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Containing the *Spectre* of the Past: the Evolution of the James Bond Franchise during the Daniel Craig Era

Abstract

The notable commercial and critical success of the four James Bond films made with actor Daniel Craig playing the lead role - *Casino Royale* (Martin Campbell, GB/Cze/USA/Ger/Bah, 2006), *Quantum of Solace* (Marc Forster, GB/USA, 2008), *Skyfall* (Sam Mendes, GB/USA, 2012) and *Spectre* (Sam Mendes, GB/USA, 2015) – has, over the past decade, provoked a sustained increase in the amount of academic commentary and debate around the Bond character, his fictional universe and multimedia incarnations. Working from the premise that *Spectre* knowingly advertises itself as a possible conclusion to the Craig era, this article attempts to identify and discuss a range of key thematic trends in Bond filmmaking (and Bond criticism) in the years since *Casino Royale*. Such themes include: enhanced attention to the fictional spy's body as a producer of textual and popular cultural meaning; Bond's complex relationship with evolving ideas of British national identity and state structures; the questionable extent to which the Craig Bond films constitute a meaningful revision of the 007 film franchise's traditional aesthetic and thematic defining characteristics.

Keywords

James Bond; Daniel Craig; *Spectre*; Bond criticism; British Cinema; British national identity; film franchise; action hero body

It is advisable not to treat real life as if it were a James Bond movie. Thus, when Gareth Mallory (Ralph Fiennes), the recently installed new Head of MI6, Britain's Secret Intelligence Service, opines towards the end of *Spectre* (Sam Mendes, GB/USA, 2015) that 'maybe it's the fate of spies to just disappear', one has to question this fictional character's resigned sentiment. Fifty-four years and twenty-four official 007 films in, and the combined best efforts of Mike Myers, Jason Bourne, and Britain's ongoing post-imperial twilight notwithstanding, James Bond remains The Spy Who Dogs Us, the hardest-bitten, longest-toothed survivor in cinema history. Whatever else it may be, then, Daniel Craig's four-film tenure as 007 looks like mission accomplished in commercial and, perhaps to some extent, critical terms alike. *Casino Royale* (Martin Campbell, GB/Cze/USA/Ger/Bah, 2006) and *Skyfall* (Sam Mendes, GB/USA, 2012) are among the most acclaimed entries in a franchise that has in its time fielded as many brickbats as bouquets. The latter film's five Oscar nominations nearly doubled the entire series' running tally to that point. Craig's increasingly virile box-office performance is of note, too. *Casino Royale's* \$599 million global gross was almost doubled by *Skyfall*, the highest-earning Bond movie to date (when production costs and box office revenues remain unadjusted for inflation) and, at the time of its initial theatrical release, the highest-grossing film in British cinema history.¹

As a direct consequence, a substantially increased number of academic commentators, including (among others) James Chapman, Klaus Dodds, Lisa Funnell,

and Christoph Lindner, have viewed the last decade as a particularly opportune moment to interrogate the Bond texts (films, novels, soundtracks, videogames) and overarching fictional universe in considerable detail.² So precipitous has the post-*Casino Royale* upsurge in scholarly interest in Bond been that it is sometimes difficult to remember that, as recently as 2001, 'the neglect of the Bond series in film scholarship'³ constituted the starting point for Chapman's *Licence to Thrill*, a pioneering book-length study of the Bond character in his various historical and multimedia incarnations. Understandably, the central driver of what Lindner terms the recent 'reinvigorated scholarly interest in 007'⁴ has involved extended examination of the Craig-era films, their remarkable commercial popularity and popular cultural resonance and the much-debated question of what (if anything substantial) is at stake, creatively and ideologically speaking, in their self-consciously rebooted twenty-first-century 007, 'a transformation of the franchise,' that in Robert P. Arnett's words, 'acknowledges previous iterations while claiming its own autonomy... present[ing] a hero recognisable as James Bond and a James Bond not familiar to many fans'.⁵

This article attempts to respond to, and build upon, the wealth of recent Bond scholarship in several ways. Firstly, it should be noted that much academic work exploring the Craig era takes the form of detailed responsive critiques of one of the individual Bond films released during that period. The following ideas and arguments respect (and, hopefully, augment) that collective critical lead by taking the most recent Craig film, *Spectre*, as their central focus of attention. In addition to detailed consideration of an individual Bond movie, however, this article also attempts a more synthesising and holistic assessment of the Craig era as whole. In part, this critical move is predicated on the benefit of hindsight: the present writer being in a position, simply by virtue of researching and writing in 2016, to have seen more Craig Bond films and read more Craig Bond criticism than his immediate predecessors had available to them. On the other hand, however, this article's synthesising attempt to read the Craig era as a whole also reflects, and emerges from, an assertion (developed at length in what follows) that *Spectre* self-consciously advertises multiple signs of it representing the actor's farewell appearance in the Bond role. This is so not least in terms of the distinctive position that *Spectre* adopts in relation to the overarching Bond franchise, compared to that taken by three predecessors with Craig in the starring role. Where *Casino Royale*, *Quantum of Solace* (Marc Forster, GB/USA, 2008) and *Skyfall* advertised themselves as what we might term a reboot trilogy, ostentatiously revising many traditional conventions of the Bond movie template, *Spectre* self-consciously returns to and celebrates the latter.

The present discussion thus tries to offer one provisional adjudication in relation to what is perhaps *the* key debate in early-twenty-first-century Bond criticism. That critical conversation revolves around the extent to which *Casino Royale* and its three successors have (or have not) made good on a possibility that Christoph Lindner suggested might be present within *Casino Royale*, namely, the franchise's self-conscious instigation of an ideologically progressive 'reintroduction... re-evaluation... reinvention [and/or] renewal'⁶ of its signature historic images of

national identities, gender politics, and geopolitical and postcolonial structures of power. For every optimistic critical perception of the Craig era's possible successes in this regard, there has been an answering claim that the actor's quartet of Bond films represents merely an unthinking continuation of regressive stereotypes long associated with the 007 franchise – or perhaps worse, a cynically calculating attempt to refresh (and thus, resell) these to contemporary audiences.⁷ As we shall see in what follows, possible answers to such questions lie with four of the present-day accessories possessed by Craig's Bond that cannot be run up by either Q Branch or a good Savile Row tailor: his body; his backstory; his Britishness; and, finally, his finite ability to keep bouncing back for future missions.⁸

'Were you expecting an exploding pen?' The importance of scriptwriters' input in the Craig Bond cycle

In pursuing these aims, it is perhaps useful first of all to highlight one way in which the Craig Bond films arguably *do* mirror elements of real life. Key here is their increasingly pronounced emphasis on the desirability of a dependable backroom team. *Casino Royale* and its successors steer the complicated oedipal-cum-operational dynamic between Bond and Judi Dench's M, a relationship that dominated a significant element of narrative proceedings from *Goldeneye* (Martin Campbell, GB/USA, 1995) onwards, 'from professional to familial'⁹ status – and thus, to a definitive close – by *Skyfall*'s end. Replacing that dyad has been a wider ensemble of secondary characters familiar from the overlapping universes of previous Bond films and the Ian Fleming novels that birthed them. *Quantum of Solace* reintroduces Bill Tanner (Rory Kinnear), MI6's Chief of Staff, a figure last seen in *The World Is Not Enough* (Michael Apted, GB/USA, 1999). *Skyfall* then brought back Eve Moneypenny (Naomie Harris) and Q (Ben Whishaw), both absent from the series since *Die Another Day* (Lee Tamahori, GB/USA, 2002), and introduced a new M played by Ralph Fiennes with more than a passing nod (patrician, white, male, has seen active service in Britain's armed forces) to the pre-Brosnan occupants of the role, Bernard Lee and Robert Brown. Moreover, *Skyfall* and *Spectre* both accord these traditionally secondary protagonists significantly more narrative agency and action than any previous Bond adventure, the extended overseas outing of Q (Desmond Llewelyn) in *Licence to Kill* (John Glen, GB/USA, 1989) possibly excepted. By *Spectre*'s end, Bond is thus an agent embedded as never before within a collective working unit. As Klaus Dodds has argued, one consequent and significant distinction between the Craig films and their predecessors involves the sheer extent to which, within the former, 'Bond never acts truly alone, and his subject position continues to be shaped by interactions with others and relations marked by axes of difference including gender, class, sexuality, and race'.¹⁰

The Craig movies' innovatively even-handed emphasis on spy and supporting personnel alike usefully directs attention to the one-sided nature of many traditional popular and/or academic conceptions of just who and what primarily authors the Bond franchise throughout its various cycles. Most familiar, perhaps, is the notion that the star sets the scene: Connery swaggers, Moore smarms, Dalton suffers (as

does Craig), Brosnan is self-satisfied, Lazenby looked lost.¹¹ Less frequent is an ascription of authorship to the occasional prestigious occupant of the directorial chair. Significant amounts of critical speculation have swirled, for instance, around the extent of director Sam Mendes's influence over *Skyfall* and *Spectre*. Mendes himself encourages this form of analysis when he makes a point of noting publicly that he 'did not expect...a giant, multi-million-dollar franchise [to afford] as many opportunities for personal filmmaking as there have been'.¹²

Yet less common still, however, is the view that screenwriters typically possess a significant degree of creative and ideological input into the Bond franchise's long-term survival and strategic evolution.¹³ The period of transition spanning Sean Connery's protracted disengagement from the role can, for example, also be viewed as one of significant continuity, with Richard Maibaum and/or Tom Mankiewicz penning the scripts for *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* (Peter Hunt, GB/USA, 1969), *Diamonds Are Forever* (Guy Hamilton, GB/USA, 1971), and *Live and Let Die* (Guy Hamilton, GB, 1973) respectively. Returning to this essay's central focus, the idea that a Parker pen wields more clout than a Walther PPK offers a suggestive way of understanding both the creative structure and commercial success of Daniel Craig's Bond tenure. Indeed, the actor himself has acknowledged script-related considerations as the main reason behind his original decision to accept the role: 'I had been prepared to read a [stereotypical] Bond script and I didn't... it felt to me they were offering me a blueprint, and saying: "Form it around that"'.¹⁴ The script in question (for *Casino Royale*) was written by Neal Purvis and Robert Wade, the screenwriting duo primarily responsible – with occasional additional input (most notably, from Paul Haggis [*Casino Royale*, *Quantum of Solace*] and John Logan [*Skyfall*, *Spectre*]) – for all Bond movies since *The World Is Not Enough*.

Purvis and Wade's public comments either side of *Casino Royale*'s 2006 theatrical release on their approach to perpetuating the franchise into the twenty-first century are telling. In 2004, Wade conceded that 'the Fleming books are really interesting because they're underneath the surface of the character and cinema isn't like that...with a character who doesn't express his emotions, you're constantly struggling to suggest them'.¹⁵ Two years later, and one day after *Casino Royale*'s appearance in British cinemas, Purvis noted how:

Over the years the film character has developed into something quite different to Fleming's [original literary] character...there's often been talk of going back to basics with Bond [but...] this was the best opportunity ever because we're starting again with the first [1953] novel...giv[ing] you the opportunity for a proper arc to his character.¹⁶

A decade or so later, these interlocking emphases on reconstruction and revelation, an agenda driven as much by economic calculation as it is by emotional catharsis or aesthetic ambition, remain clearly to the fore in *Spectre*. Moreover, they go a considerable way towards explaining why the most popular critical categorisation of the Craig films defines them as a deliberate and commercially revitalising reboot of a venerable film franchise.

The pressing desire of the Bond screenwriters to start afresh from *Casino Royale* onwards helps to explain why, watching Craig's four outings as Bond, one cannot help but wonder why the actor's 007 frequently struggles so much in his world while simultaneously performing so well in ours. *Spectre*'s counterintuitive opening intertitle ('the dead are alive') succinctly glosses the Craig cycle's overarching motivation: a determination to rediscover some substantial and sustainable sense commercial and creative relevance for Bond in the early twenty-first century. 'You do what I do for too long', Craig's 007 admits in *Casino Royale*, 'and there won't be any soul left to salvage'. Such intimations of mortality are commercial as much as spiritual and they cause many of *Spectre*'s central characters and subplots to flirt with the possibility that Bond's ongoing survival, whether that of the fictional character within the franchise or that of the franchise itself, is anything but sure today. Max Denbigh (Andrew Scott), villainous surveillance technology obsessive and Director-General of the British government's Joint Security Service, taunts 007 and M in just such terms. Denbigh sneeringly asks just what kind of British secret service and secret agent – 'One man running about in the field[?]' – might actually be fit for purpose today. In doing so, he poses a pointed variant on the very question that the Bond franchise has been asking itself for a decade and more. Denby's hidden paymaster, returning uber-foe Ernst Stavro Blofeld (Christoph Waltz), also revels in the possibility that his own cinematic resurrection – Blofeld was last seen, briefly and unnamed, in *For Your Eyes Only* (John Glen, GB, 1981) – might coincide with the demise of his longstanding nemesis. Standing in the soon-to-be-demolished shell of London's iconic MI6 building, Blofeld advances a taunting, because seemingly unarguable, concrete metaphor: 'Everything you stood for... is a ruin'.

That is an interesting choice of words. Alongside the standard-issue, five-star finery that Bond audiences have long come to expect, Craig's 007 also spends much time during his four outings navigating ruins just as unprepossessing as MI6's abandoned headquarters. Such derelict spaces might just as easily be erased instead of (re)erected, razed rather than (re)built. They recur and resonate so much within the Craig films precisely because *Casino Royale* and its successors are so keen to (re)discover a plausible and profitable reason for the Bond cycle's continuing existence some half-a-century after the first 007 film. As a direct consequence, the narrative settings in question work, as Monika Gehlawat has perceptively identified, to 'magnify the edginess of Bond's formative self by creating spaces that are less spectacular than they are porous, decrepit or cold'.¹⁷ This is particularly (though not exclusively) true of the films' pre-opening credits and main-title sequences. All underscore the notion that, while in one sense viewers are watching technically complex, elaborately finished cinematic works, in another they are simultaneously witnessing a global film franchise under ongoing major reconstruction. *Casino Royale* opens with Bond hurtling across a Madagascan construction site; *Quantum of Solace*'s introduction sees 007 survive a car chase through a quarry and a duel inside a part-restored Renaissance chapel in Siena; *Skyfall*'s first moments have him extemporise a bullet-proof shield out of a JCB digger.

Elsewhere, *Casino Royale*'s tragic love interest Vesper Lynd (Eva Green) dies in a partially renovated Venetian palazzo, while *Skyfall* introduces its villain, Silva (Javier Bardem), in the latter's abandoned island city lair; that film then locates its *Sturm und Drang* climax at Bond's visibly crumbling ancestral Scottish Highland pile. This fact, and the comparable narrative preponderance of subterranean locations (discussed at more length below) throughout the Craig quartet, illustrates the notable extent to which, as Jason Dittmer and Klaus Dodds point out, within these films, 'places are more than simply backdrops. They both provide opportunities for further development of and reflection on the complex motives driving Bond... and also leave viewers with a sense [of...] resonances and traces which will empower future episodes of Bond'.¹⁸ Up until *Spectre* at least, the 'resonances' and 'traces' with which Purvis and Wade adorn their Craig-era scripts generally worked to foreground discontinuities rather than affinities between the actor's Bond and those of his five predecessors. The next section of this essay focuses on two of the most heavily foregrounded ways in which this is so. The first relates to the Craig films' strategic depiction of Bond's body as a far more innately destructive physical mechanism (but also a far more frequently traumatised one) than that witnessed by viewers during the four decades prior to *Casino Royale*. The second relates to the same films' extensive construction of a professional-cum-psychological backstory for the Bond character, something which the pre-Craig 007 franchise had almost entirely managed without.

Penetrating to where (and who and what) you are: the importance of body and backstory in the Craig Bond cycle

Staying for a moment longer with the Craig films' recurrent fascination with dilapidated narrative locations, it comes as little surprise that *Spectre* is at pains to serve up a slew of reasons why impractical aging follies (the Bond franchise itself not least among them) fully deserve the open-ended lavishing of time and money necessary to restore them to former glories in the present day. On one level, the film proposes that its viewers need protection from the fact that our bodies are today being constantly watched. Escalating levels of state-sanctioned (though not - controlled) surveillance – 'George Orwell's worst nightmare', in Mallory's words – present a contemporary threat to Bond's British body, and the British body politic, every bit as large as the Cold War tensions that stalked the Connery and Moore eras. But on another level, *Spectre* also proffers the spectacle of a body worth watching, a deliberate continuation of what Christoph Linder, reacting to the original release of *Casino Royale*, described as 'the new corporeality of Bond'¹⁹ that proved much in evidence from that film onwards.

The Craig films' determined foregrounding of a far more realistic sense (compared to their predecessors) of the recurring bodily injury and agony that are occupational hazards of Bond's profession works to achieve at least two central narrative and promotional functions. The first, as Patrick Anderson has argued, is to 'problematise classical representations of masculinity by placing Bond's body in a central and vulnerable position'.²⁰ Secondly and simultaneously, however, the Craig

quartet's ostentatious focus on its star's notably sculpted physique also, as Orit Fussfeld Cohen notes, 'attempts to anchor the concrete body of Daniel Craig as the actual source for the new Bond in public mind'.²¹ While Craig's Bond is physically ravaged far more often (and far more brutally) than any of his predecessors, one side effect of this fact is to simply underscore the present 007's near-miraculous recuperative abilities, possessed as is he is of what Linda Racioppi and Colleen Tremonte term a 'superbly fit body in motion and under seige'.²² Thus, Bond's remarkable physicality-cum-ferality in *Spectre* arguably represents material armour as impregnable as that which this incarnation of the character first flaunted in *Casino Royale* ten years before. Were he still alive in 2015, that film's antagonist, Le Chiffre (Mads Mikkelsen), could repeat his admiring observation that 'you've taken good care of your body' with little significant qualification. The considerable advantages that this knowingly unbelievable bodily indestructibility affords Craig's Bond during the course of his missions largely replaces what, for post-Bourne audiences, might look like the comparably unlikely (but now culturally antiquated) urbanity and gadgetry of most other post-Connery incarnations of 007.²³

But the Craig-era Bond cycle also attempts to reboot itself in ways that extend beyond mere reliance on adroit headline scanning and its star's preternatural ability to sustain musculature into middle age. Of at least equal prominence to the films' foregrounding of their lead actor's body is a parallel emphasis on the lead character's backstory. 'Why', *Spectre*'s love interest Madeleine Swann (Léa Seydoux) muses, 'does a man choose the life of a paid assassin... what would happen if you stopped to think about it?' That the doubly Proustian resonance of this character's moniker both recalls and resists the Bond franchise's traditional imposition of punning, but usually puerile, names on female characters (Pussy Galore, Plenty O'Toole, and so on) is no accident: all of Craig's Bond movies are linked by an ostentatious and extended *Remembrance of Things Past*. They variously attempt to answer Madeleine's enquiry by focusing on a range of emotional ideas, histories, and states – before Bond (*Skyfall*); becoming Bond (*Casino Royale*); broken Bond (*Quantum of Solace*) – that were relatively novel to the 007 series to that point in time. Until *Spectre* at least, the films in question also seem markedly less interested than their predecessors in the somewhat ossified matter of how best to be Bond onscreen, the correct way in which to don and deploy a pre-loved tuxedo. It is perhaps worth remembering in this regard that, as recently as autumn 2005 when Craig's casting in the role was first announced, popular prescriptions of the Bond character's "correct" demeanour and deportment had become so hardened that a campaigning website, www.danielcraigisnotbond.com, angrily advanced a myriad of reasons why this actor should not play that role. Even Craig's natural hair colour was counted as a mark against him: for many, James Blond 007 was a simply unthinkable notion.²⁴

Re-watching the Craig films in the light of their express desire to circumvent many of the traditional surface appearances and stereotypes that had previously defined the 007 character in popular discourse, one swiftly comes to understand that Moneypenny's worry expressed about Bond in *Spectre* – 'You've got a secret and it's something you won't tell anyone' – is clearly unfounded. In all four of his

outings, Craig's Bond is typically given little choice but to explain or be explained by others. *Casino Royale*, for example, pivots around the notion of becoming Bond, laying bare the psychological scars incurred in the ascension to a particular professional position that shades into popular cultural archetype. During the film's course, Bond is seen attaining 00 status along with several of the familiar accoutrements surrounding it, such as his fabled taste for shaken-not-stirred vodka martinis. The character of Lynd also paves the way for *Skyfall*'s subsequent interest in the idea of before Bond when she perceptively, if cruelly, fingers the prior personal trauma (being orphaned) that propelled him into MI6's preferred recruitment constituency: 'maladjusted young men that give little thought to sacrificing others in order to protect Queen and country'.²⁵

After *Quantum of Solace*'s global conspiracy movie interlude – easily Craig's least critically (and, to a lesser extent, commercially) successful outing as Bond – *Skyfall* explores Lynd's insight at length. 'Orphans always make the best recruits' Judi Dench's M is eventually forced to confess – although Bond himself has already noted, early in *Casino Royale*, that parentless operatives also tend to have 'a very short life expectancy'. Little wonder, then, that Silva is able to taunt 007 with the gory details of an internal MI6 psychologist's report: 'Addiction indicators, pathological rejection of authority based on unresolved childhood trauma'. *Skyfall*'s climax removes narrative proceedings to that formational trauma's physical and psychological site of origin, the titular Scottish mansion within which Bond first learned of his parents' accidental demise. After hearing the news 'he wasn't a boy anymore', family retainer Kincade (Albert Finney) recalls. Indeed, Craig's Bond seems constantly punished by an unending cycle of psychological evisceration and revelation that unfolds across the four films in which he appears. As a result, the wholly submissive sentiment uttered by the defenseless open book who offers himself up to Lynd in *Casino Royale* – 'I have no armour left, you stripped it from me. Whatever is left of me... whatever I am, I'm yours – could just as easily be addressed by Craig's Bond to his contemporary creators and/or consumers at any or all other points during the actor's tenure in the role. Unfettered access to private hinterlands past and present comes to seem like the Craig-era Bond film's watchword. Indeed, the latter movie even goes so far as to associate the concept of ellipsis, the grammatical and/or narratological practice of leaving certain matters unspoken in a given account of something or someone, with outright villainy. This is because the term in question is used as the mobile-phone-communicated password that facilitates an abortive terrorist bomb plot. Screenwriters Purvis and Wade's pointedly playful choice in this regard represents but one way in which, for Jason Sperb, *Casino Royale* places studied 'emphasis on the "personal" aspect of what ellipsis might mean [, thus] point[ing] towards a larger thematic relevance'²⁶ that became clearer and clearer as the Craig years progressed.

Because the Craig movies make Bond's personal traumas the viewer's to peruse at leisure and at length, *Spectre* is both of a general piece with its three predecessors *and* a markedly inconsistent work when considered on its individual merits. After all, one of the Craig cycle's defining characteristics is the notion that domestic intrusion is awful when it happens to oneself but addictive when one

witnesses it happening to another person.²⁷ *Spectre*'s surveillance state subplot thus rails against untrammelled intrusion into private lives while also gleefully acquiesces in its villains' sadistic interventionism, at least so far as the character of Bond is concerned. During perhaps the most squirm-inducing torture sequence in any Bond movie to date, Blofeld uses computer-operated microdrills to explore the crevices of 007's skull, noting as he does so that, 'a man lives inside his head... where the seed of him lies... I'm going to penetrate to where you are'. While Blofeld's utter villainy is never in question at any point during *Spectre*, here at least he is hardly guilty of anything that cannot also be laid at the doors of Craig-era good guys and the general cinemagoing public alike. Subcutaneous skullduggery sees MI6 forcibly implant tracking devices inside Bond's body in both *Casino Royale* and *Spectre*, for example. This fact is but one symptomatic reflection of the more general fact that, as Katharine Cox has convincingly argued, a recurring keynote of the Craig films involves the idea that 'Bond's corporeality is frequently threatened and is represented as permeable'.²⁸ Meanwhile, and on a closely related note, the real money shot of *Skyfall*'s opening title sequence titillates not with the traditional promise of girls, guns, and/or foreign travel, but with the prospect of getting right inside 007's head, figuratively as well as literally speaking. In the perfect visual equivalent of a money-back guarantee, the image in question fades to black via a zoom into (and by implication, through) Daniel Craig's right iris.²⁹

It is of course possible to argue that all of this represents little more than mere clever commercial repackaging on the part of the creative team behind the Craig-era Bond films. As already noted, the showcasing of the actor's pecs (and consequent articulation of the idea that Craig's Bond is a hyper-virile and –agile physical entity) arguably works to appeal to a younger audience demographic brought up on Jason Bourne and Tom Cruise's *Mission: Impossible* movies, not to mention the commercially revitalised superheroes of the twenty-first-century entries in the *Batman* and *Superman* franchises.³⁰ It could be claimed that the concomitant emphasis on Bond's tics simply addresses another, more mature ticket-buying constituency, one susceptible to the idea that copious mental scars constitute part of a middle-aged Scots-Swiss superspy's old-world charm. However, when the Craig films are considered as interlocking parts of an ongoing, decade-long serial narrative that, in Tobias Hochscherf's words, has 'abandon[ed] the episodic structure of the franchise in favour of... over-arching storylines and cliffhanger endings so typical of most [contemporary prestige] television dramas'³¹, their attempt to insert a deeper sense of backstory and psychological three-dimensionality into the Bond franchise as a whole comes to look like a genuinely sincere and substantive creative aspiration. Supporting evidence for the latter contention can be found, for instance, in *Spectre*'s substantial narrative investment in the idea of memory as an intrinsically traumatic phenomenon, one able to either redeem or ruin individuals accordingly, constitutes a clear rejection of M's repressed/repressive stiff-upper-lip assertion (in *Skyfall*) that 'regret is unprofessional'. Central protagonists – Bond, Swann, and their antagonists Mr. White (Jesper Christensen) and Blofeld – are all linked by the extent to which memories of past traumas shape who and what they are in the present day. Swann's abhorrence of bloodshed and her tortured relationship with her male parent stem,

for example, from the murderous actions she was forced to take, as a young child, on the long-ago evening when ‘a man once came to our house to kill my father’.

In this regard, *Spectre* simply reiterates a psychological worldview and narrative approach that screenwriters Purvis and Wade (and their occasional collaborators, Haggis and Logan) had already extensively employed elsewhere within the Craig quartet. While it takes until late on in *Skyfall* before Bond literally announces the start of a journey ‘back in time’, internal travels-cum-travails are signature occurrences for a diverse range of characters from *Casino Royale* on. Like *Spectre*, *Quantum of Solace* – Camille Montes (Olga Kurylenko), Dominic Greene (Mathieu Amalric) – and *Skyfall* – Bond, M, Silva – also unite protagonists and antagonists in a shared confrontation of the extent to which painful past experiences influence present-day personalities and pursuits. This, arguably, is an important way in which the Craig films approach questions of character explication and development in a different manner to their predecessors: for the most part, the pre-Craig films were far less interested in issues of individual backstory and motivation. More specifically yet in this regard, the Craig cycle also repeatedly foregrounds a category of human being mostly absent from the franchise pre-*Casino Royale*: the child and/or the adult figured as an extension of their inner child.³² In addition to Bond, for example, *Quantum’s* Montes is a traumatised orphan, *Skyfall’s* Severine (Bérénice Lim Marlohe) a former child prostitute, and *Spectre’s* Blofeld an adult manifestation of the psychotic teenager who killed his own father in a fit of jealous adolescent rage. Viewed in this light, Purvis and Wade’s development of Pierce Brosnan’s final two Bond projects around villains driven by a quasi-oedipal rejection of parental authority – *The World Is Not Enough’s* Electra King (Sophie Marceau) and *Die Another Day’s* Gustav Graves (Toby Stephens)/Tan-Sun Moon (Will Yun Lee) – begins to look like an experimental prototype of an approach then applied wholesale to the Craig-era scripts.

The Craig films’ seriousness in attempting to cultivate a radically enhanced sense of human history and interiority within the Bond universe can be confirmed in a way similar to that which was used above to suggest the earnestness of their desire to commercially reboot the 007 template with *Casino Royale* and its successors. If the Craig quartet’s drive to make money finds a symptomatic spatial corollary in those films’ recurrent recourse to part-constructed and/or -destroyed narrative spaces, the movies’ closely related fascination with the idea of milking memory also propels them towards a surfeit of subterranean locations. Although spaces of this kind have appeared intermittently throughout the Bond series from its outset – see, for example, *Dr. No* (Terence Young, GB/USA, 1962), *You Only Live Twice* (Lewis Gilbert, GB, 1967) or *A View to a Kill* (John Glen, GB, 1985) – the notable preponderance of such spaces within *Casino Royale* and its successors exemplifies an idea that animates all of the Craig films: the notion that the stability and/or legibility of the visible surfaces of the present are always dependent on a complex network of largely hidden ancestral roots. In what might otherwise be the most surreally inexplicable act of product placement within *any* Bond film to date, *Casino Royale* drops a chase sequence into a travelling exhibition from German anatomist Gunther von Hagens’s controversial *Body Worlds* project. The pursuit in

question unfolds surrounded by human cadavers whose inner physical machinations are laid bare just as comprehensively and unsparingly as Bond's psychological equivalents are the longer the Craig era progresses. Elsewhere, *Quantum of Solace* sees M and Bond interrogate Mr. White (an enigmatic, elusive presence throughout three of the four Craig films) in a medieval Italian catacomb; the movie's Bolivian section then has 007 discover a clandestine underground dam built in order to precipitate a regional drought crisis. Several of *Skyfall*'s central locations – the WWII bunker network MI6 retreats to after Silva bombs their above-ground premises, the London Tube network, the centuries-old priest hole and tunnel network beneath Bond's ancestral family seat – are subterranean ones, and Silva sets a trap for Q via a computer virus that a map of the London Underground system as its encryption code.

Spectre preserves the above-noted trend. Bond, for example, finally runs Mr. White to ground in a hidden basement surveillance unit that the latter has built into an Austrian ski lodge. White's below-ground banks of CCTV screens symbolise the dominant approach that the Craig-era films take towards questions of character creation and development. To properly understand the public-facing carapace that something or someone presents to the present-day world, one needs to dig down as deep as possible beneath (and before) that self-protective epidermis. For James Chapman, such a move 'introduces a level of introspection and psychoanalytical apparatus that was less evident in Fleming'³³ into *Casino Royale* and its three successors alike. Perhaps the main consequence of this consistent narrative strategy is the feeling, frequently expressed by both popular and scholarly commentators, that a major element of the Craig films' distinctiveness and interest lies in the fact that they succeed in constructing and communicating a substantive sense of what Douglas L. Howard calls 'a Bond who is an actual character'.³⁴

Nobody Does It Better? Craig's Bond and twenty-first-century images and ideas of Britishness

The Craig quartet's interest in ideas of backstory (and, most particularly, backstories that foreground damaged childhoods and the difficulty of being young) clearly represents one central thematic thread running through and binding each of the films in question. But this essay's discussion now turns to another, equally important skein that links the actor's four outings as Bond. The connective tissue in question instead acknowledges the anguish of growing old, with Craig's frequently traumatised (even if then always revitalised) physical frame coming to stand, in Marouf Hasian Jr. and some other commentators' view, as 'a characterological symbol of British weakness and decay'.³⁵ In linking the most recent Bond films to questions of national identity, those recent observers build upon a longer-term critical legacy. As James Chapman and numerous other critics have argued since the original 1950s and '60s publication of Ian Fleming's novels, 'the [Bond] books and films... attempt to mediate the decline of British power by creating an imaginary world in which the *Pax Britannica* still operates'.³⁶ As a direct consequence, many if not most pre-Craig 007 movies typically flag-wave at every available opportunity –

‘Keeping the British end up’, as Roger Moore put it in *The Spy Who Loved Me* (Lewis Gilbert, GB, 1977), a film whose Marvin Hamlisch-penned theme song proclaimed to all and sundry that ‘nobody does it better’.

This traditional aspect of the pre-Craig Bond franchise’s ideological identity offered fertile ground upon which *Casino Royale* and its successors could further stake out their self-asserted difference from what had gone before within 007’s celluloid existence. Indeed, being British comes to seem ever more of a burden the longer the Craig era progresses. By the time *Spectre* is reached a sense of permanent, and possibly irretrievable, national crisis appears firmly entrenched. M rails against the disastrous consequences of an imminent merger between MI5 and MI6, which he castigates as ‘the biggest shake-up in the history of British intelligence’. Meanwhile, the treacherous, SPECTRE-employed Denbigh personifies the British ruling class as a self-replicating clique (viewers are told he attended the same private school as the current Home Secretary) in hock to the highest international corporate-criminal bidder.

Across all of the Craig movies, therefore, Bond and his immediate professional brethren are repeatedly bound by their shared knowledge (from bitter experience) that the best way to protect the country is to protect oneself from the hydra-like tentacles of the country’s state apparatus. At various junctures within the Craig films, Q, Moneypenny, Tanner, and M (both as played by Judi Dench and as later played by Ralph Fiennes) all keep secrets from each other and/or the state. This is because, throughout the Craig cycle, Bond and his closest colleagues understand that, as Steven W. Thomas frames matters, ‘enemies are everywhere because they are us’.³⁷ For perhaps this reason, *Spectre* consistently and conspicuously features (like *Skyfall* before it) the Houses of Parliament in establishing shots for its numerous London-based sequences. No previous Bond films come close to matching the amount of time these two movies spend on British soil (central London, for the most part). As Klaus Dodds has noted, this is because, during the pre-Craig era, ‘the idea of export was significant – Bond was dispatched elsewhere to confront dangers. Evil geniuses might threaten global destruction, but their fiendish plans rarely threatened Britain directly [or perhaps better, exclusively and specifically]’.³⁸ The 007 cycle accordingly passed decades accumulating air miles via a self-congratulatory advertisement of the idea of Britain as the world’s policeman, a steady-handed, coolheaded buffer between two volatile (because much younger) superpowers. In this regard, Tony Bennett and Janet Wollacott have argued, many of the Bond films (and the novels that preceded them) offered ‘an imaginary outlet for a historically blocked jingoism’.³⁹ In sharp contrast, the Craig movies instead drive mortal danger and defenselessness deep into the nation’s physical and political heart. One small, but nonetheless suggestive, indication of this is the fact that *Skyfall* was the first official Bond film to make no direct or indirect reference whatsoever to the series’ longest-standing external threat, namely, Russian state interests and state actors.⁴⁰

Indeed, one can go so far as to argue that a pervasive sense of national decline and decay already stalks Craig’s Bond right from the character’s very first

moments on screen. *Casino Royale*'s opening pre-credits sequence narrates an assassination in Prague (and as Czechoslovakia did in 1992, Britain may also yet divide, Scotland's 2014 referendum vote to remain within the UK for the present time notwithstanding). Tellingly, this apparently state-sanctioned killing (viewers never see or hear Dench's M complain about it) that allows Bond to attain 00 status is not of an enemy, but of an enemy within. The quarry is Dryden (Malcolm Sinclair), a British agent who sells secrets and shares a surname with the nation's first Poet Laureate. Craig's Bond thus owes his professional existence to the fact that, from the early-twenty-first-century 007 franchise's standpoint, one of the most significant and sellable of all threats to the British state is in fact the British state itself.⁴¹ As Tom L. McNeely and others have noted, the majority of the Craig (and, indeed, also a significant number of the earlier Brosnan) films see 'the British Secret Service... overrun by double agents... a phenomenon that happened on the female M's reign'.⁴² Taking to heart the traditional saw that one should keep one's friends close but one's enemies closer still, as the Craig quartet progresses the movies spend more and more time in London. While present-day satellite technology admittedly allows real-time communication from opposite ends of the earth,⁴³ the British capital's steadily escalating narrative prominence (not to mention the fact that the city is frequently swathed in cloud and rain) also seems to stem from an acute sense, on the films' part, that Britain itself is somehow under existential threat. This overarching sense of a former great power in possibly advanced and terminal decline is underscored most self-consciously by M's set-piece speech to a parliamentary committee in *Skyfall*. She quotes the stirring (but sad) peroration of Alfred, Lord Tennyson's 1833 poem *Ulysses* ('We are not now that strength which in old days moved earth and heaven') as Bond pounds the streets of Britain's central government district in a desperate attempt to stop an imminent terrorist outrage.

In pursuing such a reading of the Craig Bond films, it should be acknowledged that there exist highly accomplished contemporary critical analyses that place comparable emphasis on these movies' preoccupation with contemporary questions of national identity while reaching radically different conclusions about them. Recent academic commentators such as Marouf Hasian Jr. and Christopher Holliday, for example, understand the Craig films as texts that collectively and cumulatively work towards the alleged reconstruction of a self-confident, quasi-imperial modern-day British identity.⁴⁴ In response, however, (and strategically excluding discussion of *Spectre*'s climax until this essay's imminent closing section), the analysis presented here instead proposes that the national pessimism discernible within the Craig quartet arguably deepens with each passing entry within it. In *Casino Royale*, the overarching image is of a barrel imperilled by a few rotten apples like Dryden. By the early stages of *Spectre*, however, the barrel is just about held together by the precious few sound pieces of fruit still rattling around inside it. What Vesper Lynd poses as a near-unimaginable aberration in *Casino Royale* ('our government will have directly funded terrorism') quickly comes to look like business as usual across the subsequent films. In *Quantum of Solace*, the Foreign Secretary (Tim Pigott-Smith) calmly informs M that the government's interests and those of primary antagonist Dominic Greene 'now align', and is willing to let the CIA assassinate Bond.

Also of relevance in this regard is the fact that the developing character arcs of Bond and Judi Dench's M from *Casino Royale* through *Skyfall* entail that the questions the earlier movie asks of him – Is he psychologically fit for national duty? Is his national duty compatible with psychological fitness? – become increasingly posed of her instead. This is so because as the Craig era progresses and as Jim Leach has noted, Dench's M becomes 'a much less stable element in the Bond-M relationship than the male M was... behav[ing] somewhat differently from film to film'.⁴⁵ 'I would ask you if you could remain emotionally detached, but I don't think that's your problem', M chides in *Casino Royale*. *Skyfall*, however, offers stone-related counsel to the female inhabitant of a glass house. M forbids Bond to save the life of a critically wounded fellow British agent, almost kills 007 when she orders Moneypenny to fire (against the latter's better judgement) at an adversary engaged in hand-to-hand combat with our hero, and is revealed to have delivered Silva, a former British agent in pre-handover Hong Kong, over to be tortured (broken into thirty pieces, perhaps) by the Chinese government. Moreover, she struggles throughout the Craig years to see any reason why she and her agents ought to be meaningfully accountable to the UK legislature.

Service in the cause of such a country (and such a controller) might easily come to seem not worth the candle. This is perhaps the major reason why the Craig films increasingly privilege the maternal overtones present from the very outset within the relationship between Bond and Dench's M. This move is possible because the latter character is consistently figured within the movies in question as a complex and fissiparous compound entity, 'boss/mentor/mother'⁴⁶ in Linda Wight's formulation, to differing degrees and in differing orders of priority at different points within *Casino Royale* and its successors. Overall, however, the waxing of an emotional logic that justifies 007's enduring loyalty to (surrogate) Queen and Country both masks and compensates for the simultaneous waning of an ideological equivalent that sees British patriotism as a laudable form of allegiance to a contemporarily sustaining and sustainable national identity and set of state interests. Tobias Hochscherf points out that as the Craig era progresses, 'personal motives displace national allegiance'⁴⁷ more and more for Bond. It is certainly the case that Silva, a British-made bogeyman, is hard to refute when he suggests that twenty-first-century attachment to ideas of 'England, the Empire, MI6' constitutes a form of masochistic delusion akin to actively choosing to inhabit (anticipating Blofeld's near-identical taunt in *Spectre*) 'a ruin'.

Conclusion: Will (this) James Bond Return?

It is worth asking in conclusion where all of the above leaves James Bond (and/or Daniel Craig as James Bond) in 2016. On one hand, the actor's four films as 007 have clearly worked to intimate the renewed commercial and cultural vitality of character and franchise alike. But on the other, *Spectre* departs noticeably from its predecessors in pointedly inferring its lead actor's mortality, in terms of Craig's capacity to maintain possession of the starring role. Richly suggestive here is the fact that the actor's fourth turn in the tuxedo is a far more self-referential affair than his

previous three. The earlier movies' homages to Bond heritage exemplify the principle of portion control to a tee, their in-jokes celebrated because sparing. *Casino Royale's* hat-tip to *Dr. No* has Craig emerging from sun-kissed Caribbean waters, masculine undress supplanting a bikinied Ursula Andress,⁴⁸ the oil-drenched corpse of Strawberry Fields (Gemma Arterton) in *Quantum of Solace* takes the iconic gold-plated one of Jill Masterson (Shirley Eaton) from *Goldfinger* (Guy Hamilton, GB, 1964) and paints it black; Bond's lizard-hopping escape from the (figurative) lion's den in *Skyfall's* Macau casino sequence resurrects Roger Moore's similarly quick-witted egress from an alligator lair in *Live and Let Die*.

Spectre's self-reference count, however, swiftly spirals off the scale. A Latin carnival chase sequence also appears in *Moonraker* (Lewis Gilbert, GB/Fr/USA, 1979); out-of-control helicopter stunt work replays the opening set piece of *For Your Eyes Only*; a mysterious, octopus logo-bearing criminal syndicate was already featured in *Octopussy* (John Glen, GB/USA, 1983); *Live and Let Die* prefigured the latest Bond film's use of combustible skulls within the introductory title sequence; the return of Blofeld and SPECTRE references the entire Bond run between *Dr. No* and *Diamonds Are Forever*; conversation-shy Übermensch Mr. Hinx (Dave Bautista) seems like the grandson of Richard Kiel's Jaws, the latter first seen in *The Spy Who Loved Me*; Madeleine Swann's Alpine mountain-top clinic is constructed along similar architectural and dietetic lines to that of Blofeld in *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*; hand-to-hand combat on a fast-moving train brings to mind *From Russia with Love* (Terence Young, GB, 1963); Blofeld's ceremonial offer of drinks, dinner, and fresh clothes prior to termination is identical to the titular villain's modus operandi in *Dr. No*, and his hi-tech North African desert lair is the kind of divertingly spectacular folly celebrated production designer Ken Adam used to imagine and execute for Bond films like *You Only Live Twice*; the manic funhouse-style trap that Blofeld sets for Bond in the abandoned MI6 premises replays the cat-and-mouse game orchestrated by Scaramanga (Christopher Lee) at the end of *The Man with the Golden Gun* (Guy Hamilton, GB/USA, 1974).

The fact that *Spectre* plays much more with precedent than do its immediate predecessors is indicative of several things at once. Most obviously, there is a sense that the present-day Bond producers have reached the self-confident conclusion that, franchise reboot supposedly complete with Craig's ten-year term in the role, reversion to the traditional 007 movie blueprint is today more feasible, commercially speaking, than at any time since *Die Another Day*. In this regard, the careful selectivity of *Spectre's* in-joking is just as telling as is its scale. The film's laundry list of self-quotation is entirely derived from the Connery and Moore years, the franchise's golden age (relatively speaking) – a period that came to an end once the idea that Bond cried out for root-and-branch reformation properly took hold in the popular imagination with the mid-1980s casting of Timothy Dalton in the role. Craig's noticeably more light-hearted approach to playing Bond in *Spectre* also contributes to that feeling, too. Even-handedly reliant on gags and guns, winks and weaponry in a way he never was before, the actor appears for the first time like a quip off the old block, giving a performance as reminiscent of Connery in the 1960s as it is of Craig's own debut in *Casino Royale* several decades later.

Ultimately, then, when viewed in hindsight against *Spectre*'s contrastive example, *Casino Royale*, *Quantum of Solace* and *Skyfall* start to look like transitional, rather than enduringly transformational, works. Those earlier movies were arguably most preoccupied with the survivalist necessity of convincing contemporary global audiences that James Bond *had* returned. As a result, they had far less time than their predecessors for the self-congratulatory luxury of the 'James Bond Will Return' tagline with which earlier 007 movies traditionally closed. *Casino Royale*, for instance, does not permit Craig to utter the iconic line 'The name's Bond... James Bond' until the movie's very final seconds. Similarly, *Quantum of Solace* concludes with Bond reassuring Judi Dench's M that 'I never left', while *Skyfall* ends with Mallory asking the agent, 'Are you ready to get back to work?' *Spectre*'s wholesale re-engagement with major elements of the pre-Craig Bond formula seems predicated on an assumption that the promises proffered by the earlier movies have now been firmly accepted by international audiences. Or, to put it another way, perhaps the Craig cycle is as much of a serial philanderer as Bond himself was traditionally portrayed as, pre-*Casino Royale*. Reminiscent of an inveterate lothario caught red-handed, the overarching trajectory of the Craig films, when the latter are considered as a whole, looks much like an extravagant commitment to change ways today that is made precisely in order to quietly return to them tomorrow. Swann resignedly tells Bond towards *Spectre*'s end that 'I'm not going to ask you to change: you are what you are'. Perhaps she speaks for (and of) more than their fictional romance alone.

Other aspects of *Spectre* also add to the overarching suspicion that time is up for both the Craig experiment and the actor's time in the Bond role. Having, since *Casino Royale*, comprehensively elaborated, then exhausted Bond's backstory and exhumed faith in a romantically timeless image of quasi-imperial British decency and potency (not least through the patrician male Mallory's replacement of Dench's aging and increasingly error-prone female M), it is hard to see where screenwriters Purvis and Wade would have left to go. Indeed, the latter publicly noted in 2012 that the pair had in fact originally planned to depart the franchise before *Skyfall*.⁴⁹ 2014 British media reports ascribed the duo's unplanned return for *Spectre* to problems with John Logan's original script for that project.⁵⁰ Director Sam Mendes ('I have finished a journey'⁵¹) and Daniel Craig ('All I want to do is move on'⁵²) both used late-2015 promotional interviews to suggest a definitive break with Bond. Wider film industry machinations also come into play here. Sony Pictures' international distribution rights for the Bond franchise (which the company has enjoyed for the entire Craig quartet) expired with *Spectre*. This fact, and tensions between Sony and Bond co-producers EON and MGM around the series' escalating production budgets, led Barbara Broccoli, series co-producer since *Goldeneye*, to openly acknowledge in late 2015 that the franchise's future is at present 'a little uncertain'.⁵³

With this backdrop in mind, it is hard not to respect the ingenious logistical efficiency of *Spectre*'s preparatory deck-clearing for whatever creative, ideological and/or financial arrangements come to take hold of the Bond franchise in the immediate future. Reiterating the fact that the 007 movie template's traditional

tenets always seem to outlive the inflections brought to the table by whichever actor plays the role at a given moment in time is perhaps this movie's main *raison d'être*. Two interlocking ideas are suggested, for instance, by Bond's garb (a skeleton costume and mask) when viewers first see him in *Spectre*. Firstly, there is the admission that the Bond series has long owed as much to *Doctor Who* as to *Dr. No* for its evolutionary resilience. The central protagonist's body is enduring yet ephemeral in equal measure; his enviable frame and fame is worn by successive stars until the physical and/or commercial vitality of each is deemed exhausted with the passing of time.⁵⁴ Second, and more bluntly, there is the archly literal-minded visual inference that Daniel Craig is a dead man walking, at least so far as continuing to play 007 is concerned.

That same inference is advanced in a variety of other ways elsewhere in the film. '*Tempus fugit*' forms the extemporised code word that allows Bond to activate an exploding watch (just the sort of traditional Bond gadget scorned by Ben Wishaw's Q when the latter character first reappeared in *Skyfall*) and escape Blofeld's clutches. The 'atmosphere' switch Bond throws inside the souped-up car he steals from 009 may well turn on the other agent's choice of music, but the lyrics of the song the first bars are then heard from (Sinatra's 'New York, New York') gloss the implied situation of Craig's Bond beautifully: 'Start spreading the news/I'm leaving today'. More obviously still, *Spectre*'s ending ties up all manner of plot-based loose ends first deliberately frayed by Purvis and Wade in *Casino Royale* a decade earlier. SPECTRE is revealed as the puppet master behind earlier foes Mr. White, Le Chiffre, Greene and Silva, but is then swiftly beheaded by Blofeld's capture. The old MI6 premises, Bond's HQ since *Goldeneye* in the mid-1990s, is blown sky high in a controlled demolition following Silva's devastating bomb attack on the building early in *Skyfall*.

Most importantly of all, patrician democrat Mallory ascends into the role vacated by the increasingly compromised figure that was Judi Dench's M. 'We're accountable to the people we're trying to protect... there are no more shadows,' he loftily scolds her not long before her death in *Skyfall*. Director replaces dictator, WASP-ish man supplants waspish woman, and the Bond series' apparent faith in the British state and the latter's good intentions seems greater than ever as a result.⁵⁵ This self-willed forgetting of the far murkier images of national identity and state interests that characterised *Casino Royale*, *Quantum of Solace* and *Skyfall* can be understood as one major component part of what Eva Krainitzki had already claimed to be the Craig cycle's self-conscious project by the time of *Skyfall*'s production and distribution: 'signify[ing] a return to a previous Bond formula... a return to an ideological past, with a particular mode of representation'.⁵⁶ Symptomatically, however, this cross-film process culminates at the very moment within *Spectre* when Craig's 007 appears to call time on his service for the ideological projects represented by such conservative valorisations of Queen and Country. On one hand, it is surely no accident that Mallory is framed (from the prone Blofeld's point of view) against the Houses of Parliament when he matter-of-factly arrests the defeated supervillain on the middle of Westminster Bridge – and also that he diligently invokes a specific piece of governmental counter-terrorism legislation, the

2001 Special Measures Act, in doing so. Equally telling, however, is the fact that at the same time Bond chooses to walk over to that crossing's opposite side in order to embrace Swann rather than eliminate Blofeld. Nothing if not supremely self-aware of the scene's valedictory symbolism, Craig's now demob-happy incarnation of Bond notes that he is 'out of bullets' and has 'got something better to do' before quite literally putting clear blue water between himself and the most prominent architectural symbol of British national and imperial interests and self-importance.

Considering *Casino Royale*, *Quantum of Solace*, *Skyfall* and *Spectre* in the round, these films constitute quite some extended conjuring trick. Ultimately, the Craig era's initially perceived and advertised need for fundamental evolution and innovation within the 007 franchise has been obliterated with the irreversible decisiveness of a message that self-destructs in five seconds. Examining the character of Bond from a clinical perspective, a group of psychologist researchers has argued that the fictional spy exemplifies a 'dark triad' of problematic mental health conditions: subclinical narcissism, psychopathy and Machiavellianism. They go on to argue, however, that such undeniably troubling human character traits cannot simply be dismissed or demonised by medical professionals because the former 'may be solely – or selfishly – optimal for the individual in the context of their life'.⁵⁷ One might transfer this argument from the identity of Bond as fictional character onto that of the ongoing real-world film franchise which encompasses him. On the evidence of *Spectre*, the franchise seems in 2015 to have committed its immediate future to something very like the ruthless survivalism recommended by *Skyfall's* Silva: 'focus on the essentials... when a thing is redundant, it is eliminated'. It is fitting, then, that the triumphant Mallory shares a surname (the extra 'l' notwithstanding) with another Anglo aristocrat, the fifteenth-century poet Sir Thomas: *Spectre* gifts Ralph Fiennes' character nothing less than the chance to oversee his own modern-day *Morte d'Arthur*.⁵⁸ Blofeld safely behind bars, Craig's Bond bows out by collecting his restored 1964 Aston Martin from Q, the 'one last thing' he says he needs before quite literally driving off into the sun – if not heading for Valhalla, then at very least set fair for some conveniently unspecified form of 007th heaven. It seems an appropriate enough golden handshake – one heritage prop (car) deserves another (Craig). James Bond Will Return: but Bond scholars should not necessarily expect Daniel Craig and all that his era briefly played with and promised to do so as well.

Disclosure

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes

¹ See Young, Derek S., 'Bond. James Bond', 21-27.

² Many of the Bond-related journal articles that have appeared over the last decade are referenced throughout this essay. Considering book-length studies alone, the last decade has witnessed no fewer than nine new or revised publications on the Bond franchise: Brittany, Michele (ed.), *James Bond and Popular Culture*; Caplen, Robert A., *Shaken & Stirred: The Feminism of James Bond*; Chapman, James, *Licence to Thrill: A Cultural History of the James Bond Films*, Second Edition; Funnell, Lisa (ed.), *For His Eyes Only: The Women of James Bond*; Lindner, Christoph (ed.), *The James Bond Phenomenon: A Critical Reader*; Lindner, Christoph, (ed.), *The James Bond Phenomenon: A Critical Reader*, Second Edition; Lindner, Christoph (ed.), *Revisioning 007: James Bond and Casino Royale*; Weiner, Robert G.,

B. Lynn Whitfield and Jack Becker (eds.), *James Bond in World and Popular Culture: The Films are Not Enough*, Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010; Weiner, Robert G., B. Lynn Whitfield and Jack Becker (eds.), *James Bond in World and Popular Culture: The Films are Not Enough*, Second Edition, Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012.

³ Chapman, *Licence to Thrill*, 10.

⁴ Lindner, 'Introduction: Revisioning 007', 1.

⁵ Arnett, 'Casino Royale and Franchise Remix', 2.

⁶ Linder, 'Introduction: Revisioning 007', 7.

⁷ For illustrative examples of broadly supportive critical readings of some or all of the Craig films, see Arnett, 'Casino Royale and Franchise Remix', 8-14; Cox, 'Becoming James Bond', 193-194; Fussfeld Cohen, 'The Digital Action Image of James Bond', 114-118; Funnell, "'I Know Where You Keep Your Gun'", 469. For illustrative examples of broadly sceptical critical readings of the same, see Amacker and Moore, "'The Bitch is Dead'"; Hasian Jr., 'Skyfall, James Bond's Resurrection, and 21st-Century Anglo-American Imperial Nostalgia'; Funnell, 'Objects of White Male Desire'; Krainitzki, 'Judi Dench's age-inappropriateness and the role of M'.

⁸ In identifying these particular categories for discussion, this essay draws upon a wide range of existing Bond scholarship. For illustrative examples of work on the theme of body, see Cox, 'Becoming James Bond'; Funnell, "'I Know Where You Keep Your Gun'". For illustrative examples of work on the theme of Britishness, see Anderson, 'Neocon Bond'; McMillan, 'Broken Bond'.

⁹ Holliday, 'Mothering the Bond-M Relation', 266.

¹⁰ Dodds, 'Shaking and Stirring James Bond', 120. See also Dodds, "'It's Not For Everyone'"; Shaw, 'The Politics of Representation'.

¹¹ See, for example, Funnell, "'I Know Where You Keep Your Gun'", 456-457; Pierce-Jones, 'The Men Who Played James Bond'; O'Reilly and Kerrigan, 'A view to a brand', 782.

¹² Quoted in Lee, 'The Man Who Saved Bond', 36. For illustrative examples of scholarly analyses that privilege the idea of directorial input and influence over Craig Bond films directed by filmmakers other than Mendes, see, for example, Hochscherf, 'Bond for the Age of Global Crises', 317; Scheibel, 'The History of *Casino Royale*', 30-31; Sperb, 'Hardly the Big Picture', 55.

¹³ For exceptions to that rule, see Chapman, *Licenced to Thrill*, 243-245; Scheibel, 'The History of *Casino Royale*', 28-29; Goggin and Glas, 'It Just Keeps Getting Bigger'.

¹⁴ Quoted in Bilmes, 'Daniel Craig Is *Esquire's* October Cover Star'.

¹⁵ Quoted in Florence, 'Interview - Neal Purvis and Robert Wade'.

¹⁶ Quoted in Dowd, 'Film writers who "rebuilt" Bond'.

¹⁷ Gehlawat, 'Improvisation, Action and Architecture in *Casino Royale*', 136.

¹⁸ Dittmer and Dodds, 'The Geopolitical Audience', 77. More generally, Greinacher, 'James Bond – A True Modernist?' argues that Bond criticism traditionally overlooks the suggestiveness of architectural elements of narrative settings in the 007 films.

¹⁹ Linder, 'Revisioning 007', 6.

²⁰ Anderson, 'Neocon Bond', 6.

²¹ Fussfeld Cohen, 'The Digital Action Image of James Bond', 116.

²² Tremonte and Racioppi, 'Body politics and *Casino Royale*', 193.

²³ See, for example, Hochscherf, 'Bond for the Age of Global Crises', 299.

²⁴ For examples of contemporary press coverage of Craig's casting that made explicit note of the actor's hair colour, see Brooks, 'First blond Bond goes into action'; Mitchell, 'Daniel Craig crowned as "blond" Bond'.

²⁵ For extended critical readings of the pivotal scene from which this line of dialogue is taken, see Cunningham and Gabri, "'Any Thug Can Kill'", 88-90; Tincknell, 'Double-0 Agencies', 108-110.

²⁶ Sperb, 'Hardly the Big Picture', 58; see also McGowan, 'The Games Bond Plays', 385.

²⁷ Indeed, some commentators see the escalating narrative ubiquity and centrality of surveillance technologies as a defining characteristic of the Bond films from as early as the start of the Pierce Brosnan era. See, for example, Leach, "'The World Has Changed'".

²⁸ Cox, 'Becoming James Bond', 190.

²⁹ For an extended analysis of the integral place of title sequence design within the symbolic economy of the Craig Bond films, see Hunt, 'Beyond the Spiral Barrel'; Racioppi and Tremonte, 'Geopolitics, Gender, and Genre'; Planka, 'Female Bodies in the James Bond Title Sequences', 146-147.

- ³⁰ For more detail, see Arnett, 'Franchise Remix'; Cox, 'Becoming James Bond', 187; Dodds, 'Shaking and Stirring James Bond', 118; Funnell, "'I Know Where You Keep Your Gun'", 461.
- ³¹ Hochscherf, 'Bond for the Age of Global Crises', 316.
- ³² The characters of Tracy Di Vincenzo (Diana Rigg) in *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* and Melina Havelock (Carole Bouquet) in *For Your Eyes Only* form two notable exceptions to this general rule. For scholarly discussions of these figures, see Santos, "'This Never Happened to the Other Fellow'"; Pagnoni Berns, 'Sisterhood as Resistance in *For Your Eyes Only* and *Octopussy*'.
- ³³ Chapman, *Licence to Thrill*, 248.
- ³⁴ Howard, "'Do I Look Like I Give A Damn?'" , 48.
- ³⁵ Hasian Jr., 'Skyfall, James Bond's Resurrection, and 21st-Century Anglo-American Imperial Nostalgia', 580.
- ³⁶ Chapman, 'Afterword', 483. See also, for example, Bennett and Wollacott, 'The moments of Bond'.
- ³⁷ Thomas, 'The New James Bond', 38.
- ³⁸ Dodds, 'Shaking and Stirring James Bond', 118. See also Chapman, 'A licence to thrill', 115.
- ³⁹ Bennett and Wollacott, 19.
- ⁴⁰ Lawless, 'Constructing the "other"', 87.
- ⁴¹ See, for example, Hochscherf, Bond for the Age of Global Crises, p. 306.
- ⁴² McNeely, 'The Feminization of M: Gender and Authority in the Bond Films', 156-157.
- ⁴³ See Tremonte and Racioppi, 195-197.
- ⁴⁴ See, for example, Hasian Jr., 'Skyfall, James Bond's Resurrection, and 21st-Century Anglo-American Imperial Nostalgia'; Holliday, 'Mothering the Bond-M Relation', p. 269.
- ⁴⁵ Leach, 'James Bond and Female Authority', 32. See also Dodds, 'Shaking and Stirring James Bond', 127.
- ⁴⁶ Wight, 'Killing mother', 178.
- ⁴⁷ Hochscherf, 'Bond for the Age of Global Crises', 307. For illustrative examples of critical readings that stress the increasingly maternal construction of Judi Dench's M, see Kunze, 'From Masculine Mastermind to Maternal Martyr'; Patton, 'M, 007, and the Challenge of Female Authority'.
- ⁴⁸ Indeed, this brief sequence represents one of the most critically pored-over single moments in the entire Craig cycle. See, for example, Cox, *Becoming James Bond*, 186; Funnell, "'I Know Where You Keep Your Gun'"; Mercer, 'The enigma of the male sex symbol'.
- ⁴⁹ For further details, see Grobler, 'Bond writers Neil [sic] Purvis and Robert Wade confirm their departure from the James Bond franchise'.
- ⁵⁰ See, for example, Bamigboye, 'Bond turmoil as new script fails to thrill'.
- ⁵¹ Quoted in Shoard, 'Sam Mendes confirms *Spectre* will be his last James Bond'.
- ⁵² Quoted in Calhoun, 'My advice to the next James Bond'.
- ⁵³ Quoted in Barnes, 'Secret Agent in the Family'; see also Kilday, 'How Sony Could Lose James Bond After Bloated *Spectre*'.
- ⁵⁴ See Funnell, "'I Know Where You Keep Your Gun'", 460.
- ⁵⁵ See Wight, 188.
- ⁵⁶ Krainitzki, 'Judi Dench's age-inappropriateness and the role of M', 38. See also Anderson, 'Neocon Bond', 11-12; Patton, 'M, 007, and the Challenge of Female Authority', 254; Parks, "'M" (O)thering', 264.
- ⁵⁷ Jonason, et al., 'The Antihero in Popular Culture', 192.
- ⁵⁸ McMillan, 'Broken Bond', 197; 204.

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