



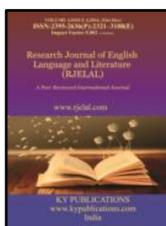
INTERNATIONAL  
STANDARD  
SERIAL  
NUMBER  
INDIA

2395-2636 (Print);2321-3108 (online)

## REDEMPTIVE VISIONARY IMAGING - THE USE OF THE CONCEPT BY IAN FLEMING

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### ABSTRACT

The paper first looks at the concept and meaning of imagery and how it is used and then analyzes the reasons why Fleming has appealed to the readers' imaginations over such a long period of time. One of the reasons identified lies in his use of imagery. He has the ability to focus on imagery in a way that it appeals to the reader and, without letting it interrupt the flow of the story, makes the narration more vivid. The paper analyses and breaks down this use of imagery and by this dissection, goes deeper into the techniques used by Fleming relating to imagery. The conceptual use of the imagery is labeled as 'Redemptive Visionary Imaging' (RVI) and examples of RVI are analyzed by taking specific usages from the novels. The paper also looks at the mechanisms – for example the 'Fleming Effect' as Kingsley Amis called it – which make the novels hit the reader with a visceral punch. This paper is a tribute to greatness.

**Key words:** imagery, innate imagery, peripheral imagery, redemptive visionary imaging

*Come, listen my men, while I tell you again  
The five unmistakable marks  
By which you may know, wheresoever you go,  
The warranted genuine Snarks.*

*Let us take them in order. The first is the taste,  
Which is meager and hollow, but crisp:  
Like a coat that is rather too tight in the waist,  
With a flavor of Will-o'-the-wisp.*

**Lewis Carroll**

***The Hunting of the Snark - 1874  
Fit the Second – the Bellman's Speech***

### The Concept of Imagery

What exactly is the meaning of imagery?

While there are many definitions to the word, we can best view imagery as the use of vivid descriptive language that appeals to one or more of the senses (sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste). In addition to this, imagery is also used to refer to figurative language, in

particular metaphors and similes. This paper will not examine metaphors or similes but will focus only on imagery and its use by writers.

Use imagery in short stories, novels, songs or poems to give a more vivid, clearer description through the use of the five senses. A versatile use of imagery creates a piece that captivates the reader because the reader can clearly see, hear, taste, touch or smell the writer's words about a subject, a character or a setting.

By and large, a first point to make as far as the use of imagery in poetry is concerned is that both the use and concept of imagery in poetry has followed shifting cultural outlooks. "The medieval view of art was rooted in morality, and its descriptions of the world never forgot that the things depicted served God's purpose: the smallest thing reached into a larger world beyond. Renaissance writers studied the classical authors more widely and employed figures — rhetorical

figures, including simile, allegory and metaphor — whose purpose was to clarify, enforce and decorate a preexisting meaning. Imagery was often elaborate, but not generally constitutive of meaning. The growth of a homogeneous reading public in the 18th century, with more settled opinions, brought a polite and plain diction into general use. Images became mental representations of sensory experience, a storehouse of devices by which the original scenes of nature, society, commerce, etc. could be recreated.” (Holcombe,2007).

The last sentence of the foregoing paragraph, ‘images became mental representations of sensory experience... could be recreated’ is of significance to this paper. This is because images which focus on sensory experiences have the capacity to make a greater impact on the reader. There is a direct correlation between what is felt by the senses and the mental ability to conjure up what the writer is saying, especially when the correlation is simple and direct. Shakespeare was a master at this and this paper has looked at his use of imagery in order to act as a foundation on which the concept of imagery has been built.

It is important to note here that imagery can also be externally oriented or internally oriented from the point of view of what it is conveying. In this connection, Virginia Woolf (1928) had written that ‘every secret of a writer’s soul, every experience of his life, every quality of his mind is written large in his works, yet we require critics to explain the one and biographers to expound the other.’ Woolf is making the same point insofar as the writer tends to ‘pull out’ images from inside him which can be from experiences undergone by him and have been internalized or from seeing something which triggers the image. Spurgeon (1935), writing on the same point had said that, ‘...we divest our minds of the hint the term carries with it of visual image only, and think of it, for the present purpose, as connoting any and every imaginative picture or other experience....’

The psychoanalyst Klein (1975), again touching on the same theme of internally and externally oriented imagery proposed that we unconsciously experience ourselves as being inhabited by a number of internal mental objects or

characters, and that these may influence and shape many of our most important struggles in the world outside. Conversely, what goes on in the outside world also has an influence on the nature and shape of the inner theatre of our internal world.

From the point of view of imagery, this distinction between internal and external forces which shape the imagery is critical. We can call the internally oriented imagery ‘innate imagery’ and the externally oriented imagery ‘peripheral imagery’. In order to understand the distinction, it is necessary to explore the meanings and the underlying assumptions which go into these two types.

Peripheral imagery draws on external sources i.e. it has its life in what the writer sees and observes and then puts it into words which can make the reader understand what is being described.

Innate imagery is the type of imagery which has close and strong links with the experiences undergone by the writer in his passage through life and which he then tries to convey to the reader through the use of imagery.

Greenblatt (2004) has said that in Henry VI – Part 2 – written in 1591 – Shakespeare has the ambitious, conniving Duke of York explain that he has lured the headstrong Kentish peasant Jack Cade into rebellion. “In Ireland I have seen the stubborn Cade” fight against a troop of soldiers, York remarks,

And fought so long till that his thighs with darts

Were almost like a sharp-quilled porcupine;  
And in the end being rescued, I have seen  
Him caper upright like a wild Morisco,  
Shaking the bloody darts as he his bells.

This is a typical case of peripheral imagery as it is very unlikely Shakespeare had been in a war and seen a soldier’s thighs pierced with arrows. He has pulled the imagery from outside his experience and brought it to life.

If we look for an example of innate imagery, we can again see this again in Shakespeare who had as a young boy assisted his father in the glover’s shop and was therefore familiar with the different types of leather used in the shop. For Shakespeare, leather was the stuff of metaphor. “A sentence is but a cheverel (fine kidskin valued for

its pliability) glove to a good wit," says the clown Feste in Twelfth Night, remarking on the ease with which language can be twisted. This is an example of innate imagery where the writer is pulling out the image from internal sources i.e. from experiences he had undergone.

It is possible that imagery can be a combination of both peripheral and innate. Obviously, the more complex the imagery (and which should in all likelihood make it more effective), the less the likelihood that the imagery will have a binary focus – i.e. it will be one or the other. It is difficult at the best of times to use imagery effectively and it is only in the hands of writers of skill that the imagery comes to life. For the imagery to be termed effective, the 'connect' with the reader on what the writer is conveying has to be unambiguous and vivid. Shakespeare is undoubtedly the master at doing this which is the reason why quite a few of the examples are drawn from his plays. And the uniqueness in Shakespeare is that the imagery comes naturally to him. The lines, "How like a fawning publican he looks" (Merchant of Venice, Act I Scene 3) which is Shylock's description of Antonio on seeing him, is spontaneous. At the same time it conveys both the physical traits Shylock perceives in Antonio and also brings out the hatred Shylock feels for him.

The perfect example of imagery that is both innate and peripheral, can be seen in the second part of Henry IV, in which play the gigantic and alcohol loving Sir John Falstaff delivers a paean to 'sherry-sack', (sack from Jerez, in Andalusia) with a detailed analysis on its power to inflame both wit and courage.

"A good sherry- sack hath a two -fold operation in it. It ascends me into the brain, dries me there all the foolish and dull and crudy vapors which environ it, makes it apprehensive, quick, forgetive, full of nimble, fiery and delectable shapes, which, delivered o'er to the voice, the tongue, which is the birth, becomes excellent wit.... But the sherry warms it, and makes it course from the inwards to the parts' extreme; it illumineth the face, which, as a beacon, gives warning to all the rest of this little kingdom, man, to arm; and then the vital commoners and inland petty spirits muster me all to

their captain .... And this valor comes of sherry." (Act IV, Scene II).

The interplay of innate and peripheral imagery is so seamless that we do not notice it when the lines are read or heard. The passage starts with the former and then gradually moves to detailing of peripheral imagery with the detailed description of what sherry – sack can do to the face of the drinker. It is this combination that gives life to the imagery. Through the dual use, Shakespeare makes the imagery two dimensional and increases the visual component of the words.

It is felt that another reason for this could be that these writers have the gift of causing in the reader what Coleridge calls 'the willing suspension of disbelief'. This is in addition to their innately skillful use of imagery. This means that the reader is pulled headfirst into the story to an extent that he or she will refuse to acknowledge that some of the events in the story cannot happen, or that some of the characters cannot be seen in real life. And this is one of the most difficult things which a writer can attempt to accomplish. It is this willing suspension of disbelief that makes us accept that Superman can fly and that Spiderman can swing his way forward using the equivalent of the spider's web to latch himself onto buildings. This idea of the willing suspension of disbelief is of importance to this paper as the concept of RVI is linked to it in terms of language and the contents of the image being narrated by the author.

In the earlier sections of this paper, I have looked at the concept and meaning of imagery and how writers have used it to give color and depth to their narration. The paper will now examine the components that make a novel compelling and see how Fleming used these to the fullest advantage. In the case of Fleming the imagery and the prose are often mixed in a fashion which makes it difficult to imitate. This is the quality which this paper analyzes and clinically details for the reader what goes into the 'Fleming effect'.

#### **A Strong Story Line**

Apart from causing the willing suspension of disbelief, Fleming has the ability to create plots which are complex but at the same time maintain a strong story line which the reader can follow easily.

The strong story line is supported by the use of RVI and this is one of the reasons for the long shelf life of these writers.

When, for example, the reader has come to the last paragraph of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* of Doyle, what would perhaps be upper most in his or her mind? It would perhaps be an intense desire to plunge immediately into another Holmes story.

Fleming argued that he created Bond as "an interesting man to whom extraordinary things happen." He appropriated the name "James Bond" from the author of 'Birds of the West Indies' because he felt the name suitably "dull" and "anonymous." There are of course, other versions which try and identify how the name "James Bond" came to be chosen by Fleming.

It is Bond's skill at high-stakes gambling, his easy of knowledge of the best wines, champagnes, automobiles, and cigarettes which has made 007 an icon of class. Bond has the ability to be comfortable in the world ranging from Dom Perignon to Mooreland's cigarettes, from Bentleys to Aston Martins.

The following excerpt shows how in Bond's world, an ordinarily generic meal like breakfast can turn into a remarkable experience.

"When he was stationed in London it was always the same. It consisted of very strong coffee, from De Bry in New Oxford Street, brewed in an American *Chemex*, of which he drank two large cups, black and without sugar. The single egg, in the dark blue eggcup with a gold ring round the top, was boiled for three and a third minutes".

Fleming's easy use of detail and brand names to define his characters helped blaze a new style in popular literature where the real world and the fictional world collided. The paper will look at this aspect of Fleming's prose later.

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The paper will now examine the concept of RVI. The willing suspension of disbelief of Coleridge referred to earlier is possibly the pivot around which imagery, both peripheral and innate, revolves. This suspension of disbelief is the second and last link in the chain which leads to RVI. To sum this up, RVI combines both innate and peripheral aspects of imagery and has to be viewed at times through the

perspective of the suspension of disbelief. Only then will RVI make its full impact on the reader. These however, are the mechanics or the nuts and bolts which go into the making of a RVI. What gives it the final color is the use of the language – all the three writers whom we have chosen as examples were masters at this latter aspect.

RVI is therefore at the forefront when it comes to the use of imagery by writers. In the examples from the three writers quoted earlier, it will be seen how the writers use both innate and peripheral imagery. Doyle largely uses peripheral imagery in his descriptions of the moor and the coming of the hound. Fleming tends to focus more on innate imagery in his description of the breakfast Bond is about to have. Wodehouse tends to combine the two in his description of the plight Mulliner finds himself in. In the section which follows, the paper will deconstruct RVI and see how it looks like when the flesh is stripped off the RVI.

#### Redemptive Visionary Imaging

In order to make it simple and straightforward, let us analyze the examples based on the following paradigms. This is important as what follows in this section lays the foundation of the concept of RVI, and I believe strongly that the foundation should be strong and tested. This section has to be viewed under the overarching perspectives of innate and peripheral imagery and the willing suspension of disbelief about which this paper had referred to in the earlier sections.

1. Association for the reader
2. Possibility of the incident/ event happening in real life
3. The 'I wish I were there' factor
4. An elaborate simplicity, which is easy for the reader to grasp,

All four of the above parameters should lead to the concept of RVI.

First of all, let us define these four parameters. Or, better still explain is meant by each of them.

#### 1 Association for the reader:

This is a tricky one. Let me try and explain what the phrase means.

Each reader brings to the text of any piece of prose he or she is reading, a certain amount of

baggage in the form of what they have read before as well as on how life has treated them. The experience of living, (for want of a better phrase), colors the reaction to what is written and how the reader reacts to what is written. He or she can either feel that what is written is very close to what can happen in real life, or conversely, may feel that such things do not happen at all and let me not waste any more time in reading this book. Both reactions, are naturally possible, and will depend on the past happenings in the life of the reader.

This association between what is being read and what is written is critical for the success of the writer. Naturally, the association has to be a positive one. And one, with which the reader finds it easy to associate. If, for example, you are reading about a boss who is a tough guy but with a kind heart (believe me, such persons do exist), and you feel that M is behaving in exactly the same way as your boss did (or does), then the writing comes to life for you and the association is built without any problems.

## **2 Possibility of the incidents/ events happening in real life**

This section in a manner is an extension of the earlier one and may even overlap it sometimes. When Bond reacts in a way you perhaps felt was similar to how you would have reacted to an incident, (though you may not have been sent like a scourge and minister of fate across half the globe to tackle the baddies), what is being written takes on a new meaning for you. The point we are making, and it may strike you as being an obvious one, is that the more the factors which you as the reader can consciously or sub consciously associate with what you read, the more the possibility of your going and buying the next book written by the same author. And in our view, the latter event happening is the only hallmark of a successful writer.

If we look at this closely, there is a very thin line indeed between the possibility of what can or cannot happen in real life. There are people in the world such as Red Adair who go about capping fires in oil wells. There are test pilots who routinely break the sound barrier and reach the fringes of outer space. There are people who, like Michael

Schumacher, routinely drive their Formula One vehicles at speeds, which to us are unbelievable. But then these are events, which happen in real life for these people.

### **3 The 'I wish I were there' factor**

In order to 'pull' the reader into the very vortex of the text, it is necessary for the writer to build into what he or she is saying an element of yearning, anxiety and suspense. All three are important and will only vary in degree from incident to incident.

Language is critical but does not come in the way of the story line which moves forward inexorably. We are never asked to take a breather from the story and say to ourselves 'how beautifully is the scene being described. We can almost see it' Yes, we can almost see it, but never at the risk of losing track of the main story. And it is this combination of being caught up with the description as well as wanting to know what is going to happen, which leads the reader deeper and deeper into the text. And our old friend the willing suspension of disbelief has us cornered once again.

To sum up, the text is skillfully made to move on two levels, a) a level, which is driven by chronology, and, b) a level which is driven by the detail. And, most importantly, these paradigms operate simultaneously in such a way that there is a seamless blending between the two. That is, the reader is never made aware that he or she is mentally operating at two levels.

The imagery and the story; the reader is never allowed to forget the one for the other.

And which also brings us to the last of the parameters, which is:

### **4 An elaborate simplicity**

In all the examples analyzed in this paper, what stands out is the ease with which the reader can follow the printed text. This is not to say that the images are not complex. Complexity is an essential part of it. But it is the skill of the writer, which makes them so easy to visualize and understand. There is no place for ambiguity and the reader is never in doubt as to what the author is trying to say.

### Details of the Concept

Before we go ahead, we would like to narrate something, which Fleming said about his writing. 'You can make readers believe that you blew up the world,' said Fleming (or words to that effect), provided you tell them that you lit the fuse with a gold plated Ronson.'

What Fleming is telling us is that the writer can create a willing suspension of disbelief provided he assists the reader in arriving at this state of mind. And he can assist the reader to do this by giving him or her images to relate to and which they are familiar with from their day to day lives. It is the juxtaposition of the unreal with the real or the fantastic with the mundane that causes the positive tension, which hooks the reader and wants him to turn the page. Yes, the reader should feel, perhaps some clever person *can* blow up the world as the writer says; and the writer ought to know because has he not even described the make and the color of the lighter with which the blower of the world lit the fuse? Of course, the fact that the reader may not be around to think these thoughts (having been blown to smithereens along with the world), is for the moment irrelevant, and comes under the concept of willing suspension of disbelief.

Moving on, it will be useful here to look at the three words, which constitute the name of the new paradigm, which we are arguing is the reason for the longevity of the triumvirate. Redemptive Visionary Imaging. What do these words mean in the context of what is being elaborated in this paper in terms of imagery?

Let me break it down to its essential components and then see if can move forward. I hasten to add that we are not playing with words for the sake of it, but genuinely feel that the three words have a lot of meaning behind them (or perhaps, in them), to pull the reader into the writer's web.

*Redemptive* – I admit this is a bit of sophistry on our part, but what we mean is that the images have the ability to 'redeem' themselves and stand out above the common run. They are unusual and often couched in words which the reader does not expect. They are not, in other words, your run of the mill

imagery, where the writer wants you to admire his or her felicity with the language.

*Visionary* – All the images show the strong visionary powers of the writers. That the visionary images culled up are sometimes bizarre, unusual, and unexpected only add to their enticing qualities. I do not mean, 'visionary' in the sense of having something profound to say or having something full of wisdom to express, or being able to philosophize and take the reader far into the future. We mean 'visionary' in the sense of being able to conjure images, which are vivid, startling, and will stand the test of time. And which will retain their freshness and uniqueness each time the reader comes back to them.

*Imaging* – Straightforward and the easiest of the three words to define – what we are primarily concerned in this paper is imagery, and have used 'imaging' as the verb form. And imagery refers to the simple and straightforward ability of writers to couch their language in words which are simple and direct for the reader to understand, and conjures up in the reader's mind what the writer is trying to portray, in a vivid and three dimensional manner.

Taken together, the use by writers of the concept of RVI, in my opinion, is what subconsciously draws the reader innumerable times to the books he or she has read earlier. I emphasize that there could be many other reasons for pulling the reader back, but are of the view that the imagery is one of the main ones. And this also makes the reader read the books with the same freshness and curiosity as when it was read for the first time.

In the previous section, it was said that there were four paradigms, which together constitute the concept trying to be pinned down.

To sum up, it is the interplay of these four paradigms, which together constitute the concept of RVI. It is not necessary for all four of paradigms to be present in order for the concept to come into play; it is theoretically possible for the concept to start operating even with only one of the paradigms being tackled by the author; obviously the presence of all four paradigms will make the writing stronger. As far as this paper is concerned, Fleming has used the mechanisms of this concept in order to bring out in the nuanced prose, the unique elements which

are the hall mark of his prose. This is what gives the novels their readability and pulls the reader back to them more than once.

### Conclusions

- What is the learning, which can be derived from what has been written so far, what are the significant conclusions, which can be drawn?

Caroline Spurgeon (1935), whom we referred to at the beginning of this paper, also has this to say about the use of imagery. "I believe we can draw from the material of a poet's images definite information about his personality". Shakespeare's imagery relays on nature and indoor life whereas Marlowe's imagery concentrates on books. Shakespeare uses daily life experiences to reflect on his writings such as: "detail of bird's flight, a flower's growth, a house wife's task... Shakespeare's metaphors are coming from his feelings, where Marlowe's metaphors are coming from his thoughts." Spurgeon, through metaphors, sees a wide opening to the poet's inner personality and this opening leads the reader to a better understanding for the conveyed material. Fleming on the other hand, uses imagery which is aimed at the 'material' side of the reader. What he does is to create a world which is believable and fantastic and outrageous, all at the same time. But the reader will never feel that the incidents narrated could never have happened.

In the two stanzas from Carroll quoted at the beginning of this paper, we can see the use of RVI in a very unusual form. Take the lines '*Let us take them in order. The first is the taste, Which is meager and hollow, but crisp: Like a coat that is rather too tight in the waist, With a flavor of Will-o'-the-wisp.*' Carroll is bordering on using RVI, but with a twist. And the twist is that the words *per se* do not have any logical meaning, but still the reader is pulled into the text by trying to grasp and understand and mentally come to terms with what a Snark will taste like. The use of the specific examples by Carroll is the key to the imaging being of interest, and as we have seen, this is also the pattern used by Fleming and Doyle. Never mind the fact that they do not logically make any sense, ignore the fact that what Carroll has written about can never ever be seen in our real world. These are of no material

consequence to the beauty of the lines and the imaging they contain.

This use of words which borders on RVI is used by Shakespeare also and it applies to Hamlet when he tell his friends Rosencrantz and Guildenstern that, "I am but mad north north west: And when the wind is southerly I can tell a hawk from a handsaw (Act II Scene II)." Hieronimo Jenkins (the Arden editor) suggests that the pairing of north/madness vs. south/sanity is a reference to the belief that southerly winds were particularly restorative for melancholics (such as Hamlet). This very well may be the case, but as far as the theme of this paper is concerned, we do not feel that it is of vital importance to one's understanding of the play. This is also true of the significance to the distinction between hawks and handsaws; it's just Hamlet playing games at the expense of his friends. Or more to the point, it is Shakespeare using a version of RVI just as Carroll did many many years later.

And this is because Carroll and Shakespeare are using what can be called Oblique Redemptive Visionary Imaging.

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In the abstract given at the beginning of this paper, asked the reader to view it as a tribute to greatness. It is the greatness, which springs from having an intellect that sees the world from a perspective slightly different from that of most people. It is a greatness, which has the ability to convey images and feelings without any ambiguity. And finally it is a greatness which foresees what will appeal to the reader, and the latter is not a small feat. That is all which was had planned to do when this piece of writing was conceptualized. . The greatness, which is referred to, is a greatness which is only too rarely seen in this day and age.

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