

## The New Brutalism:

### Agency, Embodiment and Performance in Daniel Craig's 007

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Breaking ground on the long lead-in promotion for *Spectre* (Mendes 2015), the October 2015 issue of *Esquire* magazine asked cover star Daniel Craig to reflect on a decade as 007, where “he redefined the once cartoonish secret agent as a symbol of masculinity for the modern age” (Bilmes “Once More With Feeling” 164). The feature constructs Craig's Bond in a way that deviates from established interpretations of the star-character with a distinct focus on Daniel Craig himself, here defined as much away from Bond as through him. In describing how Craig's desire for “beer and fags” stems from the actor having to knuckle down and perform promotional duties (ibid), author Alex Bilmes uses a blunt language which mimics Craig's own brusque reworking of Bond into what has been widely acknowledged as a more brutish and crude character. Craig's interpretation matches Ian Fleming's original description of Bond as a “blunt instrument” and the phrase is present in Craig's first Bond film *Casino Royale* (Campbell 2006), used by Judy Dench's M to describe the agent. Bilmes' style also departs from conventional rhetoric that constructs an actor's identity through their characters and emphasises how naturally they embody their roles, as seen in an earlier interview between the two, “[I] sat down

with James Bond for an afternoon pint” (Bilmes “*Skyfall*: the Daniel Craig Interview” online).

The 2015 article is illustrated with photographs shot by Greg Williams, a figure with much experience of Craig and Bond through his publicity/advertising campaigns for the franchise. He has also published a series of *Bond on Set* books which candidly document the “skills, hard work and magic that create the world of James Bond” (*Filming Skyfall*). It is ‘hard work’ that has come to characterise the era of Craig’s 007, particularly through the repeated use of the word ‘brutal’ to describe Bond’s action, outlook, and masculine identity. Williams’ photographs reflect this, positioning Craig in a series of modernist urban locations where harsh lines horizontally bisect the frame, with Craig leaning against concrete walls, slumped behind wide windows, and dominating a fragmented interior of contrasting geometrical planes. Aligning Bond with architecture and modernist structures is nothing new; both Monika Gehlawat and Udo Greinacher do so, using them to explore Bond’s destructive tendencies and uncertain place in the contemporary world. But for Williams and Bilmes, the emphasis is on Craig, not Bond, and here it is the actor who is defined through architectural space in a piece that consistently refers to Craig as an active agent in the construction of Bond. Craig himself frames his acting process through architectural design reflecting that on being cast “it felt to me that they were offering me a blueprint, and saying: ‘Form it around that.’” (Bilmes 168). Taking its lead from *Esquire*’s focus on the ‘hard work’ of Daniel Craig in forming Bond, this article explores the creative agency of Craig-the-actor. In emphasising

the visibility of Craig's acting labour, rather than as an abstract figure who *merely* and *temporarily* embodies a more significant character, it identifies some of the performative mechanisms used to build his version of James Bond and how these reflect and contribute to changing representations of 007 and the noteworthy theme of Craig's era—its new brutality.

### **Acting Labour and The Brutalist Aesthetic**

The term 'The New Brutalism' describes a mid-1990s cycle of films that framed ambiguous morality and hyperviolence through modes of realism and spectacle (Hallam with Marshment 224). The lineage from these to the new action cycle of the 2000s—typified by the “immersive quasi-documentary style” of the Jason Bourne films which have been widely cited as influencing the look and tone of Craig's Bond films—can be traced (Sexton online). But given Craig's approach to the character (the 'blueprint'), and the significance of the built environment in the films, it is valuable to acknowledge the phrase's architectural origins and the continuities between it and Craig's performance.

'New Brutalism' originates from architectural critic Reyner Banham's study of post-war urban construction.<sup>1</sup> He located the movement as an inherently historical reflection where meaning is created from perceptions of the recent past and how the new forms relate to and comment upon this. Like the buildings in Williams' photographs, New Brutalist architecture has long been associated with the 'ugliness' of rough-cast concrete, hard edges, and biaxial symmetry, where function dictated an economy of form. Banham

characterised it as unembellished, anti-idealist, and anti-classical with its transparent exhibition of basic structure and materials: “buildings are made of what [they] appear to be made of” and “one can see what it is made of, how it works, and there is not another things to see except the play of spaces.” (359). However, its anti-image is also the ‘image’ by which it is defined. The movement is both tangible ‘description’ and abstract ‘slogan’—an inelegant image and visible call-to-arms—containing and displaying both ‘object’ and ‘architect’.

The Bond films of Craig’s era embrace the Brutalist aesthetic and its stylistic influences as a means of modernising the series and Bond himself, using locations like the Danube House which opens *Casino Royale*, the Barbican Centre in *Quantum of Solace* (Forster 2008), Broadgate Tower in *Skyfall* (Mendes 2012), and Das Central Hotel in *Spectre*. Even the pre-Brutalist spaces of Hashima Island (*Skyfall*) and Q’s bunker in Regent’s Canal (*Spectre*) fit into this aestheticisation of Craig’s Bond with their functional structural materials of concrete and brick on display, as does *Spectre*’s use of the (fictionally) bombed out carcass of the MI6 SIS Building. Monika Gehlawat discusses the relationship between Bond and architectural space in the major action sequences of *Casino Royale* through the “aesthetics of demolition” (136), where Craig’s Bond is placed in decaying spaces to emphasise the new characterisation of the ‘reborn’ agent as brutal and self-destructive. As an illustration she uses the *parkour* chase scene and the contrast between Molloka’s (professional freerunner Sébastien Foucan) “fluid, dance-like aesthetic” and Bond’s “violent and damaging movements” (134). In terms of how Daniel

Craig relates to these architectural spaces, analyses of the James Bond films tend to concentrate on the representational where emphasis is mostly focused on the placement and movement of Craig and Bond's shared body.<sup>2</sup>

As well as showing the brutalism surrounding the modern conception of the character, Craig utilises similar techniques of construction, attitude and intent as that of the New Brutalist aesthetic in his performances. His voice is well-defined, harsh and often charmless, undercutting what might be conventional quips in other hands with throwaway sharp irritability, and his minimalistic facial expressions depict a blankness to the character. There is little use of embellishment or visual tics and his movements are fast and precise. This includes a streamlined almost robotic run, as seen in *Skyfall* in his exit from Westminster tube station where he accelerates into the road in pursuit of Raoul Silva (Javier Bardem). But there is also a distinct structural play that works with other elements to create this new Bond as a more unknowable and unstable figure across the four films. Craig overtly constructs Bond through a layered performance of different identities that is both intertextually self-reflexive and psychologically realistic. Craig's economic brutality of gesture, movement, expression and voice is most discernible when Bond has 'hard work to do'—here Craig performs James Bond-the-character performing the guise of '007-the secret agent'. What is also important is where this form is abandoned and elements like grace, wit and mime come into play.

Craig adopts the New Brutalist dictum of, not an idealised style, but a pragmatic one that overtly exhibits the material structures of Bond. It reveals the 'anti-image' of the

new Bond (that rejects convention) as itself a constructed 'image'. To paraphrase Banham, Craig's brutality is description and slogan; he is both object and architect. It is this mode of negotiation that differentiates Craig's performance of Bond to that of Matt Damon in the otherwise comparative Jason Bourne films. Though Damon too employs techniques of minimalism and blankness in his performance, these qualities serve the thematic construction of the character himself, authenticating rather than commenting upon him. Bourne begins (and arguably remains) as an empty vessel devoid of identity with Damon's shift between expressionlessness to other qualities, such as speed of physical movement in fight sequences, reflecting the ongoing reveal and remembrance of the character's background. Drawing from more traditionally realist style, Damon's acting allows the actor to embody Bourne and his minimalism functions as a masking device for a character whose mutable and extraordinary identity is disguised by surface ordinariness.

### **Bond's Rebirth, and 'Unnaturalising' Craig**

From narrative structure, challenging visions of ideology, gender and geopolitics to soundtracks and audience responses, readings of Daniel Craig's Bond films actively examine the constructedness of Bond and his world.<sup>3</sup> However, in these there is a tendency to conflate performer and character and to rely on notions of an assumed exhibition of naturalness, to implicitly interpret him as a body to place meaning upon, or to limit Craig's primary significance as one of casting. This is at odds with Craig's

discussion of his approach, especially his insistence on the distance between the two, declaring "I know I play a tough guy, but that's genuinely, genuinely not me" (Anon. online) and "I'm not very cool. I wish I was, but I'm not. And I don't pretend to be cool. But playing James Bond, you have to be cool, and what the hell is cool?" (Calhoun online).<sup>4</sup>

Both Nick Kaye, and Cynthia Baron and Sharon Marie Carnicke explore performative agency as a means of reconceptualising the 'object' beyond the autonomous and auratic, challenging the notion of an assumed inherent passive quality or essence. Baron and Carnicke challenge Walter Benjamin's argument that that the screen actor is "a prop chosen for its characteristics and inserted in the proper place" to merely "represent himself to the public before the camera which allows natural behaviour to be captured, reproduced and exhibited" (12). Whilst Baron and Carnicke criticise a dependence on Benjamin's conceptions of film performance through the body, the auratic, and the subject alone, Keren Omry's two chapters on Craig's Bond rely on this particular framework. In exploring how successive Bonds "articulate something in the general zeitgeist", Tobias Hochscherf draws on star studies— particularly how stars may *embody* social categories—to define how through "his physiognomy and screen personality" Craig "personifies" the new Bond (299-300).

But traditional star discourse always focused on a star's ideological significance more than the techniques of performance, and thinking about Craig through the lens of stardom and as a 'personification' has its limits. Within star/actor analysis, Barry King

has defined ‘personification’ differently, arguing it is where the actor’s identity is foregrounded over the character rather than those who ‘disappear’ into the role (‘impersonation’; 30). Evident in Craig’s resistance to disappearing into the character and his repeated insistence on possessing a critical, questioning distance from Bond is a performative approach that “calls attention to the distinction between [actor] and role”, a postmodern stylisation that deliberately offers critiques of social, cultural, political and ideological ‘realities’ (Baron 23). Even Craig’s natural blondness is a specific performative choice. During press coverage for *Casino Royale*, the actor commented that he was asked to dye his hair brown for the role, but preferred to cut his hair short instead to create “a more brutal appearance”.<sup>5</sup> Craig has however been prepared to dye his hair dark for other parts, including *Love is the Devil: Study for a Portrait of Francis Bacon* (Maybury 1998), *Sylvia* (Jeffs 2003) and *Infamous* (McGrath 2006). These roles were all based on real people, and it would not be a stretch to continue this pursuit of ‘reality’ in his work as Bond—although not ‘real’ per se, nevertheless an established character with an identity that extended beyond Craig’s filmic interpretation. In remaining blond, Craig immediately resists *becoming* the character—in line with King’s ‘personification’—preserving, not subsuming, his own identity, and by doing so emphasising the fictional status of Bond. And as such, Craig’s different kind of ‘personification’ (as defined by King) adds to the ideologically investigative stance that many argue typify the new brutality of his films, an aspect the actor directly identified in his performance, explaining, “I wanted to make sure, as an audience, we questioned what [Bond] was doing”.<sup>6</sup>

It is more common for analyses of Craig to concentrate on his natural and spectacular *embodiment* of the “reborn” Bond in *Casino Royale*. Both actor and character are often defined as one: by mood and tone (edgy, intense, brutal) and of the difference he introduces to the series (blonder, younger, sexier, less sophisticated). This foregrounds the effect (the ‘object’) over how Craig achieves the effect (the ‘architect’). Although it is an obvious point to make, when Christoph Lindner describes “Daniel Craig’s botched Martini order” (2), it Bond, not Craig, who ‘botches’ the order, and to cite only the script has the effect of disavowing Craig’s own active agency. Beyond the dialogue, the stylised sound of his underplaying is a significant means of conveying character type and function, with the hurried, forcefully-stressed irritability of his throwaway delivery on the line “Do I look like I give a damn” appropriately contributing to the mood and theme of the scene, enacting this new Bond’s lack of patience for traditional convention.

### **The Sound of Craig in *Casino Royale* and *Quantum of Solace***

With the distinct focus on the physical and Bond’s body in much of the analysis of Craig’s era, how his voice creates meaning is often overlooked. (This, as Martin Shingler has noted, is typical of film studies in general.) As performed and recorded here, Craig’s voice is a clear manifestation of the destabilising of Bond’s identity and masculinity in response to the more idealised Bond of previous years. Whilst Craig’s body may be spectacular and hyper-masculine in its obvious muscular display, his voice is not, creating an imbalance

between the physical and the vocal that reflects the character's own conflicts. There is a marked difference in Craig's off screen voice in press interviews where smooth movements in speed, animation and pitch can be heard. In his Bond films, Craig's voice is less varied in agility and lacks coloratura. In comparison to the voices of the other Bond actors, its harsher timbre and staccato enunciation has little richness, depth or lyricism.<sup>7</sup> This is especially evident when compared with that of Timothy Dalton's rolling Welsh accent and authoritative RSC-trained baritone, despite their Bonds often being aligned in their moodiness, intensity, and violence<sup>8</sup>. How the abrupt sound and quality of Craig's voice and how it switches in scenes illustrates wider character/narrative representation.

The distinct role of sound can be seen in a setting that immediately accentuates the importance of the aural—the unmasking of Quantum's executive board at the opera *Tosca* in *Quantum of Solace* (2008). Tobias Hochscherf has discussed the operatic sound and elaborate visuals of this scene whereby the stylised intercutting of the grand, lush performance and the action of Bond picking off the board one-by-one, creates “certain allusive meanings behind Bond's vendetta” reflective of the opera's themes of “love, murder, power and suicide” (317). Even before the visual spectacle begins the interplay between sound(s) and silence is significant, with Bond, having stolen an earpiece, silently moving his way through the space listening to the executives plot their next move. Having heard enough, he interrupts their slow and low murmured discussion, with a sharp “Can I offer an opinion?” that rings through high, loud and clear, disrupting the aural register of the whispered conversation and the symphonic opera. It is delivered

quickly and, despite phrased as a question, the downward stress on “opinion” defines it only as an interjection to signal his presence. Its brutal sting undercuts the dramatic mood created by plot and musical setting, positioning this Bond as an outsider in the lavish, sophisticated environment. (This contrasts with Dalton’s Bond in *The Living Daylights* (Glen 1987) who outwardly appreciates the high culture of Kara Milovy’s (Mayam d’Abo) cello concerto recital and the Viennese Opera.) The impact of Craig’s three lines is quick, but it has an economy of function. No longer the suave secret agent of earlier eras, mirroring the films’ pursuit of new directions of purity and realism, he is simply a man who gets the job done however jarring the disruption.

In addition to how it competes with other sounds and silences, the changes in Craig’s voice across scenes help establish Bond’s own conflicting identities, and can be seen from the outset in *Casino Royale*. On his first 007 assignment, observing Mollaka in Madagascar, he speaks via an earpiece to Agent Carter (Joseph Millson) commanding him to “stop touching your ear”. It is delivered in a slow pace with controlled force on the initial consonants, stressing that Bond is the superior agent leading the operation in a professional way. As Carter is discovered, the control is shattered and Bond yells “Put your hand down!”. Craig also drops the professional blank identity, revealing something disguised by the previously measured tone; an origin suggestive perhaps of working class identity. This threatens to break through as the pace speeds into uncontrolled violent urgency promoting the contraction “Put’cha” and losing the consonant stress on “hand”, nearly dropping the “h”.

The well-spoken received pronunciation has returned by the time Bond has broken into M's flat, but in their conversation, Craig's delivery is much higher, lighter, and inconsistent in pitch, incorporating a rising intonation into sentences where he attempts to explain his motivations during the above mentioned sequence. These rises convey a questioning element to his statements; a marginal lack of conviction and confidence in his professional self during his reprimand. Katherine Cox has described this interaction as one akin to a mother chastising her errant and arrogant son (6), a representation also explored in *Quantum of Solace* by Lori Parks (266).<sup>9</sup> Countering the fragility, his confidence returns when after M asks him how he knew where she lived, he replies "the same way I found out your name", signalling a crossing of boundaries between personal and professional/youth and experience. The consonant sounds are soft, the "your" is stretched out and there is a slight circulous wobble to it, as if swirled around the mouth before exiting. Coupled with a raised eyebrow and slight smile, the lifted intonation becomes more lively, no longer vulnerable but playful, indicative of other exchanges between Bond and Dench's M. Whilst this description may recall Roger Moore's portrayal, they are significantly different; Moore's overt displays are used to step outside the film to knowingly engage the audience whereas Craig's (and Dench's) playfulness is designed to remain within the film, creating a sense of intimacy and character development that reinforces their relationship as a maternal one. These examples illustrate, not the presence of a naturally brutal object, but the visibility of Craig's stylised construction of Bond's conflicting identities.

### **Physicality and Resistance Beyond the Muscular**

Craig's 'natural' qualities, particularly the focus on the spectacle of Craig's muscular and/or well-dressed body plays a significant role in many cultural and ideological readings of his films through gender discourse (and it is clear why traditional star studies is useful here). His 'spectacular' physical appearance (and how the films linger on this) are examined as part of the revisioning of Bond and masculinity in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Analyses of costume (and lack thereof) implicitly reify this rather passive position focusing on the symbolic character function of costuming, including Sarah Gilligan's emphasis on the role played by Tom Ford's outfits in "fashioning Bond" (80) in extending the Bond iconography as "both sheathed suited hero and the fetishistic spectacle of the stripped male body" (76). Robert Arnett writes that "[Bond's] tuxedo personifies... a symbol people can understand. Unlike Connery... Craig's Bond takes to evening wear as a guise... he performs "on stage' at Casino Royale" (15). The mis-match between Craig wearing a suit that his face doesn't fit is what develops the character, not Craig's own detached performance of 'the guise'. But Craig is more than a 'costumed mannequin' who inhabits the role of Bond (in all his guises); now a man "resplendent his hand-tailored Tom Ford suit' (Nitins xiii) or "the Blond Bond in hundred-dollar La Perla trunks" (Swift-Kramer 313).

Swift-Kramer's summation of the new Bond comes from the sequence in *Casino Royale* that establishes Craig's Bond as a born-again figure—the ultimate [re]birth of

Venus, emerging from the waves on a Bahamian beach. Inherently commensurate with New Brutalistism with meaning bound up in historical reference and ironic rejection (Ursula Andress and Halle Berry in *Dr No* (Young 1962) and *Die Another Day* (Tamahori 2002), and re-positioning of Craig as “Bond-Bond Girl hybrid” [Funnell 456]), this sequence exemplifies the contemporary representation, shifting towards an unstable conception of the character as both hyper-masculine and feminised. As Lisa Funnell writes, “through cinematography and *mise en scène*, *Casino Royale* places continuous and intentional emphasis on Bond’s body” (463) and in “his double emergence from the sea, Craig’s Bond is positioned as visual spectacle and aligned with the Bond girl character type” (456). Besides historical referent, this sequence demonstrates the brutalist qualities of Craig’s performance, which—although may be passive in its object-status—is created by an overtly harsh physicality that goes beyond the muscular surface. Its meaning comes through its historical context, it is anti-classical and ‘ugly’ in structure, and through this, there is an obvious exhibition of material and form, where we can see “what [it] is made of [and] how it works” (Banham 359).

As Bond emerges from the sea, Craig’s movement is fast and sudden, jerking his head clear of the water with such force that he rocks back down slightly into the water and a heavy-set jaw forces his mouth wide open, suggesting effort and a shortness of breath. He snaps his head around surveying the scene and rises up. Slapping his hand to his face, he rubs away the water and pinches clean his nose with a snort. Looking around, he sniffs and makes an obvious grimace, revealing Bond’s frustration at not finding his

target. In a continuous movement, he then stands up, rubs his face and then the back of his head, looking down in apparent thought, before repeating the pinch to his nose. Turning to the side, he exhales with a huff, and moves towards the beach. Wide-swinging arms pivot clumsily across a straight, fixed body, and the walk is a stomping motion, all of which show the exertion of wading through water. Spotting Solange (Caterina Murino), he immediately stops to stand in a more conventional model-like pose, with a slight smile on his face as he contemplates her.

The component parts— the stomp, the sniff, the huff, the snort, the exhale—are all ugly, obvious movements. In its detail and play of space, gesture and expression, we see the *work* of Craig's performance, and as a result, the 'ugly' work of Bond—his calculations, his frustrations, and the pay-off. It is not graceful, but there is a dynamism with the quickness of each gesture and movement onto the next. The most conventionally 'passive' element—his immobility in the clear mid-shot of his body—occurs at the moment Bond gains back control of the situation, fixing Solange in his view: as we contemplate the full spectacle of him, he contemplates another 'spectacular body. However, this too is complicated as Solange gazes back. In a later scene, he emerges from the water to join Vesper Lynd (Eva Green) on the beach. In keeping with the moment being a personal not professional one, Craig's movements afford less screen time (cutting to him already framed in a mid-shot and moving down his body as he sits) and the sense of Bond's ugly work is diminished. The first sequence has been discussed as both "gloriously spectacularising" the passive body of the new Bond and one that resists full

objectification due to a complex masculinity dependent on “physical attractiveness, strength, and desirability” (Colleen M. Tremonte and Linda Racioppi 189-92). Craig’s overtly ugly movement supports this, and recalls Richard Dyer’s reading of Rita Hayworth in *Gilda* (1946), where Dyer argues that through dynamic, overly-performed movement, Hayworth resists passive sexual objectification. Such movement, dynamism and—therefore potential for resistance—may be observed in Craig’s first exit from the sea.

Looking beyond the spectacular muscularity—of this scene and in the primitive hyperkinetic action set-pieces—different elements of how Craig utilises ‘the physical’ in his construction of Bond as his series progresses. Bond’s character shifts away from the “blunt instrument” of *Casino Royale* towards something more complex, refined, emotional, and ordinary, reflecting the traditional trajectory of the origin narrative. Over the course of the four films, overtly brutalist techniques are weaved in and out of the Craig’s performance, suggesting an increasing rejection of the brutal weaponised form. One example is the bar scene in *Skyfall*, where, presumed dead, Bond is hiding out. Itself a comparative scene between the night time energy of a high-risk drinking game and the isolation of the day time (the prize and price of ‘freedom’), it articulates the push-and-pull between personal and professional identities. In the daytime sequence, Craig slumps at the bar, his immobile hulking body dominating the frame, even overwhelming his face; he clearly does not belong in this space. Cutting to a long shot, Craig makes an overly elaborate gesture, raising his arm high to signal for a drink and then curving it down to

reach behind the bar for a bottle when he is ignored. Such grandness is atypical in his economical unembellished brutalist representation of Bond and suggests the character's need to fabricate an impact on an environment where he has none. Suddenly noticing the television report of MI6's bombing reflected in the mirror he watches with alert stillness before turning to watch the unreflected view. The simple sharp movements with which Craig shows the detached professionalism of his Bond are reintroduced, signalling that the shock of the bombing has shaken him out of inertia and that he is 'back-to-work'.

Concluding the series, *Spectre* begins with some of the most overt physical performativity seen in Craig's work; his masked appearance at Mexico's City's Day of the Dead. As well as being a highly symbolic costume and setting, Craig's movements during this sequence draw heavily from traditions of mime and dance, with an elaborate diagonally-sweeping gesture of recognition as Marco Sciarra (Alessandro Cremona) passes him, a rolling, open-shouldered hip-swinging walk, and a fluidly-rocking embrace of his partner in the hotel lift. These graceful movements give an impression of choreography, aided by the similar swaying of the steady-cam used through the sequence. The choreography and soft physicality of Craig conveys character as well as matching the formal style and over the course of the film, he moves from the ethereal to the ordinary—from Bond as impossible metaphysical being to mere civilian. Its contrast to the stomping, 'ugly' rising from the waves marks the departure between the Bond of *Spectre* and the Bond of *Casino Royale*; no longer just a brutal character and portrayed by more than a singular brutalist technique. In utilising all these qualities (ugly, graceful, ordinary

and so on), Craig's performance as Bond over the four films continuously resists a 'natural' embodiment, instead making visible its mechanisms depicting the character through complex shifts between minimalism and overtness. The juxtapositional qualities significantly contribute to how his Bond may be read as an unstable and conflicted representation of masculinity and modernity, defined by an intransience of performed stylisation in the same way that Brian Baker suggests the "rupturing" movement of Bond's body through contemporary global geopolitical spaces does (145).

### **Irony, Wit and Parody in *Skyfall* and *Spectre***

In locating the characteristics of Craig's new Bond primarily through terms like morose, intense, and brutal, what can be overlooked are the films' dry nuanced humour. It is a feature the actors identify as crucial to their portrayals, with Craig explaining the comic elements in *Spectre* as "we've got people like Ben Whishaw and Rory Kinnear who are very easy with humour... yes, we tried to put more humour into this movie!" (Calhoun online) or the declaration that "Craig [and] Dench don't agree with the critical consensus that the contemporary Bond is ponderous, melancholy... and depressive" (Diehl & Weiner online). Despite sharing the emotional intensity of Dalton's Bond, Craig's more skilful incorporation of comedic elements is one further element that separates the two. Therefore, *Skyfall* and *Spectre* can be aligned with the later films of Moore's Bond, where Moore's self-reflexive ironic performance pre-empt Craig's work in providing a detached commentary, particularly on the aging of the star and how this impacts on a Bond

increasingly prone to caricature. Over the last two films, Craig's performance becomes increasingly playful, utilising witty wordplay across sustained dialogue, such as in *Skyfall* the belated response to Silva's baiting remark about "old ladies giving orders" and "little gadgets from Q branch"; as the airborne back-up arrives above the abandoned island he retorts "the latest thing from Q branch. It's called a radio". It also contains a parodic physicality that displays and comments upon Bond's hyper-masculinity. In doing so, Craig's performance contains two seemingly-at-odds stances, both defined through forms of play: depth of character and ironic detachment. The contrasting structural features of his portrayal of Bond show the interplay between process and effect, whereby—returning to the language of the New Brutalist architects—form expresses function.

Though present in different forms in the films, one example of Craig's parody of 'James Bond' through an overt hyper-masculinity can be seen in the surveillance/fight sequence in the Macau Casino in *Skyfall*, itself a virtual satire of what a 'James Bond' sequence should be. The *mise en scène* is over-the-top, presenting the location as a spectacular Orientalist fantasy, the iconic James Bond theme plays throughout, and it has call-backs to earlier Bond moments (leaping on a giant lizard to escape danger recalling *Live and Let Die* (Hamilton 1973) and Bond telling an inexperienced co-agent 'Don't touch you ear' as in *Casino Royale*). It is a scene where the script heavily signposts the theme of performance. After Moneypenny shaves him (itself a hyper-eroticised pastiche of a seduction scene) she proclaims "You look the part now", suggesting that 'James-Bond-

the-secret-agent' is an identity to be put on when needed and as Klaus Dodds suggests a moment of knowing rejuvenation into a younger self (124). Afterwards, Craig's performance of James Bond performing '007' utilises a hitherto unusual gracefulness: he enters on a boat gliding over (no longer stomping through) the water, each punch is landed cleanly and forcefully, even as a final energetic flair-elegantly propelling himself over the balcony rail to land firmly on safe ground. The artless and ugly moves begun in *Casino Royale*—from the beach sequence or the *parkour* chase that “lacks finesse” (Gehlawat 134) are absent. No longer “in the Bond tradition, all wrong” (Howard 48), this 007 acts as he is supposed to; his introduction of “Bond... James Bond” is delivered ‘correctly’ and, although ordered off screen, he intently watches his “perfect” shaken-not-stirred vodka martini being made. Often motionless with a blank expression and a fixed staring gaze, he is difficult to read and yet totally accessible; posing motionless in his tuxedo, he is spectacularly placed for us to knowingly enjoy. He is cocky, toasting his enemies before they rush him, and confident, mocking his opponent's attempts to fire his gun with a casual finger jab and flat “good luck with that”. The roleplay finishes with a grin and a swagger, almost ‘exiting stage left’. From the script, we know Bond is playacting here; from the *mise en scène*, we know that this is a caricature of an exotically-staged fight scene, and from the differences in Craig's acting—specifically the ironic introduction of clichéd physical elements, we can see both character *and* ironic commentary on this hyper-masculine identity.

Bond's return to 'witty' dialogue is most evident in *Spectre* where there is a complex negotiation around verbal dexterity/simplicity and complete silence, and the function of these qualities in expository conversations. The ability to expertly handle the spoken word as a positive character trait has a long cinematic tradition, back to screwball comedies of the 1930s and 1940s such as *It Happened One Night* (Capra 1934) and *His Girl Friday* (Hawks 1940). Unlike those, in the Bond films dexterity is not signalled through an excess of language. The villains of Craig's era are often verbose orators, including Christophe Waltz's Blofeld, where his overly-embellished drawling vocalisation suggest a meandering, unrestrained extemporising, mirrored in Blofeld's often superfluous dialogue. And yet, how characters negotiate speech is a crucial part of how *Spectre* creates and conveys allegiances and differences around Bond. The most apparent is the droll sparring between Bond and Q (utilising Wishaw's comic timing), introduced with Q's overplayed pun around the word "prick" as he injects Bond with smart-blood. Whilst the affectionate mockery is reminiscent of their relationship in earlier films, through Craig's flat delivery of "I completely understand", what this sequence points at is the unspoken communication below the repartee.

Too inexpressive to be the genuine conversation, it signals the start of another as Bond silently encourages Q to bend the rules, and Wishaw's overplayed stuttering and flustered response disguises Q's processing of the instructions. The shifting modes of communication also characterises Bond's earlier conversation with Ralph Fiennes' M (setting up Max Denbigh's arrival). The wry tone of Craig's interactions with Dench's M

remains, with his performance relying on the same sharp insouciant inflection. But around Craig's well-defined and fixed attitude, Fiennes's style suggests elements that extend narrative and character development. Unlike Dench, Fiennes is most forceful when M talks about the new security services. When commenting on Bond's actions, his tone is soft, unaggressive, considered and at odds with his dialogue and posture as he rises, leans over this desk towards Bond and says "This has to stop". The continuity in the bloody-minded archness of Craig's mocking retorts – that he does not / will not change – against the passivity of Fiennes' delivery signals this M to be an ally, not a hindrance to rebel against.<sup>10</sup>

## **Conclusion**

According to Banham, 'What characterises the New Brutalism... is precisely its brutality, its *je-m'en-foutisme*, its bloody-mindedness' (Banham 360). When *Skyfall* won the 2013 BAFTA for Outstanding British Film, director Sam Mendes mirrored these words in his acceptance speech and in the following press conference about what Craig "was like when he's playing Bond" to twice describe the actor's "sheer bloody-mindedness". Mendes also emphasised the laborious construction of the film, first that he "represents the 1292 people who worked on the movie" and secondly that it was "built around Daniel Craig" but that he felt Craig's lack of Best Actor nomination suggested that his work had been taken for granted.<sup>11</sup> Under Craig's employment, the qualities of the new James Bond have been described as eschewing sophistication, humour, elegance, and glamour for

purity, functionality, violence, and improvisation. These words have also been used to describe Craig's performance, as if the two are the same. But character function and the formal structure of a performance are not one-and-the-same, as Mendes implores us to acknowledge. Within Craig's performative stylisation of 'the new Bond', we can observe many New Brutalist features in his functional Bond, an 'uncompromisingly frank' exhibition of basic structure and material in the overt 'ugliness' of his gesture, expression and delivery. Craig's Bond may reject sophistication and ornamentation but in demonstrating this surface quality, Craig does not himself give an unsophisticated performance. Instead, again to borrow a description of 1950s architecture, he achieves "the maximum effect with the minimum expenditure of means" (Kaye 6). It may look naturalistic, brutal and bloody-minded, but this is an appearance of form—an image of an "anti-image". Rather than embodying an attitude of 'not giving a damn', acknowledging Craig's labour and agency reveals a determined construction around the 'blueprint' of Bond.

Though seemingly 'pure' in material, it nevertheless contains complex structural negotiations between the ironic and the utilitarian, voice and body, individual and group, tone and style. Distinct changes in his performance – within one film *and* over the course of all four – promote critique over idealisation and situate meaning historically, in relation to the other Bond actors and across his own development of Bond. Continuities in the design process between Brutalist architecture and performance can be seen where the 'object' of both lies (a 'building'/ 'James Bond'). In each case, the 'object' is

understandable as a coherent visual entity or ‘image’ where “the form grasped by the eye should be confirmed by the experiences of the [object] in use” (Banham 363). *It should be what it appears to be*. In terms of Craig’s Bond, the subversive ‘anti-image’ integral to his version of the character, so often described through the rhetoric of the ‘real’ or ‘natural’, becomes the image itself. This can also be seen in the apparent correlation between qualities of star and character in extratextual media discourse, most notably the *je-m’en-foutisme* attitude of Craig’s Bond and in the constantly recirculated image of Craig’s own un-star-like irritability in interviews (that the *Esquire* feature acknowledges and deviates from). Craig’s ill-tempered public dismissals also demonstrate constructedness, with his words performing the same function as quotes about “not being cool like Bond” that mark a distinct separation between actor and role. Craig’s performance is overlooked because – historically and aesthetically placed – it appears natural, spontaneous and unlaboured; its brutality coherent with the ‘new’ world of the Bond franchise in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

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## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Ian Fleming named Auric Goldfinger after the Brutalist architect, Erno Goldfinger.

<sup>2</sup> For examples of this, see Dittmer and Dodds, Dodds, Baker, and Tremonte & Racioppi.

<sup>3</sup> For examples of this, see Dittmer and Dobbs, Sperb, Arnett, and Patton.

<sup>4</sup> By contrast, Sean Connery insisted on their similarities: “I’m naturally cool, which is a help when playing Bond. I use as much of myself as possible to make the role work” (qtd. in Pierce-Jones 365).

<sup>5</sup> Quoted from the press release published in Hollywood.com (26<sup>th</sup> November 2006), but also a quote repeated throughout press coverage around the release of the film, suggesting it originated in an Associated Press junket.

<sup>6</sup> French interview from press coverage of *Casino Royale* in 2006, available via YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f8pltXu8DzQ>,. Uploaded by Faustine68 on 4<sup>th</sup> April 2008. Accessed 8<sup>th</sup> January 2017.

<sup>7</sup> Accent is significant too, with Bond variously being played by a Scotsman, Australian, Welshman, Irishman and two Englishmen. Whilst Craig and Moore both have standard English accents with no trace of regionality, Moore’s remains more overtly trained from childhood elocution lessons, has clearer diction, and is consistently deeper and richer than Craig’s.

<sup>8</sup> Details of this comparison can be found in Lisa Funnell (469) and Robert G. Weiner, Jack Becker and Lynn Whitfield ( xvii)

<sup>9</sup> The cycle of Craig’s films has widely been discussed through the symbolic mother/son relationship of the two characters, further narrativized through Silva’s positioning of M as ‘Mummy’ and Bond as a pseudo brother figure in *Skyfall* (see Boyce 281). As Kunze (245), Holliday (266) and Boyce (282) note this illustrates how Craig’s cycle of films reposition Dench’s M in a more traditional domestic gender role, undoing much of her representation in Brosnan’s films. It is also useful to acknowledge that away from his earlier action films like *Layer Cake* (Vaughn 2004), one of Craig’s most high profile films prior to *Casino Royale* was *The Mother* (Michell 2003) that explored the affair between Darren (Craig) and an older woman May (Anne Reid). As a star, the casting of Craig brought with it this association in addition to his established action persona.

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<sup>10</sup> As Brian Patton discusses, the introduction of Fiennes' M reestablishes Bond's world as "a treasured, familiar and unequivocal masculine" one and the increasing representation of Dench's M's through traditional feminised gender identity (254).

<sup>11</sup> However, Craig has won the Annual 'GQ Best Dressed' Award many times.