



“Ever heard of EVEL Knievel?”: James Bond meets the Rural sheriff

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Abstract

James Bond emerged as an international film hero because he represented an aspirational cosmopolitan ideal offering viewers an opportunity to escape to an exciting international arena of adventure during the Cold War. Sheriff J. W. Pepper’s appearance in Guy Hamilton’s *Live and Let Die* (1973) and *The Man with the Golden Gun* (1974) disrupts such cosmopolitan aspirations by calling attention to a cosmopolitan-rural divide that lurks in the shadows of these films. As a provincial throwback, Pepper presents a starker contrast to Bond than any of the most brutal villains he encounters, thus requiring Bond filmmakers to neutralize the conceptual threat that Pepper’s localism poses to Bond’s trans-global battle against evil on movie screens around the world.

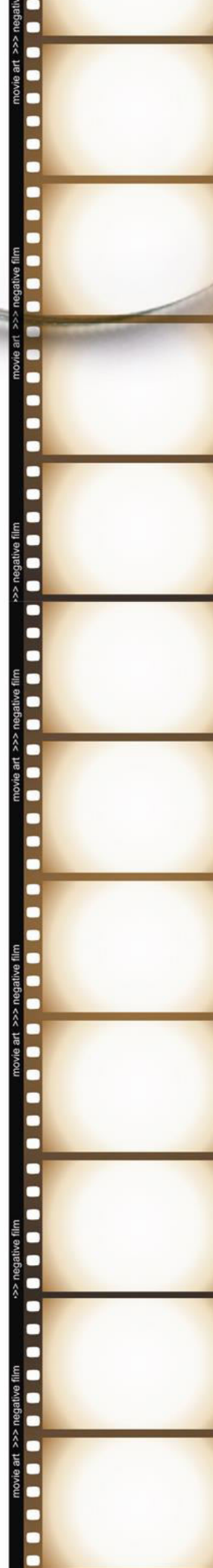
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"Ever heard of EVEL Knievel?": James Bond Meets the Rural Sheriff

John D. Schwetman

When Guy Hamilton's *Live and Let Die* hit theaters in June 1973, it broke away from the conventions of preceding James Bond films, abandoning the more serious tone of Fleming's novels in favor of more overt parody, goofy car chases, and even motifs from the Blaxploitation tradition that shaped early-70s cinema. A central scene in the movie depicts Bond's Louisiana bayou escape by boat from captivity on the villain Mr. Big's alligator farm and, in the spirit of the film's more parodic turn, introduces a singularly discordant comic-relief character named Sheriff J. W. Pepper, played by Clifton James. Pepper enters the scene by establishing a speed trap by the side of a Louisiana highway and then attempting to issue a speeding ticket to one of Mr. Big's henchmen. Spouting a stream of racist vituperation, Pepper struts around in an overblown caricature of the rural Southern police officer, a figure who is wildly out of place in the sophisticated world of global intrigue in which James Bond operates. Pepper's brief appearance in *Live and Let Die* sets up a jarring opposition between the debonair secret agent and the uncouth rural sheriff, and Pepper returns in another film directed by Guy Hamilton, *The Man with the Golden Gun* (1974), further highlighting conflicts inherent in the effort to sell Bond as a cosmopolitan hero to a less cosmopolitan movie audience. After all, Sheriff Pepper's discomfort in Bond's world more accurately reflects the American filmgoer's feelings than do the affectations of the Eton-educated secret agent with his license to kill. Pepper's foolish demeanor thus challenges filmgoers with the awkward question of how they would appear if they were to wander into Bond's rarefied domain of international intrigue and espionage. When Sheriff Pepper encounters Bond a second time in *The Man with the Golden Gun*, Pepper says, "I know you!" and thus subtly models the viewer's experience as a temporary guest on the Cold-War battlefield, wondering if the epic hero on screen

will have time to turn, wink and thereby acknowledge his or her lowly presence. In other words, Pepper's statement—"I know you!"—implies a subsequent unarticulated question: "Do you know me?"

"Freezing Clouds, Anchoring Them to England's Coast"

James Bond is among the most recognizable film heroes in the history of cinema, and his emergence and resilience are indicative of the development of cosmopolitanism as a motif in popular culture. The Bond series has maintained such staying power in spite of the end of the Cold War that once defined Bond's mission and in spite of the success of feminist movements working to destabilize the rigid gender divisions that once determined Bond's masculine appeal. Filmgoers seeking a momentary escape from the everyday find it in Bond's superhuman exploits on the Cold-War battlefield, but also in his lack of local and familial attachments, assured, incidentally, by Blofeld's murder of Bond's wife, Contessa Teresa di Vicenzo at the conclusion of Peter R. Hunt's *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* (1969). Able to thrive in any unfamiliar foreign locale, Bond is the ultimate cosmopolitan hero, dominating a postnational terrain that Martha Nussbaum defines through its Classical Greek origins in "Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism":

Diogenes knew that the invitation to think as a world citizen was, in a sense, an invitation to be an exile from the comfort of patriotism and its easy sentiments, to see our own ways of life from the point of view of justice and the good. The accident of where one is born is just that, an accident; any human being might have been born in any nation. (Nussbaum, 1996: 7)

Nussbaum thus presents a persuasive argument for cosmopolitanism as a basis for overcoming national, ethnic, sectarian and other forms of difference and the violent conflicts that result from them. In *Not for Profit*, Nussbaum refines this distinction by connecting it to our present-day global economy, arguing, "More than at any time in the past, we all depend on people we have never seen, and they depend on us. The problems we need to solve—economic, environmental, religious,

and political—are global in their scope. They have no hope of being solved unless people once distant come together and cooperate in ways they have not before” (Nussbaum, 2010: 79). Addressing global threats in secret, James Bond is one of the “people we have never seen,” quietly confronting evildoers in a cosmopolitan *milieu*. He resembles Nussbaum’s Diogenes insofar as he lacks traditional family and community connections and thus lives in Diogenes’ “exile from the comforts of patriotism and easy sentiments.” While celebrating Bond’s cosmopolitan principles, however, the films introduce new challenges to cosmopolitan optimism about transcending the national divisions that have so often brought about conflict. In particular, they present us with villains who share Bond’s cosmopolitan values and abilities but also hatch murderous schemes to dominate the world. By pitting the villains’ malevolent cosmopolitanism against Bond’s benevolent cosmopolitanism and portraying Bond’s repeated triumphs, the films thus seek to obscure the negative consequences of a cosmopolitan turn. Such portrayals encourage viewers to associate cosmopolitanism with the privileges of wealthy elites, reinforcing it as an aspirational ideal for people of all walks of life. The resistance to cosmopolitanism has receded to the cultural margins, to places like the Louisiana bayous that produce the bigoted Sheriff Pepper. Bringing Pepper into the Bond films thus allows filmmakers to confront and neutralize the threat to Bond’s heroic status that emerges from the antic cosmopolitan reaction originating in the neglected margins of the global economy, in regions that are unapologetically local in their orientations and culturally distinct from more urban concentrations of power.

When Ian Fleming began writing his first James Bond novel *Casino Royale* in 1952, his readership was primed to view James Bond as an ideal hero for the Cold War era. Christoph Lindner, for example, makes an eloquent case for the “Bond phenomenon’s” emergence with “a shift in a cultural understanding of crime that, following the disillusioning experience of two world

wars and the dawn of the atomic age, came to include crimes against humanity” (Lindner, 2009: 79). This expansion of the arena of crime to a global level calls for the elevation of the crime fighter to a global status, too. In his consideration of Bond’s appeal to mass reading audiences, Kingsley Amis writes in *The James Bond Dossier* of the challenge of deriving a sense of adventure from modern office work. Amis became familiar with Bond through his experience assisting with revisions of Fleming’s posthumously published *The Man with the Golden Gun* and actually authoring a James Bond novel himself under the pseudonym Robert Markham, a novel titled *Colonel Sun* (Amis, 1968). With a hint of mockery, Amis defines the appeal of James Bond as more accurately, the appeal of “*The Medium-Grade Civil Servant Who Loved Me*” (Amis, 1965: 1). He brings up an important point that Bond is a hero for the incipient Information Age who facilitates a fantasy of displacement as his fans fantasize about their own secret identities behind banal exteriors: “Under this fiendishly clever bank-clerk (etc.) lurks intrepid ruthless 00999” (Ibid., 5). As he situates Bond within the historical development of other heroes of the modern romance—the private detective, the cowboy, the gangster, the political assassin—Amis emphasizes the facelessness of the secret-agent hero, writing, “Not only have the [secret agents] *no need* to be outwardly different from other men; they *must not* be different” (Ibid., 4). Thus, Amis argues, the secret agent hero thrives by being distinctive in the eyes of the reader or viewer, but utterly nondescript in the eyes of everyone else. Indeed, this invisibility of the secret agent corresponds with the anonymity of any resident of a large city, since cities have radically renegotiated the notion of ties to community and anonymized their inhabitants. The secret agent becomes a key motif within the propaganda for cosmopolitanism by recasting anonymity and isolation as adventure and opportunity.

Fleming's biography reveals that he himself experienced a conflicted relationship to family and place. His father died in World War I, and, as an heir to Scottish gentry, he attended boarding schools in England and Austria. During World War II, he served in the Division of Naval Intelligence as an assistant to Rear Admiral John H. Godfrey, and his record in this role was ambiguous at best. As noted in Rosenberg and Stewart's biography of Fleming, his harshest critics have claimed that he was a bookkeeper with wild dreams: "During the war, as a desk-bound administrator for Naval Intelligence, Fleming seldom had the opportunity to act courageously" (Rosenberg, Stewart, 1989: 30). Paraphrasing John Pearson's biography of Fleming, they write, "All during the war he avoided direct action and genuine discomfort, fighting the Germans instead with great acts of the imagination" (Ibid., 31). One such act was Fleming's scheme that "had the admiralty freezing clouds, anchoring them to England's coast, and mounting anti-aircraft gun platforms on them" (Klady in Rosenberg, Stewart, 1989: 28). Fleming's fantasy of situating fixed gunnery emplacements in frozen clouds is a poignant emblem of his efforts to create a rigid world for himself from the fluid, unpredictable social setting of the wartime British military. In the James Bond novels, he may have accomplished this feat.

Bond and Scaramanga: "We Are the Best"

In Sam Mendes's *Skyfall* (2012), the movement of the action to Bond's ancestral Skyfall estate in Scotland is emblematic of a nostalgic return, "an escape, to a time before technology and signals intelligence complicated the human spying game" (Smith, 2016: 163). This recent film challenges and complicates many of the standard elements of Bond as a film hero, including his repeated disregard for family connections and ties to physical locality. To defeat the villainous former MI6 agent Silva, Bond must return to his geographical origins at the Skyfall estate in Scotland, which

is a very un-cosmopolitan plot element returning Bond to a place of local attachment. However, cosmopolitanism regains the upper-hand when Bond must blow up the Skyfall estate not long after arriving there. Like the murder of Contessa di Vincenzo in *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*, the destruction of Skyfall provides a visual icon of Bond's inability to attach himself in a traditional manner to family and place. This return to Skyfall followed by its destruction is indicative of a complex give-and-take between connection to and alienation from the land that lies at the heart of cosmopolitanism. Bond's work pulls him in two opposite directions, both toward and away from his national identity, leaving him, as Ben MacIntyre explains, empty:

[I]t is the character of Bond—established in the first novel and hardly altered thereafter—that explains the enduring appeal of the world Fleming forged: tough, resourceful, quintessentially British, but also, as Fleming intended, empty—the blunt instrument of the British secret service, a blank slate for the reader to write on. (MacIntyre, 2008: 19)

Thus, the Bond series tends to hollow out the hero's Britishness, leaving only superficial tokens of his national identity and freeing him up to operate as a cultural chameleon as circumstances may require. Macintyre's image of Bond as "a blank slate" is consistent with the stateless qualities of the cosmopolitan hero. His blankness is also a key to his ability to maneuver anonymously through the communities around the world in which he goes about his work. The villains Bond faces tend to be even more cosmopolitan than he is insofar as they are stateless actors of vast wealth, stateless enough to have no moral qualms about annihilating large swaths of the world's population on both sides of the Cold War battle lines in order to acquire power. Bond battles against the leveling excesses of cosmopolitanism as he takes on what Jeremy Black calls "the new 'international' criminal 'without a traceable history' who seems to appear 'out of thin air.'" Thus, placelessness was more than a challenge to identity; it was also a threat" (Black, 2001: 184). Black here provocatively links placelessness to the amorality of the Bond villain, though his observation is certainly open to debate. The real world undoubtedly provides numerous counterexamples of

virtuous stateless actors. Nonetheless, the novels and films tend to link these two qualities alleging at least a correlation, if not a causal connection, between radical alienation and ruthlessness. At times, this heightens Bond's own crisis, as he strives to hold onto his virtue in spite of work that continually alienates him from community.

One of the most memorable tests of Bond's virtue occurs in his encounter with Francisco Scaramanga, who, like Sheriff Pepper, appears in *The Man with the Golden Gun* (1974). Scaramanga's keystone conversation with James Bond provides the film franchise's most insistent riposte to the unsettling allegation that Bond has become as amoral and vicious as the villains he combats. The conversation takes place over lunch in the stylish dining room of Scaramanga's Pacific Island hideout, and it quickly becomes evident that "Scaramanga sees himself and Bond as professional equals" (Chapman, 2000: 174):

James Bond: You live well, Scaramanga.

Francisco Scaramanga: At a million dollars a contract I can afford to, Mr. Bond. You work for peanuts. A hearty "Well done" from her Majesty the Queen and a pittance of pension. Apart from that, we are the same. [He toasts.] To us, we are the best. (1974, 1:43:09-1:43:29)

Bond goes on to dispute Scaramanga's eloquent argument for their equivalence, arguing, "When I kill, it's on the specific orders of my government. And those I kill are themselves killers" (Ibid., 1:43:35-1:43:43). Scaramanga nonetheless continues to press his case with an even stronger insistence on the underlying similarities between these two adversaries:

Scaramanga: Come, come, Mr. Bond. You disappoint me! You get as much fulfillment out of killing as I do. So, why don't you admit it?

Bond: I admit, killing you would be a pleasure.

Scaramanga: You should have done that when you first saw me. But then, of course, the English don't consider it sporting to kill in cold blood, do they?

Bond: Don't count on that [he draws his gun but finds that Scaramanga is already pointing a gun at him]. (Ibid., 1:43:44-1:44:02)

I call this the keystone conversation because this is where the cinematic Bond most directly addresses his morally ambiguous role as a secret agent in a complex, global setting. In this scene, “Bond’s reply asserts the official and moral legitimation for his own actions” (Chapman, 2000: 174), but there is more to the exchange than this. Bond here faces an eloquent challenge to his claims of purity and loyalty from an intelligent opponent, and Scaramanga’s appeal to a brotherhood of non-aligned guns-for-hire is, in some ways, quintessentially cosmopolitan and evocative of a transnational elite in global finance that likewise exploits its detachment from national obligations in order to enrich itself by, for example, moving companies to overseas tax shelters. Insofar as Bond responds to Scaramanga’s pitch, it is with an appeal to justice—killing only killers—and to his, perhaps archaic, allegiance to his Queen. But, to be clear, Bond ultimately fails to refute Scaramanga’s argument here. Instead, he grants Scaramanga’s point about killing for pleasure and then draws his gun without further rhetorical engagement.

It is significant that Scaramanga mocks Bond’s nationalist allegiance at this key moment, tying it to the “pittance of a pension” of the civil servant and identifying it as a hindrance to the cold-bloodedness of the true professional because the “English don’t consider it sporting.” In Scaramanga’s terms, the word *sporting* stands out as a marker of Bond’s class privilege, emblematic of Bond’s delicate ethical standards here. Bond cannot have it both ways. He cannot be both the sporting, privileged British subject and also be vicious enough to survive a duel with a truly unprincipled sociopath like Scaramanga. The brand of cosmopolitanism that Scaramanga

argues for in this scene is the cosmopolitanism of the cut-throat whose lack of national allegiances liberates him from prevailing ethical codes. Viewers presumably have a great deal invested in Bond's effort to adhere to a more ethical brand of cosmopolitanism as a defender of values that transcend national allegiances, or, in other words, as a warrior deploying violence in the name of peace, but the ensuing duel between these two characters fails to resolve the doubts provoked by Scaramanga's assertions. Scaramanga may eventually die at Bond's hands, but the accusation lingers unrefuted.

The more recent film *Skyfall* “staunchly defends the role of secret intelligence as a vital weapon in the fight against security threats, and criticizes the naivety of non-combatant bureaucrats and civilians who seek to question such powers” (Smith, 2016: 155). Indeed, in spite of Bond's obligations to his Queen and to the *sporting* code, which are markers of his national identity, he also has this “license to kill” which provides him with freedom from the ethical restraints of other enforcers of the law. For its own protection, Great Britain has produced this debonair brute whose lack of traditional group affiliations, especially those of family, permit him to move comfortably from one cultural context to another, decorously navigating cultural difference without drawing too much attention to himself, detaching him from national identity as he participates in Cold War conflicts that pit a multicultural capitalist power against a multicultural communist power in the Cold-War-era Bond films. Michael Denning argues that Bond's Cold-War conflicts lack the clear definitions that once informed the conflicts over Empire that preceded them: “The novel of espionage is the tale of the boundary between nations and cultures, and the spy acts as a defender or subverter of the nation in the face of the other, the alien. The spy story appears in Britain in the wake of the heroic novels of imperial adventures and narrates the threat to Empire” (Denning, 1987: 13-14). In addition, Denning persuasively points out how, in this

genre, “History is displaced to secret conspiracies and secret agents, from politics to ethics. The secret *agent* returns human *agency* to a world which seems less and less the product of human action” (Ibid., 14—emphasis in original text). As globalization expands the boundaries of one’s individual allegiances from family to nation to world, individual action risks becoming inconsequential. In Denning’s argument, Bond is only able to return “human *agency*” in the realm of fantasy. Real life, however, in the realm of global capitalism, leaves the individual without that agency as a direct cost of a cosmopolitan expansion outward to encompass the entire globe. Lacking clear connections to place, Bond becomes a subversive figure, a disruptor of previously established categories, “the drifter in a tux whose body bears the signs of social stratification, but who never stays in one place long enough to adopt the mantle of patriarchy through its trappings of soil, blood, and home” (Miller, 2003: 239). Bond thus asserts a cosmopolitan identity without “accumulating [the] power and authority” that often accompanies it (Ibid.), and this may be the only quality that distinguishes him from villains like Scaramanga. As he joins the other civil servants on vacation and quietly mocks the more vulgar, more visible tourists around him, these tourists might understandably struggle to distinguish Bond’s motives from those of the Bond villains once the bullets begin to fly. It would be easy, in other words, for the innocent bystander to confuse the secret agent for the villainous conspirator.

The Role of the American in the British Spy Movie

In this light, one must pay particular attention to the two incursions of Sheriff J. J. Pepper as a police officer in *Live and Let Die* (1973) and as a tourist in *The Man with the Golden Gun* (1974). Pepper’s role in these films is significant insofar as his occupation gives him trappings of power, namely a badge and a gun, but only within the remote rural community that has elected

him to this office. His dialect of American English and his sheriff's uniform both mark him as an inhabitant of his particular Louisiana parish. Local in his orientation and helpless in the face of cultural difference, Pepper is a relic of a bygone pre-cosmopolitan era. In sum, he is everything that James Bond is not. Furthermore, Pepper realizes his own irrelevance during each encounter with Bond, the global policeman. Pepper deserves critical attention because of his complete failure to fit in, which points to the larger issue of the awkward disconnection between viewer and movie hero. In her analysis of portrayals of Russian characters in the Bond film, Katerina Lawless argues that the Bond series "displays bias against Russia . . . manifested textually through a number of linguistic indicators" (Lawless, 2014: 80). She adds that the films "confirm the audience's assurance in its insider status and create a bond of complicity between the filmmakers and the audience in their shared dominance" (Ibid., 94). The depiction of Sheriff Pepper challenges Lawless's argument of audience complicity, however, by deploying a similar pattern of stereotyping against an American, one of the cultural insiders according to the logic of her argument. Lawless persuasively contextualizes the harsh depictions of Russians within an East-West global divide, and the stereotyping of Sheriff Pepper makes similar sense if one situates it within a rural-cosmopolitan divide that gets less discussion but that likewise strongly influences the rhetoric of these films.

To understand this rural-cosmopolitan divide, it is helpful to examine the British-American divide that initially structures the James Bond corpus as a delicate dance between a cosmopolitan author and an American reading audience. Ian Fleming traveled to the United States while working as a secret agent of sorts during World War II. As a consequence of Fleming's interest in the United States and his desire to sell novels in this large, Anglophone literary market, CIA agent Felix Leiter crops up in the very first Bond novel *Casino Royale*, already on hand to smooth over cultural

differences between the British Bond and an American readership. It is clear from the outset that Bond is, “if not an American agent . . . an agent who is at the service of American interests” (Bennett, Woollacott, 1987: 209). Critics Lisa Funnell and Klaus Dodds have extensively examined the political dimensions of this Anglo-American cooperation across the Bond corpus and describe Leiter as the “helpful partner” in opposition to Sheriff Pepper, who “lacks the qualities that would render him an adept ally and equal to Bond” (Funnell, Dodds, 2015: 371). Christophe Laucht argues more pointedly, in “Britannia Rules the Atom” that Fleming’s novels and their film adaptations fictionally establish Great Britain as a greater world power than it actually is, just as they fictionally diminish the dangers posed by nuclear weapons during the Cold War and its aftermath. Laucht’s analysis insists on the film’s efforts to maintain a fantasy of British Cold-War superiority and refers, thus, to the “understated role of the character of CIA agent Felix Leiter as a hero’s helper in numerous stories and films” (Laucht, 2013: 361). Laucht reinforces this understanding of the filmmakers’ difficult challenge of adapting Fleming’s elitist secret agent to the populist inclinations of American film audiences.

The non-British producers, American Albert Broccoli and Canadian Harry Saltzman, had this concern for an American audience in mind as well as they enhanced the American elements of Fleming’s novels and added to Bond’s transatlantic appeal with the help of American screenwriter Richard Maibaum, who wrote the screenplay for 1962’s *Dr. No*—the first of the James Bond movies, directed by Terence Young. The distinctly American influence evident in the earliest Bond movies became even more pronounced when Maibaum brought in fellow American screenwriter Tom Mankiewicz to revise the script for Guy Hamilton’s *Diamonds Are Forever* (1971). Mankiewicz went on to write the screenplay for *Live and Let Die*, which is notable for introducing Roger Moore as the new James Bond, a more English, higher-class replacement for

the rougher-edged, Scottish Sean Connery. Roger Moore's softer, more erudite Bond serves as an even more appropriate foil for Sheriff Pepper than Connery's Bond would have been. *Live and Let Die* is among the more comedic of Bond movies and, at times, crosses over into farce with its elaborately choreographed car and boat chases—elements that are, in some ways, inimical to the objectives of a secret agent story in which, one might assume, the protagonist would seek to avoid notice. *Live and Let Die* also represents the film series' most direct engagement with racial inequality. In other words, the film takes on an array of complex topics and debates that is diverse enough to challenge even the most capable screenwriters.

“Myriads of Invisible Tormentors”

As a representative of a southern American police force identified with the violent suppression of the Civil Rights movement, Sheriff Pepper's place in the film as the butt of the joke adds awkward ambiguities to *Live and Let Die's* commentary on race in the United States in the early 1970s. From our current perspective in 2017, *Live and Let Die* ages poorly, and the experience of viewing it now presents the viewer with archaic views of racism and racial difference, or, in other words, this is the film in which “The racist position of the earlier Bond films is most egregiously flaunted” (Metz, 2004: 66). Some of the racism emanates from Fleming's original novel, whose villain is an African American gangster in league with Communist agents. Villainizing a powerful African American man is perhaps not in itself a racist gesture. In the novel, for example, Bond's boss M defines Mr. Big's villainy as a sign of cultural accomplishment: “And the negro races are just beginning to throw up geniuses in all the professions—scientists, doctors, writers. It's time they turned out a great criminal” (Fleming, [1954] 2012: 17). In addition, Umberto Eco offers Fleming a dubious defense against the charge of racism while paying particular attention to the novel's villain Mr. Big. Eco argues that, though racist generalizations

are present among the Bond villains, Fleming “tempers his choice with irony,” and that he “makes use of stock figures” from traditional fable: “Fleming is a racist in the sense that any artist is one if, to represent the devil, he depicts him with oblique eyes; in the sense that a nurse is one who, wishing to frighten children with the bogeyman, suggest that he is black” (Eco, 1979: 45-46). In this passage, Eco diminishes the consequences of Fleming’s physical transformation of ill-intentioned schemers into misshapen figures and the resulting perpetuation of racist stereotypes. In *Not for Profit*, Martha Nussbaum interprets this tendency to turn the villain into a monster in a far less charitable manner: “Much bad thinking about international politics shows the traces of this pathology, people prove all too ready to think about some group of others as black and sullied, while they themselves are on the side of the angels” (Nussbaum, 2010: 35). In the name of advancing cosmopolitanism, Nussbaum’s analysis of storytelling undoes Eco’s defense of Fleming and of portrayals of deformed or racially-other villains in almost all of the Bond stories. It is noteworthy that the Bond films indulge in this racialized form of villainization while critiquing Sheriff Pepper’s brand of racism and otherwise adopting a more nuanced approach to racial difference.

Like Fleming’s novel, the film portrays a vast African American conspiracy, a sophisticated network of Pullman attendants, cab drivers and shoeshine men, members of Mr. Big’s network armed with complex gadgets that might even make Q envious. From their subaltern positions in Harlem, indeed, because of these subaltern positions, they are able to give Mr. Big, played by Yaphet Kotto, constant intel on Bond’s whereabouts and other matters of interest to his criminal organization. This African American conspiracy brings an important motif from early African American narratives into the secret agent corpus in a provocative manner. It reminds us of escaped slave and abolitionist Frederick Douglass’s desire to “keep the merciless slaveholder

profoundly ignorant of the means of flight adopted by the slave. I would leave him to imagine himself surrounded by myriads of invisible tormentors and let him feel that he is running the frightful risk of having his hot brains dashed out by an invisible agency” (Douglass, [1845] 1967: 136-137). Douglass’s autobiography’s insightful analysis of a modern police state, that of the nineteenth-century slave regime, anticipates the possibility of African American resistance to this police state from a position of structural marginality, a possibility that the makers of *Live and Let Die* exploit along similar lines and to great effect in this film. The most logical target of Mr. Big’s network might, in the abstract, appear to be a racist officer of the law like Sheriff Pepper, but instead, in this film, Mr. Big’s network only attacks James Bond. It is almost as if Bond had haplessly wandered into the middle of an American Civil Rights battle only to draw fire from both of the opposing sides. Of course, by deflecting attention away from Civil-Rights-era disputes, *Live and Let Die* depoliticizes itself and deftly avoids any overt stances that could alienate viewers on either side of this pressing political question.

As an information-gatherer for the hegemonic Western powers, James Bond adopts the cosmopolitan stance of the privileged elites, whereas the African American characters in *Live and Let Die* occupy the cosmopolitan roles of displaced, diasporic wanderers, and this compels us to re-examine an ancient class-driven divide between transnational hegemons and subaltern migrant workers. Fleming’s novel analyzes Mr. Big’s organization in a more overtly racist manner when Bond marvels at its loyalty to Mr. Big but then turns this trait around into a slur about the susceptibility to mysticism evident in their devotion to the Haitian Loa Baron Samedi:

No one looked up from his work. No one would slacken when Mr. Big was out of sight.
No one would put a jewel or coin in his mouth.

Baron Samedi was left in charge.

Only his Zombie had gone from the cave. (Fleming, [1954] 2012: 204)

This account of Mr. Big's employees dutifully loading treasure onto a boat without stealing any for themselves reveals inconsistencies in Fleming's narrative resulting from fundamentally racist, or at least ethnocentric, preconceptions underlying his depictions of Afro-Caribbean people. After all, is Bond any less loyal to his bosses at MI-6? Is his loyalty to the crown of England and the "pittance of a pension" it offers somehow more enlightened and logical than the loyalty these men feel toward Mr. Big? When Bond places his community before his short-term personal interests, this is an act of good citizenship, but when Mr. Big's men do so, Fleming casts them as unschooled primitives hindered by their own backward superstitions. In both cases, characters from various ethnic backgrounds are able to form a unified purpose that crosses the cultural divisions that separate them, divisions, say, between the Scottish and the English or between African Americans and Caribbean islanders. England's MI-6 and the armies of most Bond-villains are well-crafted, cosmopolitan entities that are able to unite culturally diverse groups behind a single coherent goal. Both the film and the novel demean Baron Samedi's mystique because, as Daniel Ferreras-Savoye writes, "Those types of beliefs are not only opposed to those of the official religion, but they are also useless against Bond, thus demonstrating the superiority of pragmatism and reason over irrational beliefs" (Ferreras-Savoye, 2013: 155). And, this is an important insight in Ferreras-Savoye's study: that Bond is the steadfast defender of a logical, secular world order in its battle against forces of religious zealotry. And, oddly enough, in this sense Sheriff Pepper shares common cause with Mr. Big. Bond is the enforcer of this colonial (or post-colonial) regime of "pragmatism and reason" that equates regional, more traditionally religious cultures with obsolescence. Mr. Big's African origins readily identify him with the colonized Other that might logically mobilize against this expanding empire, though the novel and film alike both displace

this more threatening agenda into the spectacle of Mr. Big's greed. Sheriff Pepper's cultural and religious beliefs may be just as "irrational" from Bond's perspective, but filmmakers carefully elide such differences, leaving Pepper has a two-dimensional caricature. Thus, *Live and Let Die* dramatizes Sheriff Pepper's encounter with this larger police structure as one that confuses and ultimately threatens him, leaving his status unresolved. *The Man with the Golden Gun* reintroduces Pepper in order to incorporate him into this transnational police structure on more sympathetic terms. Whereas Mr. Big's encounter with the global police state results in his violent death, Sheriff Pepper's encounter results in a moment of gentle reconciliation in this second film.

"The Middle of the Road"

The long episode in New Orleans and the surrounding bayous that sets the stage for Sheriff Pepper's appearance in the film version of *Live and Let Die* does not exist in Fleming's novel, nor does Sheriff Pepper himself. The filmmakers understood the appeal of exotic locations, and New Orleans is appropriate as a setting within a story involving Caribbean and American forms of mysticism associated with descendants of African slaves. When one of Mr. Big's confident African American henchmen stations himself in a well-positioned ambush, in the episode described at the beginning of this article, Sheriff Pepper drives up in his squad car and immediately commences a diatribe in which he insultingly refers to the man as "Boy" and criticizes him for excessive driving speeds. Though played for laughs in the film, viewers can easily imagine the variations on this conversation that took place on southern American highways in the decades leading up to this scene with tragic consequences for African American suspects subjected to a racist legal system. In this case, however, Bond interrupts the encounter by launching his motorboat into the air over Pepper's squad car, giving Mr. Big's man the opportunity to escape from Pepper and continue his

pursuit of Bond. Pepper's ignorance of the trans-global crime drama playing out around him at this moment skews audience sympathies against him and also highlights the superiority of Bond's sophisticated understanding of this dangerous criminal gang. Bond has already demonstrated his more modern views on race by having a tryst with a beautiful African American agent named Rosie Carver (played by Gloria Hendry). Bond, thus, provides the cosmopolitan ideal, and Sheriff Pepper appears as both a point of contrast to Bond, and as a point of identification for many of the film viewers, who, seeing themselves in Pepper, may even feel a little foolish for sharing his narrow-minded provincial beliefs and inclinations toward racist generalization. In this manner, *Live and Let Die* joins a long tradition of Hollywood films belittling the provincial origins of characters like Sheriff Pepper. One year earlier, for example John Boorman's *Deliverance* (1972) provided one of the most emblematic portrayals of the rural South as a dangerous backwater overseen by a corrupt police force. Boorman adapted the film from James Dickey's 1970 novel about Atlanta businessmen who encounter extreme violence at the hands of country folk while on a canoe trip in northern Georgia. The portrayal of Sheriff Pepper in *Live and Let Die* thus appropriates the dark, threatening subversion evident in the rural South of *Deliverance* and minimizes it by turning it into a joke.

Having established Sheriff Pepper as the racist foil who might make James Bond's own racism seem palatable by comparison, the same writers Maibaum and Mankiewicz teamed up to bring Roger Moore back in 1974's *The Man with the Golden Gun*, and they could not resist bringing Sheriff Pepper back, too, for another round of redneck minstrelsy. This casting decision came about partly because Pepper "proved so popular with audiences and critics" (Chapman, 2000, 168). Bond, in pursuit of the assassin Scaramanga, finds himself in Thailand, and, in a coincidence of Dickensian proportions, he stumbles into Sheriff Pepper who is in Bangkok as one of the ugliest

of ugly American tourists. Whereas *Live and Let Die* structurally resembles Fleming's novel, *The Man with the Golden Gun* bears only the faintest resemblance to its source text. The screenwriters have shifted the action from the Caribbean to the Far East, and, in their most radical revision, they have transformed the churlish, American Scaramanga of the novel (who resembles Sheriff Pepper in some ways) into a stealthy, erudite British assassin played by Christopher Lee, an actor who was in real life Ian Fleming's step-cousin. In Fleming's novel, Scaramanga convenes a sort of executive committee of US Mafiosi and Communist agents at his schmaltzy, slightly dilapidated Jamaican resort (Fleming, [1965] 2012), while the film's debonair, classier, more British Scaramanga operates from an over-engineered, isolated retreat on a remote Chinese island where he has constructed an elaborate hit-man funhouse/obstacle course for himself complete with a James Bond statue for target practice. In place of the novel's crew of burly, crass crime-lords, the Scaramanga of the movie has only one diminutive man-servant Nick Nack, played by the French actor Hervé Villechaize who later acquired more fame in a parallel role as the assistant to Ricardo Montalban's Mr. Rourke in the television series *Fantasy Island*.

Sheriff Pepper first encounters Bond in *The Man with the Golden Gun* at a peculiar and improbable moment when Scaramanga and Nick Nack have driven off in a car with Bond's ally Agent Goodnight in the trunk, and Bond needs a car to rescue her. Through a series of highly improbable plot contrivances, Pepper finds himself in the passenger seat of an AMC Hornet with Bond at the wheel. Bond drives it through a dealership showroom window and takes off in pursuit of Scaramanga and Nick Nack through the streets of Bangkok in a high-speed car chase involving numerous near misses and the carefully-choreographed crashes of some Thai police cars. Throughout the chase, Bond grimaces uncomfortably while Pepper spews invective against "pointy-heads," which is presumably a racist reference to the Thai people. As Bond prepares to

leap the Hornet over a Bangkok canal via the remnants of a bridge, Pepper says, “You’re not thinkin’ to...” and Bond mockingly adopts Sheriff Pepper’s Louisiana drawl, saying “I sure am, Boy!” in response (1974, 1:26:48). This playful jibe serves to deflate the tension of incipient hostility that has dominated the interactions between these two characters up to this point. Bond’s earlier casual disregard for the low-class Pepper shifts at this moment into an acknowledgment of his presence and of their mutual obligation to work together to save Agent Goodnight (and, in the larger sense, the world).

Actually, Bond’s complete line is, “I sure am, Boy! Ever heard of Evel Knievel?” and it is no accident that Sheriff Pepper’s incursion into the James Bond corpus coincides with the Knievel-inspired car chases of 70s action movies, especially in the car-loving United States. In this sense, Sheriff Pepper anticipates variations on the figure of the rural sheriff that were to emerge in roles played by Jackie Gleason in Hal Needham’s *Smoky and the Bandit* (1977) and by James Best in the Carter-era television series *The Dukes of Hazzard* (1979-1985). This popular subgenre was to feature healthy doses of rural, white, American antics and elaborate car chases. Nearly every episode of *The Dukes of Hazzard* culminated in an elaborate car stunt resembling Bond and Sheriff Pepper’s leap over a Thai canal in *The Man with the Golden Gun*. And, undoubtedly, the car chases that emerge in the escapist film tradition coincide partly with the ascendancy of actual vehicular stunts performed by daredevils like Evel Knievel. The car chases also serve to shrink the environment of their films making vast territories seem momentarily conquerable. In some ways, the automobile provides the mechanical means of making one’s world a more cosmopolitan, accessible place, especially in the United States. As a cosmopolitan hero, James Bond expresses his power partly by asserting his mastery over the transportation modes at his disposal, and the car chase allows Bond to display his cosmopolitan credentials. It also makes his world seem smaller

and more conquerable than it really is, or, as Ferreras-Savoye puts it, “By being such a reckless driver on the screen, Bond not only displays the ever-present power of his 00s, but he also allows us to escape from the hold that machinery has taken over us in real life” (Ferreras-Savoye, 2013: 158). This shrinkage of the world is part of the fantasy.

In some ways, too, the car chase places a cinematic magnifying glass over the larger transportation networks that enable Bond to move all over the globe with few hindrances. The car chase provides a concrete analogue to the more abstract acuity that Bond has for moving across cultural differences in distant corners of the world. Both *Live and Let Die* and *The Man with the Golden Gun* present viewers an escapist fantasy offering momentary liberation from the day-to-day restrictions in their lives, such as traffic laws and the police officers who enforce them. In this trajectory, Sheriff Pepper evolves from his role as the man setting the speed trap in *Live and Let Die* to his role as a passenger in a speeding car and accessory to numerous violations of Bangkok traffic codes in *The Man with the Golden Gun*. And, conversely, in Pepper’s eyes the law-breaking Bond of *To Live and Let Die* transforms into the cosmopolitan enforcer of higher laws of *The Man with the Golden Gun*, and Pepper thereby becomes a valid point-of-view character to articulate the film-watching experience of many white, working-class American viewers. For this brief moment in a Hornet speeding through the streets of Bangkok, Bond dips down from the clouds to walk among his audience.

The appeal of the James Bond movies to a large, American audience is, at first blush, an appeal to escape from the mundane reality of a workplace becoming ever more desk-bound with the advent of the Information Age. In terms of escapism, Bond’s radical contrast with his audience is a selling point. However, the filmmakers of these two Bond movies knew that they had to strike a balance. Filmgoers wanted a Bond hero who broke the laws of nation-states and of physics alike,

but they also had to relate to Bond, to imagine themselves *as* Bond. They had to accomplish that act of identification that Amis describes in *The James Bond Dossier*: “To keep to the middle of the road between fantasy and realism” (Amis, 1965: 6). Maintaining this balance with a British reading audience was plausibly less difficult because of a shared British culture and a shared understanding of rigid British class hierarchies. But, accomplishing the same for American audiences would have required more creativity on the part of filmmakers, and this, too, explains Sheriff Pepper’s awkward presence in the two films. Sheriff Pepper’s excesses serve to shove American viewers across to Bond’s side of the cultural divide, to look back upon themselves in caricature from this position, and to laugh along with James Bond at the failings of their own localist orientations while celebrating their ability to do so. Sheriff Pepper bridges the chasm between the secret agent and the filmgoers who, like him, have elbowed their way into James Bond’s story, and, though at first unwelcome there, acquired the recognition and perhaps even momentary respect of the secret agent behind the wheel.

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