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Figures of Postwar Sliding: Utopia and Violence in the Extreme Sport Performances of James Bond

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Abstract: This article investigates the utopian visions of extreme sports as a postwar phenomenon by contrasting it to the violence of the extreme sport practitioner par excellence in postwar/cold war cinema: James Bond. Continental philosophy and cultural studies furnish extreme sport as a manifold of wholesome, meaningful, sustainable, life-enhancing, and environmentally intimate practices, less orientated toward human rivalry than its traditional namesake. Certain attention is thus paid to the movement of sliding in extreme sports that thrive on powerful natural forces such as air, wind, snowy slopes, and big waves, creating an ambivalent field between mastery and letting oneself go. Sliding, or *glissade*, is treated as a “figure of thought” that Bond is mustered to embody and enact with his extreme athletic repertoire. The analysis of James Bond’s extreme sport sliding is contrasted to the musings of *glissade* philosophers such as Jean-Paul Sartre, Gilles Deleuze, and Michel Serres. It is concluded that if there is utopianism in James Bond’s extreme sport performances, it is in the sliding itself, while the attaining of that state is paved with violence towards everything material. The article reinforces the concept of the extreme in relation to sport as a processual tool, rather than a category describing a fixed set of characteristics adhering to a certain practice.

Keywords: James Bond; extreme sport; Michel Serres; violence; utopia; figure of thought; *glissade*; sliding

1. Introduction

George Orwell called sport “war minus the shooting” (Beck 2013). In his case, the nationalism in international competitions qualified sport as a hostile tool and environment. Newer, alternative sports appearing in the postwar world have been framed as less rivalrous, more wholesome, sustainable, meaningful, life-enhancing, and environmentally intimate by both cultural studies (Wheaton 2004) and phenomenology (Brymer 2005; Breivik 2011; Immonen et al. 2018). These strands talk of such new sports as lifestyle, action, adventure, or extreme sports, and one fascinating facet is a tacit ideal of the researcher applying such perspectives as a practitioner and performer of such sports.

A third position, albeit not yet a strand, is represented by Steven Connor (2011), a scholar of English literature. In his *A Philosophy of Sport*, Connor labels these new sports those of “*glissade*” (French for the act of sliding). Applying a cultural phenomenological approach, informed by sundry 20th century continental philosophers as well as a wide array of literary writings, Connor ultimately joins the gospel of new sports, praising their sustainable potential. Connor’s sources of inspiration illustrate that wartime and postwar philosophers such as Jean-Paul Sartre, Michel Serres, and Gilles Deleuze are intrigued by sports of the “outside” (which is what “extreme” denotes originally in Latin). This, in itself, makes the smooth displacements of sports such as skiing, surfing, and hang-gliding worthy of scrutiny as metaphors for the relationship between humans and the nonhuman world. This article will trace those fickle tracks left in snow, water, and air in order to discuss the both utopian and violent visions that accompany them, in a conjunction of philosophy, sport, and cinema. We will

follow Connor's off-road runway, as it were, in the sense that we want to dwell on sliding/*glissade* as a "figure of thought" (Watkin 2020) in postwar philosophy by populating it with contemporaneous, fictional characters performing sports to the extreme.

Seen from the viewpoint of the philosopher Michel Serres (2016), such sports are harbingers of an end to conflicts and a new alliance with nature. What we term extreme sports help teach us the lesson that principles of peace and life currently triumph over war and death, in what for him is tantamount to a struggle between two cosmic principles: *le doux*, the soft (energy, information, mutation, peace, love, life), and *le dur*, the hard (entropy, repetition, selection, war, hate, death). Born between the wars, Serres's oeuvre (cf. Serres and Latour 1995) is marked by the fear of the bomb and could be seen as a philosophy of peace. For him, extreme sports represent a postwar shift towards an attitude of peace, while older sports were characterized by associations with war; they are therefore a model for peace for future philosophy to consider. While the older sports retained their violent origins, Serres (2016) argues, their regulations reduced the actual damage done, so there was an early tendency to a pacification of sorts (mythologized in the Olympic ideals). Still, the very nature of their cult of tall, muscular supermen Serres sees as perpetuating a Social Darwinist idea of the survival of the fittest. In the postwar era, however, things change: sports turn "soft"; the sports of *glissade* represent an end to violent confrontation and a turn to encounters with the elements of the world—and with the fluid elements, at that, with water and air. Suppleness and quick wit take the place of muscles and brute force. Serres views these sports as emblematic of a utopian vision of peace in a human history fraught with millennia of conflict, and their existence serve for him as a model for how this utopia can be realized and a new "natural contract" be instituted (cf. Serres 1990). The contention, then, seems to be two-fold: firstly, practitioners are not directed towards defeating each other, and, secondly, practitioners develop wholesome and sustainable attitudes towards nature. Steven Connor (2011), prefiguring Serres's grand narrative, rounds up his historically inclined philosophy of sport with a conflation of these two themes: these new sports, often characterized by their sliding or gliding movements, illustrate a relinquishing of "the principles of winner-takes-all victory" and "the adjustments we may need to make in our attitudes toward nature" (Connor 2011, p. 215).

Decades earlier, Gilles Deleuze had turned to the example of sport so as to teach philosophy a different lesson. Deleuze [1990] (Deleuze [1990] 2007) raises the question of origin contra movement as two differing themes for thought: contemporary philosophy, he says, has become stuck in the quest for origins and a focus on what is eternal, which means that it is unable to properly address the question of movement. In order to do so, it seems he must turn to other things than philosophy proper: first, he makes a brief comparison with sports, then he launches into a lengthy discussion of why he wrote his two books on cinema (Deleuze 1983, 1985). The histories of sport and cinema demonstrate the problematics of movement, and with certain new sports, such as surfing or paragliding, we learn to relate to an external world of forces that we enter into rather than ourselves being the origin of movement. So, if Serres's view on *sports de glisse* enacts a "soft" world (peaceful, wholesome, and sustainable), Deleuze rather actualizes the relentless momentum of a "hard" nature, which we could creatively connect (or succumb) to. These different positions are instructive of the tensions and ambivalences of this "metastable" (Immonen et al. 2018) field, practically as well as theoretically.

We can see already that this presents two conditions for our analysis: first, that extreme sports teach us something about relations between ourselves and the matter, movement, and force of the external world; secondly, that thinking this relation necessitates a relationship between philosophy, sport, and cinema. This means that we will need to have both the conditions for certain philosophical mindsets and certain athletic activities in mind in order to delineate the furtive perimeter of war and peace, of tranquility and power in, of, and by *glissade* as a "figure of thought" (Watkin 2020). It also means that we will need to populate these great outdoors vistas with actors or athletes of the same era. To this end, as our "conceptual persona" (Deleuze and Guattari 1991), we will propose a sportsman who displays in equal measures postwar prowess and cold war cunning: James Bond. In the films, Bond is often seen practicing a variety of adventurous forms of sport, such as bungee-jumping, skydiving,

and surfing. He therefore seems to be an interesting figure to investigate in order to both theoretically conceptualize and empirically scrutinize the nature of extreme sport. Pegram (2018) pinpoints James Bond's daredevilry as both reflecting and driving the development of extreme sport.

Thus, the both fictional and artificial aspects of the film medium, as well as their relations to "real life", appear as fruitful loci to be looked upon in the analysis. Not least since the "hypernatural" character of sliding in extreme sport apparently places itself at the opposite pole of the continuum artificial and real. Regarding artifice, the issue of technology must also be addressed. Wheaton (2004) highlights how decisive the use of new technology is in new sports, and Pegram's (2018) definition of extreme sport is that its success depends upon the efficacy and trustworthiness of the equipment (besides the acumen of the athlete). Certainly, part of the matter that enables Bond to perform his uncanny acrobatics is the technology at hand (that he lays at his feet). Film technology, and its development during the period when Bond films have been produced and distributed, itself also ought to have supported the bravery of our protagonist. All in all, this makes for yet another fascinating field of tension and ambivalences to investigate in connection to the extreme sport sliding of James Bond.

This could also challenge the notion that extreme sports necessarily are "new" and constituted in relation to mainstream sports. Traversing rough terrain, smooth surfaces or not, has been a strenuous task for millennia of human history. When such activities are taken up by the sport or entertainment industry, the novelty rather lies in reframing them in contemporary culture and society, bringing into these realms something primitive, elemental, and violent. Hence, part of the research problem in the present text—other than looking into the sliding actions of extreme sporting practices in Bond movies—lies in addressing the concept of the extreme, in relation to sport, as something more extravagant than just a reaction to traditional sport.

The article is structured as follows: first, we will position the area of study in relation to different understandings of "new" sports. The subsequent section presents a theoretical concept, agile enough to harbor extreme sport instances of *glissade* in both postwar philosophy and postwar cinema: "figure of thought". We also problematize the ambivalent quality of extreme sport sliding as a figure of thought in Sartre, Serres, and Deleuze. In the analytical part, we trace such sliding actions by James Bond in three different "elements": snow, air, and water. The article concludes with a discussion of how Bond's practicing of extreme sports corresponds (or not) to utopian values and how the "extreme" in extreme sport can be approached as a more fluid, processual trait.

2. Violence and Extremity of Sport

There is not much written on James Bond and extreme sports, with a recent article by David Pegram (2018) as a noteworthy exception. Focusing on the prowess and extreme performances of Bond's stunts and action scenes as decisive demonstrations of his heroic masculinity, Pegram traces the relationship between extreme sport and the Bond saga. One puzzling detail in Pegram's account is that Daniel Craig, the latest incarnation of our hero in her majesty's service for no less than five films, and despite his admirable physiognomy, does not seem to practice extreme sports. He is mentioned *en passant* in relation to water sport, but only as a desirable object, the swimming trunks of whom were manifolded to reach the stores posterior to the launching of *Casino Royale* (2006; for all citations of film titles, see Appendix A)—the reboot of the Bond saga. Perhaps Bond's sudden cessation to practice extreme sport is connected to the refashioning of his masculinity with which scholars associate the rebooted series (Cox 2014). It is in the objectification of Craig's manly gestalt and his constant connection to water that such symbolic interpretation claims to find connotations to femininity, sensitivity, and ambiguity. While delving into the question of gender identity in relation to Bond would certainly be worthwhile in relation to the hypermasculinity displayed by the hero's ample features and conquests among the ranks of the so called "Bond girls", what we aim for here, however, is not the issue of masculinity, but the element of violence in extreme sports. The ambiguity and ambivalence of Bond and his relation to the elements, highlighted by earlier studies, will, however, be retained in the present study.

Surely, it would be relevant to problematize violence in a discussion of masculinity as well, but the rawness and ruckus sought for in the present inquiry is rather related to the riveting encounters with brute nature and technological materials. To this end, Pegram's notion of what qualifies as extreme sport is relevant for study. He contends that in extreme sports the laws of nature are faced, which entails serious risks if either the equipment or the participant fails. The violence here, then, is rather stemming from nature itself than from the extreme sport athlete. The fact that extreme sport seems to be lacking in the late Bond is also something curious to tend to while sketching the "glissography" of Bond.

Sport in general has a violent tradition: its bloody past offers accounts of blood shed starting with the carnage of roman spectacles in Antiquity (Reid 2014), proceeding with the ruckus of medieval folk football and in the gutting of animals in sundry—as it were, blood sports (Connor 2011). From an anthropological perspective, Caillois (1958) characterizes sport by struggle and antagonism, *agôn*, arguing for the violent disposition inherent in it. From a sociological perspective, sport has been seen as an outlet for surplus energy and aggression—i.e., as procedural practices of civilization (Elias 1978). Aside from the obvious fact of the violence in and around sport, more fundamental connections between sport and violence or war have been extensively investigated (Jeu 1972; Bodin and Robène 2017; Brohm 2019) and can almost be seen as commonplace similes. Eichberg (2010) goes as far as to warrant that we close the bracket on modern sport, which, according to him, is violent in its massive production of losers.

New sports (of a character that remains to be determined) are perceived to be different from their predecessors by both practitioners and scholars. Such exceptional physical practices have been scrutinized by social scientific and humanities scholars for half a century now. Anthropology, cultural studies, and cultural sociology interchangeably call the new sports action, whiz, extreme, alternative, adventure, and lifestyle sports (Midol and Broyer 1995; Rinehart and Sydnor 2003; Wheaton 2004; Thorpe 2010). One of the most influential ways of framing the new sports is the cultural studies strand branding such new sports as lifestyle sports, which is held to foster individualism, commercialism, and cultural/identity politics in new ways, not least in the form of the different lifestyles they suggest (Wheaton 2004, 2014), and the concomitant preferences and tastes (Thorpe 2010). Such sports are conceived as grass roots expressions and non-aggressive activities promoting participation, fun, and living for the moment in outdoor liminal zones (Wheaton 2004). However, while communality is fostered within such practices, discriminations abound with regards to culture, identity, ethnicity, race, gender, class, etc. (Edwards et al. 2003; Wheaton 2004, 2014; Thorpe 2010).

The moniker "lifestyle" is used to embrace the values at stake culturally and for the practitioners of such sports. A buzzword during the 1990s and dormant during the beginning of the recent millennium, the term "extreme" has recently been retained in the theorization of alternative sport cultures from a body sociological perspective (Andreasson and Johansson 2018). This strand focuses on the extreme forms of training and competing in MMA, body-building, and triathlon. Thus, the elements of competition and bodily contact have colonized the purportedly pristine domains of alternative sporting culture. We will in this article pick up the gauntlet of the "extreme" and connect it to philosophical and ecological themes.

Phenomenological approaches (Brymer 2005; Breivik 2011; Immonen et al. 2018) to extreme sports focus on existential categories such as death, fear, and risk as productive categories to enhance life and increase meaning-making. There are in other words resemblances between the aforementioned lifestyle strand and this phenomenological approach. The greatest difference is perhaps that, while the former focus on the human aspect of such new sports, the latter focus on the locus, so to speak: the philosophical approximations here presented pay a lot of attention to the ecology, nature, and space of extreme sports. From an ecological perspective, Immonen et al. (2018) furnish "the extreme" of extreme sport as a metastable process through which new practices are developed, based on the uncertain tensions when human performance is executed in challenging natural surroundings. We will retain this stark focus on the milieu and on the extreme as something processual in the analysis of Bond and our discussion of continental philosophy that follows. What we will discard

is the narrow focus on the necessity of the presence of a practitioner in the research process, which, in Breivik's (2011) study, is represented by his own mastery of such sports as qualifications, and which in Immonen et al. (2018) necessitates a consensus between contemporary extreme sport practitioners and the scholars studying them.

Since our approach traces the figure of thought and the ideational history of sliding actions in Bond movies and continental philosophy, we cannot limit ourselves to our own time nor the phenomenological bodies within it. By following Connor's method—i.e., utilizing existent artistic data (namely, Bond movies)—and applying a set of continental philosophical concepts in the analysis of that material, we will be able to discuss sport both on the philosophical and social-historical level. In order not to dismiss the one in favor of the other, we will retain his “focus on the materiality of sport” and on the “elements on which it is made” when we approach the sliding in (and of) extreme sport and its appropriation in culture and philosophy. We will focus on the significance of the term extreme sport, with a view to problematize its essential relation to an outside: that which is exterior to traditional sportiveness (e.g., war, hunt, art), as well as that which is external in its practice (nature, matter, elements).

3. Figures of Thought

Nature and culture, body and mind, literature and life are all encompassed in Serres's transgressive notion of the figure. [...] Serres's figures, in other words, are not merely descriptive but performative, not merely mimetic but participatory. (Watkin 2020, pp. 19–20)

In the present article, we will posit sliding as a carnal, transgressive, information-inducing and -deducing action, connecting times, themes, mindsets, and visions of utopia and violence. To evoke the philosophical significance of sliding, we will refer to it as the figure of thought of glissade (cf. Connor 2011). Where we depart from the continental-philosophical tradition that we draw from is when we magnify the violence of extreme sport actions in order to access the full range of potentialities inherent in glissade in relation to postwar thinking and cold war zeitgeist. To this end, as our “conceptual persona”, we will propose a sportsman that displays in equal measures postwar prowess and cold war cunning—James Bond—as a means to theoretically challenge the somewhat saccharine figure of the glissade sportsman and address the ambivalence in thinkers such as Connor and his sources: Serres, Deleuze, and Sartre.

As a theoretical concept, a figure of thought is something that aids thinking by establishing continuities and providing concretion. Concretion is here to be understood very literally, such as when Serres implies that new sports are actions of peace and sustainability. This is a prime example of Serres's inimitable way of doing philosophy: to pinpoint a bodily move, a corporeal sensation, a gut feeling, a fleshy encounter with the environment, such as sliding in extreme sports, and to project this particular event on a global scale as a way of undoing the harm of abstract concepts such as animosity, violence, war, and ecocide. Watkin (2020) calls this move one of “global intuition”, which he defines as a sudden serendipitous spark emanating from fearlessly exposing oneself as philosopher, thinker, and human being to the wonders of the world. This global intuition is constituted by and continually built upon through the relations between aforementioned figures of thought, emergent and existent. As a contemporary to extreme sport, James Bond is a fruitful figure to synthesize with glissade because of his versatile repertoire of action performances. Christopher Watkin (2020) lists eight interdependent characteristics of the figures of thought active in Serres's oeuvre, which will help us to theoretically frame the sliding movements in instances of extreme sport in film. Figures of thoughts are: (1) *operators* receiving, emitting, storing, and processing information that could be applied in different contexts, producing ever new outputs; (2) *natural* phenomena, in that they all emanate from what Serres refers to as “The Great Story” (“*Le Grand Récit*”), a cosmic narrative displaying the rhythms and noises from natural vistas and history all the way back to the Big Bang; (3) *inventions* that are necessarily new tonalities in this Great Story—i.e., novel things to think with that draws up new directions for thoughts to take; (4) *bodily*—that is, not the sole property of the mind, which could be exemplified by athletic events such as the Fosbury flop, the V-jump in ski jumping, or the acrobatic martial art-inspired soccer

of Zlatan Ibrahimovic. From these four first characteristics, it could be deduced that philosophical investigation and thought can well be based in bodily states and performances, such as sportive sliding movements. This is what the disparate thoughts on sliding have done so far (Sartre [1943] 2004; Deleuze [1990] 2007) and what Connor (2011) has synthesized as *glissade*, later validated by Serres (2016) as *sports de glisse*. We will build upon that figure of thought and use its capacity to receive and perceive new information (1) by connecting it with James Bond's bodily (4) *bravado*, athletic input, and inventions (3) in natural surroundings (2). But, why Bond? The last four aspects of the figure of thought that Watkin lays out are connected to our choice to let James Bond be the one to actualize the *glissade* in order to challenge the utopian vision of extreme sports. We understand these four last aspects of a figure of thought as cognate with the Deleuzian term "conceptual persona", in that they are: (5) *narrative* (or dramatic), in accordance with a perspective through which the emergence of personae and figures of human storytelling is seen as equivalent to the genesis of new species in evolutionary terms; (6) *named*, generically or properly, enabling concrete transitions between and the mending of the general and the particular, the local and the global; and (7) *synthetic*—i.e., unique creations and existences that are able to connect the worlds they communicate, profess, promote, and traverse, and hence are concrete rather than abstract; and (8) "living" forms, from which abstract concepts and ideas are drawn in a reduction in their effervescence. Due to its basis in narrative fiction (5), there is no contradiction in viewing a fictional character such as Bond (6) as a living form (8). It is precisely because different James Bonds belong to different times, technological eras, and cultural *zeitgeists* that we can apply his persona as a synthesizing (7) figure to access all aspects and instances of *glissade*.

Glissade

For Sartre, sport has a romantic tinge, as an expression of an existential desire for existence and possession; the sporting activity itself is only transitive to the effect of sensing one's being and having. This desire is neither one to break records nor to sculpt a muscular body—which would constitute only a secondary desire—but of oneself appropriating the other. Such appropriation can be seen as a conquest or mastery of matter and space, whereby a part of the external world transforms into "an element to support action" (Sartre [1943] 2004, p. 627). He exemplifies this with a lengthy analysis of one of the older *glissade* sports, skiing, with a focus on the essence of sliding.

The sliding motion of the body and the material smoothness of the space that it traverses are intimately linked, according to Sartre. As the body slides upon a sheet of snow, for instance, it is carried along on ice crystals because the speed allows matter to support the movement. Sliding and smoothness have an intimate relation that is almost like a love affair. In Sartre's erotic metaphor, the hand slides over the smooth, pale skin of a woman, possessing her but not leaving a trace; extending the metaphor, smoothness is like the water that reshapes where the stone has made a hole in it (Sartre [1943] 2004, p. 625). In turn, *glissement* (sliding or gliding movements) is connected to water, because this essentially smooth element (which repairs when perforated) permits the realization of the ideal form of sliding, which would be a sliding which leaves no trace: the sliding on water (Sartre [1943] 2004). For Sartre, then, *glissade* sports are ultimately about a conquest of space without trace: it is an "admirable image of power," in that it shows a mastery of the depths of matter even though it never reaches beneath the surface. So, it turns out, the sport of sliding is a power game, where the exertion of power is invisible, traceless.

We might question, however, whether this phenomenology of sliding still holds for extreme forms of *glissade* sports in the postwar era. The eroticized conquest of sliding down a snowy mountain slope, taking possession of the secret depths of matter as if it were a woman's smooth skin caressed by a lover, is perhaps not the same as the experience of ski-jumping, bungee-jumping, base-jumping, hang-gliding, surfing, etc. However, we will not address the issue of such a phenomenology. The question can be posed instead regarding the ontology of the elements of sliding—the types of matter, the space, the movement, the body involved—as well as the political implications of the relationship between humans and the nonhuman world that these "dramatize" (Connor 2011, p. 210).

The sliding movements of extreme sports are dependent upon a material world of natural forces, sometimes violent and lethally dangerous, which much of human endeavor has sought to master or suppress. Sartre's idea of sliding is still representative of that mindset: the desire to conquer the seemingly indomitable vastness of material nature is a perfectly smooth operation of domination. With Serres, the skier having given way to the surfer, sliding instead constitutes a state of peace between human contestants; a discovery of the fluidity of the material world itself means that it would always slip away from human attempts at conquest. Contrary to both, Deleuze's conception of sliding is one where the human is taken up by the powerful material forces of nature, by that matter in movement which is nature itself, as opposed to earlier sporting activities where movement had intermittent human efforts as its origin. In sports such as surfing, windsurfing, or hang-gliding, the body is "put into orbit" by some external force, such as a great wave or a column of air. This is why he quips that "everywhere *surfing* has already replaced the older *sports*" ("Partout le surf a déjà remplacé les vieux sports"; Deleuze [1990] 2007, p. 244), or that the surfer is the conceptual persona for our present time (Deleuze and Guattari 1991): everywhere there is a new kind of movement, which is that of sliding upon an external power.

While contemporary philosophy seems inadequate in thinking the problem of movement in a corresponding way, Deleuze points to the actual similarity this has to how he views creativity—in sports, in cinema, and in philosophy. Creation is entering as an inventor into a series of mediators that bring about new styles. There are different ways of using concepts to think, of putting together a film, or of performing a particular sport, that when they emerge change the history of philosophy, cinema, and sport, respectively, by both building on and breaking with the syntax of a past style. In the present context, we can imagine a development of sports and Bond movies in tandem: new forms or styles of sport are being invented and practiced; new forms of being Bond are being invented, with new styles of performance, as the character is being rebooted and reinvented with each actor. These various Bonds are, in these performances, drawing upon these different sports, taking them up and restyling them, appropriating them into the logic of cinematic narrative. It is interesting to note that to a large extent the cinematic Bond seems obsessed with entering into the external world of natural forces and movements for his actions, by either directly engaging in extreme sports or stylistically extremizing sports. This is a significant way in which Bond as an action hero differs from the plethora of his heirs in the action genre: while certainly athletic and physically able, Bond has never (up until Craig) been portrayed with an emphasis on muscular strength and brute force. Indeed, that would take away some of his smoothness (Craig's first three outings illustrate just this). Bond's particular force, or his power, comes from his precarious alliance with the spectacular environments that he traverses: the mountains, the glaciers, the ocean, the air.

Then again, Bond is a fictional character from books, films, and computer games, which we theoretically furnish through the last four characteristics of the figure of thought above—i.e., that such figures are *narrative*, *named*, *synthesizing*, and *living*. In this article, the cinematic adaptation of Bond is put in focus. To this end, we will both tend to the representations of Bond's rampant displacement in pastoral settings, what could be referred to as the *dramatic* dimension, and to the technical conditions for making films during an era of rapid development of the medium, what we will call the *cinematographic* dimension.

4. Findings—Bond's *Glissade*

Traditional sports have very little place in the cinematic world of James Bond; save for dabbling with golf in *Goldfinger* (1964), swimming in *Thunderball* (1965), and skiing in *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* (1969), Bond seems to avoid traditional sports tout court. The aforementioned instances are drawn from Ian Fleming's source novels, where such sports play a minor part alongside card games as a means of social interaction: Fleming's Bond practices golf, swimming, and skiing as parts of a leisurely lifestyle. In comparison, Bond films (1962–) are replete with extravagant performances of a variety of sports; furthermore, they could be seen as contemporaneous and perhaps congenial with the

development of extreme sports. On this view, Bond movies can provide a means to zoom in on an era of extremization in sportive activities and bring them to focus in popular culture. An early inkling of this is that swimming is performed as scuba-diving in increasingly violent settings in *Thunderball*. However, what is more interesting is how sports are taken up by the figure of Bond, in a typically Bondian extremization—a “Bondification”—which pushes the limit of sport itself. In the following, this study restricts itself to a particular set of sporting activities that share the common feature of being glissade sports—i.e., those sports that involve a body sliding on or in an element of some kind, and a selection of Bond movies that dramatize Bond’s performing of them.

While Connery’s incarnation of Bond sits closest to Fleming’s sportsman, Lazenby constitutes a transitional figure into the properly cinematic Bond. *On Her Majesty’s Secret Service* (1969), George Lazenby’s only appearance in the role, introduces sport as a component of the narrative logic of Bond films. What is essential in this Bondification of sports is that the rules of the game are being broken and the sport is transformed into a set of actions that serve a dramatic purpose. In a way, this is true even for the round of golf in *Goldfinger*, which is a cheating game, but what *On Her Majesty’s Secret Service* instigates is an element of extremization. Both these films are staging instances of sportive activities from the respective source novels, but the latter film runs with the idea of skiing as an action sport and pushes it to violent extremes. Skiing turns into something else, a great sliding battle through the terrain—which is why we can say that it also introduces sport as dramatically tied to nature and the elements. Roger Moore continues in a similar albeit more comedic vein, opting for various forms of skiing (including ski-jumping and snowboarding) in *The Spy Who Loved Me* (1977), *For Your Eyes Only* (1981), and *A View to a Kill* (1985).

With Moore, skydiving was added to the Bond repertoire in the 1970s. It seems poignant that already in Sean Connery’s *Thunderball* there was an opportunity that was passed by: towards the final underwater battle, everyone parachutes into the water except for Bond; instead, he dives in from a boat. It is as if the sport is there, ready at hand, but it is markedly not one for this Bond. Nor does Lazenby skydive; he is a skier. It will take Moore to literally take the leap from the skiing model to skydiving, out of one element into another, in the beginning of *The Spy Who Loved Me* (1977); but the shift is signaled already in his first outing, *Live and Let Die* (1973), when Bond uses hang-gliding as a means to land on the villain’s craggy Caribbean island. Characteristically, in his smooth descent, Bond does not miss the opportunity to kick a henchman off a cliff before he touches down. In *Moonraker* (1979), the stakes are much higher as Bond is thrown out of a plane without a parachute and must do battle in freefall for a means of survival.

With Timothy Dalton, skydiving is put front and center, even being the means to introduce the rebooted character in *The Living Daylights* (1987). There are repeated and increasingly spectacular scenes of parachuting in this film, until things are turned on their head with a peaceful descent by groom and best man to a wedding at the start of *License to Kill* (1989). After these celestial nuptials, Dalton’s Bond turns to another form of glissade sport at the climax of an action sequence: waterskiing. This marks a shift which will prove significant for the future of Bond as sportsman, insofar as an existing extreme water sport is utilized in a Bondian manner. This is important because the subsequent incarnation, Pierce Brosnan, represents the one Bond who is fully contemporary with established or emerging extreme sports as a resource for action, and these films are therefore set in a different cultural context than previously. In addition, Dalton’s introduction of a new element, water, sets the stage for Brosnan’s most extravagant exploits. Brosnan makes repeated use of skydiving, including new and more extreme forms such as freefalling, bungee-jumping, and HALO-jumping, but he also performs two spectacular instances of surfing that all but bookend his final entry, *Die Another Day* (2002). The last of these scenes constitute a particularly pivotal moment in the fate of Bond’s glissade, as sports are pushed to hyperbolic extremes.

When Daniel Craig takes over the role, in the most conscious rebooting of the franchise thus far, returning to his origins in Fleming’s *Casino Royale* (2006), yet an attempt is made to continue the tactic from the Brosnan era to borrow and assimilate a new, existing extreme sport into the narrative.

The parkour scene in the beginning of the film paradoxically provides continuity in this Bondian use of extreme sports, while signaling a break with the Brosnan persona. Craig's roughness, as opposed to Brosnan's smoothness, is emphasized by his ferocious pursuit of a terrorist through a construction site which he virtually wrecks in his attempt to catch up. What is in effect a failure to perform the sport, resorting to brute force and dirty tricks, Craig's debut marks the end of Bond the sportsman—thus far.

The folding out of the sliding of different Bonds offers a dramatic curve with some noteworthy pit stops. Firstly, George Lazenby's quip, "I am not a sporting man, Fräulein" from *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* seems to hold true regarding traditional sports, but not regarding the sundry stunning sliding displacements emerging and taking place in the films. While Connery's and Craig's appearances do not lack in virility and ample physiognomies, the explicit use of extreme sport equipment and the concomitant sliding moves are scarce in their parts of the Bond saga. As the dramatic curve of these particular events unfolds, it is Lazenby, Moore, Dalton, and Brosnan who are found in the rising action towards the climax, to coronate the crest of the perfect wave that is the figuration of Bond in sliding action. It is thus to them we now turn in historical order in the following two sections. Regarding the transition from soft to hard, as professed by Serres (2016), we can in this section's brief overview note a faint track leading from snow to water (with air between a cold and wet place), which, then, might seem to suggest a liquefying displacement of Bond's sliding. So, while this crude analysis of solidity could be furnished as a rough softening, we still have places to go and matters to attend to, concerning the dramatic, cinematographic, technological, and artificial dimensions of Bond's *glissades* in the modern and postmodern era.

4.1. All that Is Solid Melts into Air

On Her Majesty's Secret Service (1969) is largely set in the Swiss alps, affording many opportunities for sports of snow and ice, but they are quite clearly not of a leisurely nature. In a scene taken from the source novel, Bond makes his escape from the villain's lair by setting down the mountain as a fully equipped downhill racer, though followed by armed henchmen. The cinematic rendering of the scene, with fast-paced cutting and a shaky camera attached to the skiers, involves the viewer in a tumultuous development of the action which underscores the sense of extremization of the race. Jumping over rocks, crashing through trees, Bond loses a ski but goes on balancing on his remaining one, until he turns it into a weapon to strike down and strangle the villain's henchmen, throwing two of them off a cliff, and finally reconquers a ski that allows him to slide off to safety. While the line between sport and battle is difficult to discern in the rush of the chase, what carries across that line is the predominance of the slide. The motion even slides across sports: towards the end of the film, the bobrun becomes a battleground at break-neck pace, as if the sliding motion finds a new sportive form to bring the conflict to an explosive climax.

In an intermediate ski-chase, Bond and his love interest, Tracy, share a brief moment of romantic harmony as they sweep down the snow, as if they were continuing their erotic liaison on the soft expanse of snow. But the peace is quickly broken: suddenly they rush down vast slopes and jump over the roofs of cottages in order to escape their pursuers; the violence escalates in sharp contrast to any romance, at one point showing a villain falling into a snow-machine that eats him up and spits him out in a mushy spurt of snow, blood, and flesh. "He had lots of guts", quips Bond to Tracy. Concluding the scene, the couple is desperately trying to escape an avalanche that bears down upon them until it engulfs them; it incapacitates Bond so that he loses Tracy. This scene is emblematic of a form of extremization which passes from an illusion of peace and smoothness to a destructive, disastrous end, since there seems to be no other outcome to the extremity to which the sliding motion is pushed. The avalanche is perhaps symbolic of this, as if it represents the sliding motion of nature itself: the great mass of snow resting at the top of the mountain being set in motion by a mere sound, accumulating force as it thunders down, until it crashes powerfully to a catastrophic termination. Just as the romantic interlude is interrupted by the mounting suspense, the romance with nature is thwarted by the natural violence of the material world. The scene thus encapsulates a problematic relationship between the

ideal of softness and smoothness on the one hand (the space one might slide through), and a reality of brutal, powerful materiality (the external power of a world in motion). Variations of this problematic relationship is brought about throughout the Bond movies in a series of figurations of *glissade*.

The famous pre-credits scene in *The Spy Who Loved Me* (1977), Moore's third entry, offers another shift from romance to catastrophe. Called on a mission, Bond leaves his lover in a chalet and sets down the snowy slope until his cool descent is interrupted by a group of foreign agents coming down from the side. The turn to action seems to change the landscape: what was a vast expanse of pristine snow, perfect for the slide, shifts into an obstacle course of jagged peaks and crevices. Again, a shaky camera underscores the kinetic danger as Bond plunges down through tunnels of ice and over ridges of snow, pursued by armed villains. The scene transposes again when Bond suddenly swings round, skiing backwards, and uses his prepped ski stick as a flare-gun to shoot down one of the villains. Then, he back-flips over a mound of snow and faces front again, only to tackle villain number two with his body. As he pushes the villain aside, Bond seems to make his escape down a steepening slope—only for the panning camera to reveal a huge precipice, the snow giving way to a brutally bare rockface. The music abruptly stops as the void opens and Bond's body, a tiny speck in the vast abyss, traces a silent curve as gravity breaks his flight. There is a moment when Bond seems to fall apart—his mastery of the situation thwarted, his force spent in the desperate inertia of decline, his body losing its posture, his skis falling away, he plummets like a rag doll towards the ground. But, at this very moment of defeat, the scene shifts again: a parachute miraculously opens, and it flies the colors of the Union Jack! The fall and the silence are broken, the Bond theme swells in triumph, and reassuringly the movie's theme song begins: "Nobody does it better".

Bond's virtuosity at skiing is this time not transfigured into other forms of snow and ice sports, but rather thrown up in the air to see what comes of such prowess when the ground gives way. For a brief while, Bond seems to lose his footing in the most fatal sense, but it is in fact only to demonstrate that the cool slide on snow and ice, even as it breaks through ridges and crevices, actually continues when the skiing gives way to the skydive. There is a mastery not only with the support of a material ground but a discovery of the force inherent in seemingly empty space; in a sense, colonizing the abyss with the Union Jack parachute, emptiness itself becomes imperial territory, ensuring a sublime survival in the face of defeat. Bond is furtively protected by the power of the Empire, the Union Jack literally having his back.

The next film, *Moonraker* (1979), opens with a variation on the same theme. Moore's Bond is pushed from a plane, this time decidedly without a parachute; but falling in front of him is a villain equipped with one. Bond regains control of his body as he falls and postures himself into a projectile of sorts, aiming for the villain. He shoots diagonally through the air until he catches up to and latches on to him. After a brief struggle, he extricates the villain's parachute pack, kicks him to his fateful end, and fastens the pack to his own body. The differences between these scenes are illuminating. *The Spy Who Loved Me* performs a transmutation of one sport into another; the sliding on skis seems catastrophically interrupted by the fall into the abyss, but instead it is merely a triumphant continuation of the slide by other means: going off the edge only proves that the slide can go on. *Moonraker* begins directly in violence and makes a point of the lack of the prerequisite equipment (a parachute). In this film, it is the sliding motion itself that first must be conquered. That the vertical free-fall is varied in twists and turns of struggles, as well as in diagonal, projectile vectors, is emblematic of the quest for achieving a sliding motion through air in what seems like a chaotic drop. When the void becomes air for Bond's body, he can control his movements, pursue his enemy, and claim a parachute for his own safe landing.

In *For Your Eyes Only* (1981), Bond is back in a ski resort. The film spends some time setting up the whole environment of leisurely and competitive sport, including the gleeful ice-skating sexpot Bibi and the baleful biathlete Erich Kriegler. During such scenes, we get rare glimpses of Bond actually involved in sporting activities as such, simply demonstrating an effortless ability to partake in the exercise, but they are shadowed by the fact that he is on a mission, that he is protecting Bibi, and that he needs

to get to an appointment in the snowy woodland. Any sense of ease is stymied when Kriegler shows up in the woods; Kriegler toys with Bond, shooting his gun out of his hand and splitting his ski-stick in half, so Bond must carry on with only one stick. Adding injury to insult, two armed fellow goons on motorbikes join in the pursuit. It is then that Bond steps up: he picks up speed going downhill, jumping and spinning just as he encounters the motorcyclists, so that he uses his skis as a weapon to strike the gun from the hand of one of them. As the level of danger increases, Bond renegotiates the actionable potential of the situation: the very fact that he has lost one stick, which would disable him in performing the sport of downhill racing, is used as a way to achieve speed rather than control, and the speed allows for the jump and spin, which turns his own body into a weapon.

The pre-credits scene in *A View to a Kill* (1985), Moore's final stint, finds Bond already at work in a glacial landscape—spying, dressed in white camouflage, in the midst of a Soviet military force. The intensity is quickly increased as the army men swarm in pursuit of Bond on skis, and the slopes are steepening, sometimes almost complete vertical drops. Bond's movements are therefore much more abrupt than in the earlier film, a sort of daredevil slipping and falling on ice and rock. At one moment, as with Lazenby, one of his skis is shot to pieces, so he has to balance on his remaining one. Then, he latches on to an enemy snowmobile and kicks off the ski. This seems like a transformation of s(p)orts: Bond eschews skiing for a motorsport. But seconds later, a helicopter machine gun forces him to jump off the vehicle just before it explodes; he hurls himself down and debris falls around him—among which is one of the skis from the snowmobile. Improvising, Bond attaches it to his feet. Now, this is the real transformation (the snowmobile was a red herring): in exuberant style, Bond flies up from his crevice to knock down two Soviet soldiers with his impromptu snowboard, and then swooshes down the mountainside, skidding on ice, flying off a ledge, sliding on water, in what seems almost a superhuman mastery of space, while the enemy flail and flounder in his trail. This would appear like a superheroic hyperbole if it were not for the sudden change in soundtrack: for the snowboard sequence, the suspenseful music which accompanied the action scene is suddenly supplanted by a cover of The Beach Boys' song "California Girls". In a sonic, ironic gesture, the perfection of sliding is commented on as a send-up of American adventure sports for their all too facile, showy hedonism.

Another kind of shift in the sliding, from gravity to hilarity, is seen with the ensuing Bond. Timothy Dalton is introduced in *The Living Daylights* (1987) as an anonymous figure in a group of three 00-agents on an exercise on the Rock of Gibraltar: they all parachute from an airplane onto the craggy landscape, but two agents are quickly neutralized; only then is Bond himself revealed, in pursuit of a Russian assassin. Bond jumps onto the jeep that the villain uses for his getaway, snaking down the mountain road at high speed; they go off a cliff, the jeep explodes and crashes down into the sea, killing the villain. But Bond releases another parachute (burning from the explosion) and aims for a yacht where he is welcomed by a bored socialite. By comparison, the initial jump seems trivial: now Bond jumps from a falling vehicle on fire, with makeshift access to a parachute which is burning, disintegrating as he falls towards the sea . . . And yet he lands gracefully on a yacht with a woman offering champagne and sex. These three moments encapsulate the transformative logic of Bond: parachuting for military practice is catapulted into a sequence of mortal combat, which in turn leads to a further extremization of the skydive as solution to that combat. The fourth moment is pure Bond—a triumph of style. Moreover, the whole sequence is somehow recapitulated towards the finale of the film, when Bond and his paramour, trapped in an airplane that has run out of fuel, use a military jeep to parachute backwards out from the hull as the plane crashes into a mountainside. Instantly, Bond recomposes and turns to drive his date to dinner. Such a romantic association is further enhanced in the beginning of *License to Kill* (1989), when the pursuit of the villain by airplane triumphantly turns to a celebration of camaraderie and matrimony: mission complete, Bond and his CIA friend Felix Leiter, clad in light-grey tailcoats, descend from the heavens by angelically white parachutes, down to a church just in time for the latter's wedding. This beginning, however, is in itself an ironic false herring: the jovial soaring as on clouds is swiftly negated by one of the most grimly violent storylines

in all of the Bond series. Bond is set on a course of revenge which will require a new element to match the force of his wrath. The airiness gives way to the buoyancy of water.

4.2. Extreme Sports at Work

In a sense, water is the original as well as final element for Bondian sports. Connery easily took to water, his scuba-diving in *Thunderball* being Bond's first brush with adventure sports (and his jet-pack is perhaps a form of extremization); Brosnan's encounters with water will mark a symbolic conclusion to a particular logic of Bondian extreme sporting. As a bridge to this, Dalton reintroduces water sports, and in the extreme, in *License to Kill*: not only does Bond scuba-dive again to sneak onto the villain's ship; to get away, he harpoons a henchman, jumps into the sea without diving gear, and is chased underwater by other henchmen armed with harpoons. When Bond seems overpowered in close combat, he fires a harpoon in order to latch onto an airplane which sits at the surface. As the plane takes off, Bond tears away from the henchmen, swooshes through the water and explodes through the surface just as the Bond theme kicks in. Attached to the hull of the plane by his harpoon, Bond manages to get to his feet and uses the weapon to waterski barefoot at high speed behind the plane, peppered by machine-gun fire. He catches up to the plane and clings on to one of its pontoons just as it begins ascending; a struggle follows as he succeeds in taking control of the plane. In this sequence, we see first the scuba-diving going through a transformation which increases the element of danger, then a change from the diving and swimming sports, marked by breaking the surface, to extremized waterskiing, until the movement ultimately takes off into the air. That what literally connects these stages of movement—sliding through, on, and over the water—is a harpoon, only underlines the centrality of violence.

Much like Dalton, Pierce Brosnan is introduced in *GoldenEye* (1995) performing a kind of skydive—bungee-jumping from a tall dam. This scene is interesting because it represents a new approach to use sports that are already part of an expanding repertoire of extreme sports and to appropriate them in a typically Bondian style. Bungee-jumping, with origins in the fertility ritual naghol on Pentecost Island in the South Pacific, was popularized for its thrill factor in New Zealand and France in the 1980s. However, the way bungee-jumping is utilized in the scene shows that it is ripped from both of its origins (as ritual and thrill) and reinterpreted as a maximally fast, smooth, steep descent towards a goal. This demonstrates the Bondian aim of realizing the potential for sliding in virtually any activity. It is significant that Bond does not complete the natural oscillation of a conventional bungee-jump, since he interrupts the recoil by attaching himself to the ground and pulling himself downwards. This also shows how Bond, more generally, utilizes sports for his own aims, and how this utilization serves the purpose of interacting with a specific environment.

We can see this all through the Bond movies once the logic is in place: every sport is associated with a milieu and is conceived of as a means of moving through it, escaping a pursuer or pursuing a goal. There is no experience of the sport itself in its exercise, and so no thrill or pleasure in it. The sport is more like a tool or a weapon for Bond to use when the circumstances demand it. Each sport that is brandished by Bond is therefore assimilable to the gadgets supplied by Q: they are gimmicks planted for specific plot-points where they become of use, and they are used up in the process. It could be stated that a Bondification of sports implies an extraction of their utility factor and an exhaustion of their ludic quality: they cease being sports in the common sense and become instances of perfecting sliding motions for a purpose, usually as a matter of life and death. That the power of these sliding movements comes from the outside explains why Bond himself is never exhausted by the exercise of any sport; it is rather the sport which is exhausted of its sportiveness as it is pushed to its extreme.

Skydiving would become the form of sport typical for the Brosnan era. Just minutes later in *GoldenEye*, Bond makes his escape from the Russian facility by shooting his way out of a hangar, pursued by a host of enemy soldiers, and chasing an unmanned airplane as it drives off towards a precipice. Bond runs a motorbike after the plane and off of the cliff, let go of the bike and plunges, without a parachute, in pursuit of the aircraft. By adjusting his body, he is able to steer towards the

plane and climb into it, take control of it and save himself just as it is about to crash into the stony ground. In spite of all the danger in the scene, there is a sense of determination which seems liberated once Bond's body is suspended in midair: now, in the vastness of a seeming void, there is a solitary man whose body connects to a combination of gravity and air-pressure to find its course towards its goal. Symbolically, at the end of the cold war, there is no longer a parachute to save him, no utopian imperial structure to support him; so, Bond turns elemental.

This reduction in the technological underpinning of the performance, paired with an affirmation of the force of the elements, might seem strange considering the overt predominance of high technology in the Brosnan era, but it is in fact part of a particular development of the *glissade* logic. Brosnan's Bond is markedly split between a set of technologies, which allows for a metaphorical sliding through perilous situations and, on the other hand, a primitive quest for the most potentially dangerous sliding in the absence of technology. From the outset in *GoldenEye*, this split is seen in the bungee-jumping performance, in how a precisely primitive ritual is turned into high-tech espionage. In the subsequent film, *Tomorrow Never Dies* (1997), Bond infiltrates enemy territory by performing a HALO-jump (high altitude, low opening). Once he jumps, Bond's body falls first like a projectile in a diving stance, then is pushed almost into a standing position by the air-pressure before he regains control; the wind is whistling, whooshing, even roaring as he plummets. Close to the surface of the ocean, he very briefly opens his chute to break the fall before he releases it and crashes into the water. HALO is a form of skydiving where the parachute all but disappears—it is the closest thing to a pure drop. Escalating the bungee-jump in *GoldenEye*, the HALO-jump is another way of finding a maximal, vertical speed, allowing the human body to be shot through space by the force of gravity.

Just as Dalton turned to the water in his last Bond film, so would Brosnan in his: *Die Another Day* (2002). The film opens with three anonymous men in black surfing the waves off a North Korean beach, one appearing after the other out of the enormous swell, grouping together beneath the crest; one of them will soon be revealed as Bond, once they land and their intent to infiltrate a military base becomes evident. It all seems eerily reminiscent of the start of *The Living Daylights*, but now surfing is used instead of parachuting. It is unusual seeing Bond doing a team sport, and so it is interesting to note how the jumping and the surfing, respectively, are used to gather him into a group context where, significantly, his identity is hidden. It is only when formation breaks that Bond himself takes form. But there is still another aspect of the scene which is important: the evident primacy of the elements. At first a giant wave rolls towards the shore, seen almost from the point of view of the ocean itself; then a cut, and one man rides the wave, balancing masterfully, until another appears behind him out of the breaking wave. For a moment, they slide alongside each other until a third mystery man appears out of yet another wave and they group together. The scene ends with the men disappearing again as the film cuts away to waves crashing onto the rocky shore. The dark blue hues of the nightly ocean, the contrast between the black rocks and the white spray, the ominous apparition and movement of the black-clad mystery men, the suspenseful music—everything is very different from the snowy surfing safari in *A View to a Kill*, once we really get to witness surfing as an extreme sport and not referenced as a juvenile pastime.

4.3. *CGI Glissade Surfing and the Parachute Pastiche*

Then comes the end in Iceland. Towards the climax of *Die Another Day*, Bond is rushing across the ice in a high-speed vehicle chased by a sort of satellite-cannon which concentrates the sun's power into an enormous beam of fire that cracks the ice behind him—as he breaks the villain's speed record! The vehicle is hurtling towards a completely vertical drop off the glacier; Bond manages to stop the vehicle with a hook in the ice but he falls over the edge and crashes into the icy wall, dangling over the ocean far below him. He tears off a piece of metal from the craft and breaks out a piece of cloth. While the glacier cracks and the whole ice wall breaks away, crashing down into the water and forming a tsunami wave, Bond attaches the metal lid to his feet even while he is brought down with the tumbling mass of ice. Then, suddenly rising from behind the tsunami wave, we see Bond emerging on

his makeshift metal surfboard carried by a paragliding canvas, riding the top of the wave, jumping to evade ice-blocks, until he reaches the other shore of the glacier and manages to rush up its smooth surface, soaring onto the flat ice and landing safely.

The scene is over the top in all senses. Everything that has been planted throughout the Bond movies somehow is gathered together in a grand synthesis. The sports are jumbled not only in sequence but into a hybrid, and in them all the elements are amassed—the ice and snow, the water and the air. Compared to the introductory scene, where surfing was performed in grave earnest, this scene must rely on gimmicky artificiality. Unlike the bungee-jumping scene that introduced Brosnan in *GoldenEye*, this stunt is not real nor performed in a real environment, being mostly a computer-generated simulation. It is as if mankind needs to create a fantasy landscape to realize Sartre's utopian desire of sliding one's way to mastery of the material world, thereby admitting its impossibility in reality. The attempt at perfecting an ultimate glissade finally becomes mere "CGIssade", pixelated into smithereens.

After Brosnan comes Daniel Craig, who represents the coupling of physical force and mechanical power, either in combat or in the use of motorsports (motocross in *Quantum of Solace*, *Skyfall*, and *No Time to Die*, various car chases etc.). The parkour scene in Craig's debut, *Casino Royale* (2006), is the only example of Craig's Bond trying to do what previous Bonds did, when they took on a sport and absorbed it into a Bondian style. It is also, perhaps tellingly, an existing extreme sport but of a very different kind than those attempted by Bond before: it is not symbolic of a battle with, or drawing upon, the forces of the natural elements, but rather a way of sliding through the artificial, static, built environments of urban landscapes. The parkour scene represents a variation on the previous technique of Bondifying sports by experimenting with their potential extremes, but it also represents a road not taken, a kind of dead end. The true reasons for, and the significance of, how Craig's Bond ends his career in extreme sports in this way is something to be investigated at another time.

After this end, there is, however, room for an epilogue in two parts. In connection to the 50th anniversary of the film series and the premiere of *Skyfall* (2012), Craig could be seen in a short film (directed by Danny Boyle) using a parachute. Bond picks up Her Majesty the Queen at Buckingham Palace with a helicopter and escorts her to the opening ceremony of the London Olympics in 2012. Having reached the coordinates of the destination, they descend towards the arena, each sporting a Union Jack parachute, in an ostentatious paraphrase of the pre-credits scene in *The Spy Who Loved Me*. But, just as the other Bonds, despite their Britishness and maleness, usually shun sports, Craig never pays his visit to the arena: somewhere in the descent, Craig disappears and the Queen alone enters the stadium to receive the audience's cheerful welcoming. This tells us something about what happens with Bond's *glissade* as a cultural legacy: the power of the image of his mastery of space and matter, even in the face of hopelessness, has become a cliché to reiterate whenever patriotism must be rallied. In this case, the cinematic image is transplanted into the specifically sportive setting of the Olympic games, but as sheer celebration of a nationalist spirit whose key figure is actually the Queen. Only performing the function as escort or catalyst, Bond vanishes in the fall. What this vignette signifies is that the sliding motion as an ideal can still be recaptured and that it can be maintained in any event, but it is significant that the dream is alive only outside of the movies themselves.

The final moment of sliding in the film series, thus far, occurs in *Spectre* (2015). At one time, Bond saves himself from crashing his car in a chase-sequence by catapulting himself out of his driving seat and landing with a parachute on a night-time street in Rome. Quite opposed to all the dramatic spectacle in previous films, and in stark contrast to the Olympic games vignette, the very act of parachuting or diving is withheld; we do not see Bond fly, soar, or fall, we only see him landing gently, his chute shed quietly behind him as he corrects his attire and strolls off down the street, helped by the magic trick of computer animation making the parachute disappear. Instead of Bond vanishing in the abstraction of the ideality of sliding (the mastery of space and matter, the mastery of any situation), the sliding motion here vanishes into the figure of Bond. The act of sliding has been absorbed by the

slickness of Bondian style. It is barely an act anymore, and bears no resemblance to sport, but is rather an effortless movement in a continuum of graceful, genteel gestures.

With Craig, we see a Bond who has practically left sportiveness behind, save only for its style. Some reason for this could be the development that Moore, Dalton, and Brosnan took to the extremes of various sports; it seems as if Brosnan's Bond would ultimately go too far in these extremes for other Bonds to follow. The *CGIssade* bravado somehow shattered the synthesis of the *glissade* extreme sport and Bondian drama that had been developed since Lazenby, and from this point two lines diverge: the smooth, soft ideality of the image (the style, the icon, the cliché), and the rough, hard reality of the drama (the action, the force). What we witness is perhaps a dissolution which reveals the ambivalent nature of extreme sports: on the one hand, being dependent upon the power and potential violence of nature (its extremity); on the other hand, being a celebration of the performer's skill and stylish mastery (its sportiveness). It might be that extreme sports are always at the risk of a similar dissolution.

5. Discussion

In this article, we have approached the "extreme" in extreme sport from a vantage point at the intersection of philosophy and film analysis. Research on extreme sport is rich in its variations, and we have pinpointed some general and some detailed aspects of this corpus. On a general level, we have positioned ourselves as less focused on the lifestyle-oriented aspects of extreme sports cultures (Wheaton 2004, 2014; Thorpe 2010; Andreasson and Johansson 2018). Our focus has instead been on the surroundings, which is an aspect that has been tended to in phenomenological approaches to extreme sports (Brymer 2005; Breivik 2011; Immonen et al. 2018). Notwithstanding, we have also parted from the phenomenological strand, in that we have not focused on the existential aspects of the encounter between the extreme sport practitioner and nature. Following etymology, the "extreme" relates to the outside, which suitably represents the approach we have had towards the sports in question. Pegram's (2018) study of Bond's stunts departs from the idea that, in extreme sport, you face the laws of nature when your performance is poor or when your equipment falters. On the contrary, we found in our analysis that, in the case of James Bond, those aspects were permuted. Facing the laws of nature could be avoided if you instead slide on them, and Bond does so by transforming technology, human antagonists, and nature to his environment, which he traverses violently. Serres's notion of *sports de glisse* as soft is retained to some extent in Bond's sliding, but in such cases only the quaint parts of it that reinforces an unsullied nature. His attitudes towards nature seem to be: master it through the violent abuse of different technical and technological materials, and through the gruesome defeats of the illustrious cabinet of Bond villains and their henchmen.

Additionally, in relation to Connor's (2011) question, it can be concluded that Bond's extreme sport saga starts and ends with water. Connery's (a non-slider among Bonds) scuba-diving in *Thunderball* included, water is both the original and final element for Bondian sports; after Lazenby's and Moore's hiatus, Dalton, in *License to Kill*, reintroduces water sports; Brosnan's encounters with water finally marked a symbolic and cultural fall from grace. And, from water, Bond was born again. The reboot/rebirth of Bond, with Craig as the midwife, idolized the trunk hunk's iconic ascent from the Bahamian surf in *Casino Royale*, which renders symbolic associations to Sandro Botticelli's *Nascita di Venere* ("The Birth of Venus"), when said goddess appears from the waves without a thread on her body surfing on a shell (Cox 2014).

In order to find a middle ground (between human experience/meaning-making and the raw energy of the elements), where we would not fall into the anthropocentrism of either cultural studies or phenomenology, but without losing the human aspect completely, we chose to focus on movement. More precisely, we turned to a specific displacement of certain extreme sports: *sliding*. Thus, we could discuss extreme sports more broadly—temporally, spatially, and practically. Starting from Connor's (2011) prophecies about the sustainable benefits (both culturally and environmentally) of extreme sports, and in particular the sliding qualities of sports in which the practitioner connects to

an existent and powerful elemental force, we set out to discuss and reinforce the “figure of thought” (Watkin 2020) of the *glissade*.

Figures of thought are at the same time concrete and specific entities (Watkin 2020) that connect spheres of all of existence such as nature and culture, body and mind, literature, and life. In Connor’s treatment of the *glissade*, one encounters a rich continental philosophical tradition with explicit references to philosophers of 20th century France, such as Deleuze and Sartre. Serres had not yet written about such sports. However, in his *A Philosophy of Sport* (2011), Connor seems to foreshadow Serres’s (2016) identification of extreme sports as instances of environmental intimacy. The present article has identified and closed that gap, while at the same time avoiding the all too saccharine aspects of particular sports as harbingers of peace and sustainability. So, if the figure of thought of the *glissade* seemed too pastorally quaint and picturesquely naïve, we saw the need to let a more dynamic and ambiguous character describe, perform, and mimic the sliding.

James Bond and his ubiquitous prowess was identified as a suitable character to access all times and places of extreme sport, since he both is a contemporary figure to such performances in the postwar/cold war era, effortlessly masters (and surpasses) such practices. The James Bond saga in its full-blown variation, with ever new impersonators, qualified the choice of data as an *operator* enabling access to and the continual passing on of information that characterize figures of thought. Despite applying ecological perspectives, earlier research on extreme sport offered a mainly anthropocentric view of such practices, which is an important challenge to take on for the figure of thought. In spite of Bond being human, the uncanny thrusts and thwarts of his extreme sport actions through sundry natural elements and vistas actualized the meta-stable state that Immonen et al. (2018) warrant as a prerequisite for the extremization of more mundane athleticism. Extreme sport phenomenology (Breivik 2011; Immonen et al. 2018) highlights the practitioner as mandatory for its success, and while leaving the necessity to access real life extreme sport athletes we, with Bond as our performer, retained the *bodily* aspect of this *dictum*, since it also is a prerequisite of Serresian figures of thought. The analyses of Bond as a performer of extreme sport all point towards the idea of basing philosophical investigation and thought in bodily states and performances, such as sliding movements in extreme sports. The *narrative, naming, synthesizing, and “living”* aspects of the figure of thought of the *glissade* were treated as points of entrance for James Bond as our protagonist, and we find this method as productive for opening up the study of movement from a philosophical perspective.

Sartre [1943] (Sartre [1943] 2004) conceived of sliding athleticism as caressing the smooth skin of a woman—mastery without a trace. Lazenby, Moore, and Dalton scramble this model: women could be the starting point, the end, the sacrifice of the slide (with Bond leaving maximum trace in his usually highly destructive sliding actions). Extremization and Bondification happen when Bond slides between the elements, consuming tech, tools, goons, and sometimes girls as so many instances of collateral damage. Do these sacrifices vanguard the integrity of utopia? And what is this utopia? Masculinity, romance, nature, empire, conquest, triumph—or perhaps the *glissade* itself? The battlefield is indeed “metastable” (Immonen et al. 2018), also with regards to what the stakes are. Bond is not always raving and shattering his *Umwelt*, and all the technology undergirding and conditioning his sliding is not as recklessly handled.

6. Conclusions

While we have been critical of the “utopian” visions sometimes reflected in both popular and scientific views on alternative sports, especially as we are putting an emphasis on the sense of the “extreme” in extreme sports, we should conclude by addressing the problematics of this issue as we are drawing some lessons from Bond regarding the figure of thought of *glissade*. The static while transcendent ideal of peace and harmony with nature, which is sometimes brandished as an outcome of sportive experience and lifestyle, could be replaced by a more open-ended, experimental, and processual idea of extreme sports: their unpredictable mutability perhaps reveals a utopian element of movement—the perfect slide? *Glissade* could be seen as an ideal which Bond is striving to realize,

and “Bondification” is the term that can be used for the style of extremization which characterizes his method of using sporting activities for that purpose.

If “the perfect slide” is the utopian value of movement, then water is its essential element, the philosophers teach us. For Sartre, the essence of sliding is affiliated with the smoothness of water; for Serres, the value of softness that glissade sports represent open up to the fluid nature of the outside world; for Deleuze, the emblem of a contemporary shift in our idea of movement to exteriority is the prevalence of the surfer. The history of Bond could be written as the quixotic attempt to realize this elemental ideal: Connery introduces water as potential but does not achieve *glissade* (perhaps because he has no means of extremization). Lazenby introduces *glissade* by a transition to snow and ice, which Moore can follow and further extremize until he finally connects with the extreme sport of snowboarding (thereby mimicking but not really achieving a surfing on water). Parallel to this, Moore also experiments with finding ways to slide on air by introducing forms of skydiving and hang-gliding, which both Dalton and Brosnan can take up with escalating flair and drama. Finally, Brosnan’s Bond is ready for surfing—first in a serious demonstration of his mastery of the sport, then in an extravagant mash-up of various forms of sliding sports in multiple elements, in which, in the end, he overshoots the goal. The pursuit of the ideal *glissade* culminates in a doubly synthetic excess of hybridity and artificiality. It looks like the usual story of the failure of all pursuits of utopia.

However, the failure of this teleology is perhaps the result of an erroneous use of our figure of thought. What is really the value of *glissade*? While water runs through all three philosophies, the value attached to it varies significantly: for Sartre, it is smoothness (something that passively absorbs exertion of power); for Serres, it is softness (something that pacifies conflict and ends the exertion of power); but for Deleuze, it is exterior force (something nonhuman more powerful than man which carries you along).

In fact, each element is phenomenologically ambiguous, and the Bond films play on this ambiguity, just as they reveal the ethical ambivalence attached to sliding sports. Water can be seen, with Sartre, as a smooth surface over which the body slides without leaving a trace. But it can also be a rolling wave, a crashing body of water, a tsunami, or a maelstrom, a thing of high energy that forces your body along on its ride; the challenge, the sport, is to go along, to keep up, to make that your ride. Similarly, snow can be a white sheet on which you inscribe your path, conquering a space from one point to another—a geometric grammar of mastering the material world. But it can also be an avalanche chasing you down the slope, a glacier breaking apart, a massive wall of ice crystals tumbling down on or towering over you; it is then a game of mass, of gravity, of falling or flying along with its materiality. The air can be perceived as an invisible substance on which you glide, soaring along in the atmosphere as if carried by a gentle hand. But air can also be a battle of the forces of gravity and atmospheric pressure: it can be an abyss of nothingness in which you are helplessly confronting your loneliness and mortality, falling through a void without matter to support you; at the same time, it can be a mass of pressure, turbulence, and wind, a violent hand that rudely tears at you and throws you around.

Due to this ambiguity, the model of conquest and possession in Sartre and the ideal of gentleness and peace in Serres are both insufficient for understanding glissade sports when they enter the logic of extremity and the ontology of movement. The sportsman is a seducer in Sartre and a Samaritan in Serres; Bond represents another kind of figure, far less the smooth operator than we might imagine. Even while pursuing the perfect slide, his actions must push at the extremes of sport as well as the extremity of the situation that he is in, always being swept away in a *glissade* that leaves sportiveness behind as it connects to the forces of the outside. This is the complex essence of violence inherent in extreme sports: the better you are, the more you “kill it”.

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Appendix A

Casino Royale. Martin Campbell, 2006; *Die Another Day*. Lee Tamahori, 2002; *For Your Eyes Only*. John Glen, 1981; *GoldenEye*. Martin Campbell, 1995; *Goldfinger*. Guy Hamilton, 1964; *License to Kill*. John Glen, 1989; *Live and Let Die*. Guy Hamilton, 1973; *The Living Daylights*. John Glen, 1987; *Moonraker*. Lewis Gilbert, 1979; *No Time to Die*. Cary Joji Fukunaga, 2021; *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*. Peter R. Hunt, 1969; *Quantum of Solace*. Marc Forster, 2008; *Skyfall*. Sam Mendes, 2012; *Spectre*. Sam Mendes, 2015; *The Spy Who Loved Me*. Lewis Gilbert, 1977; *Thunderball*. Terence Young, 1965; *Tomorrow Never Dies*. Roger Spottiswoode, 1997; *A View to a Kill*. John Glen, 1985.

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