

2009

Casino Royale and Franchise Remix: James Bond as Superhero

Robert P. Arnett

Old Dominion University, rarnett@odu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/communication_fac_pubs



Part of the [Film Production Commons](#)

Repository Citation

Arnett, Robert P., "Casino Royale and Franchise Remix: James Bond as Superhero" (2009). *Communication & Theatre Arts Faculty Publications*. 19.

https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/communication_fac_pubs/19

Original Publication Citation

Arnett, R. P. (2009). Casino Royale and Franchise Remix: James Bond as Superhero. *Film Criticism*, 33(3), 1-16.

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Communication & Theatre Arts at ODU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Communication & Theatre Arts Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of ODU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@odu.edu.

Casino Royale and Franchise Remix: James Bond as Superhero

Robert P. Arnett

“Who am I? I’m Spider-man.” Last line *Spider-man* (2002)

“The truth is . . . I am Iron Man.” Last line *Iron Man* (2008)

“The name’s Bond, James Bond.” Last line *Casino Royale* (2006)

Popular media and industry reporting often claim films like *Casino Royale* (Martin Campbell, 2006), *Batman Begins* (Christopher Nolan, 2005), *The Incredible Hulk* (Louis Leterrier, 2008), and *Superman Returns* (Bryan Singer, 2006) “reboot” their franchises (e.g., Cohen 2008). Invoking shutting down and restarting one’s computer provides an inaccurate metaphor for the multiple functions *Casino Royale* performs in its position on the timeline of the Bond franchise. While beginning the James Bond story again in feature film form, now starring Daniel Craig, it also acknowledges previous feature film iterations, Ian Fleming’s novels, and its fan base at a level of self-reference not previously seen in Bond feature films. *Casino Royale*, more accurately, “remixes” the Bond franchise. “Remixed media,” according to Lawrence Lessig, take a “wide range of ‘texts,’” or “quotes,” and combine them to produce “the new creative work—the ‘remix’” (69). Eduardo Navas further explains a remix can be reflexive, allegorizing and extending “the aesthetic of [the] sampling, where the remixed version challenges the aura of the original and claims autonomy even when it carries the name of the original; material is added or deleted, but the original tracks are largely left intact to be recognizable” (1). The producers of *Casino Royale* have “sampled”

the transmediated mythos of James Bond and created a film remix: a transformation of the franchise that acknowledges previous iterations while claiming its own autonomy.

As *Casino Royale* unfolds, it argues for its autonomy. The film presents a hero recognizable as James Bond and a James Bond not familiar to many fans. As Navas points out, “The spectacular aura of the original(s), whether fully recognizable or not, must remain a vital part if the remix is to find cultural acceptance” (1). Cultural acceptance of big budget, mainstream film resides in its box office success—bringing in the mass audience. Tony Bennett and Janet Woollacott’s important but dated *Bond and Beyond* (1987) suggests part of the Bond franchise’s cultural acceptance resides its willingness to change with the times. Bond, Bennett and Woollacott claim, is “[a] mythic figure who transcends his own variable incarnations, Bond is always identified with himself but is never quite the same—an ever mobile signifier” (274). Bennett and Woollacott, as well many of the writers in the essay collection *Ian Fleming and James Bond: The Cultural Politics of 007*, cite Umberto Eco’s writing on Fleming’s novels concerning Bond as a brand, as something “already there.” In presenting a Bond who is simultaneously “already there” and unknown, *Casino Royale* provides a significant, and according to Lessig, new, artifact in popular films of this decade: a successfully reinvigorated franchise. To arrive at a remixed, “culturally accepted” James Bond, the producers have shifted his genre, remixed the Bond franchise as a superhero franchise.

The producers remixed Bond within a corporate context that understood the modern superhero franchise. The production of *Casino Royale* coincided with Sony’s purchase of MGM in 2004 (Grover; Goldsmith). *Variety* reported, “Sony . . . hopes that the 007 franchise can become a cornerstone of its release slate on a par with *Spider-man*” (LaPorte 6). In remixing the James Bond franchise, *Casino Royale* argues for its place within the superhero genre. Much that is new about Bond in *Casino Royale* aligns him with superheroes like Spider-man and Iron Man, especially as they appear in the first films of their modern iteration. The first film of a franchise remix focuses on the origin story of the superhero, and like *Spider-man* or *Iron Man*, *Casino Royale* propels James Bond to his “super” identity as “James Bond.”

In remixing James Bond as if he were a superhero, *Casino*

Royale enacts a reflexive remix and therefore elements of the reflexive remix guide the analysis: first, identifying the various visual and narrative elements, Nava's "parts from different sources" of the remix within the film that negotiate multiple intertextual connections while challenging the aura of the original brand; second, analyzing how the contemporary remix fulfills its role as the franchise re-activator by rescuing James Bond from self-parody and necessitating additional installments of the franchise—its "cultural acceptance"; and, third, articulating the autonomy of the remixed *Casino Royale* as the first Bond film in a franchise modeled after superhero films.

Remixing Visual and Narrative Elements

As Jim Collins points out, franchises stake out a claim within an aggregate narrative when "they appeal to disparate and overlapping audiences, by presenting different incarnations of the superhero simultaneously, so that the text always comes trailing its intertexts and rearticulations" (180). This section considers James Bond as an aggregate text, consisting primarily of films and novels, and mines the text for visual and narrative elements remixed in *Casino Royale* to reaffirm James Bond but also to establish significant differences from previous iterations of the Bond franchise. Narrative elements include key events that propel the story, the arrangement or structure of the stories, and variations on character motivations, especially those of James Bond. Visual elements include the appearance of the hero and other major characters, the setting, significant objects used by the hero or which confront the hero, and filmic effects representing the franchise.

Ian Fleming's 1953 novel, *Casino Royale*, acts as the primary source of the 2006 film. The 1967 film, *Casino Royale*, was a satire and only used Fleming's title—the 2006 film, then, is not a remake. The October 21, 1954 episode of the CBS anthology series, *Climax!*, based on *Casino Royale*, distills to an hour and Americanizes Fleming's novel. As a condensation of the novel, the television version contains no variations that appear in the 2006 film. *Casino Royale* of 2006 remixes an adaptation of Fleming's first Bond novel while referencing multiple aspects of the previous James Bond films with the specific purpose of beginning the franchise anew.

Fleming's novel provides much of the film's Act II or middle hour. Fleming's novel begins with Bond at Casino Royale and ends

shortly after he leaves having defeated Le Chiffre at Baccarat. In Fleming's novel, Le Chiffre has lost much of the money he owes to Soviet spy organization, SMERSH. Le Chiffre plans to win the money at Casino Royale and save his operation in France before SMERSH assassinates him. Bankrupting Le Chiffre means exposing and eliminating the Communists in France, so M sends Bond because of Bond's reputation as a shrewd gambler (Fleming implies previous missions for Bond, so the story is not one of Bond's "first" mission). M also assigns Vesper to help with radio communication and be the "girl" a gambler like Bond should have around. Vesper, not Mathis (he appears in later novels), turns out to be a double agent but, having fallen in love with Bond, sacrifices herself to allow him to escape when captured and tortured by Le Chiffre. Vesper, at the end of the novel, commits suicide, leaving a morose Bond whose last line in the book is, "The bitch is dead now" (181).

Fleming's novel provides the basic plot for the film, the bankrupting of Le Chiffre at Casino Royale, and the main characters, Vesper Lynd, Rene Mathis, and Felix Leiter. Fleming's plot resonates with the Cold War climate of 1953 and therefore requires updating, not only for a contemporary political situation, but also for activating a film franchise. The film replaces the Communists' operation with an unnamed organization tied into a radical Fascist government in Mozambique, which the film sets up in its first act (approximately the first 39 minutes—subtract about three minutes for title sequence). Bond enters the story by having botched an assignment to catch a bomb maker in Mozambique. Among the things he finds on the bomber, a cell phone with a number for "Ellipsis" piques his curiosity. Whereas betrayal and deceit from the nemesis's organization move the plot in Fleming's novel, in the film the crucial events propelling the narrative come from Bond's independent action. Researching Ellipsis leads Bond to the Bahamas and to Dimitrios, whom he beats at cards. Dimitrios' plan, of which Bond is not aware, involves working for Le Chiffre. Dimitrios connects Bond to Le Chiffre's plot to destroy the new airliner and propels Bond into a world of severe tests before "becoming" Bond. Bond foils the demolition of the new passenger jet, and Le Chiffre ends up short of money, forcing him to set up his gambling option at Casino Royale, the point where the novel began. The unnamed organization appears briefly at the beginning and end of *Casino Royale* and becomes a part of the mystery in the next film,

Quantum of Solace (2008). Act III injects new material between the death of Le Chiffre and the death of Vesper, much of which involves the mysterious organization and the film's variation on Vesper. The film's narrative structure begins with Bond achieving 00 status and ends with his proclamation of being James Bond. *Casino Royale* evokes a narrative structure not from the model of previous Bond films, but from one found in superhero films.

In the first film of a remixed franchise, the hero experiences an extraordinary moment of conversion near the end of Act I: for example, Peter Parker bit by a super-spider, Tony Stark captured by terrorists, Bruce Wayne plucked from a Chinese prison to train with Ra's Al Ghul. Bond's moment of conversion in *Casino Royale* comes when Dimitrios connects Bond to Le Chiffre's plot to destroy the airliner. The new 00 agent injects himself into an extraordinary world of adventure. In Act II, superheroes struggle with the obstacles and conflicts of establishing themselves in a new identity. The ordinary side of the identity struggles with *becoming* the superhero. Bond makes many mistakes upon entering Le Chiffre's world—Solange, Dimitrios' wife, dies because of Bond; Bond loses all of the money from Vesper's bank. Act II ends when the nemesis appears for a final showdown (Spider-man vs. Green Goblin, Batman vs. Ra's Al Ghul), providing that trial-by-fire from which emerges the superhero. Vesper's deal with Mr. White's organization sets up the showdown at the end of *Casino Royale*. A denouement follows and reaffirms that the ordinary identity has become "super" (e.g., "I am Spider-man," or Batman answering the bat signal), and Bond declares himself on a narrative level and many other levels of being. *Casino Royale* follows a superhero narrative model, specifically an origin story, and like others films of this genre in the current decade remixes a new, usually darker, vision of the superhero.

The progress of the narrative toward a new, darker James Bond parallels a series of visual references with the books and the films. Many are simply fun trivia points for James Bond fans (e.g., a key ring medallion with 53—the year of the book's release, the Aston-Martin replica of the car first seen in *Goldfinger*, women in the casino scenes who had appeared in the Connery films). Other motifs visualize the idea of Bond as familiar and different. For example, like the other Bonds, Craig spends much of *Casino Royale* in formal evening attire (a tuxedo or dark suit), although the meaning of the tuxedo differs, the

discussion of which comes later and contributes to the autonomy of Craig's Bond.

Another visual variation lies in the action sequences. The major action sequences of *Casino Royale* re-align Bond with the superhero genre and de-emphasize the thriller/espionage genre. Like a superhero, Craig's Bond partakes of physical stunts: the free-running sequence near of beginning, the airport sequence, and the gunfight and chase into a sinking building in Venice at the end. Previous Bonds participated in action scenes typical of the espionage genre, such as fist fights that involved smashing furniture, but the larger scale action set pieces involved equipment or machinery (e.g., the underwater assault with high-tech scuba gear in *Thunderball*, the racing engine-equipped gondola in *Moonraker* [1979], or the hovercraft race through the minefields in *Die Another Day* [2002]) and not a high degree of physical stunts for the older Bonds and the stuntman. Granted, CGI aids both Bond and the superheroes, but the action set pieces emphasizing *individual* performance move Bond away from the part-of-the-machine imagery of the Connery/Moore/Brosnan films, typified by the assault on the enemy lair at the end of most Bond films, and toward the free-actor showdown with the villain, as in the superhero films, from which James Bond/Superhero emerges.

The denouement of *Casino Royale*, in effect the opening minutes of *Quantum of Solace*, brings together the narrative and visual motifs that simultaneously affirm James Bond and deny previous visions of Bond. He shoots Mr. White, an action that remains unresolved in *Casino Royale*, and begins a revenge quest. Visually, he appears in a tuxedo for no reason having to do with ambushing someone and carrying a very large weapon, which he holds near the side of his face, as the other Bonds did in many of the marketing campaigns. The image of Bond with the big gun would be used in marketing *Quantum of Solace*, but it never appears in the film. In the last moment of *Casino Royale*, Bond invokes another Bond motif begun with Connery: he looks almost into the camera and says for the first time, "I'm Bond, James Bond." And on that cue, the music strikes the familiar James Bond theme, which had not previously played. *Casino Royale* ends on grand crescendo of remix: this new Bond exists intertextually connected to the franchise while narrative and visual associations connect him with the superhero. Bond is at once familiar and different.

Remixing for the Franchise

Being the first film of the new iteration, *Casino Royale* carries the extra burden of necessitating consecutive films. At this level, *Casino Royale* shares more traits with the first films of superhero franchises than with the espionage genre. Like Spider-man, Iron Man, and Batman, James Bond becomes “James Bond” only in the last act of the first film. The superhero’s “becoming” dominates the bulk of the first film, and along the way it performs functions designed specifically to necessitate further installments of the franchise with story elements set up and paid off over the course of subsequent films. *Casino Royale* may have minor connections to the first films with a new Bond actor, specifically *On Her Majesty’s Secret Service* (1969) with George Lazenby, Roger Moore’s first, *Live and Let Die* (1973), Timothy Dalton’s first, *The Living Daylights* (1987), and Pierce Brosnan’s first, *Goldeneye* (1995), but these films all reinforce the continuity of the franchise (e.g., *Live and Let Die* begins with Bond at the grave of his murdered wife from *On Her Majesty’s Secret Service*) and never negate the existence of the previous Bond films. *Casino Royale* occupies a unique taxonomic space. Unlike the previous first films with a new actor as Bond, *Casino Royale* professes no sequel or prequel connection to events from previous Bond films. As a franchise entry, and an origin story, *Casino Royale* finds more common ground with superhero films, especially those remixed in the last decade. The superhero film genre is one of the few in which (a) activating a franchise is a dominant motif, and (b) perhaps the only genre in which franchises start anew. Consequently, the superhero franchise provides formal clues to delineate *Casino Royale*’s function as the first film in restarting a franchise.

Academic analysis of superhero films, like Pearson and Uricchio’s *The Many Lives of the Batman* (1991) and even Bennett and Woollacott’s *Bond and Beyond*, concerns itself with intertextual relations and cultural and ideological possibilities, but rarely address the issue of specific elements needed to activate a franchise. In Fleming’s novels and all of the films, Bond exists fully as “James Bond.” Occasionally, Fleming would add background material on Bond (e.g., an obituary written by M in *You Only Live Twice*), but Bond exists from the first book as 007. Bond, freshly minted as 007, “becomes” in *Casino Royale*, as does the world Bond will inhabit. The world of Bond’s adventure, determined by the villain(s), exists

in the immediate film and then stretches over the subsequent films of this iteration of the franchise. *Casino Royale* marks the arrival of Bond as a superhero, and it also marks the creation of a new world at a textual level (Bond vs. Mr. White) and an intertextual level (the remixed franchise). Bennett and Woollacott only touch upon an important issue of action heroes of the current decade: maturity. In the first film of the contemporary remixed franchise, maturity and serious respect for the hero's mythos pervade. Maturity emerges in the contemporary franchises because of a pattern of long-running franchises degenerating into self-parody in the third and fourth installments. For the Bond franchise, the last installments by Connery (*Diamonds Are Forever* [1971]), Moore (*A View to a Kill* [1985]), and Pierce Brosnan (*Die Another Day*), uniformly reveal excesses of silliness and self-parody. The Batman films demonstrate a similar progression, as do the Christopher Reeves Superman films. Carl Lumbard, a marketing director at Twentieth Century Fox in licensing and merchandising, acknowledged this by claiming, "The Bond films are overdue for another reinvention—the whole franchise has become perilously close to self-parody" ("Brand Mot" 10). One of the producers of *Casino Royale*, Michael G. Wilson, put it this way, with *Die Another Day* the franchise had become "more fantastic and there was a feeling that that sort of film had run its course" (McGinty 36).

Casino Royale acknowledges intertextual references, yet never relies on parody. *Casino Royale*, like *Batman Begins*, also mixes in a darker take on the hero than previously seen in the feature films and suggests maturity through impressions of the hero's psychological instability (e.g., Bond begins as emotionless assassin and recovers a sense of self with Vesper, but then is damaged by what seems a betrayal). *Casino Royale*, as a first film, maps out much of what James Bond is to become—but not all. The "becoming" acknowledges Bennett and Woollacott's notion that the text of Bond "is never 'there' except in forms in which it is also and always other than 'just itself', always-already humming with reading possibilities which derive from outside its covers" (90-91). Hence, remixing the "becoming" means acknowledging the "just itself" and also exerting its maturity to establish autonomy.

The process of "becoming" reveals a world of adventure larger than what the hero could imagine before being "super." For example, if Peter Parker did not become Spider-man, he would not

be aware of the machinations of the Norman Osborn/Green Goblin. The initiation begins with the opening sequence of *Casino Royale*, in which Bond is seen as a quiet, cold, efficient killer achieving 00 status with two kills. In becoming James Bond, the cold, efficient killer, he follows “Ellipsis” to Dimitrios and crosses over into a world of adventure he could not previously imagine. In Fleming’s novel, M sends him simply because he has a reputation as a gambler. Bond, reacting to the Ellipsis mystery, connects to Vesper, and that situation propels him into *Quantum of Solace*. The world of adventure activated by *Casino Royale*, decidedly different than previous Bond films, from the ruthless killing of the opening to the abduction at the end, furthers the autonomy of the current iteration of the franchise.

Similarly, characters of minor influence in the first film but extremely important to latter films must appear, and give a hint to future events. This element also contains a subtextual level of fan awareness. Fans (consumers of the hero’s transmediated mythos) recognize the implications of the minor characters that non-fans may miss. For example, Spider-man fans know that Peter Parker’s college professor, Dr. Connor, who appears briefly in the three films, becomes the villain known as The Lizard. In *Casino Royale*, fans know minor characters, like Felix Leiter and Rene Mathis, will return in the following films. Fans also know that the mysterious organization lurking in the background of *Casino Royale* will dominate the arc of the following films and that its destruction will probably come about in the third film, as Luke and the rebels destroy the empire and Darth Vader in the third *Star Wars* film, as Spider-man ends the Green Goblin’s legacy in the third *Spider-man* film, and as X-men vanquish Magneto and his army in *X-Men 3: The Last Stand*.

In respecting what came before and demonstrating a mature approach, *Casino Royale* attempts to engage Bond fans and (re)build a Bondian world, using a model provided by the superhero genre. *Casino Royale* activates a narrative world that can extend into subsequent films, establishes visually distinct qualities while providing variations on familiar Bond imagery, foreshadows important characters, and successfully launches the autonomy of the current iteration of the Bond film franchise.

The Autonomy of Bond Remixed as a Superhero

In a press release, producers Michael G. Wilson and Barbara

Broccoli (children of Albert Broccoli, one of the franchise's original producers) stated, "*Casino Royale* will have all the action, suspense and espionage that our audiences have come to expect from us, but nevertheless takes the franchise in a new and exciting direction" (Doonar 10). Wilson also stated, "*Die Another Day* was our most successful one yet but we felt audiences were getting tired of the over-the-top action sequences. We thought it was time to reinvent the series before it ran out of steam" (McGinty 36). To "take" the franchise in a new direction, Broccoli and Wilson acknowledge their intention to remix the franchise. They also suggest the persuasive significance of *Casino Royale* as a first film within a remixed franchise and the necessity of establishing its autonomy from the previous film iterations.

When Daniel Craig states at the very end of the film, "I'm Bond, James Bond," *Casino Royale* concludes an argument found in the first films of remixed franchises. This argument even separates *Casino Royale* from *Quantum of Solace* and future Bond films with Daniel Craig. The subsequent films represent an ongoing negotiation between audience and the producers. In *Quantum of Solace*, most of the traits associated with Connery's Bond remain absent. Craig never says, "I'm Bond, James Bond," and never mentions vodka martinis. Other levels of referencing do appear: the woman slathered in oil, like the woman painted gold in *Goldfinger*; the Aston-Martin replica destroyed in the opening. What constitutes the autonomy of this Bond can be found in five significant factors. The first is commercial. According to Waxman, "In the late 1990s, market research showed Bond movies to have the oldest demographic of any action-adventure series" (7). *Casino Royale*'s iteration of Bond needed to appeal to a younger demographic, not only for a larger section of the movie audience but also because of ancillary markets. Waxman points out that *Casino Royale*'s producers were cognizant that "the booming success of Bond video games has driven a younger audience to the movies, Mr. Wilson said—which Sony and the producers do not want to disappoint" (6).

The younger audience's acceptance of Daniel Craig in the role, evidenced by his appearance in *Quantum of Solace*, accounts for the second factor of *Casino Royale*'s autonomy. Craig does not look like the Bond Fleming describes (black hair, a comma of which hangs over his right eye, a scar on his cheek) nor does he look like any of the

actors who previously played Bond. Yet, Daniel Craig's Bond becomes the first to embrace Fleming's more morose and contemplative Bond. For example, Fleming's first sentence in *Goldfinger*, "James Bond, with two double bourbons inside him, sat in the final departure lounge of Miami Airport and thought about life and death," fits Daniel Craig's Bond and not the other Bonds (3). More intense, more morose, more independent, Craig's Bond shares more character traits with Christian Bale's Batman, Hugh Jackman's Wolverine, and Edward Norton's Bruce Banner/Hulk than he does with the previous James Bond actors.

Third, *Casino Royale* lessens Bond's misogyny. Near the end of the film, Bond believes Vesper betrayed him. M explains the background on Vesper (her boyfriend held hostage—also in Fleming's novel) and attempts to empathize with Bond, suggesting he take some time off. Bond replies, "The job's done and the bitch is dead," invoking Fleming's last line in the novel. Like Fleming's Bond, this Bond bears emotional scars that turn to hate, but then the film turns the moment in a new direction: M, a woman, explains how Vesper, a woman, saved Bond through her actions and her knowledge of how Bond would act. This narrative turn represents the ideological change of the remixed Bond, with his hate turning away from women and toward the organization that manipulated Vesper, Le Chiffre, and Mathis—and renders Bond a wounded warrior now bent on a revenge quest—again, a trait that links to superheroes and away from the previous Bonds.

The updated Vesper (she represents the bank allocating the funds for the operation) diffuses Fleming's outward degradation of women. Furthermore, the film switches the betrayal of Bond from Vesper to Mathis, from female to male. Mathis, however, once incarcerated becomes available for *Quantum of Solace*. *Casino Royale* actively works narrative elements to minimize the sense of women as objects. The strategy gives women roles of authority (M and Vesper) and objectifies Bond in a way the previous films objectified women (emerging from the waves in skimpy swimwear). Bond's relationship with Vesper provides the vehicle to show Bond's shifting attitude. The end of the film, for example, summarizes Vesper and, in effect, Bond's evolving attitude concerning women:

James, did you ever ask yourself why you weren't killed that night? Isn't it obvious?

She made a deal to spare your life in exchange for the money. I'm sure she hoped they would let her live, but she must have known she was going to her death. And now, we'll never know who was behind this.

M reveals an almost-complete inversion of Fleming's sexism: a woman superior corrects the male's attitude about his emotional reaction blinding him to the truth of the situation. Bond's maturity, more accurately the maturity of the franchise, accepts women as figures of authority. Again, the context of *Casino Royale's* production influences the content: according to *Variety*, "considering that Bond is perhaps the most macho franchise of all time, [Barbara] Broccoli points out that women are calling the shots [Sony owns Columbia Pictures, which Amy Pascal runs]" (LaPorte 6).

Fourth, in *Casino Royale*, Bond demonstrates much self-awareness and concern with what he is becoming. Self-awareness probably never entered the mind of Sean Connery's or Roger Moore's Bond. M worries that it was an error to grant Bond 00 status. Throughout *Casino Royale*, M and Bond negotiate what kind of person/agent Bond becomes. In their first scene together, M contends, "I knew it was too early to promote you." Later, after thwarting the destruction of the jet airliner and Solange's death, Bond states, "You knew I wouldn't let this drop, didn't you?" M replies, "When I knew you were you." In their last scene, M asks, "You don't trust anyone, do you, James?" He responds immediately, "No." "Then you've learned your lesson," M concludes. Craig's Bond rejects the loyal soldier conformity found in Fleming's Bond and Connery's Bond. Specifically, Craig's Bond no longer represents a conservative hero defending a status quo, but remixes the aggregate hero as an individual with a tenuous relationship to the power structure he represents, just as Peter Parker/Spider-man maintains a difficult relationship with Jonah Jameson's newspaper and Tony Stark/Iron Man clashes with his own weapons industry.

Different critics take different views of Bond's conservatism. For Comentale (2005), Fleming's Bond is a "hero of the corporation" (3). Winder (2006) sees in Fleming's M much of Fleming's conservative status quo. M, according to Winder, "incarnates in its perfect form the Conservative ideal: of patrician omnicompetence over a silent, uncomprehending, safe, passive flock" (154). Winder goes on to point out, "Wittingly or unwittingly, Fleming, in his creation of M,

exposed an entire aspect of Britain's elite which in every imaginable field was to cause havoc for decades and may well still be doing so" (156). Mathis, the experienced French agent, explains in Fleming's novel, Bond's identity: "But don't let me down and become human yourself. We would lose such a wonderful machine" (139). Craig's Bond actively resists being a "wonderful machine," going so far as to invade M's private residence. The remix emphasizes Bond having become something not yet fully realized. The new maturity of the Bond franchise rests in *not* knowing Bond's loyalties and personality traits. In not becoming a wonderful machine, Craig's Bond further asserts the autonomy of the new franchise.

Fifth, in tamping down the sexism and racism, the remixed Bond seems less "elitist." Similarly missing, snobbish attitudes about food and drink (Bond as a hero of consumerism) also diffuse Bond's connection to an aristocratic class. *Casino Royale*, like most of its predecessors, flashes an array of aspirational products (expensive watches, clothes, cars), yet most of the products act within the narrative as objects Bond needs to pretend to be someone other than himself, whereas in the previous films the product placement was crucial to Bond being able to perform his job. When Q appears in a Bond film, he attaches machinery to Bond, emphasizing the metaphorical machine of which he was integral part. As the modern iteration of Bond moves away from an elite hero, Bond becomes even more like a movie superhero. Bond's superhero costume becomes the tuxedo (Vesper supplies one, he does not have his own). The tuxedo personifies, to paraphrase from *Batman Begins*, a symbol people can understand. Unlike Connery, whose natural state seemed to be in a tuxedo, Craig's Bond takes to evening wear as a guise, something that covers his true identity—he performs "on stage" while at Casino Royale and achieves an amazing feat (winning \$150 million playing cards).

When out of the tuxedo, Bond is not of the elite (but definitely upscale with his sailboat to Venice). Taking Fleming's depiction of a much more contemplative Bond, Craig's remix emphasizes that nature when Bond is not in formal wear. The books tend to open with Bond at rest and generally morose, depressed by the loss of the "girl" from the previous story (e.g., *Live and Let Die*, *From Russia With Love*, *You Only Live Twice*). Fleming's *Thunderball* even opens with M committing Bond to a health spa for reasons that in today's language would equal "rehab" or "detox," and may portend for future films with Craig as

Bond. Similarly, Iron Man fans know Tony Starks' drinking becomes a problem as his story progresses. As in the superhero franchises, Craig and the producers remix Bond from an aggregate narrative, and their sampling choices strategically establish autonomy within the franchise. The most prominent features in building autonomy come from the commercial context of *Casino Royale's* production, acceptance of Daniel Craig as Bond, lessening the misogyny of previous iterations of Bond, creating a more self-aware Bond, and diminishing Bond's associations with the elite class.

Conclusion

Casino Royale remixes James Bond and reaffirms Bennett and Woollacott's notion of Bond as a mobile signifier, as it marks a strategic shift in the formula of the previous iterations of the Bond franchise and re-aligns Bond with the superhero genre. As the first film in the remixed franchise, *Casino Royale* follows franchise criteria established by superhero films. The "meaning" of *Casino Royale* rests in Lessig's defense of remix: "meaning comes not from the content of what [remixers] say; it comes from the reference, which is expressible only if it is the original that gets used" (74). The remixed Bond assures the audience, and specifically the fan audience, that this *is* James Bond, but with mature intent in regards to the mythos of the transmediated hero and a lack of the self-parody of previous film iterations.

Casino Royale's success as a film franchise remixed for the future also appears in its narrative structure. While concluding one story, *Casino Royale* depicts the beginnings of *Quantum of Solace* and the film(s) to follow with the question of Mr. White's identity. In establishing a continuing narrative, *Casino Royale* activates a much different franchise than had previously existed with the Bond feature films, one more like the Fleming novels. *Casino Royale*, strategically, does not answer all the questions about Bond. It activates the franchise and marks some familiar territory (e.g., Bond as MI:6 operative), yet also establishes gray area in that Bond remains a work in progress. The continuing narrative acts as a vehicle for a new, emerging Bond identity, one rooted in individualism and an awkward relationship to the power structure he represents. Unlike Fleming's Bond, Craig's Bond achieves a 00 status that makes him anything but a "wonderful machine." *Quantum of Solace* continues to reinforce, in Navas' words, "the aura of the original" but goes further in claiming autonomy.

Quantum, as the second film of the franchise, strategically deletes material previous iterations of Bond, such as the Bond catchphrases, and, with the exception of Judi Dench as M, *Quantum* makes fewer references to the previous Bond films. *Casino Royale* remains unique: as the first film of a remixed franchise it leaves Bond precariously perched, like his superhero brethren, between worlds of order and disorder. Thus, the negotiation of the remixed Bondian world begins.

Works Cited

- Bennett, Tony and Janet Woollacott. *Bond and Beyond: The Political Career of a Popular Hero*. London: Macmillan, 1987.
- Cohen, David S. "'Incredible Hulk' reboots franchise." *Variety.com*. [Http://www.variety.com/article/VR1117986691.html?categoryid=1043&cs=1](http://www.variety.com/article/VR1117986691.html?categoryid=1043&cs=1). 30 May 2008.
- Collins, Jim. "Batman: The Movie, Narrative: The Hyperconscious." In *The Many Lives of the Batman: Critical Approaches to a Superhero and His Media*. Pearson, Roberta E. and William Uricchio, eds. New York: Routledge, 1991.
- Comentale, Edward P. "Fleming's Company Man: James Bond and the Management of Modernism." In *Ian Fleming and James Bond: The Cultural Politics of 007*. Comentale, Edward P., S. Watt, and S. Willman, eds. Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 2005.
- Doonar, Joanna. "Brand Mot: James Bond." *Brand Strategy*. 2 Nov. 2005: 10.
- Fleming, Ian. *Casino Royale*. 1953. NY: Penguin, 2002.
- . *Goldfinger*. 1959. NY: Penguin, 2002.
- Goldsmith, Jill. "How Sony Did It." *Variety*. 4 Oct. 2004: 1+.
- Grover, Ronald. "Why Sony is Now a Bit Player at MGM: Private Equity Backers Have Taken Control of the Studio Howard Stringer Coveted." *Business Week*. 20 Nov. 2006: 44.
- LaPorte, Nicole. "Bond Ambition: 007 Gets Face Lift." *Variety*. 6 Mar. 2006: 6+.

- Lessig, Lawrence. *Remix: Making Art and Commerce Thrive in the Hybrid Economy*. New York: Penguin, 2008.
- Lindner, Christoph, ed. *The James Bond Phenomenon: A Critical Reader*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 2003.
- McGinty, Stephen. "Bond is Back, Bad and Playing It By the Book." *The Scotsman*. 17 Oct. 2005: 36+.
- Navas, Eduardo. "Remix Defined." Remix Theory [web site]. [Http://remixtheory.net/?page_id=3](http://remixtheory.net/?page_id=3). Apr. 2007.
- Waxman, Sharon. "Bond Franchise is Shaken and Stirred." *New York Times*. 15 Oct. 2005, late ed.: 7+.
- Winder, Simon. *The Man Who Saved Britain: A Personal Journey into the Disturbing World of James Bond*. New York: Picador, 2006.

Copyright of Film Criticism is the property of Film Criticism and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.