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BRITISH SPY FICTION IN THE CHANGING WORLD: THE GENRE AND ITS HYBRIDITY IN A DIACHRONIC PERSPECTIVE

Brytyjska fikcja szpiegowska w zmieniającym się świecie:
gatunek i jego hybrydyczność w perspektywie diachronicznej

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Introduction

In a worldwide and historical perspective, the oldest known manuscript to mention a "spy" was created in Ancient China. Around 510 BC, a local counterpart of this word appeared in Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* (Chinese: 孫子兵法, pinyin. *Sūnzǐ Bīngfǎ*). Considering its Chinese etymology, the term is believed to be related to the concepts of "a crack", "a chink", or "crevice", all three of which immediately evoke the association with a peep-hole. This, in turn, might suggest that the original image of a spy was simply that of a voyeur staring at somebody through a small opening (McCormick and Fletcher 1990: 1).

Even though it is possible to trace certain spy archetypes in Ancient literature (e.g., Dolon[1]) and the Bible (e.g., Judas Iscariot), the history of spy fiction dates back only to the late 19th and early 20th centuries – more specifically, to the so-called "New Imperialism". It was a period of markedly intensified and accelerated colonisation that took place approximately in the years 1875–1914. By its end, nearly the entire African continent, a considerable part of the Asian one, and many Pacific islands had been collectively conquered by European powers, the USA, Russia, and Japan. The process of that large-scale subjugation, along with the aggravated industrial and politico-military rivalries between colonising countries, entailed multiple armed conflicts, such as the Second Anglo-Afghan War (1878–1880), the Anglo-Zulu War (1879), the First and Second Boer Wars (1880–1881; 1899–1902), the First Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895), the Spanish-American War (1898), and the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905) (Chamberlain 1970/1981: 3-6, 16, 36).[2] Obviously, the newly-escalated atmosphere of international tension and intrigue facilitated the gradual emergence of literary works which exploited the concept of clandestine operations in both Europe and the colonial territories (Bloom 1990: 10). This practically means that, already at its inception, the spy genre was thematically inspired by real-life events.

British spy fiction, which constitutes the primary concern of this study, receives significant academic and non-academic attention both locally and abroad, most likely because many such books are written and translated for a mass international readership. This is simply popular literature, principally advertised for and easily accessible to the general public around the world. As for that scholarly interest, largely centred on his-

[1] In Homer's *Iliad*, Dolon attempts to spy on the Greek ships for the Trojans but is captured by Odysseus and Diomedes, the latter of whom eventually kills him.
[2] See also: Webster, Magdoff, and Nowell 2023 (online article).

torical issues, it is to some extent reflected by the extensive bibliography for this dissertation. Important monographs include, i.a., Brett F. Woods's *Neutral Ground: A Political History of Espionage Fiction* (2008), Oliver S. Buckton's *Espionage in British Fiction and Film since 1900. The Changing Enemy* (2015), and Sam Goodman's *British Spy Fiction and the End of Empire* (2016). Woods examines how "extrapolations of certain real world political events – [...] British Imperialism, the World Wars, and the Cold War, for example – have consistently and significantly threaded their way through the fabric of the genre" (2008: 1-2). Buckton, in turn, investigates "the origins, history and development of the British spy novel and film into the twenty-first century, focusing on the various political, literary, and cultural influences that have shaped major landmarks of espionage literature and cinema"; he argues that spy fiction, understood as both literary and cinematic narratives, "has consistently played a role in imagining, describing, elaborating and indeed defining the identity of [...] the foremost 'enemy' and national rival [...] that, in any given period, is perceived as the greatest threat to the national security of Britain and its allies" (2015: xii). Lastly, Goodman "compares and contrasts the representation of power and space in the work of a range of spy fiction authors either active or influential throughout the Cold War" (2016: 10); to be more precise, he "charts a thirty-four-year period of decline [(1945–1979) with a view to presenting] a spatial and temporal narrative of British spy fiction and the end of empire" (2016: 14). Basically, those three and many other researchers have observed that espionage stories tend to be firmly grounded in their contemporary extratextual reality, and so thematically evolve in pursuit of various real-world changes, largely yet not exclusively tied to current affairs. Given that this complex phenomenon can be analytically approached from distinct perspectives and angles, even frequently researched spy stories continue to be studied from diverse and oftentimes novel points of view to this day.

This dissertation will expand on the existing knowledge regarding the aforementioned historically variable ties between intratextual and extratextual reality. Those will be explored within a sample of British spy works, deliberately restricted to six discussed in detail (as well as some additionally referenced ones) for the sake of achieving yet another goal. That aim is to establish how focusing fictional plots on espionage generally affects the hybridity of the spy genre and, by extension, conventions related to that genre. This problem receives little to no attention in scholarly studies. The conspicuous academic reluctance to examine it could be attributed to, among others, the existence of multiple conflicting and oftentimes confusingly imprecise crime genre taxonomies,

many of which encompass spy fiction. Obviously, instead of the poorly defined ones, it is necessary to adopt a simple yet comprehensive one for this research. It will be argued that, with slight modifications, Charles Derry's taxonomy can serve as a conducive framework for the analysis of the generic intricacies of both cinematic and literary espionage stories, the latter of which will be the main focus of this study. Derry's suggestion, originally applied to crime films, is heavily inspired by a 19th-century model of crime fiction proposed by Edgar Allan Poe as well as Alfred Hitchcock's understanding of the thriller.

The working hypothesis is that spy fiction is far from being a homogenous genre. This will be shown with the help of the revised version of the aforementioned taxonomy. Its use will also facilitate the process of determining, within the sample of spy stories, which generic links are inherent to the hybrid spy genre, i.e., forced by its "sensational vs realist" subgeneric split and, above all, the intrinsic ties between the motif of espionage and those explored in various other genres. This is important because particular narratives inevitably incorporate some additional elements, unrelated or at least very loosely related to the above factors.

The thesis consists of three chapters. Chapter 1, both theoretical and analytic, aspires towards establishing an understanding of spy fiction and its position among other crime genres, all for the sake of discussing its hybridity and conventions with a high degree of efficiency. The chapter introduces key concepts (such as genre and hybridity), reconceptualises spy fiction as "factopiction", re-evaluates some existing definitions of that particular genre, divides crime genres into mystery and thriller (sub)genres, presents some preliminary considerations on the hybridity of and real-life inspired masculinity within the spy genre, and, finally, distinguishes two types of spy thrillers – sensational and realist ones. In essence, Chapter 1 constitutes a logical foundation for the mostly analytic Chapters 2 and 3.

Chapter 2 examines four early prototypes/forerunners of British spy novels in terms of their generic hybridity and ties with contemporary extratextual reality. These works are Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* (1900), Erskine Childers's *The Riddle of the Sands* (1903), William LeQueux's *Behind the Throne* (1905), and Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent* (1907). Those specific ones have been chosen for research because they differ significantly in the ways and extent to which they focus on espionage. This draws attention to the general diversity of formative directions taken in the late 19th and early 20th centuries by the then nascent spy thriller genre. The four novels are also meant to high-

light its "sensational vs realist" subgeneric split. While it is true that most of them are widely known and analysed (especially *Kim* and *The Secret Agent*, but also *The Riddle of the Sands*), their respective links to the contemporary real world still can and will, as previously hinted, be studied from new insightful perspectives and angles. Naturally, the vast scholarly and non-scholarly interest poses no impediment to the exploration of the scarcely addressed hybridity of particular espionage stories and the spy genre, in this case evaluated with the use of an altogether original approach to the task.

Chapter 3 mainly revolves around selected British Cold War sensational and realist spy thrillers, written respectively by Ian Fleming and John le Carré. The decision to discuss these works has been made on grounds of the fact that they were created by acclaimed authors at a time when the genre was no longer insipient, but well-developed and at the actual peak of its popularity. The core, albeit not exclusive, juxtaposition is between Fleming's *Casino Royale* (1953) and le Carré's *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* (1963). This is because the sensational plot of the former contrasts very well with the realistic one of the latter. Once again, it is crucial to stress that even though this chapter is devoted to espionage stories that are widely read and studied, the discussion of their ties with contemporary extratextual reality incorporates new points of view, most vividly exemplified by the in-depth investigation of the first literary 007's broadly-understood xenophobic conduct. Yet another major source of novelty is, of course, the very way in which the hybridity of these specific spy works and the spy genre is assessed.

The analysis of *Casino Royale* is situated within a concise Bondology. There are two reasons for that. First, much like the globally popular *James Bond* multimedia franchise, the bulk of existing research devoted to it is very messy. Given that various literary and cinematic versions of 007 tend to be confused and conflated with one another, it is necessary to clearly separate Fleming's protagonist from them. Second, that original character appears in a series of novels and short stories. It would be largely inefficient to discuss him only in relation to the writer's debut novel, and so relevant supplementary references to the subsequent parts are also included. Because of the aforementioned issues, the Bondology is significantly longer than the section devoted to le Carré's *oeuvre*. Notwithstanding, the study of *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* is preceded by an introduction that covers major themes in – and sources of inspiration for – his works. Chapter 3 is followed by the overall conclusions drawn from this dissertation.

Chapter 1: Towards an Understanding of Spy Fiction and Its Position among Other Crime Genres

1.1. Defining the Concepts of Genre and Generic Hybridity

Superficially, the concept of genre may seem to be a simple one. In literary studies, it is often defined as a specific type of writing; in film studies, a particular kind of films (Turco 1999: 9; Neale 2004: 105). Generally, genres serve as means of identifying works of art characterised by a high degree of similarity in their form and content[3] (Frow 2006/2015: 1-5). As these significant correlations can be drawn across a wide range of media, the notion of genre encompasses literary texts, graphic narratives, films, etc.[4] In relation to broadly-understood cultural texts, the immanent role of each genre is that of a "filter" – it is a tool for differentiating one of their varieties from others.

It must be emphasised that generic affiliation is determined by "likeness", not "sameness". Basically, even within the framework of a single genre, each work of fiction is, to a greater or lesser extent, different from others. As a result, genres can only function as abstract constructs, i.e., they are always constrained by a set of generalised rules, which can be – at least partially – applied to a variety of narratives. This, in turn, creates a most uncanny paradox: even the so-called "classic representatives" of a given genre can never fully conform to all of its conventions, nor are they completely exempt from displaying the slightest traces of generic transgression. This observation could be easily supported by that of Jacques Derrida, who suggests that every genre is governed by a "law of impurity or a principle of contamination" – in other words, its boundaries are approximate, and thus can never become wholly impervious (1980: 57).[5]

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[3] This definition is grounded in the traditional understanding of genres as classification tools. That popular view has its roots in literary criticism and can be traced back to Aristotle, who, by distinguishing tragedy, epic, and comedy in his *Poetics*, laid the foundations for the development of Western genre theory and the ensuing hierarchy of particular types of fiction (Frog, Koski, and Savolainen 2016: 17-43). It needs to be stressed, however, that some contemporary studies propose a comprehensive interdisciplinary approach to the concept of genre perceived – more broadly – as the underlying creator of meaning. For an extensive discussion on the matter, see: Devitt 1993: 573-586.

[4] Undoubtedly, the establishment of generic links between individual works of art can be associated with the notion of intertextuality. The term was coined by Julia Kristeva in 1966 and originally referred to the idea that the creation of a new text always entails the presence of already existing texts within it (1966/1980: 69). Naturally, intertextuality can be perceived as a phenomenon which is not solely restricted to literature, but occurs across a wide variety of media (Nycz 1990: 97). Still, it is vital to stress the fact that there exist multiple – occasionally conflicting – theories of intertextuality. For a detailed overview of some of them, see: Allen 2000/2011.

[5] In his article, Derrida hypothesises that "a text cannot belong to no genre, it cannot be without or less a genre. Every text participates in one or several genres, there is no genreless text; there is always a genre and genres, yet such participation never amounts to belonging" (1980: 65). To put it in simple terms, Derrida discriminates between the terms "belonging" and "participation", deeming the latter the only

Considering the above, it could be concluded that the practical classificatory efficiency of a given genre is commensurate with the degree of precision in establishing its distinctive – albeit simplified – features regarding the stock characters, literary/cinematic space, narrative structure, themes, etc. If those vital marks are very poorly specified (or overtly neglected), the genre becomes an equally vague category, occasionally misleading both consumers and scholars of cultural texts alike.

Whether well-established or not, genres are – essentially – dynamic. Over time, they undergo more or less significant transformations, frequently influenced by the emergence of new historical, political, and social contexts in the rapidly changing world (Devitt 1993: 580). In response to that ceaseless evolution, genre theories should be regularly re-examined in order to remain both culturally and academically relevant. The ongoing necessity of such revision can be further justified by the fact that the gradual accumulation of generic modifications encourages hybridisation.

Hybridisation can be defined as "the process by which two or more genres combine to form a new genre or subgenre; or by which elements of two or more genres are combined in a single work" (Duff 2000: xiv). Thus, "hybridity" denotes a conspicuous combination of two or more genres within a single (sub)genre (or their elements within a given work of fiction). This notion constitutes a recurring object of contemporary genre studies (see: Kent 1986, Hassan 1987, Hutcheon 1988, Duff 2000, Gregson 2004, Auger 2011, Garzone and Ilie 2014). Simultaneously, it is worth indicating that the use of the term "hybrid" in relation to genres has also been subjected to some scholarly criticism. For example, Martina Allen claims that works of fiction never fully conform to the "rules" of a single genre as they simply possess the features of various ones (2013: 6). In her view, the notion of "generic hybridity" is flawed as there exists no precise "generic purity" with which it could be efficiently contrasted. Alternatively, Allen reinterprets genres as "schematised world-constructions" which, if merged together,

proper one to describe the relationship between a genre and a text (i.e., a work of art/fiction), which can never be entirely confined within its boundaries. Overall, the scholar's design is to capitalise on this aspect in order to mock the very idea of ascribing texts to – in his view, intrinsically flawed – genres. It needs to be clarified that, on that particular score, this study does not support Derrida's argument at all. While it is true that generalisation inevitably constitutes the theoretical foundation of genres, it does not simultaneously diminish their practical functionality as simplified models of classification. Thus, their intricacies and evolution most certainly deserve academic attention, as evident in the ongoing popularity and development of genre studies.

form "blends" (2013: 10). Still, the final outcome of this suggestion seems mainly semantic: in practice, Allen uses the term "blend" to denote a "hybrid".[6]

A representative example of a generic hybrid is spy fiction. It is precisely its hybridic quality/impurity that will be the focus of the present study. Currently, one of the major difficulties in conducting such an analysis lies in the fact that globalisation – or, more specifically, the progressive commercialization of fiction – has blurred the differences between particular types of crime stories, including those featuring spies. For example, the international online retailer *Amazon.com* divides such works into the following eight groups: Mystery, Thriller & Suspense; Thrillers & Suspense; Spies & Politics; Assassinations; Conspiracies; Espionage; Political; Terrorism.[7] From a marketing perspective, the adoption of such broad and vague criteria seems convenient – the greater the flexibility of categories, the wider the spectrum of books and films which can be subsumed and sold under such headings. For a scholar investigating the spy genre, however, such an imprecise division of crime stories seems of very little practical use as the boundaries between supposedly distinct groups are, in truth, excessively permeable. Notably, Joseph Conrad's 1907 novel *The Secret Agent* – along with a multitude of other espionage works[8] – could be assigned to all of them.[9]

As this chapter focuses on establishing a general understanding of the spy genre and its relationship to other crime genres, it seems reasonable not to limit the perspective to British fiction just yet. Such a restriction will be imposed on further chapters. At this point, however, a broader approach offers greater flexibility as regards the selection of useful theories and, most importantly, the illustration of certain very specific phenomena with the use of diverse examples.

[6] Even though most of Allen's observations are not particularly relevant to this study of spy fiction, her research could prove valuable in the context of a broader discussion concerning different academic approaches to genre analysis. Basically, she attempts to show how Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner's theory of Conceptual Blending – originally developed within Cognitive Linguistics – could be practically applied to the field of genre studies. For more information, see: Allen 2013: 10-18; Fauconnier and Turner 2002/2003.

[7] See: Amazon.com: Books. https://www.amazon.com/s/browse?_encoding=UTF8&node=283155&ref_=nav_shopall-export_nav_mw_sbd_intl_books (accessed March 25, 2019).

[8] Later, two types of spy fiction will be distinguished – namely "sensational spy thrillers" and "realist spy thrillers". Since they are closely connected with each other, terms such as "spy/espionage stories", "spy/espionage novels", and "spy/espionage films" are used in relation to both groups.

[9] In Chapter 2, one of the sections will be specifically devoted to Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent* and its generic hybridity.

1.2. Reconceptualising Spy Fiction as "Factopiction"

One of the reasons for the continuing popularity of espionage stories is that they are characterised by plots/subplots which are at least loosely based on real-life events or relate to them. As a result, spy works reflect the cultural and socio-political tensions which existed/exist between various countries (Winks 1993: 223). This can be exemplified by the ever-present motif of an enemy/enemies, whose evolution closely parallels the real-world emergence of international threats (e.g., the Soviets, the Nazis, terrorists, etc.).[10] In the course of this discussion, it will be suggested that spy fiction attempts to exploit and comment upon those and other dangers as well as the means and methods of combating them. For this very reason, extratextual reality will not be ignored in the present study.

In essence, the spy genre blends historical/political facts with their highly subjective (frequently moral) evaluations. Naturally, in order to become an enthralling story, this combination is further intermixed with more or less whimsical fictional elements invented by the author/filmmaker. Thus, espionage works could be best described as "phantasmagorical", i.e., they take the form of a gripping multilayered coalescence of fact, opinion, and fiction. Consequently, if those components were graphically represented by partially overlapping circles, the interface of all three of them would become a metaphorical manifestation of spy fiction: the genre which blends (and distorts) "the indisputably true" with "the downright false/impossible/supernatural" and "the openly biased" (Figure 1). To refer to this particular amalgamation, it is useful to coin a new term: factopiction.[11]

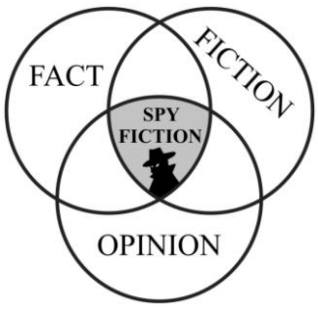


Figure 1: Spy Fiction as "Factopiction"[12]

[10] For a monograph specifically dedicated to enemy shifts in British spy fiction, see: Buckton 2015.

[11] The idea to create the *portmanteau* "factopiction" to represent the captivating narrative amalgamation of fact, opinion, and fiction has been directly inspired by the considerable popularity of the term "faction" – which denotes a similar mixture of fact and fiction – in relatively recent literary, cinematic, media, and social studies. For some notable uses of the expression, see: Johansen and Søndergaard 2010, Pakri and Graf 2012, Buckton 2015, Toni 2019, Butnaru 2020.

[12] The spy silhouette icon was downloaded from: *PNG Image.net*, https://pngimage.net/spy-icon-png-4 (accessed March 7, 2020). According to the copyright statement of rights posted on the website, no re-

Figure 1 serves as a simplified model. It is not meant to imply a hierarchical combination of fact, fiction, and opinion (or, as the term "factopiction" suggests, fact, opinion, and fiction). Basically, the three elements coexist, although the proportions – depicted, for aesthetic purposes, as equal in the graph – in truth vary from one spy work to another and are generally difficult to estimate. To support this argument, it is sufficient to observe that the literary/cinematic art of spying cannot be reliably evaluated in terms of its overtly "factual", "fictional", and "opinionated" aspects by those scholars, creators, and consumers of the spy genre who have had no prior insight into the secret world of real-life espionage (and will probably never have in the course of their lives).

As for the comparatively narrow group of (retired) spies/secret agents whose professional experience could potentially contribute to such an analysis, most of them would probably refuse to reveal the strictly confidential intricacies of "the trade" (presumably, for fear of compromising their personal safety). In Britain, specifically, the unauthorised disclosure of classified "espionage-related" information (such as the operational methods of intelligence agencies) has been legally sanctioned since 1911[13] under the *Official Secrets Act 1911* (*OSA*) and its subsequent amendments[14] (Northcott 2015: 40-41). Thus, even though some (former) British spies/secret agents created – or continue to create – spy stories, those are not faithful emulations of real-life espionage; if they were, the authors would definitely be brought to court.[15] Notably, in his 1964 novel *You Only Live Twice*, Ian Fleming addresses the "possibility" of "his own" exposure to such a fate. In Bond's obituary for *The Times*, M writes:

> The inevitable publicity, particularly in the foreign Press, accorded some of [Bond's] adventures, made him, much against his will, something of a public figure, with the inevitable result that a series of popular books came to be written around him by a personal friend and former colleague of James Bond [Ian Fleming]. If the quality of these books, or their degree of veracity, had been any

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[13] Two years earlier, in 1909, the Secret Service Bureau (forerunner of MI5 and MI6) was officially established.

[14] The full amended text of the Act can be found in the official web database of the statute law of the United Kingdom. See: *Official Secrets Act 1911*. http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo5/1-2/28/contents (accessed February 10, 2020).

[15] In 1933, one of those "(former)-British-spies/secret-agents-turned-writers" – Compton Mackenzie – was tried under the *OSA* for including real-life confidential information in his 1932 memoir *Greek Memories*. On the basis of the author's autobiographical report on the course of the trial, his sentence may appear relatively lenient – he received a £100 fine (See: Mackenzie 1968: 83-106). Also, for some other "leaks", Graham Greene and John le Carré were "sternly rebuked" by the authorities (Buckton 2015: 16-17). Overall, it can be assumed that, under the principle of law-abidance, most British "spy" writers generally eschew the divulgence of classified data in fiction, albeit "acts of indiscretion" are sometimes (un)intentionally committed.

> higher, the author would certainly have been prosecuted under the Official Secrets Act. It is a measure of the disdain in which these fictions are held at the Ministry [of Defence (MoD)] that action has not yet – I emphasize the qualification – been taken against the author and publisher of these high-flown and romanticized caricatures of episodes in the career of an outstanding public servant (Fleming 1964/2006: 258-259).

This short passage epitomises the spy genre as what, for the purposes of this research, has earlier been termed "factopiction". Essentially, Fleming – understood as the real-world (and currently deceased) writer – could not physically enter the fictitious realm of his *James Bond* novel; neither could the "popular books" he created. By the same token, the actual *OSA* could not take any legal effect within that imaginary domain. However, the author was able to concoct an abstract, distorted image – or, more accurately, reflection – of himself, his works, and the legislation, one that could be imposed upon the narrative. Clearly, the real Fleming was not "a personal friend and former colleague of James Bond", his books were not written in the wake of Bond's "inevitable publicity, particularly in the foreign press", and the real *OSA* was never a tool at the fictional MoD's disposal. Still, all those intratextual deformities are agglutinated to the elements taken from the extratextual reality, which grants the ensuing concurrent combination a false air of real-world authenticity. Simultaneously, it must be remembered that such "deviant blends" are not fully detached from reality; on the contrary, they are likely to harbour authorial evaluations and comments. Those, in turn, can be – with greater or lesser success – deciphered through logical reasoning (as shown later, such interpretations, though useful, tend to be conjectural and may sometimes radically vary depending on the initial assumptions).

Thus far, differentiating fact from fiction within the quoted passage has not been particularly complicated. However, certain issues cannot be properly evaluated in those terms. The problem can be demonstrated on the basis of further practical considerations. Namely, the fictional Fleming uses a "real" fictional spy as an inspiration for the main character in his works. Similarly, the real Fleming partially transposes his own professional experience as a naval intelligence officer onto his protagonist.[16] For the fictional

[16] It needs to be stressed that the extent to which the *James Bond* stories draw influence from real-world espionage can only be estimated, i.e., Fleming's intelligence career is not entirely known – as a matter of fact, it is still being investigated to this day (See: Moran and McCrisken 2019: 336-356). Analogically, the current state of knowledge on the parallels between the author's life and his fiction should not be regarded as all-encompassing. Still, the existence of such connections was confirmed (or at least suggested) by Fleming, his acquaintances, biographers as well as various scholars. For example, it appears that the author based some of his fictional characters (e.g., Bond, M, Miss Moneypenny) on real people; additionally, certain fictional events (e.g., Bond's gambling with Le Chiffre in the 1953 novel *Casino*

Fleming, evoking the "real-world" fictional espionage in literature has serious repercussions – he is closely observed and detested by the fictional British MoD; to make matters worse, he runs the risk of prosecution. As for the real Fleming, his conduct seems comparable, but its exact consequences cannot be properly identified. First, for a scholar completely uninvolved with the real MoD, it would be impossible to verify whether and to what extent the institution was concerned about the real author's *oeuvre*. Second, it is difficult to judge whether the real Fleming actually disclosed confidential information or not. After all, even if some real-world classified facts intersperse his fiction, their extratextual existence is not publicly known. Consequently, most readers – and, by extension, scholars – are simply unable to detect such "leaks".[17]

Upon a close inspection of the passage, it becomes apparent that the fictional world encapsulates a critical comment – or joke – on the real one. As a direct consequence of that, fact and fiction are accompanied by subjective opinions, some of which may exceed – or even exist beyond – the intratextual boundaries. In the text, the fictional MoD and M do not hold the fictional Fleming's *James Bond* works in high esteem. Those are referred to as "high-flown and romanticized caricatures", devoid of adequate "quality" and "veracity". All those contemptuous remarks echo the real-world mixed and negative reviews the *James Bond* novels and films received during and after Fleming's lifetime.[18] Simultaneously, in the passage, the "fictional" (as opposed to "real-world") counterpart of the literary works is recognised as "popular" and the "real" fictional Bond as "outstanding". It appears as though the real Fleming mocked his contemporary "Bondian malcontents" in the novel. Obviously, this is merely a viable speculation on the author's criticism. The suggestion must not be taken at face value as

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Royale) were also allegedly influenced by the writer's personal experiences (See: Pearson 1966/2013: 277-283; Lycett 1995: 7-8, 44, 51, 119, 127; Collins 1998: 367-369). For more factual and speculative links between Fleming's *oeuvre* and real-world intelligence, see: Sparks 2011/2015.

[17] Actually, there is good reason to believe that, in the near future, Fleming's spy works will be reevaluated in terms of the "(distorted) facts" and "fiction" they depict. Namely, the academic discussion on the author's ties with real-world espionage has recently gained newfound impetus. Having acknowledged the discovery of previously unknown archival sources, Christopher R. Moran and Trevor McCrisken suggest that the writer was involved in planning British secret operations within the Naval Intelligence Division (NID) during World War II to a much greater degree than it was originally and popularly assumed. Furthermore, in the course of his life, Fleming's range of influence transpired several intelligence networks as he cooperated with both the Brits and the Americans (see: Moran and McCrisken 2019: 336-356). For older biographies of the author, see: Pearson 1966/2013 and Lycett 1995.

[18] For specific details on the critical backlash against the *James Bond* literary and cinematic series, see: Collins 1998: 369-381, Mills 2015: 110, Buckland 2016: 77, and Black 2017: 89.

Fleming's exact intention remains unknown; after all, he might have modestly wished to demean himself as an "incapable" writer instead.[19]

Aside from the conceivable impression of authorial acerbity, yet another tenable opinion can be inferred from the excerpt. It can be surmised that the real Fleming deemed the "prospect" of his own prosecution under the *OSA* ridiculous, judging by the fact that he decided to explicitly fantasise about it in his novel. However, such a suspicion cannot be confirmed with absolute certainty as there seems to be no historical record of him discussing the issue.[20] Furthermore, a very loose supposition is hardly enough to assert that the author did not entertain even the slightest concern about the "risk" of being put on trial on charges of (un)intended confidentiality breaches someday.

Irrespective of various interpretations, Bond's obituary represents the ubiquitous practice of recalling, deforming, and subjectifying elements of the real world in spy fiction. The outcome of this tendency – "factopiction" – affects the ways many readers (in the case of films, viewers) perceive real-world espionage, practically inaccessible to those not involved in it. As propounded by Oliver S. Buckton, "our political, 'real life' understandings of conflicts between nations, ideologies, and populations are to some extent fictional – that is produced by discourses and fantasies within imaginative literature and film" (2015: xii). Under such circumstances, the term "factopiction", initially introduced in the context of fictitious spy narratives, could also be readily applied to the "real-world" distorted cognitive conceptualisations of actual spying, i.e., exaggerated illusions and preconceptions, to a certain degree inspired by espionage works. It must not be overlooked that spy fiction does not only facilitate, but is also a product of those abstract misrepresentations of intelligence activity. Since real-world espionage constitutes a form of *sanctum sanctorum* for people directly implicated in it, it is only natural that the spy genre generally draws on rudimentary guesses and suppositions (alongside deliberate distortions of reality), partially conditioned by existing spy works and partially conditioning those to come. In essence, it could be argued that "factopiction" is

[19] In scholarly studies, Bond's obituary is typically discussed in relation to chronological errors in the book series continuity, particularly those directly related to Bond's character development; sometimes, the passage is also mentioned as an exemplary manifestation of Fleming's consummate skill at merging fact with fiction (among others, see: Pearson 1973/2008: 6-7, Black 2001/2005: 68-69, Jaffe 2005: 104, Bethke 2006: 191, and Griswold 2006: 3, 11, 15). Yet, it seems that so far no feasible connections between the creation of the extract and the author's reflections on his personal life (along with the critical reception of his *oeuvre*) have been proposed.

[20] Besides, even if the author had offered some comments, those would not have necessarily had to correspond with his true inner feelings on such a delicate personal matter.

a self-propelled phenomenon, sustained by positive feedback loops between its intratextual and extratextual dimensions.

1.3. Spy Fiction Definitions – Further Reevaluation

Along with the intricacy of extratextual references, spy fiction also displays an astounding capacity to incorporate elements from different genres – among others, the romance, schoolboy story, and detective story (Cuddon 1977/1999: 856). Nevertheless, the complex nature of this hybridity and "borders fluidity" can also be interpreted as one of the main causes of the considerable academic reluctance to study the spy genre in relation to its conventions.

Generally, researchers are unanimous that, within the framework of crime fiction, spy fiction is a subgenre which encompasses those stories that feature "some primary connection" between the protagonists and espionage (Cawelti and Rosenberg 1987: 5). This definition – despite its apparent banality and vagueness – seems to constitute the underlying determinant of the generic classification.[21] Furthermore, Bruce Merry implies that espionage-related characters typically resort to acts of violence in defence of democracy (1977: 2).[22] Among routine clandestine activities featured in spy fiction, John Gardner accentuates deception, intrigue, murder, surveillance, and interrogation (1982: 70-75). According to Myron J. Smith, Jr., such espionage practices precipitate the achievement of two (occasionally bipolar) long-term objectives – namely, intelligence-gathering and sabotage (1976: v-vi).[23]

It appears that the academic interest in spy fiction often revolves around analysing the fictionalised art of spying. This raises the question as to whether it would be possible to distinguish a set of specific features characteristic of the spy genre besides

[21] The reason behind such a state of affairs can be partially attributed to the aforementioned commercialisation of fiction. If genres are treated as "business strategies", spy fiction simply functions as an enticing "label" which is meant to attract mass audiences (both readers and viewers) and generate profit.

[22] Naturally, Merry's suggestion is culturally-restricted, i.e., it specifically refers to English-language spy works that support democratic values. It must not be overlooked that spy fiction is likely to promote different *Weltanschauungs* depending on the country in which it is created and the author's/filmmaker's political views. To illustrate this point, it is sufficient to observe that Chinese espionage stories often depict the autocratic China more favourably than other – democratic or non-democratic – countries. For example, in Mai Jia's 2002 bestselling spy novel *Decoded* (Chinese: *解密*), Rong Jinzhen, an orphaned mathematical genius, is recruited by the Chinese national security department to break the two most advanced ciphers of "Country X" (presumably, the USA). Obviously, the implication is that Country X is the enemy that poses a threat to China, not the other way around (see: Jia 2002/2014).

[23] Smith deems the spy genre predominantly unsuitable for "less-than-tenth-grade" children as it tends to vividly depict violence and sex (1976: xi). It is worth emphasising that not all spy works are explicit in this regard; actually, some milder ones are even particularly targeted at young readers/viewers. Examples include Anthony Horowitz's *Alex Rider* novels and Robert Rodriguez's *Spy Kids* films.

the common theme of espionage, or rather associated with it. So far, the issue has not received sufficient attention. As a matter of fact, scholars typically study spy fiction in terms of particular aspects. For example, Brett F. Woods (2008) examines the political background of spy stories. Oliver S. Buckton (2015) and Sam Goodman (2016) also do that, albeit their research focus is conspicuously shifted towards investigating the concepts of, respectively, the changing enemy and literary space. This observation supports Martina Allen's suggestion that, if treated as hybrids, genres are often described "in terms of text-intrinsic features rather than with regard to the cognitive processes involved in, and effects produced by, different forms of genre usage" (2013: 4). Basically, Allen criticises the relatively persistent scholarly practice of belittling (or even disregarding) the influence of generic conventions and their modifications on hybrid genres (such as spy fiction). These neglected issues will be addressed in this discussion, though in a different way than the one suggested by Allen. More specifically, the concept of a generic hybrid will not be re-theorised as a blend. For this study, adopting Allen's method would be both confusing and inconclusive.

Clearly, the tendency towards restricting the analytic perspective can be attributed to the sheer abundance of research material, but it is possible to pinpoint another significant reason. It seems that the term "spy fiction" is often defined on the basis of crude generalisations and subjective evaluations, which adds a layer of complexity to the task of discerning generic conventions. The problem can be illustrated using the example of *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, in which John Cuddon argues that spy stories are "cleverly plotted". He believes they owe their commercial success to their combination of "the best elements" of adventure novels and thrillers (notably, politico-military thrillers). This, in turn, manifests itself in the form of "well-drawn characters", "exciting action", and "a high degree of suspense and tension" (Cuddon 1977/1999: 856). Cuddon's description – albeit logical – can be regarded as too simplistic and opinionated. Even though it contains a very basic reference to adventure novels and thrillers, it fails to offer a precise explanation as to what specifically makes the spy genre distinct from other types of crime fiction. On top of that, the choice of some excessively abstract expressions is particularly disturbing: it is difficult to understand what exactly is meant by "the best elements", "well-drawn characters", etc. The irresistible impression of scholarly clumsiness and bias is further magnified by the following back-handed compliment: "[i]n the hands of an accomplished writer like Len Deighton it [the spy novel] becomes a distinguished sub-species of the novel" (Cuddon

1977/1999: 856). Overall, it can be concluded that Cuddon belittles espionage stories and considerably departs from their substantive examination for the sake of formulating vague aesthetic remarks.

Taking into account the above, the aim of this chapter is to propose a theoretical framework for analysing spy fiction as a genre. It is useful to discuss the issue in reference to a selection of approaches to crime fiction as such, especially those suggested by Edgar Allan Poe, Alfred Hitchcock, and Charles Derry. If stripped of its medium-restriction, Derry's film-oriented genre taxonomy (1988/2002: 64) may serve as a particularly solid foundation for an extensive study of spy fiction and its hybridity.[24] Identifying the general "rules" governing spy stories – insofar as possible – is necessary for developing a comprehensive research model which could become a valuable contribution to the international academic debate on the historical evolution of these works. Obviously, samples of those within specific spy fiction studies, including this one, are inevitably very selective and hence cannot be considered representative. They simply do not lend themselves to a statistical analysis of generic conventions, which can nonetheless be logically distinguished in relation to two factors. Those include, *primo*, the general implications of focusing fictional plots, be it literary or cinematic, on espionage, and, *secundo*, the ties between intratextual and extratextual reality.

1.4. Mystery and/or Thriller? Revisiting Crime Genres

1.4.1. Key Concepts and Assumptions

> You could say that all novels are spy novels and all novelists are spy masters. Novelists have to be adept at controlling the flow of information, and, most crucially, they have to be in charge of the narrative.[25]
>
> Ian McEwan

> And now, *Monsieur*, I have more pressing matters to attend to... I am a detective, not a spy![26]
>
> Hercule Poirot (portrayed by David Suchet)

[24] Paradoxically, the scholar himself claims otherwise; acknowledging the complexity of this particular genre, he has deliberately excluded it from his classification (Derry 1988/2002: 287-288). Derry's line of reasoning on the matter will be discussed further in this chapter.

[25] See: McEwan 2012 (online interview).

[26] The quotation has been taken from the 1989 TV adaptation of Agatha Christie's 1936 short story "Triangle at Rhodes". See: "Triangle at Rhodes," *Agatha Christie's Poirot: Series 1*, written by Clive Exton, directed by Renny Rye, et al., Acorn Media, 1989/2012.

In order to present a detailed description of the spy genre, it is vital to determine its position among other types of crime fiction. Generally, spy fiction is often considered to be a hybrid of mysteries and thrillers.[27] Nevertheless, such an assumption lacks precision; it needs to be reformulated as it might erroneously suggest that the two categories constitute equal sources of influence.

The term "mysteries" is often associated with "fictional works concerning any type of perplexing mystery, criminal or otherwise, and which may or may not involve a detective, deductive reasoning, or the other hallmarks of detective fiction" (Murfin and Ray 1997/2003: 100). In a narrower sense, mysteries encompass detective fiction (the classical detective story, the hardboiled detective story, etc.) as well as other crime (sub)genres in which the role of a professional detective figure is prominent and/or the covert side of criminal activity is explicitly emphasised. Those include the police procedural, the caper story, the bandit story, and the gangster story. Mystery (sub)genres will be discussed in greater detail in one of the subsections of this chapter. At this point, however, it is necessary to indicate that "mysteries" (i.e., the aforementioned specific types of crime works) should not be confused with "mystery" (i.e., a secret or, more generally, the practice of withholding information from the fictional characters and the readers/viewers, which can be traced across different crime genres, but is nonetheless most profoundly exploited in mystery (sub)genres).

Typically, scholars, writers, and filmmakers refer to spy stories as "thrillers".[28] This semantic preference could be interpreted as an indication that the spy genre shares a much stronger connection with thrillers than mysteries. Clearly, the verification of such a supposition requires a proper understanding of what a thriller is and what makes it different from a mystery. Separating these two categories, though necessary, is a difficult task nonetheless. Indeed, nowadays the term "thriller" is used so casually that it may sometimes appear synonymous with the very notion of a "crime story". Following this logic, thrillers would naturally encompass mysteries by extension, rendering any contrast between the two virtually useless. Yet, upon close inspection of the matter, this does not seem to be the case. As demonstrated further on in this chapter, thrillers and mysteries actually can – and even should – be treated as distinct categories.

[27] See: Seisser 2014 (online article).

[28] Without a doubt, it would be rather unnatural to describe a spy novel/film as a "spy mystery". Sometimes, it is possible to come across the rather ambiguous commercial label "spy mystery thriller", but the word "mystery" merely signifies the presence of some supportive mystery elements in the thriller.

Regardless, some scholars – notably, Martin Rubin – comfortably adopt the broad and ambiguous perception of the thriller in their respective research. Actually, Rubin even goes so far as to question the genre status of the thriller (1999: 4, 39).[29] This approach conspicuously undermines the validity of generic classifications *per se* and, ultimately, questions the intrinsic value of genre studies. Therefore, for the purposes of this discussion, it is of great importance to abandon the modern, fluid view of the thriller for the sake of a more traditional, subtractive one.

At its core, the thriller is a genre of fiction which elicits very specific reactions from the readers/viewers. As the very name suggests, it "thrills", or, more accurately, produces thrills. The notion of a thrill is by no means a complex one. The Hungarian psychoanalyst Michael Balint describes its key aspects on the example of individuals who derive pleasure from using extreme theme park rides. Specifically, he enumerates three common consecutive responses to the participation in such a form of amusement. The first one is the "conscious apprehension" engendered by the awareness of the forthcoming danger (even if the risk of an accident has been seemingly reduced to a minimum). The second one is the "voluntary exposure to the threat", along with the ensuing "pleasurable" fear. The third one is the "unruffled hope" that nothing will go wrong, the pressure will be successfully surmounted and, once the experience is over, safety shall be restored. For Balint, the thrill is simply a combination of apprehension, fear, pleasure, and hope evoked by confronting external danger (1959/1987: 16-18). Indubitably, those are the principal feelings and emotions exploited by the thriller. Through exposing fictional characters to precarious environments and situations, the genre "immerses" the audience in the gripping action. The combination of ill-boding empty spaces, dramatic/over-dramatised chases as well as close-call confrontations between protagonists and antagonists is meant to elicit a state of nervous excitement from the readers/viewers. More specifically, the thriller uses those elements to ignite "vicarious

[29] More specifically, Rubin proposes reducing the thriller to the level of a "metagenre", i.e., an elusive construct existing at the interface between "a genre proper" and "a descriptive quality" added to other crime genres (1999: 4). Still, the scholar's line of reasoning appears to be inherently misguided. Basically, his notion of the thriller metagenre relies on the false assumption that crime stories advertised as thrillers are generally bound to be actual thrillers. As the commercial label of thriller is inconsistently applied to a plethora of markedly different works of fiction, it must not be fully identified with the thriller "genre", which is frequently understood as a particular type of a crime story popularised by Alfred Hitchcock. On a side note, it seems most peculiarly odd that Rubin, who himself defines the concept of genre as "a set of conventions and shared characteristics that have historically evolved into a distinct, widely recognized type of composition within an art form", fails to notice that Hitchcock's timeless – hence still culturally relevant – thriller formula meets all of those criteria (1999: 3). The director's vision of the thriller genre will be described further in this section of Chapter 1.

thrills",[30] which, as in the case of extreme theme park rides, fulfil the role of entertaining substitutes for the authentic, i.e., unsimulated, real-life thrills.[31]

The concept of a thrill is inevitably connected with two other crucial phenomena discussed by Balint, namely philobatism and ocnophilia. The former signifies a general appreciation of thrills; the latter an overt dislike for them. Basically, in order to distinguish people who enjoy thrills from those who do not, Balint refers to them as philobats and ocnophils respectively (1959/1987: 26-31). This distinction can be also interpreted in the following way: philobats willingly expose themselves to thrills whereas ocnophils avoid them. In this sense, the two terms may prove helpful in describing the inner change which the protagonists of thrillers must frequently undergo. Typically, as the main character finds himself (or herself) imperilled, he (or she) is initially terrified and tries to evade the persecutors/pursuers. However, as the story progresses, the protagonist develops confidence and courage which enable him (or her) to eagerly retaliate. Once all the villains have been ignominiously vanquished, the main character is likely to readopt his (or her) formerly peaceful demeanour. Using Balint's psychoanalytic terminology, the protagonist is forced to suppress his inner ocnophilia in self-defence. Paradoxically, he (or she) must at least temporarily take a philobatic stance in order to face the adversaries.

It is necessary to highlight the fact that the connection between some thriller characters and the psychoanalytic concepts of philobatism and ocnophilia has also been suggested by Charles Derry (1988/2002: 21-30). However, his perception of the thriller is essentially that of "a film genre" rather than "a genre of fiction". In essence, this means that Derry does not attempt to verify whether or not his solely film-based implication is simultaneously applicable to novels, short stories, comics, etc. Assuming the thriller encompasses both cinematic and literary works, it seems fairly impractical to develop medium-restricted theoretical approaches to the genre. Instead, its conventions should be discussed in relation to broadly-understood fiction. After all, such a course of

[30] This statement is not meant to suggest that the experience of participating in an extreme theme park ride is easily comparable to that of reading/watching a thriller. Nevertheless, each of those activities constitutes, in its own right, a source of vicarious thrills.

[31] Actually, it is possible to imply a correlation between the invention of vicarious thrills and human evolution. Initially, the prehistoric ancestors of humanity, embroiled in a constant struggle for survival, were forced to experience real-life thrills on a daily basis while hunting, avoiding predators, etc. Later, with the emergence of *Homo sapiens* and gradual development of technology, many immediate threats to the human life were subdued or altogether disappeared. The resulting "gap" was then filled by vicarious thrills. This suggestion is supported by Balint's observation that it was the civilisational progress which granted people the ability to harness thrills and, subsequently, incorporate them – in a more or less controlled manner – into forms of entertainment such as theatrical plays and circus shows (1959/1987: 26-31).

action would rightly acknowledge the existence of intertextual relations across different types of media in which the thriller manifests itself.[32]

For example, the aforementioned main character's shift from an ocnophil to a philobat is definitely not exclusive to films. It has been very well portrayed in, among others, John Grisham's 1992 novel *The Pelican Brief*.[33] This thriller features a young student of law by the name of Darby Shaw who formulates a theory on the murders of two Supreme Court Justices. Unfortunately for her, she accurately pinpoints the oil tycoon Victor Mattiece as the mastermind. Naturally, Mattiece quickly learns about Darby's suspicion and inadvertently confirms it by sending his henchmen to kill her. At first, Darby is an ocnophil – she is petrified with terror and attempts to hide from her pursuers. Not long afterwards, however, she resolves to defend herself, even at the risk of exposing her whereabouts – naturally, the decision to face danger marks the protagonist's transition into a philobat. Darby contacts, among others, journalist Grey Grantham, whom she actively helps to collect evidence against Mattiece. Once the oil tycoon and his associates have been publicly incriminated in the press, Darby is able to leave the country and, together with Grantham, regains peace of mind. Still, had it not been for Darby's "transformation", she would have most likely been murdered in one of her secret hideouts.[34]

It can be observed that the thriller genre produces "vicarious thrills" targeted at the readers/viewers, as well as "real-life thrills" which, within the framework of the fictional world, directly affect the characters. While these two types of thrills can be simultaneously evoked by a single situation, it is vital to remember that the readers/viewers are able to experience some vicarious thrills only because the thriller has promptly supplied them with information that is not available to the characters at

[32] The theoretical outlook recommended here can be easily associated with Thomas Leitch's more general prediction that at some point in the future literary, cinematic, and adaptation studies might merge to form what he tentatively refers to as "Textual Studies" – an interdisciplinary field focused on various types of media (for more information, see: Leitch 2003: 149-171). Apart from Leitch, Kate Newell also discusses the need to think broadly in terms of how various media influence one another. She uses the term "network" to denote the framework of intertextual relations within and between distinct types of cultural texts, i.e., literary works, films, pictures, etc. (Newell 2017: 8).

[33] In 1993, Grisham's novel was adapted into a film by Alan J. Pakula. It stars Julia Roberts as Darby Shaw and Denzel Washington as Grey Grantham.

[34] The choice of Darby Shaw as an example is significant for yet another reason. In his book on thrills and regressions, Balint symbolically – and quite provocatively – correlates philobatism with penile erection and daring male sexual performance (1959/1987: 28-30). Basically, the psychoanalyst chiefly – thus, unjustly – describes philobats with the use of male-restricted observations. Obviously, both men and women can become active risk-takers who derive pleasure and/or satisfaction from thrills. As this and other instances of Balint's unmitigated sexism most certainly deserve to be criticised, it seems only fitting that his psychoanalytic concepts have been deliberately incorporated into this specific analysis of a female fictional character.

a given time. For example, in *The Pelican Brief*, Darby at some point attempts to reach the Director of the FBI through his special counsel, Gavin Verheek. Little does she know that the man whom she eventually meets is not Verheek, but Khamel – a paid assassin. While Darby remains ignorant of the impostor's true identity, the readers are well aware of it since they have already been notified in one of the previous chapters that Khamel has murdered Verheek. For Darby, the meeting with "Verheek" sparks hope for safety. The readers, however, realising the grave danger she has unknowingly put herself in, experience a vicarious thrill – they "hold their breath" and anxiously read on wondering whether Khamel is going to succeed in killing Darby or not.

Thus far, a firm connection between the thriller and thrills has been established. Now, it is possible to proceed to some more intricate considerations regarding the genre. Quite a coherent definition of the thriller was developed by Alfred Hitchcock. Before presenting it, though, it is essential to explain why this particular film director is discussed as a vital point of reference in a study which is primarily devoted to literature.[35] Apparently, adopting such a course of action might seem unconventional. Yet, it is by all means justifiable. Despite the fact that Hitchcock's views rose primarily from his profuse filmmaking experience, many of them are applicable to both films and books as – much like the thriller genre itself – they transcend the constraints of one medium. Besides, to this day Hitchcock's works enjoy the reputation of exemplary thrillers among many directors, writers, and critics, which grants his observations the required credibility (Derry 1988/2002: 8). Obviously, Hitchcock's reflections are not meant to be treated as the all-encompassing definition of the thriller. Instead, they are recalled here because a genre study needs to be conducted on the basis of easily identifiable criteria, such as the ones proposed by the director.

The culturally solidified popularity of Hitchcock's thrillers results from his fastidious fascination with suspense. Most importantly, the director regarded its presence as the main generic determinant of this type of fiction. According to Annette Insdorf, Hitchcock understood suspense as "the prolonged state of heightened anticipation" (1978/1994: 40). In order to achieve such an effect, the thriller supplies the view-

[35] Whilst the thriller – and, consequently, the spy thriller – encompasses a wide spectrum of literary and cinematic works, it must not be forgotten that this discussion is supposed to be principally placed within the field of literary studies. Still, it would be a major oversight to ignore cross-media influences on the development of the (spy) thriller as a genre of fiction. After all, as shown in this chapter, some theoretical observations originally confined to literary works or films are, in truth, suitable for a study of both. In light of those considerations, it seems reasonable to primarily devote the analytic chapters to literary works, simultaneously acknowledging the relevance of films/TV series and some formerly medium-specific theories to the evolution of the (spy) thriller genre.

ers/readers with a significant portion of plot-related information which markedly exceeds the characters' knowledge of the presented world. The early revelation creates expectations as to the subsequent development of events. Basically, with the use of potent manipulative suggestions, the thriller aims to engross the viewers/readers in an emotional and psychological game of forecast. Still, those predictions do not need to be accurate – it is a common practice to withhold, alter or even completely abandon the final resolution (Harris and Lasky 1976/1995: 219-220). After all, suspense is not contingent on the exactness of guesses, but the unnerving experience of awaiting their verification.

Hitchcock, however, distinguished suspense from surprise, the latter – in his judgement – being merely a brief outcome of restricting (rather than broadening) the viewers'/readers' perception and understanding of a given story. In order to illustrate this distinction, it is useful to recall the director's famous explanation provided in one of his interviews given to François Truffaut in August 1962. Hitchcock said that if, hypothetically, in the course of their conversation, a secret bomb planted underneath the table had suddenly exploded, this would have merely evoked a short-lived moment of surprise among the witnesses. On the other hand, he remarked, if, 15 minutes before the detonation, the "audience" had been informed about the anarchist who had placed the bomb there, the "innocuous" discussion would have immediately lost its air of ordinariness, becoming a suspenseful foil for the unsuspecting interlocutors' impending demise (Truffaut 1966/1983: 73). Suspense is conditioned by expectations extended over a period of time; it simply cannot be conveyed by an abrupt action which lacks any form of anticipatory build-up. Clearly, Hitchcock considered suspense and surprise to be two completely independent phenomena, thus rejecting any feasible connection between them.[36] Although he attached an incomparably greater importance to the former, he never dismissed the latter as incongruous with the thriller genre (Truffaut 1966/1983: 73). Arguably, the director's most iconic surprise scene is the accidental discovery of Mrs Bates's mummified corpse featured in his psychological thriller *Psycho* (1960).

Hitchcock expressed far less tolerant views on the coexistence of suspense and mystery, frequently treating them as diametrically opposed. He believed that the thriller

[36] In contrast to Hitchcock, some scholars, for example, Altan Löker, claim that surprise can be perceived as a peculiar interlude between two distinct episodes of suspense. In Löker's view, surprise bears a close connection to one of them – it can be either a product of the episode it follows or a build-up for the one it precedes (1976/2005: 32-33). Regardless of the interpretation, suspense – the inherent quality of the thriller – retains superiority over surprise, whose role seems rather supplementary.

should primarily appeal to the viewers' (in literature, consequently, readers') emotions. Suspense, being "essentially an emotional process", was an excellent means to achieve such a goal. Mystery, in turn, which the director deemed "an intellectual process", entailed no emotional response whatsoever until some crucial revelation concerning the plot was made – approximately – after presenting one third of the story. Therefore, Hitchcock openly regarded mystery as intrinsically wasteful – hence undesirable – for the genre.[37]

Despite proclaiming such a bold conviction, the director did not actually completely eradicate mystery from his works. On the contrary, he sometimes inserted supportive mystery elements into his thrillers, provided that their presence was useful for the proper execution of suspense. Apparent traces of supplementary mystery can be found in, among others, Hitchcock's spy films[38] such as *North by Northwest* (1959), in which the protagonist – Roger O. Thornhill (Cary Grant) – becomes entangled in a seemingly incomprehensible set of unfortunate circumstances, which is later revealed to be the result of a secret intelligence operation to take the criminal Phillip Vandamm (James Mason) into custody. The film illustrates why mystery, in spite of its ostensibly significant role in the plot, is not the defining quality of the thriller. Here, it merely functions as a framework for the development of various suspenseful moments related to the protagonist's attempts to evade two groups of pursuers: criminals and the police.

A good example of such a suspenseful scene is the hotel pursuit. In order to disprove the allegation of deliberate drunk driving, Thornhill tries to gather convincing evidence for his recent abduction (which he does not understand himself). To this end, the protagonist breaks into a hotel room booked, as he surmises, by George Kaplan, the man the kidnappers mistook him for. There, by coincidence, Thornhill answers a phone call from one of his would-be murderers. Immediately after the awkward conversation, the protagonist contacts the operator in order to locate the caller. She informs him (and the audience) that the call was made from the hotel lobby. The disclosure of the ill-fated

[37] See: "Alfred Hitchcock: The Difference Between Mystery & Suspense," *YouTube*, uploaded by American Film Institute, August 5, 2009 [1970], https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Xs111uH9ss (accessed July 4, 2019).

[38] During his lifetime, Hitchcock directed 12 spy thrillers in total: 5 in Britain in the 1930s and 7 in Hollywood over the span of the next three decades. The full list of works includes: *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1934), *The 39 Steps* (1935), *Secret Agent* (1936), *Sabotage* (1936), *The Lady Vanishes* (1938), *Foreign Correspondent* (1940), *Saboteur* (1942), *Notorious* (1956), *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1956), *North by Northwest* (1959), *Torn Curtain* (1966) and *Topaz* (1969). Hitchcock's spy films – especially those from "the British era" – largely contributed to the establishment of the director's reputation as the unquestionable "master of suspense". For a recent study of these works, see: Chapman 2017/2018.

proximity of the threat marks the moment when suspense is introduced. The effect is magnified by the disturbing background music which becomes more dynamic and repetitive as Thornhill and his mother (Jessie Royce Landis) are accompanied into a lift by two thugs. After a brief moment of uneasiness, Hitchcock inserts a comic relief into the scene. The mother, in a dumb-like fashion (as she is quite sceptical about the danger) asks the criminals: "You gentlemen aren't about to kill my son, are you?", which results in a sudden burst of laughter among the crowd gathered in the lift. The distraction, however, turns out to be helpful as it enables Thornhill to escort – in a gentlemanly manner – a party of amused women leaving the lift, thus forcing his persecutors to stay behind. This somewhat ridiculous "head start" proves sufficient for the protagonist to outrun the two men and, eventually, escape by taxi.

It could be argued that the suspenseful hotel pursuit is, in essence, the result of the mystery behind Thornhill's abduction. Mystery, however, serves as a secondary plot device in *North by Northwest* – basically, it does not receive much development. Actually, not long afterwards, Hitchcock, in accordance with his overall perception of the thriller, introduces a scene in which intelligence members provide the audience with an extensive explanation as to what exactly is happening to the protagonist. Most importantly, the scene appears relatively early – around the end of the first quarter of the film.[39] Therefore, similarly to other Hitchcockian spy thrillers, *North by Northwest* revolves primarily around suspense which is, in certain cases, facilitated by the purely supportive mystery component.

One explanation for this is the fact that thrillers generally aspire to a markedly different type of storytelling than mystery-oriented works of fiction. Thrillers are, by and large, tales of prevention, focalised on the avoidance and/or neutralisation of a major threat. This trend can be illustrated on the basis of a short passage taken from Stella Rimington's 2004 debut spy novel *At Risk* and describing a counter-terrorist group meeting:

> [Mackay] extended spatulate, sun-browned fingers on the table in front of him. 'Our concern – and we've communicated this over the weekend to all stations – is that the opposition may be about to deploy an invisible.'

[39] The early revelation of the mystery to the viewer might evoke associations with the so-called "inverted detective story" – colloquially known as the "howcatchem" – in which the commission of the crime is presented at the very beginning of the plot, usually along with the identity of the perpetrator. Still, the inverted detective story does not meet Hitchcock's criteria for being classified as a thriller. First, the typical protagonist of the "howcatchem" is a professional detective, not a victim. Second, the story mainly revolves around the process of solving the criminal case instead of creating suspense.

> He let the remark hang for a moment. The calculated theatricality of his delivery did not lessen the impact of his statement. An 'invisible' was CIA-speak for the ultimate intelligence nightmare: the terrorist who, because he or she is an ethnic native of the target country, can cross its borders unchecked, move around that country unquestioned, and infiltrate its institutions with ease. An invisible was the worst possible news [...].
>
> Mackay glanced at his notes. 'Pakistan are already checking all passenger lists out of the country, with particular reference to... let's see, non-business visitors of under thirty-five whose stay has exceeded thirty days. So they're very much on to the case. No idea of targets yet, but we'll keep our ears very close to the ground.' He looked across at Wetherby, and then at Liz. 'And we need to stay in constant touch with our agents this end, too' (2004/2005: 14-15).

Essentially, *At Risk* presents the trials and tribulations of Liz Carlyle – an outstanding counter terror agent. She attempts to track down the aforementioned seemingly undetectable terrorist, who enters Britain under a British passport. Within the framework of the story, the invisible functions as the so-called "MacGuffin".[40] Initially a film term popularised by Hitchcock, the expression is currently used more broadly in the context of fiction to denote an object, character,[41] goal or occurrence that sets the narrative events into motion (Room 2000: 420). Still, it needs to be highlighted that it was the director himself who drew a very close connection between spy thrillers and the MacGuffin, claiming that "it is the thing that the spies are after".[42] Generally, the MacGuffin constitutes the characters' primary concern; ironically, it simultaneously tends to be of very little significance to the readers/viewers (Leitch and Poague 2011: 514). This is apparent in *At Risk*: the counter-terrorists experience agitation at the mere thought of the invisible. The readers, in turn, are unlikely to react as strongly to an antagonist who, at the early stages of the story, receives very little character development and constitutes a rather distant threat. Yet, it remains true that in most thrillers the prompt recognition of prospective danger forces the imperilled protagonists to take resolute countermeasures. In practice, forestalling, along with the challenges and risks it frequently poses, is a potent source of suspense – the main defining quality of the thriller genre. It must not escape attention that, in *At Risk*, the motif of prevention is firmly embedded in the main espionage plot – those two are practically inseparable. This, in turn, suggests that the hybridity of spy fiction is likely to be characterised by a general predominance of thriller elements over those borrowed from the "much less precautionary" mystery (sub)genres.

[40] The alternative spelling of this word is "McGuffin".
[41] As regards fictional characters, sometimes they are distinctively referred to as "living MacGuffins".
[42] See: "Hitchcock Explains What a MacGuffin Is," *YouTube*, uploaded by TBarton002, December 10, 2017 [1972], https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mNkPLuBjZRM (accessed July 5, 2019).

More specifically, mystery (sub)genres, unlike the thriller, do not particularly capitalise on the process of thwarting crime. The reason is simple – successful forestalling would render the role of the broadly-understood detective force completely useless. Obviously, in order to be examined, a crime needs to be committed in the first place. This "prescribed perversity" of mystery (sub)genres has been captured most acutely by Agatha Christie in her 1936 short story "Triangle at Rhodes". The following passage relates a conversation involving a certain deeply agitated Pamela Lyall and the "ever-so-perspicacious" Hercule Poirot:

> Pamela Lyall, white-faced, clad in a simple dark dress, clutched at Hercule Poirot in the hall and drew him into the little writing room.
> 'It's horrible!' she said. 'Horrible! You said so! You foresaw it! Murder!'
> He bent his head gravely.
> 'Oh!' she cried out. She stamped her foot on the floor. 'You should have stopped it! Somehow! It could have been stopped!'
> 'How?' asked Hercule Poirot.
> That brought her up short for the moment.
> 'Couldn't you go to someone – to the police –?'
> 'And say what? What is there to say – before the event? That someone has murder in their heart? I tell you, *mon enfant*, if one human being is determined to kill another human being –'
> 'You could warn the victim,' insisted Pamela.
> 'Sometimes,' said Hercule Poirot, 'warnings are useless.'
> Pamela said slowly, 'You could warn the murderer – show him that you knew what was intended...'
> Poirot nodded appreciatively.
> 'Yes – a better plan, that. But even then you have to reckon with a criminal's chief vice.'
> 'What is that?'
> 'Conceit. A criminal never believes that his crime can fail' (Christie 1936/2013: 552).

In this excerpt, Christie cleverly employs Poirot – a man of great authority – as a vehicle for highlighting the tragic inevitability of crime in mystery (sub)genres. The protagonist, being a professional detective, is perfectly capable of denigrating the justifiability of all, potentially missed, prevention opportunities.[43] Here, it does not matter whether Poirot is objectively right or wrong. In the first scenario, he basically acknowl-

[43] Despite Poirot's formidable analytic skills, it would seem a bit of a stretch of generosity to deem him a flawless law-abiding detective. Aside from being conceited and self-righteous, Poirot is also likely to impose his own sense of morality over legal justice. This inclination has been perfectly illustrated in Christie's 1934 novel *Murder on the Orient Express*. In this work Poirot shows actual compassion and understanding for the killers of the kidnapper/murderer Cassetti. Eventually, the detective willingly participates in concealing their identities from the Yugoslavian police. It appears that, under specific circumstances, Poirot may "absolve" criminals while following the dictates of his own conscience. Some other instances of the protagonist's "leniency" can be found in Christie's 1974 short stories "The Double Clue" and "The Chocolate Box".

edges the fact that the victim's death was inexorable; in the latter, he firmly believes so, to the point that his careless idleness has unwittingly facilitated the murder – in other words, led to a self-fulfilling prophecy.[44] Either way, the crime was bound to occur.

The juxtaposition of Rimington's *At Risk* with Christie's "Triangle at Rhodes" illustrates that the main threat/crime featured in each of those works has been presented from a markedly different perspective. This indicates some major disparities between those thrillers and mysteries in which criminals are not the main characters.[45] Such thrillers, exemplified by *At Risk*, are predominantly structured around the idea that a major heinous crime will most certainly be committed unless ample countermeasures – which still do not guarantee perfect safety – are taken. Regardless, the threat is likely to be neutralised, often miraculously, by the end of the plot. In the case of mysteries, however, even the most sublime precautions cannot prevent the central crime from happening.[46] Additionally, it takes place relatively early – frequently, within the first quarter of the story.[47]

For this reason, mysteries – in comparison with thrillers – tend to encompass fewer and much vaguer foreboding-inducing plot points. As for the eerie ambiguity, it can be demonstrated based on Christie's 1959 novel *Cat Among the Pigeons*. After the first murder at Meadowbank School, Eileen Rich – one of the teachers – openly expresses her inward (and, as it turns out later, accurate) fear that the perpetrator may strike again. Yet, at that point in the story, the killer and his (or her) motives remain unknown. Consequently, it is impossible to predict the exact time, place, and victim(s) of the next assault. Generally, foreshadowing in mysteries is much scarcer in detail

[44] The term "self-fulfilling prophecy", coined by sociologist Robert K. Merton in 1948, denotes "a *false* definition of the situation evoking a new behavior which makes the originally false conception come *true*" (1948: 195; original emphases). Assuming Poirot had erroneously concluded that the murder could not have been avoided, his inaction would have inadvertently contributed to its successful commission. To make matters worse, the anticipated grievous outcome would have strongly reinforced his initial misconception. As Merton observes, "[t]he specious validity of the self-fulfilling prophecy perpetuates a reign of error. For the prophet will cite the actual course of events as proof that he was right from the very beginning" (1948: 195). Undoubtedly, Poirot is a character who takes great pride in the fact that he is generally imbued with exceptional sagacity. Hence, it could be speculated that, had the detective realised that he might have fallen prey to a self-fulfilling prophecy, he would have found the discovery exceedingly distressing, if not plainly insufferable.

[45] As for the thrillers and mysteries focusing on criminal protagonists, the former simply emphasise the suspenseful aspects of committing crime, whereas the latter – the secretive ones.

[46] These generalised observations solely concern the central threat/crime which "gives impetus" to the plot of a given thriller or mystery. Subplots revolving around the commission of secondary crimes are not taken into account here as they may well appear in both types of fiction.

[47] Yet, "Triangle at Rhodes" is an exception. Since it starts with Poirot trying to enjoy his holiday, the detective "stumbles across" a case to investigate much later than he normally does.

(hence, much less suspenseful) than that prevalent in thrillers.[48] To illustrate this point, it is sufficient to once again recall *The Pelican Brief*, in which Khamel's minute preparations to assassinate particular victims are always meticulously outlined, even though the character's role in the plot is merely supportive.

Returning to *Cat Among the Pigeons*, the novel is noteworthy for its partial focus on espionage.[49] It is useful to consider this aspect as it indicates that mysteries, in comparison with thrillers, bear a much weaker generic relationship to spy fiction. Actually, according to Robert Barnard, Christie's work has been "[m]arred by the international dimension and the spy element, which do not jell with the traditional detective side" (Barnard 1980/1990: 190). Barnard's caustic criticism suggests that the motif of spying is not typically associated with mysteries. This particular issue can be examined in reference to Christie's novel. To that end, it is crucial to briefly recall some of its plot points.

Early in the story, the narrator implies a firm connection between the yet unspecified murders in Meadowbank and the smuggling of precious jewels from the engulfed in revolution Ramat to Britain. Prince Ali Yusuf entrusts this treasure to his friend and pilot, Bob Rawlinson. Heavily burdened, the latter goes to his sister and niece's hotel room and, unbeknownst to them, conceals the treasure in their flight luggage. Upon leaving the room, Rawlinson remains ignorant that he has been coincidentally noticed and watched by an unnamed neighbouring resident who, deeply excited, also sets off for Britain in pursuit of the said jewels. Eventually, with the combined effort of Poirot and ex-military intelligence member Mrs Upjohn, the secret observer

[48] However, one conspicuously thriller-reminiscent scene suffused with suspenseful foreshadowing has been inserted into the loose 2008 TV adaptation of *Cat Among the Pigeons*. Angèle Blanche – a teacher of French – witnesses the murder of her colleague, Grace Springer. Apart from the victim, she also recognises the killer – Ann Shapland, the headmistress's secretary. Using this knowledge, Blanche tries to extort money from the murderess, whom she agrees to meet late at night in a boathouse (such a meeting is not arranged in Christie's novel). Blanche enters the building, its interior mostly shrouded in darkness. The character almost immediately succumbs to a petrifying fear. As she nervously attempts to regain her composure by producing one threat after another, the silhouette of the blackmailed murderess balefully lurking in the shadows is revealed to the viewers. After a prolonged period of suspense, Blanche is suddenly struck dead from behind with a heavy sandbag. This particular murder scene seems a bit out of place in the adaptation – not only is it one of a kind, but, as mentioned before, suspenseful foreshadowing is generally uncharacteristic of mystery (sub)genres. It seems safe to assume that this scene is simply meant to pay homage to thrillers and, for this reason, deliberately breaks a generic convention. See: "Cat Among the Pigeons," *Agatha Christie's Poirot: Series 11*, written by Clive Exton, directed by Mick Pantaleo, et al., Acorn Media, 2014 [2008].

[49] Actually, the motif of espionage is mostly reminiscent of Christie's earlier adventure novels, such as the 1951 *They Came to Baghdad*. This, in turn, supports an earlier observation in this study, namely that spy fiction has emerged from, among others, adventure fiction.

(and, simultaneously, main murderess within the story) is identified as the headmistress's secretary Ann Shapland – an unrelenting former spy codenamed "Angelica".

Hence, it could be concluded that the spy element featured in *Cat Among the Pigeons* merely creates a legitimate context for the murders in Meadowbank. Otherwise, espionage is not particularly relevant to the development of the plot. After all, in accordance with detective fiction conventions, the novel is a mysterious tale of determining and arresting a killer. Even though Shapland is well-accustomed with the art of espionage, she is ultimately apprehended as a murderess. Naturally, while the role of spying in mysteries is at best marginal, investigation, which is inherently a mystery plot device, is frequently incorporated into spy fiction (albeit in a conspicuously modified form – the issue will be discussed later).

In comparison with killers, spies are generally less suitable characters for mystery (sub)genres. From a storytelling perspective, portraying a spy usually forces the initial revelation of some of his (or her) goals, methods, and motives (whether true or ostensible), whereas a killer can or should, if necessary, remain almost fully inconspicuous for most of the story. Besides, capturing an active spy is readily associated with forestalling, whereas catching a killer who has already committed the intended crime(s) is mostly indicative of the proper execution of legal justice. Clearly, as both the early disclosure of major plot-relevant information and prevention are among the defining characteristics of thrillers, spies appear in them more frequently than in mysteries.

This tendency also generally applies to serial/psycho killers who, unlike other types of murderers, typically require an intricate character development. Obviously, the likes of Dr. Hannibal Lecter can be easily found in a multitude of thrillers, especially those readily associated with non-supernatural horrors. Some recent noteworthy novels featuring ruthless and bloodthirsty antagonists include Carol Wyer's *The Silent Children* (2017) and Angela Marsons's *Child's Play* (2019).[50] Considering those two works, it becomes apparent that the insertion of serial/psycho killers into what would normally be regarded as detective stories can actually lead to a major generic deviation which, ultimately, transforms mysteries into thrillers. Basically, the choice of such antagonists entails a partial (yet overwhelming) narrative shift from the examination of crimes committed to the prediction and prevention of potentially upcoming ones. Most impor-

[50] As for the latest films devoted to serial/psycho killers, it is possible to name Duncan Skiles's *The Clovehitch Killer* (2018) and Joe Berlinger's *Extremely Wicked, Shockingly Evil and Vile* (2019). Unlike the aforementioned two novels, the films do not feature a lead professional detective as one of the main characters, and thus adhere more closely to thriller conventions.

tantly, as serial/psycho killers constantly pose a menace to society, their eventual imprisonment/death can be perceived, in accordance with thriller conventions, as more of a precaution than a sole punishment for their atrocities.

Consequently, the aforementioned distinctions carry serious implications for the roles of broadly-understood investigation in mysteries and thrillers. In mysteries, it supplies the readers/viewers with a mixture of obscure clues, red herrings, and dead-ends gradually uncovered by the detective/police force. This is typically meant to encourage the said audience to develop their own solution to the fictional crime before the real motives and perpetrators are revealed. In the case of "Triangle at Rhodes", the title immediately suggests the inclusion of a major murderous love triangle in the story. However, the supposedly plain revelation of the central theme is, in truth, meant to be partially misleading. At first, Pamela Lyall focuses her – and, consequently, the readers' – attention on a different love triangle than the actual murderous one exposed later by Poirot on the basis of seemingly imperceptible details. Essentially, the short story initially highlights an inaccurate assumption in order to create a "puzzle" for both the detective and the readers.

By contrast, in thrillers the main purpose of investigation is the relatively early revelation of some shocking (and often painstakingly detailed) findings to the readers/viewers. This newly-acquired knowledge forces them to make predictions as to the occurrence and possible development of consecutive close-call incidents. For example, in *At Risk* investigation is suspenseful as it constantly emphasises the ever-narrowing proximity of the threat posed by the menacing "invisible".

Considering the above, it could be argued – quite rightly – that both mysteries and thrillers coax the readers/viewers into making conjectures. The difference lies, however, in the foundations of those predictions. Mysteries exploit the so-called "causal nescience", i.e., they rouse the readers'/viewers' curiosity through major plot-related knowledge gaps (such as unknown/unclear murder motives). Thrillers, in turn, force inquisitive thinking by disclosing unsettling and/or exciting details regarding the directions in which the plot might advance. For example, in Richard Donner's 1995 film *Assassins*, there is a scene which shows the paid assassin Miguel Bain (Antonio Banderas) in an old desolate hotel. He arranges a sniper post at one of the windows in order to kill Robert Rath (Sylvester Stallone) – a fellow assassin. While Bain persistently awaits his prospective victim to leave the nearby bank, the viewers are provoked to make guesses as to the eventual outcome of the characters' "fateful encounter". Obvi-

ously, this is a very similar reaction to that experienced by the readers of Grisham's *The Pelican Brief*. Each time Khamel prepares himself to murder someone, they start wondering whether or not his plan will succeed.

Thus far, some underlying differences between mysteries and thrillers have been pinpointed. Those distinctions chiefly reflect the inequalities in the exploitation of two common processes in crime stories, i.e., suspense (the emotional one) and mystery (the intellectual one). On that preliminary basis, it can be already concluded that referring to spy fiction as plainly a hybrid of mysteries (mystery>suspense) and thrillers (mystery<suspense) is confusing because, in terms of the bracketed relationships, the two categories are mutually exclusive. This is precisely why it is vital to determine the extent to which the genre interacts with each of them and identify the inevitable discrepancy.

It has been suggested that, in comparison with thrillers, mysteries generally display much fewer generic ties with spy fiction. Therefore, by approximation, it seems reasonable to classify the spy genre as a thriller variation which, due to its inherent hybridity, is likely to exploit some subsidiary mystery elements as well. In order to fortify such an assumption, it is necessary to distinguish particular mystery and thriller (sub)genres with which spy fiction – a category much narrower than the mystery and the thriller genre – can be efficiently juxtaposed. Before doing so, a brief terminological revision is required. From this moment on, the expressions "spy fiction" and "the spy genre" will always indicate "the spy thriller" – hence, all three will be used interchangeably. Likewise, "spy/espionage works/stories/narratives" will refer to "spy thrillers".

1.4.2. What *Is Not* a Thriller? An Overview of Mystery (Sub)genres

Overall, it appears that the position of the thriller – correspondingly, the spy thriller – among other types of crime fiction can be discerned through a simple rule of elimination. By Hitchcock's standards, the thriller is a crime story principally devoted to the delivery of suspense. As a result, the genre makes a much lesser use of mystery,[51] rendering it – at best – a supportive plot device. Hence, it can be assumed that crime stories in which the process of solving a mystery occupies a superior position to the execution of suspense are not thrillers. Markedly, this excludes genres in which the presence of a strong professional (or, occasionally, amateur) detective figure is prominent, namely

[51] In this particular case, mystery is understood as the practice of withholding information.

the classical and hard-boiled detective story as well as the police procedural. Similarly, genres such as the caper story, the bandit story, and the gangster story, in which suspense is primarily eclipsed by the depictions of various covert aspects of criminal activity, should not be classified as thrillers. It is of importance to briefly describe each of those mystery (sub)genres so as to clearly differentiate them from the proper thriller (sub)genres discussed later. Such conduct will naturally facilitate the identification of specific narrative components the spy thriller incorporates from particular mystery and thriller types.

The classical detective story is a subgenre in which a professional (less commonly, unprofessional or retired) detective carries out an investigation of a crime – usually, murder (Rzepka 2005: 10). The most recognisable classical detective stories are exemplified by the works by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (the *Sherlock Holmes* series) and Agatha Christie (both the *Hercule Poirot* and *Jane Marple* series). As for the hard-boiled (sub)genre, it presents a cynical detective operating in a gloomy world in which organised crime thrives and the legal system is corrupt. For this reason, the plot is often conveniently set in the US during or shortly after the Prohibition (1920–1933) (Rzepka 2005: 184-186). Notable hard-boiled works include Dashiell Hammett's 1930 novel *The Maltese Falcon* (featuring Sam Spade) and Raymond Chandler's 1939 novel *The Big Sleep* (featuring Philip Marlowe).

The police procedural is a type of detective story in which policemen – instead of a detective – try to solve a crime. This subgenre of mystery fiction is characterised by depictions of coordinated police operations and routines. The main character is often a happily married policeman who nonetheless experiences some kind of family problems (Dove 1982: 112-113). The police procedural was popularised by, among others, the American writer Lawrence Treat, who specialised in it. Arguably, his most influential work is the 1945 novel *V as in Victim* (featuring Mitch Taylor) (Herbert 2003: 194). Some other noteworthy police procedurals are Richard Enright's 1925 novel *Vultures in the Dark*, Hilary Waugh's 1952 novel *Last Seen Wearing...*, and, among cinematic works, the *Dirty Harry* film series (initiated by Don Siegel and continued by various other directors).

The caper story focuses on presenting the preparation and execution of a major crime, such as theft, fraud or kidnapping, along with its aftermath – the police and/or detective investigation. Since this subgenre of mystery fiction features criminals as the protagonists, it offers insight into their inner thoughts and motivations. Apart from this,

the plot is usually interspersed with humour (Holstine 2013: 152-154). Classic examples of the caper story include John Boland's 1958 novel *The League of Gentlemen*, Michael Crichton's 1975 novel *The Great Train Robbery*, and Donald E. Westlake's *John Dortmunder* series of novels.

The bandit story is, by and large, a love story involving a wanted criminal (usually, a gangster or ex-convict) and his female companion. The plot is focused on their relationship as well as consecutive attempts to mislead pursuit from a professional detective or police force (Derry 1988/2002: 59). Popular bandit stories include Jim Thompson's 1958 novel *The Getaway* as well as Arthur Penn's 1967 film *Bonnie and Clyde*. It is essential not to confuse this contemporary subgenre of mystery fiction with the medieval bandit story, in which bandits (such as the legendary Robin Hood) continuously attack and rob their unjust feudal lords (Landrum 1999: 97-98).

The gangster story, as the name suggests, is focused on the trials and tribulations of a gangster. The main character often comes from an impoverished family and, in accordance with the American Dream, firmly believes that anyone can advance beyond the social class they were born into. However, the protagonist ultimately achieves this goal through illegal practices. Nevertheless, the gangster often tends to be viewed as a tragic figure whose rise in the criminal underworld is eventually followed by an inevitable downfall (Munby 2010: 210-221). Mario Puzo's 1969 novel *The Godfather*, along with Francis Ford Coppola's film trilogy inspired by it, epitomizes the gangster story. Some other examples of this subgenre are Edgar Lawrence Doctorow's 1989 novel *Billy Bathgate* and Lorenzo Carcaterra's 2001 novel *Gangster*.

It should be observed that there exist various taxonomies of crime fiction. Therefore, in many scholarly works, all (or at least some) mystery (sub)genres discussed here are classified as thrillers.[52] The main reason for dissociating this study from such approaches is the fact that, by obscuring the perception of the thriller, they do not seem particularly conducive to studies of individual crime genres – including spy fiction. On top of that, the six mystery (sub)genres largely sacrifice the use of suspense for the sake of carefully portraying what could be collectively referred to as a "process" – be it the detective/police investigation, meticulous preparation and execution of a criminal of-

[52] It would be extremely strenuous and, inevitably, redundant to provide a lengthy list of scholarly sources relying on crime fiction taxonomies which more or less violate the one proposed here. Thus, only selected examples of such works will be given: Carter and McRae 1997, Rubin 1999, Vanacker and Wynne 2013, Eaglestone 2013, Spicer and Hanson 2013, Larke-Walsh 2019.

fence or an individual gangster's "career".[53] Consequently, they encompass a cohesive group of crime works – markedly different from the actual, i.e., suspense-oriented, thriller (sub)genres.[54]

The connection between particular mystery (sub)genres is further strengthened by the fact that the protagonists tend to subscribe to a stable, sometimes overtly inflexible, worldview. What fictional figures as diverse as Sherlock Holmes, Dirty Harry, and Don Vito Corleone have in common is their rigid abidance by some form of an individual "code of conduct". Depending on the character, it can be anything ranging from law regulations to an inner sense of justice or even the *omertà*.[55] The key observation is that, as a rule, the protagonists' beliefs and demeanour remain largely consistent throughout the stories in which they appear.

Conversely, in thrillers the main characters are more likely to experience profound re-evaluations of their outlook on life. This usually happens under the influence of prolonged exposure to grave – oftentimes mortal – danger. Once the struggle is finally over, the protagonists may readopt the convictions and habits they abandoned, modify them or embrace different ones altogether. Some instances of notable inner changes include Susy Hendrix's (Audrey Hepburn) newly-acquired self-reliance in Terence Young's 1967 film *Wait Until Dark* as well as Dr. David Grant's (Kurt Russell) boost in confidence and leadership skills in Stuart Baird's 1996 film *Executive Decision*. Yet another, albeit pessimistic, example is James Bond's nervous breakdown after the death of his wife, Tracy, in Ian Fleming's 1963 novel *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*. The protagonist's deterioration is especially evident in the next instalment of the series, the 1964 novel *You Only Live Twice*. Grieved, Bond temporarily loses control over his life and actions as he succumbs to alcoholism and gambling. It is also worth pinpointing that, in the most recent *James Bond* films starring Daniel Craig,[56] Bond has received a much gloomier and somewhat less resilient disposition than that delineated in

[53] A similar observation – albeit restricted to some mystery films only – has been made by Charles Derry. Actually, he sceptically asserts that whenever critics demand to casually call such works thrillers, the term "process thrillers" should be applied (Derry 1988/2002: 67-68). Still, as this study generally criticises the modern-day overuse of the term "thriller", Derry's suggestion is not supported here.

[54] In the course of this discussion it will be frequently implied that, as a hybrid, spy fiction is a thriller (sub)genre which draws some inspiration from distinct mystery (sub)genres – especially detective fiction.

[55] The *omertà* constitutes a Southern-Italian code of silence. Nowadays the term is often more narrowly associated with the Sicilian Mafia and Italian-American gangsters. It signifies "the categorical prohibition of cooperation with state authorities or reliance on its services, even when one has been victim of a crime". The punishment for violating this rule is death (Paoli 2003: 109).

[56] In a chronological order, those films are Martin Campbell's 2006 *Casino Royale*, Marc Foster's 2008 *Quantum of Solace*, Sam Mendes's 2012 *Skyfall* and 2015 *Spectre* as well as Cary Joji Fukunaga's 2021 *No Time to Die*.

Fleming's novels. Most of the time, the film character appears to be "fluctuating" between two extremities, i.e., a crippling depression and a strong determination to fulfil his obligations as a British spy.

1.4.3. What *Is* a Thriller? Overview of Thriller (Sub)genres

Aside from the modern-day tendency to overuse the term "thriller", the difficulty in developing a cohesive understanding of the genre is caused by the profusion of its diverse taxonomies. Indeed, there exist so many of them that producing a meticulously detailed juxtaposition of only the most influential ones already seems an exercise in futility.[57] Likewise, the task of discussing each individual item out of what collectively appears to be a multitudinous and constantly growing list of (sub)genres is bound to impede any scholarly study. Hence, a different approach is required – one that both exposes and strictly opposes their ongoing confusing multiplication.

Clearly, many thriller (sub)genres have been primarily created for commercial purposes – hence, with little to no regard for marking distinct sets of narrative conventions. Oftentimes, such categories are named after – and almost exclusively defined in terms of – the prevalent marketing "hooks" they exploit (conspiracy thriller, action thriller, erotic thriller, techno-thriller, etc.).

From a scholarly perspective, the trouble with those, and various other, (sub)genres lies in the fact that they are characterised by a high degree of vagueness. For example, particular works of fiction may or may not be classified as conspiracy thrillers depending on the way "conspiracy" is interpreted. The word itself immediately connotes some form of surreptitious cooperation. Thus, intuitively, it would seem that the conspiracy thriller must feature at least two antagonists who "conspire" with each

[57] Some relatively recent taxonomies can be found in Leitch (2002), Wheat (2003), Scaggs (2005), Frey (2010), Smith (2013), and Williams (2018). Among the most significant English-language academic studies on the thriller, it is also necessary to enumerate Harper (1969), Palmer (1978/1979), Derry (1988/2002), and Rubin (1999). The former two deal with literature, whereas the latter two with films. Harper expounds on thrillers in reference to existential philosophy, pinpointing the protagonists' struggle with ethical/identity/life-threatening crises as the main distinctive feature of the genre (1969: 8-11). Palmer, in turn, concentrates more on the structural similarity of thrillers, reducing it to an ever-present conflict between the hero and some form of conspiracy (1978/1979: 53, 82). The problem with those two studies is that they do not establish a clear-cut border between thrillers and mysteries. Neither does Rubin's work, specifically devoted to the aforementioned concept of the thriller "metagenre". Ultimately, all three scholars confuse – to a greater or lesser extent – thriller and mystery (sub)genres, making the thriller an unnecessarily extensive category. Only Derry proposes a fairly uncomplicated classification of thrillers which, for the purposes of this study, is going to be updated.

other against the protagonist. While some scholars clearly support this definition,[58] others reject it, claiming that conspiracy – broadly perceived as moral turpitude – constitutes the foundation of all thrillers.[59] Thus, in the second variant a criminal who does not enter illegal partnerships remains a lone conspirator notwithstanding. Yet, under such peculiar circumstances, the conspiracy thriller practically encompasses the entire thriller genre and, consequently, seems to be an obscure and redundant label. To add even more to the confusion, some researchers refer to "conspiracy thrillers" as "anti-conspiracy thrillers",[60] even though – on a semantic level – those names appear to be in direct opposition.

While the conspiracy thriller is perplexing, it should not escape attention that its defining marketing "hook" – conspiracy – is, regardless of the interpretation, a very efficient suspense-inducing phenomenon. Basically, it always entails some kind of prevention and/or evasion on the part of the main characters. Thus, although the (sub)genre is often poorly specified, there at least exists an adequate connection between its name and the intrinsic formula of the thriller genre.[61]

By contrast, this crucial correlation is inevitably lost in the case of the action thriller, the erotic thriller, and the techno-thriller. Unlike conspiracy, action, sex, and technology do not constitute suspenseful plotlines on their own, but are – often forcefully – superimposed onto existing ones instead. This can be illustrated with the use of a few examples. While it is true David Leitch's 2019 action film *Fast & Furious Presents: Hobbs & Shaw* is interspersed with many painstakingly choreographed car stunts and hand-to-hand combat scenes, what truly creates suspense is the uncertainty as to whether two conflicted protagonists will successfully rise to a mutual challenge. Essentially, they must put their differences aside and work together in order to defeat a formidable villain and, ultimately, save the world. Analogically, Jamie Weston's 2017 erotic film *Darker Shades of Elise* does not owe its thriller status to passionate sex scenes, but the main character's desperate attempts to free herself from the influence of a sadistic former lover. Also, in Sam Boush's 2018 military techno-thriller novel *All Systems Down*, technology merely serves as a weapon in an international conflict.

[58] Those include, among others, Wood (2003), Kapur (2009), Kelly (2012), Trifonova (2012), and Smith (2013).
[59] See: Palmer (1978/1979: 53, 82), Ryall (1986/1996: 121), and Cobley (2000: 3).
[60] See: Priestman (1998: 34), Scaggs (2005: 117), and Schmidt-Cruz (2019: 93).
[61] Similarly, spy fiction is appropriately named after the suspenseful practice of espionage.

One crucial observation regarding the mentioned three works of fiction is that they would invariably remain thrillers even if the amount of action, sex, and technological details was reduced. To a significant extent, those components can be extracted without compromising narrative coherence. Hence, from a scholarly perspective, generic classifications structured primarily around those largely subsidiary elements may seem both counterintuitive and inefficient.

Another facet of the problem takes the form of "impostor" (sub)genres which do not meet Hitchcock's criteria for being thrillers. The most striking examples are the detective and the police thriller, which, with the exception of stories featuring active serial/psycho killers as the antagonists, should be re-classified as mystery works. The fantasy thriller is also a questionable (sub)genre. Similarly to the supernatural horror, it considerably departs from the situational realism on which Hitchcock primarily founded his perception of suspense.

Maintaining a high degree of consistency in a study of thrillers entails the necessity of adopting an uncomplicated and well-organised scholarly taxonomy in place of the chaotic and excessively commercialised ones. In order to achieve such a goal, it is useful to draw a correlation between Hitchcock's understanding of the thriller and a 19th-century model of crime fiction proposed by Edgar Allan Poe. In essence, Poe believed crime stories were structured around the mutual connections between three crucial characters: the detective, the victim, and the criminal (Cawelti 1976: 80-88). Since each of those elements may fulfil a relatively active or passive role in a given story, the interrelations between them vary from one work of fiction to another. Generally, depending on the crime (sub)genre, one of these figures occupies a more dominant position than the remaining two (Derry 1988/2002: 57). As mentioned before, one of the crucial differences between mystery works and thrillers is the choice of the protagonist. Usually, the former focus on the detective whereas the latter on the victim. As for the criminal, he (or she) can become the main character in both types of fiction.

For the purposes of clarity, all the generic distinctions discussed thus far – along with a simplified scholarly division of thriller (sub)genres – will be illustrated in the form of the following diagram (Figure 2):

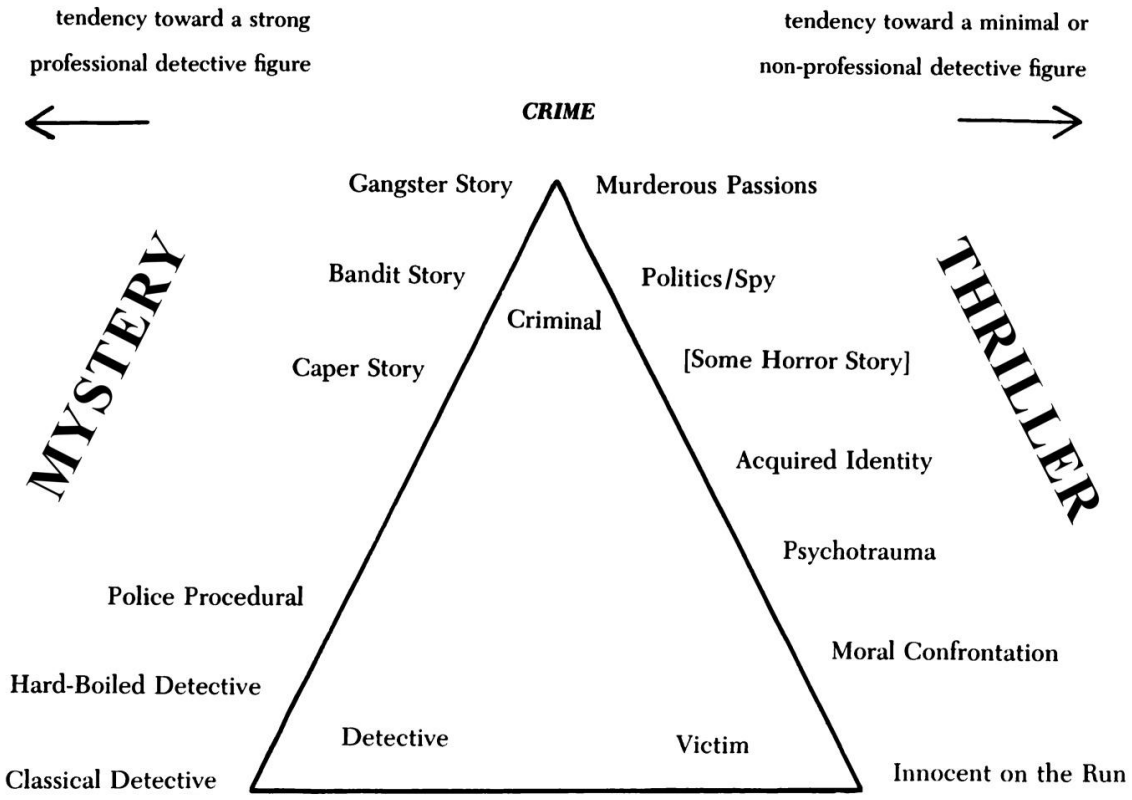


Figure 2: Crime Fiction: A Comprehensive Model

In the model, the character relations observed by Poe are presented in the form of a triangle. Mystery-oriented (sub)genres appear on the left, whereas thriller (sub)genres on the right. Depending on the side, the (sub)genres located at the base of the triangle indicate the most active role of the detective or victim. Regardless, the smaller the distance of a given (sub)genre from the peak, the greater level of attention the criminal receives.

The diagram presented here is heavily inspired by Charles Derry's comprehensive model of the crime film (1988/2002: 64). Basically, his suggestion has been slightly revised for the needs of a broader discussion involving fiction and, most importantly, literature. Here, the most striking departure from the scholar's model is the inclusion of the spy genre as a variant of the political thriller. Actually, Derry argues that spy films cannot be properly classified. His line of reasoning is based on the observation that spies can fulfil the function of detectives, victims, criminals, or even a mixture of those (Derry 1988/2002: 287-288). Obviously, the diversity of spy roles pinpointed by the scholar is accurate and not exclusive to films – it generally occurs in fiction. Still, it must not escape attention that espionage always breaches the privacy/security of those that are spied on. This practically means that even when spies primarily act as detectives, they remain, within the framework of some legal or moral system, criminals.

Since the professional detective figure from mysteries is not normally associated with moral ambiguity (with the exception of hard-boiled detectives), it seems more intuitive to place the spy genre among thrillers instead. Yet another compelling argument for doing so is the fact that spies are excellent "carriers" of suspense – they constantly run the risk of becoming exposed while operating undercover. This obviously necessitates very careful – and suspenseful – evasion.

Considering the thriller, its (sub)genres are as follows: the innocent-on-the-run thriller, the thriller of moral confrontation, the psychotraumatic thriller, the thriller of acquired identity, the political thriller, and the thriller of murderous passions.[62] As indicated in the descriptions below, each of those categories is named after its respective narrative formula.

The innocent-on-the run thriller features a guiltless victim who, often accidentally, discovers (or even directly enters) a major political intrigue on a national or international scale. For this reason, the protagonist is unceasingly chased by both criminals and the police/authorities. Given the gravity of the situation, he (or she) is forced to keep a low profile as well as take a variety of other precautions. Notwithstanding those efforts, the main character becomes involved in a series of close-shave encounters with the pursuers. In the course of the ordeal, the victim acquaints a future love interest – frequently, a journalist – of whom he (or she) is initially very suspicious. Eventually, however, they develop mutual romantic feelings and join forces against the antagonists. Curiously, by resorting to self-defence, the victim assumes the role of an unprofessional detective collecting incriminating evidence on the adversaries. As a rule, those include at least three interrelated influential VIPs (Derry 1988/2002: 66). Classic examples of innocent-on-the-run thrillers include, among others, James Grady's 1974 novel *Six Days of the Condor*, John Grisham's 1992 novel *The Pelican Brief*, and Arthur Hiller's 1976 film *Silver Streak*.

[62] In Figure 2, among the thriller (sub)genres on the right side of the triangle, it is also possible to find the conspicuously bracketed "some horror story". Generally, Hitchcock disliked the idea of calling horror stories – especially supernatural ones – thrillers. He argued that the elements of fantasy featured in horror stories did not appeal to the viewers' (in the case of literature, correspondingly, readers') real-world experiences and, for this reason, spoiled the execution of suspense (Derry 1988/2002: 8). Still, nowadays it is a common practice to classify non-supernatural horror stories, such as the *Hannibal Lecter* films based on Thomas Harris's series of novels, as thrillers. In light of these considerations, it seems reasonable to perceive the non-supernatural variant of the horror story as a rather peculiar manifestation of the thriller genre. More specifically, the brackets used in Figure 2 indicate that the non-supernatural horror story is usually more gruesome than the other thriller (sub)genres.

The thriller of moral confrontation primarily exploits the pervasive motif of the immemorial battle between good and evil. Frequently, the former is unambiguously represented by an idealised protagonist whereas the latter by a wicked antagonist. As clear-cut opposites, the characters inevitably engage in a fierce conflict which further magnifies the stark differences between them. Similarly, the plot heavily depends on contrasts and dualities. Besides, it may also occasionally feature a secondary detective force which aids the main character (Derry 1988/2002: 66).

It is vital to stress that the struggle of good against evil is one of the most common topoi in fiction. For this reason, the thriller of moral confrontation encompasses a wide variety of crime stories. Some of them, such as Brian Garfield's 1972 novel *Death Wish* and J. Lee Thompson's 1983 film *10 to Midnight*, are vigilante works specifically targeted at men. Others, including Anthony Berkeley Cox's 1932 novel *Before the Fact* and Michael Anderson's 1961 film *The Naked Edge*, are female-oriented damsel-in-distress works.[63] It is also possible to find thrillers of moral confrontation which are not particularly meant to appeal to just one of the sexes (Derry 1988/2002: 217-269). Those are, for example, John D. MacDonald's 1957 novel *The Executioners* and Alfred Hitchcock's 1943 film *Shadow of a Doubt*.

The psychotraumatic thriller depicts a protagonist whose cognitive, emotional, and/or social functioning is profoundly impaired by a past trauma. Occasionally, he (or she) might also be afflicted by an entirely groundless feeling of self-deprecating guilt. Whatever the circumstances, the main character is invariably a victim[64] who, for some reason, becomes enmeshed in an atrocious crime or deadly intrigue. As a rule, the villains notoriously take advantage of the protagonist's poor mental health in order to fully achieve their evil agenda and, in the end, remain unpunished. Much to their dismay, the main character gradually regains psychological stability and equanimity with the help of a devoted love interest who acts as an "amateur Freudian psychoanalyst" (Derry 1988/2002: 65). As the truth behind the protagonist's trauma is usually not revealed until the climax (or even the very end) of the story, it could be argued that the psychotraumatic thriller integrates mystery as a plot device. Its role, however, is supplementary as this thriller (sub)genre very rarely features a detective force (aside from

[63] In such thrillers, the protagonist is quite often a young woman who discovers her husband/boyfriend is a dangerous criminal or psycho-killer. Some of those works depict women as utterly helpless and dependent on men, which might be indicative of promoting male chauvinism (Derry 1988/2002: 262).
[64] However, the traumatised victim may sometimes become a criminal, as in Alec Coppel's 1947 novel *A Man About a Dog* and John Brahm's 1946 film *The Locket*.

"non-professionals", such as the main character and the love interest). Besides, the psychotraumatic thriller gives priority to presenting close confrontations between the "good" and "evil" characters. Eventually, those and other suspenseful events – rather than some form of investigation – unveil most of the details regarding the protagonist's mysterious trauma. Characteristic psychotraumatic thrillers include John Palmer and Hilary A. Saunder's 1927 novel *The House of Dr. Edwardes*, Alfred Hitchcock's 1958 film *Vertigo*, and Brian De Palma's 1984 film *Body Double*.

The thriller of acquired identity revolves around the perilous adventures of an impostor, particularly the struggle to remain credible and undetected. The protagonist tends to be a dangerous criminal who murders someone in cold blood and subsequently pretends to be the said victim in order to take over his (or her) property. Sometimes, however, the main character assumes an entirely fabricated identity and, by doing so, hopes to climb a few rungs on the social ladder. In any case, the protagonist's sinister ambitions always cast a shadow of irrevocable doom on his (or her) future. By the end of the story, the impostor is either killed or at least severely punished. Ironically, instead of actual exposure, it is usually the usurped identity which brings the main character to his (or her) anticipated downfall. For example, the impostor may be eventually murdered or incarcerated because the deceased person whom he (or she) has pretended to be was, unbeknownst to him (or her), a wanted criminal. Generally, thrillers of acquired identity provoke reflection on the consequences of abandoning moral values in life (Derry 1988/2002: 65). Among such works, it is possible to distinguish Patricia Highsmith's 1955 novel *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, Paul Henreid's 1964 film *Dead Ringer*, and Michelangelo Antonioni's 1975 film *The Passenger*.

The thriller of murderous passions features a deadly love triangle which usually involves a married couple and a lover. As a rule, two of those characters, driven by their lust, avarice, or vengeance, connive to kill the remaining one, who – from their perspective – stands in the way of their happiness and/or welfare.[65] Curiously, the criminals may be occasionally depicted as tragic heroes who have resorted to murder in the vague hope of finding refuge from a "toxic" marriage/relationship. In such cases, the readers/viewers are generally encouraged to sympathise (or even empathise) with the killers – at least to a certain extent. Still, whatever the circumstances, the villains are inevitably punished by the end of the story, often on account of a betrayal or a grave mistake

[65] Occasionally, as in Mike Newell's 1985 film *Dance with a Stranger*, there is only one murderer.

which ultimately attracts police attention. A less common, yet feasible, scenario is one in which the criminals, haunted by remorse, eventually decide to voluntarily report themselves to the authorities. Typically, the thriller of murderous passions presents the gradual development of the main characters at the expense of marginalising the role of law enforcement agencies in the overall plot (Derry 1988/2002: 63-65). This thriller (sub)genre encompasses works such as James M. Cain's 1943 novel *Double Indemnity*, Claude Chabrol's 1973 film *Wedding in Blood*, and Andrew Davis's 1998 film *A Perfect Murder*.

The political thriller often recounts a heinous plot to assassinate a high-ranking politician. Alternatively, the story may focus on a compromising disclosure of some kind of conspiratorial undertaking in which the government is thoroughly implicated. Generally, such works portray the activity of corrupt politicians, colluders, spies, and hired gunmen. Occasionally, the attention devoted to those characters can be shifted to members of victimised societies or protest movements, as well as martyrs. Yet another recurring character is the journalist/reporter, whose role is predominantly supportive. Typically, he (or she) attempts to uncover the main intrigue featured in the story. Overall, political thrillers can be inspired by important real-life events, such as the assassination of U.S. President John F. Kennedy (David Miller's 1973 film *Executive Action*) or the Watergate scandal (Alan J. Pakula's 1976 film *All the President's Men*) (Derry 1988/2002: 65). It is also possible to distinguish purely fictional works, such as Leslie Purnell Davies's 1968 novel *Alien* or Adam Kennedy's 1975 novel *The Domino Principle*.

At this point it is vital to briefly estimate the relationship between spy fiction and other thriller (sub)genres. In Figure 2, the spy thriller, being predominantly a variant of the political thriller, has been placed on the right side close to the peak of the triangle. Intuitively, this location could be justified by the fact that it is much easier to identify the spy/agent with a criminal than a victim. After all, the character operates beyond – or at least on the fringes of – the law. For this reason, the spy/agent may sometimes function as a "non-professional" detective figure. In this particular case, the adjective in the inverted commas does not signify his (or her) lack of investigative skills, but rather the privileged role in the – occasionally arguable – administration of justice. Of course, this position of power does not mean the spy/agent cannot be ultimately portrayed as a victim, as exemplified by Adolf Verloc in Joseph Conrad's 1907 novel *The Secret Agent*.

Each of the thriller (sub)genres discussed here has been primarily presented in relation to its respective main theme. However, a given work of fiction does not need to exclusively adhere to only one of those (sub)genres. The boundaries between them are, in truth, rather fluid. For example, *The Pelican Brief* is predominantly an innocent-on-the-run thriller, but it could be well described as a political thriller and a thriller of moral confrontation. It appears that the thriller genre is characterised by an inner (sub)generic hybridity which, by extension, directly affects spy fiction. Clearly, *You Only Live Twice* and *At Risk* are both spy thrillers and thrillers of moral confrontation. Additionally, the former bears some conspicuous structural resemblance to psychotraumatic thrillers as it depicts Bond's recovery from a temporary, yet profound, mental breakdown after the loss of his wife.

Actually, the inclusion of a generally unambiguous, and often exaggerated, conflict between the forces of good and evil is typical of many spy thrillers (especially those that will be later referred to as "sensational"). This can be attributed to the fact that extratextual international politics exerts a profound impact on the creation of those works. It needs to be emphasised that this influence is predominantly conditioned by subjective political narrations rather than the political reality as such. As Wesley K. Wark observes:

> The attraction of spy fiction has consistently rested on its use of the artifice of apparent realism; its method has been to create an alternative or counter-history. Beguiling, worrying, plausible or believable fictions of history are on offer, often with a near irresistible double guarantee of authenticity. Not only are details of plot, character and setting designed to simulate the real world, but these are frequently underwritten by explicit authorial statements (1991: 1).

Obviously, while creating embellished reflections of the real world in spy fiction, most writers and directors cautiously abstain from deprecating the intelligence services of their respective countries. This circumspection could be interpreted, at least to a certain extent, as a manifestation of patriotic solidarity with one's homeland. Furthermore, harsh criticism – whether objective or not – could potentially exert an adverse effect on the local critical reception of particular works. Hence, fictional domestic spies (with the exception of traitors) are usually depicted in a far more favourable light than their foreign counterparts. Actually, spy stories can be effectively used to promote this and other types of propaganda. For example, despite the actual decline of the British Empire during the Cold War, the *James Bond* novels and films of those times persistently reinforced the fake image of the country's unrivalled international superiority. Apart from

that, more recent iterations of the franchise have obviously not ceased to excessively glorify Britain and its intelligence through Bond's splendid espionage skills, exceptional physical and mental endurance as well as state-of-the-art spy gear.

1.5. Preliminary Considerations on the Hybridity of and Real-Life Inspired Masculinity within the Spy Genre

Essentially, the spy genre is a branch of the political thriller which emerged from late 19th/early 20th-century generic hybrids. Over the years, it has solidified its status as a hybrid genre, especially in the sense that it has always been quite flexible in borrowing the elements characteristic of other types of fiction. For example, the concept of a wonder weapon of mass-destruction (such as the titular ballistic missile from Ian Fleming's 1955 novel *Moonraker* or, more recently, genetically-modified anthrax from Anthony Horowitz's 2013 novel *Russian Roulette*) originates from war-prophecy literature (Panek 1981: 7). Actually, the idea can be traced as far back as 1871. At that time, George Tomkyns Chesney published his invasion novella *The Battle of Dorking: Reminiscences of a Volunteer*, in which the British fleet is confronted with the unrealistically overpowered German[66] "fatal engines".

The spy thriller also draws some influence from detective fiction. This relationship manifests itself in the overall idea of investigation. Basically, the spy routine of gathering and interpreting intel closely parallels the detective practice of collecting and analysing clues. Nevertheless, the ways spies and detectives operate are, on the whole, considerably different; the former, unlike the latter, are constantly embroiled in deceitful sabotage activities, often on an international scale. On top of that, while working undercover, they obviously run the risk of being compromised. Ultimately, those suspense-inducing factors make spies more suitable for thrillers than mysteries. It could be argued that spy fiction is a thriller (sub)genre which markedly reinvents some detective fiction conventions, shifting the prime narrative focus from the mysterious aspects of investigation into the suspenseful ones.

Clearly, the spy genre also derives plotlines from romance fiction. Frequently, in times of adversity, the protagonist meets an ally who eventually becomes a love interest. As a rule, the former is a man and the latter a woman, although a reverse scenario is

[66] While referring to the Germans, Chesney only uses indirect expressions such as "the enemy", even though it is beyond doubt that they are the aggressor. The novella was written in the immediate aftermath of the German victory in the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871).

also possible. For instance, in the Canadian 1997 TV series *Nikita*, the eponymous female spy-protagonist develops a complicated romantic relationship with her male colleague, Michael. Still, since the spy genre, be it prose or film, is largely male-dominated, men are far more often employed as the main characters than women. The latter are frequently given secondary roles as plain objects of affection, *femmes fatales*, or manipulated spies.[67] Thus, many spy works tend to be accused – quite rightly – of sexism (MacIntosh 1991: 172-175).

Even so, it would be a crude oversimplification to pinpoint sexism as the only source of that generic male domination. The phenomenon is actually complex and has always been linked to the emulation of specific – and, in some cases, historically changing – aspects of extratextual reality. Considering the hybrid forerunners of spy fiction written in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, they often evoke the traditional sexual division of labour in the household (i.e., male breadwinning versus unpaid female housework and child-rearing), highlighting women's financial dependence on men common at that time.[68] Clearly, this is one of the reasons for the initial scarcity and mostly low personal autonomy of female (spy) characters.

On a more general note, the spy genre is a heavily "masculine" one partially because it reflects the fact that, to this day, more men than women become high-ranking employees in various intelligence agencies around the world.[69] In the United Kingdom, for example, all Chiefs of MI6[70] and Directors of GCHQ[71] have been male so far, whereas MI5[72] has had only two female Directors General, the first one being Dame Stella Rimington in the years 1992–1996, and the second one Baroness Eliza Manningham-Buller in the years 2002–2007 (Burton 2016: 269). Besides that, in each of those organisations, approximately three in four senior positions were still occupied by men in 2016, despite internal efforts to encourage a greater gender balance.[73] Currently, inclu-

[67] For a comprehensive study on the position of women spies in popular culture, see: White 2007.
[68] See: Creighton 1996: 310-337; Horrell and Humphries 1998: 25-64; and Land 2010: 17-37.
[69] For specific information on gender gaps within some of those workplaces, see: Goldman 2016; Owen 2016; Baime 2018; Barrett 2018; Sengupta 2018a; Sengupta 2018b; Jenkins 2019; Oliver and Cave 2019; Bublé 2021; and Ferris 2021 (online articles). See also: Toy and Smith 2017: 688-706 and Lomas 2021: 995-1017.
[70] MI6 is another name for the SIS (Secret Intelligence Service). The main task of the agency is to gather the UK's foreign intelligence.
[71] GCHQ (Government Communications Headquarters) is chiefly responsible for securing military and official communications as well as providing the British government with signals intelligence (SIGINT).
[72] MI5 stands for "Military Intelligence, Section 5". It is a British counter-intelligence and security agency also known as "the Security Service".
[73] See: Owen 2016; Sengupta 2018a; Sengupta 2018b; and Ferris 2021 (online articles). See also: "Gender Balance in the Civil Service," *Institute for Government*, https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/

sive recruitment campaigns and other egalitarian initiatives tend to enjoy high popularity within both British and non-British intelligence agencies. In 2018, the American CIA[74] managed to promote a group composed of 43% female and 57% male officers to the upper ranks, increasing the total representation of women within them to 36%.[75] It can be speculated that these gender gaps will gradually be diminished in the near future and so might those in other local and foreign organisations. If this happens, perhaps female-centred spy works will rise in international popularity.

The prevalence of male dominated espionage networks in real life and spy fiction can be associated with sex discrimination, but also many other factors, such as gender differences in career choices. Those are, to some extent, influenced by gender stereotypes, but also, among others, attitudes to work-life balance. One of the reasons why fewer women than men occupy high-ranking positions in various intelligence agencies around the world might be that mostly men persistently hyper-concentrate on highly demanding jobs, sacrificing most or even virtually all of their private/family lives. As observed by Warren Farrell:

> Women today are less than half as likely as men to work in excess of 50 hours per week. (Again, working women put in more hours at home.) It is rarer still for women to sustain that commitment for 20 years and then, without having burned out, increase her hours still more as a CEO. But exactly because it is rarer, women who are willing stand out as more exceptional. Women, it turns out, are far more "European" – working to live rather than living to work. But the glass ceiling is rarely cracked by healthy, balanced people who work to live (2005: 82).

It is a mistake to perceive all high-ranking positions, in intelligence agencies or elsewhere, as those of power and privilege only. Many of them involve overwhelming requirements, high responsibility, huge risks, and extreme stress. Possibly, fewer women than men tend to occupy such posts partially because fewer women than men "live to work". Arguably, instead of asking why not as many women as men hold exceedingly onerous high-ranking positions, it would be more practical to ask why any people at all, and in particular men, want to do that in the first place. One feasible explanation is that some skilled individuals are not merely interested in status-seeking, but radically prioritise it instead; that group consists of mainly men and a small minority of women.[76] In

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publication/gender/civil-service (accessed August 24, 2022).

[74] In the United States, the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) principally collects, processes, and analyses national security information from around the world.

[75] See: Newburger 2019 (online article).

[76] See: "Jordan Peterson – Successful Men Are Insane and Work All the Time," *YouTube*, uploaded by Jordan Peterson Academy, November 25, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oteAPGPB6U

essence, those predominantly male overachievers lean towards hyper-concentring on their jobs throughout their entire working lives, which is a huge predictor of significant and sustained career advancement. Notwithstanding, most women decide not to follow suit; they simply do not compete with such people in the long run, frequently on account of having more diversified life goals. Some of those may include starting a family, spending quality time with its members, having a network of friends and acquaintances outside of work, leisure time, etc. (Farrell 2005: 50-54).

The masculinity of real-world and fictional intelligence networks is likely to be related to various other gender differences, including those in personality – more specifically, "differences among general patterns of behaviour in men and women on average, with the understanding that both men and women can experience states across the full range of most traits" (Weisberg, DeYoung, and Hirsh 2011: 1).[77] Due to the sheer extensiveness of that issue, it is reasonable not to delve into it deeply, but merely touch upon it in terms of selected aspects that seem to be of greatest importance to this analysis of the (possible) ties between espionage stories and extratextual reality.

As regards the specific dissimilarities that will be evoked in this section, it is vital to indicate that they were measured statistically within the framework of the so-called "Five Factor Model of Personality" (FFM), also known as the "Big Five Personality Model", long after the inception of the spy genre at the *fin de siècle*:

> The FFM is a hierarchical model of trait structure, in which relatively narrow and specific traits are organized in terms of five broad factors: Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness [...]. [The respective polar opposites of those five broad factors are: Emotional Stability, Introversion, Close-Mindedness, Disagreeableness, and Heedlessness]. Although the model can be traced back at least to 1961 [...], it established itself as the dominant model of personality structure in the 1980s [...]. Proponents of the model claim that it is comprehensive – that is, that it encompasses all major dimensions of personality [insofar as those have been encapsulated in language[78]] [...]. This claim to comprehensiveness makes [the FFM] a natural choice for cross-cultural research (McCrae and Allik 2002: 1-2).[79]

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w&t=152s (accessed September 5, 2022). See also: Wiessner 1996: 13-14; Cook 2009: 131-136; Gulati, Mayo, and Nohria 2013: 495; Zeigler-Hill and McCabe 2019: 11, 18-21.

[77] The existence of gender differences in personality is broadly attributed to biological and socio-cultural factors. Still, the influence of specific ones, as various researchers point out, tends to be difficult to evaluate and requires further investigation. For more information, see: Costa, Terracciano, and McCrae 2001: 322-331; Jang et al. 2002: 83-101; Rolland 2002: 7-28; Weisberg, DeYoung, and Hirsh 2011: 1-11; Power and Pluess 2015: 1-4; Allen and DeYoung 2017: 319-352.

[78] In personality psychology, the lexical approach, often referred to as the lexical hypothesis, is actually an axiomatic assumption according to which "the [socially relevant] differences between individuals [...] have been encoded in language and [...] cross-cultural factor analysis of dictionary words that refer to individual differences can be used to find the most important dimensions of personality" (Cargill 2019:

The FFM can be assessed with the use of self-report and observer-report questionnaires, such as the Revised NEO Personality Inventory (NEO-PI-R) that adopts a five-point Likert scale (Ashton 2007/2013: 47-48; Prince 2018/2020: 154-155). "When the test is applied to a large group, the results create a [nearly] normal distribution [bell curve] allowing each person to be given a percentile rank for the five individual traits".[80] Nowadays the NEO-PI-R and its various replacement options are commonly employed in online research, sometimes conducted on huge international populations, in which case the samples tend to range from tens to even hundreds of thousands participants.[81] Fundamentally, the cross-cultural data suggests that

> the gender difference in personality traits is greater in the more developed, wealthy, and gender-egalitarian countries. Men in highly developed regions of the world are [statistically] less neurotic, extroverted, honest, and pleasant compared to men living in less affluent regions of the world. Women, as a rule, do not differ [statistically] in personality traits in different regions of the world (Kiziloglu et al. 2021: 534).

According to many psychological studies, personality trait differences between the sexes are statistically greatest on the level of two broad factors of the Big Five. Women cross-culturally and by and large consistently score higher than men in Agreeableness (Compassion and Politeness – those two facets entail conflict avoidance and compliance, both related to caring intensely about other people's feelings and well-being) as well as Neuroticism (Volatility and Withdrawal – more generally, the tendency to experience negative emotions, i.e., mostly fear, anxiety, and mental pain).[82] This recurring pattern of results can be visually illustrated with the use of graphs taken from a single mono-national study. The ones in Figure 3 refer directly to Marta Palczyńska's calcula-

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1). Basically, the lexical approach excludes the possibility that at least some of the most important dimensions of personality might not have been encoded in language; obviously, that is a theoretical limitation.

[79] Over the years, the FFM has also been subject to criticism (among others, see: Eysenck 1991: 773-790; Eysenck 1992: 667-673; Block 1995: 187-215; Cattell 1995: 207-208; Paunonen 2000: 821-835; Boyle 2008: 295-312; and Trofimova 2014: 1-28). The model is by no means all-encompassing and flawless, similarly to the Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire (16PF) and the HEXACO model of personality structure, both of which are also trait-based taxonomies of personality that adopt the lexical approach and rely on factor analysis (see: Aksu et al. 2009: 1113-1127 as well as Lee and Ashton 2020: 1075-1090). Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to overlook the relevant psychological literature on gender differences in personality only because even highly reliable methods of evaluating those are intrinsically imperfect.

[80] See: Sweeney 2016 (online article). See also: Gabler et al. 2012: 155; Geher and Hall 2014: 129-130.

[81] For studies with particularly large samples, see: Schmitt et al. 2008: 168-182 and Lippa 2008/2010: 619-636.

[82] Among others, see: Feingold 1994: 429-456; Costa, Terracciano, and McCrae 2001: 322-331; Jang et al. 2002: 83-101; Mueller and Plug 2006: 3-22; DeYoung, Quilty, and Peterson 2007: 880-896; Schmitt et al. 2008: 168-182; Fleeson and Gallagher 2009: 1097-1114; Lippa 2008/2010: 619-636; Weisberg, DeYoung, and Hirsh 2011: 1-11; Georgellis and Sankae 2016: 67-80; Risse, Farrell, and Fry 2018: 919-949; Palczyńska 2018/2021: 556-580; Filipiak and Łubianka 2019: 98-108; and Bunnett 2020: 179-184.

tions on the data gathered from a sample of Polish[83] non-self-employed workers aged 19 to 67 (N = 1981; 1065 male, 916 female[84]):

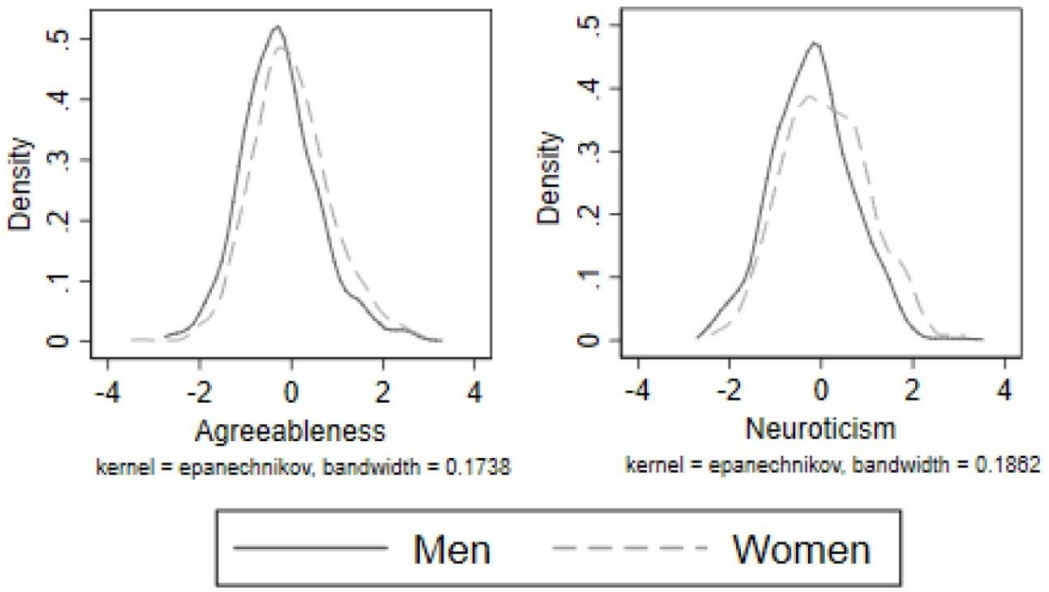


Figure 3: Overlapping distributions of Agreeableness (left) and Neuroticism (right) for men and women. Vertical axes indicate density, or the proportion of the sample in a given area under the curve. Horizontal axes indicate the levels of Agreeableness and Neuroticism respectively. In each graph, the women's curve, compared to the men's curve, is visibly tilted to the right towards higher trait levels. Of course, while women statistically reported higher levels of Agreeableness/Neuroticism than men, particular women reported higher, equal, or lower levels of Agreeableness/Neuroticism than particular men. Trait by trait, the distributions are not entirely, yet largely overlapping after all (Palczyńska 2018/2021: 562).

In a broad cross-cultural context, Jordan B. Peterson observes that women are roughly half a standard deviation more agreeable than men and that the situation with Neuroticism is very similar. Among others, this means that "the average woman would have to be less agreeable[/neurotic] than [approximately] 67% of women to be as disagreeable[/emotionally stable] as the typical man [...]"; in addition,

> the probability that a given woman is more agreeable than a given man is about 63%, and then, also, in terms of negative emotion [Neuroticism], say, it's approximately the same thing, but then you might think, well, 'What's the probability that a given person will be higher in negative emotion [Neuroticism] and more agreeable?' [...] These dimensions are orthogonal, right – they're unrelated, essentially – so that means you can add them together, and so once you start to add the [statistical] personality differences together between men and

[83] The decision to specifically include Palczyńska's graphs in this dissertation has been made purely on account of their simplicity, high legibility, and the fact that the general pattern of results is cross-cultural. In essence, no comparably intuitive graphs for a sample taken from the British population have been found. For a piece of Big Five research based on a sample of British managers, see: Georgellis and Sankae 2016: 67-80.

[84] For more information on the data and methods adopted in that study, see: Palczyńska 2018/2021: 561-563.

> women, they actually start to become quite big [by psychological standards], far more than half a standard deviation.[85]

The point of the matter is that it would be counter-productive and dangerous for both male and female spies – whether intelligence officers, their covert human intelligence sources, or other – to be high in Agreeableness and/or Neuroticism; above all, this would render them poor conspirators and negotiators, excessively susceptible to manipulation and exploitation. What actually predicts success in that morally ambiguous line of work is the ability and willingness to take advantage of other people, convincingly deceive them, and surreptitiously collect or even steal information; all that requires being high in both Disagreeableness and Emotional Stability, in the latter preferably as high as possible.[86] Hence, while many men and women obviously were, are, and will be able to become exceptionally efficient spies, the Big Five data collected from distinct countries around the world suggests that within the minority of people who are low in both Agreeableness and Neuroticism – in other words, high in both Disagreeableness and Emotional Stability – men are conspicuously more widespread than women.[87] Assuming, hypothetically, that this has been the case at least since the *fin de siècle*, that statistical disproportion might be one of the reasons why, *primo*, more male than female workers have always succeeded in advancing to high-ranking positions in various intelligence agencies around the world, and, *secundo*, the spy genre has always been predominantly focused on male characters. It is crucial to emphasise that, in any case, each of those two phenomena is not univariate, but multivariate, i.e., influenced by more than one factor. This practically means that neither gender differences in career choices nor those in personality exclude the possible presence of sex discrimination in a given workplace or harmful stereotypes in fiction. As regards spy works, many of

[85] See: "2014 Personality Lecture 17: Agreeableness and Gender Differences," *YouTube*, uploaded by Jordan B. Peterson, March 21, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yOJR-nEhNMk (accessed August 20, 2022). For additional information, see also: "2017 Personality 14: Introduction to Traits/Psychometrics/The Big 5," *YouTube*, uploaded by Jordan B. Peterson, March 11, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pCceO_D4AlY&t=2025s (accessed August 20, 2022); "2017 Personality 16: Biology/Traits: Incentive Reward/Neuroticism," *YouTube*, uploaded by Jordan B. Peterson, March 13, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ewU7Vb9ToXg (accessed August 20, 2022); and "2017 Personality 17: Biology and Traits: Agreeableness," *YouTube*, uploaded by Jordan B. Peterson, March 29, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G1eHJ9DdoEA&t=851s (accessed August 20, 2022).

[86] That last qualification does not apply to Disagreeableness since spies extremely high in it would be unable to effectively work in teams or perhaps even positively interact with any other person.

[87] This data also suggests that, conversely, within the minority of people who are high in both Agreeableness and Neuroticism – in other words, low in both Disagreeableness and Emotional Stability – women are conspicuously more widespread than men.

them present, in a sexist manner, male secret agents as more competent and resourceful than female ones.

Closing on the Big Five issues, women also quite often score higher than men in Extraversion, but this particular discrepancy tends to be much less apparent than in the cases of Agreeableness and Neuroticism. According to Yanna J. Weisberg, Colin G. DeYoung, and Jacob B. Hirsh, "the small effect size could be due to the existence of gender differences in different directions at the facet level. Women tend to score higher than men on Warmth, Gregariousness, and Positive Emotions, whereas men score higher than women on Assertiveness and Excitement Seeking" (2011: 3).[88] Out of those five facets, being high in the last two is the most conducive to successful espionage.[89] Clearly, the cross-cultural data suggests that there exist more men than women who are like that. This is basically another hint that gender differences in personality might be one of the aspects that, apart from sexism, contribute to the larger number of high-ranking men than women in various intelligence agencies as well as the masculinity within the spy genre. Conceivably, this type of literary and cinematic fiction, heavily influenced by extratextual reality, has always to some extent reflected the general patterns of behaviour in men and women on average as observed by the writers and film-makers, even long before psychologists developed the FFM and began assessing it.

Having discussed some of the (potential) reasons for and links between that extratextual and intratextual male domination, it is now possible to return to the subject of predominantly female supportive love interests in spy fiction. Naturally, they are not exclusive to it and can be traced in various thriller and mystery (sub)genres, which indicates that crime fiction as such is to some extent generically linked to romance fiction. Yet, those characters are likely to receive more development in thrillers, in which they often directly aid the protagonist in the struggle to evade exposure or pursuit. One important observation regarding spy thrillers is that early ones, such as William Le-Queux's 1905 novel *Behind the Throne*, typically depict mutual understanding as the main foundation of a relationship, sexual activity being at best indirectly implied. Conversely, contemporary ones, by the likes of Anne Stuart's 2005 novel *Black Ice*, tend to highlight erotic needs and fantasies explicitly. Stuart's work in particular explores the

[88] See also: Feingold 1994: 429-456; Costa, Terracciano, and McCrae 2001: 322-331; Schmitt et al. 2008: 168-182; and Lippa 2008/2010: 619-636.
[89] Of course, being high in Gregariousness could also potentially facilitate infiltration.

theme of forced seduction, which is strongly reminiscent of the American "bodice rippers"[90] of the 1970s and 1980s (Ramsdell 2018: 229).

Some spy works examine the long-term process of shaping the protagonist's personality and motivations; hence, they can be easily associated with *Bildungsromans* (among others, schoolboy stories). The gradual maturation from childhood to adulthood is evident in the case of the eponymous Kim from Rudyard Kipling's 1900 novel. With each consecutive adventure, the character gains valuable life experience, which helps him develop both emotionally and psychologically. A more recent and much different take on adolescence can be found in Michael Frayn's 2002 novel *Spies*. The story is narrated by the elderly Stephen Wheatley, who recalls – or, to be more precise, mentally re-enacts – his childhood self-delusions and the subsequent loss thereof during World War II.[91] Yet another recurring concept is the mental and/or moral deterioration of secret agents. Among those severely afflicted, it is possible to name Magnus Pym from John le Carré's 1986 novel *A Perfect Spy*. Earlier, Joseph Conrad introduced a particularly multidimensional "victim" – Kyrilo Sidorovitch Razumov – in the 1911 novel *Under Western Eyes*. Razumov owes the said complexity to the fact that he first betrays a revolutionist/murderer for fear of being legally implicated in collaboration, but is later profoundly traumatised by the deed.

To be exact, insanity, paranoia, and obsession belong to the themes the spy genre incorporated from Gothic fiction (Snodgrass 2005: 189-190, 258-259). Those three can be readily associated with, i.a., some short stories by Edgar Allan Poe: "Berenice" (1835), "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1839), "The Black Cat" (1843), and "Tell-Tale Heart" (1843), to name but a few. Still, it would be a major oversimplification to solely attribute the presence of Gothic elements in spy fiction to the immediate transfer of ideas from 19th-century Gothic fiction *per se*. Frequently, the borrowing occurred (and still does) through the agency of other, "Gothic-inspired", genres (e.g., sensation fiction, post-Victorian Gothic romances, contemporary horror fiction). Among those, sensation fiction, epitomised by Wilkie Collins's 1859 epistolary novel *Woman in White*, blends shocking Gothic subject matters (i.e., murder, adultery, kidnapping, etc.)

[90] Bodice ripper – alternatively, bodice buster – is a derisive term for a daring historical romance, especially one in which the heroine is first (almost) forced to have sex and then enters a genuine love affair with her seducer/rapist (Baldick 1990/2008: 40-41).

[91] Being a variation of the spy genre, the spy *Bildungsroman* tends to be associated with the general prevalence of male protagonists. This does not mean, however, that spy works cannot successfully portray the maturation of female lead characters. A good example is Rosalie Knecht's 2018 novel *Who is Vera Kelly?*, in which the American writer depicts the eponymous heroine's coming of age in conjunction with her grown-up career in espionage.

with ordinary, domestic settings, suggesting that "great evil always lurks nearby" (Brantlinger 1982: 1-3). The combination of those exact elements can also be traced in spy fiction. As a rule, spies/secret agents find themselves unable to settle into comfortable domesticity. All too often, they simply become most vulnerable at home: Adolf Verloc is killed by his profoundly enraged wife Winnie;[92] George Smiley is troubled by his beautiful promiscuous wife Ann;[93] Jack Quinn (Jean-Claude Van Damme) is cherished by his loving pregnant wife Kathryn (Natacha Lindinger), but, much to his "ferocious indignation", she gets abducted notwithstanding.[94] Basically, spies/secret agents typically lead a perpetually disorganised – if not incontestably dysfunctional – family life due to the excessively risky nature of their profession.

The aforementioned invidious disarray inscribed into a spy's/secret agent's existence inevitably connotes adventure and, on top of that, a firm connection between spy and adventure fiction. Although, seemingly, the term "adventure" may seem inherently equivocal, it could be assumed that Don D'Ammassa's definition aptly encapsulates its very essence. He perceives the notion as "an event or series of events that happen outside the ordinary course of the protagonist's life, usually accompanied by danger, often by physical action" (D'Ammassa 2009: vii). It is worth noticing that, in this sense, adventure is inseparably linked to suspense; together, they constitute the basic foundation of not only the spy thriller, but the thriller genre in general. Furthermore, it could be surmised that spy thrillers stocked with a markedly extensive multiplicity of adventures – such as Kipling's *Kim* – are not exclusively rooted in the 19th-century adventure novels by H. G. Wells, Robert Louis Stevenson, Joseph Conrad, Mark Twain, and many other accomplished writers of those times; rather, such spy works simply fit into the age-old tradition of adventure storytelling. Undeniably, narrative fiction has always relied on it – and will most certainly continue to do so – to a greater or lesser extent.

In the subsequent chapters, the development of the spy thriller and its hybridity will be discussed more thoroughly in the context of selected British works of fiction created in different historical periods. At this point, however, having established a basic

[92] In Conrad's *The Secret Agent*, Winnie murders Verloc as he directly, though unintentionally, contributes to the death of her beloved (or, more accurately, deified) mentally-challenged brother, Stevie.

[93] Smiley is a recurring protagonist (or side character) in a number of le Carré's espionage novels, i.a., *Call for the Dead* (1961), *A Murder of Quality* (1962), and *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* (1974). The fictional intelligence officer loves his unfaithful wife virtually unconditionally, but her infidelity perturbs him nonetheless.

[94] Quinn is the protagonist of Tsui Hark's 1997 spy film *Double Team*. With the help of Yaz (Dennis Rodman), a flamboyant gunrunner, the agent sets out on a quest to rescue his wife and baby from his perennial nemesis – the terrorist Stavros (Mickey Rourke).

understanding of spy fiction as a hybrid genre, it is necessary to pinpoint the existence of two distinct characteristics of the spy thriller narrative which to this day tend to be misnamed, confused, and conflated by scholars.

1.6. Sensational versus Realist Spy Thrillers

While studying the spy genre, it is essential to classify spy thrillers according to the degree of their veracity or some other, fact-related criterion. In particular, largely impossible, improbable, and supernatural narratives should be collectively distinguished from those which convey a strong impression of realism. However, this specific academic endeavour can be easily recognised as one of those lavishly strewn with pitfalls and difficulties. To begin with, spy fiction scholars use a variety of inconsistent and ambiguous names for the emergent two groups of works, which inevitably results in an undesirable terminological chaos. The most striking example seems to be that of Alan Burton, who attempts to discriminate between "spy thrillers" and "espionage stories" (2016: 141-143, 377-379). In Burton's view, the latter are "more serious, complex, and thought-provoking"; by virtue of those three realism-induced qualities, espionage stories transcend the intrinsic (spy) thriller practice of appealing to the audience's emotions (2016: 141). The problem with this line of reasoning is that "transcending" does not entail "abandoning". Actually, even the scholar himself observes that what he refers to as "espionage stories" is often called "art thriller(s)" (Burton 2016: 141). In practice, spy thrillers comprise espionage stories; such a division of works is simply ill-founded. Besides, the very terminology is confusing. First, the heads of those two compounds partially overlap in meaning, i.e., "thrillers" constitute a specific type of "stories". Second, also on a semantic level, the distinctive modifiers "spy" and "espionage" seem virtually synonymous. For those reasons, it is difficult to efficiently juxtapose the two expressions.

Another researcher, Michael Denning, recommends the terms "magical" and "existential" spy thrillers, which, likewise, are nothing short of enigmatic (1987/2014: 34-35). Basically, without prior explanation, they oddly connote "magic" and "existence" rather than the originally intended inherent characteristics of spy thrillers which justify dividing them into less and more realistic. For Denning, those crucial attributes are, respectively, "morally unambiguous" and "ambiguous" conflicts (1987/2014: 34-35). As indicated further on in this section, the scholar's suggestion to determine two

(sub)genres of the spy thriller is to the point, but the (possibly unconsidered) decision to give them excessively metaphorical names inevitably results in misrepresenting the actual distinction.

In light of the above reservations, James Chapman's terms "sensational" and "realist" spy thrillers are adopted for this study (2010: 222; 2018: 7). Basically, those names appear to be characterised by a lesser degree of vagueness than the misnomers used by Burton and Denning. Regardless, even this terminology requires some disambiguation. While the association with the Victorian sensation and realistic novel is unmistakable, spy thrillers must not be fully identified with those. Although, much like the sensation novel, the sensational spy thriller exploits perfunctorily characterised protagonists[95] embroiled in frequent and rapid twists and turns of action,[96] it usually interweaves the ordinary domestic settings with public/exotic ones, more suitable for international intrigue. As for the realist spy thriller, it imitates the realistic novel in depicting the harshness, arduousness, and conflicting moralities of human life,[97] but it also markedly deviates from the idea of "objective" realism with the inexorable inclusion of factopiction. At this point, it can be concluded that certain contrasts between the sensational and the realist spy thriller can be built along two distinctive features they respectively borrowed from the sensation and the realistic novel. Fundamentally, it appears that the juxtaposition between the "sensationalism" and the "realism" of spy fiction comes down to that between the "extraordinarily one-dimensional" and the "mundanely multifaceted" fictional renditions of the conflict between good and evil.

At the same time, it must be acknowledged that, in several academic studies, the "sensational-realist" opposition is framed as the "romantic-realistic" one (see: Cawelti and Rosenberg 1987: 45; Cawelti 1999/2004: 303; Woods 2008: 24, 53; Willmetts 2013: 154). Both suggestions are equally useful;[98] as for the latter, it can be immediately associated with the contrast between the "romantically overblown" and "believably realistic" moral clashes depicted within the spy genre. A good description of this type of juxtaposition in fiction can be found in M.H. Abrams's *Glossary of Literary Terms* (see: "Realism and Naturalism"):

[95] Actually, a very similar – albeit overtly negative – comment on the main characters of Victorian sensation fiction was offered by Henry L. Mansel. In his critical essay, he crudely disparages them as "but so many lay-figures on which to exhibit a drapery of incident" (Mansel 1863: 486).
[96] For more information on the Victorian sensation novel, see: Brantlinger 1982 and Pykett 1994/2011.
[97] For more information on the Victorian realistic novel, see: Kearns 1996 and Byerly 1997.
[98] Nevertheless, the casual interchangeability of the terms "realist" and "realistic" seems symptomatic of scholarly carelessness.

> Realistic fiction is often opposed to romantic fiction. The romance is said to present life as we would have it be – more picturesque, fantastic, adventurous, or heroic than actuality; realism, on the other hand, is said to represent life as it really is. This distinction in terms solely of subject matter, while relevant, is clearly inadequate. Casanova, T. E. Lawrence, and Winston Churchill were people in real life, but their biographies demonstrate that truth can be stranger than literary realism. It is more useful to identify realism in terms of the effect on the reader: realistic fiction is written to give the effect that it represents life and the social world as it seems to the common reader, evoking the sense that its characters might in fact exist, and that such things might well happen (1957/1999: 260).

Taking into account the above quoted remarks, it becomes clear that Denning's "magical-existential" contrast is a rather cumbersome interpretation of the "sensational-realist" and "romantic-realistic" ones. Obviously, "magic" embodies the implausible, whereas "existence" – the plausible.

It is possible to offer at least two explanations for the inconsistent terminology. First, the distinction between the sensational and the realist spy thriller may have been simultaneously noticed by multiple researchers who attempted to describe it independently. Second, there is a chance that the results of certain spy fiction studies had been overlooked by some scholars who, unknowingly, introduced their own terms in place of the already existing ones. Whichever the case may be, delineating the approximate conventions of the two types of spy thrillers requires both ordering and expanding on the current convoluted state of academic knowledge. Such an approach seems conducive to broadening the understanding of the spy genre in general.

As for sensational spy thrillers, they primarily aim to appeal to the readers'/viewers' emotions (Burton 2016: 377). Basically, such works evoke a mixture of dread and excitement with the use of complex and fast-paced action (Chapman 2010: 222). More specifically, they revolve around the gradual restoration of peace and order in a world plagued by conspiracy, treachery (and treason) as well as international threats. In other words, this type of fiction introduces (occasionally far-fetched) happy endings. Notably, the plots tend to be structured around binary oppositions, such as the ordinary – the extraordinary, the timid – the adventurous, the familiar – the unfamiliar, etc. The transitions between these extremes are meant to create the impression of suspense. Among such shifts, a crucial one concerns the setting, which, quite often, undergoes a transformation from the domestic to the unknown/dangerous/exotic (Burton 2016: 377).

The stock characters of sensational spy thrillers can be generally described as individuals with ambiguous connections and motivations (Burton 2016: 377). Yet, in many cases, there exists a clear-cut division into the heroes and the antagonists, the former being overtly idealised while the latter strongly deprecated. This type of exaggeration is applicable to both appearance and behaviour (Merry 1977: 2). Consequently, sensational spy thrillers usually promote a simplified – hence, markedly distorted and biased – image of conflicts, reducing them to genuine clashes between the forces of largely unquestionable good and evil (Chapman 2010: 222).

In both sensational and realist spy thrillers, a considerable degree of variety can be observed in the ways spies/secret agents are portrayed: they can be either experienced professionals or complete amateurs; people satisfied with their occupation or disgusted by it. Inherently, spies/secret agents are romantic figures: they act as bandits, detectives, fugitives, sheriffs, lone rangers, explorers, etc. (Merry 1977: 7-8).[99] It is also noteworthy that, like protagonists of mystery (sub)genres, spies/secret agents may follow a code of conduct that is deeply rooted in a broadly understood, and often distorted, sense of decency. For example, some spies/secret agents decide not to kill anybody in cold blood whereas others apply this rule to women only. It seems that the characters' adherence to a fixed set of principles is a manifestation of a generic link between the spy thriller (sub)genres and mystery (sub)genres, although profound worldview re-evaluations are generally more likely to occur in the former than in the latter.

At this point it needs to be emphasised that assassinations – notwithstanding the line of reasoning behind them – are obvious atrocities. Thus, the so-called "morality of the gun" is a rather questionable notion. Ultimately, in sensational spy thrillers, murder is frequently presented as more or less justifiable depending on the target and circumstances. Similarly, spying, which is ethically dubious in itself, is glorified if performed by "the good guys" (Merry 1977: 2-3).

Curiously, an active spy/agent does not necessarily have to become the leading character of a sensational spy thriller. As a matter of fact, the protagonists can be very diverse. They range from former criminals (William "Spider" Scott in Kenneth Royce's *The XYY Man* series) to music industry workers (Mark Holland in Paul Myers's *Deadly*

[99] Clearly, the diverse roles performed by spies often parallel those associated with the stock characters of various genres (mostly thriller and mystery (sub)genres, but not only). This peculiar "versatility" largely contributes to the hybridity of the spy genre and will be discussed more thoroughly in the analytic chapters.

series) or even schoolboys (Martin Clifford in the 1972 TV series *Tightrope*).[100] Still, it is a common practice to draw some kind of connection between the main characters' actions and the activities of an intelligence agency.[101] This is not particularly surprising given the fact the protagonists are often put in a dangerous situation, which, in turn, forces them to embark on an arduous – yet ultimately successful – quest for safety and justice (Burton 2016: 377-379).

Ever since the release of first sensational spy thrillers in the British Empire, such works have been in constant demand. It is possible to enumerate multiple British sensational spy thriller writers who achieved considerable critical and commercial success. The list includes, among others, William LeQueux, Edward Phillips Oppenheim, Desmond Bagley, Ian Fleming, Gavin Black, Manning Coles, Frederick Forsyth, Alistair MacLean, James Mitchell, Dennis Wheatley, and Valentine Williams (Burton 2016: 378-379).

Currently, sensational spy thrillers are heavily influenced by the *James Bond* films and novels. At its core, the series is a clever combination of action, sex, and exotic locations, complemented by the protagonist's endearing cockiness and wit. Due to its immense commercial success, the schematic construction of the Bond story is frequently imitated (or even parodied). As a direct consequence of this, popular fiction characters such as David Grant from George B. Mair's 1961 novel *The Day Khrushchev Panicked* or Charles Hood from James Mayo's 1964 novel *Hammerhead* are largely reminiscent of James Bond (Burton 2016: 379).

As mentioned earlier, in contrast to sensational spy thrillers, realist ones reject the unambiguous perception of good and evil, which endows them with a far greater degree of verisimilitude. Nevertheless, it must not be forgotten that all spy fiction is factopiction: the inevitable distortion of reality partially caused by the secret nature of real-world espionage. This leads to a paradox: realist spy thrillers seem more "believable" than sensational ones, but their actual veracity cannot be evaluated as higher since they also – in some measure – misrepresent intelligence activity. Still, it remains true that realist spy thrillers generally aspire to provoke intellectual reflection on the con-

[100] On that score, it seems reasonable to highlight the crucial difference between spy thrillers and detective stories. The latter are characterised by very little flexibility in the choice of the protagonists. Most often, they are simply professional detectives (Rzepka 2005: 10-11). Still, it is also possible to pinpoint some prominent amateurs, such as Miss Marple, the elderly spinster from Agatha Christie's novels and short stories, and Father Brown – the Roman Catholic priest from G.K. Chesterton's short stories.

[101] For example, the aforementioned William "Spider" Scott is hired by British Intelligence whereas Mark Holland is a former member of it.

flicting moralities and cruelty of the presented world (Denning 1987/2014: 34). This can be attributed to the perpetual atmosphere of duplicity, sustained by the complex instances of treachery, jobbery, bureaucratic indolence, etc. (Burton 2016: 141).

Furthermore, despite being thematically related to sensational spy thrillers, realist ones gain greater real-world relevance since they do not trivialize conspiracies and terrorism as "fully conquerable problems". On the contrary, these works are imbued with the notion of the endless and omnipresent threat, suggesting that individual states need to be constantly vigilant in order to oppose it. Yet, as in real life, even the most meticulous precautions cannot ensure perfect safety. Thus, the struggle against criminal/terrorist activity involves temporary victories and defeats, but never ceases to exist (Burton 2016: 141-142).

Sometimes, in order to highlight the aforementioned distinctions, realist spy thrillers are, quite simplistically, referred to as vehicles for expressing "Anti-Bondery" (Buckton 2015: xv). That criticism is not exclusively targeted at the protagonist of the *James Bond* series. Actually, it concerns the *naiveté* (or, in certain cases, implausibility) of many sensational spy thrillers, which either belittle or ignore the mundane and questionable nature of spying. In realist spy thrillers, clandestine activities are stripped of their purely "heroic" premise, which contributes to their verisimilitude-like quality (Maddox 1986: 158-160). For this reason, these works tend to receive more favourable reviews than other types of popular fiction, including sensational spy thrillers[102] (Orr 2015: 63).

Critical comparisons aside, it remains true that realist spy thrillers are readily associated with literary (or cinematic) finesse. This can be attributed to the fact that many acclaimed authors gained interest in producing such fiction. Rooted in the works such as Joseph Conrad's 1907 novel *The Secret Agent* and Somerset Maugham's 1928 short-story collection *Ashenden*, realist spy thrillers explore the (un)ethical dimension of spying as well as the intricate connections between spies, intelligence agencies, and society (Chapman 2010: 222). In the 1930s, the formula was enriched with the figure of a disillusioned anti-hero, introduced by Graham Greene and Eric Ambler to accentuate the growing social disquiet over the intense armament race and the rising of totalitarian

[102] The criticism presented here may imply that the artistry of a given work of fiction can be measured in relation to the degree of realism maintained in it. Nevertheless, it needs to be remembered that the very concepts of "realism" and "aesthetic value" are highly elusive and controversial. For detailed analyses of the former, see: Kearns 1996 and Byerly 1997; for a study on the latter, see: Beardsley 1981. For a review of some research on the – no less equivocal – notion of mimesis in literature, see: Gu 2005.

regimes. Notably, these two writers, along with John le Carré, are often credited with the development of high-quality realist spy thrillers (Burton 2016: 142). As Alan Furst, an American spy fiction writer, observes:

> [They] write with a kind of cloaked anger, a belief that the world is a place where political power is maintained by means of treachery and betrayal, and, worse, that this gloomy fact of life has as much to do with elemental human nature as it does with the ambitions of states. It's a bad world, where bad people do bad things [...]. By the final paragraph, it's evident that victory is not moral triumph, and, with a few turns of the globe and changes in politics, no longer victory (2003: ix).

Without a doubt, Furst's insightful comment is not solely applicable to the works of Greene, Ambler, and le Carré. As a matter of fact, it can be treated as a highly apt summary of the murky nature of realist spy thrillers in general.

So far, the main differences between sensational and realist spy thrillers have been demonstrated. However, it needs to be remembered that these works exist within the common framework of the thriller, which is a very inventive, fluid, and flexible genre. Hence, sensational spy thrillers sometimes incorporate motifs characteristic of realist ones, and the reverse scenario is also feasible. This is exactly in line with Derrida's claim that individual works of art/fiction do not lend themselves to an absolute confinement within the boundaries of a single genre (in this case, subgenre) (1980: 65). In practice, it is impossible to create a generically pure representative of the sensational or realist spy thriller. Yet, like all (sub)genres of fiction, those two should be viewed as generalised classification models, i.e., pursuable – though not fully attainable – sets of narrative conventions. This argument can be easily justified with the use of a hypothetical bipolar scale (Figure 4). If its two extreme points were respectively occupied by the sensational and realist spy thriller, the *James Bond* franchise would be located in close proximity to the former, whereas the *George Smiley* franchise near the latter. Likewise, Robert Rodriguez's *Spy Kids* films would appear on the "Bondian" side, while Conrad's *The Secret Agent* on the "Smileyan" side. Obviously, all those positions are approximations, but so is the core idea of generic classification.[103] Thus, it could be argued that genre studies heavily depend on the constant revision of diverse theoretical estimates with a view to improving the efficiency of genres as functional abstract categories.

[103] At this point it can be logically deduced that the adoption of a similar hypothetical bipolar scale would also prove useful for the analysis of the core "mystery-thriller" generic opposition explored in this chapter. Mystery-oriented works would be aligned along the "mystery" side, whereas suspense-oriented works along the "thriller" side – naturally, by approximation.



Figure 4: Sensational vs Realist Spy Thrillers

1.7. Summary

This chapter has been devoted to the introduction and prefatory analysis of some crucial theoretical concepts, such as genre, generic conventions, generic hybridisation/hybridity, factopiction, mystery, surprise, suspense, thrill, thriller, MacGuffin, philobatism, ocnophilia, and spy fiction. Most importantly, it has been suggested that, upon slight revision, Charles Derry's comprehensive model of the crime film (1988/2002: 64) can be usefully applied to academic research on both cinematic and literary works of crime fiction. This implication primarily concerns those studies in which the concept of genre is perceived as a simplified, yet functional, taxonomic unit. After all, the bracketed core distinctions between mystery (sub)genres (mystery>suspense) and thriller (sub)genres (mystery<suspense) are based on approximation as well.

It has also been established that describing spy fiction as merely a hybrid of mysteries and thrillers is over-simplistic because, without further explanation, it is unclear which of the two categories exerts the dominant influence on the genre. Actually, while spy fiction may incorporate both suspense and mystery elements, it generally exhibits a significant predominance of the former, rendering the latter of secondary importance, at best supportive. This can be largely attributed to the fact that espionage is embedded with suspense; spies/secret agents work undercover and constantly run the risk of exposure. The profession frequently necessitates participation in stealth operations on enemy territory, close confrontations with powerful villains, daring escapes, etc. Naturally, all those elements fit the narrative formula of the thriller very well. Consequently, by approximation, spy fiction has been generically classified as a variation of the political thriller – the spy thriller.

It seems reasonable to examine spy fiction in terms of its hybridity in relation to individual units within the taxonomic hierarchy of crime fiction, i.e., particular mystery and thriller (sub)genres. This approach creates the opportunity to evaluate the extent to which the spy thriller draws influence from each of those. Also, since spy fiction tends

to incorporate structural elements from other, not crime-oriented, genres, this study highlights those borrowings as well.

Finally, it has been observed that, as a rule, espionage works adhere to one of two separate – and sometimes misnamed/confused – narrative directions, hence the distinction between the "sensational" and "realist" spy thriller. Again, this division should also be regarded as an approximation, i.e., it is not merely the presence, but the prevalence of distinct conventions within a given spy work which determines its (sub)generic affiliation.

Chapter 2: British Spy Fiction at Its Inception

2.1. Socio-Cultural and Historical Origins of the British Spy Genre

To a significant extent, the creation and popularisation of spy fiction can be attributed to the United Kingdom. This is hardly surprising considering the country's extensive fascination with spies. According to Julian Petley, a British media scholar and writer, such interest stems from a self-professed national proclivity for secretive behaviour combined with a peculiar reluctance (or even inability) to disclose feelings (1988: 95). Petley's reasoning, though somewhat stereotypical, constitutes a valuable reflection on the potential socio-cultural circumstances determining his compatriots' preference for a specific type of protagonists. To illustrate the scale of this fondness, it is sufficient to observe that approximately 300 British spy novels were released within the relatively short period between 1901 and 1914. Clearly, producing so many works of fiction during the initial stage of their generic development is remarkable. They usually sold very well because of the newly emerged commercial demand (Moran and Johnson 2010: 1). Paradoxically, one of the major political scandals which served as a catalyst for the avid British interest in spy fiction occurred in France and is referred to as the Dreyfus Affair. It is necessary to present a brief historical background of the event in order to illustrate that it contributed to the early establishment of the genre and its inherent relationships with extratextual reality.

In 1894, the leaders of the French army, upon realising a secret military document had been delivered to the German Embassy in Paris, accused an innocent artillery officer of Jewish origin – Alfred Dreyfus – of treason. On the basis of scant and mostly forged evidence, he was convicted of spying and received a life sentence on Devil's Island in French Guiana. To make matters worse, in 1896, high-ranking French military officials, in response to Georges Picquart's[104] discovery of the actual spy – Ferdinand Walsin Esterhazy[105] – deliberately suppressed the truth, unwilling to publicly admit that they had made a mistake (Harris 2010: 1-2; Burton 2001: 336).

[104] Colonel Georges Picquart was an intelligence officer who conducted a private investigation in search of the real spy. His superiors, deeming Picquart's attempts to prove Dreyfus's innocence "inconvenient", took specific measures to silence him. Initially, Picquart was sent to eastern France and North Africa. He was nonetheless determined to pursue his objective, which eventually led to his imprisonment. As in the case of Dreyfus, the allegations were false (Harris 2010: 2).

[105] Major Ferdinand Walsin Esterhazy, despite the existence of strong incriminating evidence of his treachery, was protected by the High Staff, who did not want Dreyfus's conviction to be questioned. This

Initially, the Dreyfus Affair was brought to international attention by the novelist Émile Zola, who, in 1898, wrote an open letter to the President of the French Republic, highlighting various aspects of judicial and military misconduct.[106] Unsurprisingly, the British press was immediately intrigued by the shocking revelation – it turned out a useful pretext for condemning the "primitive" French system of justice, supposedly inferior to the "civilized" Anglo-Saxon one. Additionally, British Protestants gained the opportunity to accuse French Catholics, the majority of whom supported Dreyfus's imprisonment, of anti-Semitism.[107] Clearly, these factors, along with the British government's desire to divert the public attention away from the gradual decline of the Empire, resulted in the huge amount of coverage devoted to the preposterous French military cover-up. In the years 1889–1890, many influential British newspapers, including *The Times*, frequently demonised France, deeming the entire country responsible for Dreyfus's tragedy[108] (Huch 1975: 22-26). The scale of exaggeration is especially evident in the words of the editor of *St. James Gazette*: "We, the private citizens who make up states, have a plain course before us. We have to recognize that France has become a barbarous country. Such a people no longer forms a part of the comity of civilizations".[109]

Due to the adverse publicity in the British press, the Dreyfus Affair was widely criticised in late 19th-century Western Europe (Mobley 1993: 199-205). Still, despite the international pressure, Dreyfus was found guilty again during his second trial. The verdict immediately caused a massive social outcry among his supporters, which led to a pardon followed by eventual exoneration in 1906 (Harris 2010: 3-4, 368).

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resulted in, among other things, a pseudo-trial which exonerated Esterhazy in 1897, followed by a court-martial in 1898 which once again acquitted him (Conner 2014: 18, 43).

[106] The text appeared under the headline *J'accuse...!* (literally: "I accuse...!") on the front page of the newspaper *L'Aurore* (literally: "The Dawn"). In order to avoid imprisonment for the alleged "libel", Zola escaped to England. The writer returned to France in 1899, shortly after Dreyfus's pardon (Harris 2010: 2, 312).

[107] It needs to be emphasised that before being sent to prison, Dreyfus was publicly humiliated. During a degradation ceremony, he was stripped piece by piece of his regalia in front of a raging crowd of French spectators chanting "Death to Judas, death to the Jew", which was a clear manifestation of anti-Semitism. Apart from this, his sword was broken in two (Harris 2010: 1; Burton 2001: 336). It can be concluded that, in the face of such circumstances, France became an easy target for the hostile British press.

[108] In truth, the Dreyfus Affair divided the French society into two diametrically opposed groups. The so-called "Dreyfusards", who demanded Dreyfus's release and rehabilitation, generally encompassed pro-Republican advocates of anti-clericalism, whereas the "anti-Dreyfusards", who insisted on upholding the original conviction, consisted primarily of pro-Army Catholics (Conner 2014: 55). Of course, this division is simplified. As Michael Burns asserts, "not all Catholics, nationalists, and anti-Semites turned against Dreyfus; not all Jews, socialists, and anticlericals rallied to his side" (1999: ix).

[109] *St. James Gazette*, September 11, 1899.

At this point, the connection between the Dreyfus Affair and British spy fiction becomes apparent. By condemning the French scandal, the British press inadvertently brought the concept of espionage into public attention, thus creating an insatiable demand for popular literature devoted to clandestine activities. It is not surprising that early spy fiction stories, notably those by William LeQueux and Edward Phillips Oppenheim, exploit the concept of social injustice (Panek 1981: 7-9). Many authors simply seized the chance to make profit from "Dreyfus-like" stories and characters, having realised they had the potential to attract readers.

In the course of history, numerous British authors have become recognised as pioneers of the spy genre. Given that many of them (to name some of the most acclaimed ones, Ian Fleming, John le Carré, and Graham Greene) were either directly or indirectly involved in the activities of real-life Intelligence, the aptitude for inventing engrossing tales of espionage seems self-explanatory. This, however, is only one of the factors which reinforces the high position of British spy stories in comparison to foreign varieties of such literature. In fact, it is possible to correlate the abundance of fiction concerning MI5 and MI6 with the unrealistically mythologised effectiveness of these agencies. Thanks to successful propaganda, which was widely spread in Europe during World War I, British Intelligence was deemed superior to others until the 1950s when compromising instances of Soviet infiltration were publicly revealed (Burton 2016: 1-2). Interestingly, in spite of these and other failures, an idealised image of British espionage is still promoted in contemporary pop-culture, as evidenced by the ongoing production of James Bond films and novels[110] based on Ian Fleming's concept of 007 – a hyper-efficient agent "On Her Majesty's Secret Service".[111]

Among the earliest British spy novels, Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* (1900) and Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent* (1907) are often distinguished as classic representatives of the genre. *Kim*, the story of a young orphan who is trained to join the British Indian Secret Service, is one of Kipling's finest and most widely read books as it combines

[110] Some of the most recent authorised *James Bond* novels were written by Anthony Horowitz. Those include *Trigger Mortis* (2015) and *Forever and a Day* (2018). As far as spy fiction is concerned, Horowitz is also known for his *Alex Rider* series of novels, in which the eponymous character is, by and large, a teenage equivalent of James Bond. The similarity between Rider and Bond is not coincidental. Actually, the author admits that 007 – as depicted in films – was a major source of inspiration for his protagonist (Saxena 2013: 45).

[111] The tenth *James Bond* novel by Ian Fleming is titled *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*.

an adventurous protagonist with a gripping plot.[112] *The Secret Agent*, which focuses on anarchists in Great Britain, remains equally popular since it touches upon the culturally relevant issue of terrorism.[113] While the artistic value of these works cannot be denied, they were produced, ironically, by authors who did not particularly specialise in this type of fiction. It appears that both Kipling and Conrad, thanks to their respective literary skills, were able to create individual masterpieces within the framework of spy fiction – a genre established by different authors.

The first British writers who regularly exploited the theme of espionage were William LeQueux[114] (1864–1927) and Edward Phillips Oppenheim (1866–1946). This does not mean, however, that they confined themselves to the sole purpose of inventing spy stories. In fact, LeQueux's and Oppenheim's vast *oeuvres* – each comprises over 100 novels – feature a plethora of spy thrillers, political thrillers, detective novels, gangster stories, and romances. Although these works enjoyed considerable (if not remarkable) readership at the time of their release,[115] nowadays they are largely forgotten. Many contemporary scholars, for example, LeRoy L. Panek, criticise LeQueux and Oppenheim for their crude writing styles as well as rudimentary and somewhat far-fetched plotlines, suggesting apparent authorial ineptitude (1981: 4, 9, 18). Yet, since these writers are the precursors of spy fiction in Great Britain, it is necessary to comment upon the literary motifs they introduced.

LeQueux's and Oppenheim's interest in literary espionage seems to have originated from the national concern for the international position and safety of the British Empire. British society was profoundly disappointed with the plain indolence which fully incapacitated successive governments in the face of various "crises" – or at least such was the public opinion. The almost paranoid, yet not entirely groundless, imperial anxiety was fuelled by the growing French and German influences in Africa (not to mention the conflict with Boers in the South of the continent), as well as the Russian activity in Afghanistan (Panek 1981: 5-7). Germany, due to the rapid development of its

[112] In 2003, "the Big Read", BBC's list of 200 most beloved British books, featured *Kim* at the 159th spot. See: "The Big Read. Top 200," *BBC*, 2003, http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/bigread/top200_2.shtml (accessed April 24, 2018).
[113] After September 11 attacks, *The Secret Agent*, along with several poems by Wystan Auden, was the most frequently referenced piece of literature in the American media. See: Shulevitz 2001 (online article).
[114] The name is sometimes alternatively spelled "Le Queux".
[115] In the wake of successful book sales, LeQueux and Oppenheim were respectively nicknamed "The Master of Mystery" and "The Prince of Storytellers" by their publishers (Woods 2008: 32; Bloom 2008: 184).

maritime force, was particularly feared as a prospective invader of the British Isles (Woods 2008: 31).

With the intention of alarming both the British society and those in power, LeQueux and Oppenheim embarked on a quest to produce spy fiction which exposed the Empire's vulnerability to foreign threats – markedly, the so-called "German menace". The theme is especially common in their war-prophecy novels. For example, LeQueux's *The Invasion of 1910* (1906) and Oppenheim's *The Mysterious Mr Sabin* (1898) highlight a number of deficiencies in the British defence policy. These include, among others, the insufficient military training of the society, the decrepitude of the fleet, and poor coastal security (Panek 1981: 18). Due to the inclusion of spy subplots, both of these war-prophecy novels are often classified as spy novels (see: Panek 1981: 18; Peer 2008: 5). However, in the case of LeQueux's work, this might seem slightly inaccurate. It could be argued that *The Invasion of 1910* concentrates primarily on various aspects of military activity, marginalising the role of espionage in the overall plot development. Therefore, it would seem more reasonable to regard the story as a distinct representative of a transitional form between the two genres, if not solely as a war-prophecy novel.

Considering LeQueux's and Oppenheim's characteristic spy novels, for example, *Secrets of the Foreign Office* (1903) and *The Pawns Count* (1918), such works were heavily influenced by Victorian sensation novels and romances. Both authors often combined the Gothic spirit, exaggerated villains, and personal secrets prevalent in the former with the High Life, idealised heroes, selfless women, and cunning scoundrels associated with the latter. This indicates that generic hybridity has been inscribed into British spy thrillers ever since they were first created. In those early prototypes, the regular appearance of lady typists and shop girls, along with vivid descriptions of exclusive holiday resorts and exquisite parlours, served as a means to attract female audiences, chiefly members of the lower-middle class (Panek 1981: 5-7). At this point it needs to be emphasised that many early 20th-century women, despite various restrictions imposed on their participation in the public life, frequently visited libraries and showed a particular affinity for literature. Therefore, they were quickly recognised by writers and publishers as crucial target consumers (Moran and Johnson 2010: 9).

Apart from LeQueux and Oppenheim, various other British writers produced literary works revolving around the country's military unpreparedness for armed aggression. This type of fiction was, allegedly, created with the intention of suggesting specific countermeasures to both the public and those in power (Panek 1981: 7). While the

virtuous motive cannot be disproved, there simultaneously existed another, less noble one. It must not escape attention that many spy novels fostered and exploited the Brits' fear of foreign infiltration (Bold 2005/2006: 329). For authors and publishers alike, reinforcing the atmosphere of great social unrest was, at least to a certain extent, self-serving. It simply ensured consistent demand for spy fiction and, consequently, high profit.

2.2. Early British Spy Thrillers – Selected Examples

In Chapter 1, it has been suggested that spy fiction can be generically classified as a variation of the political thriller which arose from late 19th/early 20th-century hybrids. Naturally, in order to support such an observation, it is essential to identify and analyse some of those British "prototypes" of espionage stories, i.e., the earliest works of crime fiction in which the inclusion of some major professional/amateur spy plots has led to an explicit disturbance of the proportion between mystery and suspense – obviously, in favour of the latter. To initiate this part of the discussion, it is only natural to elaborate on a prototype that has already been briefly touched upon in this dissertation.

2.2.1. *Kim* (1900) by Rudyard Kipling

> The more the drive toward life is thwarted, the stronger is the drive toward destruction; the more life is realized, the less is the strength of destructiveness. *Destructiveness is the outcome of unlived life* (Fromm 1941: 184; original emphasis).
>
> Erich Fromm in *Escape from Freedom*

Considering Rudyard Kipling's striking proclivity for inventing short stories, it is not particularly surprising that his 1900 novel *Kim* could also be read as a series of those. The overarching framework of this compilation is the eponymous character's coming of age in (and journey across) late 19th-century British India under the Raj. Most likely, the episodic plot structure was partially inspired by the prospect of serialisation. Like many other Victorian literary works, this one initially appeared as sequential instalments in periodicals: from December 1900 to October 1901 in the American *McClure's Magazine* and from January to November 1901 in the British *Cassel's Magazine*. The first book edition was published by Macmillan on October 1, 1901, shortly before the final excerpts were printed in the press (Ormond 1988: 4; Hopkirk 1996/1999: 27). Upon its release, *Kim* was enthusiastically received by most critics, although some ex-

coriated its loose structural organisation (Gilbert 1967: 8-9; Brantlinger 2011: 127). Notwithstanding, the novel gained immense popularity and is still widely believed to be Kipling's finest prose masterpiece, epitomising "the power of observation, originality of imagination, virility of ideas and remarkable talent for narration" that won him the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1907 (Sinha 1975: 31; Norwich 2005: 20).

Frequently, scholars classify the writer's *magnum opus* as adventure fiction (more specifically, a picaresque novel), juvenile fiction, a *Bildungsroman*, or a cross-over of those (Crook 1989: 1; Summerfield 2010: 45; Walsh 2010: 7-13; Brantlinger 2016: 246). The aim of this research, however, is to indicate that the work in question is a forerunner of the sensational spy thriller that conspicuously borrows structural elements and motifs from various genres as well as draws significant influence from extratextual reality.

One of the most compelling and commonly accepted analytic approaches to *Kim* is to study it as if it was divided into three parts, each comprising five chapters. This is because the story shifts from Kim's travel along the Grand Trunk Road with a highly learned yet naive Tibetan Buddhist lama, Teshoo, to the boy's stay and education at St Xavier's school in Lucknow,[116] and again to a reunion with the lama, albeit this time their wanderings in the plains and mountains practically act as a cover-up for Kim's espionage activities. Naturally, those last undertakings thematically link the novel to spy fiction.

The protagonist executes clandestine missions for the informal British Indian Secret Service that operates under a legal organisation – the Survey of India. In this respect, the fictional agency corresponds with the real one. Kipling knew that the latter recruited the so-called "pundits", i.e., "specially trained native explorers [...] employed to gather topographical intelligence, often in the guise of traders or holy men on pilgrimages" (Hopkirk 1996/1999: 56). Still, the novel creates the false impression that in the late 19th century the unofficial British Indian spy network formed a well-organised body. At that time, the real imperial intelligence gathering units on the subcontinent were relatively small, scattered, and poorly coordinated (often envious of one another) (Hopkirk 1990/1991: 422-423).

As observed by Jeffrey Meyers, in the initial segment of the story the protagonist's primary role is that of a *chela* (the lama's disciple), in the middle – that of

[116] A fictional institution based on the real-world and prestigious La Martinière College in Lucknow (Hopkirk 1996/1999: 133).

a school student, and in the final – that of a spy. The scholar draws attention to the fact that Kim, an Irish orphan raised in Lahore by a half-caste woman, lives on the threshold of the Eastern and Western civilisations. Consequently, his adherence to those tends to fluctuate in degree: "Kim is an Indian in the first section, English (with Indian holidays) in the second, and English disguised as Indian in the third" (Meyers 1970: 105). Since the novel is open-ended, Edmund Wilson speculates that "Kim will eventually come to realise that he is delivering into bondage to the British invaders those whom he has always considered his own people [Orientals] and that a struggle between allegiances will result" (1941: 123). The problem with Wilson's assumption is that it artificially imposes the necessity of turning East or West on the protagonist (Annan 1960: 342; Stewart in: Stewart and Shaw 1997: 13-14). That is a vital reservation because, within the confines of the plot, Kim actually becomes the embodiment of Kipling's "Oriental-friendly" idea for competent and just British rulers of the subcontinent – a sahib (white European) who, despite learning to recognise his "unavoidable inborn superiority" over the natives,[117] is able to live in harmony with them thanks to being culturally adaptable[118] (Musgrove 1945: 98-99; Nyikos 2018: 37, 53). The emphasis on this type of flexibility – and, all the more so, its frequent abuse – evokes the theme of a perfect secret agent, one that is able to perform undercover assignments without any cross-cultural limitations. Not only does this closely link the novel to sensational spy thrillers, but also to thrillers of acquired identity. On various occasions, Kim, along with several other characters (either positive or negative), temporarily pretends to be someone else for personal/financial/political gain, or a combination of those.

With regard to the "three parts" of Kipling's work, it should be noted that at the end of each (i.e., in Chapters 5, 10, and 15) the protagonist finds himself in a state of slumber. This recurring motif of closure implies that the writer deliberately assembled the chapters in three groups of five, leaving the task of discerning that pattern to the readers. Such an opinion is supported by David Stewart, who delves extensively into the structural intricacies of the novel, explaining that, apart from the tripartite division, it is possible to distinguish a twopartite one as well. The "fulcrum" of the latter is Chapter 8.

[117] The novel is interspersed with white supremacy overtones. This issue will be addressed more broadly further in this section.

[118] The term "cultural adaptability" denotes "the willingness and ability to recognize, understand, and work effectively across cultures. It presumes that such interactions will have successful outcomes (tasks are completed, goals are met, and the people involved are satisfied with their professional relationships)" (Deal and Prince 2003/2004: 7). Kipling's vision of a culturally adaptable imperial rule of the subcontinent was shared, among others, by a group of contemporary local British administrators in India known as the "Orientalists" (McClure 1981: 28-29).

By its end, Kim learns that in comparison with the espionage challenges he has already faced, the toughest ones are just ahead of him (Stewart in: Stewart and Shaw 1997: 13-15). This is an instance of suspenseful foreshadowing characteristic of thriller (sub)genres.

Before discussing the various far-fetched and implausible occurrences within the chiefly sensational plot, it is essential to comment upon its realistic aspects in order to indicate its relationship to extratextual reality. Fundamentally, *Kim* is an Anglo-Indian novel set in the midst of the so-called "Great Game", i.e., the 19th and early 20th-century British-Russian power struggle for control over Central and Southwest Asia (Rezun 1986: 324-325). Generically, Kipling's work is tied to novels of manners because he wrote it with the intention of educating mainland Brits about the socio-cultural diversity of India. The decision to portray it in a highly meticulous way was partially a reaction against misrepresentations of the subcontinent popularised in metropolitan fiction (Moore-Gilbert 1986: 31). Traces of excessive simplification and/or beautification can be readily found in works such as William Beckford's 1786 Gothic novel *Vathek*, Robert Southey's 1810 epic poem *The Curse of Kehama*, and Sir Walter Scott's 1827 historical novel *The Surgeon's Daughter*. Even in Charles Dickens's 1848 Victorian realistic novel *Dombey and Son* the romanticised rich East India House is superficially associated with "precious stuffs and stones, tigers, elephants, howdahs, hookahs, umbrellas, palm trees, palanquins, and gorgeous princes of a brown complexion sitting on carpets, with their slippers very much turned up at the toes" (1848/2010: 32). Obviously, exotic and exciting descriptions like this one tend to appeal to the readers' imagination, but can be simultaneously very misleading if treated as "objective" sources of information about the subcontinent. Thus, with the publication of *Kim*, its author markedly differentiated himself from other British writers as the one whose fiction provided a fairly comprehensive insight into the real-world complexities of the Indian social stratification and cultural amalgamation.

In his 1937 autobiography *Something of Myself*,[119] Kipling asserts that "[t]he inhabitants of [England] never looked further than their annual seaside resorts" (1937: 159). Undoubtedly, the writer's rebuke is grossly exaggerated, but it also aptly pinpoints

[119] According to Charles Allen, Kipling's autobiography is dishonest. The scholar explains that upon publication the book "said a lot about the craft of writing but gave away almost nothing about [the author's] private life beyond what was already known or touched on in his fiction" (Allen 2007/2009: 8). This is directly tied to Kipling's unwavering strive for maintaining the secrecy of his personal information; in pursuit of that end, he even destroyed most of his correspondence (Pinney 2005: 11).

egocentric tendencies as one of the factors that effectively led many of his contemporary countrymen to "profound ignorance of Indian life and manners".[120] Kipling's knowledge of those was, in turn, far from rudimentary – he was both a direct witness and a keen observer. Born in Bombay in 1865, the future Nobel laureate spent the first five years of his life in India, where, after an eleven-year stay in England, he returned and worked extremely hard as a journalist for the next six and a half years (Quennell 1952: 160; Allen 2007/2009: xvi, 11, 63, 119, 123).

For teenage Kipling, the comeback meant the unwanted sacrifice/loosening of artistic, intellectual, and emotional bonds formed in the United Kingdom, but it also marked the end of notorious and more or less severe bullying incidents endured for over a decade (McClure 1981: 10-16). He was exposed to those at his metropolitan caregivers' home in Southsea (the main sadist was Mrs Holloway, an evangelical fanatic), at the local private day-school (ironically, known as "Hope House"), and, later, at a cheap boarding school at Westward Ho!, north Devon (specifically, the United Services College at which the only bespectacled bookworm, spitefully nicknamed "Gigger" after gig-lamps, was physically assaulted by other students, usually on account of being a clumsy standout) (Kipling 1937: 18; Jarrell 1961/1987: 17-18; Green 1965: 44-45; Allen 2007/2009: 65-66, 95).

The writer's bleak childhood experiences are of great importance to this research because some of them were projected in an altered form onto the fictional Kim. Considering hybridity, this particular aspect generically links the novel to quasi-autobiographies. Temporarily estranged from the lama and Mahbub Ali at the Maverick's barracks near Umballa railway station, the protagonist is beaten by a classmate (an obnoxious English drummer-boy potentially based on Mrs Holloway's son – Kipling's persecutor) and a vociferous red-faced schoolmaster (most likely a caricature of one or more of "Ruddy's" aggressive teachers) (Kipling 1937: 8, 12-13, 35-36, 40; Krikler 2013: 30). Once the main character is transferred to St Xavier's school in Lucknow, his situation changes for the better, but regardless he has a mixed opinion of the new place and, overall, feels restrained there. While Kim is, in Harold Bloom's words, "half a Huck Finn enthralled with freedom and half a Tom Sawyer playing games with authority" (1987: 7), it must not be overlooked that those Twainian elements are intertwined with Kipling's modified boyhood reminiscences. This argument

[120] *The Pioneer*, February 24, 1882, 2.

can be further justified by the fact that Kim parallels "Ruddy" in being a sallow-skinned sahib affectionately called "Little Friend of all the World" (Kipling 1900/1987: 9; Allen 2007/2009: 119). Originally, this phrase was used by Indian servants in Bombay to greet the future writer on his way home (Fleming 1947: 4).

In contrast to England, "India was where Rudyard Kipling was happiest, where he learned his craft, where he rediscovered himself through his writing and came of age as a writer" (Allen 2007/2009: xvi). Thus, his Oriental fiction is particularly unique:

> It is [his] Indian vision that Kipling will surely above all be remembered by, for the British Indian scene (native and Anglo-Indian) is a composition of relationships that no one else has ever put on paper, and no one else has ever made into a consistent social metaphor for human existence (Wilson 1977: 122).

As for *Kim*, it accurately portrays late 19th-century British India as a multifarious region. Its hierarchical society is, to a large extent, composed of rigid and endogamic castes, diverse in terms of religion, language, appearance, customs, and traditions. Basically, the novel presents a selection of fictionalised distinct caste members. Many of those are more or less meticulously depicted in relation to at least some of the aforementioned aspects as well as (stereo)typical behaviours.[121] *Kim* features, among others, deceitful *faquirs*, martial-natured Ludhiana Sikhs, a witty Dogra soldier, a wise *bairagi*, a tolerant Sarsut Brahmin, an importunate Jat farmer, and a garrulous old hill Rajput noble lady. Consistent with a convention of realist spy thrillers (and, more broadly, realistic fiction), most of the positive/neutral Indian characters exhibit both virtues and vices, i.e., are not idealised.[122] This is because all fictitious Orientals, including non-Indians, are closely modelled on real-world ones (Allen 2007/2009: xvi). Actually, the writer was personally acquainted with an Afghan horse-trader called Mahbub Ali (MacMunn 1937/1938: 64-65; Hopkirk 1996/1999: 60). Apart from that, a Tibetan Buddhist visitor to the *Ajaib-Gher* ("Wonder House", or simply the old Lahore museum) most likely inspired the creation of Teshoo lama (Hopkirk 1996/1999: 46; Kain 2018: 6).

[121] Some of the culture-related humour embedded in *Kim* comes from the Orientals' colourful language - in particular, witty slurs and rebukes. To give an example, one of the *Rissaldar*'s sons addresses a troublesome cart driver in the following words: "Son of a swine, is the soft part of the road meant for thee to scratch thy back upon? Father of all the daughters of shame and husband of ten thousand virtueless ones, thy mother was devoted to a devil, being led thereto by her mother. Thy aunts have never had a nose for seven generations! Thy sister – What Owl's folly told thee to draw thy carts across the road? A broken wheel? Then take a broken head and put the two together at leisure!" (Kipling 1900/1987: 80).

[122] By contrast, negative characters – whether Indians or Europeans – are usually demonised and subsequently ridiculed; this ties them to a convention of sensational spy thrillers (and, by extension, sensation fiction).

Kipling's sahibs, mainly composed of Anglo-Indians,[123] are also generally "imperfect beings" linked to extratextual reality. For example, the conversant Curator of the *Ajaib-Gher* is based on the writer's father, John Lockwood Kipling, who himself worked at the real "Wonder House" (Trivedi 2018: 31). Colonel Creighton's night guest, the Commander-in-Chief (referred to as *Jang-i-Lat* Sahib in Urdu) resembles an authentic British Indian Army general, Field Marshal Lord Roberts of Kandahar, VC, whom Rudyard Kipling eventually befriended.[124] *Jang-i-Lat* Sahib and Roberts share, among other things, the past experience of serving as subalterns in the Bengal artillery (Kipling 1900/1987: 67; Hopkirk 1996/1999: 98-99). Also, the Eurasian (or half-native) "healer of pearls", Lurgan Sahib, is designed after an actual diamond and gemstone trader in Simla, Alexander Malcolm Jacob. While the former is affiliated with the fictional British Indian Secret Service, the latter is believed to have cooperated with the real one (Kipling 1900/1987: 173, 199; Buck 1904/1925: 176-178).

Randall Jarrell stresses that "knowing what the peoples, animals, plants, weathers of the world look like, sound like, smell like, was Kipling's métier, and so was knowing the words that could make someone else know" (1961/1987: 12). Indeed, *Kim* features many picturesque descriptions of British India – its everyday life, geography, and nature. One example is the following passage concerning the Grand Trunk Road:

> [T]he Great Road [...] is the backbone of all Hind. For the most part it is shaded [...] with four lines of trees; the middle road – all hard – takes the quick traffic. In the days before rail-carriages, the sahibs travelled up and down here in hundreds. Now there are only country-carts and such like. Left and right is the rougher road for the heavy carts – grain and cotton and timber, fodder, lime and hides. A man goes in safety here – for at every few *kos* is a police-station. The police are thieves and extortioners [...], but at least they do not suffer any rivals [...]. All castes and kinds of men move here [...]. Brahmins and chumars, bankers and tinkers, barbers and bunnias, pilgrims and potters – all the world going and coming [...].
>
> And truly the Grand Trunk Road is a wonderful spectacle. It runs straight, bearing without crowding India's traffic for fifteen hundred miles – such a river of life as nowhere else exists in the world (Kipling 1900/1987: 79-80; original emphasis).

Apart from the Grand Trunk Road, which metaphorically represents life, the novel vibrantly portrays various Indian locations that Kipling was familiar with – among others, the cities of Lahore and Simla.[125] In the years 1882–1887, he worked as a journalist in the former; the latter was his recurring annual leave destination (Rutherford 1987: xv;

[123] In this particular case, the term "Anglo-Indians" denotes Brits living and/or working in India.
[124] For more factual or presumed autobiographical insertions in *Kim*, see: Krikler 2013.
[125] For studies devoted to the Indian backdrop in *Kim*, see: Joergensen 2008 and Chaudhari 2017.

Tarin 2008: 12). As regards Lahore, *Kim* recreates the late 19th-century bustling atmosphere in the streets and one of its bazaars as well as presents several city landmarks, such as the Zam-Zammah cannon, the *Ajaib-Gher*, the Sultan Serai near the Kashmiri gate (in the novel shortly referred to as the "Kashmir Serai"), and *Heera Mandi* (a hub for prostitution that the narrator euphemistically calls "the Gate of the Harpies") (Simpson 1987: 20-22; Tarin 2008: 13-14). The literary depiction of Simla, in turn, subtly reveals that the Indian setting is not only beautiful, but also, in accordance with a thriller convention, precarious. Basically, aside from the aforementioned likelihood of encountering dishonest policemen on the Grand Trunk Road, it is also easy to fall victim to crime in cities:

> [Mahbub Ali] led the horses below the main road into the lower Simla bazar – the crowded rabbit-warren that climbs up from the valley to the Town Hall at an angle of forty-five. A man who knows his way there can defy all the police of India's summer capital, so cunningly does veranda communicate with veranda, alley-way with alley-way, and bolt-hole with bolt-hole. Here live those who minister to the wants of the glad city – jhampanis who pull the pretty ladies' rickshaws by night and gamble till the dawn; grocers, oil-sellers, curio-vendors, firewood-dealers, priests, pickpockets, and native employees of the government. Here are discussed by courtesans the things which are supposed to be profoundest secrets of the India Council; and here gather all the sub-sub-agents of half the Native States. Here, too, Mahbub Ali rented a room, much more securely locked than his bulkhead at Lahore, in the house of a Mohammedan cattle-dealer (Kipling 1900/1987: 196).

Through the multiplicity of real-world inspired details, Kipling objectifies his literary panorama of British India, albeit only partially. As previously indicated, it is filtered through his own *Weltanschauung*, which is inherently subjective. To this day, the writer's worldview arouses a great deal of controversy among scholars, critics, and readers. In short, some accuse him of using prose and verse to promote various harmful ideas (such as crude imperialism, racism, and misogyny),[126] whereas others at least partially exonerate and/or defend him.[127] This is, obviously, too broad an issue to be thoroughly discussed within the narrow thematic constraints of a study devoted to *Kim*. Yet, it is possible to show that adopting strictly critical or uncritical analytic approaches to Kipling's works is reductive, especially because that collection of literature is not characterised by a rigid ideological homogeneity. Mark Kinkead-Weekes stresses that

[126] Among others, see: Scott 2014, Phillips 2016, and Nyikos 2019.
[127] Among others, see: Kinkead-Weekes 1964, Claiborne Park 2003, and Allen 2007/2009. An in-depth and relatively recent overview of a number of conflicting scholarly evaluations of *Kim* can be found in: Scott 2014.

> [...] the good Kipling lies beside the bad, and the novels are a typical cross-section. *The Light that Failed* shows him at his most brutal and adolescent, with dark streaks of violence and sadism, and a bitter contempt for women and their love. Yet the Kipling who finished it in August 1890 revealed very different attitudes in 'On Greenhow Hill' in September and 'The Courting of Dinah Shadd' in March. [...] *Captains Courageous* is the product of a clear and controlled, if limited, vision, [...] and *Kim* in its wisdom and humanity the living contradiction of nine-tenths of the charges ever levelled against its author [...] (1964: 197).

As regards the "charges" that continue to be "levelled", they are often predicated on the identification of real-world conquering Brits and conquered Orientals with, respectively, the (neo-)Marxist categories of "oppressor" and "oppressed"; even more so, on the fact that those associations are generally not mirrored in Kipling's *oeuvre*. This can be shown on the example of *Kim*, which is one of the writer's "subtler" imperialist works (Dunman 1966: 8). Essentially, the novel scarcely addresses – and when it does, falsifies – mid and late 19th-century British-Indian politico-military conflicts. For example, the *Rissaldar* (a native soldier) discommends those of his comrades who participated in the Indian Rebellion of 1857. In his judgement, it was pure "madness", an irrational and barbaric act of "kill[ing] the sahibs' wives and children" – one that, unsurprisingly, provoked retaliation (Kipling 1900/1987: 73). Clearly, that comment is biased; it exclusively emphasises and embellishes the Indian atrocities against the British Empire in order to rationalise its excessive counter-aggression; also, it diverts attention away from the religious, racial, and socio-political discrimination that had led to the outbreak of the mutiny in the first place (Fremont-Barnes 2007: 15-19). Most importantly, the character's prejudiced evaluation of the revolt is exactly in line with those featured in the earliest sensational Anglo-Indian and metropolitan propaganda reports on the subject (Chakravarty 2004: 108-109).

In *Kim*, the problem of destructive and ruthless British exploitation of India is largely overlooked. Of course, it could be asserted that late in the story the Bengali, Hurree Chunder Mookerjee, forthrightly complains to the Tsar's spies about "a Government which had forced upon him a white man's education and neglected to supply him with a white man's salary", but what truly matters is that he professes this and some other, unrevealed, bitter sentiments under the strong influence of alcohol (Kipling 1900/1987: 316). Contrary to expectations, this is not supposed to imply purely nonsensical drunken jabber. Actually, the Babu hilariously takes advantage of the *in vodka veritas* concept. Instead of predictably speaking the naked truth in his inebriated state, he unexpectedly manages to fake resentment, and thus successfully manipulates his in-

terlocutors into believing that his allegiance to the British Crown is feeble (Montefiore 2007: 87). Markedly, throughout the plot, the character experiences recurring swings of infirmity and resoluteness that generically link the novel to comedy. Those transitions are also accompanied by thrilleresque shifts between ocnophilic and philobatic stances.

The British Empire, in turn, is portrayed as the protective overseer of the subcontinent; in particular, the "superior" bringer of technological, administrative, and scholarly progress to the "inferior" Orient.[128] Such characterisation evokes associations with the "civilising mission", famously delineated in Kipling's 1899 poem "The White Man's Burden". Regardless, it would be a gross misreading of *Kim* to assume that it advocates the belligerent aspects of that ideology. As Edward W. Said explains, at the *fin de siècle* there existed "no appreciable deterrents to the imperialist world view held by Kipling" (1987: 24). For that very reason, the writer did not set his novelistic appeal for a peaceful and mutually respectful co-existence between Brits and natives outside the colonial framework, but precisely within:

> There is no resolution to the conflict between Kim's colonial service and loyalty to his Indian companions not because Kipling could not face it, but because for Kipling *there was no conflict* [...]. But that there *might have been a conflict* had Kipling considered India as unhappily subservient to imperialism, of this we can have no doubt. The fact is that he did not: for him it was India's best destiny to be ruled by England. The trouble is that if one reads Kipling [...] as someone who had read Frantz Fanon, met Gandhi, absorbed their lessons, but had remained stubbornly unconvinced by both, then one seriously distorts the defining context in which Kipling wrote [...] (Said 1987: 23-24; original emphases).

In the days of the empire, many Brits, including Kipling, were simply oblivious to the oppression afflicting India. Still, this does not mean that the writer was blind to the existence of tensions between the coloniser and the colonised. In the novel, he does not give priority to those issues in order to convey the message that human life can transcend the suffering embedded in it. In the words of Irving Howe:

> [Kipling] seems really to want to persuade us [...] that in the freshness of a boy's discoveries and the penetration of an old man's vision, evil can become ultimately insignificant, almost as nothing before the unsubdued elation of existence, almost as nothing before the idea of moral beauty (1977: 152).

Clearly, the writer plays with the conventions of the Victorian love romance, replacing the motif of romantic love between a man and a woman with that of platonic love between the lama and Kim.

[128] Apart from that, the novel frequently equates "Brits" and "Orientals" with, respectively, "truth tellers" and "liars". As mentioned in the previous chapter, exaggerated binary oppositions like this one are popular in sensational spy thrillers.

Superficially, the development of such a close bond between an old Buddhist priest and a young Irish rogue might seem uncanny. First, they do not have much in common. Second, none of them is willing and able to fully embrace the other's world-view. Still, the strengths of each travelling companion complement the weaknesses of his partner. Hence, it is possible to view their journey as a philosophical metaphor. The lama's profound spirituality metonymically evokes *fides* (faith),[129] whereas Kim's survival intelligence correspondingly recalls *ratio* (reason).[130] It could be argued that, through the characters' adventures, Kipling pragmatically advocates a synthesis of *fides* and *ratio*. That postulate can be discussed on two levels:

1) The lama seeks enlightenment (salvation); he wishes to "free [him]self from the Wheel of Things" (Kipling 1900/1987: 18). In his search for the magnificent River of the Arrow that "washes away all taint and speckle of sin",[131] he is largely predisposed to detaching himself from temporal affairs, which he frequently dismisses as illusion (Kipling 1900/1987: 18). Drawing upon the conventions of satire, the novel suggests that, if unrestricted, this tendency is bound to defeat the purpose. The lama will simply not "acquire [enough] merit" (earn the discovery of the river through a sufficient amount of good deeds and an outright rejection of sin) if he undergoes premature self-destruction (death from too much carelessness or naivety) (Kipling 1900/1987: 18).[132] In order to avoid the negative outcome, Kim reasonably

[129] In this particular context, the word *fides* is understood differently than in the Ancient Roman culture or the Christian tradition. The term plainly denotes faith in a higher purpose of one's own life, higher in the sense that it is non-malevolent as well as transcends one's and other people's mundane materialistic interests.

[130] Those associations are founded on the lama's and Kim's respective predominant traits, and thus do not collide with secondary religious nuances surrounding each of the characters. Still, it is worth indicating that the lama is critical of other Buddhist priests and, at one point in the story, Hurree Babu oversimplistically evaluates him as a "totally devoid of releegiosity" agnostic (Kipling 1900/1987: 242). Kim, in turn, is exposed to various religions in India, and specifically taught Christianity at St Xavier's school in Lucknow. Irrespective of all those factors, *fides* is obviously the lama's chief domain, whereas *ratio* Kim's.

[131] Enamul Karim points out that "[i]n doctrinal Buddhism there is no miraculous River of the Arrow, nor has the Hinduistic belief in spiritual self-purification through washing in a sacred river any religious significance" (1981: 13). It can be speculated that Kipling transposes a modified Hinduistic element onto Buddhism so as to metaphorically represent the abstract quest for enlightenment through the more tangible search for a river.

[132] Superficially, it might appear that the writer attempts to misrepresent and undermine the Buddhist concepts of renunciation and non-attachment, but, in actuality, that is not the case. While it is true that Kipling overinflates the lama's spirituality, this caricature is merely meant to warn against dangerously excessive asceticism that can occur within various religious traditions. Naturally, the writer discloses the old man's flaws without demonising him; hence, the Buddhist priest retains his status of a highly positive and sympathetic character.

imposes mundane constraints on the lama's spiritual inclination. Assuming the role of the *chela*-caregiver, the former does not merely ensure the sufficient "maintenance" of the latter's "physical vessel", but also aids the spiritual quest through the encouragement of sensible and meritorious interactions with the earthly world (for example, an exchange of services with other people – help for help, favour for favour, etc.). Most importantly, the lama gradually comes to love Kim and, as a direct consequence of that, takes responsibility for the boy. The elder cleverly arranges funding for the best education a sahib's son can receive in India, and so protects his *chela* from being sent to a military orphanage. Later, the lama's attachment to Kim – also, Hurree Babu's rescue intervention – saves the old man from drowning in a brook which he takes for the River of the Arrow. *Post factum*, the lama interprets the act of throwing himself into the turbulent water as a foretaste of Nirvana, whereas getting ashore as a conscious and strenuous return to the earthly plane with the aim of supervising his beloved *chela*'s path to enlightenment. Obviously, this incident is comical, but, much like the aforementioned provision of financial help, it supports the observation that the relationship with Kim prevents the lama's fatal disconnection from mundane existence.

2) Despite (and also because of) the tragedy of losing his parents, Kim strives to enjoy earthly life. Nevertheless, at the beginning of the story, he tries to attain that goal in a very superficial way, explicitly satirised in the novel. The main character basically "[does] nothing with an immense success", chiefly seeks pleasure for the sake of pleasure, and generally tries to avoid any form of rigid discipline (Kipling 1900/1987: 9). This childish conduct gives him a false and only partial sense of fulfilment because it deceptively offers an escape from suffering which, in truth, is simply the natural corollary of living. The protagonist slowly – and reasonably – changes his ways under the influence of his nascent faith in a weighty purpose of his own existence, one higher than that of chasing after personal comfort. In time, the boy discovers that what constitutes a truly meaningful and productive life for him is his work as the *chela*-caregiver – he gradually comes to love the lama. Essentially, Kim develops a firm belief that following the path of looking after the elder is relevant enough to voluntarily confront and endure the "burden of liv-

> ing" with its various discomforts, such as the toil of education, travel harshness, physical ailments and weariness, the dangers of espionage, etc. According to Friedrich Nietzsche, "[i]f you have your *why* for life, you can get by with almost any *how*" (1889/1997: 6; original emphases). Unless it entails too much dissociation from worldly problems, faith tends to enforce a strong sense of obligation, and thus is likely to protect its possessors from self-destructively succumbing to negative feelings (such as disappointment, frustration, anxiety, unhappiness, resentfulness, despair, and vengefulness) in the face of mundane adversity and disaster (Peterson 2018: 28, 222, 282).

Thanks to their reciprocal cooperation, each of the characters learns to adopt both spiritual and mundane responsibility that manifests itself in combining the pursuit of meaningful goals with the readiness to take on and endure burdens.

In the course of the plot, this positive conclusion is subtly foreshadowed by the lama at the Temple of the Tirthankars in Benares. During one of his visits there, he tells the Jain priests a *Jâtaka*, i.e., a story about a former incarnation of Gautama Buddha. More accurately, the old man shares with them a tale that only purports to belong to Buddhist folklore, but, in fact, is mostly Kipling's invention (Devadawson 2005: 87). In terms of genre, this stylised imitation is a beast fable; it features both the future Buddha and his primary disciple, Ananda, as elephants:

> 'Long and long ago, when Devadatta was King of Benares[,] [...] an elephant was captured for a time by the king's hunters and, ere he broke free, beringed with a grievous leg-iron. This he strove to remove with hate and frenzy in his heart, and hurrying up and down the forests, besought his brother-elephants to wrench it asunder. One by one, with their strong trunks, they tried and failed. At the last they gave it as their opinion that the ring was not to be broken by any bestial power. And in a thicket, new-born, wet with the moisture of birth, lay a day-old calf of the herd whose mother had died. The fettered elephant, forgetting his own agony, said: 'If I do not help this suckling it will perish under our feet.' So he stood above the young thing, making his legs buttresses against the uneasily moving herd; and he begged milk of a virtuous cow, and the calf throve, and the ringed elephant was the calf's guide and defence. Now the days of an elephant [...] are thirty-five years to his full strength, and through thirty-five rains the ringed elephant befriended the younger, and all the while the fetter ate into the flesh.[']
>
> 'Then one day the young elephant saw the half-buried iron, and turning to the elder said: 'What is this?' 'It is even my sorrow,' said he who had befriended him. Then that other put out his trunk and in the twinkling of an eyelash abolished the ring, saying: 'The appointed time has come.' So the virtuous elephant who had waited temperately and done kind acts was relieved, at the appointed time, by the very calf whom he had turned aside to cherish [...] for the Elephant was Ananda, and the Calf that broke the ring was none other than The Lord Himself...' (Kipling 1900/1987: 221-222).

Oddly, the *Jâtaka* reverses the master-*chela* hierarchy between the lama and Kim. Once it is told, the old man identifies himself with Ananda (the *chela*), whereas Kim with the future Buddha (the master). Kaori Nagai attributes this perplexing curiosity to "the lama's dubious fantasy" (2021: 166-167).[133] Irrespective of whether her evaluation is accurate or not, perhaps Kipling mingles those two roles so as to hint that each member of the travelling duo will eventually succeed in both teaching and learning from the other. Kim helps the lama to rationalise his spiritual conduct (obviously, only to some degree) and, in consequence, become a Bodhisattva – in Buddhism, an altruistic being who seeks and yet adjourns enlightenment for the sake of helping other people (Paskins 2018: 39). The old man, in turn, guides the boy towards spiritual maturity, in this case signified by the discovery of a truly meaningful purpose of living. In light of the above, the novel does not only celebrate life, but also contains practical advice on how to "balance" it; in Frommian terms, how not to live an "unlived life" that causes "destructiveness". Kipling's vision of a salubrious existence, as expressed in *Kim*, is the quest for friendship, love, and, apart from those, the symbiosis of *fides* and *ratio*.

Pursuing *ratio* in his scholarly analysis of the novel, Howe asks rhetorically: "How are we to explain that in the pages of this apologist for imperialism, the masses of India seem more alive, more autonomous than in the pages of writers claiming political correctness?" (1977: 152). This question provokes another: Do the cruelties of imperial rule in any way absolve those of non-imperial rule? David Gilmour contends that

> [a]t the age of 19 [in 1884] Kipling identified a truth which the next century failed to recognize: that, when all appropriate qualifications are made, minorities usually fare better within imperial or multinational systems than in nations dominated by the ethos or ethnicity of a majority (2002: 80).

Though subjective, Gilmour's comment is nonetheless indicative of the post-colonial emergence and periodic aggravations of armed conflicts that envelop(ed) countries such as India, Afghanistan, Pakistan, or Saudi Arabia (Claiborne Park 2003: 559). This illustrates that the "oppressor versus oppressed" paradigm fails to encapsulate the dynamic and multidimensional intricacies of real-world antagonistic human relationships and interactions. Basically, it is as much a misconception to exclusively confine the British

[133] Nagai also notes that *Jâtakas* are generally open to interpretation, and so even this fake one could suggest that "the older elephant, enslaved and ringed by the King's men, is a colonised subject, who is set free by a Gandhi-like young elephant when 'The appointed time has come'" (2021: 165). Naturally, Kipling did not intend to imbue his novel with potential connotations of supporting Indian nationalism. This could be the reason why, as the scholar reveals, the writer had originally planned to include a series of *Jâtakas* in *Kim*, but ultimately decided to remove almost all of them (2021: 166-167).

Empire to the role of the oppressor as to similarly reduce the Orient to that of the oppressed. The point of this argument is not to undermine the binary analytic perspective, which is relevant, but merely to show that it is too simplistic on its own. If treated as the only – or largely predominant – framework for interpreting Kipling's works, many of their positive aspects, such as the empathetic call for Anglo-Indian harmony in *Kim*, will be either ignored or misjudged. Indrani Sen stresses that

> [...] at their best, Kipling's complex narratives [...] contest and even militate against prevailing race, class and gender prejudices. At such moments [...] [those] literary texts do not merely voice contemporary ideologies but seem to subject them to ironic scrutiny and contestation through their narrative elusiveness and ambivalences (2000: 28).

As previously mentioned, *Kim* does contain white supremacy overtones. Those are mainly tied to the protagonist's education at St Xavier's school in Lucknow. The boy is basically taught there that "[o]ne must never forget that one is a sahib, and that some day, when examinations are passed, one will command natives" (Kipling 1900/1987: 168). Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to assume that the novel unambiguously promotes racism. First, Kim's nickname is "Little Friend of All the World". Second, the lama exhibits no concern whatsoever for race or caste in his encounters with other people; he explicitly professes and adheres to the belief that "[t]here is neither high nor low in the Middle Way" (Kipling 1900/1987: 32).

Most importantly, all the British characters who hold Orientals in contempt, and so openly display signs of cross-cultural ignorance and enmity, are portrayed as unsympathetic, ridiculous, and plain dumb. For example, the Anglican chaplain, Reverend Arthur Bennett, is sharply and comically mocked by Kim for being a "fool" who "lumps [the lama and] nine-tenths of the world under the title of 'heathen'" (Kipling 1900/1987: 120). Additionally, the obnoxious English drummer-boy, who bullies the main character and derogatorily refers to all Orientals as "niggers", gets spectacularly whipped by Mahbub Ali. Not only does this last incident evoke associations with thrillers of moral confrontation, but it also seems to challenge white supremacy directly. The novel implies that the Afghan has the undisputed right to dispense justice to the malevolent British sahib.[134]

[134] Perhaps Kipling introduces such a subplot for quasi-autobiographical reasons. Jeremy Krikler suspects that Mahbub finds himself in the position of an "avenging adult" because the writer could have wished for someone like that to protect him when he was physically abused as a child (2013: 30). The scholar's conjecture might be true because, as shown earlier, *Kim* does contain hidden allusions to real-world mobbing. To some extent, the Nobel laureate uses fiction to describe his past experiences in an obfuscated

It is also not without significance that Kim, despite his "higher" sahib status, is dependent on the external help provided by both Oriental men and women. Given that the novel is a forerunner of the largely "masculine" sensational spy thriller genre, it naturally features more male characters than female ones. Yet, the latter are not presented as distinctly inferior or docile, which is generally – and especially – uncharacteristic of this type of fiction published before World War I.

It was precisely the outbreak and atrocities of that conflict which encouraged a number of British women – frequently, affiliated with the military – to begin writing adventure novels focused on resolute female protagonists. Some of those works are thematically linked to espionage. Among the earliest ones, it is crucial to distinguish two novels published in 1918, namely Brenda Girvin's *Munition Mary* as well as Martha Trent's *Alice Blythe: Somewhere in England* (Robb 2002: 164; see also: Ouditt 2000/2002). The former portrays a working-class girl who discovers and subsequently dismantles a spy ring at a defense factory, whereas the latter features a teenage tomboy who, after a series of trials and tribulations, catches a German spy.

Still, it remains true that before and around that time, British espionage stories were written nearly exclusively by men and about men. Thus, as emphasised by John Charles, Joanna Morrison, and Candace Clark, "[w]ith few exceptions, if a woman was allowed into the plot [...], she was usually either cast in the role of a Mata Hari [a *femme fatale*] or the love interest of the male protagonist [...]" (2002: 43). According to those three scholars, one of the first female superspies who appeared as the main character in an English novel is Modesty Blaise, created by Peter O'Donnell during the Cold War – specifically, in the 1960s (Charles, Morrison, and Clark 2002: 43).

Although nowadays such protagonists are no longer uncommon, the genre is still widely regarded as one that chiefly promotes masculinity.[135] This gives significant weight to Rosie White's assertion that "women spies in fiction, film and television are licensed to be violent agents and, thus, confound the western binary understanding of gender that aligns femininity with objectified passivity" (2007: 1). It can be concluded that sexual stereotypes, whether or not directly embedded in particular spy thrillers, tend to serve as a lens through which those works are perceived.

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way. This practice quickly became popular among British spy thriller writers, including those who, unlike Kipling, were/are (former) spies/secret agents (Burton 2016: 11). As regards spy stories that are (possibly) interspersed with veiled and distorted autobiographic insertions strictly related to espionage, such works obviously began to emerge after the foundation of the Secret Service Bureau in 1909.

[135] Among others, see: Walter 2016, Flood 2020, Parkinson 2020, Vidich 2021 (online articles).

Returning to Kipling, he depicts the Kulu woman and the Woman of Shamlegh[136] as self-empowered, responsible, and wise. Markedly, each of them enjoys the trust, respect, and admiration of a group of men. In consequence, it would be an overstatement to evaluate the writer's masterpiece as purely misogynistic.

Thus far, the novel has been predominantly discussed in relation to its many and various references to extratextual reality, namely historical, cultural, political, ideological, and quasi-autobiographical. Now, the main focus of the research will be shifted towards espionage motifs and generic hybridity.

From a holistic perspective, *Kim* can be viewed as a spy *Bildungsroman*, i.e., a suspenseful story about the making of a secret agent.[137] Fundamentally, this profession requires the acquisition of the ability to survive and cunningly manoeuvre within hazardous environments. Hence, in a both realistic and sensational manner, the protagonist is initially moulded into an orphaned street urchin whose destitution forces him to live by his wits. Left to his own devices, Kim learns logical and critical thinking, shrewdness, manipulation, deception, discretion, stealth, and surveillance. In practice, he becomes a rogue reminiscent of those from picaresque novels (Blackburn 1979: 7).[138] At around the age of ten, the unruly vagabond is spotted by Mahbub Ali, one of the secret agents of the British Indian Secret Service (codename C25 1B), who aptly recognises the boy's resourcefulness and prospective usefulness for espionage. The Afghan horse-trader befriends Kim and, with little explanation, begins to send him on small undercover missions, fully convinced that under supervised training his newfound protégée will become eligible for membership in the clandestine organisation. Generally, the boy is tasked with following various individuals and reporting on their activities to Mahbub, who, in reward for that effort, provides money and food. Kim eagerly participates in all those dangerous errands because he perceives them as part of an exciting game which, as he correctly suspects, is bound to a far-reaching hidden agenda.

At this point it needs to be stressed that the main character does not fall prey to an evil gang of uncultured and abusive degenerates. Instead, he is being gradually prepared and encouraged to join a group of heroic daredevils. In this respect, the boy markedly distinguishes himself from Charles Dickens's Oliver Twist as well as various other

[136] Oddly, in the novel the first "woman" is spelled with a lowercase "w", whereas the second with an uppercase one.
[137] Obviously, this process should not be confused with those popularised in mystery (sub)genres – it does not contribute to the sacrifice of suspense within the plot.
[138] Actually, in *Something of Myself*, Kipling evaluates *Kim* as a "nakedly picaresque" work of fiction (1937: 245).

ill-used parentless children portrayed in 19th-century British fiction (Floyd 2011: 69-70; see also: Gymnich 2018: 17-24, 35, 63-67). Still, to this day, the motif of recruiting orphans to become professional secret agents has been exploited in multiple sensational spy thrillers.[139] As a forerunner of the genre, *Kim* simply remains one of the earliest works that utilise and promote the concept.

In order to efficiently discuss the prevalent sensationalism of Kipling's novel, it is necessary to restrict its further analysis to only a selection of plot occurrences due to their sheer multiplicity. Considering Kim's exposition at the beginning of the story, it incorporates fairy-tale-like elements, more broadly characteristic of juvenile fiction. The protagonist embodies the tricky rogue hero archetype and, as the narrator puts it, "live[s] in a life wild as that of the Arabian Nights" (Kipling 1900/1987: 9).[140] Much to the distress of two Oriental children, the boy proudly sits on – and keeps them away from – the top of the Zam-Zammah cannon, or rather the "fire-breathing dragon" that he, as the sallow-skinned yet racially white British conqueror, has stout-heartedly appropriated (Kipling 1900/1987: 7). Leaving white supremacy connotations aside, Kim is described as "a poor white of the very poorest", an orphaned boy who has nonetheless received from his dissolute father in his lifetime a magical set of artefacts (three documents) as well as a miraculous prophecy about a fateful future encounter with "a great Red Bull on a green field", "nine hundred first-class devils", "a Colonel on a horse", and "two men making ready the ground for these matters" (Kipling 1900/1987: 7-9). Eventually, this opium-induced and disjointed paternal vision, combined with a painstakingly drawn up horoscope from a Sarsut Brahmin priest at Umballa (half an hour of scratching with a twig in the dirt), fantastically comes to fruition. Accompanied by the lama, Kim stumbles upon two soldiers who set out a camp with flags featuring a military crest with the fatidic bull. As it turns out, those strangers belong to the protagonist's late father's Irish regiment – the Mavericks. The boy carefully observes the gradual gathering of that "devilish" unit and, after a short departure for a meal, sneaks into the camp. There, he is caught and his white identity is discovered. In the aftermath of the ensuing events, Kim is introduced to the English Colonel Creighton, the unofficial head of the British-Indian espionage network. This acquaintance accelerates Kim's transfer to

[139] It is vital to enumerate James Bond from Ian Fleming's series of novels and short stories as one of the most widely recognised literary spy-orphans. Some more recently invented examples of this type of protagonists include James Adams from Robert Muchamore's *CHERUB* series of novels as well as Sarah Goldstein from Matt Killeen's 2018 novel *Orphan, Monster, Spy* and its 2020 sequel *Devil, Darling, Spy*.
[140] Another personification of this fairy-tale archetype is Hurree Babu, whom the narrator compares to Puss in Boots (Kipling 1900/1987: 319).

St Xavier's school in Lucknow and, by extension, gives new impetus to the protagonist's spy training.

With respect to the fulfilment of the prophecy, it sensationally entails a string of far-fetched coincidences. In fact, it is easy to illustrate, in relation to some other plot threads, that incredible sets of circumstances are common in the novel. Shortly after becoming the lama's travel partner, Kim takes the old man to the Kashmir Serai for overnight lodging. The boy thoughtfully comes to Mahbub for shelter, but it should be noted that, from the Afghan's perspective, their meeting is purely accidental. That being the case, it seems nothing short of incredible that the horse-trader just so happens to keep by his side a MacGuffin in the form of "a flap of soft, greasy Mussalman bread" specially prepared for Kim (Kipling 1900/1987: 33). That inconspicuous bakery product conceals "a small wad of folded tissue-paper wrapped in oilskin, with three silver rupees – enormous largesse" (Kipling 1900/1987: 33). Right on the spot, Mahbub's protégée is instructed to deliver to the yet unfamiliar to him Colonel Creighton in Umballa a secret message about "the pedigree of the white stallion" (Kipling 1900/1987: 32). This enigmatic phrase, unbeknownst to Kim, stands for the discovery of a major anti-British conspiracy involving, in accordance with one of the innocent-on-the-run thriller conventions, several influential antagonists. The connivers include, among others, the five kings who control frontier areas near Afghanistan. Through their combined effort, they wish to start a war.

Markedly, the narrator emphasises that the boy has been "sent from Heaven" to save the imperilled horse-trader (Kim-*ex-machina*) (Kipling 1900/1987: 35). Mahbub finds himself in dire straits because "a kindly Northern Power" (the Russian Empire) has notified the five schemers of "a leakage of news from their territories into British India" (Kipling 1900/1987: 34). Not only is the Afghan well aware of being watched by enemy underlings, but also their perilous proximity is suspensefully confirmed by a shadow that passes behind Kim. This is why the two characters take the precaution of pretending to be complete strangers – a practice which, as previously indicated, is linked to thrillers of acquired identity. Basically, Mahbub needs to get rid of the physical evidence that he is one of the hunted spies. Having predicted, in a clairvoyant-like manner, the arrival of Kim, the horse-trader promptly seizes that opportunity to send "the pedigree" on a course to its intended destination. It is also sensationally revealed that the Afghan is "used to taking all sorts of gusty chances" like this one (Kipling 1900/1987: 35).

Perhaps that is the reason why the typically hyper-intelligent – if not psychic – Mahbub subsequently does "an utterly foolish thing" (Kipling 1900/1987: 36). Relieved of the inconvenient "Mussalman bread", he goes to the "Gate of the Harpies" to visit "the Flower of Delight", a prostitute and dancing-girl. He knows that some of his telegrams have been scrutinised by a Kashmiri pundit who is most likely affiliated with her. Acting on that hunch, the Afghan assumes the role of a spy-detective and launches a private investigation. He consciously enters what could be – and actually is – the enemy's nest, and yet in the end carelessly allows himself to get drunk there. Once he falls "flat among the cushions", the "Flower" and the pundit search him (Kipling 1900/1987: 36). Also, "a sleek young gentleman from Delhi", newly-equipped with Mahbub's keys, wanders off to inspect his stall (Kipling 1900/1987: 37). That last member of the cunning threesome, armed with a knife, is noticed by Kim, who, upon realising what is happening, discreetly evacuates himself and the lama from the Kashmir Serai. The travelling duo's narrow escape is generically tied to innocent-on-the-run thrillers. As regards Mahbub, he also sensationally emerges victorious from his predicament. In the absence of espionage-related evidence as well as presence of his silly conduct, the antagonists release him unharmed because their suspicions of his clandestine activity have been provisionally allayed. Clearly, Kipling stretches the boundaries of plot plausibility through the accumulation of thrilleresque and comedic close-shave encounters with danger.

Another time, Kim-*ex-machina* miraculously comes to the Afghan's rescue on their journey to Umballa. One night, resting with Mahbub's subordinates "on a piece of waste ground beside the railway", the boy remarkably becomes the only person to perfectly overhear two nearby assassins who, waiting for the temporarily absent horse-trader's return to his camp, suspensefully – and heedlessly – discuss their upcoming ambush on him (Kipling 1900/1987: 183):

> 'Then what is the plan?'
> 'O fool, have I not told it a hundred times? Wait till he comes to lie down, and then one sure shot. The trucks are between us and pursuit. We have but to run back over the lines and go our way. They will not see whence the shot came. Wait here at least till the dawn. What manner of *faquir* art thou, to shiver at a little watching?' (Kipling 1900/1987: 185; original emphasis).

The quoted passage reflects the sensational storytelling mode that pervades the novel. Kipling tends to sacrifice, to a greater or lesser extent, the impression of situational realism for the sake of adding excitement to the plot. Like most negative characters in *Kim*,

the two *faquirs* are preposterously dim-witted: they practically introduce themselves and their scheme to the protagonist so as to enable him to spectacularly perform a heroic deed. Also, the boy ruminates over their intrigue in a rather unnatural way. In an internal monologue, he repeatedly addresses himself in the third person:

> 'Oho!' thought Kim, behind close-shut eyes. 'Once again it is Mahbub. Indeed a white stallion's pedigree is not a good thing to peddle to sahibs! Or maybe Mahbub has been selling other news. Now what is to do, Kim? I know not where Mahbub houses, and if he comes here before the dawn they will shoot him. That would be no profit for thee, Kim. And this is not a matter for the police. That would be no profit for Mahbub; and' – he giggled almost aloud – 'I do not remember any lesson at Nucklao [Lucknow] which will help me. Allah! Here is Kim and yonder are they. First, then, Kim must wake and go away, so that they shall not suspect [...]' (Kipling 1900/1987: 185-186).

Kipling's masterpiece is interspersed with monologues (first-person, third-person, or, as shown in the excerpt, first and third-person). Some of them are unuttered and merely record the characters' inner thoughts, whereas others are, in a dramatic fashion, spoken aloud, occasionally in the form of self-talk (the fourth wall remains unbroken). In any case, those literary devices frequently disclose suspenseful information to the readers, although in *Kim* this is sometimes done in an improbable – hence, sensational – manner. Obviously, real-world people do not typically talk to themselves, nor do they think about and refer to themselves in the third-person.

As for the *faquirs*' conspiracy, it becomes thwarted in a comedic way. Pretending that he has just woken up from a nightmare, Kim suddenly starts yelling. This enables him to cause an uproar in Mahbub's camp and, eventually, slither away from it without being noticed. The boy manages to reach and hide behind an adjacent culvert, where he meets the Afghan and warns him about the lurking threat. From that moment on, Mahbub takes action. Having considered the problem in its various aspects, he arrives at a solution and, enraptured, immediately starts talking to himself about it. Thus, the horse-trader sensationally reveals that he intends to take advantage of the "zealous" English railway workers (Kipling 1900/1987: 188). On the pretence of searching for his partner, Lutuf Ullah, the Afghan "indifferently" tells an Assistant District Traffic Superintendent about two men hiding under one of the trucks. Upon hearing that communication, its recipient immediately takes the pair of "unwelcome guests" for thieves and, together with a policeman, boards a fire-carriage in pursuit. What ensues is a fierce fight between the British sahibs and the *faquirs*, from which the former emerge victorious. Subsequently, Mahbub learns about the whole course of the struggle from Kim, who has

been a bystander. The boy has also recognised one of the would-be assassins as the aforementioned "sleek young gentleman from Delhi". This, in turn, suspensefully alerts the horse-trader that his old enemies have regained interest in him.

Not long afterwards, Kim is introduced to another spy mentor – Lurgan Sahib. Initially, the "healer of pearls" attempts to scare, manipulate, and hypnotise the boy. Having ascertained that those efforts are useless, the former exposes the latter to a new type of espionage training that generically ties the novel to detective fiction. With the help of a second protégée, a Hindu child, Lurgan shows Kim how to acquire a Sherlock Holmes-esque power of observation and deduction. Basically, the teacher engages both of his students in activities that are meant to significantly increase their perceptiveness. One of those undertakings is the so-called "Play of the Jewels", a game in which each of the two contestants is allowed to look at and handle – for as long as he wishes – a set of gems or other objects lying on a tray, which will be covered once the inspection is done. The task is to first analyse the contents, and then recount as many details about them as possible solely from memory. Since the Hindu child is able to pay very close attention to minor nuances, he repeatedly manages to outperform Kim.

Undaunted by his losses, the protagonist recognises the winner as his master and rival. At that point, the competition extends to surveilling the many and diverse visitors to Lurgan's shop.[141] The owner instructs the boys to report to him "their view of each man's character, as shown in his face, talk, and manner, and their notions of his real errand" (Kipling 1900/1987: 212). In essence, the "healer of pearls" teaches his protégées how to read people. This is accompanied by lessons in disguise and impersonating other individuals. In terms of successfully utilising impostor techniques, commonly featured in thrillers of acquired identity, the Hindu child is no match for Kim, who simply has a much better understanding of the socio-cultural diversity of India as well as (stereo)typical human behaviours.

To support Lurgan's educational efforts, Mahbub, on his part, does not cease to involve the protagonist in small-scale espionage operations. In Quetta, the Afghan instructs Kim to become a scullion at a fat Commissariat sergeant's house. The objective is to surreptitiously gain access to the soldier's office box, steal a MacGuffin in the form of a little vellum ledger, copy all of its contents, and return the book to its original

[141] Lurgan's real-world counterpart also owned a shop in Simla. Perhaps Kipling's vision of an eerie house cluttered with devil masks, suits of armour, and other extravagant items is not purely fictitious (Hopkirk 1996/1999: 170).

place before the owner notices that it has gone missing. After accomplishing all those suspenseful tasks, the protagonist leaves the service unpaid and successfully delivers all the notes to the horse-trader.

As the story progresses, Mahbub and Lurgan, satisfied with the sixteen-year-old Kim's spy skills and school results, conclude that he is ready to become employed by the Survey of India as a chain-man, or rather one of its secret agents. Nevertheless, Colonel Creighton does not immediately share his subordinates' enthusiasm. The Englishman questions the boy's maturity, doubts his experience, and overall displays reluctance to send him on any dangerous mission. Through the Englishman's highly cautious conduct, Kipling condemns what he and many of his contemporary compatriots perceived as the imperial politico-military inertia. This does not mean that the novel satirises British soldiers *per se*, but merely ineffective leadership within senior and high army ranks, sometimes directly caused by poor governmental decisions. On a symbolic level, all those problems are addressed in Hurree Babu's profound complaint to Kim about the naive and clumsy counter-reaction to the five kings' conspiracy:

> '[T]he war was not pushed. That is the government custom. The troops were recalled because the government believed the five kings were cowed; and it is not cheap to feed men among the high passes. Hilás and Bunár – rajahs with guns – undertook for a price to guard the passes against all coming from the north. They protested both fear and friendship [...]. This pleased the government, anxious to avoid expense, and a bond was made for so many rupees a month that Hilás and Bunár should guard the passes as soon as the state's troops were withdrawn. At that time [...] I [...] became a clerk of accounts in the army. When the troops were withdrawn, I was left behind to pay the coolies who made new roads in the Hills. This road-making was part of the bond between Bunár, Hilás, and the government.'
> '[...] I send word many times that these two kings were sold to the north; and Mahbub Ali, who was yet farther north, amply confirmed it. Nothing was done [...]. I sent word that the roads for which I was paying money to the diggers were being made for the feet of strangers and enemies [Russians]' (Kipling 1900/1987: 295-296).

Around the time when *Kim* was first published, Kipling was concerned about the Anglo-Russian and Anglo-German power struggles (also, the dreadful possibility of a German-American alliance) as well as the long-winded Anglo-Boer conflict in South Africa (Gilmour 2002: 80, 115-116; LeFanu 2020: 6, 8). In light of those circumstances, it is hardly surprising that the novel contains a strong appeal for combating British manifestations of politico-military indolence. Hurree Chunder Mookerjee, in particular, accuses Creighton of "most reprehensible laxity" for ignoring his advice to orchestrate the poisoning of two would-be Russian hunters (actually, one Russian and one French)

who, as revealed later, have simply purchased animal skins and heads at a bazaar in Leh (Kipling 1900/1987: 296). As the Babu correctly suspects, those newcomers have been sent to British India by the Tsar to connive on his behalf with Hilás and Bunár.[142] It is implied that Creighton fails to recognise the looming threat of a Russian military invasion of the subcontinent. Unaware of the danger, the Englishman carelessly does not order any immediate action against the Franco-Russian spy duo other than surveillance. Upset with his supervisor's heedless conduct, the Bengali tells Kim: "It is all your beastly English pride. You think no one dare conspire! That is all tommy-rott" (Kipling 1900/1987: 297). In this specific case, Hurree Chunder Mookerjee serves as a vehicle for expressing what Kipling himself understood as his own nation's defect. Obviously, the comedic character veils (and mitigates the strength of) the writer's criticism.

After negotiations with Mahbub and Lurgan, Creighton ultimately refuses to assign Kim to any hazardous spy mission, but instead agrees to send him away from school on a six-month journey through India with the lama. That escapade is meant to act as a cover-up for spontaneous terrain exploration and "safe" intelligence gathering. Before the boy's departure, the horse-trader takes him to Huneefa – an expert in protective charm casting.[143] In order to bestow Kim with good fortune, she performs on him a ritual composed of exorcisms and blessings. Considering that peculiar ceremony, the supernatural aspect of summoning devils is generically tied to Gothic fiction, whereas the fact that the blind prostitute collapses into slumber beside the protagonist, having tired herself out with howling, is clearly comedic. On the whole, the juxtaposition of those elements is definitely grotesque.

Subsequently, Hurree Chunder Mookerjee teaches Kim how to recognise allied undercover agents. The Babu reveals that those spies introduce themselves in a secret code and, unbeknownst to Creighton, unofficially wear special silver amulets. It is no coincidence that the Bengali eagerly shares all confidential information with the boy, but cautiously withholds some of it from the colonel. This is meant to suggest that Kim's cultural adaptability is conducive to the development of full trust in Anglo-Oriental relations, whereas Creighton's rigid Europeanness is not. Basically, Kipling's intention was to encourage his contemporary compatriots to take an example from the

[142] It seems rather strange that the Tsar has not decided to entrust such an important mission to Russians only. Peter Hopkirk suggests that one of those two antagonistic emissaries is a Frenchman because Kipling wanted *Kim* to simultaneously resonate with the real-world Russophobic and Francophobic sentiments within the British society at the *fin de siècle* (1996/1999: 237-238).
[143] On various occasions, the novel portrays Orientals as superstitious.

protagonist and, as a result, cooperate more efficiently with the natives. The various didactic elements featured in the novel link it to *romans à thèse*, albeit only vaguely since it also capitalises on humour and other entertaining aspects.

Predictably, it does not take long for Kim to put Hurree Babu's intel into practical use. The boy accidentally meets and ultimately saves a wounded fellow agent (codename E23) from suspenseful enemy pursuit. This happens while the lama and his *chela*, previously reunited in Benares, are on a train journey towards Saharunpore with a grateful Jat farmer and his child, whom the eponymous character has cured from malaria with quinine. As the vehicle starts to leave the station at Somna Road, E23, dressed up as a Mahratta, suddenly jumps into the compartment. The impostor, much like those from thrillers of acquired identity, resorts to subterfuge. Initially, he tries to deceive the other four passengers into believing that he has sustained slash injuries in an accident with a country-cart. Kim, of course, is clever enough to see through that lie and, upon noticing E23's amulet, unobtrusively shows him his own. This sparks a supposedly casual conversation which, in fact, enables a discreet exchange of the aforementioned secret code.

Having confirmed that they are allies, the two spies begin to work together in the presence of witnesses, and yet sensationally avoid blowing each other's cover. In essence, the boy pretends to engage himself in a lengthy process of casting a healing charm on the "Mahratta". Actually, the former deliberately murmurs made-up incantations to prevent anyone but himself from listening to the latter's quiet confessions. Kim's ludicrous antics promptly encourage E23 to reveal that he is chased after, has been attacked "within earshot of the *te-rain*", and must redisguise himself before the nearest stop in Delhi to elude capture (Kipling 1900/1987: 268; original emphasis).

Clearly, Kipling endows his protagonist with superhuman multitasking skills. The boy is able to simultaneously reconcile creating and performing a fake spoken ritual with listening attentively to the other agent's story and analysing it. In a rather fantastic manner, Kim invents a plan "between invocations" (Kipling 1900/1987: 268). He publicly announces that, in order to be cured, the "Mahratta" must spend three days in the habit of a *bairagi* as a token of repentance. Thanks to that false excuse, the protagonist helps the fugitive acquire, in a both thrilleresque and humorous manner, the new fake identity of a Saddhu. The boy visually enhances that "transformation" with the use of provisional make-up produced from some of the contents of the Jat farmer's food bundle.

Comically, Kim throws its outer cloth over the owner's head and promises to curse him, frustrated with his tenacious intrusions and curiosity. Once finally allowed to behold the "Saddhu" and his newfound insolence, the superstitious father leaves the train with his child in fear of Kim's "magic". To add insult to injury, the lama also severely misappreciates his *chela*'s spectacular public display of "healing powers", ignorant of its true purpose. Instead of commending the boy, the old man hilariously rebukes him, claiming that his great wisdom has unfortunately given birth to destructive pride.

In Delhi, the "Saddhu" triumphantly escapes from the English police. Instead of him, they arrest (inferably, *ad interim*) an innocent Ajmir cotton-broker "on the [false] charge of murder done in a far southern State" (Kipling 1900/1987: 279). In this specific case, the novel exploits the theme of a guiltless victim. The character in question, like Dreyfus, is wrongly accused of a serious crime, although this seems to be the only similarity between the two.

In appreciation of Kim's support, E23 informs their mutual superiors that the boy has proven himself to be an excellent field spy. As a result, the protagonist garners professional recognition within the clandestine ranks of the Survey of India. Hurree Babu, in particular, asks Kim to aid him on a special espionage mission in the Himalayas. The boy keenly consents, whereas the lama, uninitiated into the secret agreement, eagerly welcomes the delicate suggestion to continue the search for the River of the Arrow in his beloved hills. On a side note, the mountain air comically relieves the old man of his physical feebleness. He gains superhuman hiking speed and stamina, vastly superior to those of the young Kim. Obviously, this is yet another piece of evidence that the novel tends to forsake situational realism in favour of sensationalism.

As for the undercover operation, it concerns monitoring and working out the aforementioned Franco-Russian spy duo. Hurree Babu travels ahead of the lama and his *chela* to the enemy camp with the plan of joining it "in supernumerary capacity as perhaps interpreter, or person mentally impotent and hungree, or some such thing" (Kipling 1900/1987: 297). Kim, in turn, is supposed to keep casually wandering nearby and, if need be, provide backup for the Bengali, who is terribly afraid of "highly unscrupulous" Russians (Kipling 1900/1987: 297). Superficially, the quoted phrase could suggest that Kipling demonises that nation, when in fact he ridicules it. As observed by Howe, the Tsar's envoys are "stage-comic" characters, "about as alarming as Laurel and Hardy" (1977: 146). When Hurree Babu meets the two amidst a thunderstorm, his help offer is most enthusiastically welcomed as they have already found themselves in distress. Their

superstitious baggage-coolies, afraid of the lightning that has just split a pine in front of their eyes, refuse to continue walking towards Simla on that day. It is stressed that the carriers deeply distrust the Russian and the Frenchman because no other (impliedly British) sahibs have ever tried to point rifles at them to enforce submission. Also, although intimidated, those natives view their new employers as strikingly inept:

> All the sahibs of their acquaintance – rough-clad men joyously returning year after year to their chosen gullies – had servants and cooks and orderlies, very often hillmen. These sahibs travelled without any retinue. Therefore they were poor sahibs, and ignorant; for no sahib in his senses would follow a Bengali's advice [i.e., indiscriminately accept him as a reliable guide] (Kipling 1900/1987: 317).

As previously mentioned, Kipling suffuses his masterpiece with political propaganda. For that purpose, he adopts, among others, the conventions of the thriller of moral confrontation. By the end of the novel, the good and wise British sahib Kim will defeat, with the fervent support of Orientals, the evil and dumb Russian and French sahibs. Naturally, those clear-cut binary oppositions are also characteristic of sensational spy thrillers.

To resume the paused journey, Hurree Babu bribes the baggage-coolies with money. Also, adopting the secret role of a spy-detective, he proceeds to "diligently adjust" (in fact, cursorily inspect) all the conical baskets. This culminates in the discovery of a MacGuffin in the form of "a *kilta* full of maps and documents [that include a *murasla*, i.e., Hilás's confidential letter to the Tsar]" (Kipling 1900/1987: 318; original emphases). The opportunity to steal that large red-topped container arises soon afterwards. The Franco-Russian spy duo stumble upon the lama, who is in the process of explaining his chart of "the Wheel of Life" to Kim. Intrigued by that fine piece of art, the Russian insists on buying it and, once the old man adamantly refuses, tears it by accident. To make matters worse, the former violently responds to the latter's grievous lament with a hard punch in the face.

Horrified by the sight of such atrocious "blasphemy", the carriers comically run away from the scene of the incident, taking the lama and all the sahibs' baggage with them. Concurrently, the attack on the old man provokes a sensational scuffle and gunfight with the use of revolvers. This type of a conflict, in conjunction with the picturesque mountain landscape, is generically tied to western novels and films (Carter 2008: 11, 23-25; Agnew 2020: 113).

Gravely enraged, Kim knocks the Russian to the ground and starts strangling him, which makes both of them roll over downhill. As they come to a halt, the boy repeatedly "bang[s] his breathless foe's head against a boulder" and yet fantastically avoids killing or at least permanently incapacitating him (Kipling 1900/1987: 323). Likewise, the Frenchman receives disproportionately little damage from "a shower of cutting stones" thrown at him by the stampeding baggage-coolies (Kipling 1900/1987: 322).

Pretending, in a comedic fashion, to rush to the Tsar's spies' rescue, the "hysterical" Hurree Babu descends towards the continuously battered and temporarily senseless Russian. Technically, the Bengali does save him from Kim's frenzy, but only as a pretext to tell the boy to go after the carriers and intercept the precious *kilta*. During his retreat, the protagonist literally exchanges "parting shots" with the Frenchman and, since none of them is exceptionally adept at wielding a revolver, both come out of the gunfight unscathed. Actually, Hurree Babu also has a part in stopping it. He wisely warns the slow-witted "frog-eater" that further shooting could provoke ruthless retaliation on the part of the much more numerous baggage-coolies, who have also just come into possession of most of the sahibs' guns. The Bengali also points out to the perplexed "Laurel" that the flatly recumbent "Hardy" requires immediate resuscitation.

As the melee subsides, the carriers' self-appointed leader considers the prospect of revenge, but, luckily for the Franco-Russian spy duo, the newly enervated lama stringently forbids any bloodshed. Before making that noble resolution, though, the old man experiences a brief moment of hesitation. This leads him to the realisation that he has allowed maliciousness to creep into his heart. In the aftermath of that, the lama succumbs to a spiritual crisis. After intense meditation, he ultimately blames himself for visiting his beloved hills, claiming that the desire to do so has distracted him from his quest for salvation. Both physically and mentally enfeebled, the old man becomes sick and wholly dependent on Kim. The emergence of this specific complication during an already challenging espionage mission in the mountains is of great importance to the protagonist's character development. The *chela* selflessly devotes himself to taking care of the virtually helpless lama despite all the difficulties and discipline that such a course of action inevitably entails. While confronting that overwhelming problem, Kim experiences the transition to a full-fledged and truly responsible adult. Obviously, that transformation fits into the conventions of the *Bildungsroman*.

In Shamlegh-under-the-Snow, the baggage-coolies ardently divide the loot amongst themselves. Still, in fear of the "Written Word", they hand over the "magical" red-topped *kilta* to Kim (Kipling 1900/1987: 329). As a cunning spy, the boy hides the letters and the *murasla* "inside [his] coat and under [his] belt", whereas the manuscript books "at the bottom of the food-bag" (Kipling 1900/1987: 337-338). He also judiciously throws away the container into a deep gulf to dispose of the remaining and highly conspicuous theft evidence.

It should be stressed that Kim is able to return to the plains with the ailing lama and stolen documents only thanks to the indispensable help granted by the Woman of Shamlegh. Through that minor character, Kipling incorporates a romantic subplot into the novel. Basically, Lispeth becomes enamoured with the protagonist and, on that account, provides him with food supplies as well as a palanquin with five carriers to transport the old man. She also acts as an intermediary between her newfound love interest and Hurree Babu. The Bengali devises a crafty scheme to escort the achy and tired Franco-Russian spy duo to Simla while the lama and his *chela* head back in the direction of Saharunpore. Indeed, that is exactly what happens. Though initially flustered with Lispeth's affection, Kim ultimately puts his arms around her waist and gives her a farewell kiss on the cheek. He does that for two reasons – first, to derive satisfaction from confusing her himself, and second, to express gratitude for her assistance.

As part of the said support, the Woman of Shamlegh has instructed the inhabitants of nearby villages to "hospitably" receive Hurree Babu's groggy companions as "guests"; specifically, feed them and not pose any impediment to their ignominious "march of the defeated". Hence, in a subliminal manner, the novel jingoistically propagates the "axiomatic necessity" of British colonial rule in India as simply the only viable form of governance. Clearly, Kipling's fictitious Orientals do not recognise the Russian and the Frenchman as competent enough to fulfil the role of "white masters".

To further magnify the two main antagonists' humiliation, Hurree Babu farcically asks them to write him a testimonial, which they, in turn, happily produce out of staggering ignorance. "Laurel" and "Hardy" thereby recommend their "courteous, helpful, and unerring" Bengal guide, "Mohendro Lal Dutt, MA of Calcutta", to future Tsarist spies in British India (Kipling 1900/1987: 355).

In Simla, "Mohendro" shrewdly abandons his "benefactors" and, with his superhuman hiking speed and stamina, sensationally darts across the Himalayas after Kim (he does realistically sojourn in several places, though). Before rejoining his partner in

crime at the Kulu woman's house behind Saharunpore, Hurree Babu fantastically stumbles upon the lama, just in time to save him from drowning in the aforementioned brook. Once Kim recovers from the fatigue of his own harsh mountain journey, he is immensely relieved to pass the stolen documents to the Bengali. Thus ends the final espionage mission within the story, only to be followed by the old man's confession to his *chela* that the River of the Arrow has been finally discovered.

To conclude, *Kim* is a forerunner of the sensational spy thriller. In terms of hybridity, it exploits motifs found in and generic elements of episodic novels, historical novels, novels of manners, *Bildungsromans*, *romans à thèse*, adventure fiction (picaresque novels and westerns), juvenile fiction (fairy-tales and beast fables), comedies (in particular, farce-comedies), tragedies, dramas, grotesques, satires, Victorian love romances, quasi-autobiographies, Gothic fiction, detective fiction, realist spy thrillers, thrillers of acquired identity, innocent-on-the-run thrillers, and thrillers of moral confrontation.

On a side note, it is worth indicating that each chapter of the book is preceded by a distinct epigraph – frequently, an excerpt from one of the author's poems. The purpose of those brief verse introductions is to obliquely highlight and/or comment upon major themes within individual segments of the story. Naturally, this often entails foreshadowing, which, although intrinsic to the (spy) thriller genre, is not typically executed through the use of such paratexts. Perhaps that is because it is difficult to make them suspenseful (i.e., neither too obscure nor too revealing).

As illustrated in this subsection, Kipling's *magnum opus* is strongly related to its contemporary extratextual reality. This work of fiction by and large constitutes a literary endeavour to present a highly-detailed panorama of India under the British Raj. Simultaneously, the novel reflects (to some extent) the writer's imperialist worldview, which, especially from today's perspective, is controversial. On the whole, this study of *Kim* supports the idea of contesting various (potentially) negative elements of the Nobel laureate's *Weltanschauung*, but it nonetheless opposes the unfair practices of denying, ignoring, and undermining the fact that his *oeuvre* is also imbued with positive messages as well as aesthetic value. Most importantly, in the context of early British spy works, this analysis of Kipling's masterpiece reinforces the claim that real-life events and international politics were among the chief sources of influence for the creation of fictitious espionage tropes and intrigues.

2.2.2. *The Riddle of the Sands* (1903) by Erskine Childers

> Withers demurely handed me a letter bearing a German post-mark and marked 'Urgent'. I had just finished dressing, and was collecting my money and gloves. A momentary thrill of curiosity broke in upon my depression as I sat down to open it (Childers 1903/1978: 30).
>
> Carruthers in *The Riddle of the Sands*

In his popular 2006 lecture "The Art of Suspense", Ken Follett describes Erskine Childers's 1903 *The Riddle of the Sands* as "the first novel that feels entirely like a modern thriller".[144] Clearly, Follett's decision to pinpoint a single literary work as the main progenitor of the genre may seem both excessively restrictive and subjectively biased. Yet, it carries a valid implication: the theme of espionage has been exploited by thrillers since their inception. On top of that, among the hybrid forerunners of spy fiction, this particular one has the distinction of being a highly – if not the most – influential work. At the time of its initial release, it addressed the real-world problem of British political and military vulnerability in the decade preceding the Great War (Woods 2008: 29-30).

In light of those factors, it is no surprise that *The Riddle of the Sands* has received (and still receives) significant scholarly attention.[145] However, as observed by James Purdon, the bulk of academic discussions is focused on drawing historical/biographical parallels between the intra- and extratextual reality, with relatively little to no regard for the actual literary features of the novel (2012: 537-538). In the previous chapter, this type of negligence has been highlighted in the broader context of spy fiction; it is simply a genre whose conventions tend to be belittled, overlooked, or ignored in studies. Purdon's suggestion in particular is upheld by Merric Burrow, whose analysis of first-person narration and its storytelling functions within *The Riddle of the Sands* constitutes a self-proclaimed attempt at filling in the existing knowledge gap (Burrow 2016: 112).

Likewise, the aim of this analysis is to approach the novel from a new, insightful perspective; one directly inspired by the genre-related theoretical considerations established in Chapter 1. To that end, it is useful to recall one of Burrow's reflections. He contends, in the words of Alan Judd, that *The Riddle of the Sands* is principally founded on the juxtaposition of two distinct "sensibilities", namely the "adventure branch" and

[144] See: Ken Follett, "The Art of Suspense," *Ken Follett* video [2006], https://ken-follett.com/suspense (accessed March 2, 2020).

[145] Among others, see: Seed 1990, Hopkins 2001, Steer 2009, Hitchner 2010, Brayton 2017, Sandberg 2018, and Morrison 2020: 142-162. For a recent in-depth study on the historical/biographical background of the novel, see: Drummond 2017.

the "drama of conscience, of moral ambiguity and uncertain consequence" (Burrow 2016: 114; Judd 2012: xvi-xvii). Obviously, within the framework of the present study, the former can be immediately associated with the sensational spy thriller, whereas the latter with the realist one. Indeed, Childers's work conspicuously meanders between those two narrative directions. In practice, it can be perceived as a hybrid of both, and will be studied as such further on in this section. First, it is necessary to briefly delineate the historical and biographical background of the novel in order to put the said analysis in context.

Like many other spy stories, *The Riddle of the Sands* was created with the purpose of commenting upon contemporary extratextual reality. It is, by and large, a product of Childers's political *Weltanschauung* and Germanophobia. More specifically, the author, being a stalwart imperialist, was appalled by the challenge a mere 60,000 Boer guerrillas posed to the British forces during the South African War (1899–1902).[146] Only after almost three years of fierce combat was the Empire able to subdue the enemy. Most importantly, Childers was acutely dismayed by the fact Germans were highly supportive of the Boers, providing additional weapons and military equipment against the Brits (Moran and Johnson 2010: 8).

The writer gave vent to his premonition of the German threat by creating a painstakingly detailed, hence unreadable, draft projecting a naval invasion of the British Isles. After applying considerable revisions suggested by the publisher (Reginald Smith of Smith, Elder & Co), Childers eventually managed to transform his convoluted reflections into a novel. Curiously, the work thus created immediately became a best-selling story (Moran and Johnson 2010: 7-10).

The Riddle of the Sands enters the domain of the sensational spy thriller through its considerably far-fetched and naive story premise. Fundamentally, it is a tale of two young Brits who embark on a reckless voyage from the Baltic (the Schleswig fiords) to the North Sea (the Frisian islands) in Autumn on a small and cramped "lifeboat-turned-

[146] At this point it is vital to indicate that, in response to this and other conflicts, Childers's political outlook underwent significant changes. He started to question imperialism, to the point that in 1914 he actively engaged himself in smuggling firearms for the Irish republicans, whom he strongly supported. Eventually, this sympathy cost Childers his life. On November 24, 1922, he was executed by the newly-formed Irish Free State under the pretext of illegal gun-possession. Superficially, this description might erroneously suggest that, having developed a dislike for imperialism, Childers detached himself from England; on the contrary, he even served it in the Great War. It could be argued that the author simply acted on a complex sense of patriotic obligation to both Ireland and England – his mother was Irish and father English (Sutherland 2011: 274-275). For a biography of Childers, see: Boyle 1977. A concise historical summary and evaluation of the author's political activities can be found in: Nelson 2014.

yacht" – the *Dulcibella*. This is done with no additional crew, irrespective of the apparent life-threatening weather hazards as well as other dangers. One of those daredevils, Davies, possesses remarkable (if not supernatural) seamanship and navigation skills. The other, Carruthers, is practically a novice in those regards; his prior sailing experience simply proves rudimentary in the new "spartan conditions".

Undoubtedly, the novel draws heavily on the conventions of adventure fiction through the extraordinary course of action taken by the protagonists, one that conspicuously breaks their daily routines. Initially, Davies merely "recruits" Carruthers for duck-shooting on the Baltic; the latter accepts the invitation, but quickly realises that there must be a hidden motive behind it. Indeed, there is one, but it is purely founded on Davies's loose – yet perfectly accurate – conjectures, which could, to some extent, be interpreted as lucky guesses. While sailing alone near Norderney at the beginning of September, he encountered a large German yacht, the *Medusa*, and met her owner, Dollmann. Later, reflecting upon this acquaintance, Davies develops the following suspicions. First, he feels that, for some reason, Dollmann wanted to make sure that "the inquisitive Brit" was drawn away from the Frisian coast; hence proposed that the *Dulcibella* could leave it for Cuxhaven alongside the *Medusa*. Second, Davies believes that in the course of that mutual journey Dollmann, who acted as the pilot, decided to take advantage of the bad weather and deliberately made him enter a shoal near Hohenhörn, nearly succeeding in wrecking the small vessel.[147] Third, Davies has an inkling that Dollmann might be, in truth, an Englishman who spies for the Germans. The former recalls hearing the latter shout his final navigation instructions overboard in very good English, despite the – as it turns out, previously mitigated – difficulty in speaking that language. This final supposition is also rooted in the observation that Dollmann has some connection with Commander von Brüning, a German naval officer in charge of the torpedo gunboat *Blitz*. Naturally, Davies intends to return to the Frisian islands to verify his theories, acting on a strong sense of patriotic duty towards the British Empire. In this respect Davies bears a resemblance to the stock English characters of imperial

[147] It is reasonable to point out that, from a storytelling perspective, the fact that Davies, who is generally portrayed as an extremely knowledgeable and composed "sea dog", fell easily into this trap seems strikingly out of character. It is no less surprising that he found himself overwhelmed by the situation and was miraculously saved by Bartels, the German captain of a small trading vessel. Overall, this odd setback is attributed to Davies's overconfidence, his initial wholehearted trust in "Dollmann-the pilot" as well as insufficient familiarity with the route the latter had proposed.

romances, such as Allan Quatermain from Henry Rider Haggard's fiction.[148] Much like them, Davies is an explorer who wishes to secure his homeland's position as a political superpower (save for colonising uncharted lands). Obviously, not long after the two join forces, Carruthers also adopts this goal.

It could be argued that the "sensational adventure" of *The Riddle of the Sands* is set into motion and propelled by Davies's uncanny perspicacity. As mentioned earlier, he tricks Carruthers into participation in the voyage, making the correct prediction that, once on the *Dulcibella*, his friend will not refuse to join what at first seems bound to become a "wild-goose chase" in the North Sea. To add even more dramatic tension (and ridiculousness) to the enterprise, it is disclosed that Davies has fallen in love with Dollmann's daughter, Clara, judging her – once again, aptly – as morally innocent and utterly ignorant of her father's (at that time presumed) treason. Under those peculiar circumstances, if need be, Davies wishes to reconcile bringing the traitor to justice with "getting the girl". The plan is highly audacious and improbable, hence sensational. As hinted by Carruthers, it "impart[s] into [their] adventure a strain of crazy chivalry more suited to knights-errant of the Middle Ages" (Childers 1903/1978: 215). Basically, the noble quest to save a beautiful damsel-in-distress from a despicable evil-doer (in this case, her father) is a blatant homage to the medieval romance, whereas the *fin de siècle* setting and contemporary British rescuers evoke associations with the late Victorian love romance (Saunders 2001: 187; Daly 1999: 37, 82-83).

Notwithstanding, the novel does not present the conclusion of the romantic sub-plot, but merely suggests a positive outcome. Actually, Clara Dollmann receives scant attention throughout the story. Those factors can be ascribed to Childers's reluctance to include a female love interest in his work; he was forced to do so by his publisher, who intended to make the book more appealing to 20th-century female readers (Moran and Johnson 2010: 9). Thus, as quoted by Geoffrey Household, Childers deemed Clara "a horrible nuisance" (Household 1978: 12). This, in turn, can be linked to literary sexism: like many other early spy thrillers, *The Riddle of the Sands* features very few and perfunctorily characterised women. Also, it should not be overlooked that, in the course of Carruthers's narration, the implied reader, who is indirectly referred to as "the

[148] The imperial romance, sometimes also referred to as the imperialist romance, is a sub-genre of adventure fiction in which groups of Europeans explore and conquer primitive – frequently, African – regions. Such works enjoyed their greatest popularity in the years 1880–1920 (Patteson 1981: 3).

reader" or directly as "you", is occasionally addressed with male pronouns as well, such as the one in the following passage:

> This train, as the reader who was with me in it knows, was in correspondence with another from Emden and the south, and also, I now found, with services from Hanover, Bremen, and Berlin. He will also remember that I had to wait three-quarters of an hour at Norden, from 7 to 7.43 (Childers 1903/1978: 293, emphasis mine).

Clearly, the scarce yet apparent use of male pronouns in such contexts is a minuscule clue that Childers's original intention could have been to produce "a spy thriller exclusive for men": the implied reader is, by accident or design, revealed to be male. An alternative possibility is that, in accordance with a traditional literary convention, those masculine pronouns were introduced to function as generic terms applicable to both sexes. Whichever the case may be, nowadays proponents of gender-neutral language tend to heavily criticise such linguistic choices as sources of male bias (Hamilton 1988: 795; see also: Stanley 1978, Gastil 1990, Miller and James 2009). Currently, the intricacies of gender pronoun usage in English constitute the subject of widespread academic and non-academic discussions, but at the beginning of the 20th century such issues did not attract nearly as much public attention (Livia 2001: 59-60; Pauwels 2003: 551). On a side note, the quoted excerpt also shows how, through the use of metonymy, the spy thriller can immerse the audience in the suspenseful action. Specifically, the activity of reading about a fictional train journey is portrayed as accompanying the narrator on it; the implied reader simply "becomes" Carruthers's co-passenger.

To solidify the discussion on the sensationalism of Childers's novel, it is crucial to bring to the fore the general pretentiousness of the thriller genre. Namely, it often attempts to divert the readers'/viewers' attention away from the improbability/implausibility of fictional plots, even if it is patently obvious. This aim is pursued, with varying degrees of success, through the application of various "distractors". As indicated earlier, a popular one concerns involving the audience emotionally in the protagonists' dangerous quest; this is precisely why it is a common practice to make them strive for an overblown and noble cause, frequently of immense (inter)national significance. In *The Riddle of the Sands*, Carruthers and Davies work towards exposing and capturing an English traitor; in the process, an even greater patriotic challenge emerges: they discover a secret German plan to perform an overseas attack on the British Empire and decide to thwart it.

Aside from those virtuous endeavours, the novel further fortifies its ostensible credibility with the use of a special narrative frame. In the Preface and Epilogue, the first-person narrator is moulded into a distorted reflection of the author himself. The fictional Childers poses as "the Editor" of a "true" story to foil a German invasion, related to him by the two heroic sailors:

> It was arranged that I should edit the book; that 'Carruthers' should give me his diary and recount to me in fuller detail and from his own point of view all the phases of the 'quest', as they used to call it; that Mr 'Davies' should meet me with his charts and maps and do the same; and that the whole story should be written, as from the mouth of the former, with its humours and errors, its light and its dark side, just as it happened; with the following few limitations. The year it belongs to is disguised; the names of persons are throughout fictitious; and, at my instance, certain slight liberties have been taken to conceal the identity of the English characters.
>
> Remember, also that these persons are living now in the midst of us, and if you find one topic touched on with a light and hesitating pen, do not blame the Editor, who, whether they are known or not, would rather say too little than say a word that might savour of impertinence (Childers 1903/1978: 18-19).

This extract illustrates how manipulative the "Childers-narrator" is; he tries to gain credence under the guise of concern for real-life people presented in the story – in truth, fictional characters. This ostensible caution is primarily reserved for Dollmann and his daughter. It needs to be stressed that the novel handles the politically sensitive issue of treason with delicacy. By the end of the story, Dollmann submits himself to Carruthers and Davies, who promise to take him and Clara to England on the *Dulcibella*; still, the traitor never reaches his homeland – instead, he drowns himself in the sea. Most likely, Dollmann meets such an end because the real Childers did not want him to undergo legal prosecution. Since Dollmann was a British navy lieutenant prior to his defection, presenting his trial in the novel could potentially humiliate the British Admiralty (of which Carruthers and Davies remain nonetheless critical). Regardless, this particular antagonist is very similar to those popularised in the thriller of acquired identity – he pretends not to be an Englishman, and this directly leads to his exposure and downfall.

In the quoted excerpt, the fictional Childers announces that he will not attempt to relate Carruthers and Davies's story on his own. Instead, he places the former in the position of the new, more "reliable", first-person narrator – one directly involved in the "authentic" adventure. This is not without significance. Indeed, Carruthers reinforces the illusion that all the events described in *The Riddle of the Sands* are factual: he is introduced as one of the two ostensibly real-world national heroes whose true names are

not disclosed for safety purposes. On top of that, the plot is presented from the character's personal, subjective view. In accordance with a thriller convention, this encourages the readers to sympathise with the protagonist's feelings and emotions.

Considering Carruthers's charm as a character, it can be partially attributed to his endearing relationship with Davies. In fact, *The Riddle of the Sands* is a spy thriller interspersed with subtle humour, generally inspired by the comedy of mismatches. This is signalled at the very beginning of the story, when it is revealed that, in the past, the protagonists attended Oxford together, but are by no means intimately acquainted. Upon their first meeting in the novel, it becomes clear that they are, in truth, poles apart. Carruthers, the foppish prig from the Foreign Office, is extremely perplexed with Davies, the free-spirited sailing zealot. First, the former learns that the rigging-screws, which he has bought with difficulty on the latter's special request, are not really necessary for the cruise. Then, it turns out that Davies has no crew who could carry Carruthers's luggage to the yacht, and the two are forced to handle the situation on their own. Finally, the narrator discovers that the *Dulcibella* is a very small and cramped boat, which immediately entails discomfort. Carruthers's portmanteau is too big to get through the hatchway, and thus needs to be unpacked on deck. Below it, there is a gear-cluttered saloon with barely enough room to sit upright as well as a cabin with two sheetless hard bunks (and a leak above one of them). The principal comedic effect of those ominous inconveniences is rooted in the fact that, unlike Carruthers, Davies is not bothered by them at all. In essence, he serves as a foil to the narrator, acting as a funny sidekick fixated with the *Dulcibella*. This is clearly evident in the notorious and careless activity of throwing "excess" load overboard with the intention of reducing the weight of the vessel.

As the story progresses, Davies's adventurous nature influences Carruthers significantly: he undergoes a transition from an ocnophil into a philobat. Actually, the narrator's inner transformation takes place on two distinct levels. First, he needs to overcome his fear of sailing on the small *Dulcibella*. Ironically, it is precisely this anxiety that adds a lot of suspense to Carruthers's early narration. The effect is quite often augmented by descriptions of "menacing" sounds, rich in onomatopoeias:

> Every loose article in the boat became audibly restless. Cans clinked, cupboards rattled, lockers uttered hollow groans [...]. The mast whined dolorously at every heel, and the centre-board hiccoughed and choked [...]. The deck and mast were conductors which magnified every sound and made the tap-tap of every rope's end resemble the blows of a hammer, and the slapping of the halyards against the mast the rattle of a Maxim gun. The whole tumult beat time to a rhythmical chorus which became maddening (Childers 1903/1978: 137).

Although the sounds are depicted as unsettling, they are merely subjectively perceived as such by Carruthers. On this basis, it is possible to draw a correlation between *The Riddle of the Sands* and Gothic fiction. Specifically, the character's irritation with the "maddening rhythmical chorus" is strongly reminiscent of that experienced by the unnamed narrator from Edgar Allan Poe's 1843 short story "The Tell-Tale Heart", although in the latter's case it is unclear whether the unnerving repetitive ringing truly exists or is phantasmal. As regards Carruthers, he gradually conquers his inhibitions and, with Davies's help, assumes a philobatic stance as the subordinate sailor on the *Dulcibella*.

From that moment on, Carruthers's transformation into a full-fledged philobat takes a more definite and dynamic course: he encounters the challenge of becoming an amateur spy and ultimately accepts it, determined to face the risks that come along with it. In this respect, the novel is heavily influenced by the Victorian schoolboy story – it presents Carruthers's remarkable transition from a light-minded and sulky member of the Foreign Office into an adventurous patriot defending his country. The protagonist's drastic inner change, obviously, originally conveyed the author's appeal to the "apathetic" British government to overcome their "lethargy".[149]

Since Carruthers's narration is retrospective, it lends itself well to the disclosure of suspenseful information. Frequently, he resorts to foreshadowing, which can be illustrated with the following examples. Having produced a letter requesting a longer leave from office, Carruthers weightily confesses that at that time he was "unaware of the gravity of the step [he] was taking" (Childers 1903/1978: 114). This comment immediately notifies the readers about the invaluable plot relevance of this correspondence, and rightfully so. In response, Carruthers receives a formal request to arrive at work as soon as possible, and this reply is used to temporarily allay suspicions of his and Davies's espionage activity. Another time, before the fateful inn meeting with Commander von Brüning is arranged, Carruthers reveals its proximity, claiming that "[t]he decisive incidents of our cruise were now fast approaching" (Childers 1903/1978: 156). Also, by the end of the said appointment, the narrator contends that "[it] had been a puzzling interview, but the greatest puzzle was still to come" (Childers 1903/1978: 174). This signals von Brüning's forthcoming veiled threats and, on a bigger scale, German preparations to attack the British Empire.

[149] For more information, see: Moran and Johnson 2010: 7-12.

Within the framework of the story, the invasion plan constitutes the eponymous "riddle". It is uncovered by the main characters in the course of examining the suspicious German activity near the coast of East Friesland, supposedly exclusively focused on retrieving gold bullion bars from an old sunken French war-vessel. In essence, the novel initially adopts and subsequently subverts the conventions of treasure hunt stories, i.e., it introduces a genuine salvage operation, which, as the plot progresses, turns out to be a red herring. Thus, *The Riddle of the Sands* draws influence from detective fiction. Carruthers and Davies do not merely act as spies – they are spy-detectives. This is frequently emphasised in the text through the use of expressions such as "puzzle", "secret", "the case", "investigator/investigating", etc. Simultaneously, the intellectual process of solving the mystery mainly serves as a background for suspenseful espionage. The focal point of the narrative is the fact that Carruthers and Davies notoriously put themselves in danger – they simply risk their freedom, safety, and lives.

Considering the main characters' espionage activity, it gains most of its impetus after the unsettling inn meeting with Commander von Brüning, which fuels their suspicion that the German salvage operation might be a cover-up for something else. In short, von Brüning insistently tries to persuade Carruthers into discouraging Davies from renewing "friendly" contact with Dollmann and visiting the *Medusa*, hazily denigrating the owner of that ship as "a queer fellow, of eccentric habits" (Childers 1903/1978: 175). Also, to deter the protagonists from "snooping around" the Frisian islands, the Commander subtly, yet meaningfully and suspensefully, enunciates his "police duty" to Carruthers (Childers 1903/1978: 176).

Essentially, this cloaked coercion has the opposite effect. In truth, it encourages the Brits to become all the more audacious. Therefore, *The Riddle of the Sands* depicts spying as more sensational than realistic; generally, it exhibits a degree of silliness and bravado. In search of clues, Carruthers and Davies perform a superhuman stunt. Equipped with a compass and charts, they board a dinghy and chase after the *Medusa* from Norderney to Memmert, navigating and covering a total of over 10 miles in thick fog. The sheer physical strain of that pursuit makes it reckless/implausible, not to mention the risk that the fog might suddenly disappear, exposing the small boat to the antagonists. At Memmert, in turn, Carruthers spies on an assembly of German conspirators in a ludicrous fashion. He peeks through a window in one of the metal buildings, standing directly behind Dollmann's back and literally shielding himself with it against detection. Though far-fetched, the combined act of voyeurism and eavesdropping in-

duces a lot of suspense. In order to remain safe, the protagonist must quickly respond to various dynamic changes in the precarious environment: for example, duck each time someone walks around the interior, move to another position whenever someone is about to appear in the exterior, etc.

During that meeting, Carruthers overhears, among other things, that in the evening he and Davies will be invited to supper at Dollmann's villa at Norderney. Naturally, the main characters must return to that island to maintain the illusion that they have not travelled far away from it in the first place. Thus, in a near comedic way, the protagonists shift from long-distance racing after the antagonists to long-distance racing away from them, all in the span of one day. However, humour does not eclipse suspense: the Brits realise that they will be outstripped by their adversaries, but reach them just in time to interrupt an ongoing discreet search of the *Dulcibella*.

The remaining espionage activities featured in *The Riddle of the Sands* are chiefly centred on Carruthers, who experiences what could be best described as an "explosion" of philobatism. In the course of the joint supper, he becomes more imprudent than ever and ventures to "play va banque" with Dollmann, von Brüning, as well as two other German conspirators, Böhme and Grimm. Basically, the narrator tries to tease out new information by pretending that he has figured out that the former two attended a pre-arranged meeting at Memmert, one which von Brüning had tried to conceal from him during the aforementioned inn-meeting. Carruthers also puts forward a feigned suspicion that the four plotters inspected the *Dulcibella* whereas the supper is a pretext for questioning (he knows this very well). All those sudden accusations cause some unforeseen commotion at the table and, thanks to the element of surprise, the narrator receives an invitation to Memmert. This confrontation is significant because it vividly encapsulates the sensationalism of the novel: the protagonists first take extremely dangerous – hence suspenseful – risks and then, often with great effort and/or a dose of humour, miraculously escape trouble. In this particular situation, Carruthers light-heartedly rejects the offer for want of time, simultaneously camouflaging his daring attacks as doltish jokes. To gain credence, he confirms the necessity of his upcoming return to England with private job correspondence.

On his way back, due to an unfortunate set of circumstances, Carruthers is accompanied by Böhme for a considerable part of the journey. However, once they split, the narrator resolves to change course for Friesland again. He intends to rejoin Davies and capture Dollmann. Yet, before this is done, the narrator performs his most sensa-

tional stunt. At Bensersiel he seizes the opportunity to sneak onto a tug steered by Grimm and, as it turns out later, also carrying von Brüning and Böhme. Once on board, Carruthers searches for a hiding place, and the description of that process contains a direct reference to treasure hunt fiction:

> The conventional stowaway hides in the hold, but there was only a stokehold here, occupied moreover; nor was there an empty apple-barrel, such as Jim of *Treasure Island* found so useful (Childers 1903/1978: 299).

In this particular context, Robert Louis Stevenson's 1883 novel is mentioned solely to mislead the readers. Carruthers eventually conceals himself in a small boat overboard and, instead of the aforementioned salvage operation foreshadowed in the quoted passage, witnesses a rehearsal of sea manoeuvres for the forthcoming German invasion of Britain, personally superintended by Kaiser Wilhelm II. This discovery prompts the narrator to abandon his ocnophilic hideout and once again take philobatic action. Shortly after Grimm passes the helm to another sailor and goes below deck, Carruthers picks the former's oilskin from the skylight, dons it and, in a comedic fashion, temporarily assumes Grimm's identity under cover of the night.[150] This enables him to successfully take the current helmsman's place and run the tug aground. In the ensuing chaos, the narrator proceeds to arrange his escape in the small boat. Ironically, he is unwittingly aided in the process by none other than the Kaiser himself, who helps him detach the vessel from its davits. Afterwards, with all the principal German conspirators stranded on the tug, Carruthers is able to easily leave Norderney with Davies, Dollmann, and Clara on the *Dulcibella*.

Thus far, the analysis has mostly revolved around the sensationalism of *The Riddle of the Sands*. Overall, it can be regarded as extensive, and yet it does not overshadow the strictly realistic aspects of the story. Contrary to appearances, this particular spy thriller does not simply feature a biased conflict in which the "good and bright" Brits beat the "bad and silly" Germans. While it is true that the tug incident conspicuously mocks the latter (especially the Kaiser), it would be a terrible misreading of Childers's work to assume that its entirety draws upon this solitary act of ridicule. Fundamentally, the novel portrays the German enemy as a force to be reckoned with; it is a tale of fierce political rivalry, and the two countries are adequately presented as competitive pursuers of power. In fact, maritime dominance fulfils the role of the MacGuffin: it constitutes both the protagonists and the antagonists' fervent desire.

[150] Obviously, this is yet another reference to the thriller of acquired identity.

As regards Kaiser Wilhelm II, his strong envy of the British fleet and ambition to expand Germany into a naval empire are historically accurate (Röhl 2001: 1109-1112). Also, on the whole, the novel is far from belittling this ruler. This is explicitly indicated in Davies's profound wish for less supine British statesmen: "By Jove! we want a man like this Kaiser, who doesn't wait to be kicked, but works like a nigger for his country, and sees ahead" (Childers 1903/1978: 119). Throughout the plot, Germany's political competence and military strength are genuinely admired, envied, and feared by the two main British characters. The protagonists do not exhibit any signs of blind contempt for their adversaries; on the contrary, they respect them. It is sufficient to quote Davies's positive evaluations of Commander von Brüning, whom he views as "a thundering good chap" from "a thundering great nation" (Childers 1903/1978: 68, 193). *The Riddle of the Sands* does not detach itself from the realist spy thriller precisely because Germany is objectively depicted as a serious contender for political influence; an ever-present, growing, and suspenseful threat which can only be kept in check through constant vigilance and military responsiveness on the British Empire's part. The said "responsiveness" is chiefly understood as not lagging behind in the arms race, in accordance with the Latin adage *Si vis pacem, para bellum*.

Another facet of realism manifests itself in the fact that, to a large extent, the novel is cartographic. Several enclosed maps and charts serve as direct sources of reference for both the "Carruthers-narrator" and the implied reader; basically, the former repeatedly encourages the latter to study them alongside distinct passages describing the main characters' expedition. What matters most is that, at the time of its release, *The Riddle of the Sands* reflected Childers's excellent familiarity with the Frisian coast. He knew it very well thanks to his own private voyages; those are, by and large, emulated by Carruthers and Davies.[151] Likewise, the author's small boat *Vixen* became the real-world inspiration for the fictional *Dulcibella* (Harding 2004/2007: 131-132). Rich in sailing details and jargon, *The Riddle of the Sands* is a spy thriller which simultaneously belongs to nautical fiction. As observed by Matthew Graves, Childers's meticulousness in geographic representation is comparable to that with which Joseph Conrad wrote his 1899 novella *Heart of Darkness*.[152]

It is useful to recall that the realism of a cultural text can be understood as its actual veracity or the effect, i.e., impression, it exerts on the audience. Once *The Riddle of*

[151] For thorough comparisons, see: Piper 2003: 28-33.
[152] See: Graves 2005 (online article).

the Sands was first published, one of its themes immediately challenged both interpretations. Namely, the German scheme to launch a fleet of light-draught barges from the Frisian coast to strike the British Empire excited considerable controversy. While some of Childers's countrymen viewed it as preposterous, others, including influential politicians by the likes of ex-Prime Minister Lord Rosebery (Archibald Philip Primrose), believed that the author had discovered and delineated an existing invasion plan. Childers himself claimed that it was real, yet his private correspondence on the matter is marred by logical inconsistency. In essence, he informed one of his friends that he described what he had witnessed, whereas another that he had accidentally made a highly accurate prediction about a German plot allegedly concocted a couple of years after the novel was released. On that basis, it can be suspected that Childers did not unearth any conspiracy, and indeed nowadays this is generally assumed/taken for granted (Eby 1988: 29). At this point it also seems reasonable to indicate that Kaiser Wilhelm II notoriously accused Brits of Germanophobia for insinuating that his naval inspirations encompassed pressing a grand and successful marine attack on their Empire. Naturally, his actual thoughts on the prospect can only be speculated on, but it is nonetheless generally suspected that the sheer difficulty and impracticality of the task ultimately filled him with scepticism (Kohut 1991: 215).

Even if the invasion scheme portrayed by Childers is utterly fictitious, it can be still treated as a hypothesis which exposes the presumptive weak points of the Empire's naval and coastal defences. In particular, the writer used his novel to accuse the Admiralty of the lack of a naval base, fleet, and security policy protecting the east coast of the British Isles (Childers 1903/1978: 120). In addition, he fortuitously proved that their sea charts were largely inaccurate (McCormick and Fletcher 1990: 5; Woods 2008: 29; Carradice 2021: 22). As a result, the work initially received a mixed response from the military. For example, Lord Selbourne (William Palmer), who admittedly appreciated the book, expressed concern for the author's one-sided criticism of the Admiralty, claiming it was solely founded on incomplete information available to the general public. By contrast, Hugh Arnold-Forster and Lord Wolseley (Garnet Wolseley) were unambiguously fascinated by the amount of detail with which Childers depicted the invasion. Eventually, in 1908, the Admiralty bought 117 copies of *The Riddle of the Sands* for its fiction libraries, which was a clear indication of its high popularity (Moran and Johnson 2010: 12).

In light of the above, it is evident that the German invasion plot featured in *The Riddle of the Sands* cannot be properly evaluated in terms of realism. Apparently, it comprises various truths and untruths, either confirmed or presumed, along with their subjective evaluations; hence the major discrepancies in the readers' impressions as regards veracity. As indicated in Chapter 1, it is simply not always possible to efficiently dissect factopiction into fact, fiction, and opinion. Regardless, the scheme is presented as dangerous and daring, and thus it is both sensational and suspenseful.

Closing, *The Riddle of the Sands* is a hybrid of the sensational and realist spy thriller subgenres, which can also be classified as nautical fiction. The novel is profoundly influenced by the Victorian schoolboy story as well as detective and adventure fiction (with a focus on its imperial romance and treasure hunt variations). Naturally, structural elements borrowed from other genres can also be detected. The list includes the thriller of acquired identity, Gothic fiction, the medieval and late Victorian love romance, and comedy (especially the comedy of mismatches).

2.2.3. *Behind the Throne* (1905) by William LeQueux

> Much as she prefers England, Madame Macbean is compelled, on account of her husband's official position, to still move in Roman society, where, for her great personal beauty and the sweetness of her character, she is the most admired of women in the Quirinale set, that bright and brilliant circle of Italy's bluest blood – "The World behind the Throne" (LeQueux 1905/2016: 185).
>
> Epilogue to *Behind the Throne*

Another British "prototype" of a spy thriller is William LeQueux's 1905 novel *Behind the Throne*.[153] This and many of his works (whether espionage tales, detective stories, or other) were given mysterious titles that often contain the word "secret". In practice, it was the writer's hallmark. Some examples are *Secrets of the Foreign Office* (1903),[154]

[153] For a spy fiction study which features a chapter with a brief and selective overview of LeQueux's *oeuvre*, see: Panek 1981: 5-16. It is recommended to approach this source with a measure of caution because it intermixes factual analysis with largely subjective evaluations. Those include comments such as: "[t]oday it takes a determined will and a high tolerance for unrefined and unmitigated twaddle to get through many books by William LeQueux" or "[n]o one in his right mind would want to drag through the course of all of LeQueux's novels, or even his spy novels" (Panek 1981: 5, 9). Generally, Panek's book awkwardly combines academic research with critical reviews; overall, the said chapter rather aggressively depreciates LeQueux as a writer, but simultaneously acknowledges the historical significance of his works.

[154] In *Secrets of the Foreign Office*, LeQueux introduces Duckworth Drew, who can be regarded as the archetype of the British spy-gentleman protagonist. The character, along with various other LeQueuxian spies, such as Jack Jardine from *The Man from Downing Street* (1904) or Hugh Morrice from *Revelations of the Secret Service* (1911), is embedded in the tradition of "romantic adventurers whose everyday lives

The Seven Secrets (1903), *The Secret of the Square* (1907), *The Maker of Secrets* (1914), and *The Secret Telephone* (1920). Most likely, such naming choices predominantly fulfilled a marketing purpose. It was to attract buyers with the inferable promise that in the course of reading they will be encouraged to become intellectually engaged in solving a fictional crime puzzle. Obviously, spy thrillers "disguised" as mystery works subverted that expectation, focusing chiefly on the creation of suspense.

Behind the Throne does not feature a single espionage plot, but a complex intrigue infused with story propelling spy subplots and motifs. While there exist LeQueuxian novels which utilise espionage more efficiently and to greater degrees, this one has been chosen over others for analysis as it very well exemplifies a borderline sensational spy thriller, i.e., it forcefully "stitches together" and develops/transforms several narrative formulas characteristic of various genres. It would be a mistake to assume that the development of early British spy fiction progressed solely along the lines of relatively well-rounded espionage tales by the likes of *The Riddle of the Sands*; the genre partially manifested itself in spy works which, from a modern perspective, could be regarded as extensive generic hybrids. As observed by Panek, LeQueux in particular frequently created tortuous, multi-threaded stories (1981: 5).

Essentially, *Behind the Throne* evokes much of its suspense through the preliminary disclosure of some conspiratorial connections between various characters. More specifically, it occurs within the first eight chapters (there are forty-one altogether). The story deals with Camillo Morini, the Italian Minister of War, who – unwillingly – resorts to peculation with the help of his wicked assistant, Angelo Borselli, in order to meet the unrealistic financial demands of the Ministry.[155] Both men despise each other; still, being partners in crime, they are forced to endure mutual detest. Morini remains largely ignorant of Borselli's hidden agenda to take over the Ministry with the aid of socialist MPs. To accomplish this goal, Borselli also hopes to receive some assistance from an old French associate, Count Jules Dubard (as revealed later, impostor Count;

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were punctuated by death-defying feats and narrow escapes" (Nash 1997: 344). Drew is also among those who initiated the practice of absolving fictional British espionage of the immoral aspects of the trade. As indicated in the previous chapter of this study, in sensational spy thrillers misdeeds are often solely projected onto foreign secret agents. For a broader analysis of the aforementioned three spies, see: Stafford 1981.

[155] By choosing Italy as the setting, LeQueux indirectly suggests that widespread corruption would be impossible in the British Empire (Panek 1981: 9). This can be interpreted as a form of protectionism. From a marketing perspective, such a decision also seems convenient because it creates the opportunity to attract readers with descriptions of exclusive foreign locations, either non-existent or not easily accessible to British audiences. Thus, it is no coincidence that in *Behind the Throne* parts of the story take place at Minister Morini's lavish palace and villa, the Italian Ministry of War, the *Camera*, etc.

instead, secret agent of the French Minister of War and traitor). At the beginning of the novel, it is suggested that Dubard is a very dangerous man because George Macbean, an impoverished English aristocrat, discreetly recognises him as a past acquaintance and threat (at that point obscure). Although Macbean generally fears Dubard and initially intends no confrontation, it is inevitable as they both fall in love with Morini's daughter, Mary.

Clearly, the early establishment of such a complex web of intrigue creates tension and instigates suspenseful guesses as to directions in which the plot might advance. Still, it needs to be emphasised that this effect is also partially magnified by supplementary mystery subplots. It is suggested that the aforementioned acts of collaboration involving Morini, Borselli, Dubard, and Macbean are related to a secret scheme concerning Captain Felice Solaro's inglorious dismissal from the Italian army on charges of treason (i.e., cooperation with a French spy) as well as the atrocious "Sazarac Affair", which remains unspecified for most of the story. Basically, those two interconnected mystery episodes do not receive much development in the course of the main plot, but instead are repeatedly and vaguely referenced in order to highlight that Borselli and Dubard are ruthless criminals capable of ousting Minister Morini from power.

Along with conspiracy, pervasive spy motifs largely contribute to the execution of suspense. Actually, it is possible to distinguish five espionage-related characters in the novel. The two main ones are Jules Dubard and George Macbean, whereas the remaining three supportive ones are Vito Ricci, Filomena Nodari, and Georges Latrobe. Regardless, it seems reasonable to exclude Latrobe from the upcoming analysis of spies/secret agents in *Behind the Throne* because he merely serves as a "living MacGuffin" in the story. For the purpose of maintaining its narrative coherence, he is briefly mentioned in Chapter Eight as the French spy with whom the imprisoned Solaro has allegedly connived. The inclusion of Latrobe "moves the plot forward", but is otherwise irrelevant, i.e., not much is known about him. As a matter of fact, it can only be inferred that he is a clever manipulator – in this respect quite similar to the principal French spy of the novel, Dubard.

In accordance with the self-perpetuating nature of factopiction, Dubard simultaneously constitutes a product of and reinforcement to the extratextual British smear campaign against France in the wake of the Dreyfus Affair. This can be easily discerned from the character's introduction. He is pejoratively – and stereotypically – depicted as a dandyish, unmasculine Frenchman:

> Dubard was not a handsome man – for it is difficult to find a man of the weak, anaemic type of modern Parisian who can be called good-looking from an English standpoint. He was thin-featured, lantern-jawed, with a pale complexion, dark eyes, and a brown moustache. He wore his hair parted in the centre, and as an *élégant* was proud of his white almost waxen hands and carefully manicured finger-nails. His dress, too, often betrayed those signs of effeminacy which in Paris just now are considered the height of good form in a man. His every movement seemed studied, yet his stiff elegance was on the most approved model of the Bois and the ballroom. He played frequently at his *cercle*, he wore the most hideous goggles and fur coat and drove his motor daily, and he indulged in *le sport* in an impossible get-up, not because he liked tramping about those horrid muddy fields, but because it was the correct thing for a gentleman to do (LeQueux 1905/2016: 10-11).

As indicated in the previous chapter of this study, the antagonists of sensational spy thrillers are often one-sidedly and excessively deplored. However, the quoted passage does not exclusively follow a generic convention. Another significant purpose of this overblown and prejudiced caricature is to disparage the extratextual France through vicious intratextual mockery. Obviously, Dubard serves as a metonymic vehicle for stigmatising the country, its people, their appearance, clothes, behaviour, and language.[156]

As the story progresses, the vilification of France through Dubard continues. The character first surreptitiously aids Borselli in preparing a coup against Minister Morini and then, much to his accomplice's distress, temporarily postpones it for personal gain. Dubard wishes to marry Morini's daughter before the Minister is unseated, realising that a prior scandal could foil that matrimonial plan. In order to succeed, the antagonist naturally poses as the Minister's friend. Dubard's cynicism is further escalated by the fact that his fiancée Mary has specifically asked him to protect her father, being fully aware of the tension between the latter and Borselli. Eventually, it is also revealed that Dubard, being a secret agent of the French Minister of War, has betrayed his own country and easily persuaded a French General, Sazarac, to follow suit. For the prospect of a position in the Italian Ministry of War offered by Borselli, Dubard has encouraged Sazarac, troubled by gambling debts, to acquire the necessary funds to pay them off

[156] It must not escape attention that not all French characters in LeQueux's *oeuvre* are exposed to a similarly high degree of ridicule. For example, the spymaster Gaston La Touche from *England's Peril: A Story of the Secret Service* (1899) is rather consistently portrayed as a skilled and powerful antagonist, but such characterisation is primarily meant to add tension to the central conflict of the story and intensify the impact of the villain's eventual downfall. It remains nonetheless true that some of LeQueux's novels, such as *Behind the Throne*, reflect his Francophobia; ironically, he was born in France of a French father (the mother was English) (Clarke 1997: 429). In his fiction, the writer also devoted a considerable amount of attention to "the German menace", which was, in fact, his primary "obsession" (Andrew 1985/1986: 46-47). Among LeQueux's Germanophobic sensational spy thrillers, recognisable ones include *Spies of the Kaiser* (1909) and *Hidden Hands* (1926).

through selling top secret plans of French frontier defences to Italy. Notably, the shady deals do not seem particularly spectacular; as such, they are all the more fitting for implying that to the "barbaric" French even their motherland is of little emotional significance. Adding even more to Dubard's disgrace, he turns out to be an impostor Count (such final exposures are characteristic of the thriller of acquired identity – a clear indication of the inner subgeneric hybridity of thrillers).

Basically, LeQueux brings the extratextual and overgeneralised English aversion to France, along with his own Francophobia, to the creation of his fictional French spy, endowing him with ruthless self-interest. It is useful to reiterate that the repulsive portrayal of Dubard does not merely originate from the early 20th-century anti-French sentiments within British society. At that time, it was also meant to encourage an upsurge of those negative emotions among the readers of the novel.

It could be asserted that Dubard – the dastardly French secret agent – serves as a foil to Macbean – the noble English one. The contrast, however, is not entirely founded on their respective espionage activities (in Macbean's case, morally excused). That is partially because Macbean becomes a spy relatively late in the story (i.e., in Chapter Twenty-Six). Upon receiving an Italian government position, he is asked by his former employer – Morgan-Mason, a Member of the British Parliament – to exploit the situation and discreetly collect confidential foreign intel on General Sazarac's death. A former close friend of Sazarac, Morgan-Mason suspects murder, and thus promises Macbean ten thousand pounds in exchange for confirming that supposition and determining the killer(s). Obviously, Macbean assumes the role of a spy-detective, which demonstrates a connection between spy fiction and detective fiction. Still, the novel does not explore the gradual stages of this investigation; instead, it exclusively capitalises on the risky – hence suspenseful – nature of that venture. If exposed, Macbean will most likely suffer legal consequences for the unauthorised disclosure of secret information. The narrative direction of this subplot clearly supports the argument that (sensational) spy thrillers draw some influence from mystery works, but simultaneously depart from them through – and for the sake of – intensifying suspense.

Returning to the disparity between Dubard and Macbean, it mainly occurs across the characters' roles as Mary Morini's suitors. Obviously, the expansion of love themes in the story establishes a firm generic link between the sensational spy thriller and the

romance.[157] In short, Dubard acts as the infatuated villain who wishes to have a beautiful wife, yet only cares for his own happiness and welfare. Macbean, in turn, loves Mary disinterestedly. Actually, his good nature can be already inferred from the early innocent descriptions of his developing affection – such characterisation is reminiscent of Victorian romance novels:

> Macbean was spending a month with the Reverend Basil Sinclair, his bachelor uncle, when he had become acquainted with that bright, vivacious girl who was walking beside him [...]. They had entered the wood, where the damp smell of decaying leaves, so essentially English, met their nostrils, and were strolling up one of the mossy paths in the cool shadow. Yes, she was certainly lovely, he reflected. Report had not lied about her. She was more beautiful than any woman he had ever before beheld, more graceful, more cosmopolitan [...]. Chatting gaily, they lingered in the wood, strolled through the long range of hothouses, and then back again to the lawn, where they found the guests bidding farewell to their hostess and departing (LeQueux 1905/2016: 8).

Considering the love triangle, it owes its suspense to the fact that Dubard attempts to coerce Mary into marriage. In exchange for her hand, he promises to thwart the conspiracy against her father. Cornered, she selflessly consents and the two become engaged, despite the plain lack of mutual affection between them.

Naturally, the damsel-in-distress is eventually rescued from the "unholy" matrimony by the righteous Macbean. Still, his transition from the ocnophil who dreads Dubard into the philobat who opposes him occurs conspicuously late in the story; actually, by its very end. Seemingly, this could be regarded as a generic transgression. After all, sensational spy thrillers – or, more generally, thrillers – frequently induce suspense through consecutive dangerous clashes involving the protagonists and antagonists. However, *Behind the Throne* is a good example of a multithreaded thriller in which the suspense of its interconnected subplots is magnified through delaying the hero's transformation. Macbean's prolonged, and quite unedifying, inability to take action casts a shadow of grave uncertainty over his own fate as well as that of Camillo Morini, Mary Morini, Solaro, Borselli, and Dubard. The protagonist's passivity is suspenseful as it may directly lead to the villains' – i.e., Borselli and Dubard's – triumph. That, in turn, would entail a romantic heartbreak for Macbean, political and financial ruin for Camillo Morini, unhappy marriage for Mary Morini, and fifteen years of imprisonment for So-

[157] Panek explains that many of LeQueux's novels draw a lot of inspiration from the Victorian love romance because the writer intended to reach the British lower-middle class female readers, accustomed to the works of Charlotte Yonge, Rhoda Broughton, and Ouida (Panek 1981: 5-6). Regardless, LeQueux's sensational spy thrillers appealed to male audiences as well. For example, in a monograph devoted to the broadly-understood cultural life of 20th-century Australian soldiers, Amanda Laugesen includes the writer among those widely read before and throughout World War I (Laugesen 2012/2016: 58-59).

laro. Obviously, this description also highlights the generally unambiguous polarity of good and evil characters in *Behind the Throne*[158] – a typical feature of both sensational spy thrillers and thrillers of moral confrontation.

Besides Dubard and Macbean, the novel features yet another male secret agent – Vito Ricci. This Italian spy is Camillo Morini's accomplice; in exchange for cooperation, the Minister grants him financial and political favours, including the lucrative position of deputy for Asti in the *Camera* (the Italian Chamber of Deputies). Early in the story, Ricci is portrayed as genuinely wicked and exploitative. According to a description from Chapter Ten:

> Vito Ricci, with all the outward appearance of a gentleman, was utterly unscrupulous. He worked in the *Camera* for the master who paid him best – a fact which Morini knew too well. If the Socialists were prepared to pay his price, then the man whom he had trained so cleverly and promoted to place and power would calmly throw him over, and hound him down with just as great an enthusiasm as he now supported him (LeQueux 1905/2016: 44).

Later, due to inconsistent characterisation, Ricci exhibits unwavering loyalty to the Minister – a feature which ultimately sets the Italian spy apart from the French one, Dubard.[159] To observe Ricci's "uncanny change of heart", it is enough to compare the previously quoted passage with the following one taken from Chapter Twenty:

> Ricci, unscrupulous as he had been through years of political life, sometimes holding by his intrigues the very fate of Italy in his hands, stood by in silence, his chin sunk upon his breast, for he knew too well that the ill-judged man to whom he was indebted for so much [Camillo Morini] was to be made the scapegoat of the corrupt Ministry – he knew that the man before him was doomed, and yet he was utterly powerless to save him, even though he was prepared to go to any length to attain that end (LeQueux 1905/2016: 91).

Ricci's main role in the plot is to augment the suspense of the conspiracy against Morini. Upon the spy's introduction, it is revealed that, aside from his moral decay, he is a very intelligent and valued ally. On one occasion, through persuading/bribing various parliamentary groups, he has even managed to secure the vote of confidence for

[158] Still, unlike the other characters, Camillo Morini appears to be morally complex. The issue will be discussed further in this section.

[159] The fact that, overall, Dubard – the Frenchman – is depicted less favourably than Ricci – the Italian – corresponds with the ways their respective motherlands are portrayed in the novel. While both countries are presented as morally and financially corrupt, France seems utterly demonised, whereas Italy moderately criticised. To support this argument it is sufficient to briefly compare French and Italian characters. While the former nearly exclusively encompass national traitors (Dubard and Sazarac), the latter include both criminals (Borselli, Camillo Morini, Ricci, and Nodari) as well as morally innocent characters (Solaro, Mary Morini, and her mother). Thus, it could be speculated that the story is mainly meant to strongly deprecate France whereas Italy primarily – and, as indicated earlier, conveniently – serves as an "other-than-British" sleazy setting.

Minister Morini. Thus, Ricci has a reputation for being a confident and infallible manipulator. Without a doubt, the striking juxtaposition of his past unfaltering efficiency with the newfound utter helplessness is meant to escalate the readers' anxiety regarding Morini's future. Basically, it shows that the Minister has become the target of an ingenious conspiracy, one far more dangerous than those he and Ricci have ever faced before.

As the story progresses, the spy collects intel for Morini and discusses it with him. Through the inclusion of those conversations, the sensational spy thriller provides the readers with bits and pieces of suspense-inducing information, such as the fact that Borselli, apart from unseating and ruining the Minister, also wishes to falsely implicate the latter's daughter in treason. This particular revelation creates a lot of tension because Borselli's co-conspirator, Dubard, wishes to marry Mary Morini. The readers are clearly encouraged to make suspenseful guesses as to the further development of the central intrigue. Those could include some (or all) of the following:

1) Is Dubard fully aware of Borselli's agenda?
2) If not, what form will the inevitable conflict between the two take? What will be its outcome?
3) If so, why does Dubard actually wish to marry Mary Morini? Has he got a hidden motive?
4) Will Borselli and/or Dubard triumph?
5) What will happen to Camillo and Mary Morini by the end of the story?

By now, it has become apparent that Ricci, similarly to Macbean, is a spy-detective whose investigation does not accentuate the process of solving a mystery, but the suspenseful nature of particular conflicts within the story. This observation can be further supported by Ricci's promise to relate to the Minister the course of the *Camera* meeting at which the latter is supposed to be disgraced. First, the spy announces that he will make a phone call after the event. Then, the narrative shifts to his master, nervously awaiting confirmation of the forthcoming political and financial downfall. In this particular case, Ricci's investigation merely serves as a build-up for the suspense of the Minister's (and the readers') long-drawn uncertain anticipation.

Having discussed all significant male spies within the story, it is reasonable to juxtapose them with the female one – Filomena Nodari. Naturally, this requires a prior introduction of the said "would-be *femme fatale*". Like most characters in *Behind the*

Throne, Nodari enjoys a relatively high social standing – she is the daughter of a deceased, prominent Italian general.[160] Still, presumably ever since her father's death, the woman and her mother have been experiencing financial difficulties. To alleviate this situation, Nodari becomes Borselli's spy; in exchange for her services, he arranges an illegal annual pension from the War Department which solely protects the late general's family against insolvency.

Both beautiful and intelligent, Nodari proves to be a highly accomplished spy. Through looks and deception, she successfully completes various errands for Borselli, including framing the plainly infatuated Solaro in treason. Most importantly, all her espionage missions are directly linked to the plot to ruin and disgrace Minister Morini. Clearly, Nodari possesses certain features of a *femme fatale* – albeit she should not be fully classified as one. Before discussing the reasons, it is useful to briefly delineate certain considerations regarding the concept itself as they seem conducive to the broader analysis of the ways in which women are depicted in spy thrillers.

It could be argued that the notion of a *femme fatale* is marked with a rather peculiar ambiguity. On the one hand, the character manipulates men through looks and cunning deception, often leading her victims to their demise. In this respect, the *femme fatale* can be regarded as a self-empowered woman. On the other hand, sexual objectification of women is often associated with sexism. Capitalising on this aspect, the *femme fatale* seems to represent a humiliated woman, i.e., one divested of her dignity as a human being. It appears that those two contradictory interpretations are at least partially rooted in distinct perceptions of female sexualisation – it can be related either to power or to exploitation.[161] Therefore, in this study it seems reasonable to consider both points of view while analysing fictional women – including *femmes fatales*.

[160] One of the reasons why many characters in thrillers – also, in fiction as such – belong to some form of a measurably superior social class is that the readers/viewers are likely to identify with someone whose condition in life is equal or better than their own. Edgar S. Bley describes the said identification process as a "substitutional emotional activity" (1945: 26). In other words, although the readers/viewers merely witness (i.e., not physically participate in) the fictional plot, they often (at least partially) sympathise with particular characters and/or (some of) their ambitions/motivations/actions. According to Hitchcock, identification is quite unconscious and not exclusively restricted to drawing psychological connections with the protagonists. Actually, in an interview given to François Truffaut, the director explained how one of the scenes from *Psycho* incites/forces the viewers to sympathise with the titular villain's attempt to conceal the evidence of a murder: "When [Anthony] Perkins [who plays the titular psycho, Norman Bates] is looking at the car sinking in the pond, even though he's burying a body, when the car stops sinking for a moment, the public is thinking, 'I hope it goes all the way down!' It's a natural instinct" (Truffaut 1966/1983: 272).

[161] For a recent scholarly discussion on various interpretations of *femmes fatales*, see: Letort 2020.

The *femme fatale* is definitely among the stock characters of crime fiction. She frequently appears in thriller (sub)genres, especially in the spy thriller and the thriller of murderous passions, as well as in mystery (sub)genres, commonly in hard-boiled detective fiction (Smith 2017: 37). It is difficult to identify a single crime genre which consolidated the popularity of the *femme fatale* among the others; [162] yet, she tends to undergo a certain degree of differentiation in thrillers and mysteries. The former chiefly emphasise her role as a major and apparent threat to the hero; obviously, the act of posing danger evokes suspense. The latter, in turn, generally obscure much of the *femme fatale*'s violence, i.e., it is treated as "a dark secret which the tough-guy protagonist both participates in and disavows" (Breu 2005: 15). Thus, in contrast to the suspenseful *femme fatale,* the mysterious one predominantly embodies part of the intellectual puzzle the detective needs to solve in the course of the investigation.

In the case of Nodari, it would be an overstatement to call her a "complete" *femme fatale* because she has no personal intention in harming/exploiting men and, to a large extent, is unaware of the true purpose behind her espionage activities. Despite being exceptionally intelligent, the woman unquestioningly executes Borselli's orders; she is simply brainwashed into believing that whatever he asks her to do serves the greater good of Italy. Among other tasks, Nodari is instructed to come into regular contact with her acquaintance, Captain Solaro, apparently suspected of collaborating with Georges Latrobe, one of the aforementioned French spies. From a patriotic sense of duty, she agrees, albeit reluctantly, to aid Borselli in arresting Solaro if the latter turns out to be a traitor.

In her attempts to "expose" the Captain, Nodari clearly adopts the seductive demeanour of a vamp. To gain his complete trust, she first woos him and, eventually, becomes his fiancée. Yet, she most certainly lacks the villainous/morally ambiguous quality intrinsic to *femmes fatales*. In truth, it is not Nodari, but Borselli who is in control of her operation. Unbeknownst to the woman, he uses her to pass the secret plans of an Italian fortress at Tresenta to Latrobe, from whom Solaro, ignorant of his undercover activities, has borrowed money. Ultimately, Nodari is deceived; instead of bringing the "treacherous" Captain to justice, she actually compromises his impeccable reputation by creating a false impression that, through her agency, he has sold Italian military docu-

[162] However, it should be stressed that the *femme fatale* partially owes her modern-day notoriety in crime fiction to the considerable attention she received (and still receives) in cinematic works. She is strongly associated with *film noir*; for a monograph on her portrayals in it, see: Grossman 2009.

ments to France. This, in turn, leads to the revelation of yet another feature which distinguishes Nodari from typical *femmes fatales* – remorse. She realises *post factum* that she has disgraced an innocent man and, as a result, experiences a guilty conscience. Nevertheless, Nodari does not attempt to right the wrongs because Borselli manages to reconvince her that it is her patriotic duty to blindly follow his orders (sic!). Thus, she continues to obey him and pursues another "noble" goal: she goes to England and spies on Morgan-Mason, searching for "suspicious" Italian documents. Again, she does not know Borselli's true motive, which is to steal anything that could prove his involvement in the Sazarac Affair.

Unlike the male spies of *Behind the Throne*, Nodari is entirely manipulated; thus, not self-empowered. This observation might suggest literary sexism and provokes a broader comment on the ways in which women are portrayed in the novel. First, like many other early British works of this type, this borderline sensational spy thriller features only subordinate female characters. Superficially, Mary Morini may seem to be an exception, but, in truth, the only reason she receives conspicuously more attention than the others is because she functions as the "damsel-in-distress" within the story, i.e., she is in peril and, most importantly, needs to be saved by a man. This classic theme, along with the love triangle Mary is enmeshed in, generically ties the novel to the medieval romance; simultaneously, the *fin de siècle* setting and contemporary characters are reminiscent of the late Victorian love romance.

Considering Nodari and Mary Morini, they are by no means passive victims of male domination. Rather, they try to fight for their own welfare as well as that of those they love, but what puts the two at a disadvantage against men is the lack of financial independence. It is no surprise that the novel highlights such a factor: it constitutes a direct reference to extratextual reality. *Behind the Throne* was first released in 1905; it was a time when the male breadwinner paradigm, which proliferated with great intensity in the second half of the 19th century in industrial-capitalist countries, was still generally widespread in them. This pattern enjoyed its most rapid development within working and middle classes (Creighton 1996: 310). Of course, Nodari and Mary Morini belong to the upper class, but the point is that early 20th-century women in Europe often had fewer and much worse income-earning opportunities than men. The novel illustrates the extent of those discrepancies within Italian high society: if left to their own devices, the two daughters are utterly incapable of generating profit even remotely

comparable to that of their fathers.[163] Thus, in *Behind the Throne*, influential men are consistently depicted as sole/primary breadwinners; they are the ones who create and ensure the high standard of living associated with their sphere. The most explicit example is Camillo Morini, who deeply cares for and regularly deliberates on sustaining his family's welfare. He realises that if he becomes unable to provide for them, financial ruin and, consequently, the loss of property, will be unavoidable.

In terms of its narrative approach to (female) sexuality, the novel resembles many other early British spy thrillers – it exhibits a perceptible degree of restraint. While it is true that Nodari and Mary Morini are described as outstandingly beautiful and clever, such characterisation is just meant to mildly imply sexual attractiveness. Nodari is a seductress, but there are no sensual descriptions of her seductive acts; those are unspecified and it is merely the fact that they have occurred which receives rather minimalistic intratextual confirmation. As for Mary Morini, she allures her suitors with ethereal glamour, which only gently hints at sex appeal. For those reasons, *Behind the Throne* does not appear to be a spy thriller which oversexualises women. Still, it very occasionally reinforces gender stereotypes; for example, Nodari is "one of the few women, indeed, who can keep a secret"[164] (LeQueux 1905/2016: 26).

Returning to the motif of espionage within the story, there is much more to it than just the apparent inclusion of several spy characters. As a matter of fact, LeQueux recalls the Dreyfus Affair in his novel.[165] The aforementioned Captain Solaro, the Italian officer wrongly convicted of selling military secrets to France, is a reference to Alfred Dreyfus. Actually, it is only natural to draw a connection between the two since Solaro's predicament is even blatantly subsumed as "a second case of Dreyfus" by Mary Morini (LeQueux 1905/2016: 59).

Fundamentally, Solaro is a highly romanticised fictional counterpart of Dreyfus. Capitalising on the motif of the guiltless victim, LeQueux transforms his character into a figure of patriotic sentiment and pathos. Clearly, those qualities shine through So-

[163] It is vital to emphasise that male breadwinning was not the dominant financial family model in all European countries around the turn of the 20th century. In truth, the degree of its dissemination varied from society to society and across particular social classes. For example, male breadwinning was genuinely common in Britain and Italy, but in Belgium most working-class families in Ghent lived on the collective earnings of men, women, and children (Janssens 1997: 6-7; Sarti 1999: 10-11). As observed by Angélique Janssens "by the time household heads [men] reached the age of fifty about half of the family budget came from earnings by family members other than the household head [man]" (1997: 6-7).

[164] The *cliché* about female indiscretion can also be found in *The Riddle of the Sands*. Clara's stepmother tells Carruthers that "no woman can keep a secret" (Childers 1903/1978: 265).

[165] Evoking the then "hot topic" in the novel most likely fulfilled the purpose of a marketing trick to increase its sales.

laro's daring proclamation during an audience with Minister Morini. The convicted officer, denied appeal, breaks his sword in two and casts it on the floor, declaring innocence in the politician's presence. Solaro's theatrical act of desperation closely parallels an actual event from Dreyfus's degradation ceremony – his sword was broken as well. Yet, it is crucial to observe the markedly different implications of those two situations. Essentially, Dreyfus was deprived of the weapon against his will; the gesture was meant to intensify his humiliation of being publicly dismissed from the French army. Solaro, in turn, breaks his sword on his own accord in protest against the false accusation of treason, thus emphasising his unwavering loyalty to the Italian army. Most likely, the character constitutes an overdramatised equivalent of the French officer in order to strongly appeal to the readers' emotions. It could be argued that, in part, Solaro was meant to further escalate the already inflamed early 20th-century British antipathy towards the French.

Eventually, Solaro's spectacular amnesty, which parallels Dreyfus's pardon, serves as the *deus ex machina* in the story. The character discloses the truth about yet another crucial subplot, namely the Sazarac Affair. It concerns the aforementioned unresolved murder of the French general Felix Sazarac. In Hitchcock's terms, this particular scandal functions as the MacGuffin; as indicated earlier, its vague yet undisputable relevance is frequently recalled throughout the novel. In fact, the incident welds together the entire background mystery element of *Behind the Throne*. Basically, once Solaro exposes the perpetrators, Borselli and Dubard, by the end of the story, all the main characters become fully aware of the intricate conspiratorial (and espionage) intrigue.[166]

Upon its revelation, it turns out that the mysterious Sazarac Affair in itself actually incorporates much of the narrative pattern exploited by the thriller of murderous passions. However, in the course of its acquisition, the *clichéd* criminal duo's "passion" undergoes a major transformation: the typical romantic relationship is entirely replaced with a strong mutual desire for money, power, and influence. To achieve their evil ends, Borselli (the mastermind) and Dubard (his accomplice) embark on a joint quest: they take advantage of their associates and subsequently kill/disgrace them. First, they convince General Sazarac to sell French military plans to Italy; then, to cover up the trans-

[166] As mentioned earlier, in accordance with a thriller convention, the readers have been – *grosso modo* – informed about the complexity of this connivance long before the characters affected by it.

action and retrieve the payment, orchestrate his poisoning.[167] Needing a scapegoat for the murder, the antagonists attempt to frame Macbean in it. Later, for fear that Solaro may suspect them, they fabricate evidence of the officer's ostensible collaboration with France to ensure his imminent imprisonment and silence.

The practice of singling out targets is important because it creates the "2 criminals vs 1 victim" conflict dynamic. Such a balance of forces is characteristic of the thriller of murderous passions as evident in its deadly love triangles. The "2 vs 1" model can also be traced outside the Sazarac Affair: Dubard assists (and then temporarily hinders) Borselli in the plot against Minister Morini. Borselli's ultimate goal is to compromise and unseat Morini with, among others, the false accusation of supporting Solaro, who has supposedly received some assistance from the Minister's daughter Mary (in truth, the two are mere acquaintances).

Naturally, with the final unraveling of the Sazarac Affair, a miraculous conclusion ensues. Borselli commits suicide. Dubard escapes from Italy but is imprisoned in France as a traitor. Morini, having sold his palace and property with the intention of returning the money he illegally appropriated, regains his honour and retires. Mary and Macbean get married. Actually, this novel belongs to the earliest prototypes of sensational spy thrillers that directly led to the eventual popularisation of ludicrous happy endings in that type of fiction.

Among the themes which contributed to the development of British spy works, *Behind the Throne* features conspiracy, dirty politics, and social injustice. Fundamentally, the formula proposed by LeQueux combines a convoluted plot with an extraordinary conclusion: the good characters find bliss whereas the evil ones meet their doom. However, the situation is a bit more complicated in the case of the morally ambiguous protagonist, Camillo Morini. In light of his actions, he is an unquestionable embezzler and bribe-taker; yet, he is described as a befouled defender of law and order, one entirely victimised by the depraved political environment:

> Camillo Morini was a man with a strange, adventurous history – a man who, had he not lived entirely in the political world, would have been termed a knight of industry, a self-made man who, by his own ingenious craft and cunning, had

[167] While poisons appear in both thrillers and mysteries, they seem to be most common in detective fiction. In order to propose an explanation for this phenomenon, it is useful to recall an observation from Agatha Christie's 1952 novel *They Do It with Mirrors*: "Poison has a certain appeal... it has not the crudeness of the revolver bullet or the blunt instrument" (Christie 1952/2016: 133). Considering the three murder weapons, poison is the "most refined" one, i.e., it entails the least amount of violence. More specifically, poison lends itself very well to discreet killing, and thus can effectively become the foundation of an intellectual puzzle for the investigator and the readers.

> risen to become one of Italy's chief Ministers, and a senator of the kingdom. He entertained some scruples as regards honesty, both political and financial [...]. Yet, alas! so contaminating had been the corruption about him that he found it well-nigh impossible to act disinterestedly, and very soon all his highest resolves had been cast aside [...] he was constrained, like his fellow-members of the Cabinet, to seek profit where he could [...]. At heart he longed to free himself of all this dishonesty (LeQueux 1905/2016: 1-3).

Because of his inner subdued inclination towards righteousness, Minister Morini is not punished for peculation. Instead, he makes restitution and permanently leaves the office. This symbolic act of self-absolution can be interpreted as a manifestation of a desire for safety and justice.[168] Camillo Morini, like many protagonists in sensational spy thrillers, becomes involved in a pernicious set of circumstances only to regain peace of mind by the end of the story. Simultaneously, he conspicuously differs from the stock characters of this type of fiction because he is neither one-dimensionally good nor evil; in this respect, Minister Morini demonstrates a very mild generic link between *Behind the Throne* and realist spy thrillers.[169]

Overall, the novel largely owes its high degree of hybridity to the accumulation of various narrative subplots. This borderline sensational spy thriller mainly encompasses and modifies the narrative formulas of the thriller of moral confrontation, the thriller of murderous passions, the (late-)Victorian love romance, and classic detective fiction. It also draws some influence from the realist spy thriller, the thriller of acquired identity, and the medieval romance. LeQueux integrates all of those generic components for the sake of creating a complicated and, to a considerable extent, espionage-fuelled conspiracy. *Behind the Throne* is simply one of those early abstruse works of crime fiction which helped to attract the readers' attention to the concept of spying, and thus encouraged its further and more profound development in British literature.

Closing, it is necessary to recall that LeQueux is associated with producing alarmist fiction, i.e., factopiction which called upon the political and armed mobilisation of the real British Empire with the aim of repelling its prospective early-20th-century invaders. Even though *Behind the Throne* is set in Italy, the writer does include such

[168] It appears that in *Behind the Throne* LeQueux excessively stretches the boundaries of plot plausibility for the sake of conveying romanticised sentiments. This is precisely why Minister Morini experiences expiation instead of legal prosecution, or the unprincipled Ricci shows uncharacteristic pity for his imperilled employer with whom he eventually faithfully abides. In its flagrant degree of improbability, the novel resembles the so-called "penny dreadfuls", i.e., cheap serialised British fiction abundantly produced in the 19th century (Mullin 2003: 35).

[169] It is also possible to classify the manipulated Nodari and the "not entirely unscrupulous" Ricci among morally ambiguous characters, but, unlike Camillo Morini, those two are generally portrayed as negative in the novel.

an appeal in it. Macbean, the Englishman, serves as a vehicle for expressing foreboding; in a conversation with his uncle, he declares that "We English hold the foreigner in too great contempt. We are apt to forget that there are other Powers constantly conspiring to undermine our strength and overthrow our sovereignty" (LeQueux 1905/2016: 16). The character also expresses a strong wish for "a wise King, a strong Cabinet and shrewd men in our [British] diplomatic service", followed by an observation that the lack thereof will inevitably lead the country to its downfall (LeQueux 1905/2016: 17). Thus, Macbean adds a sense of British patriotism to the novel; also, his brief comment on the ever-present threats echoes a realist spy thriller convention. All in all, upon its release, *Behind the Throne* conveyed a rather coherent political narrative through its extratextual references, i.e., it implied the necessity to oppose the "barbarous" France as well as strengthen the British Empire.

2.2.4. *The Secret Agent* (1907) by Joseph Conrad

> Faced with contemporary challenges in the social, economic, political and scientific fields, the ethical conscience of people is disoriented (John Paul II 1998: 120).
>
> John Paul II in "Fides et Ratio"

It could be construed as untypical and surprising to prelude a discussion on Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent* with a quotation from one of John Paul II's encyclical letters; after all, the novelist's declared views on Christianity fluctuated between coldly sceptical and bitterly critical (Garnett 1928: 244-245).[170] However, this particular papal statement can be plainly read as a solemn testament to Conrad's accurate and grim prediction concerning the broadly-understood and rapid civilisational changes of the 20th century, greatly but not exclusively influenced by imperialism, colonial policies, progressing globalisation, development of technology, and war atrocities. In his fiction, the writer anticipated that in response to those transformations humanity would inevitably –

[170] Regardless, it must be acknowledged that in various scholarly and non-scholarly publications Conrad is confusingly referred to as an atheist, agnostic, or even devout Roman Catholic. This is largely because, in religious matters, the writer was a man of inconsistencies and contradictions. Ever since his emigration from the partitioned Poland in 1874, Conrad had generally detached himself from the Roman Catholic Church and its rites, though not entirely. For example, he did not openly renounce the faith he was born into. As a matter of fact, on various occasions, the "Conrad-emigrant" referred to himself publicly as a Catholic; also, he was generally fond of his Polish relatives' religiousness and responded supportively to it, wishing that it would be passed onto generations to come. Detailed elaborations of all those issues can be found in: Burgess 1983. As the author of that article puts it, "following the twists and turns, the involutions and convolutions of Conrad's thinking on Christianity, in general, and Catholicism, in particular, can be excruciating" (Burgess 1983: 112). Ultimately, Burgess's assessment of the writer's professed and inferred beliefs bends towards the "non-practicing Catholic" interpretation (1983: 123).

and much to its detriment – immerse itself in multi-faceted ethical and moral turmoil, frequently due to the sheer inability to distinguish or judge precisely what is "good" and "evil".[171] The novel in question constitutes an attempt at commenting upon the intricacies of several such problems, with a major focus on espionage, anarchism, terrorism, counter-terrorism, police routines, marriage, intellectual disability, self-sacrifice, and domestic abuse.

In terms of genre, Maya Jasanoff categorises *The Secret Agent* as a detective thriller, although hesitantly (2017: 71). Indeed, her suggestion is problematic. First, as indicated in the previous chapter, "detective thriller" is a confusing label for a crime (sub)genre since the typical relationship between mystery and suspense is markedly different in detective fiction (mystery>suspense) and thriller (sub)genres (mystery<suspense). Besides, in the novel the – mostly supportive – detective force is not represented by a detective *per se*, but by policemen who "are not objectively concerned with solving a crime" (Harrington 1999: 118). Hence, Conrad's work directly obscures the moral transparency characteristic of the early prototypes of the police procedural, closely related yet distinct from detective fiction. In this particular case, it could be argued that the generic link with the then newly emerging crime (sub)genre is superior and simply conditions that with the already well-established one by extension. Most importantly, mystery is a subordinate plot device in Conrad's predominantly suspense-oriented novel. This becomes especially evident once Chief Inspector Heat and the unnamed Assistant Commissioner discuss the label sewn into the overcoat from the scene

[171] Although Conrad's lifetime rendered him unable to take any interest in John Paul II, aged 4 at the time of the novelist's death, the lack of notice was not mutual. According to one of John Paul II's biographers, George Weigel, Karol Wojtyła not only read, but also re-read Conrad's works around 1939, albeit it is not specified which ones and which Polish translations (1999/2005: 55). Still, it is generally known that many Polish teenagers and young adults back then were deeply interested in that writer's *oeuvre* – in particular, his 1900 novel *Lord Jim* (Zabierowski 2000: 212; Adamowicz-Pośpiech 2001: 14). In any case, Wojtyła eagerly "absorbed" Conrad's fiction along with that of other Polish writers: Juliusz Słowacki, Adam Mickiewicz, and Stanisław Wyspiański (Weigel 1999/2005: 55). Obviously, there was, at least in part, a patriotic rush behind the perusal of all that literature, which practically coincided with the German Invasion of Poland, the battle of Westerplatte, and the outbreak of World War II. Throughout the ensuing occupation of Poland by Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, Conrad's prose contributed to reinforcing resistance within the Polish Underground State. The members of its various structures, whether directly immersed in combat or in exile, often drew influence from fictional role models, including Lord Jim (Zabierowski 2000: 212; Adamowicz-Pośpiech 2001: 14). Returning to Wojtyła's curiosity regarding Conrad's *oeuvre*, it can also be inferred from a letter to a friend and acting mentor, Mieczysław Kotlarczyk, dated December 12 [1939?] (an edited reprint of its contents can be found in: Boniecki 1983: 49). In that correspondence Wojtyła, himself a bibliophile, marvels at the discovery of a kindred spirit in Jadwiga Lewaj, his teacher of French: "[She] is an enthusiast of great, great Beauty; enamoured with Słowacki, Żeromski, and Conrad. So we've got lots to talk about" (Boniecki 1983: 49; translation mine). Concluding, perhaps a certain dose of "Conradian scepticism" was not entirely lost on John Paul II, even if confined within a mere "flicker" shining through a singled-out papal statement.

of the Greenwich explosion. At that point in the story, the true identity of the victim is revealed (or at least strongly implied) to the readers, whereas the two characters still need to discover it. As a result, the former are not encouraged to solve a fictional puzzle; instead, they are provided with ample information that creates suspenseful expectations concerning further plot development. This is why Andrea Fenice specifically studies "[d]isrupted chronologies and subtle shifts in focalization", contending that "[those] early-modernist features [...] challenge a static and univocal presentation of events" and, consequently, enable Conrad "to manage and direct narrative tension" (2018: 64). In view of all those considerations, combined with the significance of fictional realism and espionage within the story, it seems reasonable to analytically approach *The Secret Agent* as a realist spy thriller.

It is vital to stress that Conrad, in line with the serious and bleak tone of some of his former "non-spy" works, including *Heart of Darkness* (1989), *Lord Jim* (1900), and *Nostromo* (1904), tried to abstain from "sugar-coating" intratextual reality with "layers of bland artifice". Those are understood as excessive acts of embellishment that could perceptibly obscure the illusion of mirroring extratextual reality. In the words of Michaelis, one of Conrad's characters: "All idealisation makes life poorer. To beautify it is to take away its character of complexity – it is to destroy it" (Conrad 1907/1947: 41). Though originally weaved into some fictional anarchist effusions, those two sentences contain what could be interpreted as the "sacrosanct tenet" of the subgenre, namely the persistent quest for realism; a goal not fully attainable in its idealism, yet perfectly pursuable to conspicuous degrees of partial success. In light of the above, it is possible to view *The Secret Agent* as a forerunner of the down-to-earth and sombre British spy works popularised by writers such as Graham Greene, Eric Ambler, and John le Carré.[172]

[172] Both Greene and le Carré openly admitted that Conrad's fiction had greatly inspired their own; as regards Ambler, it seems that he had never publicly denied that his prose had been influenced as well (Pendleton 1996: 1; Cobbs 1998: 18). Regardless, various scholars and critics acknowledge those three British authors as literary heirs to the Polish-English one (naturally, within the domain of producing espionage tales). Lynne Cheney pinpoints Greene's 1934 novel *It's a Battlefield* as one that conspicuously imitates the plot structure of *The Secret Agent*. Since each of the works is largely centred around an offstage occurrence (the murder of a policeman and the Greenwich explosion, respectively), she describes both as "arrangements of the effects of an event" (1970: 123). More generally, Robert Pendleton asserts that Greene's and Conrad's spy thrillers are alike in certain aspects of their hybridity, combining "the adventure story of Robert Louis Stevenson, Rider Haggard and John Buchan [...] with the more realistic political novel defined by Flaubert, Turgenev and Maupassant, and the intricate depiction of human inferiority by Henry James" (1996: 1-2). Alan Burton recalls an unspecified review for the *Guardian* in which a critic, in a similar fashion, argues that Ambler "manages to bring together the moral uncertainties of the real world and the narrative imperative of action", which results in "seamless storytelling, an im-

Ironically, it appears that the creative process behind Conrad's novel was not at all provoked by an independent and clearly outlined intention to explore espionage as one of the central literary themes. If the 1920 "Author's Note" is to be trusted,[173] the chief driving force was merely a fit of inspiration borne, in part, out of a casual conversation with a friend, Ford Madox Ford; to be exact, its miniscule fragment that touched directly upon the specifics of an actual 1894 botched bomb attack in Greenwich Park (Conrad 1920/1947: x; Purdon 2016: 47). The perpetrator – Martial Bourdin, a French anarchist – was badly injured in a premature explosion (presumably intended for the Royal Observatory) and died shortly thereafter in hospital of sustained wounds (Withers 2017: 268). Conrad recalls Ford claiming that "that fellow was half an idiot. His sister committed suicide"; neither of the two quoted assertions was true, and yet the gossip proved artistically incandescent[174] (Conrad 1920/1947: x; Newton 2007: 131). The plot of *The Secret Agent* clearly draws upon the British social agitation evoked by this particular outrage; it is also not without significance that in the 1880s and 1890s Europe was evidently plagued with a surging wave of such incidents, and Conrad was well aware of it (Simmons 2006: 130; Jensen 2014: 75).

At this point a question might arise as to why *The Secret Agent*, both strongly influenced by and focused on a sensational bombing, has not been classified in this dissertation as a sensational spy thriller. The reason is simple: although the presence of a ge-

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plicit exploration of moral questions, a narrative pace and a proper credibility that this is the way the world really might be" (2016: 30). According to Ronald J. Ambrosetti, Ambler's works released in the early 1950s display a particularly Conrad-like fascination with the intricacies of human consciousness (1994: 137). Also, Robert Lance Snyder thematically associates Ambler's 1981 novel *The Care of Time* with *The Secret Agent* – both concern dangerous revolutionary moods and international terrorism (2017b: 142). John L. Cobbs, in turn, observes that le Carré's spy thrillers feature multiple Conradian themes, including "the angst of conflicting loyalties, the corruption of bureaucracy, the tension between the individual and the state, personal betrayal rationalized by misguided idealism, and ultimately the almost naturalist pathos of vulnerable humanity in the grip of amoral and impersonal political and social institutions" (1998: 18; see also: Aronoff 1999/2001: 1-13). Jeffrey Meyers closely ties le Carré's 1964 novel *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* with *The Secret Agent*, claiming that the former replicates the latter in terms of blurring moral discrepancies between the police and criminals (1990: 196). Closing, the Conradian impact on Greene's, Ambler's, and le Carré's fiction manifests itself chiefly in deconstructing the binary of good and evil through various methods and means.

[173] As stated by Norman Page, "Conrad was an unreliable guide to his own past, the unreliability springing from a habit of reshaping his personal history that may have been partly conscious, partly unconscious. Specifically, he tended to mythologize his experience and impose on his past life an order and sense of purpose and direction that it never had" (1995: x-xi). If possible to identify, factographic errors/inaccuracies on the novelist's part will be highlighted.

[174] In his 1924 memoir of Conrad, Ford denies raising the subject of suicide in their discussion. The latter argues that what he really said was "Oh, that fellow was half an idiot! His sister murdered her husband afterwards [i.e., after the explosion] and was allowed to escape by the police. I remember the funeral" (Ford 1924/1925: 246). Roger Tennant asserts that whichever of the quotations represents the original utterance, Ford basically supplied Conrad with misinformation. The scholar also accentuates that both options are thematically connected to "the double tragedy with which [*The Secret Agent*] ends" (Tennant 1983/1998: xix).

neric link cannot be disproved, it is but of a peripheral kind. More specifically, the sensationalism of this novel is permanently inscribed into extratextual reality; in other words, it is not a product of an unrealistically overblown intratextual reflection of it. While it could of course be claimed that Conrad, misled by Ford's false rumours, emulated the circumstances behind the actual explosion in Greenwich unfaithfully and with an even more dramatic tinge of sensationalism than deserved, it needs to be nonetheless emphasised that the novel is principally based on a real sensational event, along with existing sensational gossip surrounding it (fake yet logically coherent, thus believable). This, in turn, generically ties *The Secret Agent* to historical novels, as also noticed by Jasanoff (2017: 71).[175] Overall, Conrad's work, in stark contrast to sensational spy thrillers, appears to be devoid of strikingly far-fetched, implausible, and naive plotlines by the likes of those that can be readily found in, among others, *Kim*, *The Riddle of the Sands*, and *Behind the Throne*.[176]

Additionally, it must not be overlooked that much of the suspense evoked in *The Secret Agent* is of a rather peculiar type, generally marginalised in sensational spy thrillers. Conrad derives it from a phenomenon which, using John Paul II's terminology quoted at the beginning of this section, can be formulated as "a disoriented ethical conscience". This is basically the recognition of the human propensity to confound and relativise good and evil as a source of formidable (thus suspenseful) danger. Various instances of this confusion will be highlighted when examining particular characters and their interactions, but, for the sake of maintaining coherence of the discussion, it is useful to temporarily restrict the analysis to the anarchist story background as shown in the novel.

In its portrayal of anarchism as an international threat, *The Secret Agent* blends elements of tragedy and comedy; hence, it is generically linked to tragicomedy. Conrad depicts the majority of his anarchist characters, namely Michaelis, Karl Yundt, and Comrade Ossipon, as lethargic eccentrics who almost completely rely on the financial

[175] Still, the narrative is set in 1886, and so in the novel the Greenwich explosion takes place eight years earlier than in reality.

[176] Besides the Greenwich explosion, Mrs Verloc's downfall, which will be discussed in detail further in this section, can also be associated with sensational themes. Among those, Ellen Burton Harrington enumerates "feminine frustration, the desire for liberation, and the dangers of degeneracy" (2004: 52). Simultaneously, the scholar admits that "[u]nlike a true sensation novel, the story of Winnie's exploits is neither exhilarating nor sentimental; instead, her doom-laden narrative proves a fitting capstone to an era that was profoundly troubled by the implications of greater rights and autonomy for women" (Harrington 2004: 61). This observation not only underscores the historical significance of the novel, but also supports the argument that Conrad's primary design was to make his work of fiction seem as realistic as possible rather than sensational.

support of their respective credulous patronesses. The men are utterly incapable of perpetrating any revolutionary atrocities against the state; in practice, they only spread propaganda, presented as deleterious.[177] Through those three idle malcontents, the first two physically debilitated, the author obviously ridicules anarchism,[178] but more importantly indicates that it is not fully identifiable with anarchist terrorism. This distinction corresponds with extratextual reality. As observed by Tanya Agathocleous:

> Many peaceful British thinkers of the period engaged with anarchist ideals in one form or another, including William Morris, George Bernard Shaw, and Conrad's friends Ford Madox Ford[179] and R.B. Cunninghame Graham. And indeed, the most famous Russian anarchists of the time, Mikhail Bakunin and Peter Kropotkin, had more in common with Karl Marx, in their desire for a classless and egalitarian society, than with the misanthropic and suicidal Professor of Conrad's tale. Unlike Marx, though, these thinkers believed that the masses must take history into their own hands through revolutionary acts (which might include violence) rather than wait for capitalism to sow the seeds of its own demise (2009: 11).

In *The Secret Agent*, Conrad evidently scales the harmfulness of anarchism, juxtaposing the languid threesome with the Professor, a mad bomber. While the former are simply pretentious radical activists, the latter is an actual public menace,[180] reminiscent of classic antagonists from late Victorian and Edwardian dynamite science-fiction novels and romances,[181] and yet different in his wayward and Gothic-like obsession with inventing the unworldly "perfect detonator" (Conrad 1907/1947: 69).[182]

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[177] Though members of the same anarchist cell, the would-be rebels differ ideologically. Michaelis preaches proto-Marxism, Yundt a Bakuninian-like appeal for revolt through deeds, and Ossipon a Kropotkinian-like need to pursue (pseudo-)science and reason. For a comprehensive study of Conradian anarchists and their utterances see: Mulry 2007.

[178] Apart from *The Secret Agent*, Conrad also wrote two short stories which generally condemn anarchism. Those are "An Anarchist" (1906) and "The Informer" (1906). Although the three works are thematically connected, this research is focused exclusively on the spy novel for the sake of cohesion.

[179] This blatantly contradicts Conrad's assurance from the "Author's Note" that "if [Ford] had seen once in his life the back of an anarchist that must have been the whole extent of his connection with the underworld" (1920/1947: x). Likewise, Conrad's declaration that "[he] had seen even less of [anarchists]" is dubious (1920/1947: xiv). In fact, he could have easily come into contact with them through Ford's anarchist cousins, Helen and Olivia Rossetti. Conrad was also likely to be familiar with their 1903 slightly fictionalised memoir *A Girl Among the Anarchists* (Watts 2007: 70). For a recent monograph on this and other possible anarchist contexts behind the creation of *The Secret Agent* see: Mulry 2016.

[180] Nevertheless, it must be indicated that in the end none of those self-proclaimed anarchists – not even the Professor – personally commits a murderous act of retaliation against the state and the various kinds of social injustice that exist within it. Paradoxically, only Winnie Verloc, whose attitude towards anarchist propaganda is by and large distrustful, resorts to such a deed. To sever all ties with the gender-based socio-economic trap she fell into, the woman kills her husband and becomes an outlaw. For this reason, David Mulry evaluates her as practically "the most anarchistic of characters" in the novel (2016: 23).

[181] For a comprehensive study of those genres, see: Melchiori 1985/2016: 122-149, 225-250. A selection of dynamite novels from those periods featuring revolutionary Poles as stock characters is also discussed in: Mulry 2015.

[182] In Gothic fiction, obsessions tend to revolve around freaky ambitions (usually mad science or religious fanaticism), death anxiety (fear of mortal degradation and/or live burial), crime (generally, murder and/or

The dichotomy between those two types of anarchists is crucial as it augments Conrad's mockery of counter-terrorism. It is sufficient to recall that in the novel the mastermind behind the Greenwich bombing is Mr Vladimir, the cynical First Secretary of a foreign embassy (presumably Russian). Upset with British liberalism, he schemes to provoke a major social outcry against all sympathisers of anarchism, thus forcing the government and police to start repressing them. Clearly, Mr Vladimir's ethical conscience is disoriented; essentially, he wants to pursue the "good" objective of combating international terrorism through the use of "evil", authoritarian, and excessive measures. If possible, he would take the tyrannical precaution of keeping every anarchist in Europe, criminal or not, "under lock and key" (Conrad 1907/1947: 29).

It is no coincidence that Mr Vladimir is depicted very unfavourably in *The Secret Agent*; as a child, Conrad witnessed Tsarist oppression acutely. Together with his parents, involved in Polish patriotic activities, he was banished in 1862. While en route to the Perm Province (the Ural region), those three were diverted to a different destination – Vologda (northern Russia). In 1863, for medical reasons, they received permission to move to Chernihiv (north-eastern Ukraine) (Najder 1980: 29-32). Still, the exile took a heavy toll on the convicts: at the age of eight, the novelist lost his mother, Ewa; at the age of twelve, his father, Apollo. Both died of tuberculosis, the latter only two years after his miraculous release on account of rapidly deteriorating health (Harpham 1996: 1). In relation to those traumatic events, Jasanoff thematically connects the story presented in *The Secret Agent* with the successful 1881 bomb attack on Tsar Alexander II, whose reign coincided with the deportation of Conrad's family (2017: 71-72).

Basically, Mr Vladimir seems to serve as a vehicle for expressing a warning against the dangers of autocratic rule. This impression can be further justified in reference to one of Conrad's letters to Robert Bontine Cunninghame Graham, dated October 7, 1907. It reveals that the fictional official is loosely based on General Nikolai Dmitrevich Seliverstov,[183] who was assassinated in Paris by the Polish socialist Stefan Padlewski in 1890 (Davies 2015: 216). Seliverstov was an intelligence agent and, most importantly, former head of the so-called "Third Section", a secret-police department in the Russian Empire (Walton 1967: 28).

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body mutilation/transformative surgery), monomania, psychotic love, passionate romance, guilt, spite, pride, and elitism (Snodgrass 2005: 189, 258-259, 334). Hence, among the obsessions portrayed in *The Secret Agent*, only that of the Professor seems strictly "Gothic-like" because it is directly connected to several of those issues, namely mad science, crime, monomania, spite, pride, and elitism.

[183] It is possible to encounter various other anglicised spellings of this name, including Seliverstoff, Seliverstroff, and Seliverskoff. In the cited letter, Conrad uses the polonised *Seliwertsow*.

It must concurrently be noted that, from a historical perspective, Mr Vladimir's fear that the proletariat of his own country might succumb to rebellious tendencies proved oracular. In 1917, ten years after the release of *The Secret Agent*, Tsar Nicholas II Romanov was forced to abdicate in the immediate aftermath of the February Revolution; thus, the Russian Empire came to an end. That very same year, the October Revolution took place and, in 1918, the Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic was proclaimed. By the end of the ensuing Russian Civil War in 1923, the Soviet regime had fortified its power in the newly-established Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (Wade 2001: 10-11, 19, 103, 197).

In any case, *The Secret Agent* does not appear to offer any ready-made solutions to the diverse problems it exposes. Thus, the tragicomical treatment of politics, be it anarchism, anarchist terrorism or counter-terrorism, endows this realist spy thriller with features of a satire. Nevertheless, in some of his personal correspondence, the author tries to disprove this generic link. Specifically, in a letter to Algernon Methuen, dated November 7, 1906, Conrad maintains that *The Secret Agent* "has no social or philosophical intention" (Davies 2015: 207). In essence, the writer makes the unrealistic – also arguably vain and haughty – assertion that his irony, as imbued into this novel, is beyond ideology. Such a claim can be easily contradicted. It is enough to indicate that the majority of characters are overblown (hence satirical) caricatures. Through exaggeration and absurd, they embody political, social, ethical, and moral confusion/decay, along with the novelist's perception of those issues. As observed by James F. English, the novel "deploys irony as the secret agent of reaction in a comic environment whose transactions might otherwise have opened the national community to its anarchic self-questioning" (1994: 66). To put it in simple terms, Conrad uses irony to indirectly comment upon the plot; consequently, it is filtered through his own critical worldview which, in its selective subjectivity, is not entirely exempt from ideology.

For instance, the strong depreciation of anarchism in *The Secret Agent* could be regarded as partially inequitable. According to Edward Garnett, "[Conrad's] character sketches [...] supply us with a working analysis of anarchism that is profoundly true, though the philosophical anarchism of certain creative minds is [...] out of the range of the author's survey" (1907: 1096). Garnett mildly highlights the absence of sane and influential anarchist intellectuals in the novel, despite the extratextual existence of those (as indicated earlier in the quotation from Agathocleus). It can be suspected that Conrad, exposed to a widespread anti-anarchist media campaign, perceived (and portrayed)

the deceitful activists and menacing bombers who emerged from the anarchist environment as its ample representation; such a view, while not groundless, is not fully objective. Basically, *The Secret Agent* creates the false impression that anarchists exclusively comprise social misfits, either frauds or psychos.[184]

Also, in the "Author's Note", the writer recalls scornfully deploring anarchism in his inspiring conversation with Ford. The former spoke about

> the criminal futility of the whole thing, doctrine, action, mentality; and [...] the contemptible aspect of the half-crazy pose as of a brazen cheat exploiting the poignant miseries and passionate credulities of a mankind always so tragically eager for self-destruction (Conrad 1920/1947: ix-x).

The expression "criminal futility" most likely refers to the general impossibility of the central and common goal of various anarchist movements, namely the liberation of humanity through the violent rejection of state apparatuses and formation of new "perfect" societies in which no political and socio-economic evils exist (Newman 2009: 69). In any case, the quoted passage exposes Conrad's perception of the anarchist utopia. He deems the concept unequivocally baleful, and thus unworthy of serious inquisitive study. Even more, the writer seems to treat those assumptions as self-evidently true (hence, axioms). In practice, those are only interpretations which currently fit into the complex and ongoing academic debate on the hazards and benefits of specific utopias as well as utopias *per se*.[185] Apparently, it would be highly impractical to attempt discussing such a broad issue within the narrow thematic constraints of this dissertation. Still, it is useful to analyse the theoretical foundations behind Conrad's system of ideas as expressed in *The Secret Agent*.

The writer's ideology is deeply rooted in his "non-melioristic" understanding of human nature, i.e., the conviction that it is inwardly inclined to both good and evil.[186] In the aforementioned excerpt from the "Author's Note", he expresses a belief that man-

[184] It must be noted that specifically in the UK the vast majority of late 19th-century bombings were orchestrated by terrorists who originated from the Fenian Brotherhood (an Irish nationalist secret society) rather than anarchist circles. Nevertheless, Jasanoff explains that "the Fenians who actually had thrown bombs heightened British fears about anarchists who talked about throwing bombs" (2017: 76). Naturally, the atmosphere of anxiety was further intensified by the press. For detailed information on how the British public opinion was incited against anarchism in the years 1880–1914 see: Shpayer-Makov 1988: 487-516; see also: Jasanoff 2017: 75-78.

[185] For some scholarly papers that juxtapose both perspectives in evaluating utopias see: Sargent 1982, Ambrose 2008, and McKean 2016.

[186] The term "non-meliorism" was coined by Bogusław Wolniewicz in opposition to meliorism, defined as faith in mankind's innate goodness and strive *in meliora*, i.e., for what is morally superior (2016: 293-294). Obviously, Conrad's non-meliorism is reflected in his various works, particularly in *Heart of Darkness*.

kind, which tends to either ignore or belittle the latter proclivity, is inherently predisposed, thus prone, to devastating pursuits of unattainable ideals. Bearing that presumed immanent susceptibility in mind, he fears that the notion of the anarchist utopia, along with the process of its in-depth philosophical/critical contemplation, is likely to engender dangerous delusions. It must be stressed that Conrad's apprehension is founded chiefly on the perceived co-existence and mutual amplification of vulnerability and risk. In other words, the writer assumes the presence of a pernicious weakness-and-threat relationship, but is plainly unable to verify the extent to which particular individuals actually yield to adverse influences or reject them. Since that criterion is highly abstract, it would be exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to measure it objectively.[187]

Naturally, the argument presented here does not aspire to a comprehensive study of anarchism; the aim is merely to debunk Conrad's claim that *The Secret Agent* lacks any "social or philosophical intention". Essentially, the novel disseminates both the writer's objective criticism of real-world anarchism as well as simplified anti-anarchist ideology. As indicated earlier, his work does not delve into the intricacies of intellectual anarchism, ignoring complex disparities between its diverse aggressive and mild types. In consequence, *The Secret Agent* one-sidedly suggests that the anarchist utopia does not have any philosophical value. In Conrad's judgement, it is simply too dangerous to serve as a reliable springboard for reasonable critical assessments of its own inadequacies as well as the various faults within the existing (mainly capitalist) kinds of social organisation. Overall, the novel is a product of the exaggerated anti-anarchist propaganda of the late 19th and early 20th century; by extension, this piece of factopiction supported (and still supports) a partially distorted image of anarchism.

Even so, it should not be overlooked that, in the aforementioned 1907 letter to Cunninghame Graham, Conrad denies satirising revolutionaries. Basically, he tries to separate the irony he deliberately incorporated into *The Secret Agent*[188] from satire:

> I don't think that I've been satirizing the revolutionary world. All these people [Michaelis, Karl Yundt, and Comrade Ossipon] are not revolutionaries – they are shams. And as regards the Professor I did not intend to make him despicable. He is incorruptible at any rate. In making him say 'madness and despair – give me that for a lever and I will move the world' I wanted to give him a note of perfect sincerity. At the worst he is a megalomaniac of an extreme type. And every extremist is respectable (Davies 2015: 216).

[187] On a side note, in *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord Jim* Conrad promotes work as a factor that can protect individuals from succumbing to evil tendencies, desires, and affections. Charles Marlow and Jim simply keep themselves busy.
[188] See: Conrad 1920/1947: xiii; Davies 2015: 207, 216.

Indeed, the three "shams" are not active revolutionaries, but merely inert revolutionary propagandists, and they are only satirised as such. As regards Conrad's forceful attempt to deny that the terrorist Professor is a caricature, it seems rather unconvincing since, in the novel, the "sincerity" and "respectability" of the character's unwavering conviction coincide with its pathetic naivety. The mad bomber might well be deadly, but, aside from the temporary destruction caused by his explosive devices, it is beyond his solitary effort to "move the world". This is shown through satirical mockery; after all, the Professor is portrayed as a shabby little pipsqueak.[189] Also, in Chapter XIII, he is compared to "a pest in the street full of men", which highlights his silly detachment from the rest of mankind as well as the fact that, much like a pesky insect, he will eventually be "squashed" by the "weak" masses he despises (Conrad 1907/1947: 311). Still, if not crippled by his insanity, the Professor could be alternatively interpreted as a harbinger of various 20th-century genocides and mass atrocities.

One crucial observation is that, from a modern perspective, Conrad's fictional rendition of anarchism does not appear to stand for itself only; in a broader sense, it could symbolise utopian revolutionary systems of ideas (not to be confused with the concept of revolution *sensu stricto*). Those seem to collectively fall under the category of what the Russian bard Bulat Okudzhava identifies in his fictionalised biography as "the disease of world reconstruction".[190] It is a quixotic belief that the world can undergo some form of a thorough, miraculous, and salutary transfiguration; in other words, become a subjectively perfect paradise (Okudzhava 1995/2003: 5). Obviously, the gullible pursuit of ideologies such as communism and fascism took genuinely tragic turns in the 20th century, aiding the rise of totalitarian regimes. Apart from that, among the current violent carriers of "the disease" it is still possible to name fanatical international terrorists; hence, the present-day relevance of the novel is self-explanatory.

In an article for *The New York Times*, Tom Reiss aptly deems *The Secret Agent* "the classic novel for the post-9/11 age" (2005: 35). It looks as though the relatively recent escalation of global terrorism, along with the huge amount of media coverage surrounding it worldwide, has significantly increased the popularity of Conrad's realist spy thriller. One compelling argument to support this impression is that, throughout the author's lifetime, *The Secret Agent* sold rather modestly in comparison with his other

[189] According to Jasanoff, Conrad partially imitates Charles Dickens's writing style in *The Secret Agent*. Both novelists "[pack] personality into physique" (2017: 70-71).
[190] The exact and rather grandiloquent Russian expression used by Okudzhava is *недуг переустройства* (transcr. *nedug pereustroistva*; lit. the affliction of reorganisation) (1995/2003: 5).

novels (Arata 1999: 167-168). This is because once the writer began to work on the story in 1906, anarchist terrorism had already turned from a topical issue into "an anachronism" in the UK (Jasanoff 2017: 80).

Returning to the "Author's Note", Conrad confesses that, aside from the Greenwich bombing, there was also another factor which stimulated his strong impulse to write *The Secret Agent*. It was a short excerpt from Robert Anderson's *Sidelights on the Home Rule Movement* (1906). Fundamentally, the book is a collection of reminiscences published by a retired Assistant Commissioner of the London Metropolitan Police; Anderson describes his professional career, chiefly in regard to combating Fenian terrorism (Conrad 1920/1947: xi; Beasley 2020: 196). The segment which Conrad refers to concerns a meeting between Anderson and Sir William Harcourt during which the former was scolded by the latter for refusing to disclose the identity of an informant. In Anderson's presence, Harcourt said to a colleague "Anderson's idea of secrecy is not to tell the Secretary of State"[191] (Conrad 1920/1947: xi; Anderson 1906: 89). This quotation was transposed in an altered form into *The Secret Agent* in order to emphasise the existence of a professional tension within the police force between the Assistant Commissioner and Chief Inspector Heat. The first one tells the other: "Your idea of secrecy seems to consist in keeping the chief of your department in the dark" (Conrad 1907/1947: 132).

Harcourt's allegation also resonates within the one made by Conrad's fictional Sir Ethelred against the Assistant Commissioner on account of Chief Inspector Heat's exaggerated promise that the police was keeping all anarchist activity under strict control. It is enough to recall part of Sir Ethelred's utterance: "your idea of assurances over there [...] seems to consist mainly in making the Secretary of State look a fool" (Conrad 1907/1947: 136). The quoted sentence is to some extent parallel in structure to Conrad's misquote from Anderson's book. All these connections are very important as they suggest that *Sidelights on the Home Rule Movement* encouraged Conrad to enrich the generic hybridity of his novel with some elements of the police procedural, long before

[191] While this is the actual content of Anderson's book, Conrad recalls it in general terms, without careful attention to details. As a result, the "Author's Note" to *The Secret Agent* erroneously merges together the features of two separate meetings involving Anderson and Harcourt – one from the early and another from the late 1880s. On top of that, Conrad mistakenly claims that Harcourt scolded Anderson directly and in the following misquoted words: "All that's very well. But your idea of secrecy over there seems to consist of keeping the Home Secretary in the dark" (Conrad 1920/1947: xi; Sherry 1971: 288-290). Such inaccuracies on the novelist's part are quite common and can be the products of either negligence or deliberate manipulation for the sake of achieving artistic effects.

such fiction was widely popularised.[192] Those transparent borrowings will be explored further in this section.

It was precisely the two snippets of conversations memorised by Conrad that induced him to develop some preliminary ideas for *The Secret Agent*, its characters, and setting. Initially, the writer preoccupied himself with refining a vision of an immensely vast city-turned-London[193] and, in it, the life of Winnie Verloc – a tragic figure overwhelmed with strong mother-like feelings. Conrad admits that her story had to be "reduced to manageable proportions" (1920/1947: xii). It appears that, in the course of that structural balancing, the motif of espionage gained major plot significance, so much so that the shift in perspective had to be reflected in the very title of the novel. Obviously, the eponymous secret agent, Adolf Verloc, is the central character through whom all the events are logically connected.[194] As previously indicated, it can be suspected that it was not Conrad's original goal to write one of the earliest British realist spy thrillers; the end product plainly took such a form.[195]

Considering Mr Verloc, he conforms with neither the idealised spy-gentleman nor demonised national traitor stereotype associated with British sensational spy thrillers. This is principally due to his moral ambiguity; the character is a man of serious flaws and vices, though not entirely devoid of virtues. As a member of an anarchist cell, he occupies himself mainly with seeking quarters for those newly arrived in London,

[192] In 1868, Wilkie Collins published his epistolary novel *The Moonstone*, which could be viewed as one of the earliest British prototypes of a police procedural (Wheat 2003: 41). However, the formation of a distinctly autonomous crime (sub)genre encompassing this type of works was a slow and gradual process; its culmination took place only after World War II (see: Scaggs 2005: 87-91).

[193] Lisa Feklistova recommends reading the novel as a critical commentary on the idealistic visions of London infrastructure renewal at the *fin de siècle*. She argues that "far from improving physical and moral health, the reconstruction in *The Secret Agent* underlines that cities, made by men for men, will naturally showcase human flaws" (Feklistova 2019: 16). Apart from evoking Conrad's non-meliorism, that observation generically links his work to urban fiction. It is also worthy of remark that the writer moulds London into a complex labyrinth of streets through which literally and/or metaphorically disoriented characters must navigate. This, in turn, is highly reminiscent of Gothic fiction (Hughes 2013: 167).

[194] Agathocleous points out that Conrad considered the title *Verloc* for his work before changing it into *The Secret Agent*. In her opinion, the author might have resorted to this particular modification for the sake of conveying ambiguity; she asserts that various characters in the novel could be regarded as secret agents since they realise their own and/or other people's hidden agendas (Agathocleus 2009: 9-10). For example, Anna Krawczyk-Łaskarzewska describes Winnie Verloc as "the true secret agent" because, in contrast to the idle revolutionaries, she is the one who takes violent and retributive action against socio-economic oppression (2018: 25). Jill Clark, in turn, focuses on Stevie, who "is the mover and shaker of events for every plot point that follows [his failed attempt to bomb the Greenwich Observatory for his brother-in-law]" (2004: 16). Regardless, Mr Verloc enjoys the status of the principal spy within the story on account of his profession, and thus is conventionally discussed as the titular secret agent in this dissertation.

[195] For more analytic details concerning the "Author's Note", its factual inaccuracies, and confirmed/presumed sources of inspiration for *The Secret Agent* undisclosed by Conrad, see: Glazzard 2016: 60-67.

organising group meetings at his home, and facilitating the distribution of propagandist pamphlets. However, unbeknownst to his comrades, he is also a traitor who surreptitiously cooperates with the aforementioned foreign/Russian embassy as well as the London police.

In his undercover anti-anarchist campaign, Mr Verloc assumes two distinct roles, both useful to each of his secret employers. First, he is an informer who monitors and reports on anarchist activity, especially signs of prospective criminal undertakings. Second, he serves as an *agent provocateur*, i.e., a secret agent who deliberately encourages anarchists to break the law so that they can be convicted. As a rule, he supplies them with explosives which, after foiled border crossing attempts, serve as concrete evidence of prevented bomb outrages.[196] Naturally, in terms of execution, the fictionalised Greenwich provocation conspicuously deviates from this pattern. This is because Mr Vladimir, unlike his predecessor, Baron Stott-Wartenheim, orders Mr Verloc to arrange an actual explosion that will scare the English *bourgeoisie*. Still, even in this case, the intrinsic goal to pacify anarchists remains intact, save for its despotic radicalisation.

As for Mr Verloc's spy and sabotage work, it does not lend itself easily to unequivocal moral evaluation, and thus could be described as more realistic than sensational. Fundamentally, the issue can be approached from markedly different yet not mutually exclusive analytic perspectives. To begin with, the secret agent views himself as a noble defender of public safety which, at least to some extent, is true. Definitely, he partakes in fighting organised crime, risking his own life in the process. Simultaneously, Mr Verloc's ethical conscience is disoriented. Early in the story, it is already hinted that his personal idea of maintaining the social order is by no means that of caring for the common welfare. Instead, he not only condones, but even adores supporting the unjust practice of dividing people into "the better" and "the worse" according to class and financial status:

> [Mr Verloc] surveyed through the [Hyde Park] railings the evidences of [London's] opulence and luxury with an approving eye. Protection is the first necessity of opulence and luxury. [The rich] had to be protected; and their horses, carriages, houses, servants had to be protected; and the source of their wealth had to be protected in the heart of the city and the heart of the country; the whole social order favourable to their hygienic idleness had to be protected against the shallow enviousness of unhygienic labour. It had to – and Mr Verloc

[196] Actually, the full extent of Mr Verloc's role as an *agent provocateur* is revealed only by the end of the novel. Agitated by the Greenwich fiasco, he confesses to his wife for the very first time that "[t]here's scores of these revolutionists I've sent off, with their bombs in their blamed pockets, to get themselves caught on the frontier" (Conrad 1907/1947: 238).

> would have rubbed his hands with satisfaction had he not been constitutionally averse from every superfluous exertion (Conrad 1907/1947: 12).

It must be remembered that while this passage obviously contains a highly critical evaluation of capitalist exploitation, it is not meant to endow anarchism with even the faintest trace of legitimacy. As mentioned earlier, Conrad fully equates this umbrella term for a variety of political movements and philosophies with the notion of a perilous utopia, and thus sharply rejects it as too frail a foundation for the development and execution of any positive economic reforms. Also, with regard to Mr Verloc, this excerpt shows that, like many other characters of this realist spy thriller, he tends to either confound or relativise good and evil. For this reason, the protagonist is notoriously mocked, frequently in the context of his burly silhouette, inactive lifestyle or limited understanding of the world and people around him.

Mr Verloc's indolence in particular inclines him strongly towards profitable/beneficial shady deals which require little physical effort from him. As long as those conditions are fulfilled, he is generally willing to take risks in pursuit of what he deems "easy money" and favours. This tendency obviously correlates with the repulsive nature of the protagonist's official trade. He owns and runs a genuine porn shop (not just any makeshift cover-up for clandestine activities). Most importantly, the character smuggles porn from Paris and Brussels, whereas the London police, mainly in the person of Chief Inspector Heat, deliberately overlook this criminal offence in exchange for intelligence on anarchists. While it is true that Mr Verloc has originally been coerced into cooperation, this hardly accounts for a redeeming quality given his eagerness to accept and subsequently indulge in the remunerative impunity offer.

On top of that, the novel reveals that Mr Verloc's career as the secret agent of the foreign/Russian embassy was sparked by his inglorious military past in the French artillery (although he declares himself English, he is also half-French). With a view to impressing an attractive woman, he stole and sold "the design of the improved breechblock of their new field gun" (Conrad 1907/1947: 20). In the end, the audacious feat did not bring the intended result, though. This is simply because the object of the protagonist's infatuation proved a cunning *femme fatale* of the suspenseful type, characteristic of thriller (sub)genres. Having seized the money, she promptly denounced him to the French police. The ensuing sentence received by Mr Verloc, "five years' rigorous confinement in a fortress", is thematically linked to Dreyfus's deportation to a fortified prison on Devil's island in French Guiana, albeit loosely (Conrad 1907/1947: 20).

At this point it is useful to briefly subsume the two distinct yet overlapping evaluations of the protagonist's professional conduct. Initially, it has been suggested that, at least in part, Mr Verloc puts his life in jeopardy to maintain public safety. Simultaneously, he is an egoistic chancer who takes advantage of all of his connections, be it the French artillery, anarchists, the London police or the foreign/Russian embassy. The clash of those interpretive perspectives is directly tied to the extratextual late 19th and early 20th-century British debates on the ethics of domestic espionage and the use of police informers.[197] In the novel, the problematic nature of those issues is addressed by the Assistant Commissioner. He observes that

> the existence of secret agents [tends] to augment the positive dangers of the evil against which they are used. That the spy will fabricate his information is a mere commonplace. But in the sphere of political and revolutionary action, relying partly on violence, the professional spy has every facility to fabricate the very facts themselves, and will spread the double evil of emulation in one direction, and of panic, hasty legislation, unreflecting hate, on the other (Conrad 1907/1947: 139).

In any case, Mr Verloc's moral ambiguity closely corresponds with that of real-world spies, and thus bestows upon him a significant degree of realism. It is further intensified by the fact that the main character's career as a secret agent exerts a noxious influence on his private life. He is regularly tormented by the thought that he might be furtively murdered for his undercover activities. This angst is drastically magnified after his fateful meeting with Mr Vladimir. The protagonist realises that if he refuses or fails to organise the Greenwich provocation, he will be considered expendable by his new superior. Furthermore, in response to the latter's scornful indifference and rudeness, Mr Verloc develops a conviction that this is not the type of a task which could be renounced peacefully. As explained *post factum* by the Assistant Commissioner, the main character must have feared that, if dissatisfied, Mr Vladimir would expose him to the London anarchists as a spy so that they could conveniently "dispose of him". Most likely, this sense of foreboding was reinforced by deducing that an ex-secret agent would inevitably bear an uncomfortable connection to his former employer – the foreign/Russian embassy.

In spy thrillers, especially realist ones, the home life of spies/secret agents tends to be hindered mainly, if not exclusively, by their hazardous profession. This convention does not apply to *The Secret Agent* as it draws a lot of inspiration from the domestic

[197] While the complexities of those are beyond the scope of this dissertation, specific details can be found in: Glazzard 2016: 59-84.

drama genre. The novel focuses broadly on the complex and unhealthy relationships within Mr Verloc's household. As a matter of fact, the protagonist has married into a family which is inherently dysfunctional, i.e., veritably distressed and overwhelmed by the various challenges posed by one of its member's intellectual disability. It is precisely that emotional, physical, and financial strain which results in recurring instances of damaging conduct.

Particularly in flashbacks, it is accentuated that both Mr Verloc's wife, Winnie, and mentally-challenged brother-in-law, Stevie, are adult victims of child abuse. Its exact extent can be learned from the former's reminiscences:

> [Winnie] had the vision of the blows intercepted (often with her own head), of a door held desperately shut against [her late father's] rage (not for very long); of a poker flung once (not very far), which stilled that particular storm into the dumb and awful silence which follows a thunder-clap. And all these scenes of violence came and went accompanied by the unrefined noise of deep vociferations proceeding from a man wounded in his paternal pride, declaring himself obviously accursed since one of his kids was a ´slobbering idjut and the other a wicked she-devil' (Conrad 1907/1947: 242).

Fundamentally, the quoted excerpt illustrates how devastating a single person's disoriented ethical conscience can be to himself/herself as well as other people. During his lifetime, the father failed to come to terms with his son's disability, deeming it embarrassing. Basically, the man's judgement was clouded by his egoistic and self-destructive despair. Engulfed in bitter resentment, he became aggressive and regularly beat both of his children in order to assuage his own self-focused anguish. Most importantly, it can be inferred from the novel that paternal abuse was one of the factors which profoundly deepened Winnie's sisterly overprotectiveness as well as Stevie's hypersensitivity to violence. In a Dickens-like manner, Conrad depicts dysfunctional family behaviours along with their intricate psychological background (Waters 2001: 120). This, in turn, augments the impression of realism conveyed by *The Secret Agent*.

Another vital observation regarding Winnie and Stevie's childhood is that it was rough not only on account of their deceased father's cruelty, but also their indolent mother's marital submission. It appears oddly disturbing that, even after her husband's death, the woman unduly romanticises him in the presence of her daughter as "poor daddy" (Conrad 1907/1947: 154). Yet, in contrast to him, the widow is by no means a villain, but plainly a tragic figure. This is because, on an emotional level, she genuinely cares for both her children, but simultaneously realises that, in the absence of a male breadwinner, whom Stevie is simply unable to become, the family's remaining

income from tenant rents at the Belgravian mansion hardly covers basic expenses. To make matters worse, it is bound to prove insufficient over an extended period of time. Thus the mother, herself elderly and ailing, practically delegates the matrimonial task of "securing" a new provider to Winnie. It must be noted that, in the face of dire financial straits, the widow's ethical conscience is disoriented: she unfairly prioritises ensuring her son's welfare over her daughter's happiness. For example, the mother is relieved by the fact that Winnie, deeply enamoured with a poor and young butcher, regrettably rejects his advances in order to enter a loveless marriage with the markedly richer Mr Verloc. Much like in Austenian novels of manners, the parent is concerned with the financial aspects of the alliance, equating the notion of "a good son-in-law" with that of "an efficient family supporter". Furthermore, the widow is delighted with her daughter's childlessness, knowing that under such circumstances the latter will devote herself completely to sisterly care.

Without a doubt, the mother's pragmatic appreciation of such "lesser evils" is, to a certain extent, vitiated by a tinge of egoism. Actually, on one specific occasion, she comes to such a realisation herself. Having compromised Winnie's reputation for Stevie's sake at a Charity, the widow is struck with remorse. As the narrator puts it, "[s]he had wept because she was [...] full of love for both her children. Girls frequently get sacrificed to the welfare of the boys. In this case she was sacrificing Winnie" (Conrad 1907/1947: 161). Although in the novel this comment directly refers to a single situation, it perfectly subsumes the mother's general favouritism towards her son. Naturally, she focuses chiefly on his fate because the intellectual disability renders him exceptionally dependent. Unlike Winnie, Stevie requires a guardian, without whom, at any given time, he may be placed in a workhouse infirmary (or at least this is what the widow fears).

Irrespective of various parental inadequacies, the mother is capable of putting both her children before herself – in this regard, she is altruistic. In fact, *The Secret Agent* can be read as a story which, on the whole, celebrates female selflessness, a theme commonly explored in Victorian love romances. Aside from that, this specific character trait is ingrained in the traditional Polish mother archetype known as *Matka Polka*.[198] Therefore, perhaps the novelist endows the fictional English widow (even

[198] Generally, *Matka Polka* denotes a heroic Polish mother who mainly concentrates herself on taking care of her family and working for the greater good of her homeland. For an English-language study on

more vividly, her daughter) with the willingness for self-sacrifice because such a quality was characteristic of the real-world Polish women who reared him, i.e., his mother Ewa Korzeniowska and grandmother Teofila Bobrowska (Malessa-Drohomirecka 2014: 32-34; Skolik 2015: 241). In response to Garnett's review for *Nation*, Conrad writes, in a letter dated October 1, 1907: "I am no end proud to see you've spotted my poor old woman. You've sly penetrating eye for one's most secret intentions. She *is* the heroine" (Karl and Davies 1988: 487). The quoted passage capitalises on the widow's ultimate benevolent plan to consolidate Winnie and Stevie's economic security. To reduce financial pressure on Mr Verloc, the mother decides to move out from his home. For the benefit of her children, she willingly exposes herself to the humiliating experience of begging for admission at an almshouse. Once it is granted, she significantly lowers her standard of living.

While Conrad's correspondence suggests that the widow's remarkable gift of the heart is meant to redeem her, the fact that he unambiguously refers to her as "the heroine" might seem controversial. This is because, for most part, the mother does not even attempt to raise and look after Stevie. Instead, she conveniently allows Winnie to overtake the brunt of those tasks, acting as a passive spectator of her toil. As Cynthia Joy Henderson recites, "[i]t is Winnie and Verloc who secure a job for Stevie; it is Winnie who encourages him to go out walking or to visit with Michaelis; it is again Winnie who keeps him active around the shop" (1993: 19). Overall, the widow may well not be as terrible a parent as her late husband, but nonetheless remains dysfunctional in her own right.

Moving on to the daughter, Winnie is overburdened with excessive responsibility. As a direct consequence of that, she is another character whose ethical conscience becomes disoriented. In this particular case, sisterly care takes the form of an unhealthy quasi-maternal obsession. Obviously, Winnie's condition largely detaches her from worldly affairs aside from those directly involving Stevie. This is one feasible explanation for the development of her defensive philosophical conviction that "things do not stand much looking into" (Conrad 1907/1947: 177). She simply does not want to add new problems to those she already has.

In practice, Winnie's frame of mind greatly parallels that of her husband, physically and intellectually enfeebled by his clandestine activities. Hence, to mutual satis-

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the concept and its evolution, see: Imbierowicz 2012. Obviously, the strictly patriotic aspect was not transposed onto the English female characters in *The Secret Agent*.

faction, none of them greatly absorbs or "hovers over" the other in their marital relationship which, due to the resulting lack of in-depth communication, is defective. Monika Malessa-Drohomirecka proposes a correlation "between Conrad's traumatic experiences as a child, his later unsuccessful relationships with women and the way in which he portrayed relations between the sexes in his fiction" (2014: 41). The scholar basically suggests that all those hardships fostered a pessimistic outlook. In *The Secret Agent*, the writer clearly does not idealise marriage. Most likely, he was of the opinion that it rarely becomes fulfilling, mainly because people often enter into it impulsively, driven by sexual attraction (such is the case with Mr Verloc) and/or necessity (Mrs Verloc needs a male provider for herself and her relatives) (Malessa-Drohomirecka 2014: 41-42).

It must not escape attention that while Winnie's quest for chiefly Stevie's well-being is principally noble, she simultaneously resorts to drastic, even dishonest measures to ensure it. First, she sacrifices her romantic relationship with the poor young butcher, which makes her unhappy. Second, she contracts a marriage of convenience with Mr Verloc and, in doing so, pretends that she loves him. Of course, she tries to compensate for this transgression, assuming – insofar as possible – the role of an industrious and caring wife. Regardless, "the title 'Mrs. Verloc' signifies the forfeiture of her intellectual and emotional lives just as much as the physical and sexual labor she performs" (Martin 2004: 35). To divert her thoughts away from her misery, Winnie attends the household with a view to making it "respectable" (Conrad 1907/1947: 195). Ironically, she reconciles this strive with helping her husband run a porn shop. As expected, all the plain contradictions embedded in her actions accentuate her disoriented ethical conscience.[199]

In the wake of the Greenwich explosion, for the very first time, both Mr Verloc and Winnie give full vent to their private frustrations in a marital confrontation, albeit each spouse in a different way. Immediately prior to those fateful emotional outbursts, the former peacefully attempts to comfort the latter through her sisterly (or rather quasi-maternal) sorrow, himself struck with a guilty conscience that the bomb he has equipped Stevie with has detonated prematurely, resulting in the carrier's unintended

[199] While Winnie is largely a victim of external circumstances, her problems are also partially rooted in the poor decisions she makes, which can be attributed to her limited life experience and understanding of the surrounding world. William Alejandro Martin draws special attention to the overtly masochistic aspects of her behaviour, such as the fact "[t]hat she leaves one situation of gross confinement [with Mr Verloc] only to ingratiate herself into another [with Ossipon]" (2004: 46). For more information on the theme of masochism in *The Secret Agent*, see: Martin 2004.

tragic death. Even so, Mr Verloc's importunate efforts fail to bring any consolation to his wife. The man, bitterly disappointed with her seemingly interminable unresponsiveness, loses his composure and starts making nervous excuses. He chaotically discloses various confidential details concerning his clandestine operations, explaining that, on the whole, he has tried to act in the interest of public safety and his family, risking his own life in the process. Although this argument is, at least to some extent, valid, it does not compensate for the fact that Mr Verloc, taking advantage of his brother-in-law's blind trust and intellectual disability, has cowardly and shamelessly manipulated him into participating in a dangerous errand. The secret agent, ignorant of the full extent of his own responsibility for the accident, further discredits himself by launching a tirade against his wife. In a fit of rage, fuelled by his disoriented ethical conscience, he wrongfully exclaims that they are equally culpable because she has forced Stevie upon him as a strolling companion.

Compared with Mr Verloc's violent ebullition of wrath, Mrs Verloc's is but scarce in words. She utters only a few disjointed sentences, including the brief announcement that she "[does] not want to look at [her husband] as long as [she lives]" (Conrad 1907/1947: 233). Eventually, Winnie assumes a philobatic stance and, with the use of an ocnophilic object in the form of a carving knife,[200] murders him. At this point it must be stressed that the crime itself has not been directly provoked by intense grief, or even the secret agent's aggression. Upon careful inspection of Chapter XI, it can be seen that Mrs Verloc's urge to kill comes straight from her sudden realisation that she has become "a free woman", no longer troubled by the problems inscribed into her brother's existence (Conrad 1907/1947: 251, 252, 254, 261, 263). Basically, Conrad forges a generic link between *The Secret Agent* and the psychotraumatic thriller, distorting one of its conventions. Specifically, instead of the traumatic experience of heroic sacrifices, it is Winnie's liberation from it that most profoundly impairs her cognitive, emotional, and social functioning. It is sufficient to reiterate that after Stevie's demise the woman transforms into more of an actual anarchist than those self-proclaimed ones presented in the novel.

As Brian Spittles observes, Winnie's deadly motivation draws attention to the issue of gender inequality in Victorian and Edwardian times, generally suggesting that the socio-economic repression of women could (and nowadays still can) lead to detrimental

[200] The term "ocnophilic object" denotes an object which grants a given philobat a sense of safety and/or security (Derry 1988/2002: 25).

consequences (1992: 136-138). Simultaneously, the character's gruesome downfall – she presumptively drowns herself to evade the gallows, betrayed and robbed by her would-be saviour, Ossipon – appears to serve as a warning against the potential dangers generated by radical and ill-considered attempts to pursue female emancipation. Of course, condemning drastic means is not meant to diminish the inherent justifiability of their end, which Conrad did personally acknowledge. After all, in 1910, he endorsed suffrage as one of the signatories of an open letter to Herbert Asquith, the then British Prime Minister (Karl and Davies 1990: 327). As regards *The Secret Agent*, it seems to contain a thinly-veiled public appeal for reasonable approaches to feminism and the task of combating sex discrimination, mostly in relation to disparities in income-earning opportunities.[201]

Considering Stevie's role in the novel, he mainly complements the construction of other fictional characters as the recipient of their care, indifference, and violence. This is hardly surprising given that his intellectual disability conspicuously impedes his social interactions. Still, even within the narrow scope of his limited cognitive ability,[202] Winnie's brother manifests a strong selfless inclination for helping others, especially his family. To be useful, he eagerly engages himself in menial chores, such as sweeping, dusting, dishwashing, and bootblacking. Generally, Stevie wishes to aid all those whom he recognises as hurt or downtrodden. As a result, he sympathises with economically destitute individuals, such as Mrs Neale and the hook-armed cabman. Apparently, the former quickly learns to take advantage of that kind-heartedness. Through cunningly orchestrated and exaggerated laments, she repeatedly induces Winnie's brother to make financial donations.

Indeed, Stevie's childlike naivety renders him an easy target for manipulation and exploitation. This particular fault eventually leads to his horrendous demise, suf-

[201] Still, in some of his fiction – notably, in *Heart of Darkness* – Conrad tends to portray women as physically and intellectually inferior to men, which, according to various scholars, indicates a degree of male chauvinism (see: Straus 1987, Smith 1989, Akter 2019). Nevertheless, sexism accusations against the writer are often exaggerated and unjustly projected onto him on the basis of his male characters' utterances – usually Marlow's (Hayes 1997: 102; Schwarz 2005: 66; Watts 2010: 30-31). Peter Hayes explains that "[t]o understand Conrad's depiction of women, the assumption that the objectives of male power and domination invariably underlie conservative pronouncements on gender relations must be set aside" (1997: 101). Basically, Conrad's works sometimes evoke the gender stereotypes popular during his lifetime, but this is not equivalent with propagating the belief that one of the two sexes must prevail over the other. Specifically in *The Secret Agent*, the writer promotes honest concern over many contemporary women's low social and economic status.

[202] "Cognitive ability", or simply "intelligence", is understood as "a very general mental capability that [...] involves the ability to reason, plan, solve problems, think abstractly, comprehend complex ideas, learn quickly and learn from experience" (Gottfredson 1994/1997: 13).

fused with grotesque irony. The character dies because he has been repeatedly taught by his sister and mother, determined to make him non-irritating to his brother-in-law, that "Mr Verloc [is] good" (Conrad 1907/1947: 175). This exact mantra has engendered Stevie's blind trust in the secret agent, enabling the latter to gain an unsuspecting bomb carrier, further brainwashed into believing that the mission delegated to him is humanitarian.

The ease with which Winnie's brother has been indoctrinated by his own family, along with the ensuing explosion in Greenwich Park, suggests that he could have become even more dangerous if he had been directly "educated" by the likes of Mr Vladimir or the mad Professor. According to Keith Carabine, "Stevie is the very type for Conrad of a dumb, gullible humanity primed to be the victims of [...] demagogues and fanatics [...] who trade upon the credulities of mankind".[203] Leaving aside the novelist's belief in people's universal susceptibility to the pursuit of harmful utopias, it is possible to revise the scholar's observation for the sake of endowing it with a higher degree of precision. As regards naivety, Stevie does not seem to represent mankind in its entirety, but merely human masses of a specific kind; namely, those afflicted with the disease of world reconstruction. The character suffers from it acutely, as evident in his reaction to the toil of the hook-armed cabman and his horse:

> Stevie left alone beside the private lamp-post of the Charity, his hands thrust deep into his pockets, glared with vacant sulkiness. At the bottom of his pockets his incapable weak hands were clinched hard into a pair of angry fists. In the face of anything which affected directly or indirectly his morbid dread of pain, Stevie ended by turning vicious. A magnanimous indignation swelled his frail chest to bursting, and caused his candid eyes to squint. Supremely wise in knowing his own powerlessness, Stevie was not wise enough to restrain his passions. The tenderness of his universal charity had two phases as indissolubly joined and connected as the reverse and obverse sides of a medal. The anguish of immoderate compassion was succeeded by the pain of an innocent but pitiless rage (Conrad 1907/1947: 168-169).

Fundamentally, Stevie fails to reconcile himself to the fact that it is impossible to rid the earthly world of all evil and suffering. Instead, his passionate longing for their fantastic disappearance takes the form of an obsession which, by extension, disorients his ethical conscience. Unable to peacefully realise a utopia, Stevie succumbs to anger and, unless promptly calmed by his sister, himself resorts to the violence he abhors in defiance of all the cruelty that surrounds him. Obviously, in this specific case, the capacity to dis-

[203] See: "Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent*," *YouTube*, uploaded by Manufacturing Intellect, November 28, 2018 [1987], https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yjq19I3U8H8 (accessed September 3, 2020).

cern between good and evil might also be impaired to some extent by the intellectual disability.[204]

A good example of a situation in which Winnie's brother openly displayed aggressive behaviour is revealed in a flashback from his past job as an office-boy for a foreign preserved milk firm. Upset with various "tales of injustice and oppression" related to him by his co-workers, he launched fireworks on the staircase, causing panic in the building and effectively putting those inside in danger (Conrad 1907/1947: 9). Thus, the would-be vanquisher of all evil became its sole bringer, completely oblivious to the paradox besmirching his "noble" conduct. Possibly, Stevie's mental limitations contributed to obscuring the awareness of what he was doing.

Regardless, *The Secret Agent* features the theme of a permanently broken world. At best, it can only be scantly and provisionally improved, but never repaired, precisely due to Conrad's non-melioristic perception of human nature. Following this logic, the disease of world reconstruction seems to result from the naive belief that it is possible to convert people into beings without fault, though this flawlessness is a relative concept that can be perceived differently within the framework of distinct utopias. In any case, such pursuits are not only futile, but can also be dangerous.

To expand on this observation, it is useful to compare Stevie with the mad Professor. Superficially, they might not seem to have much in common since the former seeks the everlasting good whereas the latter the bloody triumph of "strong and superior" individuals like him over the "weak and inferior" masses. Basically, each of the characters is preoccupied with his own distinct vision of a utopia. Nevertheless, what matters is that neither accepts the world he lives in. In fact, both crave for its "miraculous regeneration", and it is exactly that shared desire which is the source of their frustration and violence. In those regards, Stevie's fireworks incident parallels the Professor's bomb-making.

Clearly, those two "visionaries" suffer from more severe cases of the disease of world reconstruction than Michaelis, Karl Yundt, and Comrade Ossipon. Likewise, this phenomenon varies in its extremity among those "infected" within real-world societies.

[204] For a recent psychological study which pinpoints intellectual disabilities as factors that can lower the level of moral sensitivity, see: Otrębski and Sudoł 2020. The term "moral sensitivity" denotes "the ability to view a situation in terms of moral good and moral evil. It is an individual's ability to decide about what action should be taken in a given situation and the awareness of how particular actions may affect other people. It is a kind of an understanding of the 'moral nuances' of a situation" (Otrębski and Sudoł 2020: 3). Using that research as a point of reference, it can be suspected that, in comparison with non-intellectually disabled people, Stevie is likely to encounter additional difficulties in distinguishing good from evil on account of being mentally challenged.

Not all "patients" lose themselves completely to the task of rebuilding the world in the image of (seemingly) perfect fantasies. Yet, the powerful yearning for such transformations is often exploited by the "demagogues and fanatics" mentioned by Carabine, sometimes leading to tragedies such as the rise of the 20th-century totalitarianism. Therefore, *The Secret Agent* can be read as warning against such naive wishes and their potential threats, in the novel symbolically represented by the Greenwich explosion.

It must be noted that this specific incident, or rather its immediate aftermath, partially endows Conrad's work with features of a police procedural. Stevie's spectacular death by explosion provokes a police investigation, which comprises routine procedures such as an on-site inspection, interviews with witnesses/suspects, and collecting clues. Among those last activities, the examination of the mangled corpse at a hospital is shown in a way that is reminiscent of several genres. The practice of "zooming in" on details can be readily associated with the Victorian realistic novel, whereas the grotesque manner of description with Gothic fiction. More generally, unsettling corporeal destruction has also become one of the prevalent motifs in present-day body horror, be it literary works, films or other media:

> [Chief Inspector Heat] had been shocked by the sight [...] [of] a heap of rags, scorched and bloodstained, half concealing what might have been an accumulation of raw material for a cannibal feast. It required considerable firmness of mind not to recoil before that sight [...]. The Chief Inspector's eyes searched the gruesome detail of that heap of mixed things, which seemed to have been collected in shambles and rag shops [...]. [He] went on, peering at the table with a calm face and the slightly anxious attention of an indigent customer bending over what may be called the by-products of a butcher's shop with a view to an inexpensive Sunday dinner [...]. Then suddenly [the constable commented upon the corpse]: ˙Well, here he is – all of him I could see. Fair. Slight – slight enough. Look at that foot there. I picked up the legs first, one after another. He was that scattered you didn't know where to begin' (Conrad 1907/1947: 86-89).

Through gross references to cannibalism and butchery, Conrad emphasises the extensiveness of human capacity for cruelty, which can take the form of ruthless exploitation. Simultaneously, he draws attention to the fact that the secret agent and Stevie have posed a grave danger to the people in Greenwich Park. Had the bomb carrier stumbled near a group of passers-by, the explosion would have most likely killed or severely injured them. In any case, due to his brother-in-law's shameless deception and irresponsibility, the gullible "saviour" of the world does eventually assume the role of "an angel of death". Having accidentally destroyed himself, he also causes the tragic fall of Mr Verloc, which subsequently leads to that of Mrs Verloc. Consequently, Clark refers to

Stevie as "a catalyst for the explosive events of the entire narrative house of cards" (2004: 16). It looks as though the cycle of wrongdoings in *The Secret Agent* corresponded with the Shakespearean "[t]he evil that men do lives after them" (*Julius Caesar* 3.2.76), in the sense that the past transgressions of the dead continue to adversely affect the living.[205] Naturally, this theme is also characteristic of Gothic fiction.

Returning to the police, Conrad presents both their virtues and vices, in accordance with his non-melioristic belief in the duality of human nature. As for Chief Inspector Heat, he is portrayed as a devoted and accomplished policeman who nonetheless frequently acts on his own, i.e., without consulting his superiors and the Special Crimes Department. The officer also tends to withhold information, such as the fact that he has coerced Mr Verloc into becoming a personal informant. Apart from that, Heat's fairly lenient perception of thieving seems rather peculiar for a Chief Inspector:

> [Thieving] was a form of human industry, perverse indeed, but still an industry exercised in an industrious world; it was work undertaken for the same reason as the work in potteries, in coal mines, in fields, in tool-grinding shops. It was labour, whose practical difference from the other forms of labour consisted in the nature of its risk, which did not lie in ankylosis, or lead poisoning, or fire-damp, or gritty dust, but in what may be briefly defined in its own special phraseology as "Seven years hard" (Conrad 1907/1947: 91-92).

In all likelihood, the concept of a policeman who does not unambiguously condemn crime was deemed highly controversial, if not scandalous, at the time when *The Secret Agent* was first released. Through this excerpt, Conrad dismantles the contemporary stereotypes of a "righteous cop" and "wicked robber", suggesting that the line separating good and evil does not pass between those two occupations, but rather across every individual, regardless of the work performed. Most importantly, in the novel that boundary is not depicted as stiff, but permeable, i.e., good and evil tend to be confounded with each other and relativised; also, they can be done consciously and unconsciously, with or without purpose.

Considering Heat, the main factor which brings his disoriented ethical conscience to the fore is his dishonest approach to the task of investigating the Greenwich

[205] Ever since childhood, Conrad was deeply fascinated with Shakespeare's *oeuvre* (Najder 1980: 37). Most likely, the future novelist's initial contact with English literature occurred through exposure to his father's Polish rendition of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (Conrad 1912: 125). Apart from that comedy, Apollo Nałęcz-Korzeniowski translated at least several other works by the Bard of Avon, including *Othello*, *As You Like It*, and *Much Ado about Nothing*. To this day, none of those Polish versions has been preserved except for the 1866 one of *The Comedy of Errors*, titled *Komedya obłędów w pięciu aktach* (Zych 2010: 22). In a 1900 letter to Garnett, Conrad admits that "some of these [he] read when [he] could be no more than eight or nine years old" (Davies 2015: 138).

bombing. In order to protect his reputation, he needs to close the case as quickly as possible. Unless another instigator of that outrage is discovered, the officer wishes to arrest Michaelis – whether guilty or not, in this case innocent. Additionally, when Heat learns of Mr Verloc's direct involvement in the affair, the former, instead of apprehending the latter, encourages him to flee the country, presumably so as not to permanently lose a potent source of intelligence.

Heat's propensity for secrecy and arbitrariness does not generally appeal to his immediate superior, the Assistant Commissioner. Simultaneously, the supervisor's professional conduct is not impeccable as well. He wishes to divert the ongoing investigation away from Michaelis so as to avoid upsetting the suspect's – in practice, prospective scapegoat's – lady patroness with her obese and ailing protégé's imprisonment and potential death in custody. Basically, the Assistant Commissioner does not intend to lose the woman's favour as she happens to exert a profoundly soothing influence on his selfish, envious, and jealous wife, "[making] his married life much easier" in the process (Conrad 1907/1947: 111). Thus, similarly to Heat, the Assistant Commissioner puts his private interest ahead of police duty, which is a clear sign of a disoriented ethical conscience.

For the sake of discussing generic hybridity, it is useful to digress to Michaelis's relationship with his lady patroness. It seems to partially correlate with that between Mr William Collins and Lady Catherine de Bourgh from Jane Austen's 1813 novel of manners *Pride and Prejudice*. In each case, a clumsy and socially awkward ideologue receives support from a pompous and domineering matron. This parallel indicates that Conrad might have drawn a minor influence from Austen and/or some other pre-Victorian romance writers while working on *The Secret Agent*.[206]

Apart from Michaelis's lady patroness, the Assistant Commissioner has other connections which he exploits for personal gain as well. Having meticulously debriefed Heat on the progress of his investigation, the supervisor covertly launches another one under the auspices of Sir Ethelred, the Secretary of State. Consequently, the Assistant Commissioner can be regarded as a rampant careerist who, for the prospect of promotion, wishes to solve the case independently in order to impress his own superior. Notwithstanding that self-interest, the policeman's ingenious analysis of the Greenwich affair does lead him directly to the mastermind. From that fateful encounter, the officer

[206] For hypothetical intertextual correspondences between Conrad's works and Austenian prose, see: Samsel 2019.

of the law emerges the undisputed victor, which is reminiscent of thrillers of moral confrontation. Heat, in turn, on account of his limited understanding of the outrage, would most likely fail to even link Mr Vladimir with the case.

Overall, it could be asserted that correlating *The Secret Agent* with John Paul II's observation from "Fides et Ratio" has created a functional analytical framework for the task of interpreting the novel as a realist spy thriller. In the encyclical letter, the pope pinpoints and names a real-world phenomenon whose intratextual reflection in Conrad's work, to a large extent, happens to constitute the foundation of the various conflicts within the story. The realism of the latter's fictional characters lies in the fact that, unlike those typically featured in sensational spy thrillers, they are neither idealised nor demonised. Instead, they are shrouded in ambiguity, which results from and is shown through the lens of their individual disoriented ethical consciences. Most importantly, those emerge precisely in response to the four "papal" kinds of challenges, i.e., social (such as intellectual disability, family troubles, and secrecy), economic (such as poverty, closely tied to class- and gender-based financial discrimination), political (such as espionage, anarchism, terrorism, and counter-terrorism), and scientific (such as the development of explosives).

To further illustrate Conrad's propensity for portraying disoriented ethical consciences in *The Secret Agent*, it must be noted that he weaves them not only into the main plot and its major subplots, but also background events. Winnie, in a desperate need of transport, uninhibitedly exploits the infirm cab horse, which she subsequently pities shortly after the journey. Mrs Neale, distraught at her family's destitution, does not spend the money she receives from Stevie on her many children's needs, but simply squanders it on ardent spirits that temporarily assuage her worries. Likewise, the poor hook-armed cabman, tormented by the necessity of providing for his "missus and four kids", wastes his meagre income in pubs, seeking a short-lived peace of mind (Conrad 1907/1947: 166). It can be generally concluded that ethical consciences become disoriented once their possessors confront challenges which, from personal perspectives, seem or simply are overwhelming.

While reflecting upon Conrad's work as one of realistic fiction, it is also useful to juxtapose it with elements of early 19th-century French philosophy. One of the so-called *Idéologues* (a Parisian group of intellectuals), François-Pierre Gontier Maine de Biran, formulated the belief that the human will meets with resistance while interacting with reality, i.e., the external world (1812/1859: 217, 248; 1834: 59). As George Boas

observes, "[i]t is a situation like that expressed in Newton's third law of motion. There are two forces at work when we exert pressure upon a physical object, our pressure and the object's resistance, both of which are needed to produce our consciousness of the object" (1925: 479). Obviously, this does not mean that reality constitutes an insurmountable barrier against all human endeavours, but nonetheless signifies that it always resists them, *ergo*, is not inherently submissive. Therefore, reality does not meekly facilitate ultimate triumphs of righteous deeds over wicked ones; instead, it simply "does not care" and invariably opposes all forces that act upon it. Clearly, *The Secret Agent* largely emulates that impartiality, and thus detaches itself from sensational spy thrillers that tend to feature *dei ex machina* and (virtually) happy endings. On top of that, Maine de Biran's suggestion is complementary with that of John Paul II. In the novel, the characters' wills exert pressure upon intratextual reality which, in return, responds with resistance – hence, among others, the disorienting challenges.

As concerns hybridity, *The Secret Agent* is a realist spy thriller generically linked to historical novels, tragicomedies, satires, pre-Victorian novels of manners, (pre-)Victorian love romances, Victorian realistic novels, Victorian and Edwardian dynamite science-fiction, urban fiction, Gothic fiction, police procedurals (by extension, detective fiction), domestic dramas, sensational spy thrillers, psychotraumatic thrillers, and thrillers of moral confrontation. Also, from a modern perspective, it is possible to associate this espionage tale with present-day body horrors in which the motif of corporeal destruction has gained significant notoriety. In the aforementioned 1907 letter to Cunninghame Graham, Conrad describes his novel as "a new departure in genre and [...] a sustained effort in ironical treatment of a melodramatic subject" (Davies 2015: 216). Mixing his own scorn and pity into the narration, the writer unearths both the stereotypical British obsession with secrecy as well as his characters' disoriented ethical consciences in private, public, and institutional dimensions of life. To conclude, *The Secret Agent* is strongly related to extratextual reality as evidenced by the variety of demonstrated parallels.

Chapter 3: British Spy Fiction during the Cold War

3.1. "Shaken, Not Stirred": A Concise Bondology.[207] With a Major Focus on Ian Fleming's 1953 Novel *Casino Royale*

In popular imagination, Fleming's Bond novels and short stories have been displaced by films centred on that character. From a scholarly perspective, this creates the risk of mistakenly analysing the literary originals through the lens of beliefs and expectations shaped by the cinematic works. It is crucial not to make that error in the present study, mostly devoted to the writer's *oeuvre* and, in particular, his 1953 debut spy novel *Casino Royale*. To ensure that its generic hybridity, ties with extratextual reality, and the general portrayal of 007 in the original book series will be described with a high degree of precision, this Bondology will be divided into seven sections (also owing to the complexity of the issues discussed and the fact that this part tackles more than a single novel). The first section constitutes a brief overview of the James Bond media franchise and pinpoints the existence of the fictional multiverse. The second addresses some of Fleming's professional experiences as a journalist and naval officer that heavily influenced his fiction. The third delineates his personal approach to writing spy thrillers, largely – though not exclusively – in relation to *Casino Royale*. The fourth delves further into some realistic and/or sensational elements featured in that book. The fifth closely examines its plot so as to indicate that the novel is a sensational spy thriller and generic hybrid. The sixth contains an additional evaluation of the original 007's conduct in terms of broadly-understood xenophobia. Finally, the seventh presents concluding remarks.

3.1.1. 007 across Media and Time: From the Cold War Literary Hero to the Modern Cinematic Superhero

> I'm going to tell you a story about a man. His name was Bond. James Bond.
> Madeleine Swann in *No Time to Die*

Aside from its long-delayed theatrical release, Cary Joji Fukunaga's 2021 film *No Time to Die* will most likely be remembered for first granting and then permanently denying

[207] The catchphrase "shaken, not stirred", popularised in this exact form by many Bond films, can be traced back to Fleming's 1956 novel *Diamonds are Forever*, in which the third-person narrator describes the Martinis ordered by 007 and Tiffany Case as "shaken and not stirred" on the protagonist's request (see: Fleming 1956/2006: 89). Actually, the variant with the conjunction is also the first one directly uttered by Bond in the 1958 novel *Dr. No* (see: Fleming 1958/2006: 208).

James Bond (Daniel Craig) the prospect of living a happy family life with Madeleine Swann (Léa Seydoux) and their daughter Mathilde (Lisa-Dorah Sonnet). For the very first time, 007 (the one portrayed by Craig, not Lashana Lynch) is shown to die a super-heroic death, sensationally sacrificing himself for the greater good of those whom he has come to love as well as the rest of humanity.

This demise marks the end of Britain's iconic and globally recognised fictional spy – or does it? The film, like the vast majority of others in its series, concludes with the optimistic declaration that "James Bond will return". Craig's rendition of him may well be dead, but in all likelihood that will not stop one of the longest-running and most successful media franchises in history from expanding. To a great extent, its flexibility manifests itself in manipulating narrative continuities, sometimes maintained, otherwise violated or even (almost) completely abandoned in place of new ones within the frame-work of reboots. Particularly (though not exclusively) in the context of films, those re-inventions effectively prevent 007 from physically growing old age.[208] That is vital for an action hero who, in some sense, is currently a septuagenarian – his media appear-ances can be traced across the span of full seven decades.

Fleming's original Bond literary series comprises twelve novels[209] and two short story collections[210] published between the years 1953 and 1966; the last two books, *The Man with the Golden Gun* (1965) as well as *Octopussy and The Living Daylights* (1966), were released posthumously. All those works have been translated into multiple languages and, with a total of over 100 million copies sold worldwide, still enjoy inter-national recognition (Gammel and Mulhallen 2017/2018: 204; Holderness 2018: 38; Wilkinson 2018: 1). Since the author's death in 1964, fiction revolving around 007 has continued to be created by other, mainly British, writers.[211] Some of those are Kingsley

[208] As of today, Eon Productions has only officially advertised the Craig films as a reboot series as well as recently indicated an intention to create another one in the future. Irrespective of that, the company seems to have rebooted the Bond film continuity at least three times so far, which is directly linked to the suc-cessive introductions of Dalton, Brosnan, and Craig as 007. For more information, see: Britt and Spelling 2021 (online article).

[209] A full chronological list of Fleming's novels includes: *Casino Royale* (1953), *Live and Let Die* (1954), *Moonraker* (1955), *Diamonds Are Forever* (1956), *From Russia with Love* (1957), *Dr. No* (1958), *Gold-finger* (1959), *Thunderball* (1961), *The Spy Who Loved Me* (1962), *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* (1963), *You Only Live Twice* (1964), and *The Man with the Golden Gun* (1965).

[210] Fleming's first short story collection, *For Your Eyes Only* (1960), encompasses "From a View to a Kill", "For Your Eyes Only", "Quantum of Solace", "Risico", and "The Hildebrand Rarity". The second one, *Octopussy and The Living Daylights* (1966), features "Octopussy", "The Living Daylights", "The Property of a Lady", and "007 in New York".

[211] The literary James Bond brand is presently administered by the Fleming family-owned production company Ian Fleming Publications, Ltd. The following link leads to its official website: https://www.ianfleming.com (accessed January 8, 2022).

Amis, Christopher Wood, John Gardner, Raymond Benson, Sebastian Faulks, Jeffery Deaver, William Boyd, Anthony Horowitz, Charlie Higson, and Steve Cole. Currently, alongside post-Fleming Bond novels and short stories, comic books and graphic novels have a significant readership as well (Pfeiffer and Worrall 1998/1999: 191; see also: Egan 2016: 193-194, 232-240, 266-295, 315-331).[212]

Apart from the strictly 007-centred works, there also exist spin-offs primarily focused on other characters. His nephew, James Bond Jr., is the eponymous protagonist of, among others, R.D. Mascott's (Arthur Calder-Marshall's) 1967 novel *The Adventures of James Bond Junior 003½*, the 1991 American animated series *James Bond Jr.*, and the 1992 Marvel comic book series under the same title. Miss Moneypenny, in turn, is the heroine of Kate Westbrook's (Samantha Weinberg's) *The Moneypenny Diaries*, a series of novels and short stories published in the years 2005–2008 (Egan 2016: 191, 264-267, 297-298). Basically, the James Bond franchise expands in various directions, some of which involve relegating 007 from the main to merely a background character.

The constant demand for various types of Bondiana is directly tied to the immense and unceasing popularity of the high-grossing Bond film series,[213] made nearly in its entirety by Eon Productions – currently, 25 out of 27 films.[214] Although that company successfully managed to adapt most of Fleming's books into box office hits, this was usually done with a great deal of freedom in interpreting the source text. Many plotlines were either drastically modified or altogether replaced with new ones (Burgess 1987: v). Initially, it was feared that the author's vision of 007 as a rather sulky and misanthropic tough guy, heavily inspired by hard-boiled detectives found in American

[212] For some examples of Bond comic books and graphic novels, see: Moench and Gulacy 1992–1993, Ayala et al. 2020 as well as Ellis and Masters 2020.

[213] As of August 2021, Bond was the sixth most profitable film franchise in the world with a total gross of over $7 billion. In terms of revenue, it was surpassed only by the Marvel Cinematic Universe (over $22 billion), *Star Wars* (over $10 billion), *Harry Potter* (over $9 billion), *The Avengers* (over $7 billion), and *Spider-man* (over $7 billion). See: Navarro 2021 (online statistics).

[214] Chronologically, Eon Productions released Terence Young's *Dr. No* (1962) and *From Russia with Love* (1963); Guy Hamilton's *Goldfinger* (1964), Young's *Thunderball* (1965), Lewis Gilbert's *You Only Live Twice* (1967), Peter R. Hunt's *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* (1969), Hamilton's *Diamonds Are Forever* (1971), *Live and Let Die* (1973), and *The Man with the Golden Gun* (1974); Gilbert's *The Spy Who Loved Me* (1977) and *Moonraker* (1979); John Glen's *For Your Eyes Only* (1981), *Octopussy* (1983), *A View to a Kill* (1985), *The Living Daylights* (1987), and *Licence to Kill* (1989); Martin Campbell's *GoldenEye* (1995), Roger Spottiswoode's *Tomorrow Never Dies* (1997), Michael Apted's *The World Is Not Enough* (1999), Lee Tamahori's *Die Another Day* (2002), Campbell's *Casino Royale* (2006), Marc Forster's *Quantum of Solace* (2008), Sam Mendes's *Skyfall* (2012) and *Spectre* (2015); and Cary Joji Fukunaga's *No Time to Die* (2021). The two non-Eon Bond films are the 1967 *Casino Royale* (directed by John Huston, Ken Hughes, Robert Parrish, Joe McGrath, and Val Guest) as well as the 1983 *Never Say Never Again* (directed by Irvin Kershner). The former was produced by Columbia Pictures and the latter by Taliafilm.

crime fiction, would not appeal to theatre audiences (Panek 1981: 202; Benson 2006: 3, 6). Generally, what seems to unite Eon's diverse cinematic reimaginings of that disgruntled spy is the strive to make him less gloomy and more spectacular, frequently through the implementation of additional humour, eccentric gadgets, outrageous stunts, dramatic explosions, and dynamic combat scenes. In comparison with Fleming's stories, the Eon films capitalise on such elements to a far greater degree. For the most part, this is meant to increase commercial success, but at the same time significantly alters the original protagonist.

To date, 007 was played by a number of actors on the big screen. Those include Sean Connery, David Niven, George Lazenby, Roger Moore, Timothy Dalton, Pierce Brosnan, and Daniel Craig.[215] None of them, however, was the first one to receive the role. That distinction belongs to Barry Nelson, who portrayed "Card Sense Jimmy Bond" (in this case, an American secret agent) in the live 1954 television adaptation of Fleming's *Casino Royale*. This specific episode of the CBS dramatic anthology series *Climax!* was directed by William H. Brown, Jr., and lasts about 50 minutes (Simpson 2015/2020: 180-182; Chapman 2020: 25-26, 31).[216] Aside from that short production, two feature films were also based on the same book: the 1967 *Casino Royale*[217] (directed by John Huston, Joseph McGrath, Ken Hughes, Val Guest, and Robert Parrish) as well as the 2006 *Casino Royale*[218] (directed by Martin Campbell). The former stars Niven and the latter Craig as the protagonist. Fleming's debut novel has been brought to the screen so many times plainly because, in need of money, the writer sold the television and film rights when he was not famous yet and before Eon Productions was even founded. In the end, this enabled not one, but several independent parties to legally release adaptations (Balio 1987: 255; Caplen 2010: 72-74).

The combined bulk of officially licensed literary, cinematic, and television narratives as well as video games revolving around 007 constitute a *James Bond* multiverse.[219] In other words, various incarnations of Bondian characters (Bond, M, Miss Moneypenny, etc.) appear in parallel dimensions. To support this claim, it is sufficient

[215] A detailed overview of all 25 Eon films can be found in: Lawrence et al. 2021; see also: Rubin 1990/2021. For older insightful sources on most of those cinematic works, see: Grzesiek 2011, Moore [with Owen] 2012, Simpson 2015 as well as Field and Chowdhury 2015/2018.
[216] That television adaptation is analysed in Bignell 2018: 41-60 and Chapman 2020: 25-40.
[217] For its parodic qualities, the film is often generically classified as a spy comedy or satire. It is discussed in Hunter 2018: 127-142 and Clayton 2020: 53-68.
[218] A collection of essays on that production can be found in Lindner 2009; see also: Cox 2006: 184-196, Arnett 2009: 1-16, and Dunin-Wilczyński 2018: 71-90.
[219] See: Ehrlich 2015 and Sellers 2021 (online articles).

to observe that some of the following timelines are chronologically irreconcilable. Fleming's original book series is set in the 1950s and early 1960s,[220] Higson's and Cole's in the 1930s, Gardner's in the 1980s, Benson's in the 1990s, whereas Deaver's 2011 novel *Carte Blanche* in the post-9/11 era. Considering the last three authors' works, they illustrate the gradual and ongoing process of adjusting Bond stories to the changing external world, i.e., Fleming's characters tend to be transposed in altered forms into updated, more contemporary (or even futuristic) settings. The existence of such revisions, both in literature and other media, reinforces the observation that the spy thriller genre draws thematic inspiration from extratextual reality – notably, but not exclusively, current affairs.

Generally, the said multiverse could be viewed as "a huge mess". Throughout the first literary series, 007 is clearly one person (save for some inconsistencies in characterisation), whereas in the cinematic works, most of which are based on those books, this is not so obvious. A popular hypothesis, narrowly restricted to the Eon films, suggests that "James Bond, 007" is a transferable codename, i.e., it is supposedly passed from one secret agent to another. Basically, this is an attempt to rationalise the distinct portrayals of 007 by various actors (and now also actresses, although the 007 played by Lashana Lynch is called Nomi, not James Bond). If that underlying presumption was true, it would mean that numerous consecutive 007s could emerge in the same fictional realm.

For instance, in the pre-credit sequence to the 1969 film *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*, Lazenby's Bond, abandoned by a damsel-in-distress he has just rescued, breaks the fourth wall and says "This never happened to the other fella", which is an obvious reference to Connery's Bond from the previous five films. Naturally, the implication is that the two actors do not portray the same secret agent, but two different ones successively given the same codename. This could even be the case despite Connery's reappearance as 007 in the next part of the series. Perhaps "in the meantime" his character has simply managed to reclaim the alias from a colleague. After all, the 1971 film *Diamonds are Forever* does not directly reference "Lazenby's" marriage to and subsequent loss of Tracy Draco (Diana Rigg). Hence, it remains unclear whether or not

[220] As indicated in Chapter 1, Fleming's Bond *oeuvre* itself is not devoid of continuity errors. Those can be spotted between particular books, typically in the form of misplaced events. John Griswold attributes those mistakes to the fact that the author forcefully tried to set some of his novels and short stories very close to the year of their publication (2006: 6). For two independent scholarly attempts to propose an approximate chronology of Fleming's 007's adventures, see: Chancellor 2005: 98-99 and Griswold 2006: 7-13.

"Connery" is a fresh widower who seeks vengeance for his murdered wife on Blofeld (Charles Gray), whom he either way ferociously pursues.

While the transferable codename hypothesis is not groundless, it also has significant limitations. Fundamentally, the relationship between the number of Bond actors and that of separate Bonds is ambiguous. Most notably, in some Eon films, it is either explicitly stated or at least gently hinted that the 007s played by Lazenby, Moore, Dalton, and Brosnan share the painful memory of Tracy's untimely and tragic death. Taking that into account, it could be argued that those four actors portray one vaguely and, to some extent, illogically characterised protagonist or, alternatively, several cross-dimensional versions of him.[221]

Another vital point to consider is that, in comparison with Fleming's Bond works, the cinematic ones are collectively set within a much wider timeframe. This is essentially tied to the fact that the latter continue to be produced to this day and, as spy thrillers, thematically pursue current extratextual affairs. Generally, the Eon films released up until 1995 take place during the Cold War, whereas the remaining ones after it. Except for the "Craig saga",[222] they are known for a discernibly loose (and sometimes virtually non-existent) serialisation of storytelling across consecutive films. That, in conjunction with occasionally inconsistent cross-references and major cast changes, conveys a strong sense of not one, but rather a number of more or less muddled continuities.[223] A similar impression is evoked by video games, many of which borrow inspiration from individual films or distinct compilations of those.[224]

Acknowledging the diversity of 007-related works, it would be largely impractical to conduct an elaborate analysis of more than one of them within the confines of this dissertation. The specific choice of Fleming's *Casino Royale* is not haphazard. This novel serves as the introduction to his Cold War series, and thus lends itself exceedingly well to a thorough discussion with supplementary references to subsequent parts. Still, it is crucial not to delve deeply into the structural intricacies of that central book just yet.

[221] For an in-depth analysis of the complexities and shortcomings of the transferable codename hypothesis, see: Wojnar 2019 (online article).
[222] Studies of Craig's Bond films can be found in Hochscherf 2013: 298-320, Murray 2016: 4-11, Murray 2017: 247-273, Jones and Higson 2020: 103-122 as well as Swanson and Shields 2021 (online article).
[223] See: Koenig 2015 and Razak 2021 (online articles).
[224] See: "History of James Bond 007 Games (1983–2020)," *YouTube*, uploaded by Nick930, May 2, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j8kB68DGwO0 (accessed December 7, 2021). See also: Hall 2009: 312-330, Impellizeri 2010/2011: 7-22, Stein and Weise 2010/2011: 23-39, Fleury 2014: 247-266, Stephens 2018: 265-290 as well as Jones and Carloy 2020: 309-326.

First, it is necessary to pinpoint major sources of biographic inspiration for Bond's creator as well as delineate his general approach to writing spy thrillers.

3.1.2. Fleming as Journalist and Naval Officer. The Influence of Life Experiences on His Fiction

By the time Fleming began producing spy fiction in his forties, he had already pursued several other careers, some of which, in the end, heavily influenced his midlife literary endeavours. After failing to secure a position in the Foreign Office in 1931, he got employed at Reuters. There, over the course of two years, he became adept at writing news articles quickly, precisely, and compendiously (Pearson 1966/2013: 69-71; Macintyre 2008: 34, 39). Basically, he learned to communicate complex ideas in a highly articulate manner, which eventually shaped the style of his books. As emphasised by Oliver S. Buckton, "Ian's novels and short stories frequently [use] journalistic skills of description, concise summary, and ability to convey a sense of place" (2021: 69). Apart from that, Michael L. VanBlaricum points out that the job revolved around "foreign travel and international politics, both of which greatly colored the James Bond novels" (2018: 267).

Fleming was held in high regard by his Reuters superiors; they admired his outgoing demeanour, diligence, and competence. Bernard Rickatson-Hatt, in particular, sent him to Moscow as a foreign correspondent in 1933 (Lycett 1995: 47-48, 57). For the future author of bestselling anti-communist thrillers, that expedition was an important formative experience. On the spot, he closely observed the political workings of the Stalinist regime, chiefly in relation to counter-espionage. His task was to cover the so-called "Metro-Vickers Affair". It was a huge international scandal that concerned the arrest of six British engineers working under technical support contracts in the USSR. The Soviets accused them of economic sabotage and spying (Morrell 1995: 1-2; Robinson 2011: 85). Fleming wrote an extensive account of the defendants' trial – presumably, a show trial.[225] Upon publication, his press article was widely discussed and appreciated in London (Smith 2020: 7).

Not long after his return to England, the accomplished journalist decided to quit his job and switch industries – in part under family pressure, but mainly for financial reasons. He initially turned to merchant banking and then to stockbroking, none of

[225] Although in many scholarly studies the engineers' innocence is taken for granted, Buckton asserts that they might have actually been involved in intelligence gathering (2021: 69-70).

which he excelled at. Still, that last occupation led to an occurrence that would promptly and profoundly immerse him in the secret world of military espionage with the outbreak of World War II (Pearson 1966/2013: 88-89, 120; Macintyre 2008: 39).

In May 1939, Fleming received an unexpected invitation to luncheon at the Carlton Hotel Grill in London, where he made the acquaintance of Rear-Admiral John Godfrey, the Director of Naval Intelligence at the Admiralty. Both men quickly took a liking to each other and, already in July, the former was officially accepted as the latter's assistant codenamed 17F (Lycett 1995: 98-99; Rankin 2011: 30-32, 39, 44). According to one of the writer's biographers, John Pearson:

> Fleming finally discovered the one job for which he was ideally suited, the one career in which he was to be completely at home and in which every side of his complex and contradictory nature could be made the most of; by the time war was declared he had already created an indispensable place for himself (1966/2013: 124).

In light of that enthusiasm, it is hardly surprising that the admission into the NID (Naval Intelligence Division) quickly entailed further promotion. By December 1940, 17F had been elevated from the rank of lieutenant to that of lieutenant commander; by May 1941, he had become commander (Lett 2012: 21). This last post is quasi-autobiographically referenced in his fiction – 007 is a commander as well (Fleming 1964/2006: 256).

Generally, Fleming's war-time cooperation with Godfrey, along with the various other clandestine connections and undertakings it encouraged, constitutes the real-world espionage backdrop of the original Bond stories (Cabell 2008/2016: xi-xii; Judd 2012: xi-xii).[226] Notably, Godfrey partially inspired the creation of 007's superior, M (Macintyre 2008: 42; Buckton 2015: 263). Similarly to the Rear-Admiral, who entrusted his assistant with all classified information of the NID, M often initiates Bond into the hidden secrets of the fictionalised MI6 (Pearson 1966/2013: 124). As for that one-letter codename, it was used between November 1940 and September 1943 by Brigadier (eventually, Major General Sir) Colin McVean Gubbins (1896–1976), the then Director of Operations and Training in the SOE (Special Operations Executive). The fictional character's Scottish nationality is another reference to Gubbins, whom Fleming personally met in 1941. On the whole, Bond's commanding officer draws upon two strong-willed and uncompromising superintendents, each of whom ran a different intelligence agency (Lett 2012: 18; Lett 2013: 10; Smith 2020: 23). Besides those influences, it is

[226] For a recent monograph on that matter, see: Simmons 2020.

also probably not without significance that Fleming's overbearing mother, Evelyn, was notoriously called M by young Ian throughout his childhood (Pearson 1966/2013: 280).

In any case, the role of the Rear-Admiral's assistant considerably broadened the future spy fiction writer's knowledge and understanding of the contemporary British espionage network. The Director frequently appointed his confidant as a representative on interdepartmental conferences (Pearson 1966/2013: 124). By extension, 17F often acted as a liaison between the NID and various other units within the government's war-time administration, including the PWE (Political Warfare Executive), the GC&CS (Government Code and Cipher School), the JIC (Joint Intelligence Committee), the SOE, MI5, MI6, the War Office, the Air Ministry, and the Prime Minister's staff (Chancellor 2005: 28; Rankin 2011: 44; Burton 2016: 153; Smith 2020: 24).

Due to his familiarity with the intricacies of that local network, Fleming was also tasked with aiding the creation of a new American intelligence agency. In 1941, he provided Colonel William Joseph Donovan with advice on how to arrange and crew the headquarters of the COI (Office of the Coordinator of Information), transformed in 1942 into the OSS (Office of Strategic Services) and, in 1947, into the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) (Willman 2005: 183; Price 2008: 202; Loftis 2016: 82). In return for that supportive guidance, Donovan presented his consultant with a .38 Police Positive Colt, engraved with the words "For Special Services". The gift became a highly treasured trophy. Its recipient "would proudly show the weapon to his associates, telling them it was given to him by the father of American Secret Service" (Smith 2020: 58). The make and model number of that revolver are exactly the same as those of the gun 007 keeps under the bed pillow in his hotel room in *Casino Royale*. This is simply yet another quasi-autobiographical detail.

Apart from the United States, Fleming's other war-time destinations included Portugal, Spain, Vichy France, Algiers, Egypt, and Jamaica (Becker 2010/2011: 231). It is reasonable to place those travel experiences within the context of his overall globe-trotting, which, as previously mentioned, influenced the original Bond stories. To some extent, the international success of that book series can be attributed to the fact that it was written by a well-connected cosmopolitan, acquainted with various foreigners as well as their home countries, customs, and traditions. Basically, detailed descriptions of real-life cultural elements add a layer of verisimilitude – and, frequently, exoticism – to his fiction.

While it is possible to regard both Fleming and Bond as "men of action", one major difference between them is that the former was more of a headquarters officer than a field agent (Judd 2012: xi-xii). Unlike 007, 17F was generally not sent on dangerous secret missions; instead, he typically (co-)planned, monitored, and coordinated them from the sidelines.[227] As a pivotal operative within the NID and, most of all, potent source of military intelligence, Fleming was simply protected against the threat of enemy capture (see: Lycett 1995: 106-109, 138-145, 157). Even so, he founded the 30 Assault Unit in 1942; it was composed of Bond-like commandos who, among others, partook in the landings in North Africa, Sicily, and Normandy, contributed to the liberation of Paris, and, as the war was coming to its end, took hold of the German Navy archives (Rankin 2011: xv, 289-290).[228]

After the war, Fleming left the NID and returned to journalism. He accepted the job of a foreign manager in the Kemsley newspaper group, albeit with the stipulation that his contract would entitle him to a two-month paid vacation each spring. He spent those annual holidays in his Jamaican estate, Goldeneye – the namesake of one of his military plans (Pearson 1966/2013: 189-190). The significance of that location lies in the fact that, for the most part, the James Bond stories were created there. This includes *Casino Royale,* which the author claimed to have begun writing "therapeutically". The task allegedly relieved his pre-wedding anxiety. In 1952, the beginning novelist married his long-time lover, lady Ann Rothermere, who that very same year gave birth to their son, Caspar (Fleming 1962a: 62; Parker 2014/2015: 6, 124, 139).

3.1.3. Fleming's Spy Thrillers. Sensationally Improbable Bond Stories Veiled with Layers of (Mostly) Realistic Details

Fleming's spy thrillers are founded on a conspicuously sensational premise. A highly dedicated British civil servant, James Bond, rises to the challenge of combating major threats to his homeland and the other member countries of NATO. Notably, he ventures to do that despite his intrinsic human flaws and limitations – he is by all means a courageous hero, but then again not a near invulnerable superhero (Deaver 2006: vi-vii). Though realistically pregnable and far from unerring, the protagonist is, above all, ideal-

[227] Two of those clandestine operations, Mincemeat (successfully executed) and Goldeneye (shelved), are elaborately discussed in Macintyre 2010 and Simmons 2018, respectively.
[228] For monographs on the exploits of that military formation, see: Cabell 2009 and Rankin 2011.

istically overblown as a hyper-efficient spy – actually, more of a formidable assassin[229] and saboteur than merely intelligence gatherer (Judd 2012: xii). While 007 often resorts to more or less cruel violence, that does not prevent him from being a champion of good by the likes of those featured in thrillers of moral confrontation. His noble ends simply justify "hitting the bad guy before he gets a chance to hit you" – a common theme in American hard-boiled detective fiction, especially that published after 1945 (Panek 1981: 203). Bond's creator was familiar with both pre- and post-World War II works of that type. As a child, he was exposed to Sapper's (Herman Cyril McNeile's) Bulldog Drummond series, whereas as an adult he took some interest in Mickey Spillane's Mike Hammer series. Still, Spillane's 1950 novel *My Gun Is Quick* was perused with huge dissatisfaction and, possibly, a personal resolution to write "better" crime stories, obviously in the form of spy thrillers (Pearson 1966/2013: 245; Parker 2014/2015: 119).

As a reader, Fleming was fascinated with broadly-understood adventure fiction, especially that created by John Buchan, Erskine Childers, Edward Phillips Oppenheim, Edgar Allan Poe, Jules Verne, Rider Haggard, Robert Louis Stevenson, and Hugh Edwards (Parker 2014/2015: 119). 007 strongly resembles the valiant and outstanding heroes popularised in that genre, so much so that his efforts to keep a low profile as a spy tend to be perfunctory and, in the end, futile – hence, unrealistic. Basically, the protagonist detests idleness and craves exciting experiences to a strikingly exaggerated degree.

In his 1962 instructional essay "How to Write a Thriller", Fleming narrowly and selectively identifies the genre with "heroes who are white, villains who are black, and heroines who are a delicate shade of pink" (1962a: 59). He practically admits that his spy narratives are sensational, although with the reservation that, in his estimation, they do not present espionage itself as more incredible than it frequently turns out to be in real life:

> [M]y plots are fantastic, while being often based upon truth. They go wildly beyond the probable but not, I think, beyond the possible. Every now and then there will be a story in the newspapers that lifts a corner of the veil from Secret

[229] One vivid example of Bond's inconsistent characterisation concerns his "licence to kill". In *Casino Royale*, he tells Vesper that "It's not difficult to get a Double O number if you're prepared to kill people [...]. I've got the corpses of a Japanese cipher expert in New York and a Norwegian double agent in Stockholm to thank for being a Double O [...]. It's a confusing business but if it's one's profession, one does what one's told" (Fleming 1953/2006: 68). In *From Russia with Love*, however, the narrator claims that "Bond had never killed in cold blood, and he hadn't liked watching, and helping, someone else [Darko Kerim] do it" (Fleming 1957/2006: 226). The latter quote could be interpreted as Fleming's superficial attempt to emphasise that 007 is not an entirely unscrupulous murderer. On a side note, the first quotation also draws attention to the consistent spelling of "Double O" with the letter O instead of the digit 0 in the original Bond stories.

> Service work. A tunnel from West to East Berlin so that our Secret Service can tap the Russian telephone system; Crabb's frogman exploit to examine the hull of the Soviet cruiser; the Russian spy Khokhlov with his cigarette case that fired dum-dum bullets; the Gouzenko case in Canada that led to the arrest of Fuchs; The Man Who Never Was – the corpse with the false invasion plans that we left for the Gestapo to find on the Spanish Coast. This is all true Secret Service history that is yet in the higher realm of fantasy, and James Bond's ventures to this realm are perfectly legitimate (Fleming 1962a: 61).

Still in that essay, Fleming explicitly detaches himself from a number of thriller writers, namely Edgar Allan Poe, Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler, Eric Ambler, and Graham Greene. In doing so, he presents himself as neither a literary master nor a political educator/agitator, but merely an entertainer:

> I am not an angry young, or even middle-aged, man. I am not 'involved'. My books are not 'engaged'. I have no message for suffering humanity and, though I was bullied at school and lost my virginity like so many of us used to do in the old days, I have never been tempted to foist these and other harrowing personal experiences on the public. My opuscula do not aim at changing people or making them go out and do something [...]. They are written for warm-blooded heterosexuals in railway trains, airplanes and beds [...]. [M]y contribution to the art of thriller-writing has been to attempt the total stimulation of the reader all the way through, even to his taste buds (Fleming 1962a: 59-60).

Fundamentally, Fleming pretends that he has not imbued his "opuscula" with any kind of propaganda. Of course, he correctly aligns his spy thrillers with escapist fiction, but that relationship does not actually support his assertions of ideological neutrality at all. By setting his works against the backdrop of mid-20th-century international high life, in the books repeatedly associated with the past glamour of the Victorian and Edwardian era, the writer not only glorifies the British Empire, but also generally diverts attention away from its gradual disintegration in the aftermath of World War II. Ironically, Alex Adams pinpoints the conspicuous acceleration of that degenerative process over the span of the author's literary career:

> When Fleming published *Casino Royale* in 1953, Britain was rationing food in conditions of postwar austerity and reeling from major decolonisations in India and Palestine, and when he finished [the first draft of] *The Man with the Golden Gun* in [1964], Britain had undergone further decolonisations in Kenya, Cyprus, Sudan, Uganda, Sierra Leone and many other places, including Fleming's beloved Jamaica in 1962 (2017: 143).

With respect to the release of the first Bond novel, Alan Judd elaborates on the already impoverished state of the mainland at that time:

> [M]ost British households did not have a car, a telephone or a television. Many cities, especially London and the ports, were cratered with bomb-sites, crumbling buildings and rampant willowherb [...]. [D]aily life for most people was

> a struggle for pounds, shillings and pence against a background of chronic housing shortage, limited diet, hand-me-down clothes and, internationally, the management of economic and political decline. Few could afford wine, let alone champagne, and most had never travelled abroad, unless to fight (2012: x-xi).

It would be an overstatement to claim that the problems enumerated by Adams and Judd are entirely ignored in Fleming's spy thrillers; rather, those issues are rarely touched upon and, even then, typically belittled. For example, in *You Only Live Twice*, 007 boldly assures the head of the Japanese Secret Service, Tiger Tanaka, that

> England may have been bled pretty thin by a couple of World Wars, 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. Our politicians may be a feather pated bunch, but I expect yours are, too. All politicians are. But there's nothing wrong with the British people – although there are only fifty million of them (Fleming 1964/2006: 104-105).

The combined sensational practice of trivialising imperial shortcomings/failures and accentuating accomplishments is only one of the ways in which the original Bond works idealise(d) broadly-understood Britishness. As part of its celebration, MI6 agents are frequently depicted as *bon vivants* – both locally and abroad, they enjoy "the finer things in life". Basically, the writer attempted to "totally stimulate" his contemporary compatriot readers, especially those poverty-stricken, with realistic and vividly detailed descriptions of the characters' extravagant food, drinks, cigarettes, clothes, cars, guns, surroundings, etc. Consequently, *Casino Royale* abounds in what could be best described as a combination of product placements and fetishistic particulars. To illustrate that, it is useful to recall Bond and Vesper's first *tête-à-tête* meal during which they are wined and dined in a posh French restaurant at the Hotel Splendide. Of course, the two civil servants do not belong to the *crème de la crème* of international society, but the point is that they are able to blend in and interact with it by virtue of their clandestine profession:

> ['H]ave you decided what you would like to have for dinner? Please be expensive,' he added as he sensed her hesitation, 'or you'll let down that beautiful frock.'
>
> 'I'd made two choices,' she laughed, 'and either would have been delicious, but behaving like a millionaire occasionally is a wonderful treat and if you're sure... well, I'd like to start with caviar and then have a plain grilled *rognon de veau* with *pommes soufflés*. And then I'd like to have *fraises des bois* with a lot of cream. Is it very shameless to be so certain and so expensive?' She smiled at him inquiringly.
>
> 'It's a virtue, and anyway it's only a good plain wholesome meal.' He turned to the *maître d'hôtel*, 'and bring plenty of toast.'

> ‘The trouble always is,’ he explained to Vesper, ‘not how to get enough caviar, but how to get enough toast with it.’
>
> ‘Now,’ he turned back to the menu, ‘I myself will accompany Mademoiselle with the caviar, but then I would like a very small *tournedos*, underdone, with *sauce Béarnaise* and a *coeur d’artichaut*. While Mademoiselle is enjoying the strawberries, I will have half an avocado pear with a little French dressing. Do you approve?’
>
> The *maître d’hôtel* bowed.
>
> ‘My compliments, mademoiselle and monsieur. Monsieur George,’ he turned to the *sommelier* and repeated the two dinners for his benefit.
>
> ‘*Parfait*’ said the *sommelier*, proffering the leather-bound wine list.
>
> ‘If you agree,’ said Bond, ‘I would prefer to drink champagne with you tonight. It is a cheerful wine and it suits the occasion – I hope,’ he added.
>
> ‘Yes I would like champagne,’ she said.
>
> With his finger on the page, Bond turned to the *sommelier*: ‘The Taittinger 45?’
>
> ‘A fine wine, monsieur,’ said the *sommelier*. ‘But if Monsieur will permit,’ he pointed with his pencil, ‘the Blanc de Blanc Brut 1943 of the same marque is without equal.’
>
> Bond smiled. ‘So be it,’ he said (Fleming 1953/2006: 62-63; original emphases).

In the quoted excerpt, the British customers treat themselves to foreign gourmet cuisine, demonstrating their refined cosmopolitan taste. Earlier in the novel, it has already been suggested that 007, in particular, is a fastidious connoisseur of alcohol. At the eponymous casino, the protagonist orders a strong cocktail that he wishes to be prepared strictly according to his own recipe. He gives the bartender the following instructions: “A dry martini [...]. One. In a deep champagne goblet [...]. Three measures of Gordon’s, one of vodka, half a measure of Kina Lillet. Shake it very well until it’s ice-cold, then add a large thin slice of lemon-peel. Got it?” (Fleming 1953/2006: 52-53). In this specific case, Bond acts in a very similar fashion to Fleming, who, as a bar client, had the notorious habit of providing careful guidelines on how exactly his drinks should be mixed (Benson 1984: 42). Of course, the main character typically conducts himself in a bold and resolute manner. This accentuates the power of his imperial homeland.

007’s unique and initially nameless cocktail, which he eventually calls “the Vesper” after his first true love, was actually invented by the writer and one of his friends, Ivar Bryce. In truth, it is the heroine of *Casino Royale* who owes her name to that of their original alcoholic mixture, which, in turn, had been named “in honour of an old colonel they knew who called drinks served at six in the evening ‘Vespers’” (Cawthorne 2012: 53). Considering Bond’s pedantic martini order, it is a good example of an intratextual element that was first inspired by extratextual reality and then influenced it as well. Fleming and Bryce’s recipe was not widely known prior to the release of the

novel; their cocktail gained international popularity chiefly thanks to the commercial success of the book. To this day, the Vesper is served in various bars across the globe, although in modified forms since the discontinued Kina Lillet needs to be replaced with substitutes (Stokes 2015: 10-11; Carley 2018: 69). Generally, the James Bond novels and films tend to reference – and, in consequence, advertise – various authentic alcoholic drinks.[230] This supports the observation that literary/cinematic spy fiction is affected by the extratextual world and *vice versa*.

Alongside foreign brands, *Casino Royale* promoted (and still promotes) British ones as well. For example, 007 does not plainly consume some random cigarettes; he smokes Fleming's favourite custom-made Morlands[231] with the triple gold band, ritualistically lighted with an oxidised Ronson[232] lighter (Griswold 2006: 47; Macintyre 2008: 168). The protagonist's vehicle is also far from mundane; he drives a 4½-litre battleship-grey Bentley[233] with the Amherst Villiers[234] supercharger. Obviously, Bond's fascination with his factory-tuned muscle car reflects the writer's own passion for fast automobiles and motor racing (Millard 2018: 9).[235] That specific Bentley was (and continues to be) a rare and exclusive convertible sports coupé. It was manufactured between the years 1927 and 1931. Out of a total of 720 released units, only 55 received "a Roots-type supercharger driven from the front of the crankshaft" (Hartman 2011: 10).

Following a sensational spy thriller convention, Fleming attempts to divert the readers' attention away from the improbability/implausibility of his fictional plots through the use of realistic "distractors" – among others, detailed portrayals of diverse products. Naturally, this does not mean that those items are always presented in exact accordance with real-world facts. For instance, 007 drives two non-existent cars: in

[230] For some Bond-related cocktail recipe books, see: Leigh 2010 [2012], Kurr 2011, and Fleming 2018.
[231] Morland & Co. of Grosvenor Street was a London cigarette company that ceased to exist not long after the author's death. For more information, see: Leigh 2014 and M [Allen] 2014 (online articles).
[232] Ronson Products Limited, which operated under that name in the years 1930–1981, was not exactly an independent British enterprise, but rather a UK subsidiary of the American company Art Metal Works (Pederson 2003: 337-338). The current distributor of Ronson lighters made in Great Britain is Ronson International Limited. See: "RONSON INTERNATIONAL LIMITED – Overview," GOV.UK, https://find-and-update.company-information.service.gov.uk/company/02860221 (accessed April 15, 2022).
[233] Bentley Motors Limited, founded in 1919, is currently part of the German Volkswagen group. That British company has an over 100-year-old history of producing luxury sports cars, including race cars. For illustrated monographs on the evolution of the marque, see: Feast 2004 and Noakes 2019.
[234] For a biography of Charles Amherst Villiers (1900–1991), the British automobile and aerospace engineer who produced self-designed superchargers for the original Blower Bentleys, see: Kenny 2009.
[235] Information on cars owned by Fleming can be found in Andreina 2014/2020 and Houlihan 2021 (online articles).

Goldfinger an Aston Martin DB III and in *Thunderball* a Bentley Mark II Continental. It looks as though the writer had accidentally misnamed authentic vehicles, in which case the first one was probably meant to be a DB Mark III (much less likely, a DB3), whereas the second one a Mark VI instead of a Mark II (Griswold 2006: 309; Simpson 2015/2020: 35). Assuming that these are the author's genuine mistakes, it is rather surprising that he made them given his overall familiarity with contemporary models belonging to such brands. Besides, he was also no stranger to contacting car specialists for professional assistance on technical descriptions (Fleming 1962b: 70; Macintyre 2008: 118; Millard 2018: 9; Smith 2020: 8).

Apart from automobile-related errors, it is possible to pinpoint other ones as well. Especially in his initial four novels, Fleming depicts firearms with a relatively low degree of meticulousness and precision. At the beginning of his literary career, he was simply not well versed in that subject, and so initially did not utilise it as a source of engrossing realistic details for his intrinsically sensational fiction. Because of that, some of the guns successfully used by 007 on his early adventures are, in truth, either partially or completely unsuitable for the tasks he performs. Alan Judd highlights that problem in relation to the first book:

> Recalling an assassination he [...] executed before *Casino Royale* starts, Bond describes shooting a man through the mouth at 300 yards with a Remington 30/30. That was a short-barrelled lever-action rifle such as we used to see in Westerns. I have the Winchester version, which is very similar. Both are heavy-hitting weapons designed to kill large animals at up to 200 yards, and are inaccurate beyond that. Even with a telescopic sight, which Bond says he had, I wouldn't put money on myself to hit a man anywhere at 300 yards, let alone a target as small as a mouth. But then I'm not James Bond (2012: xv).

In 1956, Fleming received a mildly critical fan letter, dated May 23, from Geoffrey Boothroyd, a weapons expert. The latter offered punctilious advice, supported with pictures, on how 007's partially ill-considered arsenal could be improved. Bond's creator was so impressed with his correspondent's knowledge that he eagerly accepted him as a consultant for the rest of the series, hoping that together they could embellish it with yet another layer of realistic elements. The two men began writing to each other frequently and, eventually, became good friends (Tesche 2008: 14; Fleming 2015/2016: 140-141; Millard 2018: 32).[236]

Boothroyd's original suggestion was to replace the protagonist's "unmanly" .25 Beretta, which is a tiny low-powered automatic pistol, with a lighter and yet objectively

[236] Some of those letters were reprinted in Fleming 1962b: 69-78 and Fleming 2015/2016: 140-163.

more threatening sidearm, preferably a revolver such as the S&W .38 Centennial Airweight. Another vital recommendation was to change the main character's shoulder holster, thanks to which, in real life, a spy with "a licence to kill" would most likely get himself murdered in action instead. In his second letter to Fleming, dated June 1, Boothroyd thoroughly discusses that issue as well as expands on the flaws of the Beretta, explaining that in combat its high accuracy does not compensate for the low calibre:

> Bond's chamois leather pouch will be ideal for carrying a gun, but God help him if he has to get it out in a hurry. The soft leather will snag and foul on the projecting parts of the gun and he will still be struggling to get the gun out when the other fellow is counting the holes in Bond's tummy. Bond has a good point when he mentions [the high] accuracy [of the Beretta]. It's no good shooting at a man with the biggest gun one can hold – if you miss him. The thing about the larger calibres is, however, that when you hit someone with a man-stopping bullet they are out of the game and won't lie on the floor still popping off at you (Fleming 1962b: 75).

To justify Bond's disposal of his Beretta, a weapon the main character was heavily attached to, Fleming decided to introduce an additional subplot by the end of his fifth novel. In *From Russia with Love*, the protagonist's silencer gets caught in his trouser waistband during a fight, making him nearly lose his life at the hands of Rosa Klebb.[237] Subsequently, in *Dr. No*, M forces 007 to get a new handgun because of that incident. Bond acquires a 7.65mm Walther PPK from Major Boothroyd, a character directly inspired by the writer's advisor. Paradoxically, the fictional armourer incorrectly matches that automatic pistol with a revolver pouch. Fleming made this error because he did not know that the Walther was incompatible with the Berns-Martin Triple Draw holster that the real Boothroyd proposed for the S&W .38 Centennial Airweight. Another mistake on the writer's part was confusing that last firearm with the S&W .357 Magnum. His consultant specifically informed him that the first revolver can be used for close-range shooting, whereas the second one for longer-range shooting. Even so, for Bond's second gun Major Boothroyd gives him a Centennial Airweight, thinking that it is as powerful as a Magnum (Fleming 1962b: 70, 78).

[237] In his third letter to Fleming, dated June 29, Boothroyd writes: "Personally I can't [...] see how one would fit a silencer to a Beretta unless a special barrel were made for it, as the silencer has to be screwed on to the barrel, and [...] there is very little of the barrel projecting in front of the slide on the Beretta" (Fleming 1962b: 77). Overall, the expert points out that while in fiction automatic pistols and revolvers are often silenced, in real life this is rarely done because the process is difficult and likely to lower the effectiveness of those guns (Fleming 1962b: 76).

Despite his advisor's help, Fleming did not manage to entirely avoid lapses such as those. Regardless, what matters most is that their number was significantly reduced in later books within the series. On top of that, both 007 and his enemies became much better armed:

> With Boothroyd's help, the villains of SMERSH were kitted out, fictionally speaking, with 9mm Lugers and Mauser 7.63 automatics. Fleming swiftly got over the belief that guns were dull, and under Boothroyd's tuition became something of an expert: a staggering array of artillery is deployed in the Bond books, each described with full specifications, including a long-barrelled .45 Colt Army Special, a Savage 99F, a Winchester International Experimental .308 target rifle and a number of spear guns. Scaramanga, of course, totes a gold-plated single-action Colt .45 (Macintyre 2008: 132).

Through Boothroyd, Fleming gained access to reliable technical information on various weapons. Ultimately, this enabled him to describe them more accurately in his fiction, and thus add another veneer of verisimilitude to it.

Still in pursuit of realistic "distractors", the writer adorned his sensational works with a plethora of references to real-life people and events. For the most part, *Casino Royale* briefly mentions a number of politicians, including Adolf Hitler (1889–1945), Lavrentiy Beria (1899–1953), Josip Broz Tito (1892–1980), Leon Trotsky (1879–1940), Maurice Thorez (1900–1964), and Marthe Richard (1889–1982). That last and by now probably least internationally recognisable name was the alias of a French abolitionist and municipal councillor of Paris, Marthe Crompton (formerly Richer) née Betenfeld (Koestler 1952/2005: 265). As Marthe Richard, she instigated a fierce campaign against houses of ill repute, heavily contributing to their nationwide closure in 1946 (Corbin 1978/1990: 348-349; Roberts 2013: 138).[238] The ban was imposed by the law colloquially known as *La Loi Marthe Richard*, in the novel directly responsible for the sudden liquidation of Le Chiffre's newly bought Norman-Breton chain of brothels (Fleming 1953/2006: 12; Cawthorne 2012: 34-35). The antagonist's mistiming of that purchase seems all the more striking in conjunction with the real Richard's eventual political u-turn. In 1973, she supported a project to open tightly controlled "Eros centers", realising that her past "victory" not only failed to significantly reduce the exploitation of prostitutes by their employers, but also increased the number of street sex-working

[238] At that time, the French public opinion was generally unaware of the fact that, in her teens, Richard was registered as a prostitute. This was discovered later in police records dating back to 1905; see: Blume 2006 (online article).

women as well as the overall spread of venereal diseases (Koestler 1952/2005: 266; Karnow 1997/1999: 59; Rappaport 2001: 583).[239]

Leaving that aside, Fleming's fiction sometimes inaccurately recalls authentic historical facts. For example, according to *Casino Royale*, the assassination of Trotsky took place in Mexico on August 22, 1940, and was probably orchestrated by SMERSH (Fleming 1953/2006: 18). Save for the location of the assault, this information is incorrect. The Russian politician was actually attacked on August 20 and, badly injured, died the following day; he was hit with an ice axe on the head by the Spanish communist and NKVD agent Ramón Mercader (Patenaude 2009: 205-206, 281-282, 287-292).

3.1.4. Further Considerations on the Realistic and/or Sensational Elements in *Casino Royale* (1953)

> A nation can survive its fools, and even the ambitious. But it cannot survive treason from within. An enemy at the gates is less formidable, for he is known and he carries his banners openly against the city. But the traitor moves among those within the gates freely, his sly whispers rustling through all the alleys, heard in the very halls of government itself. For the traitor appears no traitor; he speaks in the accents familiar to his victims, and he wears their face and their garments, and he appeals to the baseness that lies deep in the hearts of all men. He rots the soul of a nation; he works secretly and unknown in the night to undermine the pillars of a city; he infects the body politic so that it can no longer resist. A murderer is less to be feared. The traitor is the carrier of the plague (Caldwell 1965: 556).
>
> Marcus Tullius Cicero in *A Pillar of Iron*[240]

Casino Royale is grounded in its contemporary extratextual reality. Set against the backdrop of the Cold War, it highlights the fierce political rivalry between the Western and Eastern Blocs, particularly the former's fear of communist expansion and infiltra-

[239] Before becoming a politician, Richard was a French spy during World War I as well as a member of the French Resistance during World War II (Rappaport 2001: 582). In the late interwar period, she mostly enjoyed the reputation of a French heroine, even though many critics accused her of being a fraud (Waagenaar 1965: 169; Fell 2018: 159). Those allegations were not entirely groundless; indeed, she rose to great fame in the early 1930s thanks to the publication of three largely fabricated and overblown WWI memoirs, the first one written by Georges Ladoux, her former boss and head of the Deuxième Bureau, the second one by Jean Violan (Joseph de Davrichevii or Davrichewy), her friend and possibly lover, and the third one by herself (Miller 1994: 198; see also: Ladoux 1932a, Violan [Davrichevii or Davrichewy] 1933, and Richard [Crompton] 1935). Overall, in the words of Michael Barry Miller, "the facts of her life are buried beneath layers of legend and calumny" (1994: 197). As for English-language biographies of Richard, it appears that there exists only one in the form of a translation of Ladoux's aforementioned highly unreliable book (see: Ladoux 1932b). For two broader, updated, and more objective biographies in French, see: Coquart 2006 and Henry 2006.

[240] As observed by Dan MacGuill, Samantha Putterman, and Brad Sylvester, this quotation is often erroneously ascribed to the real Cicero instead of his fictionalised counterpart from Taylor Caldwell's 1965 novel. See: MacGuill 2018, Putterman 2019, and Sylvester 2019 (online articles).

tion. After all, the novel was published not long after the British Empire had been struck with the outbreak of a national security breach scandal. In May 1951, two Foreign Office diplomats, Guy Burgess and Donald MacLean, defected to the Soviet Union, for which they had been spying since the 1930s.[241] Their mutual disappearance practically meant the admission of guilt. The two fled upon receiving a warning from Kim Philby, an allied "mole" in MI6, that a British-American counterintelligence investigation had targeted Maclean (Vargo 2003/2011: 99-100; Hobsbawm 2011: 279).[242]

In a matter of a few weeks, that escape received a lot of international press coverage. The British general public was genuinely perplexed with the described incident. It undermined the mythologised effectiveness of UK's intelligence agencies, both locally and around the world. The CIA, especially, held them in contempt (Burgess 1987: iii; Vargo 2003/2011: 101; Pincher 2009: 376, 390). Additionally, on account of Burgess's homosexuality and MacLean's bisexuality, the then common stereotype of "deceitful homosexuals" was strongly reinforced in capitalist countries (Plummer 1999: 30; Carlston 2013: 180, Schwartz 2019: 234).

Upon its release, *Casino Royale* was most likely meant to indirectly and partially excuse that particular real-life British scandal, not mentioned in the book. The novel realistically – and also rather conveniently – depicts treason as an internationally widespread phenomenon, one that adversely affects each of the two Blocs. Apart from emphasising the general ubiquity of the problem, the story is also imbued with a certain propagandistic asymmetry. The British traitor, Vesper, spies for the opposition under blackmail, whereas the Soviet one, Le Chiffre, unscrupulously embezzles communist funds for personal gain. The former, unlike the latter, is not devoid of an ethical conscience. Hers merely becomes disoriented in the face of extreme circumstances, which obviously evokes associations with realist spy thrillers. The woman is basically torn between a sense of patriotic duty to her homeland and personal allegiance to her Polish lover, held hostage by the Russians and kept alive only on condition of her unremitting cooperation with their intelligence. Vesper unwillingly betrays her country and, in the end, tries to redeem herself by rebelling against her oppressors and exposing herself as

[241] Burgess and Maclean are directly mentioned in *From Russia with Love* (see: Fleming 1957/2006: 130-131).

[242] To some extent, the late detection of those three traitors and their remaining accomplices from the Cambridge spy ring can be attributed to the high respectability of the status of a "British gentleman". As Matthew Bellamy points out, the core assumption of MI6 – prior to the discovery of Philby's connections with Burgess and MacLean – was that "the ruling-class, Oxbridge-educated male, was above reproach and thus could be trusted with national safety and security in the most dangerous of contexts" (2018: 128).

a double-agent in a suicide note left for 007. This clearly detaches her from the purely self-interested Le Chiffre, incorrigible and eventually eliminated by a fellow agent as punishment for fraudulent conduct. Through the sensational juxtaposition of those two radically different traitors, the novel simply reinforces the "honourable Brits – honourless foreign antagonists" binary opposition embedded in the original literary Bond series. In *Casino Royale*, specifically, the Eastern Bloc is biasedly portrayed as the only one that spawns voluntary traitors. This observation can be further supported by the fact that SMERSH ruthlessly double-crosses a group of Bulgarians hired to kill the protagonist.

Politics aside, Fleming's debut spy thriller draws heavily upon his overall knowledge and experience as a staunch gambler and frequenter of casinos (Pearson 1966/2013: 150). Most notably, the novel contains extensive passages with highly technical information typically featured in comprehensive gambling guides. Basically, the writer meticulously describes the mechanics of roulette and baccarat to ensure that those games do not confuse uninitiated readers. The rules and strategic intricacies of baccarat, in particular, are thoroughly explained by Bond during a conversation with Vesper:

> 'It's a simple affair [...] and you'll understand it at once if you've ever played vingt-et-un, where the object is to get cards from the banker which add up more closely to a count of twenty-one than his do. In [baccarat], I get two cards and the banker gets two, and unless anyone wins outright, either or both of us can get one more card. The object of the game is to hold two, or three cards which together count nine points, or as nearly nine as possible. Court cards and tens count nothing; aces one each; any other card its face value. It is only the last figure of your count that signifies. So nine plus seven equals six – not sixteen.
>
> 'The winner is the one whose count is nearest to nine. Draws are played over again.'
>
> '[...] [W]hen the banker deals me my two cards, if they add up to eight or nine, they're a 'natural' and I turn them up and I win, unless he has an equal or a better natural. If I haven't got a natural, I can stand on a seven or a six, perhaps ask for a card or perhaps not, on a five, and certainly ask for a card if my count is lower than five. Five is the turning point of the game. According to the odds, the chances of bettering or worsening your hand if you hold a five are exactly even.
>
> 'Only when I ask for a card or tap mine to signify that I stand on what I have, can the banker look at his. If he has a natural, he turns them up and wins. Otherwise he is faced with the same problems as I was. But he is helped in his decision to draw or not to draw a third card by my actions. If I have stood, he must assume that I have a five, six, or seven: if I have drawn, he will know that I had something less than a six and I may have improved my hand or not with the card he gave me. And this card was dealt to me face up. On its face value and a knowledge of the odds, he will know whether to take another card or to stand on his own.

> ‘So he has a very slight advantage over me. He has a tiny help over his decision to draw or to stand. But there is always one problem card at this game – shall one draw or stand on a five and what will your opponent do with a five? Some players always draw or always stand. I follow my intuition.
>
> ‘But in the end [...] it’s the natural eights and nines that matter, and I must just see that I get more of them than he does’ (Fleming 1953/2006: 72-74).

Obviously, such painstakingly detailed excerpts are not merely didactic. They also add a veneer of realism to the inherently sensational story, diverting the readers’ attention away from its overall improbability.

The gaming house in which 007 confronts his adversary is based on the still active Portuguese Casino Estoril, known for its reputation of being a popular gathering place for international spies during World War II. Fleming visited it several times in 1941; he was passing through Lisbon twice that year, first in May with Rear-Admiral Godfrey on their mutual journey to Washington and then alone on his way back to London at the turn of July and August (Orliński 2006: 205-206; Loftis 2016: 86). Possibly, both stays thematically contributed to the plot of *Casino Royale*.

The writer claimed to have derived the idea for Bond’s card duel with Le Chiffre from an actual baccarat game that took place in May 1941. In the presence of Godfrey, Fleming allegedly gambled against a group of German agents with a view to bankrupting them and, by extension, reducing the funds of their secret service. Eventually, he not only failed to accomplish those aims, but also lost all of his travel money instead (Fleming 1962a: 61). According to Pearson, the circumstances behind that infelicitous turn of events were much less spectacular since, in truth, there were no Nazi spies among the players, most of whom were simply locals:

> It was a decidedly dismal evening at the casino – only a handful of Portuguese were present, the stakes were low, the croupiers were bored. The Admiral was not impressed.
>
> Fleming, however, refused to submit to the depressing atmosphere [...]. The game progressed. Then Fleming whispered to Godfrey, ‘Just suppose those fellows were German agents – what a coup it would be if we cleaned them out entirely!’
>
> It was not a thought that particularly appealed to the Admiral – he found it impossible to translate those sombre Portuguese in their dark suits into Nazi agents. But Fleming liked the idea and played a long, unsuccessful game until he was completely cleaned out. Next day he and the Admiral boarded the flying boat in the estuary of the Tagus and left for the United States (1966/2013: 151).

In all likelihood, Bond’s creator deliberately embellished his own account of that fiasco in order to create an exciting anecdote that could advertise his books. Regardless, it is

safe to assume that this specific defeat at the card table was a memorable one for him, so much so that it may have inspired the premise of his first novel.

On his summer return to Lisbon, Fleming might have witnessed another casino incident that potentially affected the plot. At that time he was shadowing Duško Popov, a Serbian double agent employed by both the Abwehr and MI6, but loyal to the latter. Popov was in the course of executing the so-called "Plan Midas" – a major intrigue thanks to which the Germans, falsely convinced of financing their own spy network in London, were actually co-funding British Intelligence (Miller 2004/2005: 78; West 2006/2014: 79; Loftis 2016: 83-85).

According to Popov's 1974 autobiography, one evening he received a huge tranche of Nazi money, but, because of the late hour, could not transfer it to MI6 until the next day. Stuck for the night with the embezzled funds, the agent decided to carry them on him all the time for safety purposes. Meanwhile, Fleming kept following him, presumably with the intention of acting as another guardian of the loot. Together, the two men went to Casino Estoril, where Popov got irritated at baccarat with the banker – a rich Lithuanian named Bloch, who coarsely proclaimed unlimited stakes. In order to humiliate his arrogant opponent, the Serb ostentatiously laid 50 thousand dollars of "His Majesty's money" on the table, knowing that Bloch would be unable to meet such a high bet and, even if he was, the croupier would not allow it to be placed anyway (1974/1975: 126-127).

While Fleming was indeed tailing Popov, the occurrence of such a sensational casino experience cannot be confirmed with absolute certainty. In essence, the latter may have invented or at least distorted it in order to increase the sales of his autobiography. Still, in the absence of any concrete manipulation evidence, Larry Loftis speculates that Popov might have actually described the truth, with the reservation that in that case Bloch was probably not a Lithuanian, but one of the Jewish co-owners of an Amsterdam trading company, either Dr Lippmann Bloch or Dr Albert Bloch (Loftis 2016: 83, 86-87). Provided that the incident was not entirely a figment of the Serb's imagination, it could have influenced Bond's card duel with Le Chiffre in some measure. After all, those clashes parallel each other on several levels:

> In both the Estoril reality and the novel re-creation, the game is baccarat and the villains are 'holding the bank'. In both scenarios the villains are fleeing ruthless enemies (Bloch the Nazis in 1941, Le Chiffre the Russians in 1953). In both cases, the hero is a charming and courageous British secret agent (Popov in 1941, Bond in 1953) – who happens to be a gallivanting playboy. In both in-

> stances, the hero throws down an outrageous bet with MI6 money. Even the amount of the bets is roughly identical, adjusting for currency exchange rates and inflation. Finally, in both scenes, a second intelligence officer is watching with keen interest (Fleming from British Naval Intelligence in 1941, Mathis from the Deuxième Bureau – French Intelligence – in 1953) (Loftis 2016: 85).

Whether the encounter with Bloch took place or not, 007 draws heavy inspiration from both Fleming and Popov. Much like those two energetic, suave, and promiscuous intelligence workers, the main character is especially fond of attractive women, fast cars, gambling, luxury, chain smoking, and heavy drinking (Orliński 2006: 212-213; Loftis 2016: 87, 183; Smith 2020: 4-9).

In *Casino Royale*, Bond is portrayed as a very handsome man; he has grey-blue eyes and short black hair with one distinctly "disobedient" lock loosely hanging in the shape of a comma on the right side of his forehead (Fleming 1953/2006: 41, 58-59). The protagonist's good looks are complemented – rather than marred – by a facial defect, although a less subtle one than Fleming's slightly deformed nose, badly broken in his youth (Pearson 1966/2013: 25-26). Instead of that, 007 possesses the more menacing "thin vertical scar down his right cheek" (Fleming 1953/2006: 59). Regarding the spy's overall appearance, Vesper compares him to Hoagy Carmichael (1899–1981), a real-world American pianist, singer, composer, jazz icon, actor, and radio host who rose to fame as a musician in the 1930s and was at the peak of his multi-strand career in the 1940s and 1950s (Dunning 1998: 321; Ross 1999: 108).[243] Obviously, the suggestion that Bond is as physically attractive as Carmichael was originally meant to appeal to contemporary readers, many of whom admired the then widely known celebrity.

As for the main character's name, it was taken from an American ornithologist. The real James Bond (1900–1989) was best known as the author of the 1936 *Birds of the West Indies*,[244] a comprehensive guide to the Caribbean avifauna.[245] Fleming, being both a keen bird watcher and bibliophile, was deeply impressed by that book and owned at least two copies of it, each in a different edition.[246] In his letter to Bond's wife, Mary, dated June 20, 1961, he explains why the protagonist was called after her husband:

[243] For two partially romanticised autobiographies of Hoagy Carmichael, see: Carmichael 1946/1983 as well as Carmichael and Longstreet 1965. For a more objective biography, see: Sudhalter 2002.
[244] See: Bond 1936.
[245] For a recent biography of James Bond, the ornithologist, see: Wright 2020a.
[246] See: Wright 2020b (online article).

"it struck me that this name, brief, unromantic and yet very masculine, was just what I needed and so James Bond II was born" (Fleming 2015/2016: 280).[247]

Apart from that, in a 1964 interview for *Playboy*, Fleming discusses the origin of the 007 codename:

> I pinched the idea from the fact that, in the Admiralty, at the beginning of the [Second World] War, all top secret signals had the double-O prefix. This was changed subsequently for the usual security reasons, but it stuck in my mind and I borrowed it for Bond and he got stuck with it (1964: 102).

The protagonist's numerical designation is also widely suspected to be rooted in that of the eponymous anthropomorphic locomotive from Kipling's 1897 short story ".007" (Jaffa 2011: 201; Fowler 2012: 150). Another possible source of inspiration was the 007 Dover-London bus service, in the 1950s frequently used by Fleming to travel on that route.[248]

Besides Bond and his aforementioned superior, M, *Casino Royale* features several other characters who, with varying degrees of accuracy, are claimed or assumed to have been partially designed after specific real-world people. To begin with, it is quite probable that Le Chiffre was modelled on Aleister Crowley (1875–1947), a controversial English occultist and ceremonial magician, presumably affiliated with British Intelligence (Macintyre 2008: 88). Pearson mainly focuses on the resemblance in their appearance:

> Not only does the general figure of Le Chiffre, with his size, his ugliness and all the overtones of unmentionable vice match the impression Crowley usually created, but minor parallels exist between them. Both called people 'dear boy', and both, like Mussolini, had the whites of their eyes completely visible around the iris (1966/2013: 278).

To expand on Pearson's minor parallels, it can be pointed out that the antagonist is also a "flagellant" with "large sexual appetites" (Fleming 1953: 17). Those are epitomised, *primo*, by his lewd eagerness to have regular and impliedly rough sex with various subordinate prostitutes, and, *secundo*, by the fact that he personally exposes 007 to genital

[247] In 1966, the novelist Mary Wickham Bond (1898–1997) published *How 007 Got His Name*, a book devoted to the circumstances surrounding that eponymous process. She also recounts her and her husband's only meeting with Fleming in Jamaica in 1964. By its end, the ornithologist received a copy of *You Only Live Twice* with the inscription "To the real James Bond from the thief of his identity, Ian Fleming, Feb. 5, 1964 (a great day!)" (original emphases; a photograph of the inscribed page is included in Wright 2020a: 17). For more information, see: Bond 1966.

[248] See: Curtin 2022 (online article); see also: Rubin 1990/2021: 112.

torture. Basically, Le Chiffre's "kinky" conduct evokes associations with Crowley's drug-induced sadomasochistic sex rituals (see: Readdy 2018: 60-61).[249]

According to Donald McCormick, Vesper was based on Krystyna Skarbek, alias Christine Granville (1908–1952), a Polish agent who worked for the British SOE during World War II (1993: 151).[250] Notwithstanding, Jeremy Duns debunks that journalist's claim as a hoax, which, to this day, many Bond-related books and articles carelessly continue to spread. Duns also exposes McCormick's far-fetched and mostly fake evidence for Skarbek's alleged love affair with Fleming, whom she probably never even met. In essence, McCormick pretends that his "discoveries" find confirmation in several external sources – among others, Madeleine Masson's 1975 biography of Skarbek (see: McCormick 1993: 141-143, 151; Masson 1975). Ironically, in the afterword to its renamed and updated 2005 edition, Masson directly mentions him, gets confused by his lies, and on their basis makes the suggestion that perhaps indeed Vesper is the real-life agent's fictionalised counterpart (see: Masson 2005: 265-266). Obviously, this uncanny mistake undermines the biographer's overall credibility, but Duns partially and quite rightly excuses her by emphasising that she was already in her nineties when she made it.[251]

Considering Bond's two allied foreign spies, there appears to be relatively little information on their potential extratextual prototypes. It is known that Felix Leiter was named after (Ivar) John Felix Bryce (1906–1985) and Thomas Leiter (1912–1958), both of whom were Fleming's friends (Lycett 1995: 222; Chancellor 2005: 194; Parker 2014/2015: 135-136). Even so, according to the writer's personal notes on *Diamonds are Forever*, the character does not draw any other influence from them, or anyone else for that matter.[252] This, of course, may or may not be yet another fabrication on the part of the occasionally manipulative author. With regard to René Mathis, Loftis directly links him to Fleming in relation to one of the previously mentioned possible background stories behind the creation of Bond's baccarat duel with Le Chiffre (2016: 85). Obviously, that connection is merely superficial and, on top of that, highly conjectural.

Finally, a considerable amount of guesswork surrounds the possible real-world models for Miss Moneypenny, who makes her brief debut appearance in *Casino Royale*.

[249] For two autobiographies of Crowley, see: Crowley 1908/1991 and Crowley 1969/1979 (posthumous publication). For some more recent biographies, see: Booth 2000, Sutin 2000, and Churton 2011.
[250] For English-language biographies of Skarbek, see: Masson 1975, Masson 2005, and Mulley 2012. For Polish-language ones, see: Larecki 2008 and Larecki 2022.
[251] See: Duns 2014/2018 (online article); see also: Storey 2012: 107.
[252] For more information, see: Bongiovanni 2017 (online article).

Originally meant to be called "Miss 'Petty' Pettavel", she might have been mainly based on Kathleen Pettigrew (unknown birth and death dates), to whom that scrapped idea for a name directly alludes.[253] Pettigrew was the personal assistant to Stewart Menzies (1890–1968), the head of MI6 from 1939 to 1952 (Trahair 2004: 354; Macintyre 2008: 83-84).[254] Apart from her, several other possible sources of influence can be pinpointed. Those include Vera Atkins (1908–2000), an intelligence officer who worked in the SOE, Victoire "Paddy" Ridsdale née Bennett (1921–2009), Fleming's secretary during World War II, Joan Bright Astley (1910–2008), his war-time girlfriend, and Joan Howe (unknown birth and death dates), his post-war secretary at *The Times* whom he entrusted with typing the manuscript of his first book (Macintyre 2008: 84; MacLean 2011: 57; Buckland 2016: 19; Aragão 2020: 143-144).

3.1.5. *Casino Royale* (1953) as a Sensational Spy Thriller and Generic Hybrid

In *Casino Royale*, the semi-fictional British Secret Service assigns the protagonist to a sensationally suspenseful "high-risk, high-reward" clandestine operation in Royale-les-Eaux, a fictional town in northern France possibly modelled after Cabourg.[255] Entrusted with a total of 20 million francs from the organisation's budget, Bond practices gambling at the local casino, posing as a rich playboy and client of a prosperous Jamaican import-export firm. His objective is to enter the upcoming high-stakes baccarat game and bankrupt Le Chiffre – an extremely dangerous Soviet agent who serves as the covert treasurer and paymaster for a huge Alsatian trade union controlled by communists. On his assignment, Bond is assisted by two allied foreign secret agents – René Mathis from the Deuxième Bureau and Felix Leiter from the CIA. MI6, on its part, delegates the task of aiding 007 on the spot to Vesper Lynd, a personal assistant to Head of S (the section focused on the Soviet Union). Naturally, all those and some other characters work undercover. This highlights the inherent link between spy thrillers and thrillers of acquired identity.

If 007's mission proves a success, the international expansion of communism will be hindered, with that potential Red fifth column in France gravely weakened. The approximate deficit of 50 million francs in its funds, caused by the antagonist's unau-

[253] As for the actual name "Moneypenny", it traces back to one of the characters from Peter Fleming's (Ian's elder brother's) unfinished and unpublished novel *The Sett* (Caplen 2010: 83).
[254] For a biography of Menzies, see: Brown 1987.
[255] See: Salter 2013 (online article).

thorised and misbegotten past investment in a chain of brothels, will be increased by the additional 25 million francs lost in the card duel. In the case of Bond's failure, however, MI6 will inadvertently supply Le Chiffre with a huge chunk of the sum he desperately needs to recover in order to conceal the large scale fraud from his Russian supervisors, who, unbeknownst to the villain, already suspect him of some form of treacherous maladministration at the very beginning of the story. Le Chiffre works for the aforementioned ruthless SMERSH. It is a fictional Soviet counterintelligence agency similar to the real-world KGB,[256] although named after and loosely inspired by a Stalinist military organisation led by Viktor Abakumov (1908–1954) in the years 1943–1946.[257] The original SMERSH was tasked with eliminating counterrevolutionaries and Nazi collaborators; its existence was not widely known until the fall of the Soviet Union. The fact that the novel references that top secret body is obviously a testament to Fleming's affiliation with the intelligence community during World War II. Clearly, he must have gained access to some confidential information on SMERSH, but it is also highly probable that his knowledge of its workings was superficial (Birstein 2011: 1-3; West 2011: vii-ix; Frazier 2021: 42).[258]

In terms of plot structure, *Casino Royale* is fairly uncomplicated. It is composed of three major segments: Bond's mission preparations followed by the proper gambling duel against Le Chiffre, the former's torture at the hands of the latter, and the protagonist's love affair with Vesper. With the exception of the partially retrospective exposition spread across the first three chapters, the novel features a chiefly linear sequence of suspenseful episodes interspersed with some comedic and romantic ones.

The narrative begins *in medias res* with a nauseated Bond slowly leaving the eponymous casino after a fruitful yet tiring gambling night. In a thrilleresque fashion, the opening scene evokes palpable tension. First, the protagonist discreetly observes Le Chiffre and bitterly notices that the latter seems to be on a winning streak. Then, 007 reflects on the tight security of the *caisse* [cash desk] and comes to the conclusion that, luckily, the antagonist will be unable to rob it. Finally, Bond decides to return to his hotel room to check if it had been searched by anyone in his absence. On his way there,

[256] The Soviet secret police was formally transformed into the KGB in 1954, eleven months after the release of *Casino Royale* (Lawson 1984: 160).
[257] According to the fictionalised MI6 in Fleming's debut novel, his version of SMERSH is most probably headed by Lavrentiy Beria (1899–1953) (1953/2006: 18).
[258] The name SMERSH, in relation to both the real-world and fictitious organisation, is a blend of the Russian words *Смерть шпио́нам* (transcr. *Smyert Shpionam*; lit. death to spies). That portmanteau was invented by Joseph Stalin (Fleming 1953/2006: 18; Dowling 2015: 802).

the main character briefly stops by the *concierge* – whom he distrusts – and attends covert telegram correspondence. Next, instead of using the elevator, Bond quietly goes upstairs in order not to startle potential unwanted guests. This is followed by a meticulous survey of the apartment that brings the gradually accumulating suspense to its peak and subsequent dissolution:

> Bond knew exactly where the switch was and it was with one flow of motion that he stood on the threshold with the door full open, the light on and a gun in his hand. The safe, empty room sneered at him. He ignored the half-open door of the bathroom and, locking himself in, he turned up the bed-light and the mirror-light and threw his gun on the settee beside the window. Then he bent down and inspected one of his own black hairs which still lay undisturbed where he had left it before dinner, wedged into the drawer of the writing-desk.
>
> Next he examined a faint trace of talcum powder on the inner rim of the porcelain handle of the clothes cupboard. It appeared immaculate. He went into the bathroom, lifted the cover of the lavatory cistern and verified the level of the water against a small scratch on the copper ball-cock.
>
> Doing all this, inspecting these minute burglar-alarms, did not make him feel foolish or self-conscious. He was a secret agent, and still alive thanks to his exact attention to the detail of his profession. Routine precautions were to him no more unreasonable than they would be to a deep-sea diver or a test pilot, or to any man earning danger-money.
>
> Satisfied that his room had not been searched while he was at the casino, Bond undressed and took a cold shower [...] (Fleming 1953/2006: 7-8).

While 007's examination of various tiny details inside the apartment might seem sensationally overblown, the very idea of the spy's pedantic carefulness is obviously realistic. Soon after the inspection, the protagonist goes to sleep and, as he rests, the narrative temporarily diverts to the specifics of his secret mission as well as the circumstances in which he has been assigned to it. Subsequently, the story resumes its main course.

In the morning, Bond receives a visit from René Mathis, disguised as the Director of Radio Stentor. Their meeting involves a significant amount of farcical play-acting that, in terms of generic hybridity, links the novel to comedies and yet again thrillers of acquired identity. Upon entering the room, the French spy discreetly gestures for the British one not to exchange casual greetings at once, and so both initially pretend that they are complete strangers. Knowing that a hidden microphone has been surreptitiously planted in one of the walls, Mathis promptly and flippantly uses a radio set to produce, at maximum volume, "an appalling roar of static [...] on the floor beside the unlit panel electric fire below the mantelpiece" (Fleming 1953/2006: 27). Next, he turns his screeching device off, allegedly for the sole purpose of tuning it, and subsequently on in order to fill the room with the sound of a French concert. Then, amidst the noise, he temporarily abandons the masquerade to bluntly inform 007 that the latter's cover has

already been blown and one of "the Muntzes", two eavesdropping opposition agents upstairs, has most certainly just been painfully deafened by the loud music. With a view to confusing and annoying their unwanted auditors even further, Mathis, "the Director of Radio Stentor", and Bond, "the Jamaican playboy", comically continue to play with the radio set while talking to each other. The former basically turns it on and off at intervals; correspondingly, both friends shift between their respective real and false identities. In practice, those precautions are meant to ensure that the enemy listeners can only intercept largely nonsensical trivia, but not relevant confidential information, whose exchange is each time safely masked by the melodic broadcast. Overall, this entire situation seems far more sensational than realistic on grounds of its ludicrous humour.

Although much of the conversation is light-hearted, it is also suffused with suspenseful foreshadowing. Already upon Bond's arrival in Royale-les-Eaux, for some reason his adversaries have an explicit advantage over him, which he straight away correctly attributes to their fairly superb competence, but will nonetheless remain unable to fully understand until Vesper confesses her treason to him by the end of the story. In this particular spy thriller, a lot of tension is maintained by the fact that the secret agents from the Eastern Bloc keep those from the Western one under strict surveillance and *vice versa*. "The Jamaican playboy" is of course genuinely perplexed with his immediate exposure – he has hoped to stay incognito for at least some time. Basically, that unwelcome complication as well as the protagonist's anxious reaction to it conventionally highlight the narrowing proximity of danger within the story. Bond fears that the Russians might have cracked one of MI6's ciphers, but Mathis assures him that this has definitely not been the case and those have already been changed anyway to increase 007's safety. Despite this and other calming efforts, the Frenchman inadvertently augments the Brit's worries, in part by explaining that Le Chiffre himself is aided not only by two adept guards, but also by a group of three loyal Bulgarian underlings.

Besides that, "the Director of Radio Stentor" reveals that he, in turn, is helped by a charming and skilled "wireless expert", Vesper Lynd, whom Bond is required to meet since MI6 has assigned her to become his personal assistant. At first, 007 is highly sceptical about the idea of professionally cooperating with a woman, deeming her utterly incapable of handling "a man's job". That initial sexism begins to gradually recede from the very moment he makes Vesper's acquaintance at the Hermitage bar, where he recognises her not only as a great beauty, but even more importantly as an assertive and

intelligent person. Naturally, this is not intended to suggest that at some point Bond permanently ceases to display chauvinistic behaviours towards the other sex, but rather indicates that already in the first novel those eventually become relatively sporadic and – more often than not – trifling.

Shortly after leaving the bar, Bond miraculously – hence, sensationally – survives an assassination attempt orchestrated by SMERSH and executed by two of the aforementioned Bulgarians. It is implied that one of Le Chiffre's guards has equipped them with two box camera-cases, one red and one blue. The thugs have been instructed to throw the former – a bomb – at the protagonist, and then cover their escape from the crime scene with the help of the latter – a "smoke bomb". Fortunately for 007, the perpetrators, concerned about their own safety, modify that plan and activate the alleged smoke bomb prior to the bomb, effectively blowing themselves up on the spot (death-*ex-machina*) and merely stunning the slowly approaching yet still relatively distant target, additionally shielded from the blast by a nearby tree trunk (tree-*ex-machina*). Unbeknownst to the bombers, SMERSH has actually sent them on a suicide mission with two deadly bombs, hoping that ideally they would kill the British agent and then themselves. Presumably, that organisation has also intended to murder the third Bulgarian, indirectly involved in the assault, thus leaving no survivors who could potentially trace the explosions back to their masterminds. In any case, as emphasised by Wojciech Orliński, Fleming's Bond is frequently saved from danger by lucky coincidences (2006: 207). Obviously, their accumulation tends to obscure the overall impression of verisimilitude within the stories.

Even so, that fictional botched bomb attack is actually based on a real one. On February 24, 1942, in Ankara, NKVD failed to eliminate Franz von Papen, the German Ambassador to Turkey. According to Fleming, "the assassins were also [Bulgarians] and they were blown to nothing while von Papen and Fran von Papen, walking from their house to the Embassy, were only knocked down and bruised by the blast" (1962a: 61). The writer's account of this incident is not entirely accurate. In truth, there was only one would-be assassin – Ömer Tokat, a Yugoslavian student of law from Istanbul University. Two other Muslim communists, Abdurrahman Sayma (a student of medicine) and Süleyman Sağol (a local barber), had practised gun shooting with him, but did not participate in the attack. Tokat had been recruited by Russian secret agents, Georgiy Pavlov and Leonid Kornilov. They had provided him with a pistol and a "smoke bomb"

which, in truth, was an explosive (Volodarsky 2019: 280; Bezci 2020: 200; İşçi 2020: 109-111).

Another realistic facet of the assault on 007 is that, in its immediate aftermath, the main character witnesses a meticulously detailed and gruesome sight of destruction. This includes the two Bulgarians' scattered remains:

> When, dazed and half-conscious, [Bond] raised himself on one knee, a ghastly rain of pieces of flesh and shreds of blood-soaked clothing fell on him and around him, mingled with branches and gravel. Then a shower of small twigs and leaves. From all sides came the sharp tinkle of falling glass. Above in the sky hung a mushroom of black smoke which rose and dissolved as he drunkenly watched it. There was an obscene smell of high explosive, of burning wood, and of, yes, that was it – roast mutton. For fifty yards down the boulevard the trees were leafless and charred. Opposite, two of them had snapped off near the base and lay drunkenly across the road. Between them there was a still smoking crater. Of the two men in straw hats, there remained absolutely nothing. But there were red traces on the road, and on the pavements and against the trunks of the trees, and there were glittering shreds high up in the branches. Bond felt himself starting to vomit (Fleming 1953/2006: 43-44).

The quoted excerpt is somewhat reminiscent of the one in which Conrad's Chief Inspector Heat examines Stevie's mangled corpse in *The Secret Agent*. As previously indicated in the section devoted to that novel, the practice of "zooming in" on details evokes associations with the Victorian realistic novel, whereas the grotesque manner of description with Gothic fiction. The theme of unsettling corporeal destruction is also commonly explored in present-day body horror. Fleming's passage, in comparison with Conrad's, might of course seem more literary due to the discernible accumulation of stylistic devices. Those include metaphors, epithets, and personification.

In *Casino Royale*, the bombing incident is eventually investigated by the spy-detective Mathis as well as the French police. This, however, is done strictly in the background of the main events of the story. Hence, the generic link to detective fiction and police procedurals is relatively tenuous, though still discernible.

After a brief rest in his hotel room, Bond goes to the casino. The protagonist plays roulette at the same table as Leiter. The two allied agents promptly recognise each other as competent and, chiefly on that account, become friends. Together, they plot Le Chiffre's downfall as well as discuss the incidents involving the Muntzes and the Bulgarians. Leiter also warns 007 not to trust the hotel concierge, who has most likely been bribed by the opposition. In accordance with spy thriller conventions, the conversation generally highlights various espionage-related dangers.

On the whole, *Casino Royale* conspicuously reflects Fleming's genuine respect for the USA, a feeling partially rooted in his positive cooperation with American Intelligence during World War II. At one point in the novel, the CIA practically saves MI6's mission from failure. More specifically, once Bond gets cleaned out at baccarat, Leiter provides him with "Marshall Aid", i.e., additional thirty-two million francs that eventually turn the tides of the game. This is obviously a loose reference to the real-world Marshall Plan, a U.S.-sponsored program enacted in 1948 to support the economic revitalisation of post-war Western Europe (Prentzas 2011: 15, 33). Another crucial observation is that the name "Felix Leiter" literally translates as "Happy Leader".[259] This emphasises the USA's large contribution to the Allied Victory in WWII as well as the country's ensuing acquisition of a global superpower status, in this case parallel to that of the leader of the Western Bloc.

Unsurprisingly, *Casino Royale* sensationally eschews the subject of real-world Anglo-American tensions. Most notably, it overlooks their exacerbation after Burgess and MacLean's defection to the Soviet Union in 1951, much like that very British scandal itself. To some extent, the novel idealises the relationship between MI6 and the CIA, portraying these organisations as mutually respectful partners and rivals. The former, in particular, is positively envied by the latter on grounds of devising the plan to bankrupt Le Chiffre. It is also not without significance that Bond and Leiter, who both cooperate and compete with each other, are depicted as comparably skilled and experienced agents. With the help of such details, Fleming propagandistically masks the post-war decline of the British Empire, elevating it to a position of international influence similar to that of the contemporary USA.

007's meeting with the American is followed by that with Vesper. Bond takes her to the aforementioned posh French restaurant at the Hotel Splendide. There, she shares with him Mathis's new findings on the Bulgarians, the third of whom has just been arrested by the local police. One of the main revelations is that the assassins have been double-crossed by their employer. That recurring emphasis on the ruthlessness and ingenuity of SMERSH is clearly meant to induce suspense. As a stock (spy) thriller protagonist, 007 is in conflict with formidable foes who pose a serious threat to his life and well-being. This is one of the reasons why he highly values professionalism at work, even to the point of getting irritated at Vesper for suggesting that they enjoy each

[259] "Felix" is a Latin word for "happy", whereas "Leiter" a German one for "leader".

other's company at dinner (which they actually do). Much like hard-boiled detectives, the tough guy protagonist frequently attempts to repress his soft side, especially when faced with a challenging job-related task whose execution could get adversely affected by sentiments.

On the subject of upcoming difficulties, Bond informs his assistant that baccarat is largely a game of chance in which the banker has a slight advantage over him and the other players. This is precisely what makes Bond's card duel with Le Chiffre suspenseful. While nearly equal, the odds of winning are still not in the main character's favour; his victory over the gangster heavily depends on luck. Their fateful gambling bout has two turning points. First, the antagonist wins three coups in a row and, in effect, cleans out the protagonist. Then, with the help of Leiter's "Marshall Aid", the British agent bankrupts the banker in two coups, although not without any further complications along the way.

As a matter of fact, Bond's decision to buy back into the game nearly costs him his life. He is attacked by one of Le Chiffre's bodyguards at the casino table, and yet all the people gathered around it, save for the hero and villains, miraculously fail to notice that. The assailant, armed with a silenced gun disguised as a cane, attempts to coerce 007 into withdrawing the first bet. The former presses the weapon against the base of the latter's spine, threatens to shoot at the count of ten unless the demand is met on time, and proceeds to whispering consecutive numbers. Under such peculiar circumstances, the thug's "invisibility" is rather uncanny, much like his firm conviction that after committing that murder he would be able to leave the building undetected and undisturbed. Furthermore, Bond retaliates in a spectacular – hence, sensational – manner. All of a sudden, he strongly pushes himself backwards in his chair, which, in the process of falling, successfully disarms and repels the gunman. All this illustrates that, from time to time, Fleming patently sacrifices situational realism for the sake of adding excitement to the plot.

In terms of genre, Bond's baccarat duel with Le Chiffre links *Casino Royale* to thrillers of moral confrontation. That clash is simply presented as one in which the forces of good triumph over those of evil. Of course, this particular main character is not devoid of flaws and vices (such as conceit, arrogance, overconfidence, and wrath), but those do not overshadow his various virtues, most notably patriotism and a capacity for selflessness. While the combination of positive and negative qualities adds a veneer of realism to 007, his killing and sabotage skills are superhuman; on top of that, he is

an extremely handsome and adept seducer. As previously indicated, the idealisation of the protagonist, in this case only partial, is typical of sensational spy thrillers. Fleming adopts this convention in conjunction with another related one. For the sake of achieving a strikingly contrasting effect, he portrays the antagonists as repulsively grotesque. Le Chiffre, for example, is compared to "a black-fleeced Minotaur" and "an octopus under a rock" (Fleming 1953/2006: 83, 100). As for his two bodyguards, one of them has a small, squat, and excessively hairy body with severely decayed teeth, whereas the other looks "funereal in his dinner-jacket" and is somewhat reminiscent of the strong and mentally challenged Lennie from John Steinbeck's 1937 novella *Of Mice and Men* (Fleming 1953/2006: 85-86).

Having collected the winnings, Bond returns the "Marshall Aid" to Leiter in cash, leaving himself with a cheque for over forty million francs. The protagonist decides not to carry that document about him in order to circumvent any prospective mugging attempt on Le Chiffre and his men's part. Escorted by the American, the Brit manages to safely reach the hotel and surreptitiously hide the cheque behind the number plate of his room. Convinced that he has outsmarted his enemies, 007 makes the mistake of not taking any other precautions against them. Once he carelessly goes on a date to the Roi Galant night-club, the villains break into his apartment. Unable to find the cheque on their own, they kidnap Vesper so as to engage Bond in a car chase and lure him into a trap. Clearly, Fleming utilises the protagonist's overconfidence as a pretext for incorporating additional suspenseful subplots into the novel. Most importantly, their unrealistic aspects directly tie *Casino Royale* to sensational spy thrillers. Le Chiffre's plan to capture 007 alive for questioning involves forcing the latter's Bentley to run over a carpet of steel spikes and, ultimately, crash at high speed on the road. The antagonist's scheme is highly implausible (if not altogether dumb) since, in discordance with his primary objective, he puts the protagonist's life in grave danger. Irrespective of that, Bond miraculously and already typically survives the accident. What makes this turn of events all the more preposterous is that the main character does not even break a single bone. Upon regaining consciousness among the gangsters, he merely feels achy and dispirited.

The prisoners are taken to separate rooms at a secluded villa rented by Le Chiffre. While Vesper is only watched over by his bodyguards, 007 is brutally interrogated by their leader. Strapped naked to a bottomless chair, the protagonist gets repeatedly hit in the crotch with a carpet beater for refusing to confess where the cheque is. According

to Fleming, this grotesque form of abuse is "a greatly watered-down version of one of these French-Moroccan tortures known as *Passer à la Mandoline*, which was practiced on several [British] agents [during World War II]" (1962a: 61). Compared to Bond's ordeal, its declared real-life basis is more drastic indeed. The procedure entails slicing the scrotum in half with a mandolin wire (Griswold 2006: 64).

Eventually, enraged by 007's unwavering resistance, the torturer grabs a knife. Just as the victim is about to get brutally castrated, a masked SMERSH assassin breaks into the villa and murders all the other antagonists for Le Chiffre's treason (assassin-*ex-machina*). That extraordinary coincidence is immediately followed by another one. Bond survives the ambush simply because the newcomer has not been ordered to kill him. Of course, Vesper is spared as well since she secretly collaborates with the Russians.

Instead of executing 007 on the spot, the hitman resorts to a different and rather unorthodox precaution. Upon leaving, he uses a stiletto to carve the Cyrillic letter Sha (*ш*) on the back of Bond's right hand so as to mark him as a *шпион* (transcr. shpion; lit. spy). If the latter ventures to confront any other SMERSH operatives in the future, that sign is meant to immediately expose him as a threat. The assassin's line of reasoning is largely impractical. Not only does 007 escape death, but it is also implied that his newly-acquired scars can be surgically camouflaged. Overall, it is vital to pinpoint the discrepancy between the incredibly careless (yet sensational) decisions made by some SMERSH affiliates and the recurring emphasis on the high efficiency of that organisation throughout the novel. This could be interpreted as inconsistent storytelling, though the very idea that Russian agents are fallible does of course exude an air of verisimilitude.

Ultimately, Bond and Vesper are rescued by a group of French agents from the Deuxième Bureau. Two days after the torture, the protagonist wakes up at a nursing home in Royale and, due to his injuries, spends the next three weeks there. Mathis pays him two visits at that facility. During the second one, 007 explains why, in the wake of recent events, he has decided to resign from his job:

> 'When I was being beaten up, [...] I suddenly liked the idea of being alive. Before Le Chiffre began, he used a phrase which stuck in my mind... 'playing Red Indians'.[260] He said that's what I had been doing. Well, I suddenly thought he might be right [...].'

[260] This phrase alludes to Fleming's pet name for his aforementioned 30 Assault Unit, "Red Indians" (Cabell 2009: 7).

> ‘You see, [...] when one’s young, it seems very easy to distinguish between right and wrong, but as one gets older it becomes more difficult. At school it’s easy to pick out one’s own villains and heroes and one grows up wanting to be a hero and kill the villains [...].’
>
> ‘Well, in the last few years I’ve killed two villains. The first was in New York [...]. The next time in Stockholm [...].’
>
> ‘Now, [...] that’s all very fine. The hero kills two villains, but when the hero Le Chiffre starts to kill the villain Bond and the villain Bond knows he isn’t a villain at all, you see the other side of the medal. The villains and heroes get all mixed up.’
>
> ‘Of course, [...] patriotism comes along and makes it seem fairly all right, but this country-right-or-wrong business is getting a little out-of-date. Today we are fighting Communism. Okay. If I’d been alive fifty years ago, the brand of Conservatism we have today would have been damn near called Communism and we should have been told to go and fight that. History is moving pretty quickly these days and the heroes and villains keep on changing parts’ (Fleming 1953/2006: 157-160).

In the quoted excerpt, Bond reflects upon the moral ambiguity of intelligence work and politics. This complex issue, commonly explored in realist spy thrillers, receives relatively scant attention in *Casino Royale*, and so the generic link is merely loose. Actually, by the end of the novel, 007 forthrightly rejects “his own little sophistries” in order to embark on a heroic crusade against the villainous SMERSH (Fleming 1953/2006: 211). Vesper’s treason plainly augments the protagonist’s fear of enemy infiltration. Largely out of a sense of patriotic duty, he stays in his job to protect his country and its people. The main character basically acts in accordance with Mathis’s advice: “Surround yourself with human beings, my dear James. They are easier to fight for than principles” (Fleming 1953/2006: 164). This is just as though the Frenchman was saying “You have to bond, James Bond” (pun intended).

007’s convalescence gives new impetus to the romantic subplot. Vesper regularly calls on him at the nursing home and, as a result, their mutual attachment grows exponentially. Once the protagonist’s clinical treatment is over, she takes him on a surprise vacation to a small French inn by the sea. This holiday, fairly blissful at first, is eventually ruined. In order to foreshadow its abrupt end, Fleming interweaves the love affair with ominously suspenseful incidents, in the novel frequently referred to as “question marks” or “shadows”. Already on the way to that holiday destination, Vesper notices that the car they have just hired is tailed by another one. As the former stops off the main road and the latter does not, Bond wrongly assumes that she has made a mistake and manages to temporarily calm her down. Later, much to Vesper’s distress, the driver who has indeed been following them comes to the villa twice. He pretends to be a passing guest, but, in truth, keeps them under surveillance. Ultimately, it is revealed

that this mysterious intruder, implicitly marked as a villain by a black patch over one of his eyes, is a SMERSH agent operating under the alias "Adolph Gettler" (a pun on the name Adolf Hitler). This man is simply yet another grotesque evil-doer – a stock character in sensational spy thrillers.

Alarmed, Bond inquires Mathis about Gettler, but does not learn anything unsettling about the stranger. Irrespective of that, the protagonist is deeply concerned about Vesper's occasionally suspicious behaviour. She keeps telling him lies about a phone call, allegedly to his French ally, as well as secretly attempts to make another one. This dishonesty obscures the couple's thread of understanding and, in a thrilleresque fashion, augments the overall sense of foreboding that permeates most of their holiday.

Casino Royale concludes with a grim plot twist, and so in a manner that is far more characteristic of realist than sensational spy thrillers. Bond talks to Vesper about his intention to marry her and, soon afterwards, she commits suicide. Prior to killing herself, the woman has left him a farewell letter that exposes her as a double agent for the Russians. As previously indicated, Vesper has agreed to spy for them because they have captured and threatened to kill her Polish lover, whom in the end she has melodramatically forsaken once her affection has been transferred onto 007. Hunted by SMERSH for her recent disobedience, the reformed *femme fatale* has simply decided to die a sacrificial drug overdose death to ensure that her new beloved would not be collaterally murdered with her. The protagonist reacts to all that with a mixture of anger and grief. He is frustrated with Vesper's treason and its damaging effects on him and their homeland, but also makes a personal resolution to go on a vengeful rampage against that Soviet organisation. The novel closes with Bond trying to repress his romantic feelings and callously informing a liaison officer that "The bitch is dead now" (Fleming 1953/2006: 213), which is reminiscent of caustic noir film endings of the 1940s and 1950s.

3.1.6. The Spy Who Treats People Unequally – Fleming's Bond and Xenophobia

In *Casino Royale*, Bond's seaside holiday with Vesper at the humble inn quickly turns from an idyll into a tragedy. Unlike typical stock fairy tale and romance characters, the couple does not "live happily ever after". Considering that pessimistic transition, it substantiates yet another realistic facet of 007 – he is portrayed as a spy who "cannot ever enjoy lasting domestic sanctity because his existence and actions are prefigured to dis-

solve or taint any possibility of it" (Goodman 2016: 82). To put it in simple terms, the protagonist spies and, in consequence, is also likely to be spied on; faced with the ever-present threat of enemy attacks targeted at himself, his connections, and his country, he cautiously protects and/or endangers the private lives of many other people, *nolens volens* at the expense of largely sacrificing his own. This is also emphasised in *From Russia with Love*. In the process of convincing Bond to travel to England on the Orient Express, Tatiana Romanova shares with him the following vision of their mutual journey: "During the day we will talk and read and at night you [007] will stand in the corridor outside our house [i.e., train compartment] and guard it" (Fleming 1957/2006: 237). Those two quotations highlight the inevitable connection between espionage and xenophobic behaviours. At this point, for the sake of clarity, it is crucial to disambiguate the term "xenophobia", which nowadays often evokes strictly negative connotations on account of being oversimplistically reduced to unreasonable fear and/or hatred of strangers/foreigners:

> It is possible to distinguish at least four [stages of xenophobia]. The first one is c a u t i o n with strangers ('a stranger, so maybe dangerous'); the second one is a n t i p a t h y towards them as those who violate our customs and our moral or aesthetic canons; the third one is h o s t i l i t y, and the fourth one – h a t e. Let us notice that each of these stages can originate from one of two distinct and, for that matter, non-mutually exclusive sources: it can be either f e a r of the stranger and his/her intentions, unknown to us, or a b h o r r e n c e of his/her way of living, too distant from our own [...]. The fact that xenophobia [...] becomes dangerous at its higher stages does not mean that at the lower ones it is perhaps not inherently indispensable to life. There exist many human attributes of that sort; the most evident one is self-care, which at its higher stages takes the form of flagrant egocentricity and egoism. It would obviously be absurd to combat egoism through the elimination of all self-care in general (Musiał and Wolniewicz 2003: 27-28; translation mine, original emphases).

The notion of a "stranger" is a complex one; this term can refer to:

a) a non-member of one's broadly understood group(s) of affiliation (religious, racial, ethnic, national, family, friend, acquaintance, colleague, political, gender, sexual orientation, etc.);
b) someone who violates one's customs and moral or aesthetic canons;
c) someone whose intentions one does not know;
d) someone whose way of living is too distant from one's own;
e) plainly another person; in this sense, members of one's group(s) of affiliation remain strangers nonetheless, and so everybody except oneself is a stranger.

In the course of this analysis of Bond's xenophobic conduct, xenophobia will be broadly understood as every form of distinguishing oneself and/or some people from others that entails a less privileged treatment of those others. As emphasised in the quoted excerpt, not all xenophobic behaviours are intrinsically irrational and harmful; on top of that, some of them are ubiquitous and inevitable. For safety purposes, people are generally cautious with one another. In particular, they are by rule unwilling to trust anybody, even their loved ones, to the point of not keeping absolutely any secrets from them. Furthermore, virtually nobody likes everybody, and so in this sense antipathy is omnipresent as well. Considering 007, he exhibits all of the aforementioned four stages of xenophobia, which, in all its complexity, has more and less violent forms.

Throughout Fleming's *oeuvre*, Bond is hostile and, occasionally, hateful towards his enemies, i.e., malevolent conspirators, mainly Soviet Russians, international terrorists, and criminal masterminds. In essence, the protagonist is presented as the morally superior assailant. Frequently, 007 combats the affiliates of either the communist SMERSH or the apolitical SPECTRE, two ruthless and murderous organisations. As emphasised by Martin Parker, "[t]he villains themselves are always physically monstrous, foreign, not sexually normal, cruel, and greedy [...]" (2018: 182). Basically, they serve as a foil to the handsome, suave, and self-sacrificing main character, which is in accordance with the conventions of the sensational spy thriller, heavily reliant on such clear-cut binary oppositions. Simultaneously, the antagonists' high-stage xenophobia realistically augments that of the protagonist and *vice versa*. This is simply a positive feedback loop.

As revealed in *Casino Royale*, Bond harbours antipathy towards disorderly associates, be it overemotional, overambitious, disloyal or plainly stupid ones (Fleming 1953/2006: 24, 32). This is, to some extent, connected to the fact that he is highly pedantic, pragmatic, and cynical, but even more so to his self-preservation instinct. Given that, as a spy, the protagonist continuously risks his life and well-being, he simply does not want his secret operations to be further jeopardised by incompetent allies.

While 007's fear of ineptitude in his teammates is understandable, he also, in part, unfairly associates that defect with members of the other sex, although only at the start of the series (Fleming 1953/2006: 30-32, 116). Actually, already in the first novel, Bond's sexist conviction is directly challenged by Vesper's intelligence and

assertiveness.[261] Largely under her influence, he begins to display a genuine admiration and respect for skilled, adventurous, and (sexually) independent women, albeit sometimes with glimmers of male chauvinism. All those sentiments coincide in, among others, the following passage from *Casino Royale*:

> [Bond] found [Vesper's] companionship easy and unexacting. There was something enigmatic about her which was a constant stimulus. She gave little of her real personality away and he felt that however long they were together there would always be a private room inside her which he could never invade. She was thoughtful and full of consideration without being slavish and without compromising her arrogant spirit. And now he knew that she was profoundly, excitingly sensual, but that the conquest of her body, because of the central privacy in her, would each time have the sweet tang of rape. Loving her physically would each time be a thrilling voyage without the anticlimax of arrival. She would surrender herself avidly, he thought, and greedily enjoy all the intimacies of the bed without ever allowing herself to be possessed (Fleming 1953/2006: 186).

In order not to misinterpret that excerpt, it is vital to note that Bond fantasises about strictly consensual sex; on the whole, he does not intend to condone the idea of forced intercourse, even though it might superficially seem otherwise. Admittedly, "the sweet tang of rape" is an appalling oxymoronic phrase, and yet 007 does not think that rape *per se* is sweet. Within the source paragraph, that awkwardly ambiguous expression is used hyperbolically to emphasise Bond's excitement at the thought that Vesper will respond to his future erotic advances in a non-subservient manner. Of course, the protagonist one-dimensionally perceives himself as "the conqueror" and her as "the conquered", but in doing so he also aligns both masculinity and femininity with powerful agency. At that precise moment in the story, Bond resolves to make a marriage proposal to his assistant, whom he physically desires, but also holds in high regard as an emancipated woman. He appreciates the fact that she can generally act on her own terms, untrammelled by his confident demeanour. Eventually, in accordance with the protagonist's predictions, Vesper turns out to be far from a submissive lover, but that is not exclusively related to keeping him at a distance. Similarly to 007, she is also fully capable of initiating and directing intercourse when she herself feels the urge to do so. Furthermore, the sexual sphere is only one of those in which both characters are committed to fulfilling their respective/mutual wants and needs. As romantic partners, spies, consumers, and plainly individuals, they attempt to exert their own wills

[261] Prior to meeting her, 007 simply thought that "[w]omen were for recreation. On a job, they got in the way and fogged things up with sex and hurt feelings and all the emotional baggage they carried around. One had to look out for them and take care of them" (Fleming 1953/2006: 32).

upon the surrounding world instead of conducting themselves passively and obsequiously in it. It is important to stress that the protagonist's fascination with his assistant is intertwined with xenophobia. He generally finds emancipated women far more alluring than non-emancipated ones, and so favours the company of the former over that of the latter. On a broader note, he is inherently cautious with all members of the other sex, albeit to varying degrees. This depends not only on the extent to which he perceives particular women as appealing, but also the degree to which he views them as potentially dangerous to himself and his clandestine operations.

Obviously, Bond's relationship with Vesper, much like that with Tracy Draco in *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*, is unique in the sense that he genuinely falls in love and, consequently, aspires to marriage. By rule, 007 pursues non-binding and short-lived affairs, and so a case could easily be made that he treats most of his romantic interests instrumentally. Definitely, there is a tinge of superficiality in his promiscuity, but it would be both restrictive and unjust to interpret it solely in that regard.

As a matter of fact, Bond's initial appearances in fiction practically foreshadowed the upcoming sexual revolution of the 1960s, not only through his liberal attitude to non-marital sex near the end of the pre-pill era. After all, he neither seeks nor instils meekness and servility in his female lovers, and so it is a mistake to accuse him of being unequivocally misogynistic. In *Casino Royale* and subsequent parts of the series, the protagonist principally becomes attracted to those women with whom he needs to negotiate; they exhibit strength of character, often in spite of unhappy or even traumatic past and present experiences (Black 2017: 47-49). Curiously, that pro-feminist aspect of Fleming's espionage stories, at the time of their release still progressive in advocating female self-reliance and feistiness, tends to be overlooked in critical studies, discussions, and reviews.[262] Most likely, this is because the books also contain sexist overtones, as evidenced by the disturbing "sweet tang of rape", the grotesque names of some of the Bond girls (in particular, Pussy Galore, Kissy Suzuki, Honeychile Rider, and Mary Goodnight) as well as the mildly pornographic focus on women as objects of a voyeuristic male gaze (Chapman 2005: 134).[263] Another possible

[262] For a monograph that acknowledges and specifically deals with feminist overtones in Fleming's books and some of their film adaptations, see: Caplen 2010.

[263] Incidentally, the release of *Casino Royale* coincided with the launch of the American edition of *Playboy*. Not long afterwards, in the years 1960–1966, several spy thrillers from Fleming's Bond series appeared in that magazine, either in the form of single or serialised instalments. In both cases, the printed text was enriched with story-related artworks by various artists. Three decades later, between 1997 and 2000, some of Raymond Benson's 007 works were published in a similar fashion. On a broader note,

reason is that in many (especially early) film adaptations 007 is depicted as more patronising – he frequently seduces voluptuous belles without much effort and with an air of superiority.[264]

Returning to the subject of antipathy, Fleming's protagonist either is or at least occasionally acts as if he was prejudiced against certain national, racial, and ethnic groups. This can be illustrated with various examples, only some of which will be given in order to maintain coherence of the discussion. In *From Russia with Love*, Bond dislikes "dark, ugly, [and] neat" modern Turks chiefly because of their ostensibly evil eyes, described as "bright, angry, [and] cruel" as well as "hard, untrusting, [and] jealous" (Fleming 1957/2006: 153-154). In *Goldfinger*, he considers Koreans to be "rather lower than apes in the mammalian hierarchy" (Fleming 1959/2006: 244). In "Quantum of Solace", he views "beautiful Negresses" as "trouble" because they allegedly "don't know anything about birth control" (Fleming 1960/2006: 105).

While reading Fleming's spy thrillers, it is important to recognise that, to a large extent, he wrote them in a tongue-in-cheek manner (Pearson 1966/2013: 270; Eco 1979/1984: 172; Cawelti and Rosenberg 1987: 52). Hence, the desired effect of 007's derogatory reflections is typically meant to be comedic, otherwise suspense-inducing. Naturally, this does not make the stereotypes embedded in them any less harmful. To expand on that comment, it is useful to transpose a modified excerpt from Whoopi Goldberg's 2005 *Tom & Jerry* cartoon disclaimer onto Fleming's *oeuvre*:

> [T]he outrageous brand of humour [and suspense featured in the original Bond books] comes to us from a time when racial and ethnic differences were caricatured in the name of entertainment. Now, while humour [and suspense] may have been the intent of such caricatures, they also have the effect of revealing [the contemporary British] society's unfair and hurtful representations of people of colour, women, and ethnic groups [...]. These prejudices were wrong then and are certainly wrong today.[265]

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from 1960 to this day, *Playboy* has been fairly regularly documenting the evolution of the Bond media franchise with miscellaneous articles, reviews, interviews, and pictures. Naturally, those last ones include exclusive spreads depicting the cinematic Bond girls in different states of undress. For a recent monograph that expands on all those issues, see: Hines 2018. It could be argued that the association of this pornographic magazine with literary and cinematic spy thrillers centred on 007 is one of the reasons why Fleming's works tend to be perceived as more sexist than they really are.

[264] For more information, see: Sandeman 2017 and Tominey 2017 (online articles). Of course, modern Bond films are also sometimes interpreted as anti-feminist (see: Amacker and Moore 2010/2011: 144-155).

[265] See: "*Tom and Jerry* – Bonus – Introduction by Whoopi Goldberg," *YouTube*, uploaded by beniamin cotan, April 5, 2013 [2005], https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k_oEOdIBOpU (accessed January 24, 2022).

The works in question are also imbued with the rigid cultural heterocentrism[266] of the historical milieu in which they were written. For that reason, nowadays they are often accused of containing homophobic overtones.[267] This is not supposed to suggest that Fleming personally detested or avoided homosexuals – on the contrary, he closely befriended a number of them, even though he did perceive their sexual orientation as aberrant[268] (Macintyre 2008: 87, McKay 2008/2010: 134; Rankin 2011: 35; Cawthorne 2012: 35). 007, in turn, generally "ha[s] no time" for "pansies of both sexes", whom he explicitly pities in *Goldfinger*. The protagonist deems them "a herd of unhappy sexual misfits – barren and full of frustrations, the women wanting to dominate and the men to be nannied" (Fleming 1959/2006: 300).

Irrespective of the above, Bond is moulded into an exemplary patriot. This reflects Fleming's own profound love of his country (Macintyre 2008: 99, 169; Fleming 2015/2016: 89). One crucial observation in that regard is that the author's understanding of nations, as expressed in his novels and short stories, converges with Alexis de Tocqueville's conception of non-atomised societies:

> Society can only exist when a great number of men consider a great number of things in the same point of view; when they hold the same opinions upon many subjects, and when the same occurrences suggest the same thoughts and impressions to their minds (1835/1841: 424).

Fleming's line of reasoning is that national consciousness, construed as an inner sense of solidarity among those who ethnically belong to a given nation,[269] has two inseparable sides, much like a coin. The Tocquevillean "bond" (pun intended) is inextricably intertwined with the lowest stage of xenophobia, caution with strangers – in this case, foreigners. In *Casino Royale*, for instance, Bond and Leiter take a liking to each other while working on the same secret mission, but, since they are not fellow

[266] Cultural heterocentrism denotes "negativity towards sexatypical behavior, temperament, and interests" (Liaw and Janssen 2014: 99-100).
[267] Among others, see: Adams 2017: 137-158, Spungen 2017: 13-16, and Germanà 2020: 193.
[268] The fact that Fleming was biased against homosexuality but not homosexuals *per se* indicates that he did not judge them solely or even predominantly on the basis of their sexual orientation; he simply viewed it as a flaw that was of little to no significance for his overall evaluation of a given person. Since people generally interact with one another as both group representatives and individuals, it is vital not to overlook or belittle any of those two interrelated perspectives while discussing prejudices. For a critique of contemporary identity politics, see: Peterson 2018: 313-317.
[269] National consciousness is founded on factors such as mutual territory, language, culture, history, traditions, beliefs, aims, interests, etc. (Bonecki 1975: 229). Obviously, not all compatriots share that sentiment with equal intensity and it is possible to be outright devoid of it. Even so, "groups with members who do not show any patriotic feelings [...] have a higher probability of ultimate disintegration" (Otten and Cohrs 2010: 592).

countrymen, they treat their shared goals as inferior to those of their respective homelands and, in particular, intelligence agencies:

> Although he seemed to talk quite openly about his duties in Paris, Bond soon noticed that [Leiter] never spoke of his American colleagues in Europe or in Washington and he guessed that [his interlocutor] held the interests of his own organization [the CIA] far above the mutual concerns of the North Atlantic Allies. Bond sympathized with him (Fleming 1953/2006: 56).

This practically fits into Zbigniew Musiał and Bogusław Wolniewicz's claim that no autonomous and exclusive type of a community – such as a family, society, or nation – can maintain its structural integrity without even the faintest trace of low-stage xenophobia, especially in the form of caution with strangers. That is simply because the binary opposition "we and them" is xenophobic, i.e., members of each group distinguish themselves and treat differently from non-members – in other words, strangers/foreigners (Musiał and Wolniewicz 2003: 44). Actually, this provokes another observation, previously already hinted at. Assuming that xenophobia denotes a form of discrimination that does not exclusively encompass unreasonable fear and hatred of strangers/foreigners, but rather manifests itself already in a lesser feeling of attachment to some people than others, the phenomenon is basically ubiquitous and impossible to entirely eradicate. One compelling piece of evidence to support that is the fact that there exist significant discrepancies between loving, liking, and merely not wishing someone else harm. Besides, no human relationship – whether positive, negative, neutral, or ambiguous – is exactly the same as another one.

Overall, much like xenophobia itself, Bond's xenophobic conduct is heavily nuanced. As demonstrated in this subsection, it is predominantly linked to his espionage activities, self-preservation instinct, national consciousness, and personal biases. Regarding those last ones, it is essential to note that they vary in type and strength. Of course, 007 frequently utilises physical aggression as a means of combating his various enemies, some of whom he downright hates, but he nonetheless does not resort to it against:

1) all women in general, whom he from time to time stereotypically belittles, often in anger,[270]

[270] For instance, in *Casino Royale* Bond becomes enraged with Vesper's kidnapping and, while in pursuit of her captors, thinks to himself: "These blithering women who thought they could do a man's work. Why the hell couldn't they stay at home and mind their pots and pans and stick to their frocks and gossip and leave men's work to the men" (Fleming 1953/2006: 116).

2) all homosexuals in general, whom he pities in *Goldfinger* and shows little to no interest in for most of Fleming's series,
3) all strangers/foreigners in general, whom he is cautious with,
4) specific national, racial, and ethnic groups, some of which he either thinks or at least occasionally speaks ill of,
5) disorderly associates, whom he dislikes and does not want to work with.

All this complexity draws attention to the vagueness of referring directly to Bond (or anybody else, for that matter) as a "xenophobe", "homophobe", "racist", "jingoist", "chauvinist", "sexist", or "misogynist". On its own, each of those terms points to some form of a highly generalised bias instead of delving deeply into what exactly a given individual believes, feels, and does. Leaving aside cases of completely unfounded libel and slander, prejudices obviously can take more and less radical forms of expression.

Through stigmatic labelling, 007 can be easily and gravely misrepresented. Hence, from an analytic perspective, it is more objective to recognise and juxtapose the various more and less becoming aspects of his conduct as well as indicate that they constitute the basis for conflicting evaluations of the character in scholarly and non-scholarly works. One additional advantage of adopting such an approach is the fact that it acknowledges Bond's capacity for abandoning or at least not rigidly abiding by some of his unfair preconceived ideas. This is best evidenced by his diversified attitude towards specific members of the other sex, whom he, on average, far more often respects than disrespects.

3.1.7. Concluding Remarks

As demonstrated in this Bondology, Fleming's fictional James Bond universe currently constitutes only one of many within the framework of a continuously expanding and perceptibly "messy" multiverse, not restricted to a single medium. Since the writer's death in 1964, both the literary and cinematic 007 stories (more recently, also those featured in games) have thematically evolved in a manner generally characteristic of the spy thriller genre, i.e., chiefly in pursuit of current extratextual affairs. Hence, it is crucial not to confuse the original Cold War book series with other, updated or at least modified works belonging to the franchise – for example, the contemporary Eon films in which Bond combats 21st-century terrorism with the use of modern-day/futuristic equipment.

In contrast to his various more or less superheroic cinematic counterparts, Fleming's 007 is a somewhat less spectacular and merely heroic British civil servant. Naturally, that literary character is sensational in his own right, as evidenced by his extraordinary sabotage, assassination, and seduction skills (also, his abnormal and strikingly unrealistic tendency to attract attention to himself as a spy). For the most part, the protagonist is romanticised as a champion of good, albeit one that realistically possesses flaws and vices, and so is not fully idealised. This complexity is reflected in his broadly-understood xenophobic conduct, to some extent composed of unnecessary and downright harmful behaviours, but also – if not mainly – of those positively indispensable to the protection of his life, well-being, home country, and, by extension, NATO.

Like all Fleming's Bond works, his debut novel *Casino Royale* is a sensational spy thriller. In terms of hybridity, it exploits motifs found in and generic elements of escapist fiction, adventure fiction, detective fiction (mainly hard-boiled), Gothic fiction, romance fiction, melodrama, grotesque, quasi-autobiographies, Victorian realistic novels, realist spy thrillers, thrillers of moral confrontation, thrillers of acquired identity, police procedurals, as well as noir films of the 1940s and 1950s. From a modern perspective, this espionage tale also incorporates a motif typically found in present-day body horrors, namely unsettling corporeal destruction.

Casino Royale also draws a lot of influence from its contemporary extratextual reality. In the book, the Cold War setting and themes are of course conspicuously interspersed with WWII references, frequently rooted in the writer's past professional experiences as a British Naval officer and intelligence worker. It needs to be remembered that the novel was published a mere eight years after that last conflict – basically, still in its aftermath – and for this very reason often addresses it.

Throughout his literary career, Fleming wrote sensational spy fiction that was supposed to divert his impoverished compatriot readers' attention away from the then ongoing decline of the British Empire. Hence, those works contain, among others, realistic and meticulously detailed descriptions of consumer goods and other products. To this day, the James Bond franchise propagandistically glorifies the United Kingdom and will most certainly continue to do so in the future.

3.2. On the Trail of "Anti-Bondery"... John le Carré's Cold War Spy Fiction. With a Major Focus on His 1963 Novel *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*

> What do you think spies are: priests, saints and martyrs? They're a squalid procession of vain fools, traitors too, yes; pansies, sadists and drunkards, people who play cowboys and Indians to brighten their rotten lives. Do you think they sit like monks in London balancing the rights and wrongs?
>
> (le Carré 1963/2013: 200)
>
> Alec Leamas in *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*

3.2.1. Main Inspirations and Themes

As emphasised in Chapter 1, the approximate border between the sensational and realist subgenres of the spy thriller can be situated, among others, between the spy thrillers created respectively by Ian Fleming and John le Carré (pen name of David John Moore Cornwell). In contrast to the former, the latter largely devoted his Cold War fiction to the exploration of various moral and ethical ambivalences embedded in the conflict between the Eastern and Western Blocs, particularly in the domains of international politics and espionage. In a 1974 interview for Robert G. Deindorfer, le Carré emphasises his primary concern:

> One tragedy of our present age is the fact that we have been forced into a position where we have to adopt the methods of the aggressors. There seems no way around this. But it does raise the question of how long we can go on defending ourselves by these methods and remain a society worth defending (Deindorfer 1974/2004: 16).

Essentially, le Carré's works set before 1991[271] tend to highlight not only the positive, but also – if not mainly – the negative consequences of defending liberal democracy against communism with the use of non-democratic violence. The writer realistically portrays Western intelligence agencies (in particular, the British "Circus", a fictionalised counterpart of MI6) as no less exploitative, treacherous, murderous, and plagued by

[271] Le Carré's Cold War spy novels (in this case classified as such based on the fact that they feature a spy protagonist, but in fact falling into distinct genres of realist spy thrillers and detective novels disguised as those) include *Call for the Dead* (1961, a detective novel), *A Murder of Quality* (1962, a detective novel), *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* (1963), *The Looking Glass War* (1965), *A Small Town in Germany* (1968), the "Smiley versus Karla" trilogy – *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* (1974), *The Honourable Schoolboy* (1977), and *Smiley's People* (1979, a detective novel) – *The Little Drummer Girl* (1983), *A Perfect Spy* (1986), and *The Russia House* (1989). It is reasonable to add two more and rather untypical works to that list. *The Secret Pilgrim* (1990) is an episodic novel set not long after the fall of the Berlin Wall yet still focused on Cold War espionage through the characters' reminiscences, whereas *A Legacy of Spies* (2017) is a realist spy thriller centred on the present-day narrator's recollections and overall evaluation of a Cold War operation he was involved in. In practice, that last book serves as a prequel and sequel to *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* as well as expands on some of the plotlines featured in *Call for the Dead* and *A Murder of Quality*. For a relatively recent monograph on most of le Carré's post-Cold War fiction, see: Snyder 2017a.

bureaucratic careerism than Eastern ones. Furthermore, he aptly depicts espionage as a practice that has broadly-understood and severe damaging effects on many individuals, be it the spies themselves or their (un)intended victims – frequently, family members, lovers, friends, and acquaintances. All that blatant deglorification of clandestine networks is clearly a departure from the largely idealistic glamour of the sensational Bond adventures. In the words of le Carré:

> [T]he romanticised vision of the spy which was presented by Fleming created a kind of hunger for something more realistic. We'd had the public picture already of the seedy army of spies. We knew about [Alger] Hiss and [William August Fisher, alias] Colonel [Rudolf] Abel, and the English particularly – we knew them better than we knew our own writers. We could count them off like our best athletes – [Guy] Burgess and [Donald] Maclean, [John] Vassall, [George] Blake, and the rest – so that the rather treacly handling of the espionage problem created a counter-market which I was fortunately able to feed (le Carré 1968: Tape 1949.I).

Of course, Le Carré's profound interest in the bleak nature of espionage also partially stemmed from his professional affiliation with British Intelligence during the 1950s and 1960s. He worked in both MI5 and MI6 (Burton 2016: 234). Though to this day not much information about his secret activities has been publicly revealed, it is suspected that "his duties included running agents [...], conducting interrogations, tapping phones, and performing authorized break-ins" (Ash 1999: 40). In any case, le Carré left MI6 in 1964 once his and various other British agents' cover identities had been disclosed to the KGB by the double-agent Kim Philby. That traitor's long-term sabotage work eventually became the main source of inspiration for the writer's 1974 novel *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* as well as the initial chapters of the 1977 novel *The Honourable Schoolboy* (Halperin 1988: 228; Buckton 2015: 199).[272] Obviously, the author's quest for recreating the "seediness" of real-life spies in his Cold War fiction firmly grounds it in its contemporary extratextual reality.

In the section devoted to *The Secret Agent*, the existence of several significant thematic parallels between Conrad's and le Carré's realist spy thrillers has already been pinpointed. Generally, the similarities are rooted in a non-melioristic understanding of human nature (the belief that all people are born with proclivities towards good and evil, the latter of which are irremovable and, in the case of some individuals, dominant) as well as the related central trope of a permanently broken world. Most importantly, the authors encourage reflection on the complexity of human life through the depiction of

[272] For a relatively recent biography of le Carré, see: Sisman 2015.

characters whose ethical consciences become disoriented in the face of difficult challenges. Le Carré, in particular, draws attention to the intrinsically conflicting and confusing roles performed by Western Bloc spies:

> The defense of a republic always poses several moral dilemmas. Plato identified a central one when he argued that guardians must be trained as if they were great guard dogs – the dogs should be fierce and violent toward enemies and gentle and respectful with citizens. This analogy identifies two dimensions of this dilemma: First, the guardians must live a contradiction; second, the guardians are set apart unable to live the life they defend – they are treated as animals and used as a means to an end. In a liberal democracy, this dilemma takes on a special urgency, since the society is pledged to the ideal of mutual respect for the dignity of individuals – persons should not be used as a means to an end. Espionage exemplifies this dilemma in a most profound and striking way (Dobel 1988: 191).

In his Cold War spy thrillers, le Carré strictly criticises the ruthless use of persons as a means to an end by democratic states and their institutions. This is frequently done through the recurring main/background character of George Smiley, a Circus spy-detective determined not to lose all of his humanity at his dangerous job, irrespective of its intrinsically disorienting effects on his ethical conscience. Devoid of an absolute ideology, Smiley plainly tries – with varying degrees of success – to remain loyal to himself, the people he cares about, and his country. On several occasions, his longing for peace of mind leads him to abandoning the Circus, albeit only temporarily since he always eventually returns to it out of a sense of moral obligation. Similarly to Fleming's Bond, Smiley is a highly successful and individualistic secret agent, but the main difference between them is that the latter is, to a great extent, realistically inconspicuous. Le Carré's iconic spy is a shy and quiet overweight bespectacled man in his fifties, rather unspectacularly compared to a frog or hedgehog (le Carré 1963/2013: 62; le Carré 1974/1989: 330). Hence, his lifestyle is far from that of a suave playboy. Smiley is the notoriously cuckolded "plebeian" husband of the much younger Lady Ann Sercombe. Though troubled by her brazen infidelity, he is also – in an odd and dysfunctional way – reciprocally in love with her. To some extent, Ann aids her husband's clandestine activities, granting him access to influential contacts within the upper class. Notwithstanding, his overall effectiveness as a spy-detective mainly lies in his own professional skills and intelligence, both concealed beneath the inadvertent cover of introversion, mediocre looks, and marital clumsiness. People simply tend to underestimate him on those last three grounds.[273]

[273] For an in-depth analysis of Smiley, see: Dobel 1988: 205-208.

As a character, Smiley was modelled on le Carré's two real-life acquaintances – his older colleague/mentor John Michael Ward Bingham (1908–1988) and former teacher Vivian Hubert Howard Green (1915–2005) (Cornwell 2022: 637). Bingham was an MI5 agent during and after WWII as well as a crime novelist who wrote both spy fiction and detective fiction; he encouraged his protégé to embark on a writing career (Prono 2005/2015: 388; Burton 2016: 48).[274] Green, in turn, was a Church of England clergyman, historian, and Rector of Lincoln College at Oxford; hence the fictional intelligence worker's academic interests (Hahn and Robins 1977/2008: 72).

One vital observation regarding Smiley is that he acts in a highly untypical manner in le Carré's 1963 bestseller *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*, the realist spy thriller sequel to the detective novels *Call for the Dead* (1961) and *A Murder of Quality* (1962).[275] The normally sentimental spy-detective is relegated to the role of a cold-hearted background saboteur character. Through cunning deception and manipulation, he largely contributes to the demise of the protagonist – Alec Leamas, an allied Circus agent – as well as the latter's lover, Liz Gold.

It is reasonable to devote the upcoming analysis to the said work of fiction because its realistic plot contrasts particularly well with the sensational one featured in Fleming's *Casino Royale*. As previously indicated, Bond is genuinely cared for by MI6 throughout his secret operation in France. This becomes especially evident once he has been tortured at the hands of Le Chiffre. M violates standard procedures and phones Mathis from London to personally inquire about 007's health, Head of S arrives at Royale-les-Eaux with two English nurses, and Vesper is instructed to additionally oversee the patient throughout the entire process of his recovery. As for Leamas, he is plainly viewed as expendable by his superior, Control, and tricked by him into participating in what is most likely going to be – and in the end actually is – a suicide mission. The Circus sacrifices its own loyal agent and his Jewish lover (presumably, also nearly his entire subordinate spy ring in East Germany) to save Hans-Dieter Mundt – a powerful and ruthless ex-Nazi anti-Semite who leads the Abteilung (the GDR counterintelligence service) as well as covertly spies for England. That rescue is accomplished through ridiculing Jens Fiedler, Mundt's – again, Jewish – second-in-command who, much like Leamas and Liz, is capable of and willing to exhibit signs of selfless good-

[274] For a biography of Bingham, see: Jago 2013/2017.

[275] That transition from two detective novels to a realist spy thriller is caused by a major shift in plot focus, namely from the process of solving mysterious crimes to the suspenseful aspects of clandestine activities.

ness in his life. Clearly, le Carré de-romanticises the British intelligence network in *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*. In doing so he also, in a Conrad-like fashion, imbues the story with grotesque irony, onomastically reflected in the perverse name of the British Secret Service, the Circus, as well as the anthroponym Control, ascribed to the devious head of that organisation.

3.2.2. *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* (1963) as a Realist Spy Thriller and Generic Hybrid

The Spy Who Came in from the Cold is deeply entrenched in its contemporary extratextual reality. The opening and closing chapters of the book, which form a narrative frame, are set in the vicinity of the Berlin Wall, one of the landmarks of the Cold War. The novel was written in direct response to the erection of that construction, personally witnessed by le Carré in 1961 (Willman 2022: 104). He was in Germany around that time because he worked at the British embassy in Bonn under the diplomatic cover of second secretary (Gross 1980/2004: 68; Woods 2008: 121). The writer was both terrified and revolted by the barrier, which he viewed as "perfect theatre and a perfect symbol of the monstrosity of ideology gone mad" (le Carré 1989: viii).

It is also not without significance that in the early 1960s le Carré felt profoundly dissatisfied with his professional career as a spy, especially its adverse effects on his private life and first marriage. As he himself admitted, he might have projected his own feelings of loneliness and resentment onto Leamas, his divorced and friendless anti-hero with estranged children (le Carré 1989: ix-x). Still, the actual idea for the character came from witnessing a casual stranger; his overall demeanour plainly attracted the writer's attention as fitting for a realistic fictional secret agent:

> There are only two or three books of mine of which I can truthfully say, 'This is where it began.' *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* began in London airport, when a stocky man in his forties flopped on to a bar stool beside me, delved in his raincoat pocket and poured a handful of loose change in half-a-dozen currencies on to the bar. With a fighter's thick hands, he raked through the coins till he had enough of one currency.
>
> 'Large Scotch,' he ordered. 'No bloody ice.'
>
> It was all I ever heard him say, or so I now believe, but I fancied I caught a whiff of Irish in his voice. When his glass came, he ducked his lips to it in the practised movement of [a] habitual drinker and emptied it in two gulps. Then he shuffled off, looking at nobody. For all I'll ever know he was a commercial traveller down on his luck. Whoever he was, he became my spy, Alec Leamas, in *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* (le Carré 2016: 197).

The protagonist is an exhausted and alienated intelligence worker, on those grounds somewhat similar to both Smiley and Conrad's Verloc, as well as a cynical tough guy, who, much like Fleming's Bond, is heavily reminiscent of hard-boiled detectives. Most importantly, Leamas's ethical conscience is realistically disoriented by his occupation. He is intrinsically bothered and disgusted by the amoral aspects of espionage yet principally callous in its performance so as to protect "the Free World". This is not meant to suggest that the protagonist is a contemplative man – on the contrary, he detests philosophy *per se* and is simply confused. Near the end of the novel, he confesses his perplexity to Liz in the following words: "I don't believe in anything, don't you see – not even destruction or anarchy. I'm sick, sick of killing but I don't see what else [the British Secret Service] can do" (le Carré 1963/2013: 201).

As for the narrative, it begins *in medias res* at an American checkpoint on the Berlin Wall. Leamas, the leader of a British spy ring in the GDR, is patiently awaiting his best and "burnt" subordinate, Karl Riemeck, who at some point will attempt to flee from East to West Germany at a nearby crossing. The fact that Riemeck is chased after and might get killed by the opposition clearly evokes suspense. Not only is this very situation highly reminiscent of Hitchcock's spy thrillers, but also le Carré's writing style could be regarded as "cinematic", i.e., he often uses words to convey a sense of vivid imagery.[276] To support that last observation, it is useful to recall the highly "visual" description of Riemeck's ultimately failed and tragic escape:

> The East German sentry fired, quite carefully, [...] into his own sector. The first shot seemed to thrust Karl forward, the second to pull him back. Somehow he was still moving, still on the bicycle, passing the sentry, and the sentry was still shooting at him. Then he sagged, rolled to the ground, and they heard quite clearly the clatter of the bike as it fell (le Carré 1963/2013: 7).

It is revealed that Leamas has recently lost not one, but several of his agents. In practice, most of his network has been disassembled by his German arch-nemesis, Mundt. Defeated and humiliated, the spymaster returns to London for debriefing. Much

[276] On a side note, some of le Carré's Cold and post-Cold War novels have eventually been filmed. Currently, there exist 10 cinematic adaptations – Martin Ritt's *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* (1965), Sidney Lumet's *The Deadly Affair* (1966; based on *Call for the Dead*), Frank Pierson's *The Looking Glass War* (1970), George Roy Hill's *The Little Drummer Girl* (1984), Fred Schepisi's *The Russia House* (1990), John Boorman's *The Tailor of Panama* (2001), Fernando Meirelles's *The Constant Gardener* (2005), Tomas Alfredson's *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* (2011), Anton Corbijn's *A Most Wanted Man* (2014), and Susanna White's *Our Kind of Traitor* (2016) – as well as 6 television adaptations: John Irvin's *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* (1979), Simon Langton's *Smiley's People* (1982), Peter Smith's *A Perfect Spy* (1987), Gavin Millar's *A Murder of Quality* (1991), Susanne Bier's *The Night Manager* (2016), and Park Chan-wook's *The Little Drummer Girl* (2018). For an illustrated reference guide to all 16 productions, see: Palmer 2020.

to his astonishment, he is not dismissed from service for his repeated failures. Unbeknownst to Leamas (as well as the readers for nearly the entire story), the upper echelons of British Intelligence have most likely authorised those fiascos in order to authenticate his detested conqueror's cover. In truth, Mundt is a top secret and extremely valuable double-agent who spies for England, whereas Control, the chief of the Circus, is perfectly willing to protect him against potential exposure through the sacrifice of "less valuable" agents, such as the protagonist. Grotesque as it is, the privileged treatment of that ex-Nazi anti-Semite draws inspiration from extratextual reality:

> Former Nazis with attractive qualifications weren't just tolerated by the Allies; they were positively mollycoddled for their anti-Communist credentials. Who was America's first choice to head West Germany's embryonic intelligence service? General Reinhard Gehlen, former chief of Hitler's Foreign Armies East (Russian theatre), where he had made himself a corner in the Soviet order of battle (le Carré 2013: iv).

All this clearly supports the claim that le Carré's portrayal of Cold War espionage, in comparison with Fleming's, is more realistically complex and dreadful. Actually, already in his initial conversation with Leamas, Control discloses himself in a seemingly apologetic manner as a merciless tactician:

> 'The ethic of our work, as I understand it, is based on a single assumption. That is, we are never going to be aggressors. Do you think that's fair? [...] Thus we do disagreeable things, but we are defensive. That, I think, is still fair. We do disagreeable things so that ordinary people here and elsewhere can sleep safely in their beds at night. Is that too romantic? Of course, we occasionally do very wicked things.' He grinned like a schoolboy. 'And in weighing up the moralities, we rather go in for dishonest comparisons; after all, you can't compare the ideals of one side with the methods of the other, can you, now? [...] I mean, you've got to compare method with method, and ideal with ideal. I would say that since the war, our methods – ours and those of the opposition – have become much the same. I mean, you can't be less ruthless than the opposition simply because your government's *policy* is benevolent, can you now?' He laughed quietly to himself. 'That would *never* do,' he said (le Carré 1963/2013: 14; original emphases).

The quoted excerpt directly hints at the use of people as a means to an end on both sides of the conflict. Much like Eastern intelligence agencies, the Circus generally cares far more for results than the lives of individuals, even though such an approach obviously clashes with the British government's "benevolent policy". Thus, in accordance with his beliefs, Control continues to exploit Leamas. The former suggests that, prior to retirement, the latter could still be sent on one last secret mission – allegedly, to frame Mundt as a British double-agent so that the East Germans would eliminate him themselves. Eager for revenge, the subordinate gladly accepts his superior's offer, not knowing that

by doing so he will put both himself and his future lover, Liz, in grave danger, irrespective of Control's later promise not to involve her in the case. The true objective of the operation is Mundt's public exoneration of treason. Sooner or later, he will be rightfully charged with it by Fiedler, who is in the process of collecting incriminating evidence for the Praesidium of the SED (the East German Communist Party). Naturally, that private investigation generically ties the novel to detective fiction, although le Carré patently shifts the focus from the mysterious aspects of solving a crime to the suspenseful ones. By the end of the story, the said accusation will be inspected in Görlitz by a secret "Tribunal". In the course of its proceedings, the German Jew will be framed by the Circus – in practice, unwittingly by Leamas and Liz – as an evil conspirator, determined to oust the "innocent" ex-Nazi from power. Fundamentally, in contrast to *Casino Royale*, *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* does not propagandistically idealise the Brits, and so is simply more realistic in that regard.

As observed by Myron J. Aronoff, le Carré's novel "plays with different representations and misrepresentations of [intratextual] reality" (1999/2001: 63). This is precisely what makes the plot suspenseful. Officially, Control orders Leamas to take the risk of becoming a fake defector who, upon being meticulously interrogated by the opposition, will cleverly sow compromising disinformation about Mundt:

> 'Don't give it to them all at once, make them work for it. Confuse them with detail, leave things out, go back on your tracks. Be testy, be cussed, be difficult. Drink like a fish; don't give way on the ideology, they won't trust that. They want to deal with a man they've bought; they want the clash of opposites, Alec, not some half-cock convert. Above all, they want to deduce. The ground's prepared; we did it long ago, little things, difficult clues. You're the last stage in the treasure hunt' (le Carré 1963/2013: 97).

The protagonist tries to manipulate his enemies, but at the same time he himself is manipulated by his own superior, whose hidden agenda is to eliminate Fiedler as a threat to Mundt. What matters most is that from the very beginning of his mission Leamas is aware that, for confidentiality purposes, he has merely been given the basic necessary instructions, and so operates on a limited understanding of what exactly he is doing and what is happening to him in relation to the Circus's central goal (in truth, also not known to him). This enables le Carré to both shape and distort the readers' expectations as to the directions in which the plot might advance. Its sudden twists and turns, closely tied to the exposure/concealment/presumption of various truths and lies throughout several hearings, generically tie the novel to adventure fiction and thrillers. The writer's fictional spies, be it Eastern or Western ones, are sensationally yet still realistically en-

meshed in multilayered "tugs-of-war", i.e., those undercover workers aim at deceiving as well as seeing through deception. Of course, the fact that they notoriously pretend to be someone else than they really are indicates the intrinsic generic link between spy thrillers and thrillers of acquired identity.

To gain the opposition's attention as "a prospective candidate for a defector", Leamas feigns his own gradual degeneration. In order to make it believable, he allows himself to be openly mistreated by the Circus. Purportedly for the loss of his most important agents, the spymaster is demoted and reassigned to a new post at the London headquarters. He is transferred to the Banking Section, irrespective of his patent lack of vocation for office work. Furthermore, thanks to the rumours deliberately spread by Elsie from the Accounts Section, his colleagues gossip about his low income, low future pension, financial problems, and possibly fraudulent conduct at work. Basically, all that professional "fall from grace" is meant to serve as a plausible pretext for the deepening of the protagonist's drinking problem and the ensuing emergence of erratic behaviours. Those include the abrupt (and, obviously, simulated) abandonment of the Circus as well as the actual physical assault on a grocer. On the subject of hybridity, degeneration – albeit, in this case, fake – is a theme that evokes strong associations with both Gothic fiction and domestic drama.

In a seemingly desperate need of an alternative source of income, Leamas takes one menial job after another. Eventually, he is sent by Mr Pitt from the Labour Exchange (in truth, a semi-retired Circus agent) to the Bayswater Library for Psychical Research. There, as the new assistant, the protagonist meets the head librarian, Miss Crail, as well as her helper, Liz Gold. On his very first day of work, Leamas arbitrarily leaves the building for an extended lunch break. For that breach of discipline, he is reprimanded by Miss Crail, gravely and rather excessively offended by his return with shopping bags. Instead of apologising, the tough guy antagonises her even further by responding to the rebuke in a condescending manner. Through the characters' ensuing conflict, and especially that mother-dependent spinster's eccentricity, le Carré generically ties the novel to cringe comedies:

> [Leamas] had become an enemy of Miss Crail, and enemies were what Miss Crail liked. Either she scowled at him or she ignored him, and when he came close, she began to tremble, looking to left and right, either for something with which to defend herself, or perhaps for a line of escape. Occasionally she would take immense umbrage, such as when he hung his macintosh on *her* peg, and she stood in front of it shaking, for fully five minutes, until Liz spotted her and called Leamas. Leamas went over to her and said:

> ‘What’s troubling you, Miss Crail?’
> ‘Nothing,’ she replied in a breathy, clipped way, ‘nothing at all.’
> ‘Something wrong with my coat?’
> ‘Nothing at all.’
> ‘Fine,’ he replied, and went back to his alcove. She quivered all that day, and conducted a telephone call in a stage whisper for half the morning.
> ‘She’s telling her mother,’ said Liz. ‘She always tells her mother. She tells her about me too.’
> Miss Crail developed such an intense hatred for Leamas that she found it impossible to communicate with him. On pay days he would come back from lunch and find an envelope on the third rung of his ladder with his name misspelt on the outside. The first time it happened he took the money over to her with the envelope and said, ‘It’s L-E-A, Miss Crail, and only one S,’ whereupon she was seized with a veritable palsy, rolling her eyes and fumbling erratically with her pencil until Leamas went away. She conspired into the telephone for hours after that (le Carré 1963/2013: 28; original emphasis).

Miss Crail’s vile idiosyncrasies are emblematic of grotesque le Carréan humour. In his spy thrillers, the writer frequently mocks human stupidity and hypocrisy. Obviously, this is reminiscent of Conrad’s mixture of scorn and pity in *The Secret Agent*.

As previously hinted, Leamas falls reciprocally in love with the other librarian, the kind-hearted yet naive Liz. His object of affection, in contrast to Bond’s sensationally gorgeous Vesper, is more realistically “average” in terms of appearance:

> She was a tall girl, ungainly, with a long waist and long legs. She wore flat, ballet-type shoes to reduce her height. Her face, like her body, had large components which seemed to hesitate between plainness and beauty. Leamas guessed she was twenty-two or three, and Jewish (le Carré 1963/2013: 25).

Actually, it is not the protagonist who initiates the affair. About three weeks after their first meeting, Liz starts regularly asking him to supper. She plainly – and rightly – suspects that the cynical tough guy has a soft side. Indeed, the alienated spy longs for at least a scrap of a genuine human relationship. Much to her relief, the “anti-philosopher” is not bothered by the fact that she is a communist and they become lovers. Not long afterwards, once Leamas suddenly stops appearing in the library, Liz finds him very sick in a rented flat and takes care of him throughout his recovery, showing great devotion. As a couple, they feel happy together, but that idyll is short-lived. Since the protagonist is a professional secret agent, he realistically takes the standard precaution of not telling his mistress who he truly is. He does inform her, however, that he will soon abandon her to settle a score with someone. Leamas vaguely explains that the matter is serious, and so asks her not to follow him, but promises that he himself will return to her if only that is possible. Upset by those mysterious revelations, Liz nonetheless accepts the terms and, one evening after supper, the lovers part ways. At that point neither

of them realises that the Circus has deliberately made them come into contact with each other as part of the scheme to eliminate Fiedler. Of course, the romantic subplot generically ties the novel to romance fiction, whereas the fact that the couple will be killed by the end of the story can be, considering this motif, associated with melodrama.

Leamas's mission gains new impetus with his aforementioned attack on the grocer. That broad-daylight assault leads to the protagonist's temporary imprisonment and, most importantly, receives local press coverage. The main character's subsequent release marks the beginning of his confrontations with various East German agents. First, he is approached by the homosexual Ashe, supposedly an old acquaintance from Berlin who owes him money. That alleged debtor contacts Leamas with Sam Kiever, who, in turn, takes "the British defector" to Holland. There, the protagonist meets Peters and accepts his offer of fifteen thousand pounds in exchange for classified information on the Circus. It is vital to stress that *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* features an intricate web of more or less influential antagonists, which is reminiscent of innocent-on-the-run thrillers. Of course, the double-dealing main character hardly accounts for an "innocent" victim, and so le Carré does not rigidly abide by that central convention, but rather modifies it for the sake of his story.

During his preliminary interrogations, Leamas describes, among others, "Rolling Stone", a secret operation that entailed placing large sums of money on bank accounts in Copenhagen and Helsinki. Peters appears to suspect that those were actual payments for a high-level British agent in the GDR who cooperated with Riemeck. The protagonist strategically dispels – and so, in truth, reinforces – that assumption, claiming that it would be impossible for him as Section Chief in Berlin not to know about the existence of such a "mole". Obviously, the overall "tug-of-war" with the no less professional and manipulative Peters evokes a lot of suspense. He also challenges his interlocutor, in this case through seeking inaccuracies and omissions in testimonies.

While in Holland, Leamas realistically longs to free himself from his dehumanising clandestine career and, by extension, participation in the Cold War. Reminded of Liz by the sight of a casual girl, he places both his hope and faith in his beloved, viewing her as the "architect" of his future escape:

> There was a girl standing on the beach throwing bread to the seagulls. Her back was turned to him. The sea wind played with her long black hair and pulled at her coat, making an arc of her body, like a bow strung towards the sea. He knew then what it was that Liz had given him; the thing that he would have to go back and find if ever he got home to England: it was the caring about little things –

> the faith in ordinary life; the simplicity that made you break up a bit of bread into a paper bag, walk down to the beach and throw it to the gulls. It was this respect for triviality which he had never been allowed to possess; whether it was bread for the seagulls or love, whatever it was he would go back and find it; he would make Liz find it for him. A week, two weeks perhaps, and he would be home. Control had said he could keep whatever they paid – and that would be enough. With fifteen thousand pounds, a gratuity and a pension from the Circus, a man – as Control would say – can afford to come in from the cold (le Carré 1963/2013: 85).

Of course, paraphrasing Maine de Biran, Leamas's will realistically meets with resistance. The protagonist learns, to his utter bewilderment and horror, that he is wanted in England – officially for not reporting to a police station within a set period of time after leaving prison, but most likely for treason. At that point the main character greatly fears for his life, suspecting potential foul play on Control's part. Cornered, "the British defector" agrees to flee to East Germany with Peters. The protagonist decides to continue his mission, hoping that by doing so he might just survive. Basically, he is not sure if the Circus has actually betrayed him or not. In an unmistakably thrilleresque fashion, le Carré accumulates all those ambiguities so as to evoke suspense.

At a countryside lodge near Berlin, Leamas is left for further interrogations. Those are conducted by Fiedler, the Deputy Head of Security in the Abteilung. Like Peters, the German Jew is chiefly interested in "Rolling Stone", thinking that the aforementioned fund transfers were, in truth, payments for Mundt's treacherous activity. Once again, to insidiously reinforce that suspicion, the protagonist perversely denounces it as absurd, emphasising that without his knowledge the Circus could not have possibly deployed any "mole" in the GDR. Fiedler, indeed, "swallows the bait" and stubbornly tries to acquire new evidence against his superior. More specifically, the subordinate wishes to learn if and when the money from the two foreign accounts was taken out. To that end, he asks Leamas, who happens to be the joint signatory of those, to request by letter a current statement from each of the banks. On the subject of letters *per se*, their contents are sometimes presented word for word in *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* for the purpose of diversifying the narration. This obviously constitutes a loose generic link to epistolary novels.

Eventually, there is no reply from Helsinki, but the one from Copenhagen pinpoints a date of withdrawal that coincides with Mundt's past two-day stay in Denmark. This revelation directly induces Fiedler to apply to the Praesidium with a civil warrant to arrest his superior, which is exactly what Control wants, but for a different reason than Leamas at that point in the story thinks. Only by its end, after all his interrogations

and testimonies, will the protagonist realise that the true and wicked objective of his mission has been to compromise Fiedler, the patriotic German communist, and publicly exonerate Mundt, the German traitor. In other words, both the main character's and the readers' expectations will be subverted in a thrilleresque – actually, Hitchcock-like – manner. As emphasised in the section devoted to *Casino Royale*, grim plot twist endings are far more characteristic of realist than sensational spy thrillers. With respect to that, it could be argued that Fleming's novel violates whereas le Carré's follows a generic convention.

In the course of interrogating Leamas, Fiedler reveals himself to be a communist idealist. The German Jew is righteous in his devotion to his country, but also disturbingly reconciled with the idea of sacrificing innocent individuals for the greater good of the masses:

> '[...] The Abteilung and organisations like it are the natural extension of the Party's arm. They are in the vanguard of the fight for Peace and Progress. They are to the Party what the Party is to socialism: they *are* the vanguard. Stalin said so.' He smiled drily. 'It is not fashionable to quote Stalin but he said once, 'half a million liquidated is a statistic, and one man killed in a traffic accident is a national tragedy.' He was laughing, you see, at the bourgeois sensitivities of the mass. He was a great cynic. But what he meant is still true: a movement which protects itself against counter-revolution can hardly stop at the exploitation – or the elimination, Leamas – of a few individuals. It is all one, we have never pretended to be wholly just in the process of rationalising society. Some Roman said it, didn't he, in the Christian Bible – it is expedient that one man should die for the benefit of many' (le Carré 1963/2013: 115; original emphasis).

Much to Leamas's annoyance, Fiedler tries to discuss with him their respective "philosophies". The protagonist initially claims not to have any, but, once that evasive answer is dismissed, declares the belief that Eastern intelligence workers are bastards. Later, irrespective of that, the main character admits that the Circus is also willing to achieve its aims through the exploitation and killing of innocent individuals. In that regard, as Fiedler observes, the British agency is "like Stalin" (le Carré 1963/2013: 149). This blunt comparison vividly illustrates that, in stark contrast to Fleming, le Carré realistically portrays both Eastern and Western intelligence agencies as morally/ethically corrupt.

Before Mundt is arrested, his underlings capture Fiedler and Leamas. The former surrenders himself to them in front of the lodge, whereas the latter deliberately starts a fight inside and even kills one of his opponents. The rather "cinematic" suspenseful build-up to that philobatic confrontation is strongly reminiscent of Hitchcock's films:

> There were matches in his pocket but he did not use them. He took one pace sideways, pressed his back against the wall and remained motionless. To Leamas there could only be one explanation – they were waiting for him to pass from the guards' room to his own and therefore he determined to remain where he was [...]. The door which had just closed was tested, the lock turned and made fast. Still Leamas did not move. Not yet. There was no pretence: he was a prisoner in the hut. Very slowly, Leamas now lowered himself into a crouch, putting his hand in the side pocket of his jacket as he did so [...]. Taking the box of matches in his right hand he clasped it long ways, and deliberately crushed it, so that the small, jagged edges of boxwood protruded from between his fingers. This done, he edged his way along the wall until he came to a chair which he knew was in the corner of the room. Indifferent now to the noise he made, he shoved the chair into the centre of the floor. Counting his footsteps as he moved back from the chair, he positioned himself in the angle of the two walls. As he did so, he heard the door of his own bedroom flung open. Vainly he tried to discern the figure who must be standing in the doorway, but there was no light from his own room either. The darkness was impenetrable. He dared not move forward to attack, for the chair was now in the middle of the room; it was his tactical advantage, for he knew where it was, and they did not (le Carré 1963/2013: 138).

Similarly to the film director, the writer slowly but gradually increases tension, in this case through the protagonist's anticipation of and preparations for the upcoming enemy attack. The darkness and solitude of the guards' room in which the main character is hiding also augment the unnerving atmosphere. Outnumbered and surrounded, Leamas is ultimately overpowered and knocked down. Severely beaten, he is brought before Mundt, who, in turn, initiates an interrogation.

One vital observation regarding the remainder of the novel is that it discernibly accumulates suspenseful plot twists and turns, directly tied to various representations and misrepresentations of intratextual reality. The ex-Nazi calmly explains that he has been fully aware of the Circus's secret operation "against him" (he withholds the fact that he is a British double-agent from both Leamas and the readers). Seemingly victorious at that point, Mundt is nonetheless arrested soon afterwards. Next, the battered protagonist is taken to a hospital, where he is visited by the newly-released Fiedler. The latter describes his own imprisonment, particularly the anti-Semitic ruthlessness with which his superior has tortured him. The German Jew also expresses the conviction that, with Leamas as his witness at Mundt's upcoming trial before the Tribunal, the leader of the Abteilung will be sentenced to death. Even so, it is ominously – hence, suspensefully – revealed that the accused will be defended by "a very tough man", Karden, who will also summon a witness (le Carré 1963/2013: 148).

To Leamas's utter disbelief and horror, Karden's mysterious witness happens to be none other than Liz, tricked into travelling to the GDR. In the courtroom, she be-

comes terrified since she is completely unaware of who exactly is being tried and what for. Capitalising on her insecurity and ignorance, Mundt's defence lawyer cunningly asks her questions that expose her lover as a fake defector who has plainly staged his destitution, degeneration, and overall abandonment of the British Secret Service. Among others, it comes into light that during the main character's stay in prison his bills were paid by his "friend" Smiley, who also visited Liz with another agent to interrogate her as well as offer financial help. Actually, both she and the beaten grocer received money from the Circus. Of course, all this was done without Leamas's knowledge, and so he is profoundly confused by his mistress's testimonies. Those also subvert the readers' suspenseful expectations regarding Mundt's imminent downfall – it simply does not occur. The ex-Nazi is publicly exonerated, whereas his Jewish subordinate disgraced. Karden manages to convincingly portray the latter as someone who, at best, has naively allowed himself to be manipulated by a Western agency or, at worst, has consciously conspired with it against his own superior.

Subsequently, Leamas confesses that he is, indeed, a fake defector. In a desperate attempt to rescue Fiedler and Liz, the anti-hero accentuates their utter ignorance of the Circus's plan to "frame" Mundt. The German Jew also selflessly appeals for the British one's release, but in vain. Both of them are arrested alongside the protagonist. By the end of the Tribunal proceedings, the main character finally realises that Mundt really is a double-agent, whereas Fiedler's upcoming execution as a "traitor" has been Control's true objective all along. At that point Leamas and Liz's doom also seems inevitable. Still, the readers' suspenseful expectations are once again subverted, this time by the ex-Nazi. He covertly releases the two Brits, presumably to put the blame for their disappearance on Fiedler's supporters in the Abteilung. Naturally, the lovers' high-speed car escape also generically fits within the conventions of the thriller. Such flights are particularly common in innocent-on-the-run thrillers. On that score it is crucial to note that, in contrast to the protagonist, his mistress is a purely innocent victim of a Cold War secret operation. Fundamentally, neither the British nor the East German intelligence agency cares about human lives *per se*. Individuals are simply perceived as either useful or expendable in the pursuit of "higher aims", and so can be mercilessly taken advantage of or even downright sacrificed "if need be". While it is obviously difficult to evaluate whether or not le Carré's fictional Cold War organisations exaggerate the wickedness of their real-life counterparts, the strong connection between espionage and broadly understood "dirty tricks" is clearly realistic.

The novel ends on a tragic note. This is actually foreshadowed by the killing of Riemeck at the beginning of the book. Leamas, who for many years has lived the amoral life of a spy, also "comes in from the Cold" at the Berlin Wall. The protagonist altruistically orients himself towards rescuing his beloved Liz. Regardless, once she is shot dead during their mutual attempt to cross that barrier, he chooses to share her fate instead of saving himself and returning to the West. That melodramatic decision could be attributed to his deep love for her, but also the fact that her murder has most likely been authorised by the British Secret Service. Basically, her newfound knowledge that Mundt is a double-agent has posed a threat to him and the Circus. In any case, both that organisation and the Abteilung are consistently depicted as exploitative, treacherous, and ruthless throughout the entire story.

To conclude, *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* is a realistically bleak and dark espionage novel, highly reminiscent of Conrad's *The Secret Agent* and strikingly different from Fleming's sensational *Casino Royale*. Instead of propagandistically glorifying Western agencies as more righteous than Eastern ones, le Carré's bestseller emulates the amoral/morally dubious techniques of real-life Cold War spycraft, directly familiar to him on account of his own intelligence work performed for both MI5 and MI6. This realist spy thriller is not only firmly grounded in its contemporary extratextual reality, but also written in a rather "cinematic" style, heavily inspired by – among others, Hitchcockian – espionage films released before 1963. In terms of hybridity, the novel exploits motifs found in and generic elements of grotesque, detective fiction (mainly hard-boiled), adventure fiction, Gothic fiction, romance fiction, melodrama, domestic drama, tragedy, cringe comedy, epistolary novels, sensational spy thrillers, thrillers of acquired identity, and innocent-on-the-run thrillers.

Conclusions

The intention of this dissertation has been twofold: *primo*, to expand, within a sample of British spy works, on the existing knowledge of the historically variable ties between intratextual and extratextual reality; *secundo*, to establish, also within the said sample, how focusing fictional plots on espionage generally affects the hybridity of the spy genre and, by extension, conventions related to that genre.

Considering that first aim, a conspicuous thematic shift from late 19th and early 20th-century matters to Cold War ones is evident. Chapter 2 has been, for the most part, devoted to the analysis of four early prototypes/forerunners of British spy novels published between the years 1900 and 1907. Chapter 3 has examined and juxtaposed, at its core, two British spy novels released respectively in 1953 and 1963. Each of these six works is firmly grounded in its contemporary extratextual reality.

Kipling's *Kim* (1900) is set amidst the British-Russian "Great Game" for control over Central and Southwest Asia. Widely regarded as the writer's *magnum opus*, it portrays an extensive panorama of India under the Raj, chiefly in relation to the regional geography, caste system, and everyday life. The novel, irrespective of its imperial and white supremacy overtones, strongly advocated cultural adaptability for the sake of fostering a peaceful co-existence, along with effective cooperation, between the British Sahibs and Orientals. In addition, it is possible to interpret the eponymous character's journey with Teshoo lama as a philosophical metaphor – more specifically, a timeless appeal for a synthesis of faith and reason that can not only prevent people from acting in a destructive manner, but also guide them through the difficulties, pain, and suffering unavoidably inscribed into human life.

Childers's *The Riddle of the Sands* (1903) was directly inspired by Britain's imperial rivalry with the then greatly feared "German menace". The novel revolves around Kaiser Wilhelm II's scheme to launch a surprise attack on the British Empire with the use of a fleet of light-draught barges, eventually thwarted by two English sailors. Upon its release, the book aroused a great deal of controversy. Some readers suspected that the writer might have actually discovered a real enemy invasion plan, whereas others viewed it as merely a product of his imagination. Nowadays the second scenario is generally believed to be true. In any case, Childers projected some of his own sailing experiences near the Frisian coast onto the plot; he imbued it with realistic sailing details

and jargon. His work also incorporates maps which, at the time of its release, exposed inaccuracies in the Admiralty's sea charts.

LeQueux's *Behind the Throne* (1905) is a largely forgotten complex tale of dirty politics and associated with it espionage. The story is infused with a strong anti-French sentiment that clearly resonates with the extratextual British smear campaign against France in the wake of the Dreyfus Affair. On the subject of that real-life criminal justice scandal, it is directly recalled in the novel. Furthermore, the wrongfully tried and convicted of treason Captain Solaro is, in fact, a fictional counterpart of Alfred Dreyfus. Generally, *Behind the Throne* calls upon the political and armed mobilisation of the real British Empire with the aim of repelling its prospective early 20th-century invaders. Besides that, the foreign setting (Italy) is most likely meant to indirectly suggest that widespread corruption by the likes of that depicted in the narrative could not possibly occur in the writer's homeland. This work also touches upon the contemporary interrelated issues of male breadwinning and women's financial dependence on men. Both phenomena were genuinely common in, among others, Britain and Italy.

Conrad's *The Secret Agent* (1907) is a bleak and dark spy novel set in late 19th-century London. The story, thematically tied to both anarchist and Fenian terrorism, is loosely based on an actual 1894 botched bomb attack in Greenwich Park. That real-life outrage has plainly been moulded into a fictional failed anti-anarchist provocation masterminded by a cynical First Secretary of a presumably Russian embassy. The plot focuses on a variety of issues, most notably espionage, anarchism, terrorism, counter-terrorism, police routines, marriage, intellectual disability, self-sacrifice, and domestic abuse. Basically, the writer explores a variety of social, economic, political, and scientific challenges that disorient people's ethical consciences. Mixing his own scorn and pity into the narration, he exposes general human shortcomings as well as the stereotypical British obsession with secrecy.

Fleming's *Casino Royale* (1953), set against the backdrop of the Cold War, highlights the fierce political rivalry between the Western and Eastern Blocs, particularly the former's fear of communist expansion and infiltration. This novel, much like the other works from the original literary *Bond* series, propagandistically glorifies the British Empire as well as diverts attention away from its gradual disintegration in the aftermath of World War II. Fundamentally, 007 is portrayed as a heroic British civil servant, no less skilled and competent than his American ally Leiter. Through the comparison of those two agents, the writer artificially elevates his homeland to a position of

international influence similar to that of the then contemporary USA. It is also not without significance that MI6 agents tend to be depicted as *bon vivants* – both locally and abroad, they enjoy "the finer things in life". This is reflected in the vividly detailed descriptions of the characters' extravagant food, drinks, cigarettes, clothes, cars, guns, surroundings, etc.

Le Carré's *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* (1963), also set during the Cold War, was written in direct response to the erection of the Berlin Wall, personally witnessed by the author in 1961. In stark contrast to *Casino Royale*, that novel highlights not only the positive, but also – if not mainly – the negative consequences of defending liberal democracy against communism with the use of non-democratic violence. The writer attempts to deglamourise espionage *per se* on both the Western and Eastern side of the conflict. Spying is plainly shown as a practice that has broadly-understood and severe damaging effects on many individuals, be it the spies themselves or their (un)intended victims – frequently, family members, lovers, friends, and acquaintances. Hence, the fictionalised counterpart of MI6, ironically called "the Circus", is depicted as no less exploitative, treacherous, murderous, and plagued by bureaucratic careerism than the East German Abteilung. While it is obviously difficult to evaluate whether or not le Carré's fictional Cold War organisations exaggerate the wickedness of their real-life counterparts, the strong connection between espionage and broadly understood "dirty tricks" is clearly realistic.

In relation to the second aim of this dissertation, it has been assumed, as a working hypothesis, that spy fiction is far from being a homogenous genre. The analysis of its hybridity has been facilitated by the use of a slightly altered version of Charles Derry's taxonomy. Without the said modifications, it has originally been applied to crime films.

Spy fiction, understood as both literary works and films, has been classified as the spy thriller because it perceptibly favours suspense over mystery as a plot device. This variation of the political thriller is, indeed, a far from homogenous genre. It is inherently hybrid on account of its central motif of espionage. Spying is a daring and risky explorative activity, inextricably intertwined with not only suspense, but also the core element of adventure fiction – adventure. Spies pretend to be someone else in order to deceive others, much like the impostors from thrillers of acquired identity. Spies also conduct investigations, similarly to the protagonists from various types of detective fiction (classical, hard-boiled, police procedural, etc.), albeit in spy fiction the narrative

focus is shifted from the process of solving a crime to the dangerous aspects of intelligence gathering and sabotage.

Considering the all-pervasive theme of national vulnerability to foreign threats, it is occasionally accompanied by that of a wonder weapon of mass destruction. Both concepts date back to the late 19th and early 20th-century war-prophecy literature. On a side note, spy works that portray the protagonist's path to becoming a spy, particularly in relation to the development of his or her personality and motivations, draw inspiration from the *Bildungsroman* (possibly, though not necessarily, schoolboy story).

The hybridity of the spy thriller is further extended within each of its two subgenres – partially, though not exclusively, in relation to espionage. Those are to some extent grounded in, respectively, the Victorian sensation and realistic novel. The sensational spy thriller typically features clear-cut clashes between the overtly idealised "good guys" and the strongly deprecated "bad guys", the latter of whom are eventually defeated for the sake of happy endings. Such simplified and in time positively resolved conflicts, which also occur in the thriller of moral confrontation, are often imbued with light-hearted humour that can be found in, among others, the farce-comedy and the comedy of mismatches. The overall romanticisation of the presented world and characters obviously connotes escapist fiction. On the subject of sensationalism, it tends to be augmented by an accumulation of not necessarily plausible emotional events. Examples of commonly utilised ones include suspenseful escapes and chases, generally characteristic of the thriller genre and especially its innocent-on-the-run subgenre; also complex struggles of love, commonly featured in romance fiction and melodrama.

As for the realist spy thriller, it aims at exposing various horrid truths embedded in the very fabric of reality itself, reality understood as a force that resists the human will and disorients ethical consciences. This type of fiction is tied to various "bitter" or at least "bitter-sweet" genres because it attempts to de-romanticise espionage and, on top of that, life in general. The mental deterioration of secret agents, heavily burdened and adversely affected by their clandestine occupation, is likely to involve phenomena such as apathy, depression, obsession, paranoia, and even insanity; hence, that degenerative process evokes associations with Gothic fiction. The spies' dysfunctional family lives are reminiscent of domestic drama. The strong mockery of human stupidity, hypocrisy, vices, and other shortcomings – frequently through ironic humour – brings to mind satire, grotesque, and cringe comedy. Unhappy, if not utterly miserable, endings

are linked to tragedy (and also, among others, film noir of the 1940s and 1950s), whereas the overall intermix of tragic and comic elements to tragicomedy.

As emphasised in Chapter 1, individual spy works can incorporate structural elements and motifs from both the sensational and realist subgenre of the spy thriller. That intricate hybridity of particular espionage stories is made even more complex by, among others, the diversity of roles fulfilled by secret agents, some of which are intrinsic (spies, detectives, and explorers), whereas others merely optional (bandits, fugitives, sheriffs, lone rangers, schoolboys, etc). Given that every spy work is more or less different from others, each of them is, in fact, a unique hybrid, one with a distinct combination of stronger and weaker ties to specific genres. Collectively, within the sample of six novels discussed in detail:

1) links to all of the genres mentioned above in this conclusion have been observed,

2) links to some specific adventure fiction subgenres have been observed, namely the imperial romance, the picaresque novel, the western, and treasure hunt fiction,

3) links to the medieval and the (pre-/late-/post-)Victorian love romance have been observed,

4) some additional motifs and structural elements, non-intrinsic to the spy thriller genre, have been observed; hence the supplementary links to the following genres: the thriller of murderous passions, the psychotraumatic thriller, the quasi-autobiography, the historical novel, the epistolary novel, the episodic novel, the (pre-)Victorian novel of manners, the Victorian and Edwardian dynamite science-fiction, the *roman à thèse*, juvenile fiction (the fairy-tale and the beast fable), urban fiction, and the present-day body horror.

It needs to be emphasised that the presented analysis of generic hybridity, both in relation to the spy thriller genre and particular works within that genre, is merely one interpretation of a highly intricate phenomenon. This is precisely why this specific evaluation of it does not aspire to become ultimate or all-encompassing, but is only meant to highlight the existence of conspicuous generic complexities.

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Summary in English

This thesis fits into the dynamically developing and largely centred on historical issues studies of British spy fiction. The intention of this dissertation has been twofold: first, to expand, within a sample of spy works composed of six discussed in detail (as well as various supplementarily referenced ones), on the existing knowledge of the historically variable ties between intratextual and extratextual reality; second, to establish, also within the said sample, how focusing fictional plots on espionage generally affects the hybridity of the spy genre and, by extension, conventions related to that genre. Those last two genre-specific issues receive little to no attention in scholarly studies. The conspicuous academic reluctance to examine them could be attributed to, among others, the existence of multiple conflicting and oftentimes confusingly imprecise crime genre taxonomies, many of which encompass spy fiction. In light of the above, a slightly altered version of Charles Derry's simple yet comprehensive taxonomy has been adopted for this research. Without the said modifications, Derry's suggestion has originally been applied to crime films.

The thesis consists of three chapters. Chapter 1, both theoretical and analytic, aspires towards establishing an understanding of spy fiction and its position among other crime genres, all for the sake of discussing its hybridity and conventions with a high degree of efficiency. Chapter 2 examines four early prototypes/forerunners of British spy novels in terms of their generic hybridity and ties with contemporary extratextual reality. These works are Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* (1900), Erskine Childers's *The Riddle of the Sands* (1903), William LeQueux's *Behind the Throne* (1905), and Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent* (1907). Chapter 3 mainly revolves around selected British Cold War sensational and realist spy thrillers, written respectively by Ian Fleming and John le Carré. The core, albeit not exclusive, juxtaposition is between Fleming's *Casino Royale* (1953) and le Carré's *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* (1963). This is because the sensational plot of the former contrasts very well with the realistic one of the latter.

Within the sample of spy works, a conspicuous thematic shift from late 19th and early 20th-century matters to Cold War ones has been observed. Furthermore, the working hypothesis that spy fiction is far from being a homogenous genre has been confirmed. Its complex hybridity is intrinsically tied to the central motif of espionage.

Summary in Polish (Streszczenie po polsku)

Niniejsza rozprawa doktorska wpisuje się w dynamicznie rozwijający się i silnie skoncentrowany na aspektach historycznych nurt badań nad brytyjską fikcją szpiegowską. Pierwszym celem pracy było poszerzenie, w obrębie próbki złożonej z sześciu drobiazgowo omówionych (oraz różnych uzupełniająco przytoczonych) utworów szpiegowskich, istniejącego stanu wiedzy na temat związków między rzeczywistością wewnątrztekstową i pozatekstową. Drugim celem pracy było ustalenie, również w obrębie tejże próbki, w jaki sposób skupianie fikcyjnych fabuł na szpiegostwie ogólnie wpływa na hybrydyczność gatunku szpiegowskiego, a przez to także na konwencje związane z tym gatunkiem. Te dwie ostatnie kwestie gatunkowe nie cieszą się szczególnym zainteresowaniem naukowym. Wyraźną akademicką niechęć do ich zbadania można przypisać, między innymi, istnieniu licznych kolidujących ze sobą i często zagmatwanych taksonomii fikcji kryminalnej, spośród których wiele obejmuje fikcję szpiegowską. W związku z powyższym, na potrzeby obecnego badania przyjęto, z drobnymi modyfikacjami, prostą i zarazem obszerną taksonomię Charlesa Derry'ego, pierwotnie odnoszącą się wyłącznie do filmów kryminalnych.

Rozprawa składa się z trzech rozdziałów. Pierwszy rozdział, teoretyczno-analityczny, dąży do ustalenia sposobu postrzegania fikcji szpiegowskiej oraz jej pozycji pośród innych gatunków na potrzeby możliwie jak najprecyzyjniejszego omówienia kwestii hybrydyczności oraz konwencji gatunkowych. Drugi rozdział został poświęcony omówieniu czterech wczesnych prototypów brytyjskich powieści szpiegowskich pod kątem ich hybrydyczności gatunkowej oraz związków z ówczesną rzeczywistością pozatekstową. Analizowane powieści to *Kim* (1900) Rudyarda Kiplinga, *Zagadka piaszczystych ławic* (1903) Erskine'a Childersa, *Behind the Throne* (1905) Williama le Queuex (nieprzetłumaczona na język polski) oraz *Tajny Agent* (1907) Josepha Conrada. Rozdział trzeci bada wybrane zimnowojenne sensacyjne i realistyczne thrillery szpiegowskie napisane przez, odpowiednio, Iana Fleminga i Johna le Carré. Centralne, choć nie wyłączne, zestawienie dotyczy powieści *Casino Royale* (1953) Fleminga oraz *Ze śmiertelnego zimna* (1963) le Carré'a. Sensacyjna fabuła tego pierwszego utworu wyraźnie kontrastuje z realistyczną tego drugiego.

W obrębie przebadanej próbki utworów szpiegowskich, dostrzeżono wyraźne przesunięcie tematyczne od spraw aktualnych w późnym dziewiętnastym i wczesnym dwudziestym wieku do zimnowojennych. Co więcej, potwierdzono roboczą hipotezę, że

fikcja szpiegowska jest gatunkiem wysoce niehomogenicznym. Ta skomplikowana hybrydyczność jest nieodłącznie związana z centralnym motywem szpiegowania.