

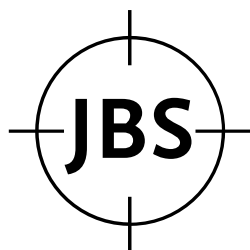
# ‘You’re a kite dancing in a hurricane, Mr Bond’

## The Elemental Encounters of James Bond

LISA FUNNELL AND KLAUS DODDS

What would it mean to describe James Bond as a man in his element? As an expression in English, being “in one’s element” usually refers to someone or something well suited to what they are doing. The term often conveys, when a human actor is involved, a sense of comfort, enjoyment, and even pleasure. Conversely, when we note that someone or something is “out of their element”, we highlight other emotions and sensations such as discomfort, dislocation, and distress. More often than not, this phrase is used to describe social and professional circumstances like embarking on a new job and/or socialising with people outside of our usual sphere. But we can also mobilise this phrase to draw attention to a relationship with something more elemental, describing human and non-human interactions with water, air, earth, and fire. While being in your element is usually seen as a good thing, we use elemental expressions like “out of your depth” and “feel the atmosphere” to suggest that social and physical pressures and forces may have got the better of us.

As a hero, James Bond is defined by his actions, masculinity, and libidinal conquests that are framed in a particular geopolitical context shaped by Cold War, post-Cold War, and, in the Daniel Craig era, War on Terror coordinates. Bond’s missions have seen him travel the earth and beyond in his quest to foil the evil designs of adversaries, ranging from crooked Soviet and Chinese operat-



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ives to megalomaniacs and criminal masterminds. Often overlooked is the importance of elemental geographies and how Bond's encounters with water, air, earth, and fire shape our understanding of him as a character and the missions he completes. As his literary creator, Ian Fleming envisioned James Bond as physically adventurous and comfortable with a range of outdoors activities including diving, skiing, and flying. In that sense, Bond mirrored Fleming's lifestyle, shaped by a nearly daily exposure to swimming and diving off the coastline of his home Goldeneye, in Jamaica. While Fleming envisioned Bond as a "blunt instrument", his novels are replete with references to Bond's bodily encounters with heat, cold, air, and the earth. In the novel *Thunderball*, Bond saves his own life because he sensed when half asleep "a tiny movement of the air", which alerted him to the approaching hand of a henchman (Fleming 2012e, 27). Bond sweats, shivers, floats, and crawls over, through, and around elemental encounters. Even in his daily rituals, as noted in the novel *Casino Royale*, Bond embraces the elemental in the form of a long hot bath and then followed by an ice-cold shower (Fleming 2012a, 48).

When translated to the silver screen, the importance of classical elements is most clearly signalled in the opening credits that feature figures in shadow or silhouette interacting with their material environments. There is usually a man who represents Bond and a series of women who may or may not be reflective of the female characters he encounters in the film. Their interactions, be they positive/supportive/constructive or negative/threatening/destructive, are defined by classical elements. These figures swim through the water as in *Thunderball* (Young 1965), jump through the air like in *Moonraker* (Gilbert 1979), are covered in earthly resources such as gold in *Goldfinger* (Hamilton 1964), and are defined by fire as seen in *Die Another Day* (Tamahori 2002). Moreover, given the relative anonymity and lack of individual identities of the figures on screen (with the exception of the Craig era films), a greater emphasis can be placed on these classical elements and how they shape our understanding of Bond's corporeal encounters. These classical elements subsequently make their way into the narrative proper and play a key role in shaping the heroic identity of Bond and his material and even atmospheric encounters.

This article builds on social science work on the materiality of geopolitics and the affective qualities of geopolitical life (Adey 2014; Anderson 2009; Shaw and Meehan 2013; Weir 2014). In our reading of Bond, emphasis is placed on his material encounters with water, air, earth, and fire, while being mindful of how his work is shaped by geopolitical atmospheres that give due attention to feel-

ings, sentiments, and forces. Bond's ability to put ice, gas, and rock to work to his advantage is crucial to shaping the prevailing mood or "atmospheres" to the geopolitical crises and dramas he encounters. By way of contrast, we recognise that many of the villains he encounters are hell-bent on manipulating, re-engineering, and even poisoning the elemental as part of their projects to secure geopolitical domination. By securing the elemental, Bond helps to reinforce the dominant Anglo-American security architecture and restrain the potential of the elemental to overwhelm the life he has striven to secure. In *The Spy Who Loved Me* (Gilbert 1977), for example, Bond stops Karl Stromberg from creating a new world under the sea by ensuring that two submarines armed with nuclear weapon are made to blow each other up. He prevents nuclear Armageddon by destroying the very agents of that possible destruction and protects the biosphere in the process. As a consequence of mission success, Bond also saves a particular form of geopolitical atmospherics, one characterised by secure bodies, robust infrastructure, and strong morale.

Our elemental intervention here highlights the different logics and registers at play when Bond encounters water, air, earth, and fire. His creator, Ian Fleming, once wrote that "J'aime les sensations fortes" and Fleming was encouraged by his literary mentors to make his character and the conditions he faced ones that picked up on the elemental and sensual (Lycett 1996, 216). This started within the home and the hotel room, as Bond's ritualised use of hot baths and ice cold showers reminds us that Bond engineered the elemental and sensual as part of his own approach to life. Bond's embracing and endorsing of "strong sensations" continues into his immersion fieldwork. In the novels, in particular, Bond is frequently depicted as "exploring" and "examining" his physical sensations such as in *Casino Royale* (3), *Live and Let Die* (188), and *Moonraker* (199) when confronting particular physical environments as well as enjoying intimate encounters with lovers. In Fleming's literary world, both the human and non-human were capable of invoking and provoking elemental encounters for Bond.

## **WATER**

Water has historically and culturally been viewed as a lifesaving and/or life giving element. From its link to the reproduction cycle of women (i.e. the waters of life) to its physiological significance in creating and sustaining human life (i.e. body water), water has long been seen as a necessity to human life and its continuation. In the Bond franchise, the element of water is set up as an obstacle that Bond needs to overcome in order to survive but it can also provide a testing ground for

bodies and their capacity to endure elemental pressures and social forces. This is established in the first two Bond films with water being associated with women through the figure of Honey Ryder in *Dr. No* (Young 1962) and with villainy through the introduction of SPECTRE in *From Russia with Love* (Young 1963). The success of Bond depends on his ability to overcome these watery elements as well as those who manipulate and even target subterranean environments for dastardly purposes.

#### THE FEMININE ELEMENT

More than any other element, water is most strongly associated with women in the franchise. This connection is first made in *Dr. No* through the introduction of Honey Ryder who Bond spies emerging from the sea while singing. This scene is so iconic that it has been referenced in both *Die Another Day* and *Casino Royale* (Campbell 2006). From the outset, Ryder is depicted as an object of the “male gaze” whose arresting image literally stops Bond and his helper Quarrel in their tracks. Through this introduction, Ryder (in her white bikini) is reminiscent of the water nymphs from classical literature who lead men away from their missions (Rositzka 2015, 153) but also as someone who is shown to be fundamentally “out of her depth” when confronted with the social practices and rituals within *Dr. No*’s underground lair. She is, however, credited as having specialised/secret elemental knowledge of the waterways of Crab Key Island; she is able to lead the men to safety while instructing them to rub water on their arms in order to protect them from the bugs. It is here that the link between women and water is first established in the series.

Importantly, the film suggests that Bond will be the “master” of this sea. On first meeting the fisherman Quarrel, Bond is referred to as “Captain” and this descriptor is sustained for the duration of the film. Fleming initially conceptualised Bond as a Royal Navy Commander, drawing from his own service in the Naval Intelligence Division during World War II. Bond’s naval background is suggested by the blue uniform he wears on ceremonial occasions such as during briefings in *You Only Live Twice* (Gilbert 1967), *The Spy Who Loved Me*, and *Tomorrow Never Dies* (Spottiswoode 1997). But in the first film, *Dr. No*, his naval background is not so foregrounded, and so the introduction, circulation, and reception of “Captain” is shaped more by the intersection of masculinity, race, and Empire.<sup>1</sup> Thus the franchise sets up and sustains an interesting relationship in

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1 Instead, it is M who is associated with his naval background as signified by the many pictures of ships hung on his office walls and over the fire place.

which women and men of colour are associated with water while Bond is envisaged as a “master” of that elemental and “atmospheric” sea: in order to be successful, Bond “must” successfully seduce women, steward the efforts of black men, and effectively transform them from being potential threats to supportive allies. While Quarrel has been consumed by fire (the antithetical element to water), *Dr. No* ends with an elemental message as Bond is on a boat with Ryder getting a tow from his American ally Felix Leiter. As the pair kiss, Bond unties the rope so that they can presumably make love before drifting home. This demonstrates Bond’s successful seduction of the woman first associated with water, and his indifference to the prevailing winds and currents. Notably, Bond has already killed Dr. No by immersing him in (bubbling) radioactive water and his metal hands lack the tactility necessary to extract himself from that water.

Across the series, water plays a key role in Bond’s many romantic and sexual encounters with women. On the one hand, Bond “first sees (e.g. Jinx Johnson), meets (e.g. Domino Derval), kisses (e.g. Wai Lin), and works with (e.g. Melina Havelock)” many Bond Girls in/under water in the series (Funnell and Dodds 2017, 157.). Much like *Dr. No*, it is not uncommon for Bond to be seen kissing and/or making love to his Bond Girl in/on water in the final scene of the film from skinny dipping with Melina Havelock in *For Your Eyes Only* (Glen 1981) to showering with Stacey Sutton in *A View to a Kill* (Glen 1985) to his romantic kiss in the pool with Pam Bouvier in *Licence to Kill* (Glen 1989). On the other hand, Bond also interacts with dangerous/villainous women whose sexual encounters with him are also associated with water albeit in extreme forms of hot and cold. On the hot end of the spectrum, Fiona Volpe tries to attract Bond while taking a bath in his room in *Thunderball*, while Xenia Onatopp attempts to seduce Bond in a hotel sauna in order to suffocate him with her legs in *GoldenEye* (Campbell 1995). On the cold end of the spectrum, Elektra King uses ice to pleasure Bond and herself during their sexual encounter in *The World is Not Enough* (Apted 1999) while Miranda Frost sleeps with Bond on a bed made of ice in *Die Another Day*, removing the bullets from his gun in the process. Of all the classical elements, water is most frequently associated with women, both good/allies and bad/villains, and their capacities to manipulate those elemental encounters.

#### VILLAINY

While water is depicted as a feminine element in the Bond franchise, it is also associated with villainy. This is established in *From Russia with Love* through the introduction of SPECTRE. The organisation is first mentioned during a chess

match when Kronsteen looks at the bottom of his water glass and sees the image of “The Octopus” followed by a message about a pressing SPECTRE meeting. During this gathering, the camera focuses on the right hand of Blofeld who is wearing a ring with the same insignia. The symbol links the villainous organisation with an underwater creature that has historically been associated with intelligence, craftiness, and greed (Ingemark 2008, 150). Much like “The Octopus,” SPECTRE plots its evil acts “under the surface” and its organisation is often isolated and insulated by water. For instance, the first meeting of SPECTRE operatives in *From Russia with Love* takes place on a yacht and it is revealed that their assassin, Red Grant, has been training on SPECTRE Island. In both instances, the water helps to isolate the group and cloak their deviant plan in secrecy. The film expands on previous references in *Dr. No* whereby the SPECTRE agent sets up his operation on an island (replete with its own dangerous creature – a mechanical fire breathing dragon designed to keep locals away), locates his personal residence underwater, and uses a special “fishbowl” glass to enlarge the size of tropical fish so that they appear more threatening. Water is used in subsequent films as a way of protecting spaces (in the way that a moat safeguards a castle/fortress) such as Octopussy Island in *Octopussy* (Glen 1983) and the island Raoul Silva commandeers in *Skyfall* (Mendes 2012), the underwater lair of Karl Stromberg (who himself has webbed hands) in *The Spy Who Loved Me*, and even the fake/plastic water on the volcano in *You Only Live Twice* and the secret satellite weapon in *GoldenEye*.

Prior to the meeting in *From Russia with Love*, Blofeld describes his fascination with Siamese fighting fish. While these fish are brave, he argues that they are largely stupid creatures except for an occasional fish who “lets the other two fight” and “waits until the survivor is so exhausted that he cannot defend himself, and then, like SPECTRE he strikes!” This simile directly compares the villainous organisation and its operatives to the fighting fish, and the association between water, sea creatures, and villainy continues on throughout the film. Oftentimes, villains not only use sea creatures to insulate or defend their lairs but also as a means through which they kill their opponents and/or hench-people who fail to get the job done including a pool of piranhas in *You Only Live Twice*, a watery snake pit in *Moonraker*, and shark tanks in *Thunderball*, *Live and Let Die* (Hamilton 1973), *The Spy Who Loved Me*, and *Licence to Kill*. In *For Your Eyes Only*, Aristotle Kristatos even drags (or keelhauls) Bond and Melina Havelock across coral as bait for the sharks and this serves as an innovative twist on the “tank” torture with its roots in Fleming’s 1954 novel *Live and Let Die*.

More broadly, water serves as a site of conflict and violence between Bond and his opponents. He fights opponents in/under water (e.g. the underwater battle in *Thunderball*), on water (e.g. the boat fight in *Quantum of Solace* [Forster 2008]), and with water (e.g. the water pistols in *Diamonds Are Forever* [Hamilton 1971]). He uses water as a cover for surveillance (e.g. underwater spying on Max Zorin in *A View to a Kill*), a means of escape (e.g. being launched as a torpedo in *You Only Live Twice*), and a position of strategic advantage (e.g. shooting a rocket from his underwater car in *The Spy Who Loved Me*). He frequently takes part in boat chase sequences that largely take place on water but also frequently transverse land and air, and usually end with a fiery explosion such as the boat chase in *Live and Let Die*, which involves all of the classical elements. Moreover, in colder temperatures he both evades and engages his opponents while skiing (e.g. from Blofeld's lair in *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* [Hunt 1969]), tobogganing (e.g. in the cello case in *The Living Daylights* [Glen 1987]), driving on ice (e.g. in Gustav Graves' ice palace in *Die Another Day*), and even tracking an opponent under frozen water (e.g. the lake scene in *Skyfall*). Bond demonstrates an unparalleled ability to mobilize, transverse, and overcome watery elements and challenges.

Since water is associated with villainy, it also serves as a means of death or grave site. While a number of minor characters are killed in the water such as the pilot in *Thunderball*, the workers in the mine in *A View to a Kill*, and the naval officers in *Tomorrow Never Dies*, it also includes major figures like Vesper Lynd who commits suicide via drowning in *Casino Royale* instead of facing the consequences for her actions. Historically, drowning/dunking has been associated with the identification (via trial by ordeal) and persecution of women accused of being witches or tempted by the devil (Jackson 1995, 73; Yeoh 2009, 16), with water serving as a purifying agent. As M reminds Bond, Lynd's death was intended to save Bond (while washing away her own sins). Additionally, villains might be killed in/by water like Dr. No in *Dr. No*, in their underwater lairs like Karl Stromberg in *The Spy Who Loved Me*, or while on a submarine like Renard in *The World is Not Enough*. Even the "deaths" of Bond have been associated with water from his burial at sea in *You Only Live Twice* to his accidental shooting where he crashes into the waters below in *Skyfall*. In both cases, it is Bond (and only Bond) who is resurrected from these watery depths. Thus water is an element that Bond needs to overcome in order to remain victorious and even where Bond demonstrates his and MI6's endurance, as posited by *Spectre* (Mendes 2015).

## AIR

James Bond is a mobile hero who traverses the globe on state-sanctioned missions. In our book *Geographies, Genders, and Geopolitics of James Bond*, we explore how gender and/or geopolitics inform the representation of large and small aircrafts, and frame our reading of Bond's interactions with/on them. But the Bond films do more than simply depict the hero's transportation through the air. On the one hand, the franchise utilises the element of air in their shaping of action to add intensity and variety to these sequences. On the other hand, toxic gases and oxygen take on narrative significance as they become obstacles or necessities to human survival. A host of villains have used air as part of their geopolitical targeting of infrastructure, bodies, and morale. The air becomes a medium for destruction, as objects and human bodies are enrolled in global destruction. In *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*, a group of brainwashed women are going to be manipulated into transporting bacterial agents around the world. The biosphere, including the atmosphere, is a vital element in Blofeld's fiendish plan as he imagines a world without agriculture and thus the basic means to feed its human and domesticated animal populations. In the 1963 source novel, Fleming spends all of Chapter 22 (titled "Something Called B.W.") informing the reader about contemporary knowledge and understandings of biological warfare and the threat posed by Blofeld to British agriculture and ecosystems.

### ACTION SEQUENCES

In the Connery era, air is utilised in spy technologies designed to aid Bond on his missions. In *Goldfinger*, his Aston Martin DB5 is retrofitted to include an ejector seat, which helps to dispose of his adversary. In *Thunderball*, Bond uses a rocket belt to escape from the château of Colonel Jacques Bouvar. And in *You Only Live Twice*, Bond flies the gyrocopter "Little Nellie" to survey the Japanese coast. In essence, the air and its accompanying aerial dimension is for Bond a sphere to eject villains into, a space to perform escape from terrestrial danger, and a perspective (from above) to perform techniques of assault, surveillance, and monitoring.

The air also increasingly becomes a space for violent conflict and the tactical and strategic advantages bestowed upon the aerial can be turned against him. This was established in the Connery era with the helicopter attack on Bond in *From Russia with Love* in the vein of Alfred Hitchcock's *North by Northwest* (1959) and the fight with *Goldfinger* on the villain's private jet in *Goldfinger*. In the end, it is *Goldfinger* who is overwhelmed by elemental pressures and squeezed out of



the plane but it could have just as easily been Bond. On the one hand, Bond films continue to present aerial threats to the hero such as the personal assistant pilot Naomi attacking Bond's Lotus Esprit in *The Spy Who Loved Me* and it is only due to the spectacular capabilities of his car that he is able to evade and circumvent the destructive "view from above" by disappearing under the water. The franchise also evens things out by featuring Bond Girl pilots<sup>2</sup> like Pam Bouvier who provides Bond with aerial cover in *Licence to Kill* and uses crop dusting spray to obscure the view of land-based pursuers. On the other hand, Bond continues to fight adversaries on board aircrafts such as a blimp in *A View to a Kill* and the AN-124 in *Die Another Day*. *Moonraker* takes this to the extreme by setting the final climax onboard a station in outer space where Bond has to rapidly get to grips with zero gravity and what we term "space air" with its own elemental forces and pressures.

Beyond aircrafts, the air itself becomes the site of violent conflict. *Moonraker* opens with an action sequence that takes place entirely in the air. When Bond is pushed out of an airplane, he has to fight with the pilot in order to steal away his parachute and secure his own safety. He also has to contend with Jaws who is pursuing him. While Bond floats to safety, Jaws free falls into the circus below but survives the crash, thus suggesting that the henchperson has superhuman abilities. Both Dalton era films open with sequences featuring parachuting secret agents – the Double-O training mission in *The Living Daylights* and the CIA capture of villain Franz Sanchez in *Licence to Kill* – the results of which become the focus of Bond's missions. The Brosnan era films increase the danger and technical difficulty of Bond's aerial actions. *GoldenEye* not only opens with Bond bungee jumping into a Soviet chemical weapon facility but the pre-credit sequence ends with Bond driving a motorcycle off a cliff and using delta tracking to move himself through the air to catch, enter, and take control over a crashing plane. In *Tomorrow Never Dies*, Bond performs a dangerous HALO (high altitude-low opening) dive in which his parachute opens briefly at a low altitude (so as to escape radar detection) before entering the water. In the same film, he falls down the side of a skyscraper with Wai Lin, using an outdoor banner to slow them down. In various ways, the air becomes a perilous space that Bond needs to overcome.

Bond's engagement with the air has been made possible by a range of objects including the parachute, which becomes epochal in *The Spy Who Loved Me*,

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2 For a detailed discussion of female pilots, see *Geographies, Genders, and Geopolitics of James Bond*.

in reinforcing his capacity to execute spectacular escapes from those who would wish to kill him. Moreover, Bond and his parachute with the Union Jack design has become an iconic image of the franchise, so much so that it was used in the opening ceremony of the 2012 London Olympics to facilitate the entrance of the character along with Queen Elizabeth as the James Bond theme was played. More generally, the parachute, as an object, proves to be a vital accomplice to Bond's capacity to use the air to evade technologies and practices of pursuit, surveillance, and capture. But it also becomes a site/sight to marvel at Bond and his technical abilities whether free-falling from great heights or simply gliding gently down towards earth after evading adversaries. In *Tomorrow Never Dies*, the filming of the HALO jump is quite different to *The Spy Who Loved Me* because the camera follows Bond's descent through the cloud cover towards the jump zone in the South China Sea. The viewer gets a palatable sense of the velocity of the fall and the blurry nature of what lies beneath. The scene ends with Bond crashing through the water and seamlessly transferring from parachutist to diver.

#### LIFE TAKING AND GIVING GAS

Gas plays an important role in many of the Bond films as both a spy tool and destructive agent. In the aftermath of the First World War, it was well understood that gas could be used to target human bodies and the morale of populations.<sup>3</sup> But gas could also be miniaturised and Fleming's wartime training with the Special Operative Executive (at Camp X in Canada) brought him into contact with poison gas pens along with other tools of the espionage trade including dagger lipstick (Vyhnak 2010, n.pag.). Other gases such as CS were developed further in the post-war period by the secret British establishment, Porton Down in Wiltshire (Harris and Paxman 2013, 197). Fleming was familiar with military research into gas, and an unpublished novel (possibly written by Fleming) called *Take Over* (1970) imagined a gas weapon that could take over the world.<sup>4</sup>

By the time Fleming was writing his James Bond novels in the early 1950s, gas and iconic objects such as gas masks were embedded in Cold War popular cultures. For British children growing up in the midst of the Second World War, the gas mask was an integral part of everyday wartime life. Public announcements concerning gas mask usage continued into the post-war period, and American children were offered gas masks as toys while striking American workers had tear gas used against them. What later research revealed, however, was

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3 For a detailed discussion, see Girard (2008).

4 For a discussion of the novel, see McCormick (1994).

that the British and American governments were also continuing to experiment and test gas on unwitting civilian populations (Keys 2015, n.pag.). By the 1960s, new films about biological and chemical warfare were becoming more widespread such as *The Satan Bug* (Sturges 1965) and the popular television series *Batman* (1966-68) featured protective bat spray and anti-penguin gas pills.

Gas could also prove a lifesaver for Bond. In *From Russia with Love*, Bond is given an attaché case as standard gear for his mission. It contains a tear gas canister that will explode if the case is not opened a certain way and it is assumed that the gas can be directed so that it targets an intended victim, as Bond is not supplied with a gas mask to protect him. Bond uses this to his advantage when he is held at gunpoint by Red Grant at the end of the film. Bond tricks Grant into opening his case (with the promise of gold) and the gas temporarily stuns the man who drops his gun. The two men fight and Bond eventually stabs and then chokes his opponent to death. Interestingly, gas does not play a factor in the 1957 source novel, which focuses on a book that shoots a bullet from its spine and Bond feigning death before stabbing and then shooting Grant (Fleming 2002d, 252-256). Instead, tear gas was added to the film script and without the help of that gas, it is difficult to imagine how he could overpower a trained assassin who is aiming a gun at him.

In the first three decades of the series, gas played a key role in the Bond films. In *Goldfinger*, the villain uses toxic gas to kill the mob waiting in the basement of his ranch house and then plans to release it on American soldiers guarding the gold supplies at Fort Knox. Fortunately, Bond persuades Pussy Galore and her flying team to switch out the canisters and not reign down poisonous gas on them. In *You Only Live Twice*, a poisonous gas (phosgene) is released in the cave at the bottom of the volcano to keep the locals away from Blofeld's operations. *Live and Let Die* features a shotgun with compressed gas bullets, which Bond uses to deadly effect when he forces Kananga to swallow one causing his body to expand like a balloon and explode. In *The Living Daylights*, Bond's use of gas proves critical in facilitating his escape from a Russian jail in Afghanistan. In *Moonraker*, Bond is visibly shocked when he watches Hugo Drax's scientists die from poisonous gas, which is accidentally released in a secret laboratory in Venice. Even when he understands what gas can do to his body, it is sometimes beyond his capacities to resist incapacitation such as when he is surprised by the use of knock-out gas by the Russian agent XXX in *The Spy Who Loved Me*. When Bond puts to gas to work, however, it is presented as supportive of the technolo-

gical infrastructure and physical acumen that makes his job possible rather than “sneaky”, “sinister”, or “under-handed”.

These films also emphasise the importance of oxygen to a person’s survival. During the epic underwater fight sequence in *Thunderball*, various people are killed or temporarily incapacitated as various parts of their gear from mouth-pieces to air hoses are tampered with. The film also features Bond using a compact breathing apparatus that saves his life on numerous occasions. And in *You Only Live Twice*, Bond uses breathing equipment when he is buried at sea. With the increasing use of gas, oxygen masks are necessary in such films as *Moonraker* when Bond along with M and the Defence Minister inspect the glass factory, and in *The Living Daylights* to help facilitate the defection of General Georgi Koskov through the oil pipeline. But Bond also uses non-conventional sources such as the air from one of his tires in *A View to a Kill* after he crashes his car into the water and also uses his gas tank as a defensive shield in order to save himself from being sucked into an underwater vent. Overall, oxygen in tank and tire forms plays a key role in sustaining Bond’s life across his missions.

## EARTH

The success of Bond as an agent depends as much on his capacity to navigate social and geopolitical environments as it does his handling of earthly forces, technology, and physical locations. Bond’s appreciation of the earth coupled with its resources is pivotal to many of the films. On the one hand, villains demonstrate their territoriality by locating their operations and/or lairs in isolated spaces, making it more difficult for their adversaries and especially Bond to access it let alone destroy it. On the other hand, villains often dig down to “unearth” something of value or use activities such as mining and resource processing to disguise their evil plans. As early as *Dr. No*, it is drawn to the viewer’s attention that the secret lair lies within a mining extractive complex involving bauxite. At the time Jamaica was a strategic supplier to the United States and an essential accomplice in enabling them to develop and use aluminium. Bond’s capacity to protect literal/natural and figurative/intelligence resources is essential to many of his missions.

### THE VILLAIN’S LAIR

The villains frequently set up their organisations in isolated spaces. In the Conner era, Blofeld builds his lairs in a volcano in *You Only Live Twice* and on top of a mountain in Switzerland in *On Her Majesty’s Secret Service*. He hides his fiendish

operations by taking advantage of the earth's prevailing topography and geomorphology. In order to access them, Bond has to scale their exterior while avoiding detection. The films place great emphasis on his corporality as Bond clammers down the volcanic slope and skis down the precipitous mountainside. Other villains have followed suit for the same reason: Kananga builds a house on a hill overlooking the water in *Live and Let Die*, Aristotle Kristatos commandeers an abandon mountaintop monastery in *For Your Eyes Only*, and Kamal Khan takes up residence in the Monsoon palace in *Octopussy*.

These lairs are not only located in isolated places but they are often designed in such a way as to emphasise the elements in/on which they are built. A good example of this is in *Dr. No*, in which the villain's lair has been built into the ground. The exterior walls of the perimeter of the facility are carved out of rock (representing the bauxite being mined) while the interior walls are largely made out of stone. In his personal dwelling below, the same design is used in addition to the inclusion of a stone floor at the entrance, stone steps framed by white rock (like a solid banister), and an underwater window that has rough edges to convey the impression that it has been carved out of the bedrock.

In addition, the villains often set up their meetings in places that are hard to access without detection. In *The Spy Who Loved Me*, Jaws meets and kills a contact in a secret part of the Egyptian pyramids far removed from the prying eyes of tourists and local administrators. In *Diamonds are Forever*, the secret research lab is in the middle of the desert outside of Las Vegas. In *Quantum of Solace*, the deal between Dominic Greene and General Medrano is finalised at an eco hotel in the middle of a Bolivian desert. And in *Spectre*, Blofeld sets up his organisation in a remote sector of a Moroccan desert, which Bond and Madeleine Swann only reach after a long journey. In each case, the facility is safeguarded by the heat, air conditions, remoteness, and lack of vegetation and underlying topography that discourages covert "visitors".

In order to transverse space and reach his adversaries, Bond uses a variety of transportation methods from trains and planes to cars. While much has been written about transportation in James Bond and particularly car culture,<sup>5</sup> these scenes draw attention to the perils and potential pitfalls of travel, especially when driving. In *Dr. No*, the car chasing Bond to Miss Taro's isolated retreat veers off the road, falls down the mountain, and bursts into flames. During the encounter, Bond struggles to retain his grip on the car as it hurtles along the stony and dusty roads. Even Bond's flirtatious car encounters with Tilly Masterson in *Goldfinger*

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5 See S. Jones (2015) and Funnell and Dodds (2015).

and Xenia Onatopp in *GoldenEye* have an element of danger as they race past each other on winding mountainous roads. Although Bond is a stellar driver capable of making evasive moves (e.g. the motorcycle skidding stunt in *Tomorrow Never Dies*) and performing dangerous tricks (e.g. the corkscrew jump in *The Man with the Golden Gun* [Hamilton 1974]) to escape from pursuit, he occasionally crashes his car (e.g. on a winding road in *Casino Royale*), requires a lift (e.g. after skiing down a mountain in *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*), and is even taken for a ride (e.g. Fiona Volpe driving Bond at breakneck speeds in *Thunderball*). In each of these cases it becomes clear that Bond prefers to be in the driver's seat and remain in control of the action scenario; it is the touch of Bond and his ability to direct technology<sup>6</sup> in unison with the elemental that safeguards him when traveling. Bond cannot always predict how the elemental will perform but his judgement and experiential knowledge is vital for anticipating likely tendencies and trajectories of grip, slip, ethereality, strength, and weakness.

#### UNEARTHING RESOURCES

Across the franchise, characters literally and figuratively “dig up” resources that are of value. In *Geographies, Genders, and Geopolitics of James Bond*, we explore the ways in which the franchise uses gender and geopolitics to frame access to both renewable and non-renewable resources. These include contemporaneous conflicts over the gold exchange standard in *Goldfinger*; diamonds in *Diamonds Are Forever* and *Die Another Day*; oil in *The World Is Not Enough* and *Quantum of Solace*; and water in *Quantum of Solace*. In each case, it is the villain who (illegally) digs up these resources from the ground and hoards/uses them for their own purpose. Women are both associated with and control access to these resources. Thus, the films emphasise the importance of Bond's libidinal masculinity to protecting Britain economically and politically. In other words, Bond needs to seduce women who are the gatekeepers to the resources; his possession of the woman translates into access to and possession of the resources that hold the key to safeguarding Britain, the West, and even the world.

Beyond natural resources, characters also dig around and go underground to gain a key piece of information. In *From Russia with Love*, Kerim Bey gathers intelligence on the Russian embassy from a reservoir built by Emperor Constantine in Istanbul. Twice a day he ventures down and ferries himself over to a spot where he uses a periscope from the British Navy to watch his adversaries.

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6 For a discussion of the haptic geographies of James Bond, see Funnell and Dodds (2015).

Later in the film he sets off explosives in order to create a distraction so that Bond and Tatiana Romanova can steal the decoder. In *A View to a Kill*, Max Zorin digs extensive trenches beneath the lakes along the Hayward and San Andreas faults. Upon detonation, they will flood causing them to submerge Silicon Valley under water and thus give him control over the microchip industry. In both instances, characters dig underground and utilise water as part of their plans but what varies is the scale and intent of these subterranean interventions. Zorin wants to turn the geology of the Pacific fault zone into a weapon of mass destruction.

## FIRE

James Bond is a destructive hero who is not only armed with a “licence to kill” but also with a “licence to destroy”. Bond not only makes claims on a variety of spaces but his ruination of the villain’s master plan, organisation, and/or lair usually includes, if not requires, the element of fire. In the early Bond films, fire is presented in a range of ways from flamethrowers to lasers while the latter films and particularly those in the Craig era centre on large explosions and fiery infernos. Regardless of its form, fire is the most destructive element and the films become increasingly “explosive” as the series progresses (which coincides with the development of action filmmaking and aesthetics more generally).<sup>7</sup> The destruction of his childhood home *Skyfall*, for example, leads to a spectacular inferno that seems to match Bond’s anger at the loss of some of the last vestiges of his family’s history. But as the films suggest, fire can also be anticipated, directed, and engineered by Bond as he blocks, encourages, and facilitates its usage.

## DESTRUCTION

While explosions are a staple of the Bond franchise, the ways in which they are produced has changed over time. In the early Bond films, fiery eruptions were fuel-related and the films provided narrative explanations for their detonation. During the chase at the end of *From Russia with Love*, Bond takes out the pursuing boats by dumping gas drums into the water and setting them on fire. The inferno not only destroys the boats behind him but also kills some of his pursuers. In the pre-credit sequence of the next film *Goldfinger*, Bond destroys a hidden heroin lab by setting a charge on a series of red oil drums (conveniently) labelled “nitro”. He saunters into a nearby bar and lights his cigarette at the exact moment the timer goes off, thus suggesting that the fire in his hand is representative of his de-

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7 For a detailed discussion of action spaces, see N. Jones (2015).

structive touch. In the early films, Bond ignites fuels to aid him in his evasion or antagonism of his adversaries.

In the Connery era, fire is also weaponised in the form of flamethrowers and becomes a tool used by the villains to attack their opponents. In *Dr. No*, the villain uses a “mechanical dragon” to patrol Crab Key Island and keep local villagers away. During a confrontation with the vehicle, Bond’s helper Quarrel is burned to death by its flame thrower. In *From Russia with Love*, agents on SPECTRE Island like Red Grant are trained to be killers using a variety of tools including flame throwers. As an object of destruction, the flamethrower trades in the exchange of not only in fire but also fear, promising the victim a horrible and painful death (This is depicted in *Dr. No* through the piercing scream of Quarrel as he is set on fire, followed by a shot of Honey Ryder’s reaction as she cries out and then turns away in horror after witnessing his death). The flamethrower was widely used in the Second World War and by US armed forces in Korea and Vietnam but it was generally considered to be militarily of questionable value given its limited range of operation and transportability. In the Bond films, however, it is suggested that flamethrowers can be used to scare away unwanted visitors and deployed in tough training regimes.

Beyond flaming devices, villains also develop lasers that concentrate heat or solar energy into a destructive form. This is first seen in *Goldfinger* when the villain threatens to castrate Bond with a laser and the beam sets the metal table on fire. Films like *Diamonds Are Forever*, *The Man with the Golden Gun*, and *Die Another Day* focus on the development of a “sun gun”, a theoretical weapon researched in Nazi Germany during World War II that expands on Archimedes’ mythical “death ray”. The device uses mirrors or diamonds to reflect solar energy on a concentrated point on earth (Funnell and Dodds 2017, 143-44). In these films, Bond has to destroy the weapons while coming into close contact with their heat. Q gradually levels the playing field by incorporating lasers into his spy devices. In *The Living Daylights*, Bond’s Aston Martin V8 is equipped with a laser that horizontally severs the cab of the pursuing cop car from its wheelbase allowing Bond to escape. In *Licence to Kill*, Q literally provides Bond with a “bag full of tricks” including a Polaroid camera that shoots out a laser. In the process of inspecting the device, Pam Bouvier accidentally burns a hole into the picture of the President of Isthmus City.

Volcanoes and lava appear briefly in the series. In *You Only Live Twice*, Blofeld locates his facility in a dormant volcano and this becomes the site for his invasion aided by Japanese Special Forces. The destruction of the lair results in



the reactivation of the volcano, leaving Bond with only seconds to escape from the new eruption. While volcanoes do not play a major role in *The World is Not Enough*, the film features a scene in Azerbaijan at a place called “The Devil’s Breath” which contains rocks that naturally spout flames. It is here that Renard is introduced into the film and demonstrates his ability to hold the scalding hot rocks without flinching. This scene is designed to present Renard as a sinister threat who possesses a superhuman ability not to feel pain and frames him as a dangerous (and arguably unstoppable) foe able to withstand the elemental force of fire.

As the franchise progresses and the Bond films become more action oriented, the number and extent of explosions increases. This is most evident in the Craig era films. *Quantum of Solace* ends with the eco hotel being engulfed in flames after Bond shoots at some of the fuel cell batteries causing them to explode. This results in a fiery action sequence, which lasts almost five minutes, with Bond and Camille Montes barely escaping the inferno in order to track down the villain Dominic Greene in the desert. The film’s director, Marc Forster, publicly acknowledged his interest in conveying an elemental force to the film,<sup>8</sup> and the destruction of the hotel unleashed pulses of energy that Bond and Montes are forced to actively navigate and negotiate. *Skyfall* ends in a similar explosive fashion with the destruction of Bond’s childhood home as well as his iconic Aston Martin DB5 in Scotland. From the look on his face, Bond seems more upset about the destruction of his car, a fact that is reaffirmed when he comments “I always hated this place”. Much like *Quantum of Solace*, Bond initiates this destruction by lighting the fuse on the gas canister and the resulting explosion kills some of Silva’s men while taking down his helicopter. It is through this explosion that Bond levels the playing field and this leads into his final confrontation with the villain. Finally, *Spectre* picks up where *Skyfall* left off by ending with the destruction of the derelict MI6 building in an explosive fashion. However, it is the earlier destruction of Blofeld’s lair in Morocco that has received the most attention. The blast set the world record for being the largest film stunt explosion in history. The destruction of Blofeld’s lair “had a total yield of 68.47 tonnes of TNT equivalent and was the result of detonating 8,418 litres of kerosene with 33 kg of powder explosives – and it lasted for over 7.5 seconds” (Swatman 2015, n.pag.).

As the Bond films have evolved, so too have the ways in which fire has been mobilised as a weapon for Bond and his adversaries. But its visual and indeed

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8 See Thompson (2008).

affective power rests, we would argue, on something rather more ancient. Fire in the Bond films is ultimately a ritualised cathartic force; it is used to symbolise and actualise a new beginning, notably in the case of *Skyfall*. Fire purifies, transmogrifies, and nullifies, and is used in both alchemy and cremation. In Christian and Judaic faiths, fire has been long associated with challenging, reprimanding, and cleansing those who came into contact with it.<sup>9</sup> Fire heralds the day of judgement of both Bond and his enemies.

## CONCLUSION

This article explores how the elemental is generative of Bond and informs his haptic encounters. But his manipulation of water, air, earth, and fire has geopolitical implications as well. For instance, in *A View to a Kill*, the triggering of an earthquake by Max Zorin is designed to disrupt part of the industrial-military complex of the US. It is a film about the elemental, as Zorin escapes through the air via a blimp and uses the wind to float over the city of San Francisco (so that he can gloat at the damage he thinks he is about to cause the Bay Area). Geology and geologists play a central role in the film, as evinced by Stacey Sutton using rock salt rather than bullets in her shot gun. Bond manages to stop Zorin by tethering his airship to the Golden Gate Bridge while May Day literally uses her body to prevent the elemental from unfolding. Bond realises that if the elemental can be manipulated by Zorin in this way then not only will a significant aspect of the US economy be affected but so will its morale. Thus, the elemental is also linked to the confidence of the US and Bond has to stop the deliberate manipulation of the elemental when the well-being of the West is at stake.

The series features various examples of Bond using and manipulating the elemental to stop his adversaries. He drowns a man (who he assumes is Blofeld) in a mud bath in *Diamonds Are Forever*. He uses solar power to destroy Scaramanga's energy station in an explosive fashion in *The Man with the Golden Gun*. He sends Hugo Drax to his death in *Moonraker* by ejecting him into outer space where he suffocates. He sinks Renard's nuclear submarine in *The World is Not Enough*. He also demonstrates his resilience in surviving the elemental, such as his resurrection from his presumed watery grave in *You Only Live Twice* and later *Skyfall*. There are, however, a few occasions when the elemental exceeds Bond's capacity to control, such as the volcano in *You Only Live Twice* and an avalanche in *Die Another Day*, but this paves the way for a different heroic narrative func-

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9 For a detailed discussion, see Prothero's *Purified by Fire* (2002).

tion, the “great escape”, rather than simply the pleasure at seeing the destruction of the lair of the bad guys.

While these narratives and elemental encounters are framed geopolitically, Bond seems to be given somewhat of a free-pass to violate, exceed, and ignore some international legal norms such as territorial sovereignty including air and sea space on the assumption that he is acting in the best interest in Britain, the West, and (it is implied) the world. Paradoxically, the films underestimate something that the British governments that Bond represents and serves did for much of the Cold War era. Britain and its close ally the United States experimented with the elemental as they sought to fix the weather, tested biological organisms on the unsuspecting public, and designed elaborate plans to trigger earth modification. In 1978 the superpowers and other parties including the UK agreed to a Convention on the Prohibition of Military or Any Other Hostile Use of Environmental Modification Techniques, which acknowledged that parties had been experimenting with the earth’s biosphere and outer space.<sup>10</sup> So perhaps allowing Bond to “go elemental” is a way of acknowledging that the world is undeniably vulnerable to those who would seek to unleash elemental forces on the fixed infrastructures and communities that make human life possible. In a dangerous world, or perhaps more accurately in a world made dangerous by human interventions, we need Bond to be “in his element” and, when necessary, to “go elemental”.

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<sup>10</sup> For a detailed discussion, see Viotti (2010).

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