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Abstract: It can be argued that for a certain kind of national hero, the sort which is military-trained, employed by his/her government, engaged in combat with a national enemy and seen as defending the nation or extending its “glory” abroad, the perception of his/her national heroism relies on a perception of his/her country’s being heroic too. This paper examines how the imperial-military “heroism” of this kind shown by Ian Fleming’s James Bond, John le Carré’s George Smiley, and Frederick Forsyth’s the Jackal responds to being transposed into an era and an environment starkly uncongenial to it, the post-imperial world which ensued after 1945. Looking beyond their often-asserted role as fantasy consolation for British readers in this period, we will consider the fictions in which these “heroes” appear textually, as narratives dramatising implicitly or explicitly the tensions between the brilliance of the conventional individual English agent and the new shortcomings of the country by which he is employed or to which he owes allegiance. The fictions can then be read as centrally concerned with the problematic changes in constructions of the English national-heroic in the years between Hitler and Thatcher.

**Bond, Smiley, the Jackal: A Spectral English Hero
for a Post-Heroic England**

“Poor loves. Trained to Empire, trained to rule the waves. All gone. All taken away. Bye-bye world.” (le Carré 2006b: 122)

Towards the climax of Guy Hamilton’s film *Diamonds are Forever* (1971), Blofeld, the villain, is holding the United States, the Soviet Union and China to nuclear ransom when James Bond enters his lair. “Surely you haven’t come to negotiate, Mr Bond?” he enquires sarcastically. “*Your* pitiful little island hasn’t even been threatened.” For James Chapman (1999: 159), this is “a remark which clearly suggests that Britain is a country of little significance in world affairs”. However, what Blofeld’s scornful remark also assumes is that there must be some kind of causative link between the actions and adventures of a hero(ine) like Bond and the international standing of his/her country, that the former must presuppose a certain status of the latter, and that any significant decline in the latter must undermine the former. The general point seems unanswerable, as is the fact that Britain’s international standing declined precipitously from the loss of India in 1947 through the Suez crisis of 1956 and on, while British fictional secret agents carried on snuffing out global forces of evil into the 1970s and beyond. It can be argued that for a certain kind of national hero, the sort which is military-trained, employed by his/her government, engaged in combat with a national enemy and seen as defending the nation or extending its “glory” abroad, the perception of his/her national heroism relies on a perception of his/her country’s being heroic too. English heroes of this type might include, more or less debatably, people like Nelson, Wellington, Drake, Wolfe, Montgomery, Marlborough, the RAF at the Battle of Britain, perhaps, in a slight variation, T. E. Lawrence (some of these people will reappear later in the analysis). As

Blofeld indicates, a disappearance in the perceived heroism of the country makes a perceived national heroism of this type increasingly untenable. (To avoid any anachronism, I shall be adopting here the habit of the novels that I discuss of taking “England” to stand in for both England *and* Britain; this confusion is one of their historical hallmarks).

In this paper I am going to look at one aspect of the literary (and not, the above being the exception to the rule, the cinematic or televisual) careers of Ian Fleming's James Bond, John le Carré's George Smiley, and Frederick Forsyth's the Jackal. My starting point will be the assumption that for an individual's personal qualities to be considered heroic depends, in certain cases and to a certain degree, on their objectives, their employers, and their employers' objectives also being considered heroic. Therefore, the heroism of somebody like Bond presupposes three other heroisms: the heroism of Bond's objectives, the heroism of England, and the heroism of England's objectives. If these three latter heroisms are present, they will strengthen a Bond's personal heroism; if they are absent, they will negate it; if they are mixed, they will give his personal qualities a complex nature. This paper's analysis will therefore serve the more general purpose of examining a vital pre-condition, both logical and material, of one kind of national heroism.

By taking, therefore, the heroism of Bond, Smiley and the Jackal, a heroism of the imperial-military type, as assumed, I will examine how it responds to being transposed into an era and an environment plainly uncongenial to it, the post-imperial world which ensued after the Second World War; I will analyse both the nature of that transposition, and the consequent problematisation of those personal heroic qualities which it produces. This problematic appears and is unsatisfactorily resolved, or at least shoved aside, in Fleming's Bond novels published between 1953 and 1965; it appears and swamps le Carré's Smiley fictions published between 1961 and 1980; and although it seems successfully surmounted at the outset of the

sole novel to feature the Jackal, Forsyth's *The Day of the Jackal*, published in 1971, the climax of the story sees it return to thwart the assassin's mission to kill Charles de Gaulle.

Before looking at these texts, I am going to sketch the chief characteristics of the English imperial-military hero. This cultural construct is a very recognisable, even a notorious one, and my purpose in outlining his personal qualities is then to be able to see how these three writers play these qualities off against the England in which their heroes are based. The English imperial-military hero is brave, even fearless, even against overwhelming odds or in impossible situations; he is indomitable, a tower of mental and physical strength, untiring and unyielding, incapable of surrender, proud; he is independent yet entirely given to his cause, loyal to his superiors; he is resourceful, ingenious, brilliant; he is clever, but his cleverness is articulated in a practical, strategic or tactical context; he is charismatic, admired, even venerated, yet there is an emptiness to him - he is an intrinsically solitary figure; he is ruthless, brutal if necessary, murderous when required, perhaps even slightly cruel; he is well-trained, skilful, professional to his core, and meticulous, utterly dedicated to his craft; he is patriotic but silently so; he is necessarily on the side of right. There is a sense of inexorable triumph about all that he does, and, crucially, this heroism is demonstrated in the theatre of English engagement with the foreign, with other countries, in distant lands: all three men studied here, for instance, speak foreign languages fluently, a telling point traduced by their audio-visual adapters. This is also heroism emerging in the pursuit of an unimpeachably moral objective which, certainly and “rightly”, will be achieved.

While this outline of the characteristics of that cultural construct, the English imperial-military hero may seem unexceptional, the notion of a “post-heroic England” emerging in the wake of the Second World War and referred to in my title may be harder to swallow. It can very plausibly be argued that a post-war England without an Empire and equipped with a welfare state providing free universal health care was more admirable, more noble, therefore

more “heroic” than its pre-war opposite. Yet while the question whether England became a “better” country after 1945 is moot, and ideologically loaded, there are compelling senses in which the country can be said to have entered then a “post-heroic” phase of its history. The sudden and vast loss of territorial possession which it underwent, clearly unwanted and long resisted, is powerfully antithetical to any definition of heroism: whereas England shrank and retreated in a reluctant capitulation enforced by its own weakness before overpowering forces, the heroic demands the large-scale, the extension of reach, the gain, the advance, and valorises the freely-chosen act achieving through personal strength a felt success which was desired and sought. This perception of a kind of national castration, of humiliating diminution, is reflected in Blofeld’s jeer about a “pitiful *little* island”. Moreover, the image of World War II in the English popular memory of the 1950s and 1960s, during which (as suggested by the endless films and novels on the subject), England had seemed heroically to fight and triumph over unambiguous international evil, could not but highlight even more starkly her contemporary exhaustion and feebleness, even while providing fantasy consolation. The glow of recent, epic and unassailable historical heroism illuminates Bond, Smiley and the Jackal, but also provides an ideal against which their present appears in an even harsher light. Thus a character in a le Carré novel published in 1974 could remark wistfully, of a period generally before this one, that: “It was a good time, do you hear? A real time. Englishmen could be proud then” (le Carré 2006b: 122), encapsulating a prevalent post-war English perception that, suddenly and unhappily stripped of demonstrable achievement on the international plane, the country’s days of greatness and heroism were over. In the context of the imperial-military, where national influence must signify more than national health services, such a sense would be only more acute.

The aftermath of the Second World War therefore witnessed the appearance of a new, unheroic kind of England radically unsuited to the assumptions and practices of the imperial-

military hero. This historical slippage rumbles uneasily beneath the surface in Fleming, is understood but devastatingly all-engulfing in le Carré, and receives a finally self-defeating solution of sorts in Forsyth. In confronting the issue of this new and shabby, exhausted, dreary and second-rate England, these heroic men and their creators examine by extension the historical peculiarity of belonging to a country clearly in free-falling decline, but undefeated by any enemy. They therefore contribute significantly to the literature provoked by the decline and fall of the British Empire between 1945 and 1979. Looking beyond their supposed role as fantasy consolation for a certain kind of British reader in this period, asserted by critics like James (1977) and Bennett and Woollacott (1987), we will consider these fictions *textually*, as narratives dramatising implicitly or explicitly the tensions between the brilliance of the conventional individual English agent and the new shortcomings of the country by which he is employed or to which he owes allegiance. The fictions can then be read as centrally concerned with the problematic changes in constructions of the English national-heroic in the years between Hitler and Thatcher.

James Bond (and Hugo Drax)

Fleming's novels' sense of the country for which Bond works and risks his life is mostly taken for granted, but they manifest considerably more unease and contempt about England than they do simple patriotism. At the end of *Dr No* (1958), for instance, Bond, in the office of the Acting Governor of Jamaica, thinks of England: "His mind drifted into a world of tennis courts and lily ponds and kings and queens, of London, of people being photographed with pigeons on their heads in Trafalgar Square, of the forsythia that would soon be blazing on the bypass roundabouts..." (Fleming 2004a: 224-25). This list of certain quintessences of England does not appear to notice its incongruent jamming together of strongly dissonant items, the

idyllic and leisurely tennis courts and lily ponds sitting alongside symbols of political power, themselves placed next to foreign-tourist souvenirs of England, and then the final evocation of the banal, dirty and noisy anti-heroism of a bypass. The oddity of Bond's list, which goes on to mention his flat in Chelsea, the tube trains which run beneath it and his housekeeper, can be explained by its highly personal nature - this is *Bond's* England. Reflecting the realities of Bond's post-war life, his list cannot but encompass the grimly non-heroic. In this Jamaican office, Bond, who almost died horribly during his mission, is reporting in to an England represented to him by a contemptibly venal Acting Governor, a tension of which he and Fleming characteristically make nothing. Fleming allows the problematic context of Bond's heroism to be felt, but its implications are invariably repressed or deflected.

The most sustained critique of contemporary England to appear in the Fleming novels is delivered by Tiger Tanaka, Bond's Japanese ally in *You Only Live Twice* (1964). Tanaka begins:

“Now it is a sad fact that I, and many of us in positions of authority in Japan, have formed an unsatisfactory opinion about the British people since the war. You have not only lost a great Empire, you have seemed almost anxious to throw it away with both hands. All right,' he held up a hand, 'we will not go deeply into the reasons for this policy, but when you apparently sought to arrest this slide into impotence at Suez, you succeeded only in stage-managing one of the most pitiful bungles in the history of the world, if not the worst. Further, your governments have shown themselves successively incapable of ruling and have handed over effective control of the country to the trade unions, who appear to be dedicated to the principle of doing less and less work for more money. This feather-bedding, this shirking of an honest day's work, is sapping at ever-increasing speed the moral fibre of the British, a quality the world once so admired. In its place we now see a vacuous, aimless horde of seekers-after-pleasure - gambling at the pools and bingo, whining at the weather and the declining fortunes of the country, and wallowing nostalgically in gossip about the doings of the Royal Family and of your so-called aristocracy in the pages of the most debased newspapers in the world” (Fleming 2004d: 79-80)

At first Bond laughs this off: "You just come over and take a look at the place. It's not doing all that badly" (Fleming 2004d: 80). But this only sets Tanaka off again:

"Bondo-san, you have pleaded guilty out of your own mouth... In fact you are doing very badly indeed in the opinion of your few remaining friends. And now you come to me and ask for some very important intelligence material to bolster up the pitiful ruins of a once great Power... It is like giving smelling-salts to a punch-drunk heavyweight just before the inevitable knock-out" (ibid)

Now Bond responds with anger: after roundly insulting the Japanese, he turns to his own country:

"Let me tell you this, my fine friend. England may have been bled pretty thin by a couple of World Wars, our Welfare State politics may have made us expect too much for free, and the liberation of our Colonies may have gone too fast, but we still climb Everest and beat plenty of the world at plenty of sports and win Nobel Prizes" (Fleming 2004d: 80-81)

Tanaka now seems to imply that his diatribe had been a test of Bond's mettle, which he has passed, but Bond is left "smarting under... the half-truths which he knew lay behind his words" (Fleming 2004d: 81). What is interesting is how self-consciously half-baked Bond's attempted defence of England's successes is, a weakness repeatedly underscored by his conceding much of the justice of the prosecution (the successive "may have"s, the "half-truths"). Nevertheless, when the conversation is over Bond grits his teeth and gets on with defeating the villain, which he triumphantly achieves. To *Goldfinger* Bond similarly says of his compatriots: "they may be slow, but they get there" (Fleming 2004b: 254). While Bond's verbal defences of England are enfeebled and unconvincing ("Bully for us" Kingsley Amis [1965: 94] remarked acidly of them), it seems that his awareness of their inadequacy only goads him to even greater potency and conviction in his *physical* defence of his country. Frequently there is an implicit sense that one of the adversaries against whom Bond is climactically fighting is the image of post-heroic England itself: "[i]f foreign gangsters find they can get away with this kind of thing they'll decide *the English are as soft as some other*

people seem to think we are” (Fleming 2006a: 46-47; emphasis added). Yet his repeated victories don’t seem to stop that idea spreading.

It is in *Moonraker* (1955) that the issue of post-heroic England grows most difficult and disturbing in terms of the effects it produces on imperial-military English heroism itself. Only a few pages into the novel, and as we might expect, a fully-fledged English national hero is presented to us:

“the man’s a national hero. The public have taken to him... They’ve got a real feeling for him. They consider he’s one of them, but a glorified version. A sort of superman... when you think what he’s doing for the country... far beyond what any government seems to be able to do, it’s really extraordinary that they don’t insist on making him Prime Minister... it looks as if he’s made this country safe from war for years... He seems to be a lonely sort of man in spite of his gay life... the people simply loved it. It was the Arabian Nights. It lit up their lives... Extraordinary man” (Fleming 2004c: 16-21)

Is this Bond? It certainly sounds like it: a national hero, sort of superman, who made England safe from war, lonely and extraordinary, while the comparison of a man’s life to the Arabian Nights recalls Umberto Eco’s assimilation of Bond’s life to fairy tale (Eco 1981: 162). Yet the quotation is filleted of all of its biographical specificity, and, indeed, it describes, not Bond but Hugo Drax, mostly depicted by Bond himself. It is possible to hypothesise that here Bond identifies himself with Drax as a bigger and better version of himself, hence the lionisation: Drax is (or appears to be) a self-made millionaire who has developed an atomic warhead supposedly for the defence of England. This is national-heroic, but set in a context of conceded national weakness and poverty: “what he’s doing for the country” is, indeed, “far beyond what any government seems able to do”.

At this early stage in the novel, Bond has never met the man he venerates as a greater version of himself, a more potent St George devoted to the defence of the jewel set in a silver sea. When he does so, privately at a gambling club, he is appalled, finds him obnoxious and

disgusting, “bullying, boorish” (Fleming 2004c: 39), and a cheat at cards. While recoiling from the man himself, calling him a “blustering, loud-mouthed bastard” (Fleming 2004c: 56), Bond also enumerates his professional qualities, ones just as easily found in Bond himself: “Full-blooded, ruthless, shrewd. Plenty of guts” (Fleming 2004c: 49). The following day, driving down to meet him at the rocket site where he is building his atomic warhead to offer to England, Bond thinks of “[t]he people at the Ministry [who] had their own view of Drax... They disliked his hectoring manners but they respected him for his know-how and his drive and his dedication. And, *like the rest of England, they considered him a possible saviour of the country*” (Fleming 2004c: 96; emphasis added). That night, dining with him, “Bond was impressed... A genuine admiration for the man gradually developed in him and overshadowed much of his previous dislike” (Fleming 2004c: 104). He decides to forget the gambling club affair “now that he was faced with the other Drax, the creator and inspired leader of a remarkable enterprise” (ibid). Seeing the rocket, Bond “felt a glow of admiration and almost of reverence for this man and his majestic achievement. How could he ever have been put off by Drax’s childish behaviour at the card-table?” (Fleming 2004c: 110).

However, it eventually transpires that Drax is not an English patriot but a neo-Nazi German, a former SS officer whose sole objective is to destroy England. Discovering this, Bond oscillates back one last time: near the story’s climax he calls Drax “really mad... you great hairy-faced lunatic” (Fleming 2004c: 213). Yet from what do these wild and uncharacteristic swings in Bond’s opinion of Drax, from “hero” to “bastard” to “reverence” to “lunatic”, derive? Bond’s veneration of Drax stems from Drax’s apparent English imperial-military heroism, both modelled on his own and, crucially, superior to it: while Bond defends England reactively, sent to crush its numerous emerging enemies, he thinks Drax’s rocket will be a proactive defence, dissuading any enemies from even thinking of emerging; while Bond, as an employee, considers himself a peon (Fleming 2004c: 7), Drax is a leader of men,

charismatic and independent. Conversely, Bond's hatred of Drax is driven initially by the latter's supposedly "unEnglish", certainly anti-social, manner. The oscillation between these opinions is at root caused by the crisis in post-imperial England which Drax exploits: that it is so weak and impoverished that, in order to guarantee its security, it is obliged to accept that a private individual, and a sociopath, build its national defences. Telling his often psychotic life-story to Bond near the climax, Drax momentarily lapses into valid points, saying that the English hide "behind your bloody white cliffs while other people [i.e. Drax himself] fight your battles" (Fleming 2004c: 210). Bond says nothing, understandably. Echoing Tanaka, Drax also calls the English "[u]seless, idle, decadent... Too weak to defend your colonies' etc" (ibid).

This sense of England is, then, Fleming's habitual starting-point, whether observed or articulated by Bond or Bond's ally or enemy, but then richly compensated for by Bond's own heroic actions. In *Moonraker* we receive a glimpse of how this diminished England might wreak confusion in the function and infect the conception of an English imperial-military heroism, such that a fanatical Nazi could become its most admired exemplar. Again, to a degree the plot works to rub this unease out: Bond diverts the rocket, saves England, kills Drax. Yet in the final chapter Fleming allows the havoc he has introduced into the idea of English heroism to linger: following the government's cover-up of the whole *débâcle*, Drax dies still honoured as a popular English hero ("Tragic loss of Sir Hugo Drax and his team. Great patriot": Fleming 2004c: 238) while Bond, refused a George Cross by M and humiliatingly rejected by the girl of the story, goes off anonymous and alone. There is much romanticism in this last image of Bond, but the imperial-military heroic is elsewhere, and finally nowhere.

George Smiley (and Nelson Ko)

Although historians of the espionage genre, like John Atkins (1984), Bruce Merry (1977) and Lars Ole Sauerberg (1984), stress the differences between Fleming and le Carré in terms of their use of fantasy and realism, these novelists' view of contemporary England is arguably characterised more by continuity than by change. Between a Fleming novel like *You Only Live Twice* (1964) and le Carré's *The Honourable Schoolboy* (1977), both set in the Far East, there is only an intensification of the post-heroic England theme, a strengthening of its importance and an increase in its extension, like a cancer gradually infecting a debilitated body. This trend can be attributed either to an external worsening in England's relative status, a perceived accelerated decline over the fifteen years or so in the condition of England's body politic, or to an internal evolution in the development of the espionage genre itself, or to a combination of these. In either case, two instances will illustrate how this relationship between Fleming and le Carré functions. Whereas in 1959 "M had decided it was time to show the opposition that the Service in Hong Kong hadn't quite gone out of business" (Fleming 2004b: 44, again conceding new weakness before redoubling efforts), *The Honourable Schoolboy* begins with the withdrawal of the British secret service from Hong Kong (from, it later turns out, the entire region), an event interpreted by one journalist as "one more sign that in South East Asia, as everywhere else in the world, the British were having to come down from their mountain top" (le Carré 2006a: 31-32). Again, whereas Bond's mission in *Goldfinger* is, in part, intended to help resolve a British "currency crisis" (Fleming 2004b: 65), and of course succeeds, British expatriates in le Carré's Hong Kong growl that "Pound's in the soup again" (le Carré 2006a: 129), and nothing transpires in the novel to counteract that. Indeed, this general picture of imperial withdrawal, unstoppable geopolitical decline, economic hardship and moral shamefulness has by now spread from the margins to become the

permanent and intractable backcloth to *The Honourable Schoolboy*'s tale of espionage in the Far East.

Thus, the British expats receive “a quite dismal picture of the moral and economic miseries of their homeland” (ibid). A journalist describes “yet one more cut in British government spending”, “times of travail”, “thinner... trade routes” and a “feeble... colonial grip” (le Carré 2006a: 35). A top British civil servant ““thinks we’re *doomed*””, saying that Hong Kong is “[r]icher than we are by half, I should think and, from where *I* sit, enviably more secure as well” (le Carré 2006a: 105; emphases in original). When Smiley’s long working hours are described by some as “dedication”, others are contemptuous: “what was there *anywhere*, in beastly Whitehall or, Lord help us, in beastly *England*, that could command it any more?” (le Carré 2006a: 57; emphases in original). The once-mighty national economy is reduced to “depressing segments of out-of-date factories resembling poorly whitewashed cinemas in the twenties” (le Carré 2006a: 118). This national degradation has spread into those private places which once reflected national glory, such as a West End club, “a grand, grubby place which owed its survival to amalgamation with humbler clubs, and repeated appeals through the post”, and whose remaining members huddle “in the half-empty dining room under the marble eye of empire builders” (le Carré 2006a: 112-13). Equally, the protagonist of the novel, Jerry Westerby, is the “heir” to a deceased, bankrupt newspaper mogul: “A mantle, power, responsibility, a whole grand world to inherit and romp around in – a world offered, promised even, then withheld... the cupboard was bare” (le Carré 2006a: 111). What is national is personal and *vice versa*: “Jerry... had never seriously doubted, in his vague way, that his country was in a state of irreversible decline” (le Carré 2006a: 485).

However, and moving decisively beyond Fleming, in *The Honourable Schoolboy* the backcloth becomes entwined with the plot itself through le Carré's technique of blurring the distinction between England and its Secret Service by using the latter as a synecdoche for the

former. Consequently, the image given early on of the Service in the mid-1970s, its budgets cut almost to zero, its deserted buildings ripped apart and apparently peopled solely by the elderly, the failed, the alcoholically crippled, the grubbily peculiar and the scarily psychotic, merges vividly into that of the country it is charged with defending. This English impoverishment comes out especially at conferences with its American equivalent:

"If it was the American turn to play host, then [the British] would be shepherded to a vast rooftop bar... to be regaled with dry martinis and a view of West London they could not otherwise have afforded. If it was the British turn, then a trestle table was set up in the [conference] room, and a darned damask table cloth spread over it, and the American delegates were invited to pay homage to the last bastion of clubland spying... while they sipped South African sherry disguised by cut-glass decanters on the grounds that they wouldn't know the difference" (le Carré 2006a: 283)

The withdrawal of the British secret service from Hong Kong means that Smiley's strategy in the Far East is, though pursued by an Englishman, reliant throughout on American resources; as with the reference to sherry, it suggests that all the English have left, penniless and impotent as they now are, is their culture and their cleverness. These qualities are located in several of le Carré's Service personnel, but especially in George Smiley, the new chief. With more than one co-worker "in awe" (le Carré 2006a: 38) of him, Smiley's heroism is established early on by colleagues:

"dear old George Smiley, surely the last of the *true* greats...

'George went five times round the moon to our one,' someone declared loyally, a woman.

Ten times, they agreed. Twenty. *Fifty!*" (le Carré 2006a: 17; emphases in original)

and, at the beginning of the final chapter, Smiley confirms the validity of such reverence by succeeding gloriously in his mission:

"In the [Service] a mood of wild triumph broke out when the grand news came through... For two days there was speculation about medals, knighthoods and promotions. They must do *something* for George, at last, they *must!*" (le Carré 2006a: 567; emphases in original)

To a strong extent, *The Honourable Schoolboy* is a novel about English national heroism, especially that of George Smiley. Clive James' (1977) review of the novel savagely criticised its "legend-building tone" of "myth-making portent", arguing that "[h]alf the time le Carré sounds like Tolkien. You get visions of Hobbits sitting around the fire telling tales of Middle Earth". He claimed that "espionage is presented as the occupation of gods", especially in the characterisation of "George Smiley, nondescript hero and cuckold genius" who, with "legendary omniscience" and subordinates who "worship" him, "completes his rise to legendary status". James is not so much mistaken as guilty of giving exaggerated importance to the novel's over-long introductory chapters. Instead, le Carré sets up the theme of heroism, legend, myth and so on solely to undercut it later, as a consideration of the novel's allegorical references will suggest (Barley 1986: 105-19; Monaghan 1985: 114-15). Fleming based what he called his "fairy-tales for adults" (quoted in Lycett 1995: vii) securely on the myth of St George: Bond therefore finds his "damsels" in the "clutches", or, rather, the employment, of his "dragon" enemy; Drax's real name, von der Drache, actually means "dragon" in his native German, and his atomic rocket stands in for the fire-breathing menace which England's national hero must snuff out. In contrast to the coherence of Fleming's national myth-kitty, Jerry compares himself both to St George (le Carré 2006a: 133) and Galahad (le Carré 2006a: 515), twin founding English heroic myths; but he finally only jeopardises England's mission for his own private interests. The Chinese Communist agent who is England's enemy and target throughout is called Nelson Ko, a forename rich in echoes of English imperial-military heroism; his brother, a corrupt and murderous Hong Kong businessman, is called Drake, in a chaoticised and crisis-haunted evocation of England's heroic past. Both historical figures were

naval officers; Nelson here works on China's military fleet, Drake has his own merchant shipping. Drake, who was awarded the OBE in 1966, like his namesake honoured by Queen Elizabeth, has a young English mistress, Lizzie; their entwined names in this context evoke Sir Francis and the Virgin Queen, yet she is a "high-class tart" (le Carré 2006a: 96), a lost soul and mythomaniac on the verge of psychological breakdown. All the traces of England's national myths and hero(in)es are degraded, confused, lost and betrayed.

This also includes Smiley, whose heroism has so long been insisted upon. Firstly, Nelson, whom Smiley has spent hundreds of working hours labouring to bring over to the West, is whisked away from the British Secret Service and taken instead to America to be interrogated; he is stolen, to be precise, from Smiley and his team by the Americans working in a secret agreement with two British agents, Enderby and Collins. Secondly, and in return, Enderby and Collins take over the Service with American backing, and Smiley is unceremoniously pushed out.

These betrayals, while certainly tarnishing Smiley's triumph, and engulfing him in a representative example of the shabbiness and ugliness of post-imperial England, do not impair his own heroic status. This occurs when he gives the order for Jerry Westerby, the agent whom he has chosen to spearhead the case on the ground, to be killed so as to save the mission. Westerby is a long-time associate of Smiley's, a trusted colleague, likened to an adoptive son, and having him shot dead is an appalling act with echoes of ethnonarrative: the hero who is compelled to kill his own child. Smiley is forced to do so because Westerby abandons the mission at its most critical point to try to save Lizzie, with whom he has fallen in love. If Westerby succeeds, he will wreck the mission; placed under unendurable pressure, Smiley has Westerby discreetly eliminated. The effects of this act are equally appalling: Smiley suffers a nervous breakdown, while Westerby is wiped from the Service's own history of the case, the circumstances of his death officially airbrushed. When Smiley recovers, his

loyal co-worker Guillam goes to visit him, but, in the novel's last words, "Smiley never mentions Westerby. And nor does Guillam, for George's sake" (le Carré 2006a: 573).

The Honourable Schoolboy first builds Smiley up as a genius of almost monastic single-mindedness, devoted to England's good, then devastatingly unravels this, yet does so in a way which leaves his prior greatness intact. His order to have Westerby killed undercuts his national heroism and reduces him to the shabby, venal, brutal level at which the dispossessing Enderby and Collins already live: all three are men prepared to betray and crush their colleagues to achieve their goals, except that Smiley's order cannot blot out the picture of his heroism which the previous five hundred pages have so painstakingly painted. Instead, by the use of synecdoche, le Carré nationalises Smiley's descent into moral ugliness and gives this sullied heroism the status, surely overblown, of recent English geopolitical history read as tragedy. By the novel's end, the British Secret Service has effectively become America's property. Enderby and Collins have sold its independence in exchange for personal advancement. All that English culture and cleverness is left either idle, with nothing to be exercised on, or working for another country.

The Jackal (and Claude Lebel)

As for Frederick Forsyth's *The Jackal*, his solution to all the misery and the shabbiness, the bankruptcy and the venality of England shown by Fleming and le Carré is a characteristically elegant and brilliant one: no longer to work for it. He chooses instead the life of the international political assassin, and in *The Day of the Jackal* is engaged by the French paramilitary organisation the OAS, who wish to assassinate President de Gaulle, to overthrow French democracy and install a fascistic military strongman in his stead. A decisive break with Bond and Smiley immediately appears: the Jackal makes no pretence at fighting on the side of

good or against evil; he does not pretend either to believe or to disbelieve in his employer's objectives. His only interest in the mission is its lucrative personal rewards. Not only does the Jackal not work for England, he does not work against it either; he simply vaults far beyond the whole question of national allegiance. If he turns away to the OAS's French-government-in-waiting, it is not because it would make a better country, but because it will pay him so much more, and this only because, as an illegal organisation, it has no compunction about robbing banks. (In 1959 Bond's annual salary is just over \$4000 [Fleming 2004b: 24]; in 1963 the Jackal charges \$500,000.) The Jackal therefore places his imperial-military Englishness at the service of any high-paying foreign organisation. This breathtakingly simple abolition of the nation-state problem which the Jackal has found turns out, finally, to be too simple: if England can be vaulted over, the Jackal will find his own Englishness his most insurmountable stumbling block.

Yet if the Jackal does not fight for England, in what sense can he be considered an English imperial-military hero? Furthermore, at the outset we said that heroic personal qualities can be reinforced or negated by the heroism or otherwise of an individual's context, and the Jackal has chosen to fight for evil employers and for venal motives. To answer this, I would first argue that Forsyth relies in part on suggestions that the Jackal can be assimilated to men like Bond or, further back, the hero of Geoffrey Household's *Rogue Male* (1939), who fought courageously against totalitarianism. They carry out missions which recall the Jackal's against genuinely loathsome enemies of Britain. In the short story "For Your Eyes Only" (1960) Bond is sent by M to shoot dead with a long-range rifle an ex-Gestapo gangster, while in "The Living Daylights" (1962), another short story, he fires diagonally from out of a shadowy upper window above a European street aiming to pick off a Soviet Communist sniper. The protagonist of Household's novel, finally anonymous like Forsyth's, attempts to

assassinate Hitler with a long-distance rifle shot; when, like the Jackal, he misses, he is hunted like an animal and suffers and endures terrible but heroic hardships in the bravest of causes.

Secondly, the Jackal's personal Englishness is heavily emphasised throughout, whether by the narrative voice referring to him as "the Englishman", or by the indications that the Jackal's physique, temperament, class and tastes accord with the traits, in 1963, of the stereotypical Englishman abroad. "His elegant light suit and confident manner picked him out as an English gentleman", the narrator tells us (Forsyth 1995: 296); a supplier tells him that: "Monsieur, you are an English gentleman. It is clear to all'" (Forsyth 1995: 136). The Jackal looks "like a man who retained control of himself" (Forsyth 1995: 53-54); unflappable, self-contained, well-groomed, tall, fair-haired and so on, personally the Jackal could hardly be more, in necessarily inverted commas, "English".

Thirdly, the Jackal's professional character is formed from the qualities of the imperial-military hero which I listed earlier. One particular incident in his biography serves to reinforce this identification. Before hiring him, the OAS read about unspecified "jobs" he has previously done (Forsyth 1995: 48), and at a critical juncture he thinks back to the sudden rise in his financial fortunes "[o]ver the past three years" (Forsyth 1995: 298). By British intelligence he is inconclusively linked to an event two-and-a-half years earlier, when "the dictator of the Dominican Republic, Trujillo, was assassinated on a lonely road outside Ciudad Trujillo. According to the reports he was killed by partisans" (Forsyth 1995: 254).

However, there was also:

"a rumour that Trujillo's car was stopped, for the ambushers to blow it open and kill the man inside, by a single shot from a marksman with a rifle. It was a hell of a shot – from one hundred and fifty yards at a speeding car. Went through the little triangular window on the driver's side, the one that wasn't of bullet-proof glass. The whole car was armoured. Hit the driver through the throat and he crashed. That was when the partisans closed in. The odd thing was, rumour had it the shooter was an Englishman" (ibid)

This episode establishes the Jackal's military greatness as a sniper. However, both the setting ("a harsh, arid landscape in a hot and distant land": Forsyth 1995: 255) and the victim ("an old man in fawn twill and gold braid, who had ruled his kingdom with an iron and ruthless hand for thirty years": *ibid*), together with Forsyth's manipulation of sympathy and the marksman's rumoured nationality, irresistibly invest this incident with the imagery of British imperial conquest. Both the tone and the details call up a host of echoes from the late-nineteenth-century stories about intrepid Englishmen, vile and absurd local tyrants, and exciting adventures in tropical climes analysed by Joseph Bristow (1991). The Jackal's current action, aimed, like Nelson's and Wellington's English imperial-military heroism, against a proud and disdainful leader of France, can only intensify these historical reverberations, and finally establish the Jackal in a context where, strictly speaking, he does not belong.

Forsyth therefore mixes together the traits of the English imperial-military figure, now almost free-floating, detached from an England which is post-imperial, with a kind of personal hyper-Englishness; it almost conceals, but not quite, that for large parts of the novel England, in the shape of Prime Minister Harold Macmillan, treats him as an enemy of the state. The Jackal's heroic status, his Englishness, and his imperial-military status are actually, in this new identity economy, extremely unstable, but this does not become apparent until the novel's climax, when the house of cards of the Jackal's identity collapses. In this climax, the Jackal is secreted in a room high above the Place du 18 Juin in Paris, gazing down the telescopic sights of his rifle at his target, President Charles de Gaulle:

"The President of France paused before the first man in the line of veterans and stooped slightly to listen to the Minister explain who he was and what was his citation for valour shown on that day nineteen years before. When the Minister had finished he inclined his head towards the veteran, turned towards the man with the cushion, and took the proffered medal. As the band began a softly played rendering of 'La Marjolaine' the tall General pinned the medal on to the rounded chest of the elderly man in front of him. Then he stepped back for the salute.

Six floors up and a hundred and thirty metres away the Jackal held the rifle very steady and squinted down the telescopic sight. He could see the features quite clearly, the brow shaded by the peak of the képi, the peering eyes, the prow-like nose. He saw the raised saluting hand come down from the peak of the cap, the crossed wires of the sight were spot on the exposed temple. Softly, gently, he squeezed the trigger...

A split second later he was staring down into the station forecourt as if he could not believe his eyes. Before the bullet had passed out of the end of the barrel, the President of France had snapped his head forward without warning. As the assassin watched in disbelief, he solemnly planted a kiss on each cheek of the man in front of him. As he himself was a foot taller, he had had to bend forward and down to give the traditional kiss of congratulation that is habitual among the French and certain other nations, but which baffles Anglo-Saxons" (Forsyth 1995: 408; ellipsis in original)

Let us focus here on the kiss which saves de Gaulle's life, the "kiss of congratulation... habitual among the French and certain other nations... which baffles Anglo-Saxons". This baffling has a nice double meaning: as an Englishman, the Jackal does not conceive of it, and consequently, again as an Englishman, he is thwarted by it. Having renounced his nation-state, the Jackal is undone by his nationality: it is because of his Englishness that he fails. The Jackal rejected England as an employer, and finally his Englishness traduces him. The crucial point is that Fleming's Service experts or le Carré's Sarratt training officers would have briefed the Jackal, had he worked for them, on local customs: in both *Goldfinger* and *Diamonds are Forever* (1956) Bond goes abroad made fully cognizant by M and his contacts of the metal and stones in question, while Westerby moves around the Far East guided by the information impressed on him by Smiley's specialists. Breaking with the British government, the Jackal has forsworn this reservoir of knowledge. His solution to the problem of English heroism in the age of a post-heroic England is finally his undoing.

Furthermore, an additional point can be drawn from the identity of the man who kills him, Claude Lebel, the Parisian commissaire who had led the investigation into his mission. Although in every physical and personal sense the Jackal's opposite, as a worker who is "slow, precise, methodical, painstaking" (Forsyth 1995: 207) Lebel is strikingly similar to

him. In essence, Lebel is constructed as a 'dog', that is, a tame, domesticated jackal. He has a wife and children to whom he is devoted; he chooses to keep his own office, preferring familiar surroundings; he works for the state, using his abilities to protect the homestead. The Jackal, on the other hand, is homeless, rootless, a subversive, an outsider, "the world's outlaw" (Forsyth 1995: 262), a loner killing to survive. Lebel is described as "dogged" (Forsyth 1995: 210) and even has a dog's "soft brown eyes" (ibid). The Jackal, a wild and savage beast, is more powerful, fitter, faster and cleverer; he is also considerably more vicious. Lebel, revivifying the cliché of the detective, is like a bloodhound who gets on to the Jackal's scent and follows him unrelentingly; the two men are tame and savage versions of the same creature. Alone, the dog cannot match the jackal, but he can mobilise all the resources of the homestead against the lone intruder who threatens to cause havoc.

The Jackal's failure is then not solely a failure of Englishness: it is also a failure of the imperial-military heroic, of the kind of Englishman who roams the planet subjugating it to his needs, like Bond in America or Japan or Jamaica, Smiley in Germany or Hong Kong, or the Jackal in the Dominican Republic and France. Defeated by the forces of the local and the defensive, of the family, the homestead, the tribe, once again the Jackal is superannuated. As with *The Honourable Schoolboy*, though, the novel closes on an elegiac note as Lebel anonymously attends the Jackal's anonymous burial, and Forsyth evokes a sense of mourning, not so much for a particular man, but for the passing of a more brilliant, more extraordinary, more *heroic* self. Once again, some will find this allegorical reading of the end of the British Empire, though dramatically skilful, morally highly dubious.

A Spectre Haunting England

Forsyth's subsequent plots chart the gradual marginalisation of British influence. *The Dogs of War* (1974), a fictionalisation of mercenary activity in Africa in the 1960s, places Britons centre stage as strategists and fighters. Adam Munroe in *The Devil's Alternative* (1979) plays a crucial role, but only as a go-between ferrying the superpowers' messages across the Atlantic with their permission, and Andrew Drake too, but as a Ukrainian nationalist of mixed parentage. In *The Fourth Protocol* (1984) and *The Negotiator* (1989), England is reduced to the playground for superpower conflict, analogous to Vietnam or Afghanistan, where the US and the USSR plot their *coups d'état* while English policemen chase around their own motorways trying to help one set of foreigners to catch another. In *The Fist of God* (1994), Forsyth finally gave another British agent a central role, but in the form of an anachronistic and implausible throwback to T.E. Lawrence, a boyhood hero of his (Cabell 2001: 11). Similarly, while Alistair MacLean first achieved best-seller status with retrospective fictions about British military heroism in the Second World War, such as *HMS Ulysses* (1955) and *The Guns of Navarone* (1957), "[i]n many of [his] 1970s novels there is not so much as a British character in the *dramatis personae*" (Sutherland 1981: 101). More recently, two successor narrative forms can be identified. In one, such as the tales of derring-do which emerged from the first Gulf War like Andy McNab's *Bravo Two Zero* (1993), the portrayal of British military heroism in far-flung places is implicitly compromised by its being placed at the service of foreign, that is American, political power. In the other, such as the BBC television series *Spooks* (BBC1, 2002-), the British agent is modernised precisely by having his/her field of operation reduced to that of a Claude Lebel.

The era of the stranded and belated English imperial-military hero studied here is therefore a brief one and a closed one. Post-war British espionage-adventure fiction, breaking

with the past, was an exclusively professionalised affair, a matter of bosses, secretaries and training courses, and this drawing of agents, spies and adventurers under the aegis of a political state as employer evidently opened up a new problematic: the relationship between the heroic act - or the act assumed heroic - and the people or nation on behalf of whom it is at least nominally done. In practice, the world, and England with it, had moved on beyond what English imperial-military heroism was capable of producing. Ironically, the golden age of British espionage-adventure fiction focuses on the era of its own belatedness. The day of Bond, Smiley and the Jackal was in many respects over before it had even begun: these are texts which present the national hero as his own ghost.

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