

Bristol Journal of English Studies, Issue 3 (Spring 2013)

England's Green, Unpleasant Land: Memory, Myth and National Identity in the Novels of Ian Fleming

Samuel Goodman

Victory in Europe Day (VE Day), May 8th 1945, was by all accounts a day of mixed emotions. The radio broadcasters present outside Buckingham Palace noted the strain of recent hardship and collective hope for the future in equal measure in the atmosphere.¹ The widespread mood of public opinion as captured by Mass Observation (MO) reporters was that Britain, exhausted by war, was on the verge of a new age.² The end of the war in Europe had provoked spontaneous celebrations of relief throughout the nation as those fortunate enough to have survived believed that the wartime struggles through which they had suffered were to be finally rewarded in a new era of great political and social change. However, the change that the British public desired in the summer of 1945 could never be accomplished by a single hammer-blow of immediate social shift; a range of prejudices, divisions and modes of thinking would inevitably endure. Indeed, in *A History of Post-War Britain 1945-74*, C. J. Bartlett states that 'in many respects the years of peace were a continuation of the years of war in different circumstances'.³ The view that with the cessation of hostilities a new world would suddenly burst into existence failed to account for the commemorative desires of the people of Britain, the power of their memories and their attachment to the myths of the recent past.

Further, Britain and the British had already changed in numerous, often unsettling ways. For instance the nation had won a war but had bankrupted itself in

1 Maureen Waller, *London 1945* (London: John Murray, 2004), pp. 291-293.

2 David Kynaston, *Austerity Britain 1945-51* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007), p. 31.

3 C. J. Bartlett, *A History of Post-War Britain 1945-74*, (New York: Longman, 1977), p. 1.

order to do so. Britain, the nation that had led the world in peace and in war since the beginning of the nineteenth century was now in thrall financially, militarily and culturally to America; Britain and her Empire had fought for peace but were now increasingly viewed as ever more oppressive, out of step with modernity and the global move towards political self-determination. British victory in the Second World War was a curious and confusing kind of triumph.

In this article I will illustrate how, in the fraught social climate of post-war Britain, the Second World War became imbued with near mythical significance. I will argue that the increasingly popular fiction of Ian Fleming developed this significance further by coupling it with enduring characteristics of imperial mythology to create a compensatory fantasy in the form of the post-war espionage novel. Paying close textual reference to *Moonraker* (1955) and *Goldfinger* (1959), I will argue that Fleming's novels suggest an example of how, when desperate for securities in an uncertain political climate, Britain reverted to an image of a mythologised, sentimental past - one of power and international prestige but also one of green fields and provincial towns. I will analyse how national identity is represented in both novels, arguing that Fleming's portrayal of Britain and the British is reliant on the combination of myth and memory to compensate for the diminishing state of national sovereign power. Finally, this article will demonstrate how the conjunction of myth and memory in espionage fiction was simultaneously comforting and corrective; alongside the reassurances provided by the past, Fleming insinuates that only by framing contemporary action within the litany of imperial myth could the collapse of British power be thrown into reverse.⁴

⁴ This article will examine the original novels only and not their filmed versions as the circumstances surrounding their adaptation in 1964 and 1979 (*Goldfinger* and *Moonraker* respectively) were very different to those of their original publication.

We'll Meet Again: History, Memory and Myth in *Moonraker*

The paradoxical nature of post-war Britain, one of concurrent victory and degradation, resulted in a rush of contradictory demands made by the British public upon their government. These demands appeared representative of the desire for progression and stasis in simultaneity; the British public wanted their old lives back, just this time with better pay and improved standards of material wealth. They wanted their country back, rebuilt in all its pre-war grandeur, minus, of course, the overcrowding and the high cost of rent or purchase.⁵ They wanted their international standing preserved, even at the expense of others, as evinced by the support for the military occupation of Germany, Austria and Japan, occupation that was to last, in some cases, up to twenty years.⁶ To a large extent, post-war Britain wanted everything back to normal, only different.

In the post-war world, things would be very different indeed. The upheaval caused by total war was near universal in Britain, with only some rural communities experiencing little disruption to routine. The war, many historians would later assert, was to be celebrated as an ordinary peoples' triumph; after all, they were the ones who had done the fighting and the dying. Winston Churchill regularly aggrandized the role of ordinary men and women throughout the conflict, and especially in his own history of the war published in serial volumes between 1948 and 1954. However, despite this high praise, it would not be until the mid-1950s that ordinary people would witness widespread improvement in their material circumstances; such improvement would come only after the post-war Labour and Conservative governments negotiated the raft of economic difficulties created by the transition from wartime to peacetime

⁵ Kynaston, p. 154.

⁶ The British Army of the Rhine (BAOR) retained an administrative function until 1949, whereupon it became the primary British military contribution to NATO in Europe. A full history is provided at <<http://baor-locations.com/historybaor.aspx>>, [accessed 3 March 2013].

economy. Instead, historian Raphael Samuel's identification of their immediate reward was the enshrining of contemporary myth at the heart of post-war British identity throughout a range of popular fiction.⁷

The phrase 'England's green and pleasant land' taken from the ever-popular hymn 'Jerusalem', itself derived from William Blake's 'And Did Those Feet in Ancient Time' (1808),⁸ speaks volumes about both the reforming zeal of post-war Britain and the political undercurrents of Fleming's fiction. The ideal of building a 'New Jerusalem' after the war was at the forefront of the Attlee government's policy for rejuvenating the country.⁹ By the time that Fleming published the first of the James Bond series in 1953, the reality of 'New Jerusalem', in comparison to the original intention, had suffered greatly as a consequence of various financial strains. But in many places, such as Fleming's fiction, the dream lived on, sustained by the fervour surrounding the coronation that same year and the so-called 'New Elizabethan' age. As well as the coronation, Peter Hennessey in particular identifies a combination of events - including the transition from rationing to unrestricted purchase and the widespread availability of consumer goods such as cars, white goods and electricals during 1953 to 1954 - as that which marked a more keenly felt break between post-war decades than did the forties becoming the fifties.¹⁰

Though traditionally conservative in his politics, in his novels Fleming betrays a great deal of awareness and sensitivity towards post-war concerns of social mobility.¹¹ Bond may mix with the upper classes in Fleming's novels but he is most

7 Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory* (London: Verso, 1995), p. 208.

8 See William Blake, *Selected Poems* (London: Heinemann, 1996), p. 125.

9 See Keith Jeffreys, *War and Reform: British Politics During the Second World War* (Manchester: University Press, 1994), p. 88.

10 Peter Hennessey, *Never Again: Britain 1945-51* (London: Vintage, 1993), p. 387.

11 David Cannadine, *In Churchill's Shadow* (London: Penguin, 2003), p. 292.

certainly not one of them and is no gentleman spy.¹² Fleming instead aligns Bond with the shifting class distinctions of the period; though his comfortable background means he cannot be described as a ‘man on the make’ either, Bond notably appreciates the finer things in life and displays a clear desire to possess them.¹³ Despite some of Fleming’s more deplorable attitudes towards gender or race, his approach to social mobility in his novels is often refreshingly egalitarian. In characterising Bond in this way, Fleming reflects wider developments in British identity in relation to the changing state of the British nation and general attitudes of the period. Just as Hennessey suggests a new anima began to switch Britons from producers to consumers in the period, Fleming’s novels adopt a similar outlook. The policy of the Labour government upon election in 1945 was to pursue a major programme of industrial reassessment resulting in the nationalisation of British heavy industry by 1948.¹⁴ The traditionally industrial areas of the north of England, viewed as the Victorian ‘Workshop of the World’, were no longer associated with constructions of Britishness as they had been in preceding decades.¹⁵ Instead, the identity of Britain

12 It is worth acknowledging too that in *The Man with the Golden Gun* (1966) Bond states that ‘EYE AM A SCOTTISH PEASANT AND EYE WILL ALWAYS FEEL AT HOME BEING A SCOTTISH PEASANT’ (*The Man with the Golden Gun* [London: Penguin Classics, 2006], p. 180). The definitiveness of this line must be treated with a degree of caution, however, as Fleming had decided to effectively retrofit Bond’s heritage after the success of Sean Connery’s portrayal of Bond in *Dr No* (dir. by Terence Young [1962]), beginning with Bond’s obituary in *You Only Live Twice* (1964).

13 Recent scholarship on Fleming’s novels has explored the relationship between Bond and the burgeoning consumer society of post-rationing Britain in the 1950s; for instance Christine Berberich reads Bond’s ‘obsession with luxury goods, brands and expensive foods’ as either the ‘innocent’ indulgence of a nation long-deprived of such pleasures or, more critically, as a form of ‘exploitative literature’ designed to capitalise on the public interest in the lives of the rich. See Christine Berberich, ‘Putting England Back on Top? Ian Fleming, James Bond, and the Question of England’, *Yearbook of English Studies*, 42 (2012), 13-29 (pp. 18-19).

14 Correlli Barnett, *The Lost Victory* (London: Macmillan, 1995), p. 222. Barnett describes the subsequent mismanagement of industry under a panel of government directors he views as either unqualified or too inexperienced in their operations as instrumental in the post-war decline of British manufacture and production.

15 Philip S. Bagwell, *The Transport Revolution* (London: Routledge, 1988), p. 89. Also, Patrick Joyce’s *Visions of the People: Industrial England and the Question of Class 1848-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) illustrates that British national identity in the nineteenth century was the product of regional manufacturing cultures which together formed a continuum of identities incorporated under the banner of empire.

was being cast out of the Labour government's emphasis on social welfare and increased standards of living; the promise of a better quality of life was thus fulfilled through the reorganisation of the British economy and the reprioritisation of space. Though the Labour government had been replaced by a Conservative one in 1951, British identity of the 1950s, and the public that comprised Fleming's eager readership, experienced a far greater affinity with spaces of leisure and social development than those of Victorian manufacture. In their pursuit of pleasure, Fleming's novels would champion a new English heartland in the post-war world.

However, despite the mood of progressive social mobility in Britain it is particularly telling that, until the funds available ran out, a key component of post-war rebuilding was the proposed construction of war memorials across the country. Though the initial scheme envisaged the construction of memorials on a near numerical par with those erected after the First World War, there were key differences. Those commemorations dedicated to the dead of the Second World War that were built would not typically be as ornate as those of the previous generation, often consisting of a simple plaque listing the names of the dead. The reason for this decision in favour of understatement was the popular belief that New Jerusalem itself would act as site of remembrance as much as any other memorial. It was to act as a universal form of monument, one in which the sacrifices on the home front would also be venerated. In pursuing the dream of 'New Jerusalem' the qualities held in collective national memory would be given a central corporeal place in historical record through the physical and metaphorical reconstruction of the nation. As a consequence, remembrance would remain central to redevelopment; Britain would seek to go forward by constantly looking back.

The notion of looking back is crucial to any understanding of Fleming's fiction. It is well documented by Fleming's biographers and critics alike that the character of James Bond bears a close resemblance to his creator, albeit one imbued with a good deal of artistic licence.¹⁶ Bond's rank, service, habits and background are informed greatly by Fleming's own personal tastes and past experiences; for instance, both share Scottish ancestry, a love of Jamaica, good living and fine clothes, and hold the rank of Commander in the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve (RNVR). Another point at which Fleming's factual biography intersects with that of his character is his decision to associate Bond with the county of Kent. Fleming was a resident of Kent himself, buying a house at St. Margaret's Bay in Dover from his friend Noel Coward and living there from 1949, until his death in 1964 on the nearby St. George's golf course. He is also reputed to have based Bond's codename, 007, on the bus route that ran near his home.¹⁷ As a result, Fleming sets a great deal of his domestic writing in Kent, making it the setting for two major novels of the Bond series, *Moonraker* (1955) and the later *Goldfinger* (1959), as well as including passing references to the county elsewhere throughout the series. Equally, Bond's biography, outlined in a fictional obituary in *You Only Live Twice* (1964), emphasises his Scottish and Swiss heritage, however, it also reveals that he grew up in Kent.¹⁸

Aside from his personal connections to the county, Fleming's decision to set the majority of his domestic writing in the county of Kent is further indicative of how he derived ideas of national identity from the spatial and memorial consciousness of Britain, ideas he then reinforced within his fiction. Fleming's Kent illustrates the paradoxical relation between stasis and development in the post-war world. Though the creation of post-war British identity would be influenced by factors such as urban

16 Peter Hennessy, *Having it So Good: Britain in the Fifties* (London: Penguin, 2006), p. 166.

17 Andrew Lycett, *Ian Fleming* (London: Phoenix Press, 2002), pp. 442-443.

18 Ian Fleming, *You Only Live Twice* (London: Penguin, 2004), pp. 200-201.

redevelopment or increased social mobility as a result of improvements to standards of living, it would be determined alongside continual veneration of recent British history and an acknowledgement of a wider, more general memorial culture consolidated through space.

Tony Bennett and Janet Woollacott argue that ‘Bond also functioned in this period as a site for the elaboration – or more accurately, re-elaboration – of a mythic conception of nationhood’; Fleming’s novels adopt a Janus-like position in that they look to the past in order to secure the future, combining existing myths with attempts to create their own.¹⁹ In *Moonraker* Fleming accomplishes this re-elaboration of myth not only through the characterisation of Bond but through the historical and memorial spaces that Bond encounters. The novel details Bond’s mission to investigate a murder at the site of Britain’s entry into the nuclear arms race, the eponymous ‘Moonraker’, at its launch-pad in Dover. The plot unfolds to reveal German, and more specifically Nazi, supervillain Hugo Drax’s plan to destroy London with the ‘Moonraker’ as revenge for Germany losing the war - a plan supported and funded by Soviet Russia.

The principal action of the novel takes place in the historically-charged location of the ‘bloody White Cliffs’ of Dover, as Bond, almost single-handedly, strives to protect the nation from destruction at the hands of Drax and his men.²⁰ Fleming continually illustrates throughout the novel how Dover is a space influenced by both past and present:

It was a wonderful afternoon of blue and green and gold.
When they left the concrete apron through the guard gate near

¹⁹ Tony Bennett and Janet Woollacott, ‘The Moments of Bond’ in Christoph Lindner, ed., *The James Bond Phenomenon – A Critical Reader* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), pp. 13-33 (p. 18).

²⁰ Ian Fleming, *Moonraker* (London: Penguin, 2006), p. 263. All subsequent references to this work, hereafter *M*, will appear parenthetically in the text.

the empty firing point, now connected by a thick cable with the launching site, they stopped for a moment on the edge of the great chalk cliff and stood gazing over the whole corner of England where Caesar had first landed two thousand years before.

(*M*, p. 178)

The battle for Britain's future, a place alongside America in the Cold War arms race, is set in a space of great historical resonance, placing history and heritage firmly within a contemporary setting. In Fleming's England, the technological developments of the present and future are able to sit side-by-side with the legacy of the past. By referencing Caesar's landing Fleming emphasises Bond's connection to historical space and myth; continuity is implied between Bond's contemporary defence of the borders of England and those throughout history, stretching back through events such as the Battle of Britain, the Invasion scare of 1940-41, the Hundred Years War, the Norman conquest and the Romans (*M*, p. 178). Regardless of the invader, the preservation of English territory is what matters; Fleming reinforces these references by mentioning 'Walmer and Deal [...] Sandwich [...] North Foreland and [...] the Thames' (*M*, p. 178), all either Cinque Ports or the site of battles during the Anglo-Dutch wars of the seventeenth century.²¹ The idyllic depiction of Dover, in seemingly natural hues of green and blue and golden sunlight, is a deliberately mythologised production of Englishness. In the same way that Bond is an everyman figure that metonymically embodies the hopes and desires of post-war Britain, the space of Dover performs a similar function for English history and heritage. By placing Bond in Dover, Fleming gives him a leading role in a much larger island story; in defending his 'corner of England', Bond contributes to the preservation of the entire nation (*M*, p. 178).²²

21 See J. R. Jones, *The Anglo-Dutch Wars of the Seventeenth Century* (London: Longman, 1996), pp. ix; 23.

Setting the events of *Moonraker* in such a historically resonant space as the white cliffs, Fleming associates contemporary action with the perceived glory of the past through the interconnection of memory and history. Pierre Nora argues that ‘memory and history, far from being synonymous, are [...] in many ways opposed’, suggesting a problematic relation between the two terms.²³ Memory, according to Nora, is ‘living’, being embodied in a particular society and consequentially in a state of permanent development, changing with the passage of time; by comparison, history is an incomplete reconstruction of what has ceased to be: always relative, always a representation.²⁴ Nora writes of history as analytical and detached, far removed from the emotive nature of memory. This view is contradicted by Samuel, who writes of history not as incomplete and deficient but as an active, constantly evolving force subject to revision and reinterpretation.²⁵ Fleming’s employment of space acts as a necessary mediating factor between memory and history, reconciling the inherent tension between the ‘living’ state of memory and the incomplete and relative reconstruction of history.²⁶ Setting Bond’s contemporary mission in the historical space of Dover means that Fleming’s novel joins the emotive power of wartime memory with a number of associated and varied historical occurrences; individual involvement in events is then linked with the larger historical narrative by access to memorial space as a means of fostering national identification.

Fleming’s use of the White Cliffs of Dover is illustrative of how Kent, and other spaces like it, can function as an access point for the individual to engage with

22 In terms of the novel’s preoccupation with wartime myth, it seems no accident that Bond should be on the White Cliffs of Dover; the song of the same name, as recorded by Vera Lynn in 1942, was one of the war’s most popular and widely-known songs. See Vera Lynn, *Some Sunny Day* (London: Harper Collins, 2009). Also, see Angus Calder, *The Myth of the Blitz* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1991), pp. 11-12.

23 Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory* (New York: Columbia, 1996), p. 3.

24 *Ibid.*, p. 3.

25 Samuel, p. x.

26 Nora, p. 3.

British myth through a combination of personal memory and awareness of history. The cliffs are depicted as a liminal space - on the fringes of land and sea, or Britain and Europe - and as a portal between the present and any point in the nation's history.²⁷ The individual is able to imagine an equal kinship with his or her forebears through access to memorial space. Nora states that the process of memorialisation is not innocent and that by 'defining the relation to the past [...] shapes the future'.²⁸ In Fleming's novel, the setting of the White Cliffs mediates the national relationship to the past, emphasising the heroics of recent history as a means of legitimating current actions; Fleming engages the individual in the new fight by associating it with the spirit of the old. Fleming suggests that such historical spaces become, to use Nora's words, 'compounded of life and death, of the temporal and the eternal'; the temporal, namely the war, becomes a contemporary guide for prosecuting the eternal, namely the continuance of the fight to defend England from its enemies.²⁹

Fleming's novel indicates how history, like memory, can be revisited and revised, emphasising some elements and excluding others in order to create deliberate effects in the present. The desire to combine the power of history and myth means that Fleming constantly revisits the Second World War in his writing. Kent again becomes a favoured location for him to do so and, although Fleming includes wartime memories throughout his entire series of novels, it is in *Moonraker* where his fixation with the war crystallises. As a consequence of its geographical relation to London, Kent was part of the wartime 'Bomb Alley', subject to arbitrary area bombing from Luftwaffe aircraft returning to their bases in northern France. Similarly, Canterbury was a target of the Baedeker raids; subjected to approximately 135 aerial raids, the

²⁷ The name 'Kent' derives from the ancient British for border, 'cantus', further emphasising its liminal qualities. See Judith Glover, *The Place Names of Kent* (London: Batsford, 1976), p. 8.

²⁸ Nora, p. 11.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

city was damaged considerably and then redeveloped after the war.³⁰ Recognising this spatial legacy, *Moonraker* is a novel wholly preoccupied with the experiences, prejudices and actions of the Second World War; indeed, the entire plot of the novel, a die-hard Nazi's revenge on Britain, is a product of wartime conflict.

Written and published a decade after the war ended, the novel illustrates Fleming's attempts to preserve the international standing of Britain through continual emphasis on memory and myth in a number of ways. Repeatedly throughout the novel, Fleming associates very contemporary fears, those of nuclear proliferation and Soviet intrigue, with the fears of the recent wartime past, specifically the V1 and V2 bombing campaigns of 1944-45.³¹ Fleming continually weaves associative examples of the war into the novel; he references a mission at Peenemunde (the original launch site for the V1 and V2 programme), goes into detail when describing antagonist Hugo Drax's membership of the Brandenburg Division, names a chief henchman Krebs (a reference to Wehrmacht General Hans Krebs) and indulges at length the character's 'joy' at mounting an infiltration operation reminiscent of his time in the Ardennes (*M*, pp. 9, 259, 126, 250 respectively). Fleming includes memories of war within his narrative as a means of inviting a contemporary readership, potentially one with their own memories of war, to identify with his characters and the political agenda of his novel.

Indeed, the actions and experiences of the individual are transposed against the wartime metanarrative of shared adversity particular to post-war Britain but placed in a contemporary context to illustrate how the war is still relevant long after its conclusion. With Bond's eventual triumph over Drax and his men, Britain not only

30 See Nicola Lambourne, *War Damage in Western Europe: The Destruction of Historic Monuments During The Second World War* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001), pp. 54-55.

31 Fleming's characterisation of Drax and his men is also illustrative of contemporary fears over German rearmament and the potential of resurgent Nazism.

replays but re-wins the Second World War all over again. Fleming validates the myth that the British had fought a ‘just’ war, that an evil of truly monstrous proportions, personified in typical Fleming fashion by Drax’s physical deformity and psychological theatrics, had been rightly confronted. In so doing, he reduces the moral complexities of the Cold War into a historically supported demarcation of right and wrong, furthering the profoundly imperial view that Britain’s was an empire of just causes, an essential ingredient of its myth-making composition.³² In a final gesture on Fleming’s part, it is telling that Drax, the diehard Nazi, develops into an agent of Russia; it demonstrates how the origin of the threat may have changed but the prescribed remedy remains the same.

The connecting factors that unite the disparate recollections of war in Fleming’s novel are not only the sense of purpose awarded by war but also the willingness with which characters make sacrifices in pursuit of a common goal. At the climax of *Moonraker*, Bond’s willingness to sacrifice himself for the good of the nation supports Fleming’s identification with the wartime myth of nationhood and his assessment of its relevance in a post-war context. Just as the rocket is about to take off, Bond states ‘I shall walk out of here and shut the doors and light a last cigarette under the tail of the Moonraker [...] it’s me or a million people in London’ (*M*, pp. 275-276). Displaying the stiff upper lip valorised by the wartime generation, Bond gladly accepts his fate: ennoblement with a place in history.³³ In a novel already full of Battle of Britain imagery through its Kentish setting, Fleming casts Bond as one of the ‘few’ to whom so much is owed by so many, intimating that a similar selfless

32 See Peter Clarke, *The Last Thousand Days of the British Empire* (London: Bloomsbury, 2009).

33 Critics such as David Newsome and John Tosh have argued that the wartime ‘stiff upper lip’ was itself a product of the Public school system of the late-nineteenth century. See John Tosh, *A Man’s Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (Bury St. Edmunds: St. Edmundsbury Press, 2007).

attitude is needed to combat the nation's current enemies. Fleming further implies the importance of the role of the individual within the wider tableaux of the war-effort, emphasising the collective association evoked by war memory. *Moonraker* invokes the wartime self-sacrifice of the individual and the personal determination Fleming sees as integral to British identity. Historian Angus Calder's *The Myth of the Blitz* (1991) was not the first revisionist history to suggest the idea that national solidarity during adversity was little more than a shrewd conceit of propaganda.³⁴ Calder suggests that the root of post-war British identity is not to be found in the victory of 1945 but in the celebration of the hardships of 1940, in a portrait of 'British or English Moral pre-eminence, buttressed by British Unity'.³⁵ Fleming's novel, in its conglomeration of myth, memory, history and setting does just this; rather than the exhausted nation of the war's conclusion, Fleming focuses attention on the endurance and courage signified by Britain standing alone.

Goldfinger, Sovereign Space and the Special Relationship

Moonraker was written at a time when the Empire, only recently rebranded as the Commonwealth, was still bolstered by continual possession of colonial dominions and was able to distract itself from the more obvious shortcomings of post-war recovery. *Goldfinger*, however, reveals a very different position. Published after the major political events of the decade, particularly the disastrous Suez Crisis of 1956-7, *Goldfinger* is redolent of national, economic and political decline. The novel reveals the paradoxical state of stasis and development in simultaneity that was inherent to the nation; *Goldfinger* is inescapably a product of imperial misfortune but reads as

34 Calder, pp. 1-2.

35 Calder, p. 2.

though the Empire is still entirely extant. It reveals at once how much in Britain had changed whilst denying that any change had indeed occurred.

The circumstances of the 1950s created a desire for resurgent British agency on an international scale, even, and perhaps especially, when confronted with the proof of the inability to act unilaterally. Not for the first time, the nation looked backwards to the pre-war securities of eminent international place. The cultural gap created by the nation's sovereign and political vicissitudes was the ideal environment for the novels of Fleming to flourish. Bond becomes a compensatory fantasy of a nation beset by political restrictions.³⁶ In an era of frustrated martial ambition, in Suez, in Cyprus, in Kenya, the glamour and sheer ability of a British agent to act with the audacity and verve of Fleming's character appeared compelling to a public in need of something to celebrate. Bond's exploits satisfy the combative element of British identity restricted by international allegiances, purporting to reassure the British public that the nation could protect itself without the assistance of allies, and that Britain's allies, more importantly, needed them.

The 'Special Relationship' between Britain and the United States, another celebrated wartime fiction, amounted to little more than dependency in the post-war world. The double bind of financial and political necessity was coupled with that of American cultural ubiquity, which forced a reaction within British national identity. In the Macmillan-era of post-war Britain to which *Goldfinger* belongs, few appeared more committed to the continued maintenance of the Special relationship than Harold Macmillan himself. The nature of this long-distance relationship, however, had undergone revisions, some subtle, some less so, since the Lend-Lease Act of 1941,

³⁶ Bennett and Woollacott, pp. 18-19.

when Britain cast itself as an equal partner demanding the tools necessary to finish the job.³⁷

By the time of *Goldfinger*'s publication in 1959, Macmillan was pursuing his own version of British and American cooperation as that of playing the role of 'Greeks to their Romans'.³⁸ It is the position of Britain as Greece to America's Rome, that of the slave, if Macmillan's metaphor is to be held true to the original, dependent on the power and raw materials of the larger nation whilst trying to maintain a modicum of dignity, that Fleming's novel continually attempts to negotiate. However, recognition that the scenery of the world-stage was shifting had occurred far earlier. In February 1946, long before the Berlin Airlift prompted a 'mushrooming' of American military installations on British soil, Clement Attlee wrote, 'It may be we shall have to consider the British Isles as an easterly extension of a strategic area the centre of which is the American Continent rather than [sic] as a power looking eastwards through the Mediterranean and the East'.³⁹ Despite intentions to the contrary, this subordinate state is one which *Goldfinger* would later affirm.

Goldfinger details a mission in which Bond is tasked with investigating the activities of Britain's richest man, Auric Goldfinger. It transpires that Goldfinger, who lives in Kent, is the international treasurer for SMERSH (the Soviet counter-insurgency agency) and is at the head of an elaborate plot to steal the American gold reserves held in Fort Knox, thus devaluing the Dollar and, by extension, crippling the world economy. Fleming's novel purports that protection of British territory and political interests is best pursued through aggressive action, as well as indulging the

³⁷ Kynaston, p. 223.

³⁸ Richard Crossman, 'The Making of Macmillan', *Sunday Telegraph*, 9 February, 1946, p. 4. See also Christopher Hitchens, 'Greece to their Rome', in *Blood, Class and Nostalgia: Anglo-American Ironies* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1990) pp. 22-37.

³⁹ Barnett, *The Lost Victory*, p. 54.

fantasy that Britain is a vital, and more importantly, equal partner to America in the fight against communism.

To emphasise the importance of national preservation, Fleming describes Bond's journey from London into the Kentish countryside in detail. Bond is provided with an Aston Martin DBIII as a part of his cover, which suggests 'a well-to-do, rather adventurous young man with a taste for the good, the fast things of life'.⁴⁰ The Aston Martin here acts as a fitting indicator of his status and his access to a space of affluence and privilege, via 'the sprawl of Rochester and Chatham' (*G*, p. 69). The fringes of suburban Kent eventually give way to an idealised portrait of ancestral England as Bond escapes the influence of London. In Kent, Bond is described as 'running through the endless orchards of the Faversham growers. The sun had come out from behind the smog of London. There was the distant gleam of the Thames on his left' (*G*, p. 71). Bond emerges from the darkness of the city into a veritable 'Garden of England', replete with pastoral images of natural growth and reminiscent of the river trade of previous centuries. It represents a necessary fiction written at a time of uncompromising reality for British identity. The passage is intended to satisfy the intense need for certainty in such an uncertain age; a need that arose in response to the imperial, economic and international humiliations of the previous half-decade. Kent once again becomes the epitome of an essentialist construct of English identity, evoking by association the history of Chaucer, Dickens, the river culture of the Thames estuary, the Cinque Ports and more recent concerns of the county's wartime role. In this sense, the 'endless' nature of the landscape suggest an unbroken stretch of British identity which must be defended from Goldfinger's clandestine Soviet influence.⁴¹

40 Ian Fleming, *Goldfinger* (London: Penguin, 2004), p. 68. All subsequent references to this work, hereafter *G*, will appear parenthetically in the text.

The emphasis on this sense of unchanging, static identity through historical space is revealed to be fallacious. The journey that Bond must make to reach this pastoral fairy-tale version of England is far more revealing than the destination. When driving through the sprawl of the larger towns of the county, he indirectly reflects upon the effects of modernisation. Bond recognises how Rochester and Chatham and the Medway Towns have grown to form an almost indistinct entity. The development of the post-war period and the extension of suburbia has forced both spaces together, causing a loss of individual character. Despite the organised sense of order that the presence of the Secret Services is meant to convey, the reality is one of disordered, unmanaged and uncontrollable growth. As much as Kent is asserted to be represented by the beauty of the Faversham orchards, it is equally revealed as the ‘melancholy, forsaken reaches of the Thames’ (*G*, p. 69). Far from the unity presented in the romantic vision of British history, the county and the country are divided into spheres of privilege and lack thereof. Bond himself helps to reinforce the confusion and distortion through the form of his cover. Despite his appearance being that of post-war frivolity and affluence he instead reveals himself to be a perpetual outsider intruding on the spaces of privilege he encounters. In rekindling his pre-war friendship with a caddy at Royal St. Mark’s golf course, Bond is guilty of the same self-delusions as those that cause him to view Kent as overwhelmingly pastoral. In an uncertain time, he retreats from the harsh gaze of modernity to the comfort and known environs of the past and the symbolic states of Britain.

41 Fleming’s assessment of the English countryside as ‘endless’ is comparable to the near contemporary currents of Anti/Intermodernism. According to both Blake Morrison and Kristen Bluemel, Anti/Intermodernism placed great emphasis on the longevity and continuity inherent to the English pastoral imaginary. See Kristin Bluemel, *Intermodernism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009) and Blake Morrison, *The Movement: English Poetry and Fiction of the 1950s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980).

Alongside its deliberate evocations of war myth and British history, ‘Thoughts in a DBIII’ reveals a number of contradictions and disunities inherent to concerns of British sovereignty. The chapter indicates how the desire to fortify space through displays of overt force leads to the paradoxical undermining of British sovereign power. Both the chapter in question and the novel as a whole concern the proximity and co-operation of British and American forces as a means of preserving control over space. The contradictory nature of Kent is again revealed through the description of the American Airbase at Manston:

Another five miles and Bond was through the dainty tele-world of Herne Bay. The howl of Manston sounded away on his right. A flight of three Super Sabres came in to land. They skimmed below his right-hand horizon as if they were diving into the earth. With half his mind, Bond heard the roar of their jets catch up to them as they landed and taxied in to the hangars.

(*G*, p. 73)

The passage is revealing for a number of reasons. It immediately presents the contradictory images of a quaint, traditional Britain juxtaposed against the might of an American military installation. The fantasy-like construct of the ‘dainty’ Herne Bay is at odds with the equally unimaginable nuclear power of the jets and the political superpower they signify. The conspicuous presence of American power within Kent also uncovers the more pressing realities of geopolitical allegiance.⁴² The passage indicates that the arcadian ‘tele-world’ of Kent is impossible to maintain without the fortification of space through military means. The privilege of leisure space and prosperity must be fought for if it is to be enjoyed. However, the preservation of British sovereignty is paradoxically attained by relinquishing a proportion of it to

42 The presence of American military bases would provoke widespread CND demonstrations and the famous Greenham Common protests in the 1980s. See David Fairhall, *Common Ground: The Story of Greenham* (London: I.B Taurus, 2006).

American power. In order to preserve its ancestral homeland, post-war Britain cedes a portion of that land to another sovereign nation. Attempting to preserve space in this fashion serves only to augment the process of change. By this, the US presence is intended as a means of alliance and protection, unity and solidarity but the reality is that as it seeks to do these things it changes the form and shape of what it tries to protect.

Significantly, Manston is explicitly mentioned in Calder's *Myth of the Blitz*, in which he reports its 'twelve day martyrdom' during the Battle of Britain and its role as scenery to 'the finest and most abject in human nature'.⁴³ Again, like in *Moonraker*, Fleming ensures that Bond is present in the spaces that define and produce post-war British myth. As before, Fleming associates Bond with the staunch defence of the British Isles; Bond's lone presence is Fleming's way of again identifying him as one of the 'Few' of wartime Manston. However, despite Fleming's acknowledgement of the myth of Manston, here he serves only to illustrate the degraded position of British power since his earlier novel. In the same way that the intrusion of the American jets into the narrative in this fashion is at odds with Fleming's emphasis on pastoral, rural Britain throughout this chapter, they also undermine his inclusion of the wartime myths of Britain. The implication of Fleming's depiction of American servicemen in England is that in a Cold War setting the 'Martyrs of Manston' would no longer be British. The war myth of Britain 'standing alone', untenable in the Cold War, is superseded by the reality of Britain standing behind America; this is the equally much-mythologised 'Special Relationship' in action.⁴⁴

43 Calder, p. 103.

44 The phrase 'Special Relationship' was used originally by Winston Churchill in a 1945 speech but popularised in his 'Sinews of Peace' address at Fulton, Missouri in 1946. See James W. Muller, *Churchill's 'Iron Curtain' Speech Fifty Years Later* (Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1999). Shared war service is also the means by which Leiter and Bond first develop their friendship; in *Casino Royale* (1953) Leiter states, 'I was regular in our Marine Corps before I joined this if that means anything to you.' He looked at Bond with a hint of

Merely by being present, the American intervention alters the original state of Britain and British identity. Despite intentions to the contrary, British territory has been invaded, defining the space and its inhabitants in unsuspected, unintended ways. The commanding presence of the airbase in *Goldfinger* recalls Attlee's comments from 1946, affirming Britain's position as an easterly military satellite of the United States. The passage reveals the subtle extent to which this alteration has affected Britain. Bond is said to hear the jets with 'half his mind'; though not bearing a direct influence upon him, the American presence remains latent in his consciousness (*G*, p. 73). His identity as an independent British agent is permitted by the exercise of overt American power; again reminiscent of Attlee's remarks, British forays into the Cold War are underwritten by the safety-net of American military might. Further, the intrusion of the jets into Bond's mind in this fashion is at odds with his emphasis on pastoral, rural Britain as, although they help pursue its preservation, they ensure its destruction. The sovereign territory of Britain is subdivided into zones and spaces of influence that effectively preclude any pure sovereign control. Rather than the gateway to England or British history, Kent becomes instead an example of the post-war spatial paradox in which space is preserved through change and development. Kent, lauded throughout Fleming's novels for its quintessentially English, unchanging state, alters dramatically as a consequence of the Cold War.

The American presence in Kent ensures the destruction of the wartime myth of 'standing alone' but helps preserve other, more contemporaneously relevant myths instead. The sudden American defence presence in Britain illustrated in *Goldfinger* reveals the influence of textual and contextual circumstances on Fleming's narrative.⁴⁵

self-deprecation. "It does" said Bond'. Ian Fleming, *Casino Royale* (London: Penguin, 2006), p. 55.

45 Until this point in Fleming's series, Anglo-American interactions had been largely conducted either in Europe, the United States or the Caribbean, not in Britain.

After *Moonraker*, in which Britain attempts to develop an independent nuclear deterrent and fails, and after the unsuccessful real-life trials of Britain's first hydrogen bomb in 1958 as well as the geopolitical animosity after the Suez Crisis, refreshing the wartime relationship with America appeared a matter of necessity.⁴⁶ Fleming makes the advantages of American support plain to see; Bond's mission in *Goldfinger* is only successful because of American intervention at the novel's close. Britain, represented by Bond, is rescued from near certain destruction by the timely intervention of American military power and victory is snatched from the jaws of defeat. Both Bond and Britain can claim victory, sustaining myth by finding themselves, once again, on the winning side.

Conclusion

The emphasis on memory and myth in post-war Britain was, in hindsight, an inevitable consequence of total mobilization and near-universal communal experience in war service. Moreover, the articulation and reinforcement of that myth through popular fiction revealed a tangible sense of political purpose on the part of its authors. For Fleming, writing in the 1950s and 1960s, the social cohesion promised by accentuating the often very real bonds of war was to be the means by which Britain would overcome the challenges of the post-war political climate.⁴⁷ Fleming's fiction illustrates how the connection between individual memory and historical values of nationhood is accomplished via the production or perceived signification of space. For Bond, space acts as a portal through which either his particular experience or

46 Hennessy, *Having it So Good*, pp. 136-137

47 Peter Hennessy describes the unity of men 'who had common membership of that tiny proportion of the human race who learnt to fly an aeroplane before driving a car' (*Having it So Good*, p. 6).

contemporary actions are connected to those of universal historical narrative. Fleming's espionage fiction depicts a two-way process by which the past and present combine in the post-war period. By connecting memory and history through space, spies are induced to continue spying; their actions, though performed in an uncertain moral climate, are legitimated through association with the historic defence of the nation.

Fleming's repeated acknowledgement of Britain's wartime role also acts as a reflection of the immense cultural value post-war society placed on participation in the Second World War; by the time Fleming achieved widespread popular success in the late 1950s, Britain's wartime record had been moulded into a saga of defiance, stoicism and ultimate moral victory.⁴⁸ Even after the 1970s, when developments in historiography subjected the wartime role of Britain to new scrutiny, exposing and reinterpreting some of its uglier episodes such as Dresden and Singapore, and the Special Relationship deteriorated as Britain refused to participate in Vietnam, cultural and artistic evocations of the Second World War remained as popular as ever. However, the social and political division of that decade suggests that the reliance on myth as a compensatory fantasy was equally as debilitating for Britain as it was cohesive. The vast expenditure of scarce resources in maintaining the Empire or developing an independent nuclear deterrent were, in the long run, more damaging than empowering, not only draining the treasury of resources that could have further developed post-war industry, or improved standards of living, but also giving Britain a disproportionate sense of its international influence. However, despite the ways in

48 Official historiography of the war would largely go unchallenged until the late 1960s; since the so-called 'cultural turn', much more critical academic works such as Corelli Barnett's *The Audit of War: The Illusion and Reality of Britain as a Great Nation* (London: Macmillan, 1987), David Edgerton's *Warfare State: Britain 1920-1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) and *Britain's War Machine: Weapons, Resources and Experts in the Second World War* (London: Allen Lane, 2011) have questioned Britain's war record.

which the national focus on the Second World War may have hampered Britain's acceptance of its changed circumstances in the 1950s and 1960s, history judged the conflict with Fascism a battle worth fighting and, in the moral greyness of the Cold War, one rightly celebrated in the pages of popular fiction.

Bibliography

- Bagwell, Philip S., *The Transport Revolution* (London: Routledge, 1988)
- Barnett, Correlli, *The Audit of War: The Illusion and Reality of Britain as a Great Nation* (London: Macmillan, 1987)
- , *The Lost Victory* (London: Macmillan, 1995)
- Bartlett, C. J., *A History of Post-War Britain 1945-74* (New York: Longman, 1977)
- Bennett, Tony, and Janet Woollacott, 'The Moments of Bond' in Lindner, ed., *The James Bond Phenomenon – A Critical Reader* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), pp. 13-33
- Berberich, Christine, 'Putting England Back on Top? Ian Fleming, James Bond, and the Question of England', *Yearbook of English Studies*, 42 (2012), 13-29
- Bluemel, Kristin, *Intermodernism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009)
- Calder, Angus, *The Myth of the Blitz* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1991)
- Cannadine, David, *In Churchill's Shadow* (London: Penguin, 2003)
- Chapman, James, *Licence to Thrill: A Cultural History of the James Bond Films* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1999)
- Clarke, Peter, *The Last Thousand Days of the British Empire* (London: Bloomsbury, 2009)
- Crossman, Richard, 'The Making of Macmillan', *Sunday Telegraph*, 9 February, 1946
- Edgerton, David, *Warfare State: Britain 1920-1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006)
- , *Britain's War Machine: Weapons, Resources and Experts in the Second World War* (London: Allen Lane, 2011)
- Fairhall, David, *Common Ground: The Story of Greenham* (London: I.B Taurus, 2006)
- Fleming, Ian, *Casino Royale* (London: Penguin, 2006)
- , *Goldfinger* (London: Penguin, 2004)
- , *Moonraker* (London: Penguin, 2006)
- , *The Man with the Golden Gun* (London: Penguin Classics, 2006)

- , *You Only Live Twice* (London: Penguin, 2004)
- Glover, Judith, *The Place Names of Kent* (London: Batsford, 1976)
- Hennessey, Peter, *Having it So Good: Britain in the Fifties* (London: Penguin, 2006)
- , *Never Again: Britain 1945-51* (London: Vintage, 1993)
- Hitchens, Christopher, *Blood, Class and Nostalgia: Anglo-American Ironies* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1990)
- Jeffreys, Keith, *War and Reform: British Politics During the Second World War* (Manchester: University Press, 1994)
- Jones, J. R., *The Anglo-Dutch Wars of the Seventeenth Century* (London: Longman, 1996)
- Joyce, Patrick, *Visions of the People: Industrial England and the Question of Class 1848-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991)
- Kynaston, David, *Austerity Britain 1945-51* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007)
- Lambourne, Nicola, *War Damage in Western Europe: The Destruction of Historic Monuments During The Second World War* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001)
- Lindner, Christoph, ed., *The James Bond Phenomenon – A Critical Reader* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003)
- Lycett, Andrew, *Ian Fleming* (London: Phoenix Press, 2002)
- Lynn, Vera, *Some Sunny Day* (London: Harper Collins, 2009)
- Morrison, Blake, *The Movement: English Poetry and Fiction of the 1950s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980)
- Muller, James W., *Churchill's 'Iron Curtain' Speech Fifty Years Later* (Missouri: University Press, 1999)
- Nora, Pierre, *Realms of Memory* (New York: Columbia, 1996)
- Samuel, Raphael, *Theatres of Memory* (London: Verso, 1995)
- Tosh, John, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (Bury St. Edmunds: St. Edmundsbury Press, 2007)
- Waller, Maureen, *London 1945* (London: John Murray, 2004)