Bond), if not in incident then in atmosphere, and also lays into the artificiality of 007 in contrast to proper humans and the greater savagery of love's death. Total guess, not my business, but domestic bliss not overchocolatey when he wrote it?

Happier is that Bond gets his comeuppance, not least with the final twist but also in shamefacedly accepting that the story was more interesting than his initial (appalling) rudeness about the Governor, his social circle and Bermuda as a whole led him to believe. Not just in loosening the straightjacket of "007 story", this is one of few occasions – *The Spy who Loved Me* to come – where Fleming distances himself from Bond. One speculates: a manifestation of boredom with the silly man and determination to show that he wasn't just "James Bond" – look, I've written a story in which he's contemptible. The Quantum of Solace in Fleming's relationship with Bond is reaching zero, 007 making Fleming feel insecure in his ability to do anything else – hence trying this sort of tale – and actually seems to want to destroy him. Or will. The Inglorious 12th creeps closer. There's little of the wishes-fulfilled avatar here. Perhaps an unpopular move: the relative obscurity of this tale and the reception for *The Spy who Loved Me* indicate that his audience weren't fans: they were captors.

The film is criticised as a Bourne pastiche but what is *this* other than a Maugham pastiche? Both iterations of Quantum of Solace taking something from the same genre that is critically perceived (justifiably?) as worthier than Bond. Not read much Maugham

meself, but the third-party anecdotage is characteristic. Fleming cannot totally slough his own skin; like so many incidents in the Bonds, the tale is apparently true, embellished, with names changed to protect the culpable.

We join the action – some “sitting down” – just as the Governor is about to launch, and Bond – an ungrateful guest – is feigning interest in a tale he childishly provoked by mentioning air hostesses in the first place, actually having “no intention of marrying anyone” let alone an “insipid slave” such as cabin crew or (gulp) “the Japanese”. “He only hoped to amuse or outrage the Governor into a discussion of some human topic”. Tit. By the end, Bond and the Governor are on speaking terms, but the close friendship we are asked to believe in *High Time to Kill* doesn’t have much basis in (cough) fact. The Governor smokes in a manner reminiscent of the Savalas Blofeld, but that’s *definitely* a contrived connection too far.

Masters – Phillip Masters – was at Fettes. Bond reacts not, unsurprisingly. Years until he’ll read his obituary and find out he went there too. The surname-forename-surname construct so familiar for Bond is merely signals an expensive education, not mentioned often in the films (except negatively) lest it dissuade the Bs and Cs from realising their lifestyle aspirations were beyond them from birth, and thereafter refusing to part with more money. Masters took a scholarship for Oxford – “the name of the College doesn’t matter...” *Au contraire*. Vital to distinguish Balliol from somewhere like St Catherine’s. “He wasn’t a particularly clever chap...” Balliol it is. A chap of liberal ideas who got on well with the natives – uncharacteristic of Old Fettesians if Bond J. and Blair A.C.L are a guide – “he was lenient and humane towards the Nigerians. It came as quite a surprise to them.” Probably wired them his bank details, sending their surprise into orbit; no-one else falls for it.

Just the sort of chap to appeal to Bond; an under-sexed, hockey-playing pal of the Fuzzy-Wuzzy with “very little to recommend him to girls”. Loads in common. But as Fleming would rather tell his story than yours, 007, you just sit there on the chintz and watch the Governor tip his ash into his coffee cup. You’ve had more than enough attention. “His emotional life ran along the frustrated and unhealthy lines that were part of our inheritance from our Victorian grandfathers.” Hmm. You do know to whom you’re talking, Your Excellency? *A man who cures lesbians*. If you’re trying to appeal to mutuality of British sexual repression, you’ve seriously misread this audience.

The Governor’s tales of Masters’ “friendly relations with the coloured people of Nigeria” – what, including those coloured *white* too? What a great guy – provokes Bond into banging on inappropriately about sex, precisely the shaming trap Fleming has engineered for the libidinous, single-track-minded embarrassing clown. More questionable is how far Fleming is distanced from the sentiment that the only trouble “with beautiful Negresses is that they ~~mash guava~~ jars don’t know anything about birth control.” Couple of points for your consideration, once you’ve stopped hyperventilating: a) unless (God forbid) this is absurd prejudice, how does Bond *know this*? b) has the smoke rising from the Governor’s cigar persuaded 007 to stand for Pope? The Governor is unimpressed with Bond’s “earthiness” – a.k.a. reprehensible manners, can’t take him anywhere – and the gap between creator and creation deliberately widens. “Disastrous marriages and other tragedies”; whatever can Ian Fleming be thinking of? An initially exciting but now tiresome partnership with 007; time for subconscious uncoupling.

“He was, in short, a sensitive misfit, physically uninteresting, but in all other respects healthy and able and a perfectly adequate citizen.” How kind. Yet, for all Sex-o-Tron’s physical prowess, uber-

menschen sneering superiority towards his dining companions and thermite-bunging brilliance, Masters is a citizen capable of yet greater violence. So *stuff you*, 007.

“[Bond] was enjoying the story. The Governor was telling it in a rather elderly narrative style which gave it a ring of truth.” *Chapeau*, W.S. The Guv’nor.

“Young Masters’ service in Nigeria coincided with the first Labour government” – still unclear why Bond is enjoying the story given that he’s not *ad idem* politically, either. Perhaps it’s the shared social awkwardness that appeals. Time-barring ironcrabs its hold on James Bond. First Labour government: 1924. Let’s say Masters was 24/25 by then. The Governor is a year older than Masters and by the time of this story – late 1950s, say – is a man who has “filled the minor posts for thirty years while the Empire crumbled around him”. High Time to Kill is set in 1999. Oh, tip top. “Nigeria got a new Governor with advanced views on the native problem...”, such problems as it being their country.

“I hope you aren’t too bored by all this. I shan’t be long in coming to the point.” Sorry, attention span of a... whassface. I’m sure it’s BAFTA-bothering but I can’t see this “James Bond” show lasting if sitting in vicarious contemplation is all that happens. Can’t get into it, although I know people are *obsessed*. Apparently you have to let it build over weeks. Don’t have the patience. Can’t get through a dinner party without some prat claiming it’s why tv was invented. No: it was invented as a means of avoiding evenings with the likes of *you*. Should have filmed it in Danish. Might come back to it once the box set comes out and then I can grasp the story arc/fast-forward to the killings.

Let’s see what else is on.

THE FOURTH 007TH PARAGRAPHS – RISICO

“Any questions?” M’s jaw stuck out like the prow of a ship...”

It would, wouldn’t it, being a sailor ‘n’ all?

The rushing between Rome, Venice and Ancona gives this tale the impression of being overstuffed, certainly in comparison to its introspective predecessor (range, though?), but it offers thematic novelty underacknowledged in the Bonds: to get the job done, those on your side might be unpleasant. Yeah, you’re right, we should only deal with nice people...

Up to now, Bond’s allies, whilst often characterful and rough like Kerim Bey and Quarrel, are “good”. Colombo, Lisl Baum (Austrian not German, but near enough) and Kristatos (even at his “nicest”) are crooks. A cheery run-around, or exposure of the seamier underbelly of the goodies vs. baddies lark? The heroes and the villains all mixed up...

Accepting there would be no twistatos without making *everyone* suspect, but Risico is not of the world where a Nazi tried to nuke The Queen. We knew where we stood with that. Hurrah for freedom! It’s now fuzzier. The lack of control in SHAPE. M abusing his position for vendetta. Quantum of Solace exposing futility and in this one, dancing with the devil. As for The Hildebrand Rarity, superficial glamour can’t stop the seediness leaking through. Only for your eyes is the rock lifted, and out wriggle the worms beneath the superficial flagwaving fun of smashing Fritz/Yuri/Auric. Touched on before, but now Fleming directly serves five distinct reasons to doubt 007’s world. The fun’s going out of his writing; interpret as desired. This continues into Thunderball with the revelation that SIS has bought information from SPECTRE, indirectly helping its existence. Then it becomes a

more troubling foe and they can't pull the plug. Never happens in reality, except all the bleeding time. *If we refused to do business with villains, we'd have almost no-one to trade with.*

Amusing passage about the bees in M's bonnet (bet he looks divine in it), amplifying his role beyond the sparse characterisation of earlier ~~films~~ books. "There were queen bees, like the misuse of the Service..." Um... the Havelocks, anyone? *Anyone?* Hello? Am I not meant to talk about that, then? "...and the search for true as distinct from wishful intelligence." No dodgy dossiers, despite the outlandish hunches/outright *guesses* with Drax and Goldfinger. The fun continues with his pogonophobia, mistrusting "dressy" men (an euphemism caused by giving votes to women) – just as well Bond's never invited him to breakfast – those who call him "sir" off-duty (he prefers "Cindy" (*with* a C)) and "an exaggerated faith in Scotsmen", handy if you're James Bond, even if you haven't yet achieved Scottishness. M's foibles – by implication his leadership too – are likened to those of Montgomery and Churchill; presumably *positively* given that they were both alive in 1960. "Moreover he would never have dreamed of sending Bond out on an assignment without a proper briefing." Mr Boyd. Mr Gardner. Taking notes? No? Hmm, OK.

"M gave Bond a hard, sour look." Uncalled for, given how 007 made that grubby von Hammerstein business "go away", unless he's being particularly dressy today. "Earlier this year I had to take you off other duties for a fortnight so that you could go to Mexico..." Places this after Goldfinger, then. Continuity continues in referencing Ronnie Vallance but gone is the all-in-it-togetherness of earlier, simpler tales: Vallance has wilfully undermined M, jockeying for political favour. This isn't five old farts standing round giggling at a robot dog: this exposes M's position, as much a shafttable, exploitable blunt instrument of the state as Bond is. Taking notes *now*, I see, Mr Gardner.

“Seems the dance halls and the amusement arcades are full of pedlars.” Yes, if there’s one thing heroin does, it really improves yer dancin’. I’d have a look into a chain of restaurants in News York and Orleans too, while you’re at it. This business about heroin being an instrument of psychological warfare against Britain – isn’t that [part of whatever masqueraded as] the plot of Devil May Care? It screws you up (heroin, not Devil May Care, although point noted) unlike seventy cigarettes a day and a tsunami o’ booze which are just lush and, y’know, *ectually* servings of fruit and veg.

More political infighting with the chat about the CIA operating under the FBI’s nose and then a special treat for the lunatics who consider Quantum of Solace (the film) to have an insidious anti-American vibe, with the revelation that Kristatos is Allen Dulles’ top guy, a top guy he hasn’t spotted is a murderous heroin smuggler in the pay of the Russians. Unless he *has* – but what *are* you suggesting about the CIA with that, Mr Fleming? Guessing, it *is* probably stupidity rather than mendacity. Must run in the family; Dulles Snr couldn’t stop Toulouse-Lautrec and the T-1000 taking over his airport. The CIA: either duplicitous or thick. Yay freedom.

“Bond was thinking that the whole affair sounded unpleasant, probably dangerous and certainly dirty.” No kidding. Cynical about the (limited) effectiveness of organisations like SIS or the CIA to stop something that *actually happens*, something that isn’t strapped to a rocket or involves hypnotised provincial crumpet poisoning hens, Risico (for all its “action”) is a bleak, defeatist tale and possibly the grubbiest of the lot. “How much will we pay for the traffic to stop?” A dirty reality. It won’t stop. But you’ll still pay. Replace the stone, and walk away. Watch out for landmines.

Feel soiled now (not that way: I’m not *that* old). Perhaps a nice dip in the briny will wash it off.

THE 007TH PARAGRAPHS

THE FIFTH 007TH PARAGRAPHS – THE HILDEBRAND RARITY

“What did I tell you, James?...”

This gaudy human world of artificial pleasures is the fleeting crest of a wave; the depths harbour infliction of great pain and the abuse of beauty through greed. Major Gonzales, Milton Krest and both participants in the Masters marriage to name a few. Five short tales in which the natural order is polluted (here, explicitly) by transitory, cruel human vices, be it a beautiful forest floor fresh-painted with bikerbrain or a beach crammed with mines. Any yearning for a simpler life is squashed by covetous pursuit of money and power. From a pleasant view, to a dirty kill, then.

James Bond, it's all about expensive cars and first-class living and sharp clothes and [come up with a suitably engaged adjective: can't muster one] watches, isn't it?

Isn't it?

It's a popular critical précis of Fleming's style that he details the luxuries; seems less widely acknowledged that Bond's reaction to the trappings of good living is often guilty justification – or plain guilt – when he's indulging, and *contempt* when it's someone else. The films wouldn't dare: must get the budget in and you can't do that suggesting his watch is a self-cossetting frippery, the momentary distaste in acquiring it displacing the permanent soulstain of, y'know, killing. Bond's disgust at (say) eating well with Mr DuPont isn't just at overfilling himself, it's at having the meal at all. Was there ever a man more misunderstood? Film Bond may be a (commercially, wise) sponsored mannequin but he of the books seems *anti-consumerist*. A plain fellow of spartan regimes with a handful of egg recipes upon which to live, hankering after life on the reef divested of human complexity and responsibility, shunning the mink-lined prison of *stuff* and, when

he succumbs to occasional pampering to avoid darker thinking, he hates himself for it. Bet he doesn't have eleven remotes in his lounge.

Remiss not to note that GoldenEye tried to shoehorn a semblance of a suggestion of this with its leaden subtext *shouted* about Bond's drinking and womanising smothering death and heartache; however, the reason that sounds tin-eared is not just Mr Bean's incredible accent but also because the rest of it is a two-hour advert for dressy suits, ostentatious timepieces and a grotty sports car to appeal to the gullible consumer deceived into thinking that's what a James Bond lifestyle is, falling right into the costly trap of trying to copy it in a wholly misunderstood and misbegotten way. In *The Hildebrand Rarity*, James Bond, lazily perceived as cooler than the yummy side of the pillow, covers up a vicious murder, the murkiest of all the questionable acts he performs in this collection. Go on – buy that watch. *Buy it*. Don't you *want* to be him?

Bond's – what? *Inverted* snobbery? – is frolicsome in this story. Initially impressed by the luxury of the Wavekrest, we join his meandering with the docile Fidele Barbey as the first artifice – air-conditioning – shatters the superficiality. From hereon in the shell cracks further, encouraged along by a whip-wielding ratbag. Milton Krest's impact – and the reader's desire for Bond to hit him, hard – is the greater for not being a malformed crackpot but simply a cruel thug, a knuckle of a man with no redeeming features. The physical description he gets doesn't bode “nice” and things aren't meant to improve once his Prussian antecedents are revealed. “Always at your feet or at your throat! Sense of humour indeed! And what must this woman have to put up with, this beautiful girl he had got hold of to be his slave – his English slave?” Er, OK. Calm down. War's *over*. When Krest poisons a defenceless community with a Germanic-sounding chemical, it's not difficult to grasp at – nor gasp at – the echo.

Amidst all the ostentatious awfulness of Milton ~~Kraut~~ Krest, all the pejorative characteristics of the stereotypical ruthless Hun and vulgar American rolled into one blisteringly hilarious caricature that after a while – how ironic – tends to stick in the throat, he can claim one bizarre feature: the voice of “the late” Humphrey Bogart. Wonder why Fleming had to give him that, other than to pipe aboard a droplet of Bond’s contemporary cultural awareness, similarly referenced in *Risico* with the suggestion of an afternoon watching a Brigitte Bardot film (although he might have been joking). Could be another suggestion of artificiality, that Krest emulates cool behaviour he’s seen on film, to emphasise that anyone mentally sound would never try that. *Buy this ‘phone*.

Similarly, “this man likes to be thought a Hemingway hero. I’m not going to get on with him”. Why not? An invention of an author holed up in the Caribbean, the subject of tales of melancholy derring-do with a robust attitude to ladies, drink and fishing, delivered in journalistic prose and with a strong fatalist streak ... Oh, I get it, you don’t like the competition. Well don’t worry – he’s even more brutal and virulently racist than you are, and *such* a bastard when it comes to women. The compare and contrast of Krest to Bond is fun, and it’s happenstance not coincidence: consider the way in which each would kill a fish. Bond nobly, after an energetic struggle with an armed opponent. Krest a bored bully, money and power simply cheating, choking the little people, his death a particularly ironic one. All that money and you can still end up choking on fishbones. Seem to recall that happening frequently to the Queen Mother. *Note bene*, Mr Bond – if you’re not keen on Hemingway, never go to his house because your boss will try to have you shot, although it is stretching things to call a poorly cut 80s sports-casual blouson “dressy”.

Amusing that Liz Krest is attracted to Bond, not simply because he is James Bond and he's always bloody super, yawn, but also because he's a gentler practitioner of the dark characteristics of her late husband. Not as heavy a drinker, but a drinker nonetheless. Challenging views on those of other countries born (including a devastating summary of the American psyche). Not so much whipping as threatening a light spanking now and again. A fisherman, but a less brutal one. Can be boorish and with a tendency to provoke when bored (although we are invited to cheer it here rather than question it *per* Quantum of Solace). Just her type, really. Just the type she kills.

Run! Or swim.

"Free, and I don't go deep, It's only a hobby." Mr Fleming, you underestimate yourself. In five grubby tales of human nature and human vs. nature, the short stories don't contract Bond's world but expand its frontier. However, the shores newly reached are lapped by very dark waters. Some of the material here wasn't tried again but across and within each story, the shadows soon to surround James Bond – and, without doubt, his creator too – are beginning their build.

That's more than enough television for one evening; station's about to close down anyway and play the National Anthem. They'll take requests – any country you like. Except one.

JAMES BOND WILL RETURN IN THE 007TH
CHAPTER OF THUNDERBALL. JACQUES STEWART
TIRES OF TELEVISION AND IS CONTEMPLATING
WRITING THAT STORY YOU TOLD HIM AFTER "SOME"
PINTS OF WINE. HE'LL SHARE CREDIT WITH YOU.
PROMISE.

THINK DAYS SINCE DEAD OLD GOLD YE DAY JUNE COLLABORATION FOODS QUICK TEN ONE AIRCRAFT BOND GAVE ALSO EYES PERSONAL JAMES NEW WEAPONS MONEYPENNY FOUND DOORS CAR MIND CIPHER FASTEN YOUR WENT THUNDERBALL LAP-STRAP SITCOM EARLY WELL SQUARE THREE G.M.T. TWO TIME PAPER ATOMIC MISS ENVELOPE TOOK HOURS GOT GRAY STAFF PUT LIKE BAD CAME LEAST BREAKFAST HEAD LIFE NOTHING RIGHT THINGS NOW MAY REACHED CHIEF MADE YER MISTER

Based on an original screen treatment by Jacques Stewart and two strapping young chaps he met in the pub. Several pints of wine later, he can't recall who suggested what, officer, but once you've struggled to the end, you'll know they won't sue for credit. Defamation, perhaps.

Datedly jiggerscreeched at the outset of many a DVD:

You wouldn't steal a car. Correct. That's not "couldn't", so presumably it's not a challenge. I wouldn't steal two nuclear bombs either (he writes, attempting to discipline this drivel). As for "couldn't", that's for me to know and for you to find out. Top tip: stock up on tinned food before 29 August 1997. No, that *hasn't* been and gone; you were *told* that by The Man and chose to believe it because "they" fed you distracting consumerist pleasures. If the views drip-sneered onto message boards establish a date by spot-testing social mores of the age, it's currently June 1959.

You wouldn't steal a handbag. True again! Oh, how you know me. You complete me. I love you.

You wouldn't steal a television. Spooky now.

You wouldn't steal a movie. Well, not so much steal as sorta *borrow* it. Don't worry, nobody really minds. Trust to luck that the same nobody notices.

Unfortunately, despite clever hiding of it in the next hugely anticipated adventure of the singlemost culturally significant fictional character of the twentieth century, “notice” is what they did. “Mind”, too. James Bond did not believe in luck, we are told. Ian Fleming patently didn’t believe in good judgment, save for the one handed down that accelerated his demise. Did he learn his lesson? The Spy Who Loved Me suggests not: he pinched that from a “Vivienne Michel”, although she wisely kept quiet and chose instead to pursue a more rewarding career as a motel nymph.

Hindsight rendering the question a fat lot of use, but it’s questionable whether the Thunderball litigation was interested in preserving the sanctity of contribution *per se* or rather the incredible opportunity that presented itself to secure rights to the tale as a springboard for the ancillary cash graspable in selling toys and “lifestyle” tat; worth suing for. “Exploitation of intellectual property” rarely had a rawer example. It’s difficult to regard Never Say Never Again as bettering the cultural stock of the human experience, *ars gratia artis* and all that, but squeezing the golden thunderballs at our expense made someone rich and kept shareholders and pension funds all smiles. Doubtless – and indeed, legally – those promulgating the case were entitled to do so, just as I’m legally entitled to unblock a toilet with my bare hands, although exercising such entitlement seems grubby.

This is in obvious contrast to the altruistic fluffiness of Danjaq, a charitable enterprise of greater benevolence than a rest home for insufficiently wounded kittens.

It’ll be on the litigious side of unwise to comment – even within a facetious piece – about who did what to whom because a) there’s probably still someone kicking around with a stake in the outcome of the Thunderball trial and b) rich people squabbling about who gets to relieve us of yet more money is unedifying. The case’s lega-

cy is mixed: the brace of films it spawned are peerless, at differing ends of that scale, although it seems that Blofeld could now appear in future Eon films. Given their previous loon-based depiction of him, and multiple parodies since, it's moot why the Broccoli factory would want to reintroduce his roundly-mocked persona to disrupt the current balance of begloomed despair, peevish insubordination, a half-naked drunk and a M named Gareth. Possible that the implausibility of *The Cackling Wig O'Skyfall* buttered us up for insertion of Ernst. It wouldn't be our first time, either, although it strikes me that making Silva an information exploiter shoots Blofeld's bolt, unless there's opportunity to pick up the Skyfall plot thread of the leaking of British agents' names, mysteriously abandoned half way through in favour of *Grab a Granny*.

The spavined whining about recent Bond ripping off Bourne forgets that Bond's most successful film, pre-rebooting, was itself spawned of a rip-off. Perhaps that's what the film-makers mean when they umpteenthly claim they're "going back to Fleming". "Perhaps". Choppy waters, and dangerous to stay in too long: the sharks, they circle. Query whether *Thunderball* should even come into an exercise of finding the core of a Fleming Bond, if it's not all his own work. It might be a diversion to try to work out what's plainly him and what's more doubtful. Whilst the idea of (say) *SPECTRE* could be the result of collaborative work (don't know and don't care, in equal measure), the articulation of the ideas one assumes is his alone otherwise Blofeld sharing Fleming's birthdate and his antipathy towards Germans is one mother of a coincidence.

The dangers of collaboration laid bare, not just in *Thunderball's* genesis but also in its story. Tickled fitfully in waspish references to the inadequacies of *SHAPE* in *From a View to a Kill*, here Fleming prods further with a warning about the loopholes created by bring-

ing together nations of differing temperament – such as the British and, y’know, *Italians* – in preservation not of individual nationalistic goals, just been through a war where that was the villain’s “journey”, but pursuing instead the abstract, conflicted, exploitable ideological nonsense of “peace”, each partner nation having its own definition. The advantage of teamwork is that no individual is responsible for errors; a problem shared is a problem blamed. That absence of responsibility is also its disadvantage, also a tendency to be infiltrated, a notion that Mr Gardner ran with many (many, *many*) times. Loop-holes through which private enterprise without an ideology other than wealth can skip freely, causing merry hell.

Collaboration allows a pantomime Italian – a wartime enemy – onto the Vindicator, leading to disaster. It’s not an Englishman who steals the bombs, is it? The mutually suspicious and fractured cabal that defends Britain is in contrast to the (...erm) union of crooks – a U.N. of crime, a largely European union at that – headed with fierce purpose by a Greek Pole connected to the Abwehr (inevitably). Bond, knackered instrument of a weakened state, undergoes a futile rebooting at Shrublands, starkly juxtaposed with the introduction of the ruthless SPECTRE, itself a collaborative entity but one with energy, one with a *point*. How can an exhausted and unfit ~~Britain~~ Bond cope?

In this atmosphere of fractious marriage, where stands the purpose of a James Bond? 007 is no team-mate; the sports he favours are single-player mode. After a distressing episode with a yoghurt, he recaptures his single-minded, booze-and-eggs fuelled identity and saves the day. Come on Britain! Don’t let your identity be subsumed! This is what we need! *Isb*. The book leaves me with a question: under which flag does Bond sail? The threat here is to an American interest and 007 seems integrated into and comfortable with the culture: the amused, detached observer of the USA in Live and

Let Die and Diamonds are Forever is gone, as has the paternalistic riding to the rescue of Dr No. He's a fuzzier World citizen who happens to be British, something the films cling onto when they can't justify (beyond bolstering the opening weekend's grosses) why 007 should (say) stop Max Zorrrrr'n giving California a much-needed bath. There are neither Americans nor British in (the book version of) SPECTRE. Special Relationship takes on the Special Executive? I suppose that's what the concluding battle represents, that Britain and the US depend on each other and it's a relationship best consummated. In Felix Leiter's dreams, anyway.

Identity is eroded, be it Bond a (momentarily) changed man via the Shrublands digression, or Britain's capacity to determine and defend itself *by itself* withered by the political expediency of NATO. Too many cooks spoiling an undecided broth and SPECTRE – pragmatic and determined, unburdened by any political belief that can be turned against it – strolls by and nicks its nukes. One way of preventing war is, through eroding the psychological frontiers of statehood, diminishing the egregious nationalism that often allies itself with it. Accidentally on purpose, that allows private enterprise to thrive. There are no nations; just companies. No populace; just shareholders. The only boundary is the amount of disposable income one has. That it's revealed that SIS has bought information from SPECTRE in the past, and now it's SPECTRE giving them the run-around, only emphasises how ineffectual, how wheezily behind the pace of the game, post-war nationhood is.

Whilst it's stretching things to suggest Thunderball is a communist tract, there is a small-p political edge, SPECTRE as an exaggerated extraction of post-war consumerist and corporate opportunism and building a infrastructure of a "state" unlimited by physical frontiers, the commoditisation of violence that doesn't even have an ostensible

THE 007TH CHAPTER

excuse in religious fanaticism or flag-waving simple-headedness, making it difficult to infiltrate and undermine. You knew where you were with SMERSH; behind it there was a belief that could be analysed, turned. It's not the case when the only purpose is money. The Russians are now out of the game and when they return in *The Man with the Golden Gun*, they're only in it for the cash. With national culture confused, co-dependent and cross-fertilised, the lacuna in power is filled by private enterprise out to make a fast buck. Look at all the millionaires who stand for election without any evident policies, f'rexample.

A politically-associated multinational corporation provoking international incidents to bloat the income stream? As if.

THE 007TH CHAPTER – THUNDERBALL: 'FASTEN YOUR LAP-STRAP'

We're in the midst of an amusing structural trick; during this 007th Chapter, we learn that the bombs have been stolen and in a few pages' time, we're told how it was done. That way around, any accusation of implausibility in the execution of the scheme struggles to be heard. When Petachi's tale is told, we've been primed to know it works. Cunning.

Breakkytime chez Bond but – hoots! – everything's changed. A faddy breakfaster at the best of times, it's now much, *much* worse. Yoghurt, served with a lecture on enzymes. Can't even have a nice chucky-egg. Deliberate detail with the Bulgarian/Gloucestershire heritage of his meal that even yoghurt cultures have mixed-up nationality? Why not: it amuses. "He masticated each mouthful thoroughly". That amuses even more, but I have a tawdry mind. How do you chew yoghurt, though?

This business about the release of pytalín and its brethren could incentivise a truculent child refusing to chew its food, that it will never grow up to be James Bond if it doesnae. Why it would – or could – be an ambition of a child, or those childish of mind, to emulate a tobacco-addicted misogynist bigot remains unclear, but then some persons buy cars or watches or suits or (yikes) guns out of such desire so it would appear to be a common problem, or a problem of the common. James Bond rarely seems like a man one would wish to *meet*, but banging on about his digestive tract and cheerily embracing his paperwork and actually being good at his job, he's now unbearable. I suspect that's the point. Where's the barely-competent drunk who just about gets by, who defeats clear-headed efficient (and probably Hun-inspired) planning by furry-tongued chance? Don't worry; by the end of the next chapter he's blitzed out of his skull on something eggy. As it stands, though, his diet of Energen rolls and efficient memoranda has turned him into the worst sort of earnest, superior, self-satisfied creep. Beginning to see why Mr Gardner gave him a SAAB.

In another corner of the forest, the one known to the locals as “Dead Man's Plagiarism”, I wonder what, or who, was the original source of this tract about the benefits of mastication. It reads a more than a little “textbooky” yet hasn't adopted either the Harvard or OSCOLA referencing norms. Fleming Junior: see me after class. I'll show you what mastication's all about. Not that I disagree with the advice. I have my five/seven a day and have learned to love the prune. But enough about “relations” with Mrs Jim. I'm not averse to nibblin' on a firm young carrot now and again. That one is back on topic; *promise*.

Bond's priggishness and general insufferability – always strumming away in the background but now turned up to 11 – is affecting the

supporting cast, especially the “delectable” Loelia Ponsonby, of whom Miss Moneypenny, her best friend, is otherwise jealous. The cow. Interesting parallel that Moneypenny draws in canteen gossip between toiling for M and “working for a Gandhi or Schweitzer or someone”; yeah, *those* callous bastards. Oh, aren’t men awful? I do like your hair (*you look like an electrocuted hedge*), I think you look better with hips (*you fat bitch*), you know, as if you get outdoor exercise (*you dried-up husk of lesbo*), no *I’ll* get these, I insist (*because you’re poor*). “It’s when they get godlike one can’t stand them.” What, not even if they’re like Min? Go on, bet you’d love a piece of *that*.

Necessary product placement with the brand of death-stick, the Morlands smoked “since his teens” (tsk!) now abandoned (temporarily) in favour of an American brand, the melding of cultures once more, and here comes the comic relief to clear away the breakfast things (Bond, like all children, is allergic to both trays and washing-up). As with Macbeth’s drunken porter, or these 007th Chapter pieces, it “may” have been funny in its day, but it’s now tiresome and we want killings. “May’s elderly, severe features were flushed.” Sign of a poor diet, that. Somehow she thinks she’s in the right, depressingly undereducated maggot. May McThing. I’m not suggesting that she’s related to Mr Big’s lusciously-named henchman McThing, although her dialect is equally ludicrous, but I can’t recall whether Fleming surnamed her or whether this was inflicted by a successor-in-title. Her views on nutrition now seem only to harden both the arteries and the stereotype of the Scottish diet.

May, played by With Special Guest Star Richard Dreyfuss, angrily crushes a yoghurt pot in her “strong fingers” (hands like gammon; circulation issues), and accuses Bond of “poisoning” himself, a callous thing to say to a man who nearly died a few books back. What’s wrong with yoggie-poggie, anyway? May’s endorsement of his “wee

bitty smoke” doesn’t help. She’s a public menace. Lord knows what she would make of Gwyneth Paltrow. Fritters, probably. How on Earth would this creature and the equally loopy Tracy occupy the same flat? Perhaps that’s why May paid Blofeld to blow her head off. Bond thinks Tiffany Case walked out, and sees no coincidence in May suddenly having mounds of bacon to feed him. No wonder she needs him to eat it all, otherwise even Thicky Bond would get suspicious. Yes, she’s a cereal killer. (I am *so* sorry).

“It’s no recht...” Hang on, she’s not *German* is she? My, Bond *has* changed. “It’s no recht for a man to be eating bairns’ food and slops and suchlike.” The experience of unleashing offspring has permitted me insight into childhood diets and it’s hardly as if he’s guzzling five Chambourcy Hippopotamousse, wet twigs and Lego, is it? Bairns’ food; yeah, and scrambled eggs aren’t repressed-British-male-public-school -clinging-onto-nanny muck, are they? Difficult to dip yoghurt in batter and deep-fry it, but I bet she’d try. “Ye needn’t worry that I’ll talk, Mister James, but I’m knowing more about yer life than mebbe ye were wishing I did.” Loose talk such as the ensuing monologue may cost Bond his life, but it’s probable no-one would understand her. When she bangs on about “anuither fight”; what *is* that? Aneether? Anweether? Anooother? Min alone knows. Bond, who is shortly to learn that he is himself Scottish, doesn’t speak like this, even after a crack on the head and being lobotomised twice, first by the Russians and thereafter by the obscenely sinister Sir James Molony, patently the inspiration for the Albert Finney character in *Skyfall* that Bourne film. Her suggestion that Bond could pack her off to Glen Orchy (ratio of chip shops to health clubs 33:1) reveals that she doesn’t know his life as well as she thinks. He’s more likely to shove her in a bin bag and hurl her into the canal. Better weigh it down with a dead dog; the fat in her veins will make her too buoyant.

THE 007TH CHAPTER

All this hands on your hips timewarp stuff achieves, May, is to set him off again on his righteous, unsettlingly evangelical lecturing. I know, they're so precocious these days. Is this Ian Fleming trying to do "funny"? What is this; a sitcom pilot – the classic/clichéd odd couple? She's an auld maid determined to serve him lard! He's a psychopath with a penchant for mastication! When they met, it was (politically expedient, government licensed) moidah! Hilarity ensues. Needs a snappy title.

"JAMES AND MAY": sound, but exposes a flaw when, demanding "mair poonds", May is replaced for ~~season~~ series five with a sass-ay jive-talkin' racial stereotype for the requisite zingy opposites-attract heartstopping cack; let's say a morally loose/heart-of-gold Inuit whore or a housekeeper from "Manchester" despite sounding as if the closest she's been to Manchester is a misguided attempt to gargle the Ship Canal. Whatever: no Germans. He's not a fan. If that doesn't work, try a CGI ocelot. NB this is not "James May". That's a different situation tragedy. That a patently intelligent man can have done... such things... I need a lie down. Music by Ronnie Hazelhurst.

"LAST OF THE BREAKFAST BOOZE": can't see it lasting. Ectually, it doesn't; by the end of chapter eight he's ordered up a cholesterol nightmare, the drinks tray and a stroke, and this sorry yoghurt episode is barely mentioned again. Was Shrublands quasi-autobiographical filler for what is otherwise a thin narrative? Discuss.

"SPECTRE AT THE FEAST": not bad, but is the world ready for broad domestic comedy mixed with a virulently ignorant depiction of international terrorism? Oh yeah, True Lies. That did it so, so well, so... *comfortably*. We'll pass.

"HOUSEKEEPER OF THE SECRETS": a "housekeeper" is old-fashioned and we don't want to emphasise it. If we changed May into

Marco the Thai houseboy, it'll appeal across wider demographics for sponsors to target, and Mel Gibson and Danny Glover desperately need a new vehicle, don't they? *"One's a ladykiller – and the other's a ladyboy! Put them together and watch the juices flow! Don't eat that 'Special Yoghurt'!"*. Houskeeper of the Secrets is filmed in front of a medically live studio audience. It could work: splenetic bigot expressing decrepit and ridiculous views learns the error of his ways in unthreateningly neutered comedy, despite inexplicably returning to his unreconstructed ways at the start of each episode because he has to "learn" some more. What do you mean "it's been done before"? What do you mean "before as in every-bloody-thing-on-television before"? What do you mean "have you never read your own piffle?" Despite the mass-audience appeal/just desserts of seeing this Mr Gibson person mincing about in a gingham frock, it'll get cancelled when Hyundai pull sponsorship after an ill-judged Superbowl episode, not so much jumping the shark as munching the pussy, involving an aggressive Korean neighbour, the "missing" cat and "lesbian golf".

"DON'T YOU MASTICATE AT ME!": like it, but can we really *base* a show around waiting for delivery of one catchphrase? Still, cretins will put it on T-shirts so we might juice two years out of it. Alternative title: "Lick My Lard". I'm taking it straight to Netflix if you're not interested.

"CRASH-DIVE AND ULTRA HUSH": a working title that'll have to change when a "person" on Twitter renames it "Muff-dive in Laura Bush" causing the internet to implode.

"FUNDERBAWL!": wacky time-travel comedy when a Mrs Hudson rip-off from the 1950s is ~~deep-fried~~ deep-frozen and wakes many years later. Laugh! At her attitude to Actimel! Cry! When she doesn't understand why this confirmed bachelor cannot find the right girl!

THE 007TH CHAPTER

Excrete! When she finds out Bentley is owned by *The Germans!* Ian Fleming's grave is brought to you in association with Hotpoint.

"MUESLI, GIRLS AND GUNS": I'm thinking "no".

"DEATH FOR BREAKFAST": thematically sound on a number of levels but too knowing an in-reference, perhaps. Tends also to limit the concept to breakfast jokes and there's only so many times Bond threatening May with the rough end of a banana remains funny rather than domestic violence. Sample dialogue: "If you don't shut up, I'll batter you". "Och, that's in bad taste Mister James, but everything does taste better in baaaaahhhhtttterrrrrrrrr. The noo." [Audience whoops] [Audience is taken out and shot].

"MAY THE FARCE BE WITH YOU": F*** off.

Apparently egg whites will kill you, as will all white foods. Except yoghurt. Ah, the hypocrisy of food-faddists, ordering us to gargle cress smoothies yet cramming their own maws with ripe Brie smeared over roast swan. Anyway, it's cruel – and unwise – of May to taunt Bond in this way as he's a recovering alcoholic murderer and shouldn't be riled. "...ye're no yerself any more." No kidding. Big prize to the Walking Heart Attack for spotting the theme. "She went out and banged the door". Really? Bit of a liberty for the domestic staff to take, and it may be ageist of me but I didn't think she had it in her. Cheeky old moo, the noo. Bond cracks a stunningly sexist menopause joke and the audience goes wild. Station break.

Into domestic unbliss, international danger must interrupt, and Bond's Batphone is all a-jangle. "He pressed the receiver to his ear, trying, as in the old days, to read behind the words." Not sure he's got the grasp of this telephony lark, but that's yoghurt-addiction for you. Fruit Corner: it screws you up. Thought I could handle it but then someone gave me some fat-free Passion Fruit and Radish and I

was... gone. Rotted me eyeballs and me teeth, but that was probably all the sugar in it.

“Bond had the most selfish car in England”. The way it’s described, he’s butchered something pleasant and turned it into the well-orf equivalent of a Saxo with an iridescent paint-job driven by a pock-marked pubescent booming out dancing tunes of the day and scaring codgers. Mr Deaver giving 007 a Subaru Impreza to berk around in wasn’t far off the mark, after all. It sounds ghastly and Bond’s chat up line – “I’ll pick you up in my locomotive” – might be *echt* Fleming but it’s also *echt* creepy. What next – a glass of Madeira and a promise of how to get her into films? Of note that Bond spends half his capital – £3,000 (at a rough guess £60,933.30 by May 2014) – on this desecration, although since the other half’s going on a lifetime’s supply of banana Petit Filous it’s relatively sensible. Not badly off, is he, if he can blow his wad like this? Wonder if all of Goldfinger’s haul found its way to the bottom of Goose Bay after all.

“She went like a bird and a bomb...” – an explosive gannet, then – “...and Bond loved her more than all the women at present in his life rolled, if that were feasible, together.” As they amount to “May”, it’s a distressing image brought on by excessive dairy ingestion. I’m thinking “feasible”, although it’s ungallant to consider May a “rather ugly boot”. “No garage doors to break one’s nails on”. How butch. That the base of the car once belonged to “some rich idiot” that “married” it to a telegraph pole is a bit much: 007’s record with cars isn’t good. His marriage’ll be a car crash, too. “It was nine o’clock, too early for the bad traffic.” Total fantasy. So this “fancy driving” comfortably-off Chelsea-dweller in his souped-up Bentley thinking he owns the road and patently dangerous when hurtling through the park, is someone we should *admire*? Hm.

“Zing and crackle” and “machine-gun rattle” – this *is* Mr Fleming writing this stuff, innit? Magic onomatopoeetry. “What the hell had happened?” Somebody’s probably lost a dog. Signals are firing off all over the place, including “Personal for Dulles”; he’ll hand it straight over to Kristatos, the clown. NATO, MI5 and Portishead, the latter’s message being “When’s your next album out?” Chaos and an international crisis evident, “Miss Moneypenny smiled cheerfully”. Given the earlier anti-Schweitzer sentiments, I fear for her values. A little insight into how she started in the Service makes me wonder how she was promoted and, as I’m speculating, the red light goes on above M’s door. Ooh, *uncomfortable* timing. But no more uncomfortable than the experience itself.

I seem to recall M sometimes having a Gatsby-esque green light? Might have misremembered that. “The red light went on above M’s door. Bond walked through.” Presumably having opened it first, but he’s never that bright even when on top form, and May is worried about his mental health. At least he hasn’t tried to bang it. Probably hasn’t got the strength, the yoghurt-jockey.

Having lied about trying to give up smoking – ten a day sounds a lot to me – Bond undertakes a sub-Holmesian examination of the Photostats of SPECTRE’s letter, a letter produced without kind permission and it’s amazing that Blofeld didn’t sue as well. He never gets to deducing that it was written by an obese neuter Polish Greek with syphilitic tendencies, persuasions towards both Samurai and female garb, a keen amateur gardener and research chemist with a bath-o-sub and a volcano whose hobbies include breeding white pussies, flying remote control and (it says here) “Hans”. But not cricket. Doesn’t run in the family, then. See, Eon – Blofeld’s a *mess* and there might not be anything left to say. Don’t. Do. It. “A typewriter with a bold, rather elegant type had been used.” Likes a nice font, does

Blofeld. Underacknowledged in chapters gone, his most evil act was inventing Comic Sans. “There was no sealing wax.” What did you expect? Written by quill and delivered by pigeon? You’re up against modern-shaped persons now, Bond.

The letter is “correct and well laid-out”. Begging to differ: although signed on behalf of an organisation it deviates between “I” and “We”; most unprofessional. I suppose if we weren’t in June 1959 this would be an email and sign off with the tautological “Kind Regards” and (horrendously) mistake “myself” for “me”, so best stop moaning. June 1959, then. A point by which Bond has served the King longer than he has the Queen. Over forty years later, this same character who – let’s not bushbeat – starts Thunderball physically past-it, energetically saves the Cannes Film Festival from witnessing yet another bomb. What a guy. When he disappeared for most of the 1970s, must have taken up jogging. It might be all that yoghurt paying off.

“There are also USAF Identification Numbers in such profusion and of such prolixity that I (sic) will not weary you with them.” Oooh, saucer of milk for *you*. As if pinching nuclear weapons isn’t cheeky enough. Given SPECTRE’s constituent members, and the stated flying range of the ‘plane, the threat is unlikely to be exercised against Mainland Europe or Russia but the reader is ahead of the recipients, and it’s for the next chapter to debate this, including the revelation that SIS has bought information from SPECTRE in the past, something I’ve always found intriguing. As it stands, the threat is well articulated (if grammatically suspect) and the instruction to deposit the bullion on Mt Etna, the previous chapter identifying the Bronte side, makes one wonder whether it’s intentional to drop it into Admiral Nelson’s backyard as provocatively emphasising the neutering of the British lion.

THE 007TH CHAPTER

Contract Law: Assuming that blackmailing Western powers into avoiding obliteration is an offer rather than an invitation to treat, please provide your opinion, relying on decided cases, whether by demanding use of the 16-megacycle waveband and threatening to detonate two atomic bombs if its terms are not wholly complied with, SPECTRE is successfully impliedly excluding the Postal Rule in accordance with Holwell Securities v Hughes (1974); additionally, advise whether unleashing 007 is an effective counter-offer (30 marks).

Stupid dialects, Bond delivering an opinionated lecture and driving like a lunatic, the text a transparent means of digressing into something bothering the author to pad out the tale, an exciting cliff-hanger, a structural game, mocking of social developments (previously female emancipation: now, very sound nutritional advice) and statutory reference to eggs, it's definitely Ian Fleming delivering this. Others may have the rights, and the wrongs may have been his alone, but this 007th Chapter gives much of "the essential". It remains live culture, with the nourishment yet to be refined out. Shame he had to be sued into listing all the additives.

JAMES BOND WON'T RETURN IN THE 007TH CHAPTER OF
THE SPY WHO LOVED ME, BECAUSE HE DOESN'T BOOK
INTO THE MOTEL UNTIL LATER IN THE EVENING. JACQUES
STEWART RECOMMENDS THOROUGH MASTICATION AS
THE KEY TO A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE. THE NOO.

[illegible]

I found what follows knifed into my cranium one morning. As you will see, it appears to be the first person story of a young woman (*it's in the interests of keeping a consistent number of testicles to write "young"*), evidently beautiful (*and in the interests of my lovely, lovely face*) and not unskilled in the arts of love (*and of the joint account*). According to her story, she appears to have been involved, both perilously and romantically (*but mostly perilously*), with the same Jacques Stewart whose pointless exploits I myself have written from time to time. With the manuscript was a note signed (*in my blood*) 'Mrs Jeem', assuring me that what she had written was 'purest truth and from the depths of her heart; take out the bins and deworm the dog'. I was interested in this view of Ian Flemeeeeeng, through the wrong end of the telescope so to speak, and after obtaining clearance for certain minor infringements of domestic bliss, I have much pleasure in sponsoring its publication, otherwise she'll make me sleep in the boathouse once again and its roof leaks.

Send help.

JS.

‘Allo.

Fnarr! Ten-line sentences! Ees what ma ‘usband does, ees eet not? Believe eet, talking to ‘eem is worse. I theenk ‘e breathes through ‘is plump skeen, jibber-jabber-jibber-jabber-bluh-bluh-bluh in that dialect of ‘is. Shaddap you face! Pigliainculo! We of Napoli can talk, but ‘e takes – as ‘e would say – the sheety biscuit. Not that ‘e is allowed biscuits, the fat ‘ippo; ‘e ‘as to lose twenny pound, figlio di puttana. I know, I know, ‘e would say the easy way to do that is to give me money for shoes. Is “man” (!) who theenks shoes cost twenny pound.

Stronzo!

What does ‘e mean, “wrong end of the telescope”? I’ve seen ‘is telescope. Need telescope to see eet. Piccolo. ‘E likes James Bond. Is bambino, ‘asn’t grown up. Is path-et-eeec, no? Thees James Bond, ‘e marry a di Vicenza, no? She mad, she die, ees good: northern slur.

[Mrs Jim interjects: Ectually, although Italian by birth, I (was) moved to England at three years of age and raised in East Sussex. I have no discernable accent affecting my pronunciation and certainly nothing like the preposterous depiction here. If anything, my English accent corrupts my Italian. My professional letterhead doesn’t read “screeching blowsy fishwife psychopath cliché” but rather “consultant surgical oncologist”. I appreciate, however, that this nonsense is about an Ian Fleming novel, so cohering with the style I must adopt heightened characteristics and a farcically impenetrable, offensive manner of speaking so that the reader appreciates that I am “foreign”. I *am* fond of shoes, though. And swearing. As for persons of the Veneto: no strong feelings. If they stay out of my way, I stay out of theirs.]

So, I do review-a. Thees Vivienne Michel – mignotta. End. Fine. Ciao!

‘As to be longer? Perche? Ma ‘usband makes ees longer? Is eet to compensate?

PART ONE: MI

“I was running away”. Along with creetics, leetle-boy Bond fans and readers wan’ing good time (testa di cazzo! Not that-a sort-a good time). I don’t theenk woman, she writes eet. I theenk eet ees Ian Flemeeeeeng in slurt’s dress and whore’s shoes (twenny pound). Ees man who pretends to be woman, like ma ‘usband does when ‘e theenks I’m no in ‘ouse. What is thees – Silence of Lamb? Non mi rompere il coglioni! Man should be man. Was ‘e at Eeeeeeeeton? Ah! Explains eet. Mamma knew. Mamma said. If it wasn’t for the keeeds...

What-a can I tell you about-a my life? I was born in Napoli broth-el to meeeeserable whore with ‘eart of lead and Latvian – how you say eet? – stevadore with an ‘ump. We were poor, but we weren’t ‘appy. I ‘ad to eat fish’eads until I was eight-a and then we shot-a the dog. I was urchina bella, stealing kerchiefs and inexplicably breaking into song and dance routines despite rickets and diurnal cholera outbreaks. Dio mio! And then wicked theatre producer, ‘e found me and put me in ees girly show and [insert-a Tiffany Case life story... ‘ere. When done, insert-a Vivienne Michel life story where you god-damn-a like; I no judge you]. And now I am ‘ere, bird with a weeng down, feeeedled-with in cinema non-paradiso by thees Derek feelth and rejected by Aryan ‘omophobe and ridin’ my Vespa all a-carefree and leathered-up and alone which eeesn’t very wise for a veeectim of abuse at the rough ‘ands of men, save as moist sleaze fantasy by thees Ian Flemeeeeeng. ‘As she not seen Psycho?

[A consultant surgical oncologist writes: Me accent's slipping. Manchester? Liverpool? (Where?) No: 'Ove. Sorry, *darling* – Hhhhhhive. Horrible Hairy Hove Hhhhhhhaberdashhhhery. None of the above is true. My parents were doctors. I have never owned a Vespa. Like motorbikes, their only benefit is as a guarantee of imminent organ donation. I drive a Maserati. No, I *aim* a Masterati. It weeds out the weaker cars. I don't believe I know a Derek – one doesn't mix with the teaching classes – but you'd be surprised at the number of Aryan 'omo-phobes one encounters in Hhhhhhenley-on-Thames. Usually trying to get my vote]

PART TWO: THEM

When all thees 'appens, eet ees Friday 13th. Ees no subtle, no? Ees like pulp gangster tale. Ees not very good pulp gangster tale. She gonna be raped! She just victeeem. She a-knows she ees victeeem. She prisoner of dirty old-a man in 'er 'ead. Thees Flemeeeeeng, ees bad-toothed stinkeeng alcoholic middle-aged "man" tryin' to get into body of young woman. Ees peeg! If he write eet today, bad man pretend to be young woman on eenternet and 'e get-a locked up with other bad men and become rottinculo. This a-Flemeeeeeng, he just a-drool, old-a cazzone. Bastardo!

Ees a gum-shoe novel, but in bad-a shoes.

Knock-a knock-a.

PART THREE: 'EEM

Bond-a turns up! He dressed-a like gangster! Is no subtle. "All women love semi-rape. They love to be taken". No they don't-a. What ees thees rubbish my 'usband reads? Ian Flemeeeeeng? Ian Flemeeeeeng? You 'ear me? Li mortacchi tua! You leetle boys all preten-

din' to be-a James Bond with your dreinking and seely watches and priddy cars, and thees is the sort of theeng you like! Merda! 'E jus' doin' 'eet to shock, like bambina when she excreta everywhere and seets there, all smiles. Ees disturbed child writin' for stupeed children. What ees thees? 'E theenks that because 'e write as woman, ees okay to say eet? Sheet-weet.

[A consultant surgical oncologist writes: The sentiment is possibly criminal. Why have I allowed this revoltingly poor book into the house? There's no ambiguity in what is expressed. It may be a inciting influence on the weak-minded i.e. the sort of people at whom it is aimed. I would say I thought better of my husband but on reflection realise I don't and that this is well down to his usual standard. I shall have words with Jacques. I shall win]

The policeman, he-a called "Stonor". Like-a Stonor 'Ouse. Ees close to us. You weel know eet not for eets park and 'istory but (I weep-a for you, you crumbs-a of livin') because eet was in "Bond feelm", a seely cartoon, one of the ones with 'eem 'oo look meees'nable, like he 'ad rough end of cello up 'is lady rose.

'Ees all a nice-a chat thees Stonor 'as with 'er but it all comes to one theeng – she ees rough slurt, and she gonna end-a up in ditch.

I 'ave 'ad enough of thees. Thees book, ees feelth. Ees thrown in been. I shall 'ave to 'and back to Jeem to write rest of eet. You might not notice difference but I've trouble keeping eet up. As ma 'usband would say, annoyeengly, fnarr.

What does eet mean?

[Sound of shackles being unlocked, bag removed from head, an overweight body being dumped in a chair and hasty removal of first edition of a misguided book from the "been"]

Thank you, scrumblenumptin. Didn't even have to say the safe word. Ooh, sore wrists.

[A consultant surgical oncologist writes: Indicative of girth of telescope that it's only the wrists rather than the entire arms.
My tragedy]

Enough with *folie à deux*. Time for *folie à Fleming*. What is this? The Spy Who Loved Me; the life of Vivienne Michel, a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying..?

...confidence?

...complacency?

...underestimation?

...exhaustion?

...conflict?

...concern?

...*guilt*?

Perhaps all, but never convincingly settling on one as predominant.

Must have been "unexpected" upon receipt at Jonathan Cape, causing alarm that flicking through pages of Bond as if they were banknotes might end due to baffling authorial self-indulgence. Queries, too, about what was in the cigarettes Fleming devoured as ravenously as they devoured him. As with its namesake film, to unleash this in the teeth of litigation and when James Bond's future might have been doubted, displays bravado. This tenth book is yet bolder than that tenth film which, gloriously, is a remix played at maximum volume, but mistakes confidence for excessive invulnerable boasting. Fleming had already done that with Goldfinger. This first person narrative, Jane Eyre meets Midwood Books meets criti-

cal outrage, teeters along the high, thin wire between bravery and stupidity. As conflicting motives tumble with it, I can't decide which side it falls. Fall, however, it does.

Not dissimilar to the film, there's self-awareness (that the films would not shake for decades), something that often accompanies outward swagger. Unlike the Eon series' grisly backslapping knowingness of its own demerits, this book arguably *backstabs*. What is Fleming saying? This is all James Bond is; my tragedy is that this is what I have actually achieved. Doused in champagne, caviar and scrambled eggs but understand, please – clear even for Bs and Cs – that it's no better than equivalent sleazetrash in racks in the lobbies of motels and read by persons frequenting them. *Ah, my legacy*. This is all I can do, this is all I've been doing, and I am defeated by it. You simply thought it was better because there was *Bridge*.

Alternatively, is Fleming mockingly taking on US pulp and, finessing it through Bond norms, beating that lot at their own game? Is it just a piss-take? Of whom, though? If it's of the reader, this is an act of brutal complacency, a writer overconfident that he could write rubbish and people would still buy it. However, such a charge is easier to sustain were this a more regular affair. Evidently *some* thought went into it, unlike Goldfinger's easy cruise-control. Exhausted, then? The spy may have loved me, but has the author fallen out of love with the spy? Turning against his creation just at the point when others will take 007 and let him run completely out of hand? Like its heroine, psychologically it's all over the place, hard to read, and that's not a million miles from suggesting some of it is unreadable. Some distaste at its contents aside (albeit understandable), the benefit of *The Spy Who Loved Me* and its justified place in the series is that it's a horrifyingly raw exposure of an author losing control of his creation. Possibly his mind, with it.

Several sources assert that Fleming was aghast at being read by juveniles. Given that he freely unleashed excessive! exclamation! marks!, Lower-Sixth common-room opinions, “Pussy Galore”, demented ex-Nazi hurling rockets at Her Maj, “homages” of books he enjoyed and a fascinated terror of women, one wonders what he reasonably expected. Perhaps, Ian old lollipop, you could have made them less juvenile in the first place? Ignoring that argument in favour of the income stream, he chose to deliver a cautionary tale about the lack of difference between James Bond and other two-bit rapey gangsters and how the superficial allure of that world is no place for nice young persons. Is it, accordingly... *a children’s book* – or at least one aimed at them? If so, it’s the second most salacious Young Adult fiction imaginable (after John Wayne Gacy’s *Boy’s Bumper Book of Clowns*). Not too surprising, given the decidedly *mixed* messages of “James Bond and the Adventure of the Dirty Lady in the Motel” that he needed another go at junior storytime with Chitty Chitty Bang Bang. The Spy Who Loved Me has plenty bang bang; as for chitty, depends how cleft one’s palate is. If you need help, Mrs Jim is handy with a scalpel.

Cramming this parable with the most explicit sex of his work – the “Me” part of the book is a wantonly grimy Hot Sleaze Shocker – with a heroine expressly depicted as loose and an exciting gun-fought chase around burning buildings, suggests confusion, or hypocrisy, in the attempt to steer impressionable youthery away from Bond. For his next trick, Mr Fleming will magically eat a cake and yet still have it. Gangsters, girls and guns are real turn-offs for the adolescent, aren’t they? Like the end of a moralising cartoon, the child-catching violence sunk by an epilogued “message”, admittedly more commonly “to conquer Castle Greyskull, learn to work together as a team [*buy our toys*]” rather than “wanton sluts who

have had an abortion only narrowly avoid a fiery hell”, but Fox doubtless has that in development. Strange to try to dissuade those seeking shocks by increasing the more shocking elements to overload. Bit like my father’s idea that, in finding one’s offspring (hi) taking a nip o’ booze, making the little swine finish the bottle to teach me a lesson; the lesson being that alcohol is smashing, and I’ve never looked back. Possibly counterproductive. Fleming should have just unleashed a 200 page version of *Quantum of Solace* and bored the little sods to death. The sensation is that of a tabloid berating television for shocking acts of Ban-This-Sick-Filth-Now-ness and proving its point by printing close-up stills over many moistly-worded, drooling pages.

The irony of the title – the spy doesn’t love her, he buggers off before a nice eggy breakfast, ordering her to change her soap, indicating she’s a skank (with just cause) – could suggest that Vivienne is an unreliable narrator. Put Bond in a (marginally) more normal scenario than Dr No and how does he behave, particularly to a young lady we have come to “know”? As reprehensibly as ever, even more so given that Vivienne is “real”, which I suspect is the point. And how does this woman, verderbt, verdammt, verraten, react? Does she loathe him, like a sensible person? No; it’s hero worship and another jumbling of what the message might be striving to be. Are we meant to sympathise with her, or think her daft? I don’t read empowerment – nor empathy, nor sympathy – in articulating the tale through this female voice, so “daft” it must be. Although that undermines the (possible) message, it does open up the idea that she represents a *fabulously* embittered critique of an unblinking hero worship of 007 (and puts the “semi-rape” stuff into the mouth of a cretin, the only place that can harbour it). Given that she’s the only one who ever slept with him, she’s Bond fan number one. Look at

her. *Just look at her*. Learning nothing, off she will scoot and probably end up murdered. Bond fans. Too stupid to accept the truth, all a-gurgle at this terrible, terrible man. Biting the hand that feeds him, is Fleming, in between mouthfuls of that everlasting cake. Whether one is meant to tut at her struggle, or lick one's lips precisely because of it, is hard to decide. The book might be a good idea, but query whether this was the right conveyance for it. A morality tale, but one that *leers*. What does Vivienne learn by all this? Sod all. An uncritical Dr Watson in motorcycle leathers, and now I've an image of Nigel Bruce that's going to take some shaking out of me.

In having Bond seen through the eyes of another major character, the opportunity for finger-wagging presents itself handsomely, although given the content of the book, you just don't know where that finger has been. Urr. On reflection, it had to be "the girl"; a villain's (or more amusingly, a minor villain's) perspective (as with *From Russia with Love*) would inevitably be skewed towards the "Well, they *would* say that about Bond, wouldn't they?" but the impression of Vivienne is that she's a bit thick to be deceived so easily by the obvious trap at the motel and her lovers: Derek, an old Etonian, and Kurt, whose views aren't radically different from those Bond has himself expressed, and then 007 who encapsulates several aspects of both – and of Horror and Sluggsy – but is in some mysterious way "better". The ongoing themes from chapter 20 of *Casino Royale* – which now looks like a manifesto for the series itself – that the heroes and villains get all mixed up... made as explicit as it ever will be.

In hindsight, fascinating timing. At the end of its publication year, we received the Eon-ised Dr No and – Professor Dent and swamp guard aside – the films would not (until recently) share the qualms of an author coming to terms with what he has done. Look

at that merchandising, all those toy DB5s sold on the back of Goldfinger, in which a woman is taken to a barn and raped – or semi-raped (because she appears to like it) – or the model space shuttles that naturally emanate from a defenceless girl being ripped apart by Dobermans, or the opportunity to buy a watch whilst your misguided peamind prays that others will think you are James Bond as a result, a man who destroys homes in downtown St Petersburg with a tank, the git. Admittedly, Fleming expresses discomfort ten books in, money in the bank, a Presidential-endorsement made and multiple films on the horizon, which isn't medal-level bravery but could be mentioned in dispatches for attempted gallantry, similar to J.K. Rowling bravely outing Dumbledore once all the enriching wizardry was done.

Just like Vivienne Michel, we didn't want to listen. Faced with this borderline-rapist clumsy thug snob, what did we do? We embraced the monster and instilled him into Western culture to such an extent it would be hard to imagine it without him. We *were* “warned”, albeit by the very person who was as culpable of romanticising 007 just as much as Vivienne Michel.

The films doubtless boosted awareness of Fleming, but their jack-booting of what Bond “is”, appealing to the undemanding, easily deceived and product-placers offering budget if their baubles are shown in a benevolent arc-light, might not “get” what Fleming was saying with *The Spy Who Loved Me* (even if its execution doesn't say it well). This is not a man to be liked, says Fleming, trying to wean us off any admiration we had, lest we be considered as gullible as Vivienne. Yet Eon turned him into the greatest hero-icon commodity of the century. The legacy of the (mostly) formulaic films haunts “James Bond” and whilst the Fleming estate doubtless benefits by association with the series, this book – others, true, but this

THE 007TH CHAPTER

one especially – demonstrates that Ian Fleming is underestimated by any parallel preconception that he is a writer as formulaic as the committee-minds that puked up Octopussy or GoldenEye. The Spy Who Loved Me may not be a successful departure, but as a day-release respite from the prison of “James Bond”, it has appeal.

Then he goes and spoils it all by saying something stupid like “semi-rape” and, stunned, one argues that it should be locked up forever and the key not just thrown away but melted down.

THE 007TH CHAPTER – THE SPY WHO LOVED ME: ‘COME INTO MY PARLOUR...’

“I looked forward to bed.” Give it a rest. One-track mind, this “girl”. Oh, stuff the pretence, it *is* Ian Fleming writing this and doubtless amusing himself. Someone has to be amused. One big clue about Vivienne Michel’s brilliantly closely-guarded secret identity is the list of products found in and around motel rooms (beyond crack-pipes, maggots and discarded limbs). Her enthusiasm at naming the Icemagic ice-makers and Simmons Vivant furniture a) reveals her inner Fleming in the obsessive name-checkery and b) makes her sound a bit simple given her enthusiasm for branded toilet paper, which supports the theory that the author is setting her up as a hopelessly naïve clown and c)...

c). Stage 1. James Bond is not a man to like. Stage 2. Vivienne Michel is a twerp. Stage 3. They both have a peculiar fascination with branded goods. Stage 4. Is Fleming advocating that such persons are either cruel or mentally deficient, or both? Stage 5. Accordingly, was all the product placement actually *contempt* for such

things and the persons that covet them? Stage 6. Buy this watch/sports car/mobile telephone. Hm. Did Eon miss the point as much as those who want to “be” Bond by buying any of that cack? Perhaps they would have missed the money more.

Still, he’s giving those currently staying in a motel the opportunity to peel their eyes away from the salacious pages, look around, see the same accoutrements and smile at the prospect of an adventure happening right there, right now and hoping the spouse never finds out.

“Mrs Phancey, an iron-grey woman with bitter, mistrustful eyes and a grim slit of a mouth...” AND HER NAME IS FANCY! GED-DIT? Quasi-Dickensian in its “wit”. Got another one for you. An Englishman (who might be Scottish), a Korean and a German walk into a bar. That’s the Englishman’s explanation when the other two are found clubbed to death, anyway. I’ll be here all week. I’m assuming Vivienne bemoaning her “meagre saddle-bags” isn’t an intentional euphemism, but it’s a better joke than those other two.

Lovely bit of requisite yucky-animal-imagery with Mr Phancey’s eyes moving over Vivienne “like slugs” – gloriously grotesque, epicentre Fleming – and more tremendously subtle clues about who’s really in charge here with statutory references to eggs. I’m beginning to see why Bond has something of a connection with this woman (apart from her morals being more meagre than her “saddle-bags”); she seems reasonably level-headed (at a very low-level, admittedly) and with the shared fixation in becoming egg-bound, seems far more appealing a prospect than the – how shall I put this? – “easily distracted” Tracy. She’s also pleasingly unquestioning – the questions Mr Phancey asks are plainly working out whether she’s expendable but she sees them as no more than “normal curiosity”, despite his flighty chit-chat about Sanguinetti’s brothel. Asking what parents she has and whether she has any friends are

irregular questions for moteliers to put: in my experience (another story...) they never enquire beyond “comfort or ribbed?” To be fair, Vivienne is turning out to be *precisely* the sort of underwashed moral vacuum one utterly accidentally finds in one’s room. No, I don’t know how she got in here. Nor do I know how I developed this funny itch.

OK, so an invitation to a clip-joint, then pumping her for information, then they offer her a job that “after a bit of polite probing” (gulp) – she *takes*? There’s a certain perception of the judiciary that they have an attitude that victims of crime – especially sexual crime – bring it upon themselves. This has no basis in fact. Until now. “The business about the station-wagons opened my eyes to the seamy side of the motel business.” Yes, and it’s simply been honey cupcakes so far, hasn’t it? Amusing details about folks pinching the loo, but if we’re being invited to swallow (... no comment) this as the digression of a young woman rather than a dissolute bored ratbag hammering away at a gold typewriter with some filler anecdotage he contracted whilst touring around, it’s not really working any more, is it? “Everything was screwed down that could be screwed down...” I might be alone in reading too much into that one.

“In cities, motels had other problems – prostitutes who set up shop, murderers who left corpses in the shower, and occasional holdups for the money in the cash register.” Four stars on TripAdvisor, that. “...Jed thought he had found himself an easy lay.” Jed’s no fool: must have read her diary. That business about sex in the cinema... Apparently something that happened to Fleming himself, but contemplate that too much and one’s mind melts at the duhty old man re-imagining his own deflowering as that of a young gel. Vivienne is subjected to all this for sixty dollars, which at the time

was about ten pence; she would have been much better off with a paper round but I cannot help but think that she wouldn't *enjoy* that half as much. My elevation to the judiciary is plainly overdue.

"It seemed a vague sort of arrangement to leave an unknown girl in charge of such a valuable property..." You don't say. And yet, you don't *run*. Has your brain a gaudy neon sign proclaiming "Vacancy"? Bond fans, eh? Bit stoopid. At least the Phanceys leave her some eggs, so I suppose that's a win-win for this weird semi-autobiographical-gendermash *thing*. "That last day I had expected the Phanceys to be rather nice to me." I cannot see anything in this 007th Chapter's description that would lead anyone bar a monumental imbecile to believe... ah. "Jed became tough and nasty..." *Became*? The atmosphere of sexualised aggression around this truck-stop harlot is definitely "screwed down". Having proposed as a flippant theorem that Fleming is depicting her deliberately as the sort of idiot who would fall for Bond and all he stands for, I'm rapidly becoming convinced of it. I, Fleming, I *was* Vivienne, "educated" in and around Surrey in oh-so-many-ways; you, reader, you *are* Vivienne, because you are still overawed by Bond in your simple little doe-eyed way whereas I've grown out of my fascination with him and now know better. My cautionary tale is unheard by the self-inflicted deaf. I even bring myself in at the end as a police captain and lecture you and *still* you won't listen. I give up.

What's that you say, Mr Saltzman? *How* much? Good lord. Where do I sign?

"I went behind the cafeteria bar, turned on the electric cooker, and put out three eggs and six slices of hickory-smoked bacon. I was hungry." Flabby, too, if that's anything to go by. And yet, such meagre saddle-bags.

THE 007TH CHAPTER

One abandons this glutton-fast-track-to-morbid-obesity-half-wit as there's a loud hammering at the door (also a dark and stormy night, this Friday 13th; is no cliché left unmolested?), a splendidly terse cliffhanger, and wonder whether the book deserves a reputation as a failure. Insofar as it holds true to core Fleming elements such as chance (hopelessly improbable here) overcoming sinister "plans", and grotesque villainy being juxtaposed with (...sort of) innocence, and the usual St George guff, it's solidly representative of his work and only a departure in its surface execution. There's even a beastly German. There's a germ of a unique dramatic genre in developing Kitchen-Sink Fantastical; unique in the sense that no-one else was unwise enough to emulate it. A very difficult book to pigeonhole, but as far as that goes, a positive reinforcement of Ian Fleming as a more imaginative mind than other emanations of Bond have allowed his reputation to be. One can only fail if one tried in the first place, and therefore it can be commended for having bothered.

What's unavoidable amongst swirling motives as graspable as dissolving fog is that the perceptible contempt for Bond developed in the previous handful of books and (especially) the short stories of *For Your Eyes Only*, now runs through Fleming's work like marbled fat. Just to emphasise the point, two books will follow to put the rancid bastard through *hell*.

JAMES BOND WILL RETURN IN THE 007TH CHAPTER OF
ON HER MAJESTY'S SECRET SERVICE. MRS JIM IS AVAILABLE
FOR REGIONAL PANTOMIME AND EMERGENCY SURGERY.
JACQUES STEWART IS PROBABLY IN A LOT OF TROUBLE NOW.

SECRET SERVICE

ON HER MAJESTY'S

another make like stuff violence
probably around twist Bond people
hand think lobes client thought indeed come
sort got mind across file made smart
came see course play desk case
looked new Comte must man things
yes right Blofeld first vanity
family sure wants become worry time
way lawyer snob room get
may rather matter Count now smiled
lost title de Bleuville
Basilisk name one arms
know eyes speak
years

THE HAIRY HEEL

OF ACHILLES

Hard to come up with a shock ending these days, not simply because “internet” blabs spoilers as loosely as that bewildering Snowden tick, but also because twists now seem such a staple of popular culture that it’s disappointing when there isn’t one. Case in point: *Die Another Day* *doesn’t* end with a humiliating apology, mass refunds, emergency product recall and everyone culpable for its spewing flayed with cheese graters and their dingle-dangles fed to Dobermans. Major missed opportunity but, from one perspective, a massive reversal in that it didn’t happen. I was expecting it.

I’m *entitled* to it.

I won’t be providing a twist. Otherwise I would have been merciful, ending this nonsense here and you’d have to distract yourself from the bleak reality of whatever you are by other means of supply. Try psilocybin, or licking an entertaining toad. Either method guarantees more coherent entertainment, I cheerfully admit.

I suppose many would point to this anticipation of twist in low-level, mass-appeal “culture” to emanate from the hopeless *deus ex machina* when that gobby carpenter with ego issues rose from the dead. Yeah, *right*: utter cop-out, although it’s easier to jump a shark when you can already walk on water. Alternatively, “Darth” Vader telling the boring lad that he was his dad; claiming he was his mum would have been more engaging, and likely. Sherlock Holmes (ostensibly) dying, Norman Bates as the world’s fourth most vicious drag-act, Superman emerging as a neck-snapping balsawood psycho, a New York populated by apes (tempted to ask whether that *is* a twist, but *won’t*) and much involving Messrs. Norton and/or Spacey; all such matters spring to mind. Some might point to the conclusion of this book and its shotgun wedding as another sound example.

However, is the end of OHMSS actually a surprise? Ian Fleming was a regular exponent of the sting in the tale, surely? Casino Royale ends on a grim downer, Moonraker has a lower-key shock, but still punchy, From Russia With Love nearly kills 007 and, in Goldfinger, Bond administers a cure for gay. Quantum of Solace is one long build to a twist, You Only Live Twice has a demented conclusion (arguably no shock at all since the rest of it is really weird), The Living Daylights an embittered end, 007 in New York a comedy one and Devil May Care, “as” Ian Fleming, has nonsensical surprises that are indeed truly shocking. In practically all the other Fleming novels, Bond ends up in hospital/recuperation but, on balance, there’s a good chance on picking up one of his books that something will happen at closing time that’ll leave you the one that’s bruised.

Granted: going loop-the-loop as the last giddy thrill of the roller-coaster isn’t limited to the original series. Ignoring the projectile traitors that pebbledash his Bonds, irritating more than they entertain, Mr Gardner doled out a vicious downbeating in a fistful of his. If I

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recall correctly (look away now to avoid spoilers) Role of Honour, Scorpius, Never Send Flowers and Seafire (I *think*) have concluding twists, and there may be others, such as the duplicate shock of a) Felix Leiter pimping out his daughter and b) his having dabbled with unprecedented heterosexuality at some point. Possibly just a phase he was going through. Mr Benson (look away now if... no, just look away) did it at least a couple of times, pretty effectively too, and Mr Deaver's effort is constructed entirely of twist and little else, rendering a second read impossible (as well as unwise) because once you know the "surprises", there's bugger all else to "enjoy".

Strangely, the films don't really go in for last-minute table-turning, and more often than not end with Bond and a chumess happily in moist congress. I suppose one could argue that all the Daniel Craigs conclude in qualified success, and Skyfall particularly has a bitter twist with M's death, but anyone who couldn't see it coming despite umpteen hours of sledgehammered symbolism is daft (or wisely shunned "internet" for a year in advance of its release); and, of course, the adaptation of this one, ending not in water but in slaughter.

As a result, there's a tenable argument that Mr Lazenby's solo outing and the three most recent films, with the ambivalence-to-tragedy of how they conclude, actually do adopt the "back to Fleming" nonsense hauled before unbelieving ears with every effort since whenever. An additional benefit is that they pleasingly expose (not that they really need to) what pathetically compromised, hollow anti-Fleming dross Licence to Kill is, with its happy party, relaxed Leiter (might be the morphine, I s'pose) and fish-winkery. Insofar as the films go, then, OHMSS is one of few; of the books, though, it's not that much of a surprise. It would have been more shocking had the marriage actually lasted. He's James Bond, he's *bound* to shove her into a skip at some point. Her capacity for "annoying" is extensive and

the seeds are sown for ever more outrageous high-maintenance attention-seeking (won't chime well with the "secret agent" thing, I'd wager). Skating down the slippery slope towards pushing a pramful of cats around town whilst shrieking kwazily, is "Trace".

We're prepared for disaster: Tracy starts with a death wish, and eventually it's realised. Er – *surprised*? She has to die, and expose what a clown Bond is by being incapable of preventing it (and having accelerated things by poking Blofeld's hornet's nest of hypnotised crumpet). Albeit denied the opportunity to personally stage-manage her bid for oblivion, it was coming, albeit it remains very brutal *how*. Not just within the confines of the story but also because the author is patently sick of 007 by now and relishes devising an opportunity – a deliciously drawn-out one – to make him bloody miserable. Could one credibly think that after the thumping Fleming has been giving Bond lately that he was going to grant the horrid berk *happiness*? Mr Gardner is sometimes criticised as never appearing to like James Bond, but he might only have been picking up where dad suddenly left off.

What really is *new* is not the "unexpected" ending but that we haven't previously seen the knock-on effect of the post-adventure downtime. Whilst in other books Bond may have remembered previous assignments, they're memories of the adventures as we knew them too, Tiffany Case deserting him one notable exception. On the whole, he does not contemplate the aftermath of his actions nor is he forced to meet face-on the ramifications of them. We don't know what came of Mr Big's organisation nor (say) Crab Key once Bond had finished smashing it about, which suggests he neither knows nor cares. Maybe this is what Fleming initially intended in his cold, professional agent: job done, move on, the bitch is dead etc. However, even if he tries his best with the sentiment about regret in Goldfinger,

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the preceding few pages in which Bond contemplates the Mexican affair is plainly letting the mask slip, and the likes of Quantum of Solace peel it off completely.

There *is* character development in the Fleming Bonds; perhaps more accurately, development in the author's attitude to the character, possibly because a consequence-free, conscience-free, lead would bore, quickly. It's similar to the first two Craig films, from the regret-free, impact-unaware efficient thug regarding the death of one bomb-maker an achievement, end of adventure, let's move on despite destroying loads of stuff, to a man becoming aware of the wider repercussions of various acts and deaths for which he is responsible. Fine, during other Bond films there may be moments where 007 reflects on what he has brought upon others – the deaths of Paula and Aki, giving Paris Carver's shoulder a quick nibble and appearing to try to snort Elektra King's corpse – but these aren't formative: they're just fleeting skipped heartbeats of shade that mean nothing, go nowhere and are quickly forgotten because there's frogmen to harpoon, rockets to destroy, a remote control car to play with or an opportunity to have Christmas in an utter turkey.

True enough, the last third of *Casino Royale* (the novel) is “repercussion” too, but those are primarily of Vesper's actions, not Bond's. What the film changed is to make the set-up of the poker game – and all the misery that emanates from it – the result of Bond's activity, making the slightly-too-long free-running and airport business critical to the tale rather than (one's immediate impression) that they're noisy filler. The passage of the character through the Craig films – repercussion, (mixed) retribution and resurrection – mirrors that of these final three novels. Quite what'll happen in the fourth Craig is uncertain as Fleming left no obvious clue. It'll probably be regurgitation.

This is what Tracy is for, developing the last book's theme of the impact Bond has on others; there, softly introduced via a motel fumble forgettable to Bond if not the other party, but still not yet coming back to bite him; here, it's going to gnaw – hard. Tracy exists to press home to Bond the results of his colourful super-duper multiple exclamation-marked supervillain-smashing activity and continues the finger-wagging of Captain Stonor. This is where such adventure gets you, there will be consequences and you cannot divorce yourself from the results of your actions, regardless of their perception of having been the “right” thing to have done. The only divorce you'll get is from the barrel of a gun. The detail – the giddy diversions into heraldry and biological warfare and mesmerised dolly-birds – is a blind: the point comes in the closing brace of chapters. Approached this way, it becomes easier to cope with Mr Benson's villain in *Never Dream of Dying*; one of the more profound cameos and a book I've possibly failed to appreciate properly. N.B. “possibly”.

The true shock of OHMSS is not the end: it's the fact of the engagement and marriage at all. Putting aside that I find the flaky, needy, brattish Tracy a character of mystifying allure for Bond, in relation to any woman what is the source of his sudden desire for betrothal? Strikes me that Bond's most direct statement on the subject comes in *Quantum of Solace*'s musings on marrying an air stewardess or “a Japanese” and he's only raising the subject as a gitsome way to wind the Governor up and shock him into conversation. *Vesper* aside, he doesn't appear to be desperate to marry any of the other women he's happened across, and the end of *Moonraker* and the subsequent hopeless relationship with Tiffany Case are statements that Bond is not the marrying kind (don't get your hopes up, Mr Leiter). Maybe there's something in the air at Royale-les-Eaux that fires the old juices and affects his judgment. Presumably it's an

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intentional bitter irony that the two women he meets there are his two great tragedies. Probably best to never, ever go there again.

Whether it's one of the final flourishes of Fleming's autobiographical wish-fulfilment to have a bloody annoying wife shot apart remains ungallant speculation.

THE 007TH CHAPTER – ON HER MAJESTY'S SECRET SERVICE: THE HAIRY HEEL OF ACHILLES

An amusing incident: a man hiding behind a code number conspiring with a man hiding behind a code name against another trying desperately hard to publicly augment *his* identity. It's the last chap who is the bad guy. An uplifting episode of nourishing morality.

Misquoting the misquote: Vanity, thy name is villain. Consistent Fleming themes: the villains undone by their vices, more often than not greed, and how *distasteful* flashy vanity is, likened to V.D in due course. Here, Blofeld's vanity and greed for status (if not money) coalesce. Mr Big's diamond studs embellish his moral abandon, as does Rosa Klebb's grotesque attempt to prettify herself. Goldfinger scratching a "z" into his gold bars is unnecessary frippery, simply showing off, and the Spangs are more show than go. Their physical flaws aside, consider how many of the villains are gaudy in their accessorising, and we haven't yet reached the motherlode with the Golden Gun. Chewable also in the patent guilt and disdain Bond/Fleming/Bond has for the accoutrements that, in moments of great weakness, he allows into his otherwise sparse, regimented lifestyle of a single recipe for death-by-egg and constantly wearing the same things. Permitting this villainous frailty entry potentially mixes up the heroes and villains, etc. His car,

for example, even described at its *best* is “selfish” and later in this tale, his Rolex simply has to die. Most of his nice things end up annihilated: he doesn’t covet them, he doesn’t collect them. He destroys them, just as he is destroying himself as a finely-tuned instrument of the state by drinking and smoking to excess.

Do you still want to emulate this awful man? OK then, *smash* your watch.

The perception that the Bond novels fetishise “posh stuff” seems misplaced. There’s a stand-offishness, a suspicion, even going so far as embarrassment should one indulge oneself. The films... the films *differ*, embracing the vulgarity. The risk, of course, is that this attitude tips into another vice, snobbery, or at least a version inverted by an attitude of superiority over such trivia. It strikes me that Fleming is happier that Bond demonstrates that, his own Achilles heel that styx in the craw (sorry), rather than debilitating – and *exploitable* – status symbolism. Snobbery and vanity might not sit on directly opposing ends of the seesaw, but 007 is more *sine nobilitate* than vain. His has the affectation of morality, not a snobbery drawn out by clinging to baubles or titles or the like. Snobbery about snobbery. With violence. Superiority is achieved through deed, not via acquisition, covetousness and gaudiness: a theme well-trodden. James Bond has an ambivalent attitude to his 00 status, albeit miffed when it’s taken off him in the next book. In the not-too-distant future he will tersely refuse a knighthood. We’ve just been through Bond’s polite-but-bored reaction to his family history and now we have the chapter that emphasises the contrast between hero and villain, setting up Bond’s infiltration of an otherwise impregnable mountaintop lairrrr not by all-out assault (yet) but through indulgent flattery. What a tangled web is woven. Are these things really about basic Good vs. Evil, or just human flaws vs. grotesque exaggerations of human flaws?

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Requisite Fleming *animal* kingdom violence in what Bond sees before meeting Sable Basilisk, and reassurance that the writer is back on form with the description of the younger man as physically normal – at least, not unappealing – shorthand “good”. A person’s activity during WWII being Fleming’s consistent convenient signal to the contemporaneous reader of the morals of a character, a technique he deliberately subverted and deconstructed with Dexter-Smythe, this Sable Basilisk did decent things and therefore is lovely. Not only does War hangover propel many of his plots, but it also swiftly establishes “good” and “bad”, or at least “flawed” and “absurdly flawed”. Finding a place, a role, be it for people or for nations, in the post-War period is endemic to the Bonds: is this why many a modernised continuation rings only a cash register, rather than “true”?

Bond comparing the atmosphere of the College of Arms to a University common room makes one wonder what his experiences at the University of Geneva were actually like, although one trusts to this Mr Cole to inform us in due course.

“Snobbery and vanity positively sprawl through our files...” Perceptive chap, this Sable Basilisk, which is just as well as Fleming is unlikely to want to defame him and bring on yet more crippling litigation. Seems to have sized Bond up as an intelligence operative, for a start. The amusing lecture about the nature of the work and the baser instincts of the desperate is re-emphasised quite devastatingly later on, and breaks off here with the crucial mingling of avarice, greed, snobbery and vanity. Throw in nuclear extortion and you’ve made a potential Bond villain out of anyone who tries drawing up their family tree in the vain (all meanings) hope that they’re related to someone famous. According to “the internet” I could claim a very distant kinship with Charles Taylor. Not sure I want to possess his coat of arms; too literal an interpretation.

In relation to the diffidence of Sable Basilisk about the place the College of Arms has in the great scheme of things, Bond's affirmation is delivered "staunchly". Whilst this may just be politeness, there's equally so a character point. After all, he is on a particular person's secret service. Not a revolutionary, nor an iconoclast, but neither a dunderheaded flag-waver: a creation of a writer not unwilling to poke the structures of the state every now and again, keeping those at arm's length whilst drawing out the personalities within.

Another Fleming trope perceptible, then: over the course of the books we are actually told very little in depth about the Secret Service as an entity (significantly less than the political infighting and infrastructure of SMERSH or SPECTRE), instead focusing on a handful of characters within it; similarly with Leiter as opposed to being given much about the inner workings and/or politics of the CIA, or Draco in relation to the Union Corse. People are valued; institutions are either gently mocked – as here with the College of Arms, or Shrublands or Blades (say) – or much more commonly *feared and to be fought*: ~~Eton, Sandhurst, Rowe and Pitman~~ Mr Big's gang, The Spangled Mob, SMERSH, SPECTRE, Goldfinger's hood's conference and even Scaramanga's lower-rent one, all remorseless in their organisation and collective, anonymising nature. With Leiter, one doesn't get the feeling that Bond is "working with the CIA/Pinkertons/the US Marines or whoever the hell it is Leiter's rented himself out to this time"; he's working with the individual, Felix Leiter, as much as he was with (say) Quarrel. A belief in the strength of the individual rather than a hive mentality wins the day. It *might* be a Room 39 offshoot – Fleming personally prized for imaginative wartime schemes against the relentless German war machine (possibly). It also suggests that

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“Carte Blanche” and “Solo” aren’t bad titles at all. Not surprising that every time Mr Gardner has 007 joining a group of others, it always ends badly. Flaw in the character: he’s not keen on structures. Bit selfish, really.

...*vain*? “Self-centred” is harder to deny. A mistrust of planning and organisation that subjugates persona, certainly.

The one notable time where he is patently an obedient cog in a larger machine, is *You Only Live Twice*, and there’s some slight reversal of the norm as the organisation into which 7777 is subsumed is more rigorous than the villain’s. By the time we reach Japan, Blofeld’s organisation is blown and whilst he has the Black Dragon Society at his disposal, it’s not the structure that SPECTRE had and Blofeld uses them primarily as the domestic help. The alien environment into which Bond is dropped isn’t just Japan: it’s the requirement to behave within the confines of Tanaka’s initial disapproval and 007’s patent discomfort at being obliged to operate within the framework both of delicate diplomacy and the Japanese secret service itself and not go off and make it up as he goes along. That’s partly what is so discomfiting about that book, unsettling environments in abundance. That and the dead wife thing. More “next time”.

“Remember that Thunderball affair about a year ago? Only some of it leaked into the papers...” Including the *designated code-name* within SIS, it seems, as well as Blofeld’s identity. That’s no leak; that’s a gush. Look ye, Assange – you have no purpose; it happens anyway. “Now, how did you come to hear of him?” I refer the dishonourable gentleman to his own answer. As for the “about a year ago”, hang on a mo. Thunderball was *expressly* June 1959. We’re about to be reminded that Blofeld was born on 28 May 1908 (...yeah, yeah) and is “now 54”. Christmas on the horizon, Ursula

Andress kicking about Piz Gloria, we're obviously in the late autumn of 1962. What *has* Bond achieved in three years, beyond persecution of German viniculturalists and motel arson? No wonder he was feeling unappreciated. Went and cured that disenchantment by rescuing a skittish loony, and that I suppose does give insight into the allure of Tracy: she gives him something to do to alleviate soulcrushing boredom. A rock-solid reason to marry. Better than the one I had, admittedly.

I'm sure Blofeld's thrilled by having his cover blown by his lawyers in the opening sentence of their letter. Top work there, boys. You had one job. *One* job. An object lesson in the significance of client confidentiality, this book. Admittedly, they have to cope with the name "Gumpold-Moosbrugger", wisely changed for the film to avoid the second half being mistaken by its leading man for a suburb of Brisbane or refreshment delivered via tinnies (Science Fact!). Not totally sure why Bleuville is changed for Bleuchamp, other than it being "the French form of Blofeld", which I suppose it might be, but to what end? He's patently *not* French, in any iteration. Might as well opt for Bluerinse, as indeed he did in *Diamonds are Forever*. Uncertain about the "Gumpold" thing too, although that might just be the copy I'm using.

The letter makes mention of Augsburg, and there's another reference to come, and I'm reminded of an oddity in the film when it's apparently this *mistake* by the College of Arms that partly blows Bond's cover (that and all the knobbing), causing 007 to look terribly confused, although that might have been Young George trying to remember how to work a dunny. Wonder why they picked this, rather than have Blofeld simply remember that it's (nearly) the same chap who exploderated his toy volcano and fed his boyf to some grumpy fish.

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The discussion about how Sable Basilisk supplements his income – which would be a corrupt backhander save for the fact that he has a normal face and is therefore a nice person – seems (as much of this does) to be Fleming transposing a conversation that amused him. Colonel Smithers, the Faberge dealer in *The Property of a Lady*, whoever it was that force-fed him yoghurt and a multitude of others through the books: the voice of the “expert” to add background veracity to the tale, a frequently-deployed trick. The College of Arms sounds stingy and under the control of something fabulously kinky calling itself Garter King of Arms but, of course, institutions is ‘or-rible but individual peoples is lovely.

Fleming appears to have done his own extensive research into Blofeld’s background too, by picking up a copy of *Thunderball* and reheating scraps of that, lots of stuff there about his Greek mother (presumably called Thetis). Plagiarising himself, safer ground but a bit of a mindbender nonetheless, as is the repeated antiquated spelling of the word connection as “connexion”, at least in the edition I’m flicking through. Be that as it may, it seems thin that the great organising power that is Blofeld doesn’t know about S.B.’s unauthorised enquiries – and positively anorexic that the ostensible “in” for Bond is a conviction that Blofeld, the great information-broker, *won’t know* about the de Bleuville lobes crisis. Hang on: he’s going to the trouble of setting himself up as a right old Count and he’s not going to be aware of *that*? “...there’s no reason why he should know what physical characteristic we’re looking for in this interview.” There *is* a reason: he’s Ernst Stavro Frickin’ Blofeld and umpteen paragraphs of *Thunderball* were spent telling us he has an innate capacity for finding things out and then using them to his advantage. Sometimes these books are maw-crammed with detail and then sometimes... sometimes they’re just shamelessly winging it, aren’t they?

“A certain royal family have minute, vestigial tails”. Oh go on, do tell. If it’s our lot, no wonder they always look so pained. On Her Majesty’s Secret Cervix? Surely *not*.

The Identicast – yay gadgetry – running through Bond’s mind – yay, er, weirdness, although I accept that he can’t carry it around – reminds Bond that Blofeld has very pronounced lobes, although it might be that Q pressed the wrong button again. They were bound to be either grotesquely non-existent or massive, because he’s a villain and therefore a *freak*. Identicast’s not going to prove its worth anyway once you meet him, Bond. There you were, expecting a blunt bruiser and what you get is an effete, silvery-haired gent. At least that’s one thing about Blofeld the films did get right, albeit in a slightly peculiar order. They never did show us his ~~monkey’s paw~~ hairy heel which is a great shame as I understood Charles Gray had tremendously shapely ankles.

“But, even if Blofeld agreed to see me, how in hell could I play the part?” Dubbed, probably.

“I don’t know the difference between a gule and a bezant...” – any port in a storm, eh? Calm down, Felix – “...I’ve never been able to make out what a baronet is.” No believer in the honours system (nor is M), Bond’s ultimate refusal of a knighthood is telegraphed, and his creator’s disdain for the same is about to be lectured to us. “You can easily mug up a few popular books on heraldry. It’s not difficult to be impressive on the subject.” Not exactly overselling the College of Arms, is he? First it’s necessary off-the-books payments to be able to afford the Turkish tobacco, now it’s an admission that it’s largely a con exercised against those rendered gullible by the power of their delusional vanity. Slightly forked of tongue, this basilisk.

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“Who am I exactly?” Big question, that. Efficient agent unburdened by regret? Romantic and noble hero to a troubled girl? Blofeld is certain about his identity; Bond’s is more of a debate, one he’s prepared to open by imminently paraphrasing his question with “Who exactly am I?” If defined by what he does, do his two narratives – Blofeld and Tracy – convincingly mesh? Query whether they are *meant to* until the final scene when “repercussion” raises its violent head and the dual plots collide, tragically. Although Tracy does help Bond at the end of his initial escape from Piz Gloria (in massively coincidental circumstances), she nimbly steps back onto her own storyline swiftly thereafter. The “drama” of the film in having Tracy captured by Blofeld, giving Bond and Draco reason to attack Piz Gloria beyond saving chickens from catching Hen-AIDS, arguably erodes the shock impact of the one story viciously interrupting the other; there had already been a merging. In two minds about this: is it more callous – and more tragic – for Blofeld and Bunt to murder a woman they “knew” or someone who is effectively an innocent stranger? Either is very naughty, but perhaps the impact of bitter and unavoidable repercussion is greater in the book as the film Tracy is a consistent participant in Bond’s world for most of its second half, villain-baiting and goon-killing, thereby arguably more adoptive of its associated risks.

Still, you don’t hire Diana Rigg and leave her in a Munich hotel. You hire her to recite poetry at dawn.

The tirade about buying respectability through titles is pretty vicious, and worse than that when commenting on how women react. “The idea of suddenly becoming a “lady” in their small community is so intoxicating that the way they bare their souls is positively obscene.” Bearing mind that the author’s wife was previously married to a Viscount, a status duly stripped from her, and since

it's easy to establish that Ian Fleming is expressly no believer in such façade, one does speculate whether there's a coded message in this vituperation that were Fleming ever to be offered a gong, he'd spurn it not just because he doesn't value the system – likening it to a consultation about V.D is a “hint” – but also because doing so would wind the Mrs up something rotten, leaving her with “essential meagreness” and “basic inferiority”. Disgraced Contessa or disgraced Viscountess? Mighty fine coincidence. By this stage, probably mighty fine enemy action.

Speculation too far? Consider this passage: “He no longer admires the material things, riches and power. He is now 54, as I reckon it. He wants a new skin.” Villain, or *author*? He wants to change and inevitably it's bloody James Bond who comes along and thwarts his aspiration. Right then, sonny: one of us has to alter and if the requirement to bang out your tiresome exploits to public demand, exhaustedly, means it's never going to be me, then it's going to have to be you. Accordingly, over the course of this book and the next two, Bond is deprived of much – his wife, his status, his memory, his mind, his liberty – until he emerges a simpler, blunter and harder man divested of the baggage, and still in no desire of a knighthood. Still James Bond, but stripped of the unnecessary and the acquired. Wish-fulfilment again, but of a very, *very* dark sort.

“He wants a new skin.” Hang on: Blofeld's got a new skin. Slightly syphilitic, but otherwise minty-fresh. Had he not got ideas above himself and instructed incompetent lawyers to correspond with the College of Arms, no-one would ever have found him. One suspects this is the “point”. Achilles is only as strong as his heel, after all. Bond's Achilles heel – Tracy? Definitely a weak spot, fated to be pressed or tripped over, a visceral image upon which to close this 007th Chapter.

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Consistent themes tickled, plotting a mite sloppy but with no holding back in expressing “a view”, this 007th Chapter might not have physical action, hot babes and gunplay, but it’s a *blistering* attack on valueless ornaments and the worthlessness of those who *would* value them. If you are noble in nature, demonstrated (let’s say) by rescuing a bird with a wing down and thereafter suppressing your fundamental characteristics by actually marrying her, even when it goes “a bit wrong” and nobility of nature – is Bond ever more chivalrous than in this book? – can’t prevent bad things from happening, you’re still considerably less vile than the man who fakes his nobility.

Unless, of course, you don’t mean it, you don’t exhibit true nobility but instead marry someone totally unsuitable who you don’t really love, in an expedient but futile and unconvincing attempt to change your harum-scarum high-living, fast driving, pill-popping and devil-may-care gambling. Then... then you’ll be made to suffer, and deserve to, Contessa.

Ooh, twist ending.

JAMES BOND WILL RETURN IN THE 007TH CHAPTER OF YOU ONLY LIVE TWICE. THE GREATEST TRICK JACQUES STEWART EVER PULLED WAS CONVINCING THE WORLD HE DID EXIST.

[illegible]

Previously, on *James Bahnd...*

Bezants! Syphilis! Girls! Chickens! Christmas! Microbes! Earlobes! Bobsleighs! Wedding! Bang!

Exhausting.

Chap'd need a holiday after that. Touch of sightseeing, a wander around an exotic garden, visit a castle, perhaps a mud-bath or a swim-swim. Pick up local customs, pick up a local, enrage them by behaving as a Brit abroad, complain about the food, have a fight, throttle someone, go crazed in blood lust and, when it's time to go home, forget it all and defect. Have had similar city-breaks (ah, Paris) except for the last bit. James Bond has to go that one stage further, doesn't he? Show-off.

Mr Grumpy goes to Tokyo, then. I accept he has reason to be miz. However appealing a short-term solution to impeded freedom to do whatever and whomever one wants, losing one's spouse cannot be fun. In vowing to be true until death does you part, one's not expecting that to happen within an hour, before the weak buffet and witnessing an elderly relative get whammed and claim they invented the lemon. Won't have even have had time for photographs of hair and faces both questionable when viewed a decade on; I mean, who the F*** is that bloke, there, next to your ferociously slutty fat friend with the tattoo of Harvey Keitel on her pockmarked whalethigh? What do you mean, how do I know about that? Look, there, atop those veined legs reminiscent of cheap Stilton. Agreed, it could be some cake, but it *looks* like Harvey Keitel. So does she.

That said, Bond didn't so much lose Tracy as have her removed from him, and only shortly after they'd met. Given that she was practically a stranger, is it more the traumatic manner of the separation (bound to tend to upset) rather than the loss itself? If so, arguably Bond could be happier: he had yet to observe the way she ate eggs, or cut her toenails whilst watching television, or [continues in this vein for umpteen tedious paragraphs of trivial domestic irritations] or the annual one-day interest in "sorting out the garden" despite patently not knowing a weed from a banana. All these things James Bond is blissfully denied and then he gets a knock on the head and forgets about his marriage anyway. I'm struggling to see the downside.

So's M. Not the most sympathetic of reactions, referring to Bond as a "lame-brain" and being "under the weather", the brutal old blister. Bond's more than that. The desperate, death-dripped recounting of a sweaty, out-of-condition James Bond shuffling around Harley Street practitioners trying half-heartedly to get well but trapped in

the countdown to his next drink, resonates bleakly with what one knows of Fleming's imminent fate. Possibly the *saddest* piece of writing in all the books, the loneliness in a crowd of a dying man and, more than that, a man who knows the game's up but cracks a forced smile to try to convince others, and himself, to the contrary: heart-breaking. Possibly literally. Wasting one's days in trying to prolong them, despite death addiction. All that work Fleming has been doing to undermine Bond's appeal and I feel sorry for him now. Looking death in the face with a pointlessly brave one of his own; might be a second life, but it's not much of one. The medical history Fleming ascribes to 007 one suspects is voluntary disclosure of his own records, embellished. The autobiography turns bitter. Just not up to it any longer and the demands of the job increasingly beyond him. A couple of Bond's recent missions have failed; stretching it perhaps but authorial reflection here on the trouble surrounding Thunderball and the reception for *The Spy Who Loved Me*? The expectations – the demands – of others have turned it sour and unappealing.

What is required of Bond is required of Fleming: a supreme call on his talents in the face of an impossible job. *You Only Live Twice* tackles this need for energy by appearing to turn in the drowsiest novel of the run. That's a disguise, and better than the one Bond adopts. Admittedly, the atmosphere is so dense one could dig into it with a spoon, but *everything's* here, deceptively muted by oppressive melancholy and a pace that for two-thirds of the book might frustrate those seeking "thrills". Fleming always was one for structural whimsy, was he not? Look carefully: what he's actually doing, skin tinted much darker but palpably *there*, is taking familiar tricks by the hand and skipping merrily over the top with them. A final wild fling for the old ways. The path may lead towards rebirth but before one emerges there washed of brain and identity, before one sloughs

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the old skin, all the characteristics of your first life get an outlandish, bacchanalian wake. For example -

- A pretty girl. Granted, a requisite. That this one's a film star and Bond impregnates her strikes me as escalating the norm a nadge.

- Indulgent food – a given. That it's still alive or could kill you – not so.

- A childish fascination with the promise (but *not* act) of skewed sexual practice. This one has toad sweating. Yum.

- Referencing past adventures has, of course, occurred before, but taken further here with a direct sequel. Might be difficult to establish what's going on were this the first Fleming you read.

- A more substantive moral tone than perception of Fleming's output permits. True, a perception that cage-rattling opinions and sexual tease don't render undeserved, but recently we've had criticised the superficiality of Bond's allure in *The Spy Who Loved Me*, then excoriation of unedifying lust for status in *OHMSS*. Now, where revenge is concerned, it is better to travel hopefully than to arrive. The two graves yawn wide for Bond and Blofeld; likewise, for Fleming, avenging himself on Bond by "killing" him, then wiping his personality and *then* having him defect in ambiguous circumstances. In parallel, the mutual participants accelerate mutual destruction. Violence has solved nothing. No catharsis, no satisfaction, no reward. Odd stance for an adventure novel to take, that it was all *pointless*, but save to the effect it's exhibited at its most extreme here, this idea has been coming since *Quantum of Solace*, if not earlier. It gets another outing next time, too.

- WWII hangovers. They litter the books but this time Bond *subjugates himself* to a wartime enemy. That's new. Wouldn't have hap-

pened with (say) the Germans. The development of the relationship with Tanaka from this inauspicious start is critical; these are men of their time. Taking them away from their war experiences, and mutually wary discussion of them and the cultural aftermath, and dropping them into – say – 2002, hollows out the residual tension between the characters, the basis of the relationship, that remains unresolved by this book’s end.

- Further, the relationship with the ally – Quarrel, Kerim, Leiter even – has tended to put the pal into the role of assistant, a helper to Bond. Not a *servant* per se but not quite equal; a friend in a time of need. Here, Bond assists Tanaka. This is not the standard ally dynamic.

- Hot gypsies. This time they’re sea-gypsies. One better.

- St. George. Dragon. Slay. Here, little Black Dragons surround the bigger one, who for SCREAMED SUBTEXT handily wears a kimono with a golden dragon sprawled across it. Just in case you didn’t/couldn’t get it. Still, they did let the Bs and Cs read these, didn’t they?

- The grotesque. Whilst there might be more physically repulsive creatures than Blofeld and Bunt in Fleming’s armoury, although they give anyone a good run, the whole Garden of Death set-up is textbook heightened macabre, the closest to outright unnerving horror he gets.

- A murky-of-motive M. Previously, Bond has helped him resolve M’s conflict – Von Hammerstein, for example. Now Bond is the conflict. M’s passive/aggressive attitude to 007 has been escalating for some time, and it’s about to go bang. His behaviour here tends to suggest that all Colonel Boris did to Bond was to let a seed already sown, bloom. Folks talk of these concluding novels (the ones not written by Vivienne Michel, anyway) as a “Blofeld trilogy”; fairy nuff, but equally so they’re the “M quartet”: humiliating 007 by sending him

off to Shrublands, then giving him a lousy task in tracking Blofeld and here shaming him again when sympathy might have been in order. No wonder, in book 4, Bond tries to “pop” a “cap” in his “bottom”. Doesn’t change anything; M sacrifices Bond to Scaramanga because he prefers others to do his dirty work for him, the swine.

- James Bond’s capacity for self-destruction competing with a fierce will to keep living. Goldfinger’s buzzsaw is a notable example, as is the Crab Key assault course. With this one, he has good cause to harbour bleak thoughts and it’s wincingly black comedy that the opportunity to embrace suicide is presented on a plate with Blofeld’s oasis of oblivion, and Tanaka banging on about how honourable it is. That he fights off temptation reminds one that however violent the closing battle may be, the greater struggle Bond has to overcome in this book is within. Blofeld is dispatched pretty efficiently; it is Bond’s personal history that is his own worst enemy. Wipe it clean, and start one’s second life anew.

- Amused, fascinated, repulsed, engaged, stand-offish, flummoxed, frustrated descriptions of a foreign culture. Many, *many* pages, even more time and attention devoted to it than the USA of Live and Let Die or the Jamaica of Dr No. Some whine that You Only Live Twice has “too much” travelogue, but the travel writing has always been an ingredient. “More than before” is more legitimate an observation yet, delivered like this, it’s not something about which to moan.

- A disguise. Some mild tinkering around the edges in Live and Let Die and, of course, the last book’s alter ego; but here, a full-on change in appearance. Pushing a previous trick one step beyond.

- Distancing of creator from his creation. The moralising is one facet, but arguably the obituary’s mocking of the books is the ultimate betrayal, and another twist in a corkscrew of them at the close

of play. Additionally, Bond's overall lack of success is amplified by the position in which Britain finds itself. His exploits have achieved very little and have brought him and the nation no reward. That he is on this mission shouts loudly his pointlessness; had he been a success, had what he achieved meant anything, Britain might have been better off. Not suggesting things have gone backwards because of Bond, but he might as well have not bothered. It's only after he's been scrubbed clean next time around that he's offered a knighthood; all the other "successes" patently didn't stack up.

- Associated with this is the contempt for decay in post-War Britain. Tanaka gets a *blistering* couple of speeches on the point and, since he's an Oxford man, he's utterly butterly and must be agreed with. Additionally, the whole Magic 44 and 7777 episode is a cruel demonstration of how incidental Britain is. Bond is not just preserving its position, as in previous books: he is trying to *enhance* it. Bond's rhetoric of "...our Welfare State politics may have made us expect too much for free, and the liberation of our Colonies may have gone too fast, but we still climb Everest and beat plenty of the world at plenty of sports and win Nobel Prizes..." – who are you trying to convince, matey?

- The villain arguing their case. Common enough, but whilst the likes of Mr Big, Drax, Dr No and Goldfinger acknowledge in their monologues that they are operating as criminals, Blofeld's claim is to have been an unfairly underacknowledged humanitarian, and there's a macabre plausibility to his reasoning. The heroes and villains finally did get mixed up, after all.

- An increasingly jaundiced view of the USA. Bond's cynicism about its relationship with Japan, for that matter Tanaka's bitterness about the "despicable way of life" with its "hideously large bosoms", is not the open-eyed tourism of Live and Let Die. Whilst that

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wasn't wholly uncritical, and this book isn't entirely *anti-*, there's a perceptible shift in attitude, particularly in Bond's analysis that the cultural ills have been visited on Japan by "the lower level GIs... who are basically Irish or Germans (yay!) or Czechs or Poles"; all the usual Bond-baiting food-groups. Not the Scots, it would seem.

- Egg obsession. In particular, the bizarre comparison between the ceremonial delicacy of fugu to eating an underdone fried egg. Slightly parochial, terribly amusing.

- On that, is this the *funniest* Bond book? The notion of 007 – he of "colourful" views and a penchant for violence – on an incredibly sensitive diplomatic errand is a hoot. Clowning around with live fish on his plate, sustained comedy of (extremely good) manners, relentless culture clash pratfalls and pithy barbs from Bond (this 007th Chapter contains a belter) – there may have been similar episodes before but it's the juxtaposition with the grimness that heightens the humour here. Perhaps it's a creeping influence of the tone of the films, although this Bond is comically ignorant and clumsy whilst they tend to go for "urbane" to commoditise shallow consumer aspiration. This is not the po-faced professional of Casino Royale nor the boorish lout of Goldfinger. And how can one not love – *adore* – a book that proclaims "The fish tasted of nothing, not even of fish."? Art.

- An interest in flora and fauna runs as a rich seam through Fleming's novels, and is obviously taken to insane extents in this one.

There are *doubtless* others. Ludicrous opinions (many); probable racism (much); name-dropping one's friends (Coward; Kissy's cormorant etc); a villain dying of boredom and possibly articulating the thoughts of the author – all there. I'd suggest it's the *ultimate* Fleming. Perhaps not in plot, or girl, or villain or "action" the most

archetypical “Bond” in the public eye – for good or ill, depressingly that might be Goldfinger – but all the *Fleming* is there, and maxed out. An all time high. How much further could it go? Once you’ve had lethal shrubbery and a Samurai Schweitzer, where next without being farcical? Containing many standard requirements, accentuated to the point of the absurd, this is an adventure where Bond is stunningly insensitive to an Asian culture, the baddie is by his own reckoning benefiting mankind with his scheme, and there’s a sword fight with a loony who has changed his appearance and who owns a garden with bubbly hot spring things. It marks the death of this version of James Bond, leading to a quasi-reboot in which he is stripped back, to begin again.

Which makes it Die Another Day.

Freddie Uncle Charlie Katie.

THE 007TH CHAPTER – YOU ONLY LIVE TWICE: THE DEATH COLLECTOR

You Only Live Twice: When Gardeners Go Bad. Note – this is not When Gardners Go Bad; that’s [spoiler]. And [spoiler]. [Spoiler] too, for many, although I rather like that one.

Another example of FlemingPlus. Albeit open to an accusation of filling space and meeting a requirement for girth, in the recent books there’s a tendency to paraphrase conversations and information about a subject of fleeting interest: the taxi-driver and the enzyme chats in Thunderball, two dialogue-heavy chapters in the College of Arms last time out, as examples. “Paraphrase” might itself be a paraphrase for “utilise wholesale without expressly citing the source”

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although to put that higher than a personal impression leads one back to Thunderball, big trouble and a red-hot geyser of litigation. Much of this 007th Chapter is given over to two lists of information which, whilst helping set the scene, aren't that generous to an idiot contriving to take the piss without any justification for so doing.

Leaves one pondering: in the rumination about the bird-life of Jamaica at the start of *For Your Eyes Only*, was there "reliance" on the work of the ectual James Bond? Brainburster of a wheeze, if so. If that didn't bruise your noddle, the obituary fesses up to stealing someone else's life story *entirely*.

Anyway, back at one of Bond and Tanaka's many – *many* – conversations, we've just rolled away from a plump cliffhanger – "He collects death" – which slips in another common idea; that coveting, collecting, is morally dodgy, and you can't get dodgier than "death". *Maybe* watches. "Let us just say that he provides an easy and attractive opportunity – a resort – for people to do away with themselves." Well, he *is* from Switzerland, they're quite big on euthanasia, although their "resort" seems to be a tin hut on a Zurich industrial estate rather than the theatrics of (rumble of thunder) THE ALLOTMENT OF DOOM. Can't help feeling the Swiss are missing a trick, there.

As well as a citizen, even if the claims to such are thin. *Switzerland*. Who do we know who's latterly been in Switzerland? No? Oh, come on. "Dr Guntrum Shatterhand" has the planet's most attention-seeking villainous name and no real background, in spite of which the CIA have cleared him (the clowns, maintaining a record for perceptive brilliance despite Kristatos), so he must be suspect. Blofeld – for it is he, sorry for the spoiler fifty years on – is up to his old trick of exploiting his status and that of others, money and titles still getting him somewhere. Slightly unclear where the fascination

for psychotic daisies has come from but he's gone a bit bonkers so I expect we shouldn't question it too thoroughly. Like the CIA. I might take up gardening as I shuffle towards retirement, although the Chinaberry tree isn't that popular in Oxfordshire. Shame: it would see to next door's cat most gratifyingly. Couple of Jequiritz beans rammed right up its fumarole should sort it out.

They just waved in Shatterhand, this Gertrude Jekyll-and-Hyde. "An interesting and financially sound citizen whose harmless pursuits would be of some benefit to Japan." Despite importing hostile veggies. Amazing. These days you can't get into anywhere with an atospeck of mud on your shoe. Reminds me of Darwin airport where I had a KitKat in my pocket. Won't tell you how I smuggled it through Immigration, but keep thinking about Down Under and you're in the right ballpark.

The business about Shatterhand choosing his castle is a sparkling dollop of mischievous whimsy as it appears from a number of reliable sources that coastal fortresses are none-too-common in Japan. Given that I'm unconvinced that anything that goes on in or around said establishment is intended as documentary fact, with glee one excuses it. That it achieves any semblance of plausibility is the trick seen with (say) Mr Big's ballistic desk – slip something ridiculous into the true detail and see if you get away with it. It may well be that because so much of *You Only Live Twice* is gloriously absurd that there has to be loads of surrounding factual backdrop to ensure you only suspend disbelief rather than succumb to it entirely, which could only be to the detriment of enjoying it.

"The doctor and his wife, who is by the way extremely ugly..." Ooh, you bitch. Yet she speaks so highly of you. In context, there's no need for Tanaka to make this observation, other than dropping another clue for Thick Jamie to miss. A few sakes 7777 may have

had, but how much more obvious could it be, other than Shatterhand recruiting a criminal gang as his staff?

Ah.

The background and motives of the Black Dragon Society – name’s a giveaway that they’re cheeky rascallions – might not be true, but it’s recounted with such plausibility that it *could be*; largely the purpose of the whole Bond enterprise and the delicacy of Fleming’s approach, the balance that guides the ludicrous to within touching distance of credibility. The eventual obituary’s barb about the quality of the books and their questionable “degree of veracity” might be Fleming playing at not wanting to be seen to have tried – how *vulgar* – but equally could be a fine in-joke; “degree of veracity” is the great *strength* of Fleming’s books. Not “total veracity”, for that would be extremely dull and “James Bond” is not, nor is it intended as, a realistic depiction of the security services and all its multiple dull machinations. Judging the “degree” of veracity just so helps smuggle in the utter absurdity of what is not so much a Hanging Garden of Babylon as a Hanging, Disembowelling, Gnawing and Poisoning Garden of Grr. Frankly, if you can call a story “Quantum of Solace”, “Degree of Veracity” seems no worse to me, and applicable to any of them. The films regularly go mad and overstep the mark and there’s a tendency amongst the continuationists to try to increase the quantum of truth, so that when moments of lunacy come, they seem much more noticeable as such, less deftly woven, out-of-place, forced, and their contrivance blaring louder.

This isn’t to suggest Fleming always succeeded in weighing it up. Goldfinger relies on ridiculous turns of fortune and coming up soon is the curious incident of Scaramanga hiring Bond for no readily explicable reason. For the former, I’d suggest that Goldfinger is a deliberate bored piss-take of a book; for the latter, evidently an un-

derdone one. Speculation though it is, but I take the view that given the opportunity to do more with his final novel, Fleming would not have altered that plot point; however, he may have included more garnish to help us swallow it.

If there's a point to the latter half of the book, other than demonstrating a verdant, overgrown imagination, I suppose it's that one cannot defy death, but one can defy the reader's expectations. There's an early example being set up here: the Black Dragons have a couple of (very long) paragraphs building them up and then ultimately they turn out to be less armed guards and more armed gardeners. It's like hiring Steven Seagal and getting him to empty your bins, although even that might actually be beyond him now, poor old soul. "They were totally ruthless, and not out of any particular political conviction. They operated strictly for cash." There used to be another organisation just like that. No? What do you want – words of one syllable? Will a photograph do? On which.... Bond has met Blofeld's new face, and knows Blofeld is on the run. Either a) he does not use Identigraph so lauded in the previous book to create an image to be sent to security services around the world, which is further evidence of "slipping" or b) he does do this but Tanaka doesn't recognise the man from the comparable photograph of Shatterhand? Garden of Massive Plot Holes, that.

Strikes me that this is one of few occasions in Fleming where the reader runs ahead of Bond; the other clear example being the opening chapters of *From Russia With Love*, but the difference here is that we are travelling alongside the man, not ahead of him, and yet still arriving more quickly at the destination. Is it further distancing – emphasising that Bond has indeed lost his sharpness, making 7777 look foolish despite the mounting evidence? Or a dramatic trick, that we can get excited in anticipating how Bond will react when he finds out what we're increasingly sure of, and yet more thrilled

THE 007TH CHAPTER

at the thought of how gratifying the revenge will be until... until it's not. The dead don't care about vengeance, and nor should you. Boo. Bloody Fleming and his twist endings. It's probably both of those ideas. Clever.

"Really, for the head of a national secret service, Tiger's metaphors were almost ridiculously dramatic." Yeah, you just don't want a chief with an imbalanced approach to simile and oxymoron, do you? Let's have one like M, a conniving psychopath out to destroy Bond in various terrible ways. The moaning that goes on about the attitude of the Dench M tends to ignore how beastly, critical and unkind Fleming had M towards the end. If I had a boss like that, I'd leave the scabby bastard on Colonel Sun's island and consider a skewer down the ear too generous a fate. No wonder he needed that slidey-down screen job, although it might have actually been installed to protect his abused minions from his devious cruelty rather than the other way around.

"He and his hideous wife are not harmed by these things..." Oh, leave her alone, you rotter. She's done nothing to you. To Bond... well, OK, maybe, but unless you're being very, *very* mean to Bondosan and sadistically withholding that you know precisely who the Shatterhands are, the Bunt-abuse seems uncalled for. Save, of course, to watch another clue about the mastermind behind Organic Dignitas go sailing by. "...she wears some other kind of protective clothing." Surprised you didn't say it was her face, and the spiders and snakes and whatnot are scared of contracting *her*. Don't forget that you only have that "golden smile" of yours because your teeth are rotten. People in glass houses shouldn't grow Jimson weed, or something.

"What a daft set-up." I'm not sure why, but I find this comment of Bond's tremendously funny. The fourth wall crumbles as Bond, under his breath, addresses the reader directly for the first time in

his career; that's how I've always read it, anyway. A Pythonesque aside, the self-mockery – the films' influence? – puts this a long way from the austere soul of *Casino Royale*. Deliciously self-aware, although questionable whether “daft” is convincingly “Bond” a word (and he'll use it again in the next chapter). When your own leading man starts doubting the sanity of it, you might as well unleash the diving girls, toxic cress and *THE FORTRESS OF OBLITERATION* because it's really not going to get any more sensible now. *It is daft*. I'm liking this James Bond more and more. Such a shame he has to die, just when he was becoming bearable.

“Countryside” – also the technical name for the act of killing Blofeld, or M – appears as a consistent ingredient of Fleming's books, a naturalist manqué. *Dr No* is basically a study on Man vs. Nature, albeit one with rockets, and whilst that's a score-draw, here nature's winning comfortably due to its arsenal of terrifying biology. Who do we know who had an interest in developing aggressive biological cultures? Whilst you're struggling with that fiendish clue, time for a shopping list:

“1. *Deliriant*. Symptoms: spectral illusions, delirium; dilated pupils; thirst and dryness; incoordination; then paralysis and spasms.” Mimic this in a risk-free environment by watching a school nativity play.

“2. *Inebriant*. Symptoms: excitement of cerebral functions and of circulation; loss of coordination and muscular movements; double vision; then sleep and deep coma.” Ooh, couple of pints of that, please. Sounds delicious.

“3. *Convulsivant*. Symptoms: intermittent spasms, from head downwards. Death from exhaustion, usually within three hours, or rapid recovery.” So it'll either kill you, or it won't. Reasonable

odds, and sums up everything one ever does, surely? The specific symptoms remind me of our third wedding anniversary. “Leather”, apparently. Stockholm. We had to kill time. Nearly each other. All a touch grubby.

“4. *Depressant*. Symptoms: vertigo, vomiting, abdominal pain, confused vision, convulsions, paralysis, fainting, sometimes asphyxia.” I doubt I’ve ever read such an efficient and objective review of Fox News.

“5. *Asthenic*. Symptoms: numbness, tingling mouth, abdominal pain, vertigo, vomiting, purging, delirium, paralysis, fainting.” Remember Sunny Delight? *That*. Purging sounds... good? Is that like 5/2 or the one where you gorge yourself on roast pork but can’t eat spuds?

“6. *Irritant*. (Hi!) Symptoms: ~~maddeningly undercredited rubbish about the Bond books~~ burning pain in throat and stomach, thirst, nausea, vomiting. Death by shock, convulsions or exhaustion; or starvation by injury to throat and stomach.” Has evidently encountered Mrs Jim’s trademark rabbit casserole.

An undodgy dossier of superfoods takes up much of the remainder of this 007th Chapter. It’s slightly arid, and one does wonder, without an unwise direct accusation, what the inspiration for the material was. That *very cautiously* observed, there’s Flemingesque amusement in the examples: the detail about the oleander wood is especially macabre. “Addiction to toloachi, a drink made from [*Datura*] *tatula*, causes chronic imbecility.” Addiction to “internet” achieves the same.

“Doctor Shatterhand’s garden is indeed a lovesome thing, God wot.” Poetry, then, and not just in the haiku duel. Have we had much poetry before, From a View to a Kill aside? One forgets that

Bond is an educated man, although opportunities to use his education have been sparse, in favour of knives and knobbing. Seems a facet of the character Mr Gardner ran with, to the extent that one expected his dullard Captain Boldman, if making it to retirement, to have taken a seat at one of our minor universities (Cambridge). Come into the garden, James, for the black bat, night, has flown, although it's equally likely one of the snakes got it. T. E. Brown's ditty about his back yard ends "'Tis very sure God walks in mine". In Dr Shatterhand's walks a loony who *thinks* he's God, but is much nicer. Educated, then, but not particularly bright is this 7777. Clue after clue nibbles at him like an undernourished pirhana.

On which: "They can strip a whole horse to the bone in less than an hour." That's nothing; Findus could blast-strip an equine carcass in three minutes ten, tops. Ta-Da! Beef Lasagne. Yet, despite the carnivorous fish, toxic hallucinogens, stems that contain "milky juice" (fnarr) and assorted other very naughty hedges, we close the 007th Chapter with Bond *still* asking what the object of the exercise might be. Perhaps "lame-brain" was justifiable, after all.

All this excess; you really can't carry on like this, y'know. Need to trim the fat, scrape back. The balloon's gone up, and it's time to let go. You've looked death in the face – taken it by the throat, in fact – and killed off all the canker that was clogging up that life's identity; everything plunges into the sea along with you, and swept away. Time for your second life.

JAMES BOND WILL RETURN IN THE 007TH CHAPTER OF
THE MAN WITH THE GOLDEN GUN. JACQUES STEWART'S
MILKY SAP CAUSES CHRONIC IMBECILITY.

A word cloud for the movie 'The Man with the Golden Gun'. The words are arranged in various sizes and orientations, with a blue diagonal graphic on the right side. The words include:

Jamaica, looked, front, get, ice, entrance, took, magazine, close, another, back, Caribbean, manager, lobby, just, suit, big, white, time, air, put, now, redemption, change, behind, gave, men, round, white, suitcase, coming, wall, room, high, turned, telephone, went, hotel, around, want, right, bed, ideology, one, walked, lot, chair, go, small, black, night, drink, quick, knew, young, door, long, Scaramanga, came, man, got, glass, left, money, two, discomfort, number, James, UN-REAL ESTATE, GUN, GOLDEN, WITH THE, THE MAN.

Start over, and simplify.

Often dreamt of by chaps sliding towards their forties, therefore not unusual for James Bond. True, it's more commonly contemplated when staring into a ready-meal and the ready-meal stares *right back*, rather than after killing a maniac, impregnating a film star, unwittingly faking one's own death and trying to kill the boss. Frankly, that lifestyle sounds titillating and a place one escapes *to* rather than *from* (possibly its original point) but perhaps even its view palls, in time.

Given the opportunity, what would I do differently? "Rabat 2001", *definitely*. Actually name one of the offspring "Remnant". Avoid that encounter with [not telling], although it's now a divinely grubby anecdote since his conviction, so I'd think carefully before dropping it completely. Would drink better wine and get that par-migan tattoo I promised meself. A life still too short to learn Welsh, or to contemplate using public transport. Using the public *as* transport... wholly different matter.

Not much else.

Especially if this reboot requires electrocution by my chums (I have three; possibly four if Torquil returns my pinking shears). Call me selfish, call me a coward, call me Bwana (eccentric, but so tremendously sweet of you) but the prospect of twenty-four zaps at my brain over the course of thirty days doesn't thrill. Telling me about it *would* pass quickly, though. Bond's reconditioning in *The Man with the Golden Gun*, his own side microwaving his mind and cynically taking a gift of an open-goal to re-educate him, telling him he's been brainwashed and to Kill! Russians! but markedly *not* reminding him about the dead wife or that his real name's David Webb, lasts less than a page before he's Bourne again and let loose to disrupt the scheme of a... a naughty hotelier.

In both, one recognises the common perception of this novel as unfinished. What of Bond's rehabilitation? Where is the villain's outrageous apocalypse? Where are Bond's reawakening memories of his marriage and realisation that his own side have done him more damage than Colonel Boris ever did? Why is it about an away-day board meeting/team-building exercise for conned investors? Where's all the digression about shrubbery, for frick's sake? However, Weir of Hermiston this is not. It *is* finished. There's an ending – clue. What it is, is unpolished. Arguable evidence of “unfinished”, in that Fleming had yet to apply louche but increasingly ill-disciplined extravagances before his days were rendered unprolonged. Raises contemplation: this is Bond in raw form, uncluttered with “views”, light of diversions into the author's medical history or whatever he had read, liked and then pinched. Terser, harder, quicker. Just as juvenile – the sexually foggy villain has *three nipples* and a big gold gun – but blunter overall.

Better for it? If one accepts the existence of an argument (if not actually accepting *the* argument) that excess germinated fantasy in that Garden of Death, Fleming carrying on the garnishing trend of

You Only Live Twice could have teetered too far, finishing touches becoming finishing molestation. Might this be stronger *without* opportunity to marinate it in watertreading nonsense? Possibly stretching things to suggest that bare-bones Bond was intentional or devised as a restart, but seeing it as such rather than as an exhausted conclusion to the florid melodramatics of the preceding books, lends it greater appeal, and a promising basis for Bond tales to come instead of nailing the coffin lid down none too ably.

Fine, it relies on the hellishly unlikely circumstance of the World's Greatest Hitman hiring a bloke he's just met as (hmmm...) muscle, which is daft, but is that reason to dismiss the novel completely when you have Goldfinger engaging 007 as his P.A. in a generally better-regarded book, albeit one overloaded with objectionable timewasting rubbish? Surely Bond habitually survives on the misguided (in) actions of the villains? The SMERSH goon in Casino Royale could have shot him: didn't. Mr Big gets multiple opportunities to kill the annoying man: doesn't. Dr No dumps him into a vat of tarantulas rather than put a bead in his brain and as for Blofeld... consistently hopeless. And that's when they *know* 007 is dangerous opposition. At the point of engagement, Scaramanga has no reason to suspect Bond of anything, except being a chap who hangs around a town where "Hot Cock Soup" is promised and can be rented in a whorehouse for \$1,000 by a predatory athlete of ambiguous persuasions who wants him for the weekend, providing security. It's Pretty Woman, with blingy handguns and a superfluous tit. You decide whether that's a reference to Felix Leiter.

Is this the distinction between "plot" and "story"? Amongst the continuationists there are plots less porous than much of Fleming, but query whether others' storytelling panache (or absence) as grandly distracts worries about credibility. With Fleming denied the

chance to smuggle dubious structure behind ambles into “stuff”, as he did with (say) *Diamonds are Forever*, the more front-and-centre exposure of TMWTGG’s shoddy plot dynamic gives the lie to the impression that he himself tended to cultivate, that he listlessly tossed off a Bond in between gobfuls of cigarettes, a tsunami o’booze and an afternoon in a near neighbour. If this does stand as the exception establishing the norm, he evidently took more trouble over the “finished” product than self-perpetuated rumour suggested. One mustn’t be seen to try, and yet this one demonstrates the trying that must have actually gone into something as bloodweepingly ludicrous yet smoothly digestible as *Dr No*.

There’s regular conjecture about who – if anyone – manhandled the manuscript before publication: fine. Matters little: it got itself published. What this doesn’t alter is that there is enough “Fleming” here to render it “complete” as one of his, if diluted. If there was meddling, that hasn’t altered it to be unrecognisable, even absent habitual frippery. Themes and ideas – both narrative and subtextual – brewing for some time are in attendance and it’s odd that the book receives the criticism it does. True, this Bond is not the witbag of the last outing but the poor lad’s been partially lobotomised by the British Secret Service and, given the antiseptic “romance” with Mary Goodnight, probably chemically castrated too. Makes him an effective weapon. Blunt instrument. The novel makes no bones about Bond’s nature, albeit one manipulated by those he serves. Just as with the text, his masters have scraped out much, if not all, high living and wacky views and hurled him at Scaramanga as a disposable utensil. That’s all he ever was. All these books ever were.

Quite why continuation writers raise memories of Tracy *without* dealing with Bond coming to terms with his bosses frying her out of his brain to keep him a lethal weapon seems a missed opportunity.

Chap'd resent that, surely? Although the concluding lines of this book might be interpreted as alluding to its subcurrent of homosexual intrigue, likewise they could be an unresolved cliffhanger. If that really is Bond's attitude to women, it's one placed there through the application of electrodes. The prospect of truth dawning and 007 throttling the sinister Sir James Molony – or cooking *his* head – is pleasing; shame it never happened. As the most prolonged torture Bond undergoes in the novels – a *month* – his shock therapy passes without retribution. In comparison, what the Russians did seems mild, pushing an amnesiac along a path already travelled – the one signposted “M's a bastard” – but not wiping the hard drive. Bond even remembers Maria Freudenstein (ish: not too good on her surname) and canteen rituals. The pain meted out by his own side is grotesque in comparison. How is this “good” when other tortures Bond has endured were “bad”? Heroes/villains/changey-sidey. If you're mad and want a (yikes) story-arc, how about the conclusion is Bond waking up to who the real villains have been, all along... Some say M lets 007 off easily after the assassination attempt. You go lick a live wire, then run that by me one more time. Come now: M sends him after Scaramanga, a flamboyant man of reputation more fearsome than deed, knowing he was not ready, knowing he would likely die. M-y was very bad.

Whatever the (in)significance of Bond's shock treatment as a plot point, it raises a staple Fleming theme: success through suffering. Those whose power and influence are disproportionate to any pain they went through to get there – Goldfinger, say – are morally inadequate and to be destroyed. People who have it easy need to be brought down a peg or two, which more often than not for a Bond novel means “strangled”. Easy achievement – getting your first go at a novel published to acclaim – must have retributive agony to assuage

the resulting guilt – having to repeat that to meet impossible demand. This might be why, the more I re-read of Fleming, I’m doubting Mr Ac-Tor Dalt-Ton as being the true representative of Ian Fleming’s 007 as some claim, as indeed I previously have; does his Bond really *suffer* enough, except when smiling? This Craig chap... it’s relentless. As for most of the others, they’re just the sort of glib and undeserving “winner” that Book Bond would heroically asphyxiate, and how we’d cheer. The apex of this is Blofeld seeking to *buy* credibility. OK, so Drax and Dr No were chopped about during their time but their successes, were they to have happened, would still have been excessive in comparison. Here, Scaramanga leads a charmed life for one with meagre talent and whilst he’s given an entertaining backstory, albeit little more than a triple-nippled Von Hammerstein, he doesn’t seem to have bled in the accrual of status. This might be why Mr Gardner’s multiple turncoats tend not to work: they don’t treat Bond badly enough nor are they sufficiently undeserving of a showy status to be accepted as villains in this niche idiom of “Bond villain”. Granted, there’s little “grey” in Fleming but these are short-ish books and one can’t waste time when there’s carpet-beaters to swish, pain to endure and grim satisfaction to be gained.

In this vein, the final paragraph of the book allows itself another interpretation: women are too easy a conquest, and not one from which wholesome – spiritual? – satisfaction is gained. Success there is actually a personal failure, and it may explain why every one of Bond’s romantic relationships is an utter, stinking disaster. On the bleak side, that. Calvinistic protestant shame ethic. With guns, gangsters and hot dancers with a selection of exotic fruits balanced on their heads. Not sure – is that Methodism? Bond’s masters may not share such teachings. Their fondness for wiring miscreants to the mains to sizzle out the naughty, suggests they’re Scientologists.

THE MAN WITH THE GOLDEN GUN

A debateable parallel could be Fleming engineering for himself a torment to overcome, with the Thunderball incident, to alleviate the easily achieved ashes of success, warding off accidie by masochistically creating his own hurdles. Likewise, Bond has a couple of simple opportunities to kill Scaramanga but doesn't take them. Too straightforward, otherwise. Got to have a struggle to make the eventual victory worthwhile, rather than shamefully underearned. If one is wounded – physically or psychologically – so much the better. Scaramanga hasn't deserved his death. Whilst his dossier presents a nasty ratbag, he hasn't yet made Bond suffer, so 007 cannot justify his personal reward of killing the man. It would be easy, and lead to greater shame than not having killed him. Honour is in not shooting the man in cold blood rather than in a medal or, for that matter, a knighthood.

One cannot be Victor Ludorum (twice) without having to run through the pain of a savage beating, and if one has to apply one's own crown of thorns because the opposition's not up to it, so be it. Engineer one's own myth if they're too weak to do it. Pretending one's enemy is more powerful than they are to justify one's brutal actions in ostentatiously destroying them is a fictional construct and could never really occur. "Obv". Even then, one might not be satisfied with the results. The Man with the Golden Gun goes up against The Man with the Tailored Hairshirt and it's cruel sado-masochism by Bond to string out Scaramanga's inevitable fate just so he himself can get beaten up along the way; see also The Spangs or 007's tendency to make things worse for himself by bullying Drax. Much of Bond's villain-baiting, on reflection, isn't stiffly-uppered bravado in the face of peril; it's a selfish, masochistic thrill, causing retributive violence; exactly as desired. A short story's worth of content is drawn out *due to* Bond's character, not through some perceived

absence of it simply because this book doesn't have much knobbing, watches and caviar. As if those actually matter in establishing "James Bond". Misguided moralised masochism is the making of the man, not the materialism.

The criticism that cites Scaramanga's anorexia as a villain tends to miss that as a potential strength of the character. Granted, there isn't "much" to him compared to Drax or Goldfinger, but that's no defect. Le Chiffre was as two-bit and desperate. One can tire of monologues (yet you still read *this cack*) and we've just had the most deluded of them all, Blofeld's claims to be a SuperJesus. After that, any villain's proclamation would be a let-down. Although many claim it as underdevelopment, we're never clear about this villain's motives, in any direction. Yes, we're force-fed that he is possibly homosexual but nothing comes of it other than (highly) suggestive incident, and I'm not sold on why he's doing what he's doing, other than laundering crooked money. Hotels and sugar and *something*. I like that. You don't get such ambiguity with cat-eating Koreans or Dr No chucking arachnids around. Given the opportunity, Fleming might have had the third nipple lactate corrosive milky sap so, again, one of the pleasures of the book would have been denied us. The man having no world-threatening plan to foil allows the pointless-penitence-through-pointless-pain idea to flourish. That Bond feels little satisfaction in winning only goes to reinforce the author's own view about success, and that it's independent Jamaicans who clear things up leaves Bond's role in doubt. The muted conclusion repeats the question asked for some time – "What *really* was the bloody point?". Every book since and including *The Spy who Loved Me* has so concluded, asked in differing ways, and *Quantum of Solace* looks ever more like the series' ideological turning-point and not an obscure literary flourish.

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This “starting-over” thing. What’s often ignored is that something else ends. There’s evidence of an author out of steam – yet more Jamaica, another name from the school register, the ump-teenth hoods’ conference, a circus background for a killer, plot via the adventurous medium of “neglect”, Felix Leiter for no reason other than nostalgia and to up sexual tension – but perhaps time to move on, after one last blow at that withered whistle. The positive attributes – less chaff, a more straightforward Bond, a man abused in the pointless service of a dwindled state – promise unrealised potential for a future very dark.

Shame.

On several levels.

THE 007TH CHAPTER – THE MAN WITH THE GOLDEN GUN: UN-REAL ESTATE

In which a drunk Bond thinks about Scaramanga whilst relaxing in his underpants, notes the villain’s physical prowess and has a phallic sweatdream about him. Not dispelling the rumours much, is it?

The opening, about the disorientation felt when arriving somewhere new at night strikes one as human truth. Have experienced this myself, albeit often because I’m somewhere where I shouldn’t be, or wouldn’t be if sober and not whoring myself out from seedy bordellos (again! Tchoh!). Bond’s skill in knowing on which hand-side the sea lies is of questionable impressiveness, given that Jamaica is an island. Fifty-fifty. His general discomfort is, of course, further self-inflicted suffering, walking (or, at least, driving) straight into a difficulty he has chosen to create. “The first law for a secret agent is

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to get his geography right” (surely the *first* law is the one about being “secret”?) and he’s trampled over it, along with other laws, such as being an agent and actually doing his job. “His nearest contact was a girl in a brothel thirty miles away.” Well, coincidence upon coincidence, Felix Leiter is kicking around (and the rationale for his being there is thinner than Bond’s, unless Scaramanga took a liking to him when Leiter showed dexterity with that hook).

“The situation was not reassuring.” Just how Bond likes it. The loony.

The unfinished hotel momentarily ablaze with light – authorial comment on the plot? Bond’s identity? Scaramanga’s reputation not only preceding him but all he has, given his threat actually amounts to shooting some wildlife and a dim gangster? I wonder how deliberate it was to have a half-built Bond knocking around a half-built hotel in a half-built novel. A stage set, scaffolding’s all there but no depth. For Scaramanga’s duped investors promised glittering rewards, read all who bought the book. Fleming’s final joke? Equally, an exercise in pretence. The villain misleading his investors, Bond operating under a pseudonym, Bond not being himself at the start of the book and questionably the 007 of old in the rest of it. Leiter, Nicholson, the cover stories of the gangsters, Bond’s insincere relationship with Goodnight, pretending there’s a threat to the Empire when the Empire’s gone: everything operates on an unreal level, this 007th Chapter’s title no accident. A hazy state where fragments of past adventures appear, disconnected. A dream? Is he still in Vladivostok, or The Park? Candidacy for Manchuria? Too much cheese before bed?

On that, the edition before me is a Pan 12th printing 1973, as old as me. It has fewer wrinkles but the same musty smell. Couple of oddities. The Pan photomontages – the most amusing Bond covers –

pick up on items in the text; always fun to spot them. This cover is dominated by a truckle of Stilton, a ripe spoonful dug. I'm assuming that this refers to M's lunch early on, but that's really quite obscure. Unless it's something sordidly suggestive of Scaramanga's personal life, perhaps the text didn't sufficiently inspire, or someone voted against showing electrodes. As a huge lump of cheese, it might be comment on tired stuff like tying a girl to a railway track and yet another runaway train, etc. It's not the best of these covers; that's Thunderball, which magnificently includes a display of lettuce. Odder yet is that the copyright in this edition vests in something called Gildrose Productions Ltd (rather than Glidrose) and as that doesn't exist, feel free to copy the book wholesale (don't tell anyone I said that).

"A young American with a neat face..." No idea what this is. This Scaramanga does like to surround himself with spruce chaps, does he not? This business about an inability to whistle meaning a man is of the happy persuasion might explain why sports referees, policemen and teachers need a device to enable them to do so (I *guess*). My brother can whistle and he's most jolly. After all, you just have to put your lips together and blow. Might as well suggest homosexuals can't swim, or attract enemy radar. Does Bond ever whistle? All the same, denying the theory that Scaramanga wants to pump Bond full of shot isn't helped when, subsequently, Bond and Goodnight's liaison is interrupted by the man coming out of the closet.

Reassuringly Bondy in inspecting his bedroom for "objects of suspicion". Reminds one of what the films used to do, the Bond theme at full pelt for the benefit of the listening devices. These days, once Mr Craig has destroyed a room and outstared his guilt into a mirror in narcissistic self-hatred, there's no time to worry whether the lampshade's bugged or the Gideons have hidden one of their ludicrous telephones to God in the bedside drawer. "Outside the

sea whispered softly on an invisible beach...” And they say Die Another Day is stupid. Unsurprising this hotel’s over budget if that’s an amenity. The business with the telephone... hmmm. Book’s written *when*, exactly? After the author’s seen similar in *From Russia with Love*? Adapting an adaptation of one’s work; all terribly complicated. Funny, though. Book’s quite “gadgets”, especially in the opening chapters, and presumably this is embracing the trend of the films, and equally presumed is Bond cutting eyeholes in a newspaper and using a glass as a listening device a piss-take of the same.

It’s possible to read the book as anti-“spy”, even anti-“Bond”. The insularity of M and Colonel Boris using 007 as their pawn, big men idling in insignificant gameplay, is jettisoned in favour of dropping Bond into a grubby, half-built world where the likes of Scaramanga would just as easily kill for the British as for the Cubans, were the money worth it (the only allegiance); scrappy, desperate and small men, neither superspies nor supervillains. Bond shuffles around the dregs of Empire; not the colonial power biffing up Crab Key (Dr No being this book’s counterpoint), this is a broken Bond, a broken Britain, letting the USA infiltrate the hotel and the Jamaicans tidy up. The British, who Scaramanga kills for amusement rather than tactical advancement, are ineffectual: Ross, Goodnight, arguably 007. The villain’s concerns are Russia and the USA; the British are cannon fodder. The previous Bond, prior to “therapy”, could be ridiculous and archaic in such a world. A less dogmatic Bond ready to be re-shaped by new norms has potential. Pity it never went further: what we have here is a rebooted *Casino Royale* – thwarting the raising of funds to pay for Soviet agitation – tackled in a *significantly* less vintage-Bentley, champagne-and-strawberries, velvet-gowned world, barely a dozen or so years on. It doesn’t matter now how much toast one gets with the caviar. It might not be a real world

(and Fleming mixing terrorism, Black Power and Cuba into one is no more realistic than his belief that women's lib caused the sporting of green carnations) but it's a scruffier one.

"It crossed his mind to say very devout prayers out loud before he went to bed." There's potential for drawing out Christian undertones, patently in the resurrection, the fall from grace, Goodnight being likened to an angel, that penitence and pain thing, arguably (only arguably) the forgiveness by M. Without doubt the book has a redemptive quality to it, although Bond does not wholly embrace that redemption, questioning whether the world from which he fell is worth ascending to again.

"James Bond unpacked his few belongings..." Which, in a certain frame of mind, could be read as desperately sad. I'm in that frame of mind. He proceeds to sit alone in a hotel room, get drunk and order room service. Tragic, especially in the amount of bourbon he's knocking back. A lonely figure, this James Bond, even if his current isolation is self-inflicted. "The best drink in the day is just before the first one (the Red Stripe didn't count)". Spoken like a true alcoholic. Albeit the pretence of intellectualism of the old Bond remains in his reading matter, one of Fleming's darker jokes ensues when Bond reads Kennedy, just as Kennedy read Bond. One assumes that the passage at which the book falls open – "I looked down into my open grave" – is a nod to TMWTGG being written post-assassination, the daffy fun of *From Russia with Love* on JFK's reading list now very bleak.

Bond struggling with Scaramanga's motives and whose money he represents is indicative of our experience of the man, but also of tension between old-think and new-world. It doesn't matter where the money comes from; the importance is the money itself. It breaches every border, infiltrated everywhere and corrupted ideolo-

gies in pursuit of a fast buck. Fleming gave us this with SPECTRE; here he reinforces his point about the abandonment of political will by now involving the Russians with the gangsters. Something the passage of the Bonds has shown is the dismantling – pointlessness, even – of national identity when up against hard cash. Crime has no flag, and economic might is the only frontier. One final point to make – with Major Dexter Smythe, money taints even the ostensibly heroic. Perhaps hypocritical given Fleming’s comfortable lifestyle, but then it may take one possessing money to understand the terror of it possessing you.

“How in hell was Bond going to take him?” Fnarr. I may be misreading this, but does a drunken, half-naked 007 start shooting things in his room? Housekeeping’ll be most grumpy. “The mouseline sauce might have been mixed at Maxim’s” is presumably a compliment rather than it tasting as if it had been flown several thousand miles over a period of some hours. And then Bond, thinking of Scaramanga, barricades himself in and gets naked into bed. Protesteth too much?

Bond’s dream. Does he dream much, or is this new? Well... it’s phalluses, innit? Scaramanga sits “bassackwards” (? But fnarr, anyway), “golden cannon”, “long cigar”, “touch hole” (blimey), “tremendous flash”, “tried to fit the notch of the arrow into the gut”, “coming straight for Bond”. Etc. Take a cold shower, and indeed Bond does. One of Dr Freud’s easier appointments. Then, to dispel whispering, you wander around the garden in swimming trunks and gaze at the nipples of a similarly underdressed man performing physical jerks from his buttocks whilst attended to by a “good-looking young Negro”. Amongst the unanswered questions of our time, such as why do Queen still *bother* and why do Terminator skeletons need teeth, lies this one about whether Scaramanga is homosexual

and its follow-up about this being why he rents Bond. An ugly attitude to women aside, there's little manifestation of the man's sexual preference and he seems as neuter as other villains, unless trampolining is one of the gay sports, along with Ice Hockey and Luge. There's little exposition of his sex position. Perhaps the suggestiveness that there is, was as far as it could go, given homosexuality was a crime at the time of publication (whereas state licensed murder and "semi-rape" weren't). If it hadn't been hinted at, would we have guessed? Scaramanga does wear a cravat, but so did that Mr Brosnan's Bond at the start of *GoldenEye* and he's very butch. We do get that comment later on about looks passing between Bond and Nicholson of the sort shared "between crooks, between homosexuals, between secret agents" and there's at least two of those types in the building. Queer analogy, in the circumstances.

The dossier speculation aside, is it better read as setting him up as the parallel Bond: fit, brutal and determined, a crack-shot enforcer for others, not terribly bright? The man Bond could have been if born elsewhere. Fine, the film tried to ramp up this "dark side of Bond" thing, neglecting to recognise that in slapping Andrea Anders around, MooreBond was capable of demonstrating both halves. Perhaps the suggested sexuality is no more than the mirror of Bond's and a minor part of the key idea behind the character. But then one reads "[Bond]swam twice as far as intended" and it turns into a cock fight after all. Oh, get a room. Plenty to choose from. Some might be finished.

Not much else is. The atmosphere of "phoney" is drawn out by the description of how un-made the hotel is, and Scaramanga's plan to sweet-talk his investors does seem daft. But – common theme time – we're dealing with greed, not sense, so success is not improbable, albeit Bond doubts it but his judgment throughout the book

is dodgy, at best. The details about the hotel and its environs over a couple of pages betray a sneer at tourist development of Jamaica, doubtless upsetting the author's idyll. The Man with the Golden Gun – might be a novel, might just be NIMBYism.

“...with a coloured girl.” White's a colour.

“There were not too many small precautions he could take.” Like driving into a desolated swamp, provoking a killer of British agents, attending a meeting at which he could be recognised if his assumptions about Communist money bear out and wearing a dark suit on a hot day. Ensuring your car gets shade seems a misplaced priority, displacement activity, when precaution so far is minimal.

Wandering through the hotel with Scaramanga, alone, another opportunity to kill him wasted, and Bond arrives at the meeting room with its ominous “wine-red carpet”. Watch out, 007. Remember what happened last time? Laziness, or intended echo? Or, as before, fragment of a dream? Whatever – red floor and white leather chairs – nightmare, albeit one transported to Harlem by 1973. Suggests Scaramanga isn't of the interior design preference, after all. Bond takes further “small precautions” by as-good-as announcing “I'm a British spy” with his observations about bugging the room, identification of “The Purple Gang” (they'll clash terribly with the furniture) and where in the Caribbean the money comes from but Scaramanga's all distracted by sorting the staff rotas, wondering who's stolen the towels and devising amusing ways to wake guests at 2 a.m. with the fire alarm. Bond calling himself “Hazard”? Might as well call himself Mr Kil.

Scaramanga's warning that this isn't “another Apalachian” sends one a-Google (other search engines are available, but they're utter crap) and, after realising one ectually spells it Apalachin, one con-

THE MAN WITH THE GOLDEN GUN

cludes this is exactly what it is. Thanks for flagging it up, Ian old smudge. To whoever writes up that page on Wikipedia – when you get to the heading “In Popular Culture”, consider including The Man with the Golden Gun. It doesn’t have many chums, and has more merit than at least two of the Robert DeNiro “films” cited. Also – outdoors and sunshine aren’t scary. Have a bath.

“He’s in labour relations, like me. Represents a lot of Teamster Union funds. He shouldn’t be any trouble.” Um, OK. So amongst our modern villains are trade unions and the Jews and Italians in “the entertainment world”. So how do you think those films about your blessed alter-ego get made, you barmy old badger? Do like that “labour relations” joke, although calling people “Hal Garfin-kel”, “Leroy Gangerella” and “Louie Paradise” tends to betray that they’re not Surrey men and possibly reinforces the author’s tired, careless prejudices one last time. “So don’t go prying into my affairs or you’ll get hurt.” Well, it’s your own silly fault, Pistols. You invited him to stay for the weekend. Why? Don’t answer. Keep us guessing. “As if he could hardly control himself longer, the big man turned on his heel and strode brusquely out of the room.” Ooh, get her. “James Bond smiled”. Well done, James. Only made it harder for yourself. But you like that, don’t you?

“A strong reek of high gangsterdom rose from the paper” reminds one who (probably) wrote this; vividly yet unexpectedly appealing to the senses. Fine joke about the Dutchman, and then we meet him. Hendricks, the big bad, is no freak, has no deformity other than avoirdupois, is “totally anonymous” and that’s what you get by way of villain in this new world. At first glance underwhelming, he’s terrifying. The bland, politically connected “banker”, no better than a gangster, can unleash more damage than the unhinged misfit with a surfeit of teats. Scaramanga is deferential to Hendricks; he has to be,

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for the point to work. Hendricks is why all the “sugar” stuff means little: that’s not the plot. Scaramanga might not be the most indelible of the villains, but that’s because he’s a *henchman*. That’s OK. That’s all James Bond is, too.

Within one book we’ve gone from swivel-eyed Samurai loonpots, to bankers. Count the number of pirhanas you’ve encountered, now count your pennies, and then tell me from whom you actually need protecting. Ironic, given what the Fleming family does. One last self-mocking, wheezy laugh from behind the golden typewriter.

JAMES BOND WILL RETURN IN THE 007TH PARAGRAPHS
OF OCTOPUSSY AND THE LIVING DAYLIGHTS.
JACQUES STEWART SHALL NOW GET DRUNK, LIE AROUND
IN HIS PANTS AND DREAM OF HOT COCK SOUP.

station well paper last great double
knew black back rest sir hours Yes Major
London old 007 IN NEW YORK
THE PROPERTY already finally
business thought OF A LADY think
& THE LIVING coffee
DAYLIGHTS man
OCTOPUSSY glass
single Goodbye know like girl red looked big
Berlin Dr Fanshawe now good
hell eggs told ten Smythe never Solange American
room went long food James right
even made two climb embarrassing blue

One has to pick the right moment to say goodbye.

Also, the proper goodbye to say, be it to a beloved pet in a ditch-bound binbag, to a less-beloved relative going alongside it (bag one, get one free, too tempting to ignore), to one's children scattering to University and to one's money disappearing with them. Goodbye is not the hardest word to say; the hardest word to say is "specificity". Goodbye is a hard thing to *mean*, if you misjudge what you inflict with it. At one end, it shorthands "Oblige Me By Fornicating Off and Dying in Pain, Immediately", in the Goodbye, Mr Bond sense, the opposite of the oily dollop within Goodbye, Mr Chips (unless I've misunderstood both). Between, betwixt and around those gambol:

- the casual b'byes one uses with "friends" (whatever they are), with re-helloing imminent, although I tend to be in the Goodbye, Mr Bond bracket as articulated above;
- ending a 'phone call, although I tend to be in the Goodbye, Mr Bond bracket as articulated above;
- the apology at the end of a relationship, having failed to worm one's way out by all other means including "some" poison and "some" knives, although I tend to be blah blah blah...;
- the celebratory goodbye as one watches a mighty Longship burn in the bay; and
- the equally final type when you spot one of your sprogs aboard it, screaming and a-smoulder, increasingly combustible. Although I tend to be in the Goodbye, Mr Bond etc...

So many varieties of pip-pip and tatty-bye that it can be difficult to get it just so. An excoriating message insinuating demonic sexual threat surely fails when expressing bereavement sympathy, but *might* be appropriate if e-mailed on your last day at work, and only definitely appropriate if you were making shovels rather than having resigned the Papacy. Last impressions count as much as first, and context is all for a final farewell. Rare the chance to repeat, to repair. In Octopussy and The Living Daylights, there are *four* goes at it. Botched jobs, given all the alleged “James Bond” since.

I’m not advocating – it’d be drivel – that these stories were (all) written as a parting of the ways. They were published to ensure a parting of us from the money and just happen to be in the last Bond cobbled together, leaving a residue of half-plots and character names scribbled onto a Chesterfields carton. Not even Glidrose/IFP could scrape such crumbs together as a viable publication (although they did emit Carte Blanche, so beware). The real farewell was The Man with the Golden Gun and we didn’t get a chance to say goodbye and nor did Ian Fleming, once the sky fell and his heart burst (...again). These tales are letters accompanying the Will, giving the beneficiaries four paths for James Bond, four ways to invest a legacy. That literary Bond has (largely) travelled only one road, the road least stony and paved towards easy cash by a series of fair-to-middling-to-dreadful films, opens up speculating how it would have been if the other options had been preferred, giving Octopussy and etc... substance to masticate. Artificial exercise, but unless you’re only joining in now (*odd* place to start, O fruitlet), be reassured that this isn’t “proper”. At least the conceit raises the book beyond a barrel-scraping grab-bag of greed, so embrace my “positivity”.

One of these stories promises – or doesn’t deny – “more adventures to come”, and it’s the least interesting one. The others

demonstrate 007 had run his race, be it “Bond meeting his maker” (literally), Bond content to be dismissed or Fleming sending 007 shopping for socks. Given opportunity to nail the lid down, given none-too-subtle *instruction* in at least two of these tales that the game was up, either through bitterness or defeat or lack of ideas, guess which path they picked. It’s not hard; there are more “James Bond” stories written by others than there are James Bond stories written by Ian Fleming. The theme of the later Flemings – acquisition without suffering is sinister – is ignored by mendaciously blating out “James Bond” continuations and, by deed and practice, such awful behaviour is endorsed. It’d be an idea for those responsible to read the books to establish their values above their value, instead of projectile vomiting more our way, one’s money spewed right back. *Nos culpa*.

The cash-cow could have been slaughtered in its prime; juicy, satisfying and a sacrifice at the optimum moment. Instead, on it lumberlimps, legs gone, the milk long sour and cheesy, the limbs leathery and cruelly prodded into excreting worm-ridden, maggoty pats. [It’s a pooh-pooh metaphor]. Is it *fun* to watch a once noble creature suffer miserably, crippled by BSE (Bond’s Senseless Extension) and extending its undeserved pain to us all? Is it right to *encourage* this?

What followed was ghoulish. Ouija-mes Bond delivering garbled messages from beyond the grave and, as with all mediumistic piffle, open to interpretations *potentially* plausible but probably a trick (Higson, Amis, Wood, Pearson, select Gardners), or bewilderingly drab and hardly worth the drama (Faulks, Boyd, far too many Gardners) or terrifying, soul-slaughtering and causing many a sleepless night (Deaver, Benson, Cole). With this final flourish of Fleming presenting a chance for oblivion oh-so-moist unto the palate, it’s thin to argue that any decision to continue was *artistic*.

James Bond was not an unfinished symphony; the orchestra had packed up and, in one of these tales, he confirms this by shooting at them. Taken as a whole, Octopussy and etc... wasn't steering "James Bond" in the direction into which it was wrenched in the pursuit of pounds. Cretins/optimists/people blinkered to what a piss-awful world it is/publishers desperate for dollar, might assert that each goodbye brings opportunity for a fresh hello. To such persons I say they are cretins/they are cretins/they are cretins/they are cretins and will eventually introduce us to the creative writings of a Raymond Benson, making them cretins of a particularly inconsiderate malevolence.

Saying goodbye presents opportunity to reflect. Admittedly, my daily courtesy to acquaintances musters less than a gnat's cough of contemplation about the farewell, or the acquaintances. *This* sort of goodbye, the potentially permanent, may give those blissed in stupidity the chance to look forward to what comes next. Look forward to what? An explicit attempt to write as Ian Fleming. Overdenied, protesteth-too-much attempts to write like Ian Fleming. Baffling attempts to write like writing. Diminishing and diminished returns, all. Normal people might look back at what is lost. Might as well draw this specious experiment to a pause by drawing upon the 007th Chapters to establish what has gone and what might never be recaptured. Some of these are no great loss to a more enlightened populace, and more harm might be done by contriving to reawaken them "to bring Bond and his attitudes into the 70s!/80s!/90s!/new century!/back to 1968!/and 1934!/8 B.C., where they belong!" than leaving them, and us, alone.

- CASINO ROYALE – High living, harsh thinking, much drinking. The incidental secret agent. For its time, daring undertones of heterosexuality.

OCTOPUSSY & THE LIVING DAYLIGHTS

- LIVE AND LET DIE – A relentless assault on the senses. Particularly taste.
- MOONRAKER – War's over, so what can bored British gentlemen do? Weaponise the class system, that's what.
- DIAMONDS ARE FOREVER – Land of the brave, and the home of the freak.
- FROM RUSSIA, WITH LOVE – Assassination. Of character.
- DR NO – Paternalism, environmentalism, colonialism, hyperrealism, tourism, counterculturalism, eudaemonism, colloquialism, alcoholism, supernaturalism, athleticism, nascent embolism.
- GOLDFINGER – A bilious, spittle-flecked hatred of everything “other”, presumably as a “joke” and a warning about what happens when a creation starts to take precedence over a creator. Heeded? Exhibit A: Internet discussion boards and the persona one adopts.
- FOR YOUR EYES ONLY – Five different types of relationship joined by commonality of vitriol, failure and pain. All inhuman life is here. Mahvellous.
- THUNDERBALL – Strained and embarrassing comedy nonsense juxtaposed with absurd ultra mega-threat picking at a contemporary concern. We could make a film series out of that. As far as -isms go, query “plagiar-”?
- THE SPY WHO LOVED ME – The underacknowledged variety of the author. N.B. variety doesn't necessarily mean “good”. The James Bond films demonstrate variety and at least a dozen are an utter waste of even your life.
- ON HER MAJESTY'S SECRET SERVICE – Malevolent snobbery.

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- YOU ONLY LIVE TWICE – Malevolent shrubbery.
- THE MAN WITH THE GOLDEN GUN – Amateurism, eremitism, pococurantism, counter-imperialism, ostracism, dilettantism, alcoholism (again), homoeroticism, antagonism, all thwarted by aldosteronism.
- OCTOPUSSY AND THE LIVING DAYLIGHTS – No good about goodbye. Could give up. Fail to.

Unwarrantable seriousness for a midge: prior to this exercise, had you asked – had you *dared* – what I expected as core LitBond, I might have mentioned some of those. Or did I just know what I wanted to find and interpret it falsely, bend it to make a redundant point that due to intervening legislation outlawing discrimination on the basis of race, gender, disability and sexual orientation – the Four Horsemen of Ian Fleming – the continuations could come nowhere near this. Not seeing much of The Facts of Death in that list, save perhaps for the Thunderball one and that’s not wholly surprising given its quasi-novelisation nature. Do we get any of those things in the well-scrubbed “adventures” of Never Send Flowers or DoubleShot or their ilk? And yet the new books appear with tedious inevitability and “James Bond” stamped on them (if not *in* them). Absent the above, if those are potential touchstones of LitBond, is there much to distinguish non-Fleming “James Bond” from other adventure tales? Admittedly, if you *were* to write anything with those characteristics, you might not be published. Arrested, maybe. I’ll send a cake, although I do charge top-dollar for conjugal visits.

It’s often stated as an excuse for their attitudes that the Flemings were “of their time”. It shouldn’t be excused; it should be *celebrated*. What does High Time to Kill tell us of 1999, or Role of Honour of 1984 other than “micros” came in suitcases? Naff

all, both. They neither rehearse the attitudes of the Flemings nor tie themselves closely to those of their own eras (if there were any), tumbling disconnected in a vacuum of bland. The ersatz efforts of Messrs. Faulks and Boyd put Bond back in his time, but one flecked through with 21st Century small-l liberal revisionism of the 1960s, at best knowing and ironic reproduction furniture rather than the *echt* Louis XV.

This isn't suggesting that anything not written by Ian Fleming is terrible. Most books in human history were not written by Ian Fleming, and three are better (The Code of the Woosters, A Tale of Two Cities and William Shatner's Tek Vengeance. That's it). Some continuations are good books, but sullied by association with 007 (e.g. Solo). Some are decent James Bond, if that list has potential, but awful books (e.g. Devil May Care). Some are just awful (e.g. oh, you decide).

Not one of them is *necessary*.

Not suggesting they've dragged it down – much... – but equally not suggesting they've moved it along in a memorable or meaningful way. Either indicates total failure of impact. What is the cultural purpose of a continuation Bond? What purpose within the confines of “007”? When it comes to wishlisting a Bond film, it's invariably a demand for the fishbones of Fleming – the Garden of Death, say, or smoking, misogyny and sweet tang of rape (internet people will have their little ways) – rather than the full body of anything “following”. Rare is the claim that Bond Twenty-N cannot be a proper 007 film unless it's Death is Forever or if it comes without that hotel bedroom scene from [*any* Gardner, *every* Gardner] or the sex grim from Never Dream of Dying or what it *really* needs is that bit in Carte Blanche where... where... oh, I've forgotten... otherwise I WON'T WATCH IT. As unnecessary extensions, these monstrous carbuncles on the

face of a much loved and elegant friend haven't made impact even with *us*, never mind real people, so what's the bleedin' point other than cashing-in? Fine, the films have helped Fleming take "priority" in public awareness of written Bond but as they are (mostly) feeble as adaptations, the Flemings must have proved themselves to have other "qualities" to still be uppermost in the mind over fifty years on. The continuations pleading to be filmed – they know who they are – have been ignored, apparently on the basis that Eon are well-capable of producing their own mediocrities (they are). There's a plausible argument that the films have picked at Mr Gardner's stuff for years, a compliment repaid by the Bensons, but it amplifies that only a select few noticed or cared because the continuations haven't achieved indelibility within "Bond", and also that Eon are out of ideas. Upon which – SPECTRE, eh? Haven't we *done* that?

Ian Fleming created not just a cultural icon but, given the way 007 pervades as a reference for so much, influenced a culture. It is, notably, "Ian Fleming's James Bond" in the films, in much the same ways as it's "Tom Clancy's Op Centre" albeit written by algorithm. Mr Gardner was a fine writer – *The Secret Generations* is splendid, do read it – but faced with continuing a series of such influence, "continuing" suggesting seamless and *similar effect and impact*, could he? Really? At least he had the good grace to forget James Bond after half-a-dozen goes and thereafter present the duller Captain Boldman and although the books still said "James Bond", it's not dissimilar to calling something "The Bourne Legacy" and not having Jason Bourne in it. "Captain Boldman still operates in 007's highly-charged world of adventure!", it didn't say. A world of hotel rooms, windcheaters, rope-soled moccasins, relentless treachery and much too SAAB-y for my liking, but some took to it.

Could *anyone* actually “continue” this? Consider that list above. It snuffed out when its creator did. Purporting to be James Bond and legally justified in so claiming, without the “official” hand on the tiller, aren’t they all of them Never Say Never Again? And again? And a-bloody-gain? The current trend to have “literary” writers du jour – and Mr Deaver – inflicting pre-packaged significance of their “names” onto it but adding sod-all else except “Some more James Bond; *buy it*, you saps” – amplifies that insofar as artistic relevance goes, literary Bond can’t *of itself* be impactful without stapling onto it reputations built elsewhere. We are left exposed to these cynical gimmicks that sell well enough but achieve bugger all for 007. Is “James Bond” capable of selling without a famous name elbowing him out of view? If not, why not? Is it because (oh, heresy) *It. Is. Done. And. Cannot. Lawfully/Morally/Decently/Credibly. Be. Done. Again?*

Was there a great untold Bond story left on 12 August 1964? If so, have any of the thirty-something subsequent attempts ectually hit on it? *Truly?* There was nothing left and, so this argument goes, Octopussy and etc. shows it. The likes of Solo are slumming, drawing the attention of the Great Unwashed to the artiste’s better works, like having an unexpected Nigel Hawthorne in Demolition Man or John Malkovich in (*dear God*) Con Air, or Daniel Craig in James Bond films. Albeit Fleming wasn’t writing for altruistic reasons – and definitely not for the good of his health – one suspects the key most worn away in producing these new ventures is not “E” nor Alt Gr (whatever that does), but SHIFT 3. Or SHIFT 4, should the dollar be stronger.

The next stage of this experiment shall approach the continuations, warily. If they don’t do [much of] what Fleming flung, what it is they *do* do? [Doo-doo? Another pooh-pooh metaphor? Let’s

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see. You could guess my attitude but golden sweetcorn might peek through. Am I stretching this imagery too far? Come now, it's by reference to the... the *mechanisation* of written James Bond, the essence of taking things beyond their acceptable limit. Stop whining.].

I suspect this next comment won't date: we get a new "James Bond" novel next year. Feel free to interpret my next comment as commensurate with the habitual meaning behind my farewells.

"Goodbye, Mr Bond".

THE SIXTH 007TH PARAGRAPHS – 007 IN NEW YORK:

"It was around ten o'clock on a blue and golden morning..."

Those of you playing along could wonder why I haven't picked this up at paragraph 36, for consistency with the For Your Eyes Only "one" and honouring the robustness of this process. Those of you who aren't (and why on Earth not?) could still observe that in the editions of Octopussy and etc... that have "007 in New York" in them, it's rarely first on the slab. To all of you persons, I reply: a) shut your collective cakehole and b) the story only has ten paragraphs, albeit two are insanely long, and another couple are cookery.

The "apology" goodbye, then. In "Thrilling Cities", Fleming denigrated New York, although it was last on his itinerary and the old flopper was knackered. He laments the city losing its heart (an irony cruel to point out, but I am cruel, so put on that big old coping face of yours and embrace the day). This is a man who apologises for endorsing journalists' sideswipes about corruption in New York, and for expressing sadness about America being "temporarily in poor health", but doesn't apologise for "All women love

semi-rape” or every stinking word of Goldfinger. Hm. Although he does bang on about “the vast economic power held by women” and the deleterious effect on the family unit, so contrition was appropriate, albeit it’s weird to denigrate “escapism and flight from reality” given what he churned out and what it became. I wonder what he would think of Ms Broccoli’s multi-billion dollar vodka adverts promising escapism and flight from reality? Possibly not a vast amount, given the outcome of this story is that women are so hopeless a chap can’t even go to the shops without them causing particularly stupid trouble.

The homily in *Thrilling Cities* about the “abdication of free will to the chemical companies” – taken to extremes could be the foundation for a Bond story, perhaps? Was Mr Faulks indeed writing “as” Ian Fleming by embracing this in *Devil May Care*? Misunderstood book, or just coincidence? Ends with a wander around hotels, restaurants and name-dropping, including that of Stirling Moss, who I understand might appear in the *Only-In-It-For-The-Art* runoff from Mr Horowitz. Still, I suppose it may have been a surprise to the contemporary reader that New York, with its potential for excitement, good living and bizarre sales taxes, was perceived as faded, rude and instilled “deep malaise” into an author otherwise total giddy sunshine by this stage of his life.

Whereas others might use petrol-station flowers or interpretive dance, Ian Fleming apologises through the medium of James Bond, and throws in a recipe for something eggy as a bonus. Still, insofar as things losing their heart go, putting James Bond – unstoppable super-agent and lethal sophisticate – in New York and having him draw up a shopping list indicates listlessness of the highest order. Fleming’s run out of things for Bond to do; 007 contemplates buying socks. It’s all go, round here. Such excitement in the city that never sleeps

or, in my experience, in which it never stops raining. James Bond doesn't do shopping. Shopping is vulgar. It is done for him. What's May for, other than weak comedy? I have no need to see James Bond buying petrol or using a loyalty card or attacking a self-service till with a machete (although, y'know, if they have to make changes to Bond 24's script because real villains have leaked it, it might be a popular scene). Having him think about toothbrushes is plebeian, if funny. Those who whine that the recent films have drabbed-up James Bond should steer clear. As apologies go, this is "not much of an". Backhanded at best – New York has such malaise that it even renders James Bahnd a plodding dullard? Bit unfair. New York can be jolly, despite the *smell*, and there's a splendid Cuban restaurant near Washington Square where they hand-roll cigars and ply one with mojitos and beyond that I don't remember other than waking up in queens (decide whether a capital Q is significant).

"It was around ten o'clock on a blue and golden morning..." Joining the "action" in the thrombosis queue to get into the bleedin' USA – know *that* feeling – things get lively straightaway with a paragraph lasting three pages. Little happens, but it's the one place you don't want to draw attention unless you gain glee from taking forced rectal hydration (you might; not judging) or administering it (am judging; you're a pooh). The apology is questionable in describing this Gehanna and its "stupid" trolleys, "unnecessary" central heating and other laborious processes devised to annoy. The eventual twist – that there is no reptile house at the zoo – would seem to come loaded with the observation that it is unnecessary because the city is one big one. However, Bond keeps these thoughts to himself. Experience dictates that shouting that it's *inexcusably crap* gets you ape-handled to the back of the queue and your green landing card falsified to declare that between 1933 and 1945 you *were* involved

in persecutions “associated with” Nazi Germany despite being born within a habitually persecuted demographic, and forty years too late. Still, easier to argue one’s way out than from a chokehold.

A.k.a BOAC’s “English Country House Breakfast”.

The early books glamorised international travel, showing an austerity-bound readership what they were missing, the grotty Morlocks. With further reflections to come on hotels closed and standards slipped, there’s an elegiac air to this trifle, albeit failing to recognise that it’s the appeal and success of James Bond that have – in part – opened up desire for these opportunities to Bs and Cs and thereby lengthened the queues at the airport and dragged everything down to their standards.

Bond is entering the USA under a pseudonym, “David Barlow”, which given the domesticity of the under-drama and the banality of Bond’s thinking, I’ll take as a reference to a contemporaneous character in Coronation Street. The criticism that the CIA won’t find out about him for 24 hours doesn’t look too “apologetic”. He appears to have previously used the chauffeur company in his own name, which might not be wise, but then his reflections in a Carey Cadillac are of other things. Razors and socks and gripping “spy” stuff like that. One thing worth knowing is that James Bond’s passport number is 391354 which, if you add the separate numerals together, comes to 25, the numerals *then* added comes to 7. As in Double-0. *Fancy*. A foretelling of when IFP recruit Dan Brown to spew a Bond. “They” could do worse. “They” already have.

The dirty bit of inter-agency sabotage, a Profumo undertone, that Bond is to engineer reminds one of the murkiness of, say, *Risico* and tends to emphasise that the books were grubbier about the relationship with the USA than the films have been, a couple of recent excep-

tions apart. What chimes more sourly is the notion that “M looked after his own”, which doesn’t ring true when it comes to how he has treated Bond since his rehabilitation from a right old Klebbing. This business about the Reptile House, and the eventual twist, also tend to undermine 007; has he not *checked*? How competent is he? Head all-a-whirl with retail therapy and hotel rooms, it’s “not very”.

“Here was the guts of New York, the living entrails.” Visceral, but *praise*? Hmm. Flattery – and, it would appear, the Battery – will get you nowhere. I’ll ignore the crack about “Harlem, where you now needed a passport and two detectives” because it’s exceptionally dodgy. Why, Ian? Why there, as opposed to anywhere else? What are you trying to tell us? Isn’t it the funny people zoo of Live and Let Die any more? Tsk; standards, eh? And what’s this about Bond having once had a small apartment in New York? When was that – presumably after the city kept taking him by surprise in the second and fourth books, otherwise that would be very weird. That’s right, apologise by *sneering* at the quality of the shops. Whatever they’re selling, I’m not buying much “sorry” here.

“Solange (appropriately employed in their indoor games department)...” Mind boggles. Perhaps it is Boggle. Can’t help feeling, with the griping about “dank toast”, the quality of Gillette products and the desire to have a comfy corner in which to read the paper over lunch, that Bond’s becoming an old fart. All he’s done since landing is *moan*. Put an Izod golf sock in it, you miserable measle. It’s not like it was in your day, is it, before the “expense-account aristocracy” (OK, so *what’s Bond then?* Apart from a hypocrite) bruised everything by having the temerity to want to eat and “because they didn’t know good from bad, deflating the food”. This from a man who thought an avocado was pudding, once ate asparagus with sauce Bearnaise rather than mousseline and confuses

“Scotch” (a drink) with “Scottish” (a nationality). Moral turpitude that should have meant his landing card was shredded.

This food snobbery – like most snobbery – is hollow; what he demands of the Edwardian Room at the Plaza is scrambled eggs, public school high-tea food. Having previously given the recipe to the hotel – Felix Leiter “knew” the “head” waiter (bet he did) – we’re now treated. For four “individualists” (?) you need copper dishes and arteries the width of Fifth Avenue and, if this was the basis of his diet, it wasn’t smokes or drinks that got Fleming; it was eggs. If he’s feeding Bond this, it’s another signal that the creator wants him dead and, by sharing the recipe, you too. That’s not cruel: he’s sparing you reading Brokenclaw and thereafter begging for death’s infinite kiss. Look, I don’t mind if I sit in the middle of the room or to the side or next to the bogs, as long as it’s well away from this weirdo. Pink champagne at lunchtime? There is no appropriate time nor use for pink champagne, unless you need the dog dewormed.

On he bleats about the food – the Americans just don’t do it *right*, do they? You can’t get Marmite and a finger of Fudge, unless you know Felix Leiter. You will let us know when there’s something you *like*, yeah? This nag flogged to death, time to saddle-up another high horse, one that’s cantered in from Thrilling Cities: “Were the Americans becoming too hygienic in general...?” This stuff about Solange gargling with TCP (ouch) is made to sound odd, but considering this is *James Bond* and where he’s *been* – pussy, galore – and that he reeks of eggs, pink champagne and bitterness, it’s odder still she’s not in a hazmat suit, or protective custody. He wants to take Solange to watch porn. She can do so, so much better. Quite a catch, isn’t he? What a grotty little man.

Shopping, brand-snobbery, Manhattan, restaurants, porn and violence: British Psycho.

“And that bar, again still undiscovered, which Felix Leiter had told him was the rendezvous for sadists and masochists of both sexes”. Felix dropping a *big hint* here, old boy. No? Oh, the pain of the unrequited. I bet Leiter would forgo the TCP for a share of your “incomparable toothbrush”. “It would be fun to go and have a look”, as with transvestite bars Bond has known across Europe. Couple of things here. Firstly – *what?* Secondly – Fleming is look, don’t tell. Very rarely does he describe the throes of congress. Bond isn’t about that – the thrill is in the chase, not the prize. This might be why Bond is attracted to Tracy; the incredible effort to catch her, but not contemplating what success would look like. Claims by at least one continuationist that Fleming would be more graphic were he writing now, justifying their salaciousness, I don’t buy. He tried graphic in *The Spy who Loved Me*, and it was embarrassing and disconcerting. Sensuality, certainly, lots of it. Sexuality? On several levels, much less defined.

“...then home for more love and TCP.” If that evening had come off as planned, 007, you couldn’t legitimately claim surprise if it had been industrial bleach.

Any apology I could give for my truculence about the continuation novels is inspired by the apologetic tone of 007 in New York.

THE SEVENTH 007TH PARAGRAPHS – THE PROPERTY OF A LADY:

“Dr Fanshawe was aghast...”

Let’s say paragraphs 36 to 42. It matters not. This inconsequential tale sets up the possibility of Bond continuing and insofar as its underwhelming incidents represent a template, its mediocre ramble is one rigorously adhered to over the years. Query whether that

was worth aiming for. This, then, is the goodbye that promises the adequacy of the returns we've been served. The Property of Lady, *j'accuse*.

We've just had Bond sum up Dr Fanshawe as having homosexual "tendencies" (whatever they are), because he sports a cravat. The BrosnanBond adopts a sports-casual cravat in that car "chase" ten dull minutes into GoldenEye so... draw your own conclusions. In crayon, and bile. What's interesting is the attitude of M, and Bond, in the presence of a civilian. We don't see this often: perhaps at Blades but otherwise theirs is a world as closeted as the one Bond's prejudices construct for Dr Fanshawe. It's disconcerting to see M and Bond being ostensibly contrite, pleasant even, when faced not with a subordinate/lunatic, but an ordinary person, albeit one who expostulates in their presence. Perhaps that's why he needs the cravat. It's such a persistent stain.

However, their contempt for Fanshawe and his values is tangible. M, patronising the man *horrifically* despite sharing observations with him about "hunks" (that's what it *says*) characterises Fanshawe's expertise as "leisure" and ignobly raises his military status as if that's somehow intrinsically worthier than the other's; Bond can barely wait to get the man out of the room, and addresses him as if he's not there and with a total lack of interest about "wherever you're going". What horrid, sneering, schoolboy bastards. They're our heroes. *Nos cuplae*, encore.

Moment of amusement in the reference to the "stolen Goya". Story published in 1963... hmm. I suppose something had to survive Crab Key although, dwelling on that, shouldn't that have been a *nuclear* explosion that destroyed it? Get the impression that's the *plot* and the excuse for watching Ursula Andress get soaped down very, very, *very* many times. Forgive me expostulating.

“It will be pleasant to walk across the park.” Given what Bond suspects of the man’s proclivities, it is surprising Fleming hasn’t told us what Fanshawe might get up to in the bushes, or the loos.

“M had taken a bulky file, stamped with a top secret red star...” If it were so top secret, how would one know its colour or shape, or of its existence at all? Hopeless place is full of leaks. As we’re about to find out, just as we’re about to find out M’s eyes are blue. I thought they were grey, as in *damnably-clear-and*? Anyway, hang the detail, this is a dozy lollop of a tale in which Fleming’s egg-obsession reaches absurd levels and we are lectured about something of passing authorial interest at the time and he’s played this trick before; few too many times for sustainable interest. Still, some of the others try it too. Based on publication date, what is Win, Lose or Die (apart from a nonsensical title) other than “John’s been watching Top Gun”? Never Send Flowers other than “John’s been watching The Silence of the Lambs”? Carte Blanche other than * “Jeffery’s been reading loads of Jeffery Deaver but very little James Bond”?

(*tell a lie, it’s also “Jeffery owes me my money back”).

A classic Fleming sweep through the biography of the treacherous Ms. Freudenstein, skirting over the plausibility of the Purple Cipher once we’ve been distracted by minor sexual titillation. Like so much Fleming, like so much of the motivation behind and character of villains, heroes and allies, there’s a basis in WWII. Sometimes the war hangover is overt – Moonraker, say – and sometimes it’s muted, but it’s the one fixture across *all of it*. Bond is a creature of a World-blasting post-War hangover, as are the villains he challenges, be they despicable boom-opportunists or proto-Mussolinis. It’s not post-9/11 or knocking around the Cannes Film Festival and saving the lives of the Coen Brothers. Other people can do that, better. Bond has already speculated in the tale whether M is bored and spring-

ing this underwhelming mission to relieve his own ennui. Query the same tactic with Julius Gerner. Query the whole of the enterprise being read in that; warlike men bereft of the war that made them, having to make one up to sustain their purpose. M's childish glee at "hotting up" the material going through the phony cipher is a dead giveaway. Calm down, dear.

To be fair to the poor girl, at the hands of these wretched men, she's only on fifty quid a month so they've only themselves to blame. Mrs Jim (probably) pays the cleaner more than that (I don't engage with domestics; one must maintain hierarchy. Also, no-speaky anything east of the Elbe).

When it comes to it, not that it's in these paragraphs, Bond's "flash of intuition" that the Resident Director will turn up to the auction has always struck me as a thin reasoning for the sake of a story but I suppose one doesn't crack the spine on a Fleming and expect impermeable plotting. Absent anything more spectacular happening, though, this time it seems particularly anaemic.

"All very satisfactory". Not really.

THE EIGHTH 007TH PARAGRAPHS – THE LIVING DAYLIGHTS:

"Yes, he had got the picture..."

Presumably not that stolen Goya making yet another appearance. Gets around, dunnit? Can hear The Ac-Tor Timothy Dalt-Ton saying this line, too.

The Berlin Vintage, then, to the tune of a Wykehamist snore (ill-bred? Minor key? Both). The atmosphere of these paragraphs one could dig bits out of with a spoon, and they stand as a solid ex-

ample of Fleming's observational eye, even if in the bleakness of the city and the weather he is prey to pathetic fallacy. There's little doubt this is dirty work, a direct assassination and on a par for grubbiness with taking out Von Hammerstein. Setting it in a chilly, broken and glum Berlin might be over-egging things, although it's possible that Fleming would say one could never over-egg. There's some coming up, shortly.

This first paragraph of this random seven gives the lie to the perception that James Bond is unaffected by his job of killing people. Notably, the job is not saving people. Bond's fretting mind is whether he can kill Trigger and the bitter goodbye of the closing lines encapsulates failure, despite having preserved 272 whole. There is absolutely no thought given to whether there's another way to extract the fleeing agent. The incidental success of saving the man, and that he has done so without having to kill at all, brings no solace. Questionable whether Bond has or could derive any satisfaction from Saving! The! World! If he has not managed to kill and whether the tendency in the Eon films to have him do just that and be a far nobler creature, has grasped the character.

Or, at least, the character presented here. This is a hard, terse, embittered Bond, appropriate to his environment, but the twist in the tale regarding the opposing shooter only works if we have bought that he is a killer. Too much "nice" and it's inevitable he would stay his hand, albeit blow hers off. Presumably this is why – questionable education aside – he is so horrible to Captain Sender. Is this true to form by this stage in his "development" – one might have believed it of 1950s Bond, but of the softer/softened-up one of the 1960s? Flipside is that we might be getting back to the kernel of James Bond without the surrounding fluff that two hundred pages more would bring. This is an uncomplicated tale with a straightfor-

ward premise – “sudden death or a home run” – and reins Bond in. His is a hired hand, the reluctant but effective executioner, brought in to serve and not be the centre of attention. Rarely has he been a blunter instrument. Rarely has the Eon series got an adaptation just so than in those early Bratislava scenes of *The Living Daylights*, at least until the mood-hoovering pipeline piffle.

Ramming the atmosphere home non-too-subtly, we have violence in the ordinary. The “gun-metal” dawn, the “depth-charges” of the sleeping pills arranged in ranks, and their pole-axing effect, it all builds to the one shot. There’s no sunshine in this tale, as that would divert the momentum of the misery infused. But this is James Bond, surely? Martinis and bikinis and colour and glamour and gadgets and wit, not half-awake, staring miserably into the Berlin gloom at weed-strewn bomb-damage and hanging around a drab apartment with an unmade bed, the only thing he kills here being time. The potency of cheap metaphor, perhaps, but the grimly oppressive atmosphere reeks of damp and sweat and this is just as vivid as when Fleming’s banging on about barracuda, exotic birds, voodoo, biological misfits and atom bombs.

“...burned the message with a sneer at his profession.” He’s not enjoying himself, is he? Piece as a whole reads critical of the ways, means and morals of the Secret Service, perhaps as pointedly ambiguous (if that’s possible) as anything in Fleming. A calling as broken as the rubble, disappointed and cynical. Mr Gardner’s books tend to politicise SIS to the point of mind-bending complexity but there’s little argument that ultimately they are “doing good”, similarly the Bensons. *The Living Daylights* isn’t about “doing good”; it’s just “doing”. And failing. The heroes and villains all mixed up.

Still, amidst this dampness and torpor, some things still hold. The “vast dish of scrambled eggs and bacon” that Bond crams into

himself, with whisky laced with coffee (suspicion that's the right way round) is a reassurance that this is James Bond, a James Bond who will now drift through a chilly character-study of a chilly city. There's no love lost between him and Berlin, and the crack about the brittle chromium veneer on American cars is one Fleming also made in his ostensible apology to New York. Bond's not even in the mood to use a whore; that the thought crosses his mind places him some distance from that chap with the invisible car or the crocodile submarine. He'd rather have a bracing walk and a perfectly horrible-sounding meal and it all adds to the air of punishment, reluctance and despondency dripping off the page.

Neat trick with the Opel, although query why Trigger doesn't just shoot the man fiddling with the engine, and another reference to angst with the Americans, everyone hoping for "...a clean job and without repercussions." We never get to know the repercussions of Bond failing to kill Trigger. Plainly, one potential is that he is dismissed and this is left deliciously hanging but – no... And so the rot sets in.

I haven't tended to play "favourites" in this exercise, largely because of the silly concept of only looking at bits of a story. It's true that *Goldfinger* and *The Spy who Loved Me* are those I would less readily reach for but if you wanted a positive, have this: this is a favourite. It's so lip-smackingly bleak, densely atmospheric and Spartan, absent the ludicrous – if entertaining – padding that weighs some novels down and, given the final (relatively) merciful act and the sour impression it creates in his superiors, whilst it may not demonstrate a man of great moral virtue, it elevates Bond as a better man than those that employ him.

If the final tale is anything to go by, than those who would write him, too.

OCTOPUSSY & THE LIVING DAYLIGHTS

THE NINTH 007TH PARAGRAPHS – OCTOPUSSY:

“Up in that big double bedroom in the Tiefenbrunner...”

And so, the end. And in the end, a whole picture seen. From the youthfulness of Kitzbuhel to decay in Jamaica, via London, cutting off little slivers of wartime experience to build a persona, to create comfort, but drinking himself to death in a marriage that has irritated him, wasting lazy days on the reef and watching life slip out of view, ultimately destroyed by James Bond, the map of Dexter Smythe is the map of Ian Fleming.

It's not a suicide note, nor (one hopes) a confession, but it is starkly metaphorical. The idealised avatar, the fictionalised autobiography, has outgrown the husk of its creator leaving him abandoned, lonely and empty, and has developed a life outwith. For Dexter Smythe, reputation and riches from cutting off fragments of gold; for Fleming, the same achieved in polishing up fragments of memories, of past golden glory. For both, the riches running out, spent. Destruction comes a-knocking and destiny strikes without pity. James Bond meets his maker (I know I've already done that joke but I like it, so *nurr*) who is left reflecting on his life and realising he is surplus to requirements. James Bond will continue. He won't. Whatever the parallels of the earlier works, Fleming and Bond now part, identities unwoven and the threads cut. It is in the mouth and mind of Major Smythe, not James Bond, that unpalatable attitudes and War-cling rest and, although the Major is not wholly incapable of engendering some sympathy for his plight, it is time for all that thinking and behaviour to die and let James Bond continue on without them, if he can. A final farewell to the wartime genesis and all the “good” it did. This tale might not have been the last written, but it feels like an end, an elegy for a high old time now come to naught. Ashes, dear boy, ashes.

I'm writing myself into accepting the approach – or at least, the existence – of the continuations here, aren't I? Dexter Smythe is dying, Ian Fleming too, but James Bond will carry on. It could be read as the author's endorsement that he does, leaving behind the old ways, and the piece becomes not just reminiscence but a reflection on how James Bond came to be. Gold – literary ability? Clutching at it a bit but humour me more than I have humoured you – found in the Alps as a younger man, not necessarily his own gold and possibly “a bit” stolen given the influences – Bulldog Drummond, Fu Manchu, Crowley, etc – but effort taken to carry it from there with sweat and hard work and smuggle it into one's own name; then, having got away with it, living off the spoils, and very well. Easy to point to the persona of Dexter Smythe as Ian Fleming, but Octopussy the tale also stands as a metaphor for the whole damn show, how well it all ran and how dissatisfaction, complacency, boredom, illness, drunkenness and a dried-up fund of imagination brought it down, to “a bizarre and pathetic end”. A self-mocking parable and now the show's over, for one of the participants. Although Bond's barely in it, this is more about “James Bond” than anything else Fleming wrote, and seems as good a place as any to stop. Either it endorses that Bond will continue (a positivist outlook beckoning others to have a go) or recognises that if he does so, he does so without characteristics that once defined him – anti-Hun, drunkenness, wartime hangover – now discarded by balling them up into “Major Dexter Smythe” and drowning them. The early Eon films showed that a type of “James Bond” could succeed without the literary character's more extreme traits. The Bond in this tale is almost entirely without characteristic, a blank canvas upon which others can draw their own stuff. This is a handover: does Bond need that baggage and, as that baggage is Ian Fleming, does it need him? Alternatively, less positively, it's to set a challenge: if I divest 007 of everything that has

“made” him, how successful can he be should anyone *dare*? Challenge definitely taken up. Challenge met? Less definite. Let’s see.

The one character point 007 is given here is, of course, the twist, that Oberhauser taught him to ski before the War. His other habits have been passed to Smythe, but the dating of the character remains, which renders his throwing ice axes around the Himalayas in 1999 or saving Princess Diana in 1993 highly suspect.

Still, it might only be a codename.

While I’m contemplating that, you have a good old contemplate why the Gestapo would mark all their documents in German other than the ones “only to be opened in final emergency”. None-too-surprising that they weren’t, is it?

Smythe’s a stinker (particularly so because he’s not wearing any pants), Oberhauser’s a credulous idiot – Lord and North Korea alone knows what his namesake’s going to turn out like – and Kitzbuhel and its surroundings sound lovely. Not a vast amount happens in these seven paragraphs other than setting up the inevitable dastardly deed, and reinforcing that to understand the pitiable end, one has to go right back to the promising beginning. Is it a plea by the author for sympathy for his plight? His own creation isn’t overtly sympathetic to him, after all.

“There are many crevasses.” Stretching the metaphor over the precipice, some of those following the path, following the leader, have been swallowed up.

Some should have been.

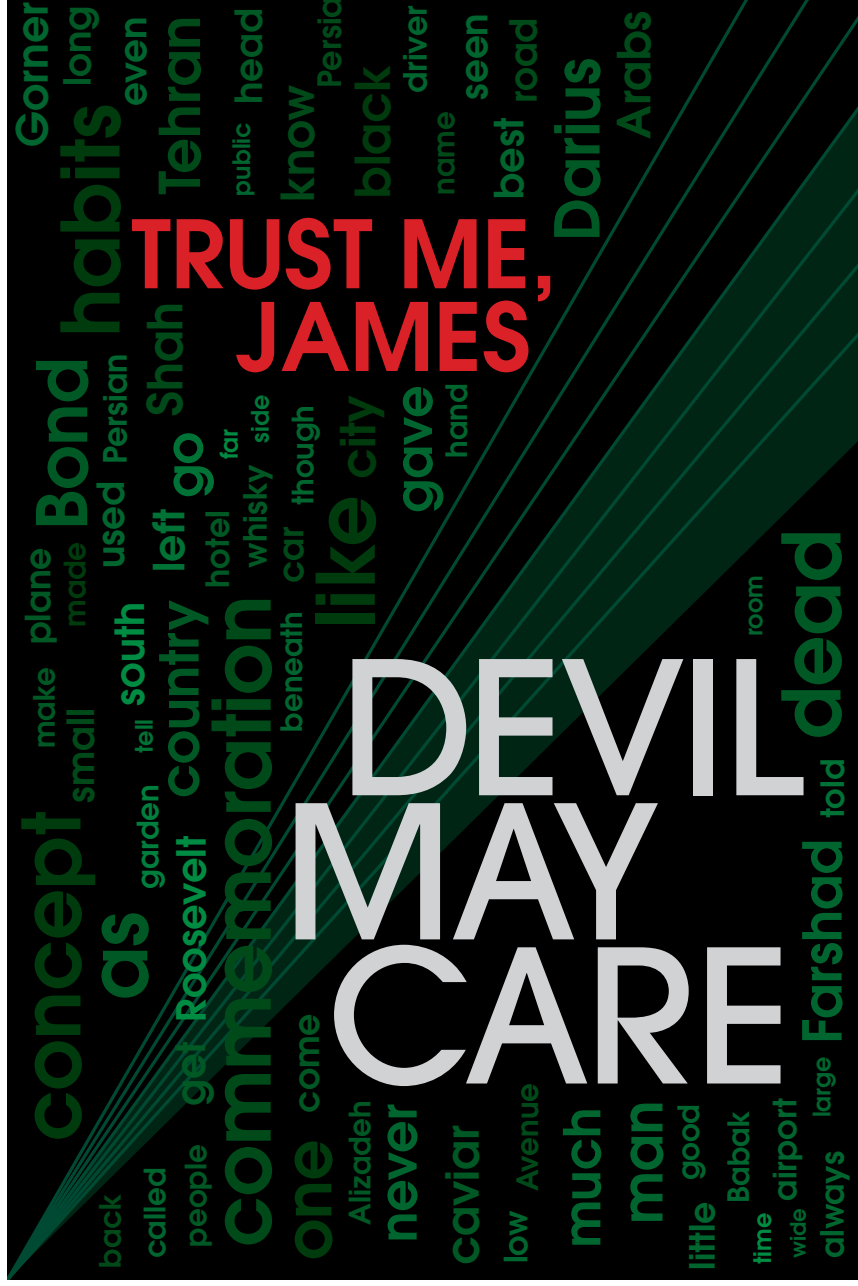
Of those, one that seems as on ice as Hannes Oberhauser is Per Fine Ounce, and my attitude to discussing that is encapsulated by its acronym PFO: if in doubt, the first word is “Please” because

THE 007TH CHAPTER

sometimes I'm nice and the third word is "Off" because much more regularly I'm 'orrible. Not getting into that minefield so I suppose the place to re-start all this nonsense is Colonel Sun.

Still, time to say goodbye, to bring a bizarre and pathetic series to an end. The pain of a goodbye is tempered by the promise of being able to say hello again. Well, yay. The 007th Chapter will return. It will, however, be set in the year 2086 to bring its views right up to date, or something.

JAMES BOND WON'T RETURN.
"JAMES BOND", A CHARACTER NEEDING A
PURPOSE OTHER THAN MONEY, WILL SHUFFLE
AROUND IN THE 007TH CHAPTERS BY OTHER FOLK
BECAUSE FOR SOME REASON IT IS VITAL TO THE
CULTURAL LIFE OF THE PLANET THAT HE DOES.
JACQUES STEWART IS *OBVIOUSLY* ONLY THIS SOUR
BECAUSE HE'S NOT ONE OF THOSE OTHER FOLK.
OBVIOUSLY.
IN HIS OWN TERMS, THEN,
"GOODBYE, MR STEWART".



Sebastian Faulks writing “as” Ian Fleming, then.

Not “like”.

Must be a difference, and a choice to brand/cripple Devil May Care with “as”, suggesting not just continuation but... impersonation? I have a hard enough time pretending to be me, never mind anyone else. Ian Fleming Publications could have reached down from its Smaug-haul of exploited gold onto which we blind-faithfully tip our overabused hopes every few years, and stamped ‘pon the cover “by Sebastian Faulks” and we’d have bought it.

This it did not do.

The ideas *are* distinct. Were I to live “*like*” you, I’d adopt as many of your proclivities as I could bear whilst still able to look myself in the mirror without shame (won’t be very many, will it?), habits I’ve observed when parked nightly outside your bafflingly poorly-secured hovel. You need thicker curtains and you’re better off not knowing what I’ve been doing into your jam. That wallpaper is *so* 2012. You remember 2012 – when you last changed your bedding. Were I to live “*as*” you, however, I’d do all that but would also pay your bills (*how much* on depilatory creams?), adopt your musk, wear that... garb, kiss your mum (for free, not her usual tariff for “extras”) and I’d have to kill you, too. An awful lot of effort for such little reward. Are you *worth* being? Greenleaf, you say? Hmm.

Commercially, Ian Fleming *is* worth being. This book sold well despite... *itself*. Awfully little effort for such substantial reward. However, “Being Fleming” can’t be fun (and rendered total misery by that wretched mini-series recently puked out, probably flatlining Young Cooper’s bid for the top job; shame). Writing “like” Fleming is challenging even without practising his dubious habits, which if “as” rings true, Mr Faulks was bound to. Whether he sucked his way through incalculable Balkan fags (British meaning... let’s say), developed (to avoid litigation, it *is* “developed”) an interest in flagellation and sourly bullied a phalanx of physical/racial/sexual unfortunates, has not been disclosed. He looked miserable at the book’s launch; knackered, not from the effort of writing it (...no), but of *living* it. As at 2008 Mr Faulks, born alongside Casino Royale, was barely twelve months younger than Fleming was when he carked it, and a booze-baccy-and-eggs-loaded routine won’t dislodge celery and the occasional fartlek from any doctor’s list of life-style changes for a mid-middle-aged chap to make. Or he’d read the book and realised they’d published his first (mad) draft. Given the prevailing wisdom about how The Man with the Golden Gun came to be, that’s very “as” Ian Fleming.

The “as” thing is a deuced odd conceit, as if asserting to write *like* Ian Fleming would be open to the criticism of “no he isn’t” (second in simplicity of impact only to the devastatingly well-timed belch), but *as* Ian Fleming could avoid this. However, “as” encompasses “like”, and wider issues yet. Avoids trouble with the Fleming heirs – “like” might have been perceived as taking the piss, and they don’t seem full of giddy fun and forgiveness. “As”, however, embraces the concept (the execution was closer to embracery), celebrating the centenary of Fleming’s birth by slipping on his skin and jiggling about with one’s ya-yas all a-glibber. When this perplexing

notion was announced, I wondered what fresh hell it was. Having absorbed that stultifying go-nowhere anecdote, if you still think it wise to subject yourself to this, you'll fear it'll verge to one side and stay there, angry and shouting, like Mrs Jim overtaking buses full of fragile kiddies (other persons' kiddies, so of neither value nor concern)/hearses/the Rozzers/anyone going less than what she claims as "road speed", which is essentially everyone. That I was disfigured in a car accident concerns her not; I have been "pre-disastered", she cackles, taking her eyes off the road *yet* again; no believer in lightning striking twice, she. They shake their fists at her, she shakes her wrist at them. It's pointless showing-off with total disregard for proper behaviour and the welfare of others, barging through deaf to contrary attitudes and, with that racing change down through the gears, we crash-dive right back into this, don't we?

Is it unfair to say that the general view of Devil May Care is one of ambivalence? Searched out with sufficient diligence/desperation, one could find enthusiasts at each end of the pro/con scale, as there would be for the merits of orally-manipulated chicken-sexing, but the default position seems to be greater regard for something having existed to mark the Fleming centenary, than for it being this specific thing that did such existing. That a book was produced *was* surprising; the quality of written Bond for the preceding decade suggested "they" had forgotten about 007 as a credible enterprise, or if what we had been spoon-fed was the best that could be done, "they" were better off not bothering themselves or (more importantly) us, or (considerably more importantly) me. That it would be the work of a Booker-botherer like Mr Faulks boded well (his brother is an eminent QC and a government peer in the Ministry of Jurr-Stice, so I'm a lickle wary lest he fling his wig me-wards), mimicking – or "as" – the lurch towards "quality" the Bond films had gone through

by casting such folks as Daniel Craig, The Dench and Denise Richards. Just as proper films could now be made of James Bond, so could proper books be written. Yumster.

Then, just as one was licking not just one's own lips at the thought of a book as heartbursting and delicious as Birdsong, along clumps "...writing as". Not "as" Sebastian Faulks – a lost opportunity, we could have had an examination set text, we could have had a redefinition, we could have had a contender; instead we had his distancing himself from the get-go – and, when it came to it, not even *like* Sebastian Faulks. Oh bum. Notably, not sold with "like" Ian Fleming, either. Although we helped it along its successful way for we are lost souls all, for several Bond fans it is not even "writing". Or, at least, not "Bond writing" whatever its *other* merits, which obviously aren't as important. This raises masticatory thought. Underneath, strip away the "Bond", is Devil May Care actually any good as a *book* book and – furthermore – isn't that *really* what makes for (wholly subjective) success with Bond? Diamonds are Forever is a more engaging record of a time and a place than it is a "story" and Skyfall, for example, strikes one as a better *film* than it is a *Bond film*, its Bondness being chaotic. Maybe that's why it reached an entertained audience wider than people fretting about how that DB5 turning up is staggeringly unlikely. If you give the people what they (think they) want, you end up with Goldfinger (the novel), or Die Another Day (the... thing).

I recognise the accusation that I've just invented this position in the same manner I recognise that child that can't *really* be mine because Mrs Jim would chisel me nadgers orf – i.e. ignore it and hope it *goes away* – but one "success" of working through this 007th Chapter self-regard is that I know I ejaculate a-gushing about Flemings that are interesting as *books* regardless of preconceived "Bond" ingredients – Moonraker, say, or You Only Live Twice – yet those

more “Bond-like” within the popular perception – i.e. Goldfinger, Thunderball perhaps – I’ve chipped at more acidly. I’m not suggesting I’m right or superior (I *am*, though, both: *cope*), and I accept that the most un-“Bond” of all, The Spy who Loved Me, is no favourite, but then Ian Fleming didn’t write that. What do you mean, “total charlatan cop-out”? Still, a side-effect of the experiment has solidified for me that when it comes to Bond, it’s more engaging to consider how it was done than what was said. They can get anyone to do the latter and, depressingly habitually, did.

Whether it *should* be a solid book first and a Bond second, or “Bond” first, last and everything, depends on what one wants. “Wants”, not “needs”. From the prehistory of dial-up internet, powered by stapling a pterodactyl to a car battery, I recall arguments on Bond “web sites” between those claiming that (plucking a name from the air) Mr Benson’s works were worthwhile because it meant “more Bond” for us all to “collect” and “enjoy”, bare existence its own reward, and those (hello) who for the first time in their avaricious little lives had woken up to the meaning of more being less. The naysaying position irked many to accuse that those saying nay (I did say it was a long time ago) were ungrateful swine whose attitude would prevent Bond from continuing, because that contingency was obviously much more likely to arise due to mistyped rubbish on a message board than due to mistyped rubbish in a book. Some became most irate, but not as enraged as I was when Mrs Jim wouldn’t get off the ‘phone thereby preventing me from exploring the opportunity afforded me by “internet”, to tell someone in Pasadena that they were a twat.

So, if writing “as” Ian Fleming, and if true to that, what promise blossomed in that teeny-tiny word, and what crushing disappointment to gleefully anticipate, if one believes “as” Ian Fleming to

mean molesting the format, stroking structure into submission, daring to digress, diving deep into some of the “detail” but coming up for air and skitting by overcasually elsewhere, prodding the reader not just with lurches in the architecture but also in worldview and generally, at its most successful, leaving one gleefully fiddled-with, come the climax. Half-tempted to put “shaken and stirred” there but even if what I have written is crap, I don’t have to write it “as” crap. The story, the “spy thriller”, is incidental. If it wasn’t, his plots would have been direct and unrelenting, rather than meanders during which one smells the flowers and fights some fish and THE GERMANS. Ironically, given his attitudes to “other folk”, one of Fleming’s most appealing attributes as a writer is the *diversity* shown within one idea – James Bond. Fine, he might not have frequently exposed himself outwith that parameter but, within, it is considerably more varied than the timesmoothed perception of “James Bond” immediately suggests.

The counter-argument is that he could manipulate the delivery so freely because the plots ignored logic and sense that a less flamboyant writer wouldn’t dare abandon. It may be more straightforward to assert there is a strongest Fleming novel – *From Russia with Love* is often cited – than it is to identify a *definitive* one, given the experimentation that goes on under the pretence of guns, gambling, girls, GERMANS, gluttony and guilt. I’d say there *isn’t* a definitive one because, freed from adhering to anything other than an inner momentum, each pulls the idea in different directions. *Moonraker* is nothing like *On Her Majesty’s Secret Service* which is nothing like *Live and Let Die*, etc. They’re evidently written by the same bloke, though.

However, perhaps only naturally *because* of its celebratory nature, *Devil May Care* seems at first sight constructed entirely of “Bond”, or at least some button-pushing mish-mash of half-remembered

novels and films, a collective folk memory of “James Bond”, and not quite so much what could be celebrated of Fleming’s written style, despite explicit protestations to the contrary. It has a routine structure – albeit taking ages to *end* – and requisite 007y things happen to 007 and the usual hangers-on. It is without doubt a Bond book, in the sense that there is now so much more written and filmed Bond than was ever produced by Ian Fleming. Is it, given its promise, a *Fleming* book? On the need/want test, regardless of what we *want* it to be, does it *need* to be, to be “Bond”?

In giving us a reasonable but ultimately by-the-numbers “Bond” experience, I doubt it. If it’s not as inventive nor provocative as (subjectivised memory of what I thought of “as”) Fleming, why lay one’s self the trap of writing Bond (which probably happened) but not writing Fleming (which probably didn’t)? A grumpy allegation would be that it just ladles on so thickly the cynicism of the exercise that it could be difficult to sit down and tease out the Flemingy goodness underneath all the habitual Bond-o-cack. Perhaps in time it will come to me, as it did with *GoldenEye*, which *qua* Bond film is “good” because it’s got everything Bond in it, but it did take a little while* for it to dawn on me that, as a real film, it’s absolute stinking pus-drenched saggy *bonehole*. See? I *have* met y’mum.

(*twelve seconds. I need a faster acting venom).

Perhaps it’s this: writing “like” would tickle us into believing that we would get something that hit a perceived style of *already-written* Fleming books whereas writing “as” demonstrates what Fleming, totally out of puff and interest and trying to scrabble free of the fan-shackles of imprisoning expectation, prepared to nick ideas from anywhere (including the film series of his own work), would have shoved at the World had he lasted one year and one book longer. A Stanislavskian attitude to banging out a Bond, al-

though this Method approach renders one to be spavined and be-reft of motivation, stamina and breath. On that basis, for many Devil May Care hits the spot absolutely just so, but that's a curious way to *celebrate* Ian Fleming.

I've asserted that writing like Ian Fleming has established itself as beyond competent emulation, although now I wonder upon the proof. Of Mr Gardner's output, he is evidently writing "as" John Gardner and you can sod right off if you don't like it. Mr Benson put it on record on more than one occasion that he is not Ian Fleming and never will be, which for the sake of his health is wise; he seems nice and on a personal level ill-deserving of one's knee-jerk abuse. Mr Deaver didn't evidently stir himself to try, probably best for all concerned. At most I'd suggest the most direct happenstances/coincidences/enemy action are Amis, producing something patently of the same family once you scrutinise it, like meeting inbred twins of differing genders, and Messrs. Wood and Pearson, more on whom once I remember where I put their books. Mr Boyd went for atmos but for the large part of what emerged, it read to me less "like" Fleming, I. more "like" Fleming, P. Four, possibly five, goes, in over fifty years since Ian Fleming died, despite several dozen books with "James Bond" in them. Whether that output *succeeds* as James Bond without emulating Fleming is one matter, and a wholly subjective one; commercially (the only driving factor – it can't be artistic) "James Bond" material can objectively *exist* without him.

There is a less bleak angle to posit (although I am not sure I *fully* agree it): that Devil May Care is "important" as it proposes a "Fleming", encumbered by the success, aware of Bond becoming *the* popular icon of several generations, writing into a period text all that Bond came to be. *This is the only thing that a Fleming, assumed with knowledge of what Bond became, could possibly have*

produced to meet all possible demands and (mis?)understanding of an idea now wholly out of his control. Anything else would have been to *deny* “Bond” and its developed norms. It’s not as if this is a character no-one’s heard of, and its lack of obvious similarity to how (say) Casino Royale is written, is as much testament to how far “Bond” diverged from his creator after his death as You Only Live Twice’s differences to that first novel demonstrate his flexibility whilst he was hurling them out. “As” Ian Fleming, if Ian Fleming had lived to *be* it. The book is artificial – the “period” commentary reads as liberal-hindsight irony; a negative distraction – but the positive artifice is in “having” the writer – or someone who understands the *writer* more than his *writing* – produce something recognising the changed invention. As such, a back-door and back-handed recognition that the general approach (in spirit if (most definitely) not in execution) of Mr Benson and Mr Deaver – push, pull, adapt to suit, see where it can go – is not *wholly* contrary to a Fleming approach whereas the more superficially “recognisable as cod-Fleming-“like” writing” of Wood and Amis is the sort of rut routine that Fleming tried to *avoid* replicating. Same sort of thing happens when Eon announces it’s “going back to Fleming”; under this interpretation it means “jiggering about with it to sustain our own interest otherwise we’ll only produce something as listless, time-serving and complacent as A View to a Kill again; oh look, we’ve cast a short, blond man”.

Those who accuse Mr Faulks of not having understood Ian Fleming possibly miss the point; he seems to understand *him* (if not the method of delivery) tremendously well. Objections to the book that it doesn’t read “like” Fleming fall the wrong side of the “like”/“as” do-dah anyway, and also presume a purist attitude to his work that the author himself did not demonstrate. See how reactive to exter-

nal events the writing becomes the more Fleming produced. It wasn't beyond him to shoehorn his creation into a television format, nor beneath him to steal a film, so how could it not be the case that presented with the opportunity to emit something that absorbs and comments on everything understood as "Bond", he wouldn't have? When Ian Fleming saw the breadth of his domain, he wept for they'd fouled it up really badly, but might as well join in because it's, y'know, *money*, and Anne does need her spends. This seems a much more likely product of Ian Fleming than forever knocking out From Russia with Love 2, breezily ignoring the creativity-stifling of "real Bond fans", whose smothering adoration of something they liked, and associated underthought demand that the same thing is repeated forever, will only suffocate it in the end. Oh look, there's Boba Fett.

Hopelessly contrived an argument? Fits. "Artificial book gets artificial argument" shock. The book is an act of contrivance, both in its existence or within what passes as its plot. I may be overdoing it but I want to like the book (even if it barely goes out of its way to be liked). I like Ian Fleming; I like Sebastian Faulks; despite your suspicions, I like James Bond. In principle, their convergence should have been right up my alley, instead of it feeling that's where it's shoved. A hybrid exercise – it says it's Ian Fleming, and therefore a Bond novel, but it even came with its own (execrable) theme tune, and therefore a film. "As" Ian Fleming insofar as had he lived, had he seen what it became, he too would/could have produced a book changed – corrupted? – by "Bond". James Bond now determines what "Ian Fleming" does, not the other way around. In such circumstances, tainted by foresight in the same way as elements of Devil May Care are tainted by hindsight, Ian Fleming couldn't have written it "like" Ian Fleming *either*.

Just "as".

They won't try the conceit again. The point's been made. Bond has gone on without him, and this is a pretence at the author producing something that recognises the change, basking in but also overwhelmed by his own phenomenon. As such, Devil May Care is not so much a commemoration of Fleming's birth, but absolute confirmation of his demise, and the liberty his creation had to outgrow him. Ian Fleming is, finally, dead.

Long live James Bond.

THE 007TH CHAPTER – DEVIL MAY CARE: “TRUST ME, JAMES”

I shall be writing this paragraph “as” Hallmark Cards: So! You are writing the new James Bond. Let us hope it dun't go wrong! Your words is really, really nice. £18.99 are the cover price.

Trust you, Mr Faulks? Hmm. You've written something where you appear to forget the plot halfway through and then struggle to conclude it efficiently. Still, that's “as” Diamonds are Forever, I s'pose.

I shall be writing this paragraph “as” whatever Pope it is we're up to now, I dunno... Polonium 40?: Homosexuality simply does not exist. Therefore, homosexual paedophiles cannot exist and accordingly cannot be prosecuted. Slam dunk da funk. God, however, is real.

A quote descends us into Tehran. Did we get quotes with Fleming? There's that cod-Basho stuff in *You Only Live Twice* but this isn't habitually “as” Ian Fleming. “As” John Gardner, maybe – several of his open with wise words from elsewhere, and there was all that deadweight Abelard and Heloise cleverness nailing the already lamed Brokenclaw permanently to the floor. Not yet feeling the breadth of Mr Faulks's “as”. One s.

I shall be writing this paragraph “as” the Office of the President of Zimbabwe: Dear Dr Stewart. With thanks for your application for the role of President and Chief Lion of the Glorious Nation of Zimbabwe. We acknowledge that you have your own meat hook, and thank you for the photograph to confirm that this was not a sordid white-devil euphemism. You do appear to meet the person specification in full, especially the bits about providing your own cress, and the “exterminating”. However, the role is currently occupied by His Excellency the Great President for Life by Popular Demand and Whom God Preserve the Robert Gabriel Mugabe I. Try not to be as disappointed as the last speculative applicant who tragically shot himself in the back of the head and whose family and everyone who ever met him committed suicide by coshing themselves to death before sadly dissolving themselves in acid. We wish to discuss your proposal in person and are obliged to you for putting your home address on your letter; please welcome an imminent visit from our representatives to 138 Piccadilly, London, W1V 9FH. Please disable your metal detector, smoke alarm and shoot your dog, to permit our family liaison operatives full access. Be seeing you.

“Work had never taken him to the Middle East, and for this he was thankful.” How inclusive. How “as”. There’s more “as” Ian Fleming in articulating the trappings of travel, not just travel itself, and somewhere new for the reader, even if this is a Tehran of forty-odd years ago. A solid attempt at Fleming’s vivid but increasingly pinch-mouthed observations of what he witnessed in a postwar world decayed by money, depleted resources, women and the struggle of a melting pot of mixed-up races (Bond included) to win the grab for all those, legitimately or not, and Mr Faulks tries damned hard to give us the sights and sounds and dust and dirt of the place, but it is one we can never know. Unlike Fleming giving his *contemporary* reader

the scent and smoke and sweat of a Las Vegas or an Istanbul they could aspire to visit, this Tehran is time-locked and gone. On the one hand, this is, of course, the modern reader's approach to Fleming's descriptive work of Kingston or Kent or Tokyo – not of journalistic current record, but of a historical place and time, so Faulks grants us the experience that we, the 2008 reader, feel now of Fleming's writing. But on the other hand, Ian Fleming did not give us the Jamaica of the 1920s and rarely if ever went backwards save to illustrate a villain's biography. Fleming set his stuff in his here-and-now, just as Eon do, just as (... I may be weakening) Messrs. Gardner, Benson and Deaver have done. The argument stands: the written James Bond is not a period character. He has *become* a period character, *we* have made him that, usually to overcome modern discomfort and “excuse” him, but this was never the intention. Setting him fortysomething years ago is not, *technically*, “as”.

I shall be writing this paragraph “as” Methuen Publishing: Dear Dr Stewart. Thank you for your unsolicited... object “The 007th Chapter”, returned herewith. Unfortunately we do not see the appeal and would be surprised if it would find an audience wider than about six people. Have you tried Ian Fleming Publications? That’s a level of sales they were accustomed to with new output, for about fifteen years or so. You might want to stop being quite so rude about them, though. We’ll be keeping the photo of your meat hook as scant reward for having made it through one of your paragraphs.

Two things in that, though. James Bond always *was* a period character, an elegiac and completely unlikely unreconstructed throwback to a Buchanite/Drummond-esque world of damsels and Bentleys and fine eating and dastardly, undershaven and invariably GERMAN foreigners wagging the Lion's tail, and hurrah, hussah and hooroo! At least, to start with, tearing around Northern France in a char-

acterful jalopy, feeding velvet-clad naice gels strawberries and avocado, and subsequently giving the nig-nog, the Hun and some ghastly Americans a sound thrashing, before the modern world starts dragging him down to break him utterly. He is essentially preposterous and a yearning figment of the frustrated, immature and withdrawn imagination of a disappointing schoolboy. If brave, one could argue that by shoving such an antiquated figure into the atomic age, Fleming is satirising the heroes of old, but I'm not convinced that holds up because it never comes across as anything other than Fleming taking Bond, if not his plots, seriously. His stories frequently have ironic elements, but the series is not an exercise in irony overall.

I shall be writing this paragraph as the person you love most in the world, other than yourself: Help me [X], call the police; he's imprisoned me down a well. He makes me do things. I'm sick of rubbing this lotion into my skin, for a start. Then he starts swinging his meat hook about.

This, however, is. Devil May Care has an (unavoidable?) air of manipulating a location we cannot see/contradict within our own experience and judge for ourselves, into twenty-first century parallels, hindsight and clever-cleverness. The most resplendent view here is not over the Caspian, but over the neon-lit and cattle-prodded irony of the British Secret Service and a duplicitous CIA mucking about in the Middle East against a perceived threat, conspired against on a flimsy pretext. Yeah, yeah. Thanks, Sebbers old pip; we would have been lost without you. Save for the fleeting comments to come about time spent in the vicinity, it's true that (purely chronologically) Bond has not brought his readers here yet, and only selectively hereafter. On the one hand, with the ensuing Darius Alizadeh and the description of his entourage and lifestyle we are not a million miles away, literally and (...erm) literally, from Darko Kerim's Istanbul – query

whether it's "as" not being terribly original or "as" giving the people what they think they want – but on the other is the inescapable fact that this book was published in 2008 and there's a gnawing sense that "Persia" was picked to punch home Some Sort Of Point, with a subtlety of payload that'd take out a Russian nuclear plant.

I shall be writing this paragraph "as" John Gardner: My micro – a Toshiba L630 with Media Controller and Eco Utility 0973570573095[-85=05-5 – has a Secret Compartment in which I keep my Sykes-Fairburn commando pies, sandal repair kit and hotel reservations. You want me to write a credible human emotion? You want me to go outside? But I've all this great technical stuff and clumsy sex to describe. I feel betrayed! Again! Do you like my new windcheater? It's genuine Janet Reger. Meat hook, you say? Hmm... Crimson fireball! Oh leave me alone, I've got serial numbers to transcribe and literary allusions to crowbar in. Will this do?

"He regarded the lands between Cyprus and India as the thieving centre of the world..." Sebastian Faulks shall be writing this part "as" Fox News. Or, for that matter, "as" Ian Fleming, telling us something directly about a Thrilling City. Interesting little details about having visited Egypt as a child (?) and kicking around Beirut on leave, encountering women far more modern in their attitudes than he had ~~ignorantly prejudged~~ expected, but beyond the introduction to a new bit of the world via Bond, the nagging gnaw now chews great sodding lumps out of me. We and the author are ahead of Bond – forty years ahead of him – whereas Fleming was at least twenty years *behind* his creation, still fighting out frustrated World War 2 desk-jockey fantasies through the medium of baity Bauxite magnates, and appealing to a contemporaneous readership of similar Doodlebug-scarred mindset. The War hadn't ended, just taken on a different, expenses-paid form, and so old suspicions could still

be exploited, but – and this is important – not criticised. Such continued antipathy was *heroic*. That Fleming frequently likened his villains to the likes of Mussolini wasn't to make a point actually *about* Mussolini; it was useful shorthand for his readership as “villainous foreigner braggart bighead cult-of-personality loon” to avoid having to describe them too much, not that Dr No made the trains run on time nor drained the Pontine Marsh. Calling Domino “Petachi” was presumably a *joke* along the same lines. James Bond is not real, nor is his world. Both just have to be plausible. Plausibility and reality are as distinct as “like” and “as” – which are, indeed, all about plausibility on the one hand, and reality on the other.

I shall be writing this paragraph “as” Raymond Benson: Ooh, I’ve just remembered Captain Stonor. That is good. I have not used him yet. I shall reference him. He can turn up unexpectedly and save the day, even though he’s 126 and I am not actually using him other than for a Bond-imploding reference. Develop the character? No, sorry, what? Don’t get you. Why would I need to do that? Oh look, it’s Lisl Baum. I wonder what she’s up to now, fifty-five years on? My Bond friends will like that. We know Bond. We are the Bond-knowers. Can I call the heroine Aerolae Hamnd-Shandee? What about Chutnee Tunnelle? Bond’s got his meat hook out! Flying scout! Oh leave me alone, I’ve got a copy of Playboy to contemplate. I read it for the Bond stories. Will this do?

Devil May Care is nakedly commenting on a war *yet to come*, decades away, and the “as” thing cracks open. Although aspects of Fleming’s personal political views come through, on occasion a leetle too strongly for a contemporary liberal mindset, here we have a contemporary liberal mindset commenting right back. Fleming wasn’t a “political writer” *per se*, nor is it evident that he is using Bond to further an undergraduate-level stance on A Bad Thing. James Bond is

no allegory, but in Devil May Care it's used as one. Fond of making 007 suffer and undermining him as a character he may have been, but this goes further than Fleming, into undermining the concept. This is a tricky area for Devil May Care, tipping it into an area Fleming didn't go, and thereby tonally "off" in trying out "as". Fleming was not above criticising those whom he considered deserving of criticism, but it was blunt. You knew if he didn't like you; he was rude to your face, or at least, directly in print. For example, if you accept Risico, the whole of the CIA was staffed by gullible fools. Some idiots perceived this book as anti-American in a way Bond "isn't", which is ludicrous; consider multiple film Felix Leiters and the acrid sideswiping throughout Fleming's work. It might be anti-*Twenty First Century American*, though, a nation one sneers at, behind one's smugly stroked chin, at one's peril. The more germane criticism is that a Bond story seems to have been hijacked for an entirely different purpose than simply telling itself. Dr No is not a criticism of the Amritsar Massacre and Moonraker doesn't say much about the Easter Rising. Devil May Care isn't a bad title, but a more on-the-nose one might have been "Benefit of Hindsight". It probably does amount to a Bond in various aspects, but with an unnecessary/unwelcome/unconvincing additional layer splatted right on top, and getting in the way. Written as Sebastian Faulks, I'd be considerably more content with the approach, and unsurprised. Written "as" Ian Fleming, it's deeply annoying, exploitative, preachy and misjudged. Sebastian Faulks is writing "as" Jacques Stewart.

I shall be writing this paragraph "as" NASA. Dear Dr Stewart: Thank you for your e-mail. No, we don't know what the International Space Station is for, either. Sssh, though. Kind regards, Mr NASA. PS Thanks for the photo of your meat hook. We've never heard that expression for it. You crazy Brits!

“When going through US Customs, he used a British diplomatic passport, number 0094567...” No he doesn’t; he is David Barlow, passport 391354, according to 007 Does Socks. Or David Somerset, as here, Mr Faulks raising the spectre of Darko Kerim a few paragraphs before we meet his indistinguishable clone. Sebastian Faulks writing “as” Raymond Benson. Curious that we’re not told the name of Bond’s hotel, despite an “as” journey through the fragments of Tehran, not just describing but observing with a critical traveller’s eye a city as a living entity, very Fleming, albeit, as observed, this is a bit of a cheat because we’ve no way of knowing for ourselves. “It was as though at this latitude the city had taken a grip on itself in its desire to become more Western.” Tehran, eh? Oh har-de-har-har, Faulksie. We know sumfink Bond dun’t know. This distances us from him rather spectacularly. Hard to engage with a book written quite so *archly* as this.

I shall be writing this paragraph “as” the General Synod of the Church of England: Dear Dr Stewart. Thank you for your letter of 13 inst. Having considered your proposition carefully, and mindful that the modern church requires (much as we regret it) appealing branding, we still do not think it at all appropriate, and probably casually anti-Semitic, that the imminent Second Coming of Our Lord Saviour Jesus Christ be known as #dejaJew. With warmest regards. Blood, bro. The General Synod. PS May we keep the photo of your meat hook? We’ve never seen such a big one.

The “Bobby Moore, Bobby Charlton” stuff is no worse than Fleming calling Dexter Smythe’s doctor “Jimmy Greaves” and having Bond’s youthful driver in Thunderball bang on about Rosemary Clooney. True, the reference to The Rolling Stones earlier in this book reads as trying too hard, but then was it them to whom one cannot listen without earmuffs? There’s always been cod-culture

referencing and these are just other examples, and not the worst. Mr Gardner crosses the line with Bond watching The Untouchables; Mr Deaver never saw the line and would deny its existence, hurtling on by with references to Harry Potter and Boots the Chemist and Subarus, hoodies ‘n’ shee-it.

I shall be writing this paragraph “as” my youngest child’s homework club: Calypso has a funny-smelling cake that she has cut into ninths and six glasses of cherryade that are each five-sevenths full, of gin. My gin. Jasper has gained 115% of his body weight by playing FIFA all day and Sahara (....bloody hell) has four-fifths of a left leg due to her mother having drunk too much during pregnancy. Ptolemy (...I’m calling ChildLine) is nine-thirteenthths of his way through a bottle of that nice Mr Stewart’s Calvados and Pip is of indeterminate gender; what sort of haircut is that? What are the domestic, local and worldwide socio-political threats and opportunities concordant on emerging democracy in Myanmar? What do you mean, just Wikipedia it and download some Call of Duty cheats whilst at it? Also, what sort of question is that to ask eleven-year-olds?

“...but Bond was thinking of one name only: Dr Julius Gorner.” And then proceeds not to think of him. Seemed to meet with criticism, the choice of name, in that we’ve already had a notable Julius “from” Ian Fleming and, by implication, Fleming would not have been so lazy and would at least have bothered to call him something different but equally sinister, like Keith. Well, it is “as”. Ian Fleming, with two double bottles inside him, sat in the final departure lounge of his life and thought about not really bothering himself too hard. If we’re playing that game, it’s a bloody big surprise he’s not called Ernst Blofeld *and have I used that already? Oh, don’t fuss so, old boy. It doesn’t matter.* Nor does Gorner’s plot, which is

THE 007TH CHAPTER

all over the blimmin' place and either a) clever authorial criticism that Fleming – and for that matter, Eon and all that is “Bond” – rarely produce entirely watertight stories but it matters not because of the “style”; or b) a bit crap.

I shall be writing this paragraph “as”... Look, child, Daddy’s busy showing off pointlessly to four people by bashing out truculent balderdash. No, you may not have a cigar. What do you mean Ptolemy isn’t moving? Run a cold bath and hold his head underwater; that should fix him. You’ve already done that and that’s why he’s not moving? Hm. Well I’m fresh out of ideas, me. Go find your mother, she’ll sort it out. What do you mean she was the one who was doing the holding? Do pipe down, you tedious young blister.

Yay, a painful shower, scrambled eggs and a lake of booze. “As”. “He dressed in a short-sleeved white shirt, loose cotton trousers and black moccasins with reinforced steel toecaps.” The last sounds painful, and a smidge “as” John Gardner too. As we head back into the Tehran traffic, driven by “Happy” who will meet – *duh duh duh* – an unhappy end (it’s very sophisticated), “...the car wove through a furiously contested junction where the traffic-lights seemed to offer no more than suggestions.” A laid-back, flippant understatement of danger; reads “as” familiar.

I shall be writing this paragraph “as” a Book of Condolence: We were devastated to hear that Ptolemy recovered.

“In my darkest hours I feared that destiny would never bring James Bond to my home town.” Ian Fleming, writing as Ian Fleming having seen the Bond phenomenon take off, and his James Bond is known the world over. In all “his” other books, no-one’s heard of Bond, he’s not that highly regarded by his peers and even Blofeld needs reminding who he is. Now, he’s world-bleedin’ famous. OK,

so Darius is part of the Service, but it's easy to read his use of "James Bond" as the idea, the branded lifestyle choice, not the anonymous man who is only a silhouette. Cohering with the Fleming theory that much character is established in manual manipulation – not in that way, Mr Benson; calm down, lovey – Darius has a "firm, dry shake", not the "slippery recoil" that Bond had encountered, amongst other places, in Cairo. When a child. Disturbing image, that. On we move, and in due course, Darius serves him a shaken martini without Bond specifically requiring it. Hm. *Secret agent*? Holed up in Bond's hotel room are Shirley Bassey, a suitcase full of product-placed watches and Bernard Lee is drinking the complimentary shampoo because there's nothing else on offer.

I shall be writing this paragraph "as" Cardinal Prince Moses Jol-fatty of Nigeria: My imprisoned father has found oil and requires one small administrative investment of £10,000 for a 1000% return within 20 minutes. You were highly recommended to me as a person of grand vivacity and other mystifyingly inappropriate compliments. Send me your bank details, password and inner thigh measurement. I wait on hearing from you honoured Sir or Mad-ame. Yours in Christ.

This Darius, who seems uncannily familiar, wears "...an open-necked blue shirt that had a look of the shop windows on Rome's via Condotti." As opposed to Peterborough's via Condotti. Not a wholly specious point, and a hole in "as" – an "as" hole, no less; one suspects Ian Fleming would have assumed his "A" readers would have known... The beer, which is American, gets a slagging and doubtless some lunatics would see this as further anti-Americanism and not a thing Fleming would have done. To which – a) exported American beer *is* appalling, it's like drinking cat's piss and, for an initiation ritual, that is something I have done (drink American beer, not cat's

piss) and b) read 007 Does Zoo; his appetite for American food and drink, initially fascinated, has become jaded and ambivalent. “He had trusted Darius from the first moment and his instinct in such things was seldom wrong.” Until he starts getting himself written by John Gardner and then it collapses completely.

I shall be writing this paragraph “as” the 17.34 from Paddington to Oxford: I’m sorry but this paragraph has been cancelled. I hope this does not inconvenience you today. Would you like a complimentary flapjack? I have no hot water due to a fault. I will shortly be approaching Inverness; I appear to be lost. This joke will terminate here. Remember to take your dignity with you. And your meat hook.

Insofar as the Beluga “...should smell of the sea but never of fish”, given one’s experience of the sea smelling of used prophylactics, turds and tourists, it rings true to my experiences with caviar. One thing that is arresting, here, and Faulks is more successful than most post-Fleming authors in achieving it: the perceived elitism is actually a perverse egalitarianism. Fleming – and by and large successfully, Mr Faulks – is not telling us things for the sake of reeling off a lot of serial numbers or painstakingly showing that he’s researched the rules of Mah-Jong or computer programming or golf; that’s all about the writer, selfishly. Fleming has a desire to share; he is *beckoning* us, enticing us into that world, those of us who aren’t already with him (Bs, Cs, *you*). Little buttered gobbets for us to gobble down. He wants us to enjoy, mutualise the experience, and he is heightening its scent and... etc. to enable one to journey with him. It’s that Fleming *Feel* and, as a humdrum plot device once observed, there’s no point in living if you can’t feel alive. You don’t have to describe everything to within an inch of its life; if anything, that’s far more stand-offish and impenetrable and cold, however “real” or plain the device or incident. Just wallow in the things that give pleas-

ure, and allow others to. A redistribution of the wealth of the senses. It's not showing off; it's wanting us as a participant, companionship through what might have been quite a lonely life, on reflection. This is how "plausibility" works over reality; a teased seduction, rather than a bash on the head.

I shall be writing this paragraph "as" Eon Productions: No, we're not making it.

Again, we have a mention of Gorner and *again* the subject is immediately changed, as if Gorner's never anyone's focus, least of all the author's. When the time comes in the eventual shakedown and a ludicrous plot wrench occurs involving Scarlett, it's suggested that everything said of the man is a fiction and it's a happy coincidence that it turned out Gorner did hate Britain as much as everyone *claimed* he did when trying to provoke Bond into killing him. That's really... weird, although probably some sort of Saddam Hussein parallel somewhere down the line; how very... pfft. Darius is, of course, of a hybrid background, the sort of thing that fascinated Fleming to the extent that he also made Bond mixed-nationality, which seems to get itself overlooked generally. "I studied at Oxford, which, in case you're wondering, is why I sound like an English gentleman." Good lad; I like him. Not only picked up the accent but, also, the comma. The lengthy speech about background and the jockeying for political position in the region: Darius Alizadeh is saying all this "as" Darko Kerim, and it's a convincing attempt.

I shall be writing this paragraph "as" US immigration at JFK: Sling your meat hook out of our country.

"People are welcome to try and make money here, though it's difficult to do it legally. Apart from oil. We also accept a degree of political interference if there's something in it for us: protection,

influence, arms, dollars.” Shock. Awe. Snore. May all well be so, as with the stuff about Kermit Roosevelt and US meddling but it’s so overclangingly *knowing*. True, it’s not as simplistic a world as Mad Hun Bungs Missile At Queen would have one “believe” but then one *didn’t* believe that, one wasn’t required to believe that and accordingly, one didn’t need it correcting by being whacked over the head with a placard. Recall there’s some barb somewhere about Julius Gorner setting himself up as a proto-Rupert Murdoch which, y’know, *cringe*. Until one remembers that Fleming not only had a go at Lord Rothermere, he also had several goes on his wife, so really quite “as”, as it turns out.

I shall be writing this paragraph “as” my languages master: A competent half’s work from Jacques although I suspect that he sees little point in French, or in the French. If he keeps getting his meat hook out I am going have to tug it off him.

Darius mentions having played tennis with Kermit Roosevelt. Everyone plays tennis, in this world. Although the earlier match with Gorner plays right into the “cheat the cheat” stuff seen many a time, and times yet to come, is *tennis* really a Bond sport? Alongside skiing, scubaing and shagging, it seems leafy, prissy, a bit Pimm’s, the preserve of the colonial set so roundly sneered at in Dr No, Quantum of Solace and Octopussy. Fine, Mr Faulks seeks to write it as a struggle but there’s a whiff of barley water rather than hard booze. Don’t think any fondness for tennis has ever been previously expressed; I might be wrong. Perhaps it’s because it’s so mechanically trying to be the Goldfinger golf match that it doesn’t ring true, rather than due to the choice of game itself, but there’s a tinny, through-the-motions, Bond-by-numbers quality to it that taints it and chimes ill. Notably, after the Goldfinger incident, Fleming doesn’t repeat the trick, so this is dubiously “as” whatever the sport. Still, at least Mr

Faulks assumes we have *heard* of the game he's chosen, unlike other authors rumbling along shortly.

I shall be writing this paragraph "as" The Actor Pierce Bronson: I put my career down to good luck, good looks and knowing where all the negatives are kept. Just think yourself lucky I wasn't singing this paragraph "as" The Actor Piers Brasnose.

Back in the car, and the traffic hasn't improved, nor has Happy's driving – and nor has the Quantum of Subtlety. Kermit Roosevelt – meant to have been known as "Mr Green" – Kermit. Green. *Bah* – appears to have bodged a coup attempt by trying to instigate it on the Muslim day of prayer (those damned pesky Empire-building Yanks! That'll teach 'em. Not (ooh)). One suspects his ignorance is not being celebrated but criticised, but then Muslim was only invented in 2001, so how was he *meant* to know, y'knaa?

I shall be writing this paragraph "as" the writers of The Simpsons: I've run out of ideas.

A traveller's tale, a dip into martinis, high-living, spydom and caviar and now a descent into the seamier side of the city, a world more frequently subjected to Fleming's engaged descriptive eye than the martinis, high-living etc (even if it's this latter that caught the popular imagination of "Bond"), we leave Bond about to enter a brothel and take drugs, to live life as a little adventure, to live life "as" James Bond: both experiences are not unknown to him, at least in book form, when he's not Captain Boldman (a neuter prude).

I shall be writing this paragraph "as" Ian Fleming (...the temerity of it): You say that the man who designed these marvellous word clouds is... is a German? The Hun! Everywhere! What's the score? Ah well, surely it all matters not. I'm off for a swim. With luck, I'll spear Pussy on my meat hook.

“As” Ian Fleming – colourful supporting character (albeit not terribly original); the stench and everyday dangers of a city; questionable opinions; the weariness of the traveller new-landed in an unknown place; the fondness for the local history lecture, the light dusting of the tangled skein of espionage not getting in the way of moving matters along. It’s pretty bloody close.

I shall be writing this paragraph “as” Sebastian Faulks: In my exceptionally entertaining (if I say so ... myself... erm) 2011 work “Faulks on Fiction”, text © ...me, I provide an engaging record of how I went about producing Devil May Care and explaining some of the choices I made... three years after the reviews came in, so not just having had the horse bolt the stable, but by that point warmly tucked up in a “pork” pie. As I suggest there, “The trick with parody is to find the characteristic elements of a writer and exaggerate them...roughly 120 per cent of the writer’s own style...I thought it would be crucial to pull up well short of this line... my idea was to create a style that was about 80 per cent Fleming...” I suppose it remains to be determined where the other 20 per cent was. I did give a bit of a clue: “If you cared to be pretentious, you could track through Devil May Care a subtext in which I am courting the character of Bond, trying to bend him a little more to my will...” Stewart, J. – of pretension, j’accuse. Not that that’s in any way pretentious.

The *déchéance* is where it is not “as”, that the lecturing continues into current history, a modern take on 007 corrupted not just by the sixty years of “Bond” being the singlemost culturally impactful fictional character in the West, but a perceptible desire to demonstrate that Bond is not real (...we knew this, Sebastian) and of nil practical benefit given what ultimately really happened (...this we also guessed). Fleming’s world is a heightened reality,

an escape for writer and reader alike. An author who is wanting us strapped to the paddles of a riverboat and repeatedly coldly dunked into harsh reality, rather than liberating us into plausibility, keeps both himself and us imprisoned, no escape, no escapism, and despite getting close, is in danger of writing himself *out* of Ian Fleming's "as". One s. Probably.

JAMES BOND WILL RETURN IN THE 007TH CHAPTER:
VOLUME TWO – PLEASE MAKE IT GO AWAY. JACQUES
STEWART IS WRITING THIS PARAGRAPH "AS" APPROPRIATE:

That's all, Faulks!

THE 007TH CHAPTER

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