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James Bond's Biopolitics

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Abstract: This chapter traces Foucauldian technologies of power in the James Bond universe and characterises the Bond franchise's biopolitics in the cultural environment of the 1960s and 1970s, when 007 became a mass phenomenon. The majority of the chapter is dedicated to a case study of *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*, Ian Fleming's tenth Bond novel (1963) and the sixth film in the EON series (1969). The chapter highlights the intersection between reproduction and fertility on the one hand and the infliction of death and mass genocide on the other, and it examines how James Bond juxtaposes the disciplinary means that are directed against the body (as an organism) on the one hand, and the state-powered regulation of biological processes that control the population on the other. The two versions of *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* amount to the franchise's most straightforward foray into the realm of biopolitics and would pave the way for the franchise's subsequent biopolitical and eugenic moments, like when the figure of the genocidal villain gets to articulate the franchise's own subliminal agenda regarding population control and the future of the (British) species.

Keywords: James Bond; Michel Foucault; biopolitics; thanatopolitics; sexual revolution; contraception; genocide; *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*; *Moonraker*

1. Introduction

Biopolitics is and always has been a rather ambivalent term, for it encapsulates the facilitation and management of life and health on the one hand, and the inhumane and racist politics of exclusion, eugenics, and sterilization on the other (Lemke 2007, p. 9). In a series of lectures at the Collège de France in March of 1976, Michel Foucault historicized the political functionalisation of ideas of life and death and the 19th-century's development of "what might be called power's hold over life," as well as the process of "[how] the biological came under State control" (Foucault [1975] 2004, p. 239). Biopolitics, in its original formulation, thus accounts for how individual life became integrated "into the techniques and strategies of a political power bent on optimising the productive forces of life itself" (Heron 2011, p. 36). The exact dating of this process remains a point of contention between Foucault and Giorgio Agamben,¹ but in Foucault's argument, the second half of the 18th century sees the emergence of new technologies of power which are directed at man-as-species, that is: at birth, death, and illness, "something that is no longer an anatomo-politics of the human body" but "a 'biopolitics' of the human race" (Foucault [1975] 2004, p. 243). From this moment on, sovereignty no longer just exercises the right to kill, but "the right to make *live and to let die*" (ibid., p. 241, my emphasis).

Foucault probably meant no conscious reference to the world of James Bond here, though the big-screen adaptation of Ian Fleming's second Bond novel, *Live and Let Die* (1954), was still quite fresh

¹ Foucault sees this starting with late modernity, whereas for Agamben, late modernity is only about the state making its "bio-political orientation" explicit: "the state has ceased to veil its essentially biopolitical orientation [. . .], a development emblemized by the concentration camp and the politicization of life in debates about issues like abortion and euthanasia." (Gil 2013, p. 130)

(1973) when Foucault delivered his lecture.² While he never addresses Bond in any of his writings—in fact, he often remains notoriously reluctant to move beyond his immediate jurisdiction, the 19th century—, he may have been all too aware that the idea of the hyper-virile secret service man with a ‘license to kill’ embodies in a somewhat bizarre and perverted fashion many of the ideas he addresses in his reflections on disciplinary power.³ Needless to say, the Bond franchise has always been rich in various other Foucauldian themes, like madness and sexuality.

It is the aim of this chapter to trace some of the Foucauldian technologies of power in the James Bond universe and to characterize Bond’s own take on biopolitics in the cultural environment of the 1960s and 1970s, which is when 007 became a mass phenomenon, drawing upon the case of *On Her Majesty’s Secret Service*, Fleming’s tenth Bond novel (1963) and the sixth film in the EON series (1969).⁴ My main point of debate will be the intersection between reproduction and fertility on the one hand and the infliction of death and mass genocide on the other, and how Bond juxtaposes the two series of mechanisms that Foucault characterizes as crucial to modern biopolitics: the disciplinary means that are directed against the body (as an organism) on the one hand, and the state-powered regulation of biological processes that control the population on the other (see Foucault [1975] 2004, p. 250). Having briefly contextualized my Foucauldian interest in Bond, I shall read the two versions of *On Her Majesty’s Secret Service* as the franchise’s most straightforward foray into the realm of biopolitics against the background of the 1960s. Moreover, I will discuss how this evolves into the formulation of a biopolitical and eugenic programme; one that rather perversely uses the figure of the genocidal villain to articulate the series’ own subliminal agenda regarding population control and the future of the (British) species. This agenda largely consists in a surface renunciation of mad eugenics (as embodied by the Bond villains and their world-domination schemes), paired with a clandestine articulation of *sympathy* for this kind of eugenic policy. This constellation makes the Bond films rife with contradictions, and it may have contributed to their ambiguous reputation: they are clearly very *contemporary* films that are utterly appropriate to the post-war spirit of sexual libertinage, but at the same time, they remain committed to 19th-century notions of imperialism, hegemonic whiteness, and eugenics.

2. A Foucauldian Take on 007

Given how pronounced and regularly several Foucauldian themes occur in the world of James Bond, it appears rather striking how little critical work in that direction has been done so far. Aside from some readings that apply the concept of heterotopia to 007’s geopolitics, for instance (see Drügh and Mergenthaler 2005), or some discussions of how Bond is an agent of ‘discipline and punishment,’ most of the existing Bond criticism has gone down the path of de-historicising the character. In doing so, scholars follow the early semiotic and structuralist invitation of critics like Umberto Eco, who emphasized that Bond was a phenomenon worth studying for its binary set-up and predetermined plotting alone, and that the character was all formalism and zero psychology (Eco [1966] 1992, p. 159). This approach went so far as to excuse Bond’s misogyny, his anti-Semitism, and his racism, as part of an indispensable Manichean ideology that exists “purely for rhetorical purposes”; in Eco’s famous words, Fleming is “Manichean for operative reasons” (ibid., pp. 167–68).

Yet it is worth remembering that Bond, as a belated proponent of Victorian imperialism, as the owner of a ‘license to kill’ and as the personification of neo-colonial delusions of grandeur, amounts not just to a “blunt instrument” designated to ‘discipline and punish’, he also embodies the key dilemma at the heart of modern biopolitics: sovereignty’s struggles to remain powerful in an age of *dying*

² In Fleming’s novel, Bond is informed by the CIA that their policy with Mr. Big “is ‘live and let live,’” prompting Bond to respond that his job dictates “another motto. It’s ‘live and let die.’” (Fleming [1954] 2012, pp. 34–35)

³ The somewhat baffling idea of the ‘license to kill’ (which appears to condone killing in self-defense but at the same time to go beyond that) is discussed in greater detail in (Tedesco 2006).

⁴ EON have been producing the Bond films since 1962. Many filmgoers (as well as a number of scholars) tend to exclude the few existing non-EON Bond films from the discussion. For a more detailed discussion of the status of the ‘non-canonical’ material, see (Schwanebeck 2018, pp. 167–68).

sovereignty. In Foucault's account, sovereignty reacts by resorting to the xenophobic degradation of other ethnicities. Systematic racism thus establishes "a biological type caesura" and serves as "the precondition for exercising the right to kill" (Foucault [1975] 2004, pp. 255–56), and nowhere could this be more evident than in the Bond franchise, with its glorification of "a state-sanctioned assassin" (Tedesco 2006, p. 114) who is also a jingoist.

Moreover, Bond is not just a product of post-war popular culture, consumerism, and the Americanisation of Europe. He *is* all that, of course, but the cultural and political wars he fights are informed by the same processes that also inform Foucault's and Agamben's theorisation of biopolitics: the long 19th century, the rise of eugenics, and the state-sponsored enforcement of sterilization and genocide in 1930s and 1940s fascism, all of which are grounded in the 19th century's preoccupation with hereditary greatness and the dream of building an empire to outshine and outlive the competition. These themes are constantly mapped onto the life-and-death politics of the James Bond series, nowhere more so than in *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*.

3. "Total Infertility, in Plants and Animals!"

Even though *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* provides a template for later Bond films in a number of important ways, it is widely considered an anomaly in the series in a manner that is rather illuminating for my discussion. First of all, it is widely considered the most 'faithful' adaptation of a James Bond novel and thus constantly invoked as a major landmark in Bond's adaptation history, grounded as it is by the figure of Ian Fleming, the author, as the omniscient creator and stern patriarch of the franchise. Whenever the series gets 'out of hand' like an undisciplined child, it gets 'grounded' again with a reference to Fleming's father figure (see Schwanebeck 2018, p. 167); crucially, *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* (1969) offers some real emotional stakes but comparatively few major action sequences. The film is also the first one to come to terms with questions of reproduction both on the level of the plot and that of the film's production. The story sees Bond get married and ponder the question of his inheritance, while the exit of Sean Connery in the role of Bond prior to the start of production led to a re-casting and made it necessary to address the question whether Bond had a fertile future beyond the 1960s and beyond his 'original' embodiment—George Lazenby famously retired from the role because he believed Bond would inevitably go out of fashion in the 1970s. In cinematic terms, the film enjoys a stellar reputation as "the revolutionary James Bond film" (Castle 2004); for some, it is the one James Bond film it is okay to like even if you are not a fan of the series. In the words of Steven Soderbergh (2013), the film is "beautiful in a way none of the other Bond films are," blending elements of the French New Wave and classic Eisenstein montage in a way that makes it a product of the culture industry that is rather unique at the same time.

The publication of the novel and the release of the film, six years later, frame an interesting time period. *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* was the first novel that Fleming wrote with the film franchise being under way. The EON series would eventually eclipse the fame of his books and, at the same time, radically re-interpret and re-contextualise them, adjusting the character to a changed cultural environment. Fleming's hero, it is worth remembering, comes into being in 1953, and he is a Cold Warrior whose missions revolve around the rivalry between the Capitalist West and the Communist East.⁵ In the books, Bond rarely saves the *world* but often the integrity and face of the British and Western *body politic*. The films, by contrast, transgress Fleming's Cold War dichotomies and see Bond go after self-fashioned, private entrepreneurs and megalomaniacs like Auric Goldfinger, plutocrats who pursue their own mad agenda. In terms of the sex, there is little in Fleming's novels to indicate the on-set of 1960s *Playboy*, free-love permissiveness. In the books, sex arises out of the same binary logic that the structuralists found so intriguing about 007: women yield to Bond because this defines

⁵ At the dawn of the 1960s, the Bond novels took a different turn, though, as Fleming made his hero go after supranational threats like SPECTRE, an organisation that sides with neither the East nor the West.

their supplementary function, while Bond seduces them because his dominance over them makes him a man. Fleming's Bond enjoys very little, he 'consummates' women almost reluctantly, and often despises them all the more for it. In *Moonraker* (1979), Bond's routine is described as "making love, with rather cold passion, to one of three similarly disposed married women" (Fleming [1955] 2012, p. 11). It is important to outline this set-up because, while the two versions of *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* might be ticking the same boxes in terms of the plot, to call them identical would be akin to saying that, in Jorge Luis Borges's famous story, Pierre Menard's version of *Don Quixote* is identical to the *Don Quixote* of Cervantes. Quite on the contrary, 'reproducing' the property in a changed cultural environment means it becomes a different text, or, in Borges's words, "a kind of palimpsest, in which the traces—faint but not undecipherable—of our friend's 'previous' text must shine through" (Borges [1939] 1998, p. 42).

On Her Majesty's Secret Service is the second volume of the so-called SPECTRE trilogy and sees Bond go after his nemesis, Ernst Stavro Blofeld, head of the supranational terrorist network SPECTRE. Bond tracks down Blofeld in the Swiss Alps, where he resides under the name of Bleuville and attempts to prove that he is a descendant of old French and Polish aristocracy. Bond sneaks into Blofeld's snow palace by pretending to be a genealogist and soon investigates his opponent's family line and heraldry.⁶ Blofeld emerges as the sum of all clichés about blue-blooded degeneracy: his ears stick out from his head (Fleming [1963] 2015, p. 414), his nose has been eaten away by syphilis (p. 414), and as a marker of 'pure-blooded' family heritage in the vein of the Habsburg lip, the Bleuilles have no ear-lobes (pp. 371–72)—a characteristic that echoes with Cesare Lombroso's famous claims about the visible degeneracy of the criminal. The appearance of Blofeld and that of his female helper, Irma Bunt, illustrates that aristocratic inbreeding has no future without the import of fresh blood, and the Nazi tropes could hardly be more pronounced in the book, with Blofeld's minions "click[ing] [their] heels" (p. 461), and infertile, stern Irma Bunt acting as Eva Braun to Blofeld's impotent Hitler (German-speakers will detect a pun here), a bizarre and distorted mirror image of the ideas of master race and eugenic cleansing that Blofeld preaches in his mad monologues.

It is in Blofeld's lair, a luxurious clinic located at the Piz Gloria, that Bond uncovers SPECTRE's latest scheme: to target Great Britain with biological warfare by brainwashing and re-programming ten young women who will transport biological weapons back home, thus poisoning the country's crops, poultry and animals, making Great Britain bankrupt. When Bond encounters the unsuspecting young women who are under Blofeld's hypnotic spell, he is overwhelmed by the sheer beauty of these astonishingly healthy "country girls" (p. 449). They seem to embody rustic country virtues, feeding on a diet of meat and potatoes and showing a rather bizarre interest in all matters agricultural and "how to improve the crop" (p. 439), which resonates with the underlying implication that they are well-bred signifiers of British greatness and genetic, as well as economic, self-sufficiency.

The film version, by contrast, does not go for the satirical and over-the-top image of peasant girls with "splendid, sweated young bosoms" (Fleming [1963] 2015, p. 397), whose hair "smells of new-mown summer grass" (p. 443) and who are brainwashed into poisoning the countryside. Instead, the viewer is treated to a gallery of international starlets who are framed through the male gaze, not so much a celebration of female diversity among the nation than a concession to contemporary *Playboy* aesthetics (Figure 1); to show that he is 'with the times,' Bond even reads a copy of *Playboy* in another scene.

⁶ Kingsley Amis is one of the few stern critics of the novel, arguing that "all the heraldry and genealogy" do not contribute much to the plot (Amis 1965, p. 114).



Figure 1. Blofeld's biopolitical weapons (*On Her Majesty's Secret Service*).

All that is left of Fleming's "beautiful ogresses" who devour huge steaks (p. 405) is the character of Ruby Bartlett, who flirts with Bond while eating a chicken wing, in a sequence that clearly looks to the erotic dinner scene in Tony Richardson's adaptation of *Tom Jones* (1963). While the novel is rather detailed on the nature of Blofeld's plan, going so far as to introduce an expert from the Ministry of Agriculture and Fishing to add much-needed explanations, it is for the film to spell out that what is at stake here is not so much British plant- and wild-life but the future of the human species. Blofeld threatens

total infertility, in plants and animals. Not just disease in a few herds, Mr. Bond. Or the loss of a single crop. But the destruction of a whole strain. Forever! Throughout an entire continent. If my demands are not met, I shall proceed with the systematic extinction of whole species of cereals and livestock all over the world!

Fleming's own follow-up novel, *You Only Live Twice* (1964), has Blofeld explain in retrospect that his plan was targeted against the body politic of England, "a sick nation by any standards" (p. 794), and that it might have healed as a result of the culling.⁷ In either version of the material, Blofeld's weapon of choice is the female body, which is recruited and symbolically inseminated with poison, to put a spin on the theme of reproduction. The British Secret Service later surmises that one of the girls whom Blofeld promises to cure from her allergy against turkeys returned from Piz Gloria "inspired to improve the breed" (Fleming [1963] 2015, p. 526), though *what* breed is left tantalisingly open. Fleming's novel frames this ambiguity by frequently resorting to animal metaphors: while Bond arguably roams among the nation's most fertile hens, from his perspective, Blofeld is "the fox" (p. 540) who plunders the chicken-house of Great Britain. This makes Britain's finest girls, simply referred to as "[t]he birds" in one encoded message (p. 541), the nation's egg-producing hens to whom Blofeld promises that they "will be able to improve the breed of chickens all over

⁷ The plot of *You Only Live Twice* drives home the point, as Blofeld creates a 'suicide garden' as a public service to dispense of individuals who are tired of life: "a tidy, out-of-the-way charnel-house which relieves them [the Japanese government] of a constant flow of messy occurrences involving the trains, the trams, the volcanoes and other unattractively public means of killing yourself. You must admit that, far from being a crime, this is a public service unique in the history of the world." (Fleming [1964] 2015, p. 795)

England. [...] Thousands, millions of chickens made happier because of you.” (p. 446)⁸ *You Only Live Twice*, which concludes the Blofeld storyline, follows up on this joke by having Bond admit to Tanner that “I was all set to go into chicken farming” (p. 617), and given the constant presence of this image, it is tempting to add the Derridean wolf figure into the mix, “the beast under the features of the sovereign” (Derrida 2009, p. 18). The metaphor resonates both with Blofeld’s greedy ways, as well as with the figure of Bond’s wolf-whistling, ‘chick’-devouring sexual predator.

The chicken/egg analogy carried an additional weight in the cultural context of the late 1960s, with the baby-boomer years coming to an end. Since 1965, or approximately the time that the Bond films had turned into a global box-office phenomenon, the large-scale implementation of oral and intrauterine contraceptives meant that the birth rate in Britain and in other European countries was in free fall and that, to stick to the metaphor, more eggs than ever before remained unfertilised.⁹ The birth rate reached its lowest point in the second half of the 1970s, around the same time as when Foucault gave his lectures on biopolitics and when the Bond franchise began to think about global annihilation and breeding again. The success story of Bond’s *Playboy*-inspired sexual hedonism famously coincides with the first licensing of the Pill in the UK, an event that brings together the two axes that Foucault identifies as the crucial backbone to the politicization of sex: the disciplining regimes of the body and the regulation of populations (Foucault 1978, p. 145). While neither contraception nor eugenics was ever fully regulated top-down on the level of the state in Great Britain, they are arguably bound up with matters of state policy and legislation. Chikako Takeshita, in her biopolitical analysis of women’s bodies and contraception, demonstrates how contraception amounts to “a disciplinary technology [that] simultaneously liberates women while it subjects them to a biopolitical intervention,” and nowhere could this be more evident than in the post-war climate of the 1950s and 1960s, with debates on overpopulation and the First World’s attempts to regulate the fertility of the Global South (Takeshita 2011, p. 27). The year after the release of *On Her Majesty’s Secret Service*, there were congressional hearings in the United States about potential health hazards of the Pill, and in a letter addressed to his colleagues, Senator Bob Dole famously proclaimed that the Pill was not to be underestimated as an “important weapon in the struggle to achieve some control over our ability to multiply ourselves into chaos” (qtd. in Takeshita 2011, p. 40). This attitude would subsequently be adopted as state doctrine to grant contraceptives “the role of the agent of bio-power” (ibid., p. 70), particularly in those Asian countries that resorted to one-child policies.

The development and testing of contraceptive devices is tied up with a number of “colonialist intervention[s]” and Western imperialism (ibid., p. 40), including large-scale testing in economically weak areas like Puerto Rico, often with disastrous effects on the population’s health.¹⁰ This kind of experimentation follows in the spirit of 19th-century eugenics, where the idea of population control arose from observations on the reproductive rate amongst the allegedly ‘undesirables.’ As a result, the “number of children born became a matter of public interest” (von Rosenberg 2012, p. 97). Foucault indicates as much in *The History of Sexuality* when he argues that Francis Galton’s early eugenic work arose from attempts to pinpoint the hereditary qualities of British greatness. He also suggests that the age of eugenics turned “reproductive sexuality into a concern of the state” (Mottier 2012, p. 148) and pathologised female bodies in order to ensure their reproductive function. To Foucault, birth control is

⁸ This is not where the novel’s animal metaphors end. Irma Bunt calls the Piz Gloria her “little Eagle’s Nest” (Fleming [1963] 2015, p. 427), while Bond’s father-in-law, the gangster Marc-Ange Draco, refers to his Corsican allies as “[g]reat pigs” (p. 542).

⁹ The pill went on sale throughout Europe in the early 1960s (see Marwick 1998, pp. 394–95).

¹⁰ Scientific experimentation in the 1950s routinely targeted disenfranchised groups like African Americans. For the clinical trials of the Pill, Pincus and Rock turned to Puerto Rico, an island that “suffered from overpopulation” and whose “poorly educated population proved ideal for testing whether illiterate women could handle the cyclic regimen” (Watkins 1998, p. 31). In his book *Countdown*, Alan Weisman reports on the horrific details of the field-testing, with Puerto Rican women receiving high-dosage pills that gave them “nausea, dizziness, headaches, blurred vision, bloating, or vomiting,” as well as strokes (Weisman 2013, p. 69).

located at the very “junction of the ‘body’ and the ‘population,’” in that it makes sex “a crucial target of a power organized around the management of life rather than the menace of death” (Foucault 1978, p. 147).

The full-scale implementation of population control at the state level is later taken up in more detail by Giorgio Agamben in *Homo Sacer* (1995), where he addresses the biopolitical policies of the National Socialist State and how biopolitics turns into “thanatopolitics” (Agamben [1995] 1998, p. 142). Agamben thus adds to the argument of Foucault, who never delivers on his promise to fully explore the eugenic state, birth control, or how there is a gendered dimension to these policies (see Mottier 2012, p. 154). However, his insightful discussion of how the “eugenic ordering of society” goes together with an “exaltation of a superior blood” remains integral to the field of biopolitics and, I would argue, to any in-depth account of Bond (Foucault 1978, pp. 150–51).

On Her Majesty's Secret Service (and most other Bond films and novels, for that matter) tip-toes around the problem a bit, drawing attention to the eugenic angle but never spelling out the reproductive and biopolitical dimension of Bond's sexual libertinage. The only exception is the credits scene, which formulates the question of whether or not Bond has a future beyond his past hedonism. The credits use the motif of the hourglass to emblematised the passing of time, and they also set up *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* as one of the most self-referential Bond films, one that frequently echoes the most iconic moments of the first five films, in an effort to provide continuity between Sean Connery and George Lazenby's tenure. The overall effect goes far beyond a celebration of the Bond archive, though. As the silhouette of a man (presumably Bond himself) clinging to the moving hands of a clock-face is juxtaposed with images of the ‘sands of time,’ the sequence implicitly suggests that Bond is fighting his biological clock and reflecting on his past, with each hourglass representing the memory of previous conquests, in chronological order. Tellingly, the sequence starts and concludes with multiple silhouettes of a sexually alluring version of Britannia, and it invokes the spirit of ‘Rule, Britannia!’ on the levels of music and iconography,¹¹ as though it were trying to advertise a more (re-)productive form of sexuality, to serve the cause of the Empire (Figure 2).

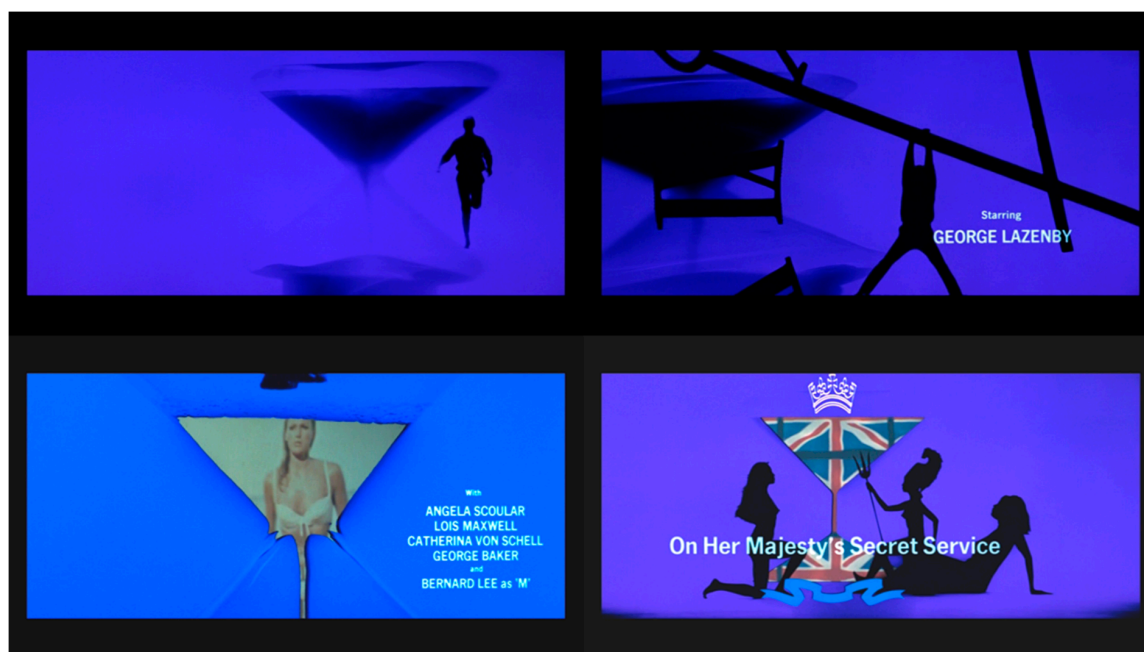


Figure 2. The sands of time and the spirit of ‘Rule, Britannia!’ (*On Her Majesty's Secret Service*).

¹¹ John Barry's main theme also has some overtones of Thomas Arne's famous anthem, “Rule, Britannia!”.

Things get a little more explicit in Fleming's story, *Quantum of Solace* (1960), where Bond's fear of getting his mistresses pregnant is actually spelled out. Bond claims that "beautiful Negresses [. . .] don't know anything about birth control" (Fleming [1960] 2006, p. 83), which resonates with a number of racist arguments regarding the overly fertile Third World. The same point is borne out much more frequently and crudely whenever Bond turns his 'license to kill' against hordes of faceless, identical-looking minions of different ethnicities whom the films consider disposable and thus tend to execute on a mass scale; look no further than Goldfinger's Asian henchmen (*Goldfinger* 1964) or the troops in Blofeld's lair (*You Only Live Twice* 1967).

If Bond's function as a biopolitical agent of imperialism is to exercise small-scale genocide like this—which, interestingly, aligns him very much with his opponents—then *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* also asks the question of whether Bond is capable of any *positive* eugenics, highlighting the fact that procreation is an integral part of stately biopolitics (see Lee 2013, p. 1). Bond's magnetic sexuality arguably is a political weapon to that end, "a normative and essentialist measure of nationhood" (Bold 2009, p. 216) that frequently manages to convert deviant ethnicities and sexualities to the 'good cause' of the West. This entails "compulsory heterosexual[ity]," the possibility of reproduction, and a re-conversion of women to serve the (British) body politic (ibid., p. 209), most notoriously so in the case of *Goldfinger's* Pussy Galore, a woman whom 007 'saves' from lesbianism *and* from villainy by injecting her with his seed (see Fleming [1959] 2012, pp. 371–72). Similar healing powers are attributed to Bond's lovemaking in *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*, when a post-coital Bond happily notes that "the cure [for Tracy] had really begun" (p. 358).

Usually, children play no major role in the Bond films, not even as the stereotypical signifiers of innocence in dire need of protection, as it is customary in the American superhero tradition. In fact, Bond himself occasionally disposes of children as unwanted intruders, most evidently so in *The Man with the Golden Gun* (1974), which features *actual* children (the boy whom Bond pushes out of his boat when he no longer needs his help), *symbolic* ones (the film's various incarnations of the infantilised Other), and *distorted* ones like Nick Nack: Scaramanga's dwarfish henchman intrudes on Bond's lovemaking with Mary Goodnight like an unruly child in a version of the Freudian primal scene.

The film version of *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* retains the marriage plot, yet crucially, it opts to forego the topic of children altogether. Some implicit acknowledgement of the topic of children remains in the film (when Bond and Tracy reunite just before Christmas and seek refuge in a stable, the scene has clear overtones of the Nativity story), but explicit references are omitted. This extends to the backstory of Bond's fiancée. In the film version, Tracy is a young widow whose 'troubled personality' is blamed on a lack of parental guidance. In the novel, however, her trauma stems from the death of a young daughter. The fact that Bond and Tracy make plans for the future turns Tracy's death into a two-fold tragedy in biopolitical terms. Jacques Derrida's seminar on *The Death Penalty* (Derrida [2000] 2014) contains some musings on Victor Hugo's abolitionist writings, particularly those chapters in which Hugo argues against the death penalty against women as "a double infraction of the 'right of life': each execution kills not just a woman, but also her potential children (Deutscher 2017, p. 34).¹²

The fact that Blofeld threatens the reproductive system of the Empire makes the climactic fight at the Piz Gloria a symbolic battle over Britain's future, and one with a symmetrical outcome: Bond torpedoes Blofeld's plan to control the future of Britain from the top, while Blofeld kills Bond's wife Tracy and thus extinguishes Bond's family tree. Ironically, Bond fathers a child in the next novel, *You Only Live Twice*, but amnesia prevents him from ever learning about this. This, too, is never taken up in the film version, possibly because the notion of reproduction would introduce epic and serialised elements into a franchise that made a habit of going back to the status quo. Moreover, the franchise is content to understand reproduction in one sense only: as the cloning (or re-casting) of its lead actor at

¹² Derrida comments in passing on how the 'right to life' debate is instrumentalised in debates on abortion and contraception (Derrida [2000] 2014, p. 123). He also sketched an outline for some remarks on Foucault's bio-power and his own take on the death penalty, yet his notes could not be deciphered after his death (see Bennington et al. 2014, p. xvi).

regular intervals, a process tentatively started with *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*, the first film of the EON series that saw a new actor take over the role of 007 (see [Schwanebeck 2018](#), p. 171).

4. Megalomania and Eugenics

James Bond's biopolitics are always mapped against the backdrop of imperialism and 007's various encounters with the colonial Other. Sometimes, he comes up against what Véronique Mottier refers to as an "internal other" in the context of eugenic politics: physically disabled or allegedly 'anti-social' and 'morally defective' individuals ([Mottier 2012](#), p. 153). In the world of Bond, these are usually the villains. The punchline is that these disabled and deficient rogues are also the ones that voice the most fanatic biopolitical agenda, spelling out and perverting rather than outright *negating* what is essentially the imperial eugenic mission that Bond himself serves, too, when he is, quite literally, 'on her Majesty's secret service.' This aspect is highlighted in the increasingly outlandish plots of subsequent Bond films of the 1970s, which only bear the vaguest of links to Ian Fleming's source novels and often just retain their titles and the names of a few characters. With their global annihilation plots and transnational megalomaniacs, they continue to riff upon the themes of *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*, but with more and more subliminal indicators that the villain's eugenic threat is not opposed to but rather, in a highly over-the-top fashion, *in line with* the imperial ideology as propagated by Bond himself, the ultimate agent of imperialism.

This is especially true of *The Spy Who Loved Me* (1977) and *Moonraker* (1979), two films that are virtual carbon copies of each other, even by the standards of a franchise that was—and remains—fully committed to delivering more of the same. Their two villains, Carl Stromberg and Hugo Drax, are private entrepreneurs who aim for no less than a global genocide in order to look for a better and more resilient form of *zoē* elsewhere: Stromberg in the life aquatic, Drax in outer space. Of the two, Drax is the most biopolitically committed Bond villain since Blofeld, and firmly located at the intersection of the old and new forms of sovereignty: routinely dispensing death while also employing 'bio-power' in order to control human life. Drax wants to destroy life on earth in order to repopulate the planet anew by way of a Noah's ark-scheme on a space station. For this purpose, he selects specimens whom he appears to match by ethnicity and common features like physical build and hair colour. As Bond gains entry to the villain's lair, he initially appears to be stuck somewhere between the Roman priestesses of Vesta and the Garden of Eden, which makes it fitting that he must fight a snake before he is admitted into this Elysium.

Like most Bond villains, Drax is rather sensitive about his "lack of pedigree and breeding" ([Taylor 2011](#), p. 55), and he appears happy to act the part of the asexual and abstinent sovereign who, in outright Foucauldian fashion, merely *supervises* the corporeal modes of behaviour, putting forth his 'power-knowledge' by way of a radical intervention ([Foucault \[1975\] 2004](#), 251f.). He formulates his creed thus:

Here, in the untainted cradle of the heavens will be created a new super-race, a race of perfect physical specimens. You [the subjects] have been selected as its progenitors—like gods. Your offspring will return to Earth and shape it in their image. [. . .] Your seed, like yourselves, will pay deference to the ultimate dynasty which I alone have created.

Drax's monologue amounts to the franchise's most straightforward approximation of Nazism, at least up until *A View to a Kill* (1985), where Bond is pitted against Max Zorin, "the Frankenstein-like sociopathic, hyper-intelligent result of a former Nazi scientist's genetic experiments" ([Schwanebeck 2016](#), p. 517). Blofeld still was an entrepreneur who aimed for blackmail and whose biopower was thus not yet a means to an end. By contrast, Drax's vision of the future is not framed by economic prospects but by complete "control over the biological, of procreation and of heredity" ([Foucault \[1975\] 2004](#), p. 259). The structural set-up of the film dictates that Bond must foil the scheme and kill Drax, but make no mistake: his own biopolitics are not that far removed from what Drax is planning.

As Bond sneaks upon the ark that carries the progenitors of Drax's future master race, all of whom are clad in white garments, the ethnic diversity amongst the genetic elite appears no less committed to hegemonic whiteness than Bond's own, 19th-century informed vision of colonial imperialism (Figure 3). There are Asian and Black women in Drax's lair, but they are not aboard the spaceship later seen in the film, which might indicate that the repopulation scheme entails segregation. The fact that the passengers begin to mate while still travelling towards their destination finds a match in Bond's customary reward once the mission is completed: the readily available (white) Bond girl who is consummated right after the showdown, while they are still traversing the orbit in zero gravity. This kind of imperial fornication is the exclusive domain of the *Übermensch*, similar to what Drax has in mind for the new master race—a troubling proposition that hints at the fundamentally problematic biopolitical subtext of the Bond franchise. Needless to say, Bond's implied reluctance to father children is a given, particularly with the name of the Bond girl (Holly Goodhead) signalling that she specialises in nonreproductive oral sex. His reproductive capacity as a man is never called upon, quite unlike his longevity as a franchise that undergoes renewal at certain intervals.

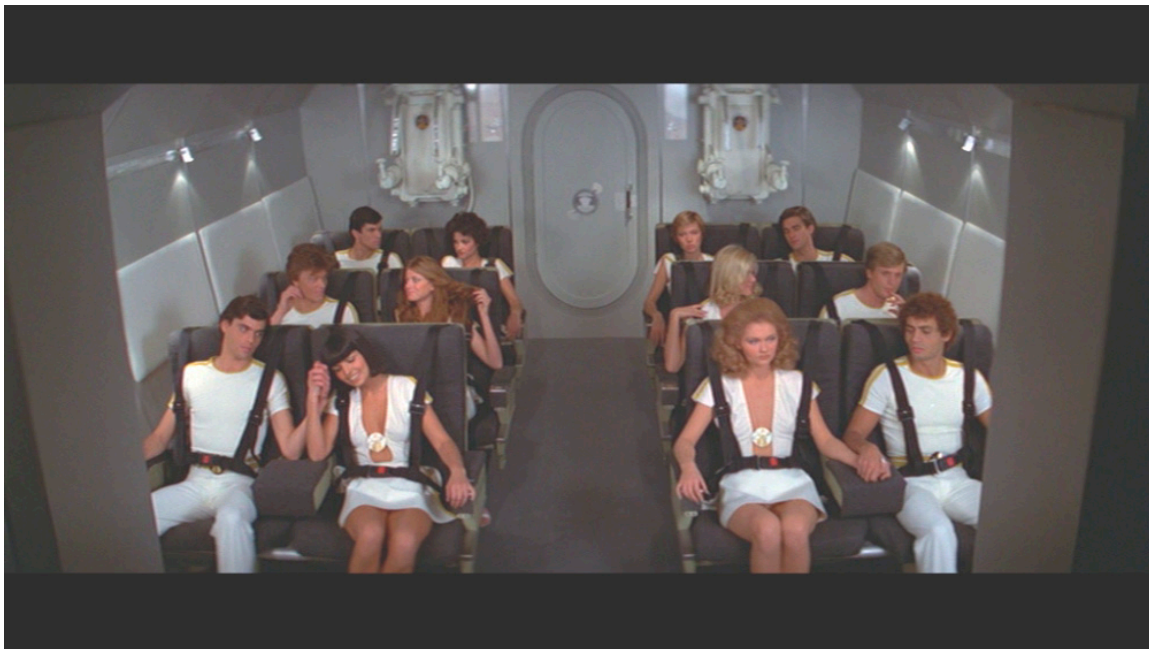


Figure 3. The future master race boards Drax's ark (*Moonraker*).

Fittingly, the Blofeld/SPECTRE plot was to be concluded in the next Bond film, in a scene with even cruder eugenic overtones. The pre-title sequence of *For Your Eyes Only* (1981) harks back to the Blofeld/Tracy plot of the 1969 film, as Bond lays some flowers on his wife's grave, only to be abducted by a wheelchair-bound Blofeld. Following some spectacular stunt work aboard a remote-controlled helicopter (directed by John Glen, who had served as editor and second-unit director on both *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* and *Moonraker*), Bond kills his nemesis, seemingly oblivious to the troubling implications of the scene. As Blofeld (now speaking with a pronounced accent that he never had before in the series) bargains for his life, he offers to buy Bond "a delicatessen", a type of store that is historically linked to Jewish migrants, only for 007 to dispose of the disabled man in an industrial chimney, the eternally youthful superman extinguishing the series' embodiment of 'life unworthy of being lived' in a manner that triggers historic associations with the Holocaust.

5. Conclusions

Even though some critics of the concept of biopolitics argue that biology, by definition, exceeds the grasp of politics (Lemke 2007, p. 10), it has become clear that the two are firmly linked and cannot

be conceptualised without each other in the world of James Bond, where traditional biopolitics are always supplemented by thanatopolitics. In fact, *any* “government of procreation” arguably carries a thanatopolitical dimension: the abortion debate is constantly aligned with the debate around the death penalty (see [Deutscher 2017](#), p. 7), just as Bond’s sexual politics must be viewed in the context of his routine dispensation of ‘death penalties.’ The fact that Bond frequently ends up killing no fewer people than the actual villain strongly hints at their mutual interdependence. Even though 007 is tasked with killing his mad antagonists, they tend to come across as the only kindred spirits available to him, particularly in those Bond films—*GoldenEye* (1995), *Skyfall* (2012), and *Spectre* (2015) come to mind—where the antagonist is a fraternal character and/or Bond’s mirror image. The last two examples indicate that the overall coordinates have not changed in the James Bond universe, and while the series has made a number of concessions to changing tastes and geopolitics, it remains committed to hegemonic whiteness and the biopolitical programme that I have traced throughout this chapter. Some recent analyses of Bond and of spy fiction in general suggest that Bond embodies Agamben’s ‘state of exception,’ inasmuch as the spy “seeks to uphold the rule of law and power” by resorting to actions that are often “considered illegal by the state that he serves,” which makes him a paradoxical agent of sovereign power who simultaneously “undermine[s] the principles of that sovereignty” ([Goodman 2016](#), p. 8). Derrida has reflected at greater length on this ambiguity in *The Beast and the Sovereign* (2009), arguing “that terror is equally opposed to the state as a challenge as it is exerted by the state as the essential manifestation of its sovereignty” ([Derrida 2009](#), p. 41). By the same token, Bond occasionally resembles Agamben’s ‘dead man walking,’ the homo sacer who “*may be killed*” and is “*yet not sacrificed*” ([Agamben \[1995\] 1998](#), p. 8). All of these readings come with their own biopolitical implications, but it is the Foucauldian perspective that arguably yields the most insight into the themes of reproduction, sexual hedonism, eugenics, and state-sanctioned thanatopolitics. Out of all the Bond stories, it is *On Her Majesty’s Secret Service* that brings all of these themes together most forcefully, not least because its two versions bracket an important transitional period in history, and also a crucial moment in which Great Britain ponders the future of its fertility and, by implication, that of its body politic. While Bond has always seemed very much a figure of the (cultural) moment (his state-of-the-art technological equipment and other commodities see to that), he does not seem like a very suitable candidate to lead Great Britain into the *future*. Not only does the character’s constant rejuvenation indicate an agelessness that seems curiously resistant to *having* a future, Bond’s sexual antics never produce any offspring, and instead of a narrative of character development and maturation, the series has, for the most part, been content to have Bond protect Britain’s status quo. Fleming wrote his first Bond novel in 1953, when Elizabeth II had just ascended to the throne, which means that 007 has *always* been ‘on Her Majesty’s Secret Service,’ the female monarch being the only woman with whom he has ever been in a meaningful long-term relationship. With the credits promising that Bond will return, and with his own “sovereign right to kill anyone” ([Foucault \[1975\] 2004](#), p. 60), his ‘license to kill,’ firmly intact, Bond will continue to dispose of the mad sovereigns that overstep their eugenic bounds, even though he may be secretly rather sympathetic to their cause. Let’s not forget that the family motto of the Bonds, as spelled out in both the novel and film of *On Her Majesty’s Secret Service*, has more than a touch of imperial megalomania about it: *orbis non sufficit*, “The World is not Enough” ([Fleming \[1963\] 2015](#), p. 363).

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