



# ‘The sweet tang of rape’: Torture, survival and masculinity in Ian Fleming’s Bond novels

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## Abstract

Little scholarly attention has been paid to the torture scenes in Ian Fleming’s canon of Bond novels and short stories (1953–1966), despite the fact that they represent some of the most potent sites of the negotiations of masculinity, nationhood, violence and the body for which Fleming’s texts are critically renowned. This article is an intersectional feminist reading of Fleming’s canon, which stresses the interpenetrations of homophobia, anticommunism and misogyny that are present in Fleming’s representation of torture. Drawing on close readings of Fleming’s novels and theoretical discussions of heteronormativity, homophobia and national identity, this article argues that Fleming’s representations of torture are sites of literary meaning in which the boundaries of hegemonic masculinity are policed and reinforced. This policing is achieved, this article argues, through the associations of the perpetration of torture with homosexuality and Communism, and the survival of torture with post-imperial British hegemonic masculinity. Fleming’s torture scenes frequently represent set pieces in which Bond must reject or endure the unsolicited intimacy of other men; he must resist their seductions and persuasions and remain ideologically undefiled. Bond’s survival of torture is a metonymy for Britain’s survival of post-Second World War social and political upheaval. Further, the horror of torture, for Fleming, is the horror of a hierarchy of hegemonic masculinity in disarray: Bond’s survival represents the regrouping of normative heterosexual masculinity through the rejection of homosexuality and Communism.

## Keywords

007, hegemonic masculinity, heteronormativity, homophobia, James Bond, torture

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Many of the discursive and representational practices through which heteronormative hegemonic masculinity is organised, reiterated and policed use descriptions of torture as a potent and ambivalent complex of meanings – meanings concerned with describing and enforcing boundaries and hierarchies that cross gender, class, race and ethnicity. In this article I argue that the torture scenes in Ian Fleming's James Bond fictions (1953–1966) function as potent images of the threat of homosexuality and as vibrant celebrations of the resistance of hegemonic masculinity to the political and sexual subversion that this threat represents. This is an element of a homophobic and heteronormative economy of meaning which is designed to make hierarchies between masculinities – hegemonic and subordinated – conspicuous. This homophobic representational strategy intersects with the problematic ideas about gender, martyrdom, endurance and survival that are involved in Fleming's representation of torture. Fleming emphasises Bond's valuable masculinity through his endurance of torture, highlighting two overlapping meanings by underscoring Bond's ability to resist the attractions of Communism – the great political antagonist of the period – and homosexuality – an interior 'enemy' in opposition to which mainstream British masculinity was identified. The hegemonic British masculinity of which Bond is an image is revealed as resistant to these threats through Bond's resistance to torture.

It is no novelty to claim that James Bond is a 'mythic figure' and a masculine exemplar (Bennett, 1983: 205). My originality here is to examine the role played by his endurance of torture in the establishment of this status as a totem of aspirational masculinity. The torture in Fleming's novels has received remarkably little scholarly attention, but I argue that despite this critical neglect Fleming's torture scenes represent some of the most potent sites of his negotiations of masculinity, violence and national identity. As such they are vitally important aspects of Fleming's work. Villains frequently torture Bond, and it is consistently played out as a homosexual seduction in order both to associate the evil of torture with homosexuality and to reveal Bond's valuable masculinity (itself an image of a privileged form of hegemonic British masculinity) as sealed against both the physical advances of homosexuality and the complex of ideological associations that Fleming layers onto it. I do not argue that the torture scenes represent literal seductions; rather, I argue that the torture scenes are unsettling precisely because they are based on intimacy with men: villains who are marked as sexually excessive and ideologically unacceptable attempt to seduce Bond into betraying Britain. Anthony Easthope (1990: 30, 105) has argued that the representation of intimate male violence is a sublimation of desire that reaffirms homosexual attraction in the gesture that seeks to expel it. My argument is precisely the opposite: Fleming's torture scenes dramatise male intimacy solely to underline its unambiguously unacceptable nature. The horror of torture, in Fleming's canon, is the horror of a hierarchy of hegemonic masculinity in reversal or upturned, and Bond's resistance to torture – his resistance, at once physical and ideological, to homosexuality and Communism – reorients the normal. Bond's torturers are coded as defectively masculine, and are consistently associated with Communist threats to Britain,

NATO and the West. Through his endurance and rejection of the unsolicited intimacy of torture, Bond (and through him Britain, NATO and the West) is revealed as an emblem of superior masculinity.

In this article I am concerned solely with the twelve novels and two short story collections written by Ian Fleming, rather than the wider Bond franchise. This broader franchise includes most obviously the twenty-five Bond films, but it also involves many associated epiphenomena featuring Bond, including comic strips, novelisations, video games and advertisements (for more on this, see Bennett, 1983; Bennett and Woollacott, 1987; Black, [2001] 2005; Lindner, 2009). Fleming's Bond novels are a particularly generative textual territory for the analysis of the association of torture with sex because the undisguised ideological meanings in them are so readily legible. However, though these meanings are unambiguous in the texts, I do not argue that the texts disseminate meaning didactically; I follow Tony Bennett and Janet Woollacott, who argue that the Bond novels 'do not merely reflect or pass on, unmodified, a series of contemporary ideologies' (1987: 95). The texts express ideas about martyrdom, violence, sex and the body, but in no sense are these texts at the origin of these ideas, as the ideas must already have been widespread in order for the texts to be comprehensible to their audiences. There is a mutual recognition, amplification and reinforcement between the chauvinisms of the texts and the pre-existing chauvinisms of their audience, as Fleming at once reflects and constructs the ideas, meanings and attitudes in which his texts are implicated. Here I begin to unpick one of these reflected ideas: the gendered and ideological meanings of Bond's resistance to torture.

### **Heteronormativity, hegemonic masculinity, homophobia**

Heterosexual relations can be productively understood as a political organising principle folded into the structure of normal experience in a way that has disciplinary effects on the gender identity and sexual behaviours of everyone, and particularly exclusionary effects for those who do not conform to heterosexual expectations. Hidden inside its omnipresent visibility, heteronormativity is at once a metanarrative that defines and regulates the permissible contours and thresholds of interpersonal interactions, and a rigorously policed and yet fluctuating, intuitive and ambiguous set of activities and expectations that makes ordinary life comprehensible through the discursive practices that organise and discipline our understandings of gendered relations into heavily value-laden schemas of what is normal or natural. It is the set of social practices through which heterosexuality is 'constructed as a coherent, natural, fixed and stable category; as universal and monolithic' (Richardson, 1996: 2), and a dimension of daily experience which 'consists less of norms that could be summarised as a body of doctrine than of a sense of rightness produced in contradictory manifestations – often unconscious, immanent to practice or to institutions' (Berlant and Warner, 1998: 548 n). It is manifest in not only the principles according to which certain varieties of heterosexuality are made to seem normal and privileged, but also the exclusionary boundaries

according to which any other form of sexuality is subject to disapproval or, very often, violent discipline. Representational production (including but not restricted to literary, filmic and popular cultural production), I argue, has a complex role in negotiating the understandings that form this sense of 'invisible, tacit, society-founding rightness' (Berlant and Warner, 1998: 548 n), and can operate flexibly and in contradictory, conservative or contestatory ways. Reactionary fiction, which is how I position Fleming's Bond canon, often plays the role of structuring, reinforcing and underlining the parameters of normative and aspirational roles, behaviours and hierarchies. Narrative is one mechanism through which certain practices and roles are made comprehensible as normal; further, it is a mechanism through which certain characteristics and behaviours are both marked as more desirable and associated with natural political superiority.

Hegemonic masculinity is a complex construction, and it requires the constant reiteration and policing of hegemonic practices and performances in order for the positions of power assumed by normative masculinity to seem invisible and inevitable. Normative heterosexual masculinity can only be hegemonic (socially and politically dominant) if it is visibly so; gendered hierarchies, and the locations of various forms of masculinity in these hierarchies, must be continually made conspicuous. The dominance of heteronormative hegemonic masculinity relies on the delineation of lesser masculinities and the repeated demonstration of their inferiority. Violence is central: Robert Connell describes violent interactions as 'transactions between men' that 'are used as a means of drawing boundaries and making exclusions' ([1995] 2005: 83). Representation has a key function here: as it explains, glamorises, critiques or otherwise imbues moments of bodily conflict with meaning, it is a crucial adjunct to violence that functions to secure its role as a means of policing sexualities and gendered identities. The representations of torture in Fleming's Bond canon have the function of underlining patriarchal, heteronormative and homophobic hierarchies in which hegemonic masculinity, as emblematised by Bond, is represented as superior at once to both lesser masculinities and all femininities.

Although it functions to condemn homosexuals to discipline, heteronormativity is also the principle according to which 'institutionalised, normative heterosexuality regulates those kept within its boundaries as well as marginalising and sanctioning those outside them' (Jackson, 2006: 105). That is, heteronormativity requires those who practice heterosexuality to do so within a narrow framework of acceptable parameters. These boundaries are where narratives and representations do much of their work, work which consists in framing the ways in which gendered identities can acceptably be performed. In addition to excluding homosexuals and Communists from the confines of permissible masculinity, Fleming constructs Bond as an image of hegemonic masculinity to which heterosexual readers are invited to aspire. Various an 'ideological short-hand for the appropriate image of masculinity in relation to which feminine identities were constructed' (Bennett, 1983: 202), and 'an agent of the patriarchal order, refurbishing its imaginarily impaired structure by quelling the source of the disturbance within it' (Bennett

and Woollacott, 1987: 116), there is a consensus among Bond scholars that Bond is presented by Fleming as an organising principle for desirable, imitable heterosexuality. This is not, however, as simplistic or binary as may be assumed. Bond does not simply triumph; he is located in the complex relational economy of masculinity through a double movement in which he is revealed as fallible and potentially vulnerable, and in which he demonstrates his quality by overcoming this potential lack. Bond's momentary failures lead him to intense trials in which his ultimate victory and his value as a signifier of national masculine character are given greater impact. Since homosexuality is seen as representing a potential point of threat or permeability in the total and closed veneer of straight masculinity, Bond must resist its advances in absolute terms in order to demonstrate the principle of total inviolability central to aspirational hegemonic masculinity.

Fleming labours Bond's value as a totem of masculinity throughout his canon by contrasting him favourably to excessive masculinities whose violence and sexuality are not as continentally organised. Several villains treat women particularly badly, such as the woman-torturing Emilio Largo (Fleming, [1961] 2012: 305–317), Pussy Galore's rapist uncle (Fleming, [1959] 2012: 371) or Milton Krest who, imitating a disciplinary peccadillo that Fleming attributes to Arabs, beats his wife with a stingray tail nicknamed The Corrector (Fleming, [1966] 2012: 211). Bond is better at violence than all of these men, because he both chooses more appropriate targets for his violence and administers it more decisively and effectively. He is also contrasted with limp men whose masculinity Fleming describes as insufficiently robust. For example, Fleming insults intellectuals by calling them homosexuals (Fleming, [1966] 2012: 50), and central to Smythe's 'demerits' in 'Octopussy' (1966) is what Sam Leith, in his introduction to the collection of short stories bearing that name, describes as 'a failure of manliness' (2012: 15). The hierarchy of masculinities described in *The Spy Who Loved Me* (1962) is particularly illustrative here: Bond is rougher, more robust, and more attractive than narrator Viv's two previous disappointing lovers Derek and Kurt, but he is nowhere near as dangerous as Slugsy and Horror, the two reptilian gangsters who threaten to murder her. Bond thus occupies a specific position in a complex relational economy. Bond is more risky (and thereby more interesting) than fops and hypocrites, but he is safer than, and protective against, bestial criminals: his masculinity is represented as valuable because it is positioned as particularly good in relation to the failed masculinities of other men.

Homophobia is central to the 'coherent heterosexuality' upon which hegemonic masculinity relies (Alsop et al., 2002: 143–144). Homosexual acts between men were criminal offences in Britain until 1967, so the policing to which non-heterosexual pleasures were subject was in no sense merely discursive when Fleming was writing. Derek McGhee writes that in 1950s England, 'the policing of homosexuality was carried out with considerable zeal', leading to what he calls 'many sordid prosecutions' (2004: 359). After the strategic egalitarianism of the war years, heterosexual norms and boundaries were reaffirmed with striking force; material practices of exclusion, criminalisation and pathologisation were reinforced and

normalised by ideological productions that celebrated heterosexuality through the demonisation of homosexuality. Accordingly, the discursive and political construction of homosexuals and homosexual acts as threats to normative sexuality and to society at large was particularly widespread in this period, because, as Mike Donaldson writes, 'male heterosexual identity is sustained and affirmed by hatred for, and fear of, gay men' (1993: 648). Jonathan Katz observes that the cultural, political and criminal designation 'homosexual' required the definition, description and visible condemnation of a 'lascivious outlaw' (1995: 112). It was not enough for the homophobia of the period to designate homosexuals as medically or biologically defective, as harmlessly different; the straight hatred of homosexuality paints queer desire as pathological, antisocial, dirty, risky, even treasonous: as Guy Hocquenghem writes, it 'decorates it with blood' ([1978] 1993: 69). Fleming's texts participate in this construction of lascivious homosexual outlaws through the ways in which the villains are characterised according to stereotypes about the dangerous, craven and violent nature of homosexual masculinity. At the same time as Fleming's Bond canon draws on longstanding homophobic templates and tropes, it reinforces, modifies and amplifies these same representational shorthands.

Aside from the anodyne assertion in *The Man with The Golden Gun* that homosexuals cannot whistle (Fleming, [1965] 2012: 39), much of this stereotyping associates homosexuality with objectionable, criminal and bloodthirsty aspects of masculinity. Homosexuality and non-heterosexual appetites are the source of the evil of villains including Scaramanga, psychologised in M's briefing materials as 'a sexual fetishist with possible homosexual tendencies' (Fleming, [1965] 2012: 40–41), and the homosexual assassins Kidd and Wint in *Diamonds Are Forever* (1956). In *Diamonds Are Forever*, Bond's American colleague Felix Leiter explicitly underscores the connection between homosexuality and sadistic pleasure when he remarks that '[s]ome of those homos make the worst killers' (Fleming, [1956] 2012: 157). The sexuality of Le Chiffre, who is described in Bond's briefing dossier as a 'flagellant' (Fleming, [1953] 2012: 18), is explicitly connected to the pleasure he derives from performing torture; although he is not explicitly marked as queer, his sexual practices are non-normative and associated with bloodshed. This homophobic opprobrium is central to the manner in which the texts police normative heterosexuality, because homosexual advances have a complex web of meanings for Fleming: they represent the straightforward threat to masculine penetrability of a deviant and criminal sexuality; they represent the sexual intentions of a form of perverse masculinity; and, perhaps in part owing to the treasons of Guy Burgess and Donald Maclean (homosexual British spies who defected to the Soviet Union in 1951), homosexual advances are made to dovetail with political betrayal to Communism. Indeed, homosexuality and Communism were frequently mutually associated during the Cold War (Easthope, 1990: 108; Edelman, 1992: 268). For Fleming the ambiguity of homosexuality was, as Black writes, 'as much political as sexual. The homosexual traitor Guy Burgess was thus the antithesis of Bond' ([2001] 2005: 105–106). Accordingly, the endurance of torture in Fleming's Bond

novels is mapped onto the resistance of male physical attention. Bond's resistance to torture violence and his overcoming of the physical invasions of inferior men represent a decisive rejection of homosexuality, and in the same movement they demonstrate and celebrate the worth of moral values such as courage, loyalty and anticommunist patriotism, all of which Fleming claims exclusively for heterosexuality.

### **National crisis, masculinity, endurance**

It is a critical commonplace to assert that Bond is an image of masculine supremacy that articulates potent national myths about Britain at a time when the reality behind these screen myths was anything but unequivocally positive (for examples of this position, see Moniot, 1976; Bennett, 1983; Black, [2001] 2005; Goodman, 2013). Fleming's Bond canon was produced between 1953 and 1966, thirteen turbulent years which saw Britain undergo profound and painful readjustment to its increasingly post-imperial post-Second World War geopolitical position. 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 Man with The Golden Gun* in 1965, Britain had undergone further decolonisations in Kenya, Cyprus, Sudan, Uganda, Sierra Leone and many other places, including Fleming's beloved Jamaica in 1962. Rather than straightforwardly trumpeting Britain's value and strength, therefore, Fleming negotiates Britain's mid-twentieth-century transition from imperial superpower to European nation state (Winder, [2006] 2011: 290). As James Chapman remarks, Bond is 'an essentially conservative hero, a defender of the realm' (1991: 29); Bond's task is 'to vindicate a myth of Englishness which has been put into question by the tide of history' (Bennett and Woollacott, 1987: 110). Bond is Fleming's response to Britain's problems in the middle of the twentieth century; Bond represents the best aspects of the British national character that have persisted, survived, through the profoundly bruising victory in the Second World War and the trials of decolonisation that followed it. Accordingly, given that Bond is more a metonymy of survival than of triumph, Fleming's Bond is a far cry from the 'hyperheterosexualised' (Jenkins, 2005: 314) and triumphant figure familiar from some of the Bond movies; as Toby Miller writes, 'teleological accounts of a phallic, hegemonic hero' are not appropriate for Fleming's originary Bond, as the 'chaotic' and sometimes contradictory nature of the texts does not permit uncritical readings of the character or of the society on whose behalf he operates (2009: 286). Nowhere in Fleming is Britain simply praised for its own sake – it is, rather, praised for its survival of profound historical trauma. This is another example of the meaning of the double movement described above: Britain is first revealed as seriously endangered before it is revealed as superior through the overcoming of threat.

David Cannadine expresses this nuance when he writes that Fleming's writing reflects a complex mixture of '[a]wareness, approval, revulsion, reaction and fantasy' as responses to the 'decline which he saw around him in contemporary

Britain' (1979: 55). Fleming does not uncritically valorise the UK; rather, he praises a certain emerging form of British masculinity as the solution to its decline. Bond's bodily survival is particularly important here. Bond's wounding and survival form a potent metonymy of the wounding and survival of the best attributes of British identity. As Britain loses its Empire, Bond remains guarantor of the continued quality of British national character through his multiple varieties of masculine prowess, including factors such as his physical appeal to women, his athleticism, his skill at cards and his almost parodically generous capacity for the pleasures of food, tobacco and alcohol. Bond is located in the literary tradition of the British lover, in which heterosexuality, national security and justice form an associational complex: Bond demonstrates his masculinity by fighting both to defend his nation and to win the sexual approval of women (for a discussion of the British lover tradition, see Hawkins, 1990: 30). In particular, his ability to perpetrate proportionate and just violence marks him as an agent of moral good in the ambiguous and uncertain Cold War world. Anthony Synnott writes that '[a]lthough he kills, it is only in the line of duty, usually after considerable provocation and in self defense, and he takes no sadistic joy in the killing' (1990: 411). However, though Bond may be legitimate in the reluctant exercise of his capacity for murder, he suffers much more often than he kills. I argue that it is his victimhood, rather than his violence, which is the key factor in marking him out as a signifier of national endurance.

Bond's capacity to suffer is stressed much more frequently than the justice of his capacity to inflict violence, and likewise it is his endurance of pain which Fleming uses to confer greater value upon him. This is a modification of the heroic model in which the British lover is usually located: Bond's suffering is the primary activity, the central expertise, which demonstrates the masculine qualifications of the nation he represents. For a particularly striking example, one could consider *You Only Live Twice* (1964). Bond's Japanese interlocutor Tiger Tanaka sneers that the British 'have not only lost a great Empire, you have seemed almost anxious to throw it away with both hands' (Fleming, [1964] 2012: 107). For the remainder of that novel, Bond is physically tested in various ways to prove both that Britain is still a serious geopolitical power and that 'there is still an elite in Britain' (Fleming, [1964] 2012: 107–108). Alternatively, one could consider the trials arranged for Bond by Dr Julius No, who is 'interested in the anatomy of courage – in the power of the human body to endure' (Fleming, [1958] 2012: 257). Bond encounters an elaborate obstacle course of tortures in *Dr No*, culminating with his battle against a giant squid (one of Fleming's pulpier flourishes), from which he emerges mangled yet triumphant. Bond is an image of elite power which circulates at a time of international decline; he radiates this meaning through his survival of intense bodily pain. Britain may be embattled and diminished, but Bond's endurance of his physical trials reveals that in important respects it can still prevail.

In addition to suffering almost continual decolonisations, Britain had the complex task of effectively orienting itself with regard to other world powers, principally the Soviet Union, the United States and the emerging continental alliance



which would become the European Union. The role of Fleming's fiction in this reorientation is not simple. Ronnie Lipschutz, for example, writes that 'Fleming could not forgive the United States for having shouldered aside the British after World War II. Bond was Fleming's revenge, forever saving the Americans from both their clumsiness and the Russians' (2001: 55). It is tempting to agree here, and to argue that Bond represents total British triumph and a nostalgia for imperial supremacy which sneers at the vulgarities of US power; some of Fleming's more jingoistic remarks, such as 'this time it really was St George and the dragon', 'Never go a bear of England' or 'Dulce et decorum est...and all that jazz!' (Fleming, [1959] 2012: 298, 358; Fleming, [1964] 2012: 233–234), may support this reading. However, I would argue that Fleming, in meticulously describing all antagonists in terms amenable to the lens through which the US was redrawing Cold War geopolitical allegiances – that is, in describing every enemy as a Communist or a Communist ally – uses Bond as a means of solidifying Anglo-American allegiances. Fleming's foregrounding of Anglo-American friendship is most clearly legible in Bond's enduring relationship with Felix Leiter. For example, in *Casino Royale* Leiter subs Bond the money to continue gambling against Le Chiffre, an intervention Leiter describes as 'Marshall Aid' and which Bond describes as 'the best thing that ever happened to me' (Fleming, [1953] 2012: 110, 114). This event cements their friendship, which persists throughout Fleming's novels.

In order to solidify its special relationship with the US, Britain adopted a new political vocabulary that represented Communism as its principal adversary. Andrew Rubin writes that '[c]haracterising former colonial subjects as communist threats to the imperial order enabled Britain to continue to exercise its power in concert with the US strategy of containing communism [...] What was previously encoded as a rebellion to British colonial rule was rearticulated as an international communist threat' (2012: 35). Britain's many decolonisations were most often spearheaded by radical nationalist groups who sought to nationalise economic resources and restructure wealth according to socialist principles. However, in order to solidify the ideological affiliation with the US, in British representations – both official and literary – these nationalists were 'invariably described as purely "communist" for public relations' (Curtis, 2004: 280). This explains Fleming's obsession with Communism, which sees almost all of Bond's antagonists described as Communists or complicit with Communism (*Diamonds Are Forever*, in which the villains are American gangsters engaged in sheer unregulated capitalism, is the only exception to this). Reproducing the official position that Britain's enemies could be overwhelmingly described as Communist in character, Fleming paints his villains as such and then repeatedly emphasises Bond's – Britain's – resistance to Communist seduction in order to underscore the extent to which the US and the UK were allies in the same civilisational conflict.

It is principally through Bond's vulnerability, and his ability to stoically undergo and yet perpetually recover from horrendous violence, that Bond's value as both a masculine exemplar and an image of Britain's geopolitical repositioning can be

most productively read. Torture is often represented as, under certain conditions, empowering for the victim: that is, victims of torture can ‘win’ by refusing to speak. Page duBois writes that ‘[s]ilence under torture may be coded as an aristocratic virtue’, writing that ancient Spartan myths about the systematic inculcation of the endurance of pain underscore ‘the degree to which silence under pain is ideologically associated with nobility’ (1991: 26–27). The principle here, that the stoic survival of physical suffering is interpreted as revealing admirable masculine qualities, resurfaces in Fleming’s writing. Through Bond’s survival of torture, an embattled nation is invited to recognise its own overcoming of adversity. Bond is not of aristocratic origin (Fleming, [1963] 2012: 68–78), so his ability to represent Britain’s finest elements reveals that his superiority is truly *meritocratic*, that is, *earned, deserved*, an indisputable and inevitable result of natural selections. British superiority is revealed as part of the natural order of things, and the stoic endurance of torture is an arena in which this superiority can be demonstrated. This can be located in a long Western tradition in which the experiences of suffering, survival and escape are potent tropes which reveal, produce and amplify desirable masculine qualities. Surviving torture represents, for Fleming, the achievement of a higher masculine status, and this potent association operates as a way of policing normative gender hierarchies. Not only is Bond’s resistance to torture an example of the association of physical excellence with moral and political superiority, it is an association of his heteronormative heterosexuality with that natural superiority.<sup>1</sup>

### The sexual representation of torture

Like the association of the survival of torture and nobility, the association of sexuality and torture has a long history. The extent to which the sexual dynamic of war can be described as an extension of masculine sexuality has been widely described and critiqued. Scholars argue that military prowess and sexual potency have been associated in the Western imaginary since at least the conquests of Julius Caesar, and the nuclear age remains preoccupied with a similar priapism (Cohn, 1987: 690–702; Nagel, 1998: 256–258), and at least one popular historian has boldly claimed that ‘the desire to inflict pain’ is ‘controlled by sexual impulse’ (Gregson, 1965: 16). It is no surprise then that torture is often formulated in similar terms. Emma Kuby writes, for instance, that French activists criticising French torture in the Algerian War ‘drew on a readily available cultural shorthand equating war with taboo sexual pleasure and, subsequently, with the destruction of normative masculinity’ (2013: 134). The rhetorical appeal of this association of torture and sex is straightforward: it attempts to reveal and critique torture in particular as obeying a physical logic that operates on a similar principle to sexual relations, and violence more generally as an extension of sexualised male dominance.

This rhetorical isomorphism between torture and sex may indeed have much to recommend it as a critical manoeuvre, because by placing torture – the most potent image imaginable of direct violent coercion – at the heart of the nature of the sexual, this image has the potential to reveal and forcefully critique the gendered

and sexual nature of patriarchal power. Very often, however, it is mobilised quite differently. Historian Marnia Lazreg quotes a torturer:

An interrogation is like making love. An essential rule is to take your time, know how to hold yourself long enough till you reach the crucial moment, keep up pain till it reaches its climax. Most of all do not go beyond this threshold or your partner will die on you. If you can motivate him, he'll talk. Well, you know, orgasm. Otherwise, he'll pass out. If you love women, lieutenant, you should understand. (2007: 127)

This torturer *embraces* the idea that torture operates similarly to sex, endorsing this explanatory mechanism as an effective way of transferring knowledge and of replicating practice. Much as in sex one elicits orgasms with the expertise of the experienced lover, he claims, through torture one extorts secret knowledge through the skilled application of pain. The moment of orgasm is made analogous to the moment of coerced confession: both moments are instances in which the body is forcibly made to reveal truth. Crucially, the subject to whom the body belongs is pushed beyond control of their corporeality and speaks involuntarily, uncontrollably, because overwhelmed by physical sensations. Note that the torturer does not refer to any specific sexual event or act – penetration, ejaculation – but that he underscores the extent to which sex and torture are seductions, persuasions, which obey similar embodied logics. As we have seen, heteronormativity and homophobia require men to demonstrate their impermeability: in Fleming's torture scenes, Bond cannot let a man make him orgasm; that is, Bond cannot let a man take control of his sensations so that he involuntarily betrays secrets. This representation of torture as a sexual transaction should be resisted as a fundamentally unethical misdescription of torture, of sex, of victimhood and of gendered relations more generally, because it sexualises torture in order both to make it seem titillating, attractive and explicable in terms of a familiar and pleasurable physical principle.

Critique of the sexual core of torture often fails to escape the paradigm that conflates sex and violence, reinterpreting but not discarding it. Lazreg does not fully interrogate this relationship between torture and sex; instead, she asserts that, as physical manipulations, they are of the same order (2007: 268). It is true that sex acts are often used in the course of torture, and rape reveals that sexual acts can be acts of violence (Juni, 2009). However, we should be careful about deterministically categorising torture as sexual. Revealing the potential for torture to have a sexual dimension is important, but to reduce it purely to sex is a dangerously closed interpretive gesture. Torture is an intimate relationship, a form of relational violence that operates to destroy and dehumanise bodies both sexed and gendered. This does not mean, however, that there is a foundational implication of torture and the sexual. Starvation, suffocation, enclosure, beating and many other non-sexual physical invasions can be involved in torture. These sexual descriptive strategies gender and sexualise a form of domination that does not need to be read in such terms to have clarity.

Imagining the torture relationship in terms of a male-on-female relationality presupposes a masculine torturer, which reproduces the notion of men as natural dominators of women, and presupposes a feminine or feminised victim, which represents weakened flesh as necessarily female. Further, it perpetuates the gendering of status: the torturer is often described as ‘feminising’ their victim, a strategy that obviously perpetuates the male chauvinism that inferiorises women; violent activity is coded as masculine, and receptive victimhood as feminine, in such a way that the normative, intact, undamaged body is coded as male and the damaged or weakened physicality of the victim as non-normative and female. To return to Bond: his flesh is represented as potentially female, as potentially sexually passive, and through his endurance of torture this potential must be mastered and negated. Bond must remain the primary man, the one in control of the revelation of truth. Bond’s refusal to respond to torture – his refusal to speak involuntarily – is the refusal to succumb to the masculine authority of his torturers, the refusal to lose control and be forced to (however involuntarily) acknowledge the domination of another man.

It should be stressed that in suffering torture, men are not ‘feminised’. It is their embodied and continuing identity *as men* towards which their attempted emasculation is directed. Even in situations of castration the male victim may be incompletely male but he is not made female: to say that he becomes female is to read the female body as not only an incomplete male but as a diminished and damaged one. Sex is undoubtedly sometimes central to torture, and the gendered identity of the victim often becomes a territory for their abuse and as such is sometimes crucial to torture’s power, but it is often acted upon in a much more complex way than a metaphor that relies upon the logic of penetration can convey. *Domination* is what is inherent in torture, and this domination can take a racist or homophobic or sexist form – that is, the form of violence can reflect the values of the person perpetrating it – and it can utilise many dimensions of embodied vulnerability, such as sex, space, hunger and fatigue, without changing its core nature. Since gendered metaphors are descriptive and interpretive acts that exist independently of the torture act, it is such metaphors themselves that introduce essentialist sexism and deterministically heteronormative meanings into the understanding of the torture relation.

It is not only torture that is gendered through the use of this rhetorical isomorphism between violence and sex; Carol Cohn, for example, writes that the description of nuclear war with priapic metaphors, such as that it is a ‘pissing contest’ (1987: 696), misdescribes war in a way that makes it attractive to perpetrators and that trivialises and elides the suffering it causes. The description of torture as a sexual transaction also has these trivialising consequences that Cohn describes. Accepting the torturer’s bragging at face value is quite clearly problematic, because basing an interpretation of the sexual dynamics of torture on the torturer’s perspective without including the experience of the victim inevitably leads to a skewed perception of what took place. Accepting the torturer’s self-romanticisation misses the fact that this gendered description of torture is in fact

simply a form of euphemism, a circumlocution, a self-serving misdescription. A torturer may take sexual pleasure from torturing (although we can rarely know whether this is in fact the case), but will never be able to impart it through torture. Neither are sexual practices such as BDSM (Bondage, Domination, Submission, Masochism – that is, sexual activities that involve consensually perpetrating and receiving various levels of violence) to be conflated with torture. Negotiations of mutual *consent* are central to distinguishing between torture violence – in part defined by the absence of consent of the victim – and sexual acts involving consensual violence and humiliation (Langdrige and Butt, 2005: 70). The key difference is that torture can never be consensual for the victim. It is ethically incumbent upon us to sympathise more with the victim than with the perpetrator, and it is only the perpetrator who could understand the situation symbolically or metaphorically and not as a horrifying material experience of extreme physical distress. Likewise, to describe it as an experience that is a mark of honour is to trivialise the devastating effects of torture. Enduring torture is always transformative, but it is grotesque to claim that it is positively so. Fleming's misdescriptions, by using the survival of torture as a marker of valuable masculinity, further distance us from the reality of torture. Fleming's novels do not glorify or justify the *infliction* of torture, as Johnson (1958) has argued: they apotheosise, misrepresent and trivialise the *survival* of it by lionising endurance as a form of masculine prowess and as resistance to a deviant sexual urge.

### **Torturing Bond: Torture, seduction**

In *Skyfall* (2012), Javier Bardem's villain Silva flirtatiously interrogates Daniel Craig's Bond. In some ways it is staged as a torture scene; Bond is tied to a chair, for instance, a common cultural shorthand indicating the onset of torture, and which was central to his torture in the earlier film *Casino Royale* (2006). This scene does not, however, feature violence. It is staged as at once a confrontation and a persuasion, at once an interrogation and a seduction. Silva strokes Bond's thighs as he attempts to diminish his attachment to his superiors: in a gesture at once sexual and ideological, Silva attempts to seductively coerce Bond away from political fidelity to England. This conflation of ideological subversion and sexual attention is an example of the return to the representational conservatism of the novels for which the Daniel Craig Bond films are known (Funnell, 2011; Kord and Krimmer, 2011: 133). In Fleming's canon, even more so than in *Skyfall*, Bond is continually made potentially available to male intimacy, and he continually resists it and the ideological conversion and betrayal that it represents. This movement, in which Bond continually remains impermeable to the unsolicited intimacy of the cast of inferior men who torture him, is a foundational dynamic of Fleming's canon.

A truism about homophobia claims that straight men are suspicious of gay men because they fear that they will become the object of a desire that resembles their own. That is, straight men know that the way they desire women involves violence

and contempt, and they fear that they will be objectified by gay men in a similar way. The role of violence against women in the Bond novels reveals that Fleming's homophobic representation of torture expresses this fear that male desire will be turned against men. Sophia McDougall (2013) remarks that Silva's treatment of Bond caused discomfort for certain viewers because Silva is the first character to treat Bond like a woman; throughout Fleming's original canon, however, torturers constantly treat Bond the way that Fleming's men treat women – in an objectifying and invasive way which disregards permission or consent. In *The Spy Who Loved Me* Viv describes Horror's violence against her as 'refined, erotic cruelty' (Fleming, [1962] 2012: 116), and in *Dr No* Bond's proxy torturer Quarrel takes pleasure in torture, grinning as Annabel Chung spits in his face. Once he has released her, he grunts and remarks 'with quiet pleasure' that she was a 'tough baby' (Fleming, [1958] 2012: 62). Likewise, Drax's torturer Krebs in *Moonraker* experiences a salacious pleasure as he anticipates torturing a woman: 'Krebs's mouth was half open. His tongue ran up and down his lower lip. He seemed to be having difficulty with his breathing as he took a step towards the girl' (Fleming, [1955] 2012: 267). Perpetrating physical violence on women is here represented as an extension of erotic desire, and this is precisely the sexual attention that Bond must resist when he undergoes torture at the hands of his Communist enemies. The potential for receptivity is at the very origin of Bond, and not a twenty-first century innovation: within the ruthless economy of homophobic heteronormativity, this antinormative and antiprocreative desire must be disciplined. His status as a totem of aspirational masculinity dictates that Bond must remain desirable to all, but he must be in control of the forms of desire to which he chooses to respond.

Crucial here is the fact that seduction is represented as a way of inscribing and reiterating gendered hierarchies. In another modification of the British lover tradition, Fleming actively celebrates sexual promiscuity as an indicator of masculine virility, uncoupling patriotism from monogamy; in Fleming's heroic model, romantic love is an exercise of masculine power, and power needs to be distributed across as wide a population as possible. Seducing women, sometimes violently, is an aspirational activity, a demonstration of power that is amplified through repetition; resisting torture – refusing to be an object of intimacy – is represented as the resistance to another man's masculine and sexual aspirations, the refusal to allow another man to wield the power that seduction represents. The 'best' man can both fuck anyone he wants and remain unambiguously impermeable to the fucking of other men: torture is thus central to Fleming's erotics and to his negotiations of consent, which are always understood in terms of conquest. Bond should generate consent in women – especially resistant women, such as *Goldfinger's* lesbian gangster Pussy Galore, or undomesticated women such as *Dr No's* Honeychile Rider or Judy Havelock from *For Your Eyes Only* ([1960] 2012) – and withhold consent from men – such as *Casino Royale's* Le Chiffre, *Moonraker's* Krebs or *Goldfinger's* Oddjob – because sexual consent is inseparable from political domination. Women consent to their domination when they willingly accept their place in a gendered hierarchy, and Bond refuses to consent to be

dominated by other men, which demonstrates his place at the top of a hierarchy of hegemonic masculinity.

It is particularly illustrative that Fleming speaks often about rape in terms that underscore its nature as a taboo yet thrilling pleasure. In *Casino Royale*, Fleming describes Bond's desire for Vesper Lynd after a period of convalescence. As his body recovers from torture, Bond is particularly excited by the thought that 'the conquest of her body, because of the central privacy in her, would each time have the sweet tang of rape' (Fleming, [1953] 2012: 199–200). Rape is described as the heart of desire: at the rebirth of Bond's libido, it is the unformed origin of his re-emerging ability to desire. Violent heterosexuality is aspirational and normative: raping women is the truest form of consensual sex, for Fleming, as it expresses not only this original and undomesticated nature of desire but also the political 'truth' underlying gendered relations. This truth, for Fleming, is that men want to, can and should, dominate women, and that both men and women desire this and acknowledge the natural justice of it. In *Goldfinger*, Bond exchanges a 'flurry of masculine/feminine master/slave signals' (Fleming, [1959] 2012: 211) with Tilly Masterton when they meet; seduction has a mutually acknowledged and approved power structure in which men are masters and women are mastered. Darko Kerim in *From Russia With Love* operates as a masculine exemplar both in describing a story in which a woman he abuses comes to love him as '[a]n interesting lesson in female psychology' and in remarking that all women 'long to be slung over a man's shoulder and taken into a cave and raped' (Fleming, [1957] 2012: 187, 185). Kerim knows the original truth about sexual relations, unencumbered by prudish bourgeois morality or liberal pretensions to sexual equality. Importantly, female approval of this hierarchy is demonstrated by the claim, made by the female narrator of *The Spy Who Loved Me*, that 'all women love semi-rape' (Fleming, [1962] 2012: 189). Such remarks indicate that both men and women acknowledge the fundamental rightness of rape; even semi-rape derives its thrill from the notion that a man is entitled to a woman's body at any time. In this respect, Fleming's texts anticipate feminist critiques of rape, such as those of Susan Brownmiller ([1975] 1976: 15), Catherine MacKinnon (1997) and Alison Phipps (2009: 670), who argue that rape is an immanent disciplinary component of normative heterosexuality; for Fleming, however, this is a thrill rather than a critique. Much as the torturer quoted by Lazreg affirms the value of the conflation of torture and sex, Fleming approvingly emphasises the centrality of rape to heterosexuality.

Likewise, Bond's seduction of Pussy Galore, who projects 'the sexual challenge all beautiful Lesbians have for men' but who succumbs to Bond's appeal because she 'never met a man before' (Fleming, [1959] 2012: 279, 371), plays into two major and related anti-lesbian homophobias: firstly, misogynist fantasies about corrective rape, and secondly the idea that women choose to be lesbians because they've never experienced a masculinity virile enough to convince them of the rightness of heterosexuality. In Fleming's economy of gendered relations, heterosexuality is rigidly organised and homosexuality must be normalised: gay women must be straightened into sexual receptivity and male intimacy must be decisively rebuffed.

As Stephen Heath writes, the seduction of Pussy reveals the masculine impulse both to ‘*explain* her lesbianism’ and ‘to prescribe treatment from practising sexologist Bond’ ([1982] 1990: 96; emphasis in original). Female homosexuality – and the challenge that hegemonic masculinity reads in the sexual unavailability it entails – must be firstly made comprehensible as a pathological condition and then corrected through disciplinary initiation into heterosexuality (for more on this argument, see Jenkins, 2005: 313; Ladenson, 2009). This seduction-discipline-conversion, mandatory for gay women, is simultaneously the seduction-discipline-conversion that Bond must resist: at the same time as he must not betray secrets to the Communists, he must not betray the heterosexuality of which he is an emblem by being forcibly recruited to homosexuality.

### **The meanings of pain: Torturers, torture**

Fleming’s Bond’s talent for the survival of violence, and the frustration of the ambitions of his torturers that this represents, is represented as a particularly masculinising aspect of his experience. Although his distress is presented as genuine and intense, his experiences of violence provide him with opportunities to demonstrate not only his capacity to withhold information from his tormentors but also his masculine qualities such as focus, courage and patriotism, associating these values with his heterosexuality. In *Moonraker*, for instance, he fools Drax into beating him senseless, inviting violence in order to derange his torturer and create time to formulate a plan for escape: even when undergoing a severe beating, Bond remains intellectually and strategically focused (Fleming, [1955] 2012: 281–282). His torture in *Goldfinger* reveals Bond’s self-sacrifice particularly forcefully. Drawing on the ‘mainspring of will-power that must not run down again until he was dead’ (Fleming, [1959] 2012: 247), Bond repeatedly asserts that he would rather die than capitulate. This subordination of his life to the necessity to protect the nation from destruction is as clear an image as one can imagine of patriotic self-sacrifice. Bond, through his prodigious ability to suffer, is repeatedly revealed as an image of aspirational hegemonic masculinity.

Bond’s masculine value is repeatedly shown as exceeding the value of others. James Molony, a physician hired by Universal Exports, tells M. that Bond has ‘been in *real* pain’ (Fleming, [1958] 2012: 18; emphasis in original), underscoring the extent to which Bond is unusual and exceptional in his capacity to sustain authentically serious injury and to survive intact; in a later text Fleming repeats and amplifies this when Molony reflects further that he ‘had seen how the spirit, the reserves in the man [Bond], could pull him out of badly damaged conditions that would have broken the normal human being’ (Fleming, [1964] 2012: 22). As it is a doctor who reaches these conclusions, these words are imbued with the objectivity of medical authority – Bond’s excellence is therefore presented as having a sound scientific basis. Medical authority is also called upon to testify to the extraordinary nature of Bond’s resistance in *Casino Royale*. The French doctor who treats Bond after his torture says that he has treated many patients who have ‘suffered similar



handling' (Fleming, [1953] 2012: 161–162) and that not one has borne it as well as Bond. The novel is set in postwar France, so this can easily be read as a reference to members of the French Resistance who were tortured by the Gestapo. Fleming describes Bond resisting to a greater degree than the martyrs of the French Resistance, and the effect of this, echoing Page duBois' assertion above that silence under torture is a characteristic that is used to denote moral and political value, is to show that Bond is at once a superior physical specimen and a moral exemplar. In the central torture scene in this novel, Bond's genitals are repeatedly thrashed and it is only the intervention of an assassin that prevents Bond's castration: it is Bond's embodied and gendered identity as a British man that is tested and which emerges triumphantly resistant.

Recent scholarship on the movie adaptation of *Casino Royale* (2006) emphasises an element of this reading, but also underscores a revealing difference between the film and its source. Many critics write that Bond's endurance in this scene reveals his extraordinary value: the torture scene 'showcases [Bond's] bodily strength and subsequently reinforces the notion of heroic competence' (Funnell, 2011: 468); Bond 'resists a feminized position' and 'garners agency through his refusal to perform victimhood' (Pheasant-Kelly, 2014: 206); the violence that 'we expect will expose his vulnerability in fact enhances his strength' (Omry, 2009: 170); Bond's suffering 'shows the depth of his strength and integrity' (Howard, 2009: 42). This rather descriptive, uncritical and univocal scholarly response shows the extent to which the scene is intended as a demonstration of Bond's virile and valuable masculinity; there is a consensus that enduring torture 'well' reveals Bond's masculine excellence and emphasises his desirable moral and political characteristics (integrity, heroic competence, strength) – a commendable masculinity is thereby revealed as embodied, natural and inevitable. However, contrasting the novel with its filmic adaptation also reveals that although the scene may lay a comparable emphasis on Bond's masculinity, the film elides the homophobia of Fleming's original text. Reading these scenes in adjacency reveals more clearly the interrogation of sexual normativity and deviance that is particular to Fleming's writing. Mads Mikkelsen's Le Chiffre may be a terrorist financier and a torturer, but he remains heterosexual, that is, a sexually normative antagonist. In the film adaptation, Bond's physical survival remains a metonymy of the survival of a British identity marked as authentically morally virtuous and politically superior, but it is no longer the explicit rejection of sexual deviance that it was for Fleming.

Much as it is a truism to acknowledge the ways in which Fleming repeatedly reiterates Bond's physical superiority, the obvious and often cartoonish monstrosity of Fleming's villains is widely acknowledged. There is a reinforcing and circular reciprocity between the negative characteristics displayed by his villains. Synnott argues that ugliness, for Fleming, 'symbolises evil and evil is symbolised by ugliness and foreignness' (1990: 413). Sex is again central, as 'a notion of deviant sexuality fits in with menace' (Black, [2001] 2005: 107). This is particularly true of those who torture Bond: his torturers are marked as lesser men through their physical and sexual characteristics. In *Casino Royale*, Fleming describes Le Chiffre as mixed

race, overweight and, as seen above, a ‘flagellant’, with a ‘small, rather feminine mouth’ (Fleming, [1953] 2012: 17–18). Unlike Mads Mikkelsen’s lean and suave screen interpretation of the character, Fleming’s Le Chiffre is racially impure, physically unfit and sexually nonconformist; a striking example of the characteristics that Fleming clusters together to potently denote evil. In particular, his sexual peccadillo, flagellation – a practice in which the body is mortified for sexual pleasure – is directly linked to his propensity for inflicting violence; there is a definite suggestion that Le Chiffre’s motivation for torturing Bond is as much sexual as it is about recovering his lost fortune. *Moonraker*’s Krebs, whose torturing career earns him the nickname *The Persuader*, is described as ‘a youthful version of Peter Lorre’ whose handshake reveals ‘a slightly damp hand’ (Fleming, [1955] 2012: 266–267, 132–133; emphasis in original). Fleming’s evocative reference to horror actor Lorre collapses a great deal of associations into one image, as Lorre’s characters are often sinister, villainous and dangerous foreigners; the insinuating reference to a limp handshake is also a clear indication of a masculinity marked as insufficiently robust.

Fleming also uses racial stereotypes in order to describe torturers as sexually excessive, perverse and dangerous. Oddjob, Auric Goldfinger’s torturing manservant, is exemplary here. Goldfinger describes Oddjob to Bond as a particularly vigorous specimen of the Korean temperament, which in its attitude both to sexual relations with women and to confrontations with men is unified in the imperative ‘to submit the white race to the grossest indignities’ (Fleming, [1959] 2012: 182). For Fleming, Oddjob’s desire to sexually humiliate women and to violently overwhelm men thus share a common root. Likewise, Tee Hee, black gangster Mr Bigg’s torturer in *Live and Let Die*, is represented as having an infantile and animal relish for his work, and an ‘inane’ and ‘falsetto’ giggle (Fleming, [1954] 2012: 92). This, and the transparent racism of the rest of this novel, which underscores the bestial and atavistically sexualised nature of black embodiment and desire, is used to make Tee Hee’s desire to hurt Bond seem like an extension of sexual greed. Perpetrating torture is consistently associated with illegitimate and unpleasant desire in order to emphasise the value of Bond’s continent and well-organised heterosexuality; through refusing to succumb to any male desire, the embodied morality of Bond’s masculinity is repeatedly emphasised.

Soviet torturer Rosa Klebb of *From Russia With Love* emblematises another perversion with which Fleming was concerned: female masculinity. Although Rosa never tortures Bond, she does appear to kill him with a penetrative blow at the end of this text, and throughout the novel Fleming emphasises the physical characteristics which most clearly distinguish her from acceptable femininity. She has a skill for violence, a ‘harsh, authoritarian voice’ and is described as looking ‘like the oldest and ugliest whore in the world’ when she attempts to wear normative feminine clothing (Fleming, [1957] 2012: 99–101, 120, 125, 116). Klebb is located at the heart of the Soviet torture apparatus; the fluidity and ambiguity of queer sexuality is, to recall Hocquenghem’s evocative phrase, ‘decorated with blood’ through its association with the institutionalised sadism of totalitarianism. This character, who

appears to murder Bond, again represents a reversal of normative gender roles, and unlike Pussy Galore she cannot be converted to normativity through sexual persuasion. Unfavourable contrast to the normative femininity of the young and beautiful Tatiana Romanova, the Soviet agent sent to seduce Bond but who defects to the West (in part, of course, due to Bond's romantic irresistibility), is used to underscore both Klebb's aberrant and masculine sexuality and her political perversion. These two factors dovetail in her role as torturer; her 'reputation for sadism is underwritten by her lesbian tendencies' (Bold, 2009: 210). Regardless of their biological sex, torturers are presented as ideological and sexual perverts with ill-regulated and inappropriate masculine sexual impulses. Every time Bond is faced with torture, that is, every time he is enjoined to betray Britain, he is faced with a form of sexuality that he must repel. Torture and sexual seduction are conflated in order to dramatise the ideological rejection of Communism and homosexuality that is at the heart of Fleming's politics.

## Conclusion

Ian Fleming's torture scenes are potent knots of meaning which represent complex negotiations of masculinity, sexuality, power and national identity. The Bond novels repeatedly show the horror of torture as the horror of a hierarchy of masculinity in disarray, and Bond's resistance to torture – his resistance to homosexuality and Communism – regrounds the normative, decisively enforcing homophobic and nationalist norms about masculine behaviour, conduct and being. Bond can seduce and Bond can reject seduction: the integrity of Bond's masculinity stands in for that of heteronormative British masculinity, and the superiority of this form of masculinity is demonstrated repeatedly by Bond's capacity for suffering. Surviving pain has ideological connotations which confer high moral value. Fleming underscores the value of post-imperial British masculinity by showing how well it can suffer and emerge triumphant, in some ways improved and enriched. This valuable masculinity is, of course, highly specified: it is a white, heterosexual and heteronormative masculinity which is defined through the physical endurance of torture, the repulsion of homosexuality and the rejection of Communism.

## Note

1. It is worth underlining that the consistent casting of Bond as the victim of torturers working on behalf of the Soviets and never as the perpetrator has the effect of concealing the extent to which Britain was a torturing Empire. This occurs despite allusions to historical constellations in which it is now acknowledged that British forces tortured extensively, such as Fleming's references to counterterrorism operations in the Malayan Emergency, to 'Mau Mau work' in Kenya (Fleming, [1961] 2012: 43–44; see Elkins, 2005: 62–90) or to the enmity between Britain and Greece (Fleming, [1957] 2012: 272). Displacing sole responsibility for torture onto NATO's Cold War antagonists attributes degeneracy, sadism and excess to the enemy in the same gesture that underlines the positive moral character of the British.

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