

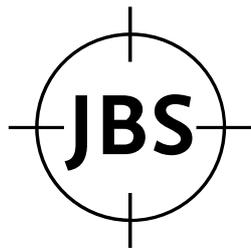
Between Progress and Nostalgia

Technology, Geopolitics, and James Bond's Railway Journeys

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This article discusses the train journey in the James Bond film series as a narrative and aesthetic device which produces specifically modern forms of mobility, and also interrogates these mobilities. Bond's trains transport imaginary geographies and identities; they function as figures of both techno-cultural development and imperial nostalgia, and they dramatise the mobility of the cinematic machinery itself. In *On the Move: Mobility in the Modern Western World* (2006), Tim Cresswell defines mobility as central to the experience of modernity. For Cresswell, "movement" refers to the abstract transportation of bodies, while "mobility"

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is socially produced: it is movement imbued with meaning and tied to power dynamics. Elsewhere, Cresswell and Deborah Dixon discuss the potential of cinema to think about questions of mobility because it is an apparatus that is itself grounded in mobility: “film is a visual representation of a mobile world” (2002, 4). The beginning of the first Bond film, *Dr. No* (1962), subtly comments on the series’ dramatisation of mobility. After a dissolve cinematically transports the viewers from Jamaica to London, we see large maps on the walls of different locales linked to the British secret service. Many of them are on a global scale, and they are traversed by lines and networks that gesture towards the global circulation of people, objects, and information that is so characteristic of the Bond series. Even more strikingly, a series of paintings and drawings in the background presents an evolution of transport, beginning with a horse, then several ships and old cars – before another dissolve and a shot of an airplane transport us back to Jamaica along with Bond. The train is curiously absent in this series from horse to airplane, and a similar absence haunts scholarly discussions of the Bond films. To our knowledge, the only discussion of trains in the series that goes beyond a passing reference is offered by Klaus Dodds and Lisa Funnell, whose recent *Geographies, Genders and Geopolitics of James Bond* (2017) includes a few pages on “Trains, Planes, and Automobiles” (172-185, see esp. 173-177). Dodds and Funnell offer a brief overview of Bond’s most important railway journeys and point out that “they provide opportunities for conversational set pieces [...]; violent confrontations [...]; and a romantic getaway” (172). We would like to address this gap in scholarship and argue that a close examination of the poetics of the railroad in the films reveals that the train is central to the geopolitical imagination of the series. While the train is absent in *Dr. No*, the spatio-temporal imperatives that govern the first scenes of the film – the network of communication and transportation, the logic of the schedule, the regulation of space and time – was first brought about by the train, which became the epitome and driving force of technological modernity in the nineteenth century.²

2 For a comprehensive discussion of the reorganisation of space and time by the railroad, see Wolfgang Schivelbusch’s classic *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the Nineteenth Century* (1986). A more recent (and equally thorough) discussion of the railroad past and present from the perspective of cultural geography is offered in George Revill’s beautifully illustrated *Railway* (2012). The insightful work of Ralph Harrington also examines the anxieties and neuroses associated with the railway (1998, 2000). For a discussion of the cultural impact of the railway in the Victorian period, see especially Michael Freeman’s *Railways and the Victorian Imagination* (1999) as well as Matthew Beaumont and Freeman’s *The Railway and Modernity: Time, Space, and the Machine Ensemble* (2007).

In many ways, then, the “machine ensemble” of the railroad (Schivelbusch 2007) functions as a sometimes visible, sometimes invisible structuring principle that governs the action narrative and the global network represented in the Bond films. Yet Bond does not belong to the nineteenth century. When *Dr. No* was made in 1962, trains were no longer at the forefront of technological development – they had been superseded by air and even space travel (cf. Funnell and Dodds 2017, 173). Along with changes in railway technology and the closure of railway lines in many countries including the UK, this led to a cultural re-evaluation of the train, which could now also signify technological nostalgia rather than progress (cf. Revill 2012, 189-199).³ This is the mode in which the train is represented in *Skyfall* (2012) when we see Bond sitting in front of three paintings at the National Gallery. All of them suggest melancholia and technological nostalgia, but the one to the right is particularly interesting for our purposes, as it is Turner’s *Rain, Steam, and Speed – The Great Western Railway* (1844), the most famous painting of a train in history. A discussion follows in which Q mocks Bond for his sentimental attachment to a bygone time of spectacular gadgets and all-powerful agents in the field. This ties in with the film’s homage to – but also critique of – a different geopolitical era, and a different film style. The Turner painting is aesthetically connected to the train shown in the action sequence at the beginning of *Skyfall*: in its raw corporality, filmed in the same warm colour tones as the painting, the scene itself seems to belong to the realm of physical action derided by Q. Bond is accidentally shot off the train by Moneypenny before he is symbolically reborn and enters a new era – the era of digital surveillance and disembodied remote-control action. The decisive influence of the latter is already made clear as the film cross-cuts between the MI6 headquarters in London, filmed in cold, blue tones, and the action scene on the train itself, monitored and regulated by M and her associates. Indeed, as Moneypenny gets ready to shoot, the train itself is framed and mediated by the new technology as it is fixed by the digital screen of her rifle. At the end of the scene, the train fittingly disappears into a tunnel, having symbolically served its term.

However, it should be noted that we do not want to trace a teleological narrative of the train’s gradual transformation from the epitome of modernity to an emblem of technological nostalgia.⁴ Instead, we contend that Bond’s railway

3 In a review article from 1969, John R. Kellett already noted a tendency in contemporary railway histories to portray steam railways in highly nostalgic terms.

4 In an insightful essay on Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* and the Bond films as myths of modernity, Oliver Lubrich argues that while the former celebrates Western technology,

journeys signify neither progress nor nostalgia unambiguously. Rather, from *From Russia with Love* (1963) to *Spectre* (2015), the series has mobilised the train as an ambivalent spatial figure caught in a tension between these two modes. We are interested in what the train is made to signify, and the ways in which the series draws on a range of newer and older associations that go back to the nineteenth century but continue to have strong figurative power. In this sense, Bond's trains dramatise technological modernity and its ambivalences. One of the essential interrelations that the series thinks about by means of the train is that between the body and the machine, or what Seltzer calls "the workings of the body-machine complex" (1992, 20). But the train is also linked to the cinematic machine itself: it resonates with the mobility of the images, the dynamics of storytelling, and the rhythm of editing. Historically, railways embodied the comfort, ease, and speed of modern life (Schivelbusch, 8-15).⁵ Yet as Ralph Harrington argues, the railway journey in the nineteenth century was also "a shared cultural location through which the ill-defined but potent anxieties associated with the advent of mechanized mass transportation were focussed, collected and transmitted" (2000, 230). Our central claim is that Bond's railway journeys are similarly ambivalent and thereby negotiate the technological and geopolitical anxieties of their day.

POETICS OF THE RAILROAD

We would like to begin by addressing this ambivalence through an analysis of the poetics of the railroad. Nineteenth-century literature discovered the poetic and narrative potential of the train. Poets like William Barnes, Robert Louis Stevenson, and Thomas Hardy⁶ combined the rhythm of the railroad with the rhythm

the latter manifests technological scepticism in the first decades, only to gradually resemble *Dracula's* celebration of technological modernity in the later films. Aside from the fact that this argument (dating from 2003) would need to be reconsidered in light of the technological anxiety evident in the most recent Bond films, our own argument is less teleological and posits that the series' relationship to technological modernity is more ambivalent and multifaceted than Lubrich would have it.

5 The supposed smoothness of rail transport was one of the central arguments used by its advocates. Thus, a commentator in 1825 wrote that "the locomotive engine rolls regularly and progressively along the smooth tracks of the way, wholly unimpeded by the speed of its own motions" (Adamson, qtd. in Schivelbusch 9).

6 Barnes's "The Railroad," Stevenson's "From a Railway Carriage," and Hardy's "On the Departure Platform" are among the most remarkable poems that use the form of poetry itself to think about the rhythms of the railroad. Modernist poems like William Carlos Williams's "Overture to a Dance of Locomotives" further seized on the meta-

of poetry,⁷ and writers of fiction,⁸ especially crime fiction, used the linear (but often interrupted) movement of the train and the train's spatial configuration to develop specific narrative patterns and rhythms.⁹ But as Lynne Kirby has shown (1997), it was the cinema that fully embraced the railroad because it saw in the train an analogue for its own apparatus. Both modern machines operated by the turning of wheels or reels and were tied to a new mode of perception – fleeting images observed by immobile spectators or passengers.¹⁰ Both transported people to a variety of locations, in short: both were machines of movement.

A narratological analysis reveals that Bond's trains can both epitomise the imperatives governing the action narrative by driving and accelerating the narrative pace and the opposite; namely, mark moments of respite or a pause from the narrative. In the opening sequence of *Skyfall*, the train does the former. The sequence consists of a number of consecutive chase scenes set in Istanbul, where Bond and Moneypenny are trying to retrieve a stolen hard drive. Through cross-cutting, the chase in Istanbul is juxtaposed with the MI6 headquarters in London, where M and her team monitor the activity of their agents in the field by means of digital surveillance, as already pointed out in the introduction. Throughout the sequence, Bond and Moneypenny use different means of transportation to chase down the antagonist. Initially, they follow him in a car but after a crash, Bond and his rival continue the chase on motorcycles, which leads

poetic potential of the railway to think about the rhythms of modern life.

- 7 For a discussion of trains in poetry, see Peter Wenzel and Sven Strasen's edited collection *Discourses of Mobility/Mobility of Discourse: The Conceptualization of Trains, Cars and Planes in 19th- and 20th-Century Poetry* (2010). Remo Ceserani's *Treni di carta: L'immaginario in ferrovia: l'irruzione del treno nella letteratura moderna* offers a more thematic account of the ambivalent reception of the train in European literatures, and includes a significant number of railway poems.
- 8 The best-known early writer of fiction to engage with the railroad was Charles Dickens, especially in *Dombey and Son* (1848), "The Signalman" (1866), and other stories and sketches originally published in *All the Year Round* and *Household Words*.
- 9 For a psychoanalytic discussion of the import of the train in crime fiction, see Laura Marcus's "Oedipus Express: Trains, Trauma and Detective Fiction." A survey of railway crime fiction is offered by Ian Carter (2001, 167-239; cf. also Carter 2002). Michael Cook discusses detective fiction revolving around the locked train compartment as a special variant of the locked room mystery (2011, 21-42).
- 10 In 1878, Friedrich Nietzsche used the train journey as a trope to describe the experience of modern life: "With the tremendous acceleration of life mind and eye have become accustomed to seeing and judging partially or inaccurately, and everyone is like the traveller who gets to know a land and its people from a railway carriage" (1996, 132).

them over the roofs and finally through the indoor area of the Grand Bazaar. On the roofs, Bond and his rival have to carefully trace straight lines which are given by the architecture and take on the same function as rail tracks, determining the course of the chase. Accordingly, even before the actual train appears, the film already anticipates its logic.

The introduction of the train itself forces the action narrative to take an abrupt turn. While the motorcycle chase comes to a sudden end on a bridge due to a traffic jam, the only way the chase can continue is via a jump from the bridge onto the train which, at that very moment, emerges from underneath it. The appearance of the train, thus, not only continues the action narrative but also abruptly alters its mode. In order to get on the train to follow his antagonist, Bond rides his motorcycle over the edge of the bridge. As he successfully lands on the roof of the train, the motorcycle falls onto disused rail tracks on the other side of a fence. The shot signals that the train now fills the position previously occupied by the motorcycle, advancing the action narrative. Significantly, part of the Bond theme is played in the very moment in which Bond lands on the roof of the train. This signals that now the action narrative is at its peak and that the hero's actions are tied to and determined by the movement and dynamics of the train. While the chase continues on the roof of the train, Moneypenny follows it by car on a road parallel to the railway line. However, from the moment Bond lands on the train, MI6 loses him on their monitors. This change is crucial since it reinforces the opposition between the raw physical action space of the train and the space of disembodied digital surveillance. According to the agents in London, Bond is now "going out of range" and M herself states: "We've lost tracking, we're blind here, what's going on?" Of course, the use of the phrase "we've lost tracking" is ironic here since the train, which structures the space opposed to the digital network, is very much on track.

The fight on the roof of the train, then, embraced by the energetic dynamics of high speed, is a scene of extreme narrative risk; any moment could substantially change the course of the narrative. While the chase continues, MI6 is dependent on Moneypenny's report from the car. However, the route of the train does not allow for constant and clear surveillance since there are several tunnels to which Moneypenny's jeep has no access. These tunnels constitute a space of concentrated action, and the fight is quite different inside them: it contains a high level of intimacy and the groans of Bond and his antagonist, as well as the sounds of the fight itself, are heard for the first time since they got onto the train. The intimacy of the fight thus accentuates the raw physical nature of

the train's space. Towards the end of the sequence, the train emerges from the tunnel and crosses a bridge with yet another tunnel ahead. As Money Penny is getting further and further away from the train tracks, she reports to M: "Looks like there isn't much more road, I don't think I can go any further." This is a crucial moment since the train will be able to continue on its route while the car and Money Penny, tied to the surveillance space in London, have to end their chase. While digital tracking ultimately wins out over physical railway tracks as Bond is shot off the train, the railroad here epitomises the narrative dynamics of the classic action narrative.

The train scene in *Casino Royale* (2006) serves an entirely different function: its temporality is that of rest and leisure. While the scene is not without narrative importance as it sets off Bond's transformation from spy to lover, it actually *endangers* the action narrative as it suggests a romantic alternative for Bond. This is connected to the transformation of Bond as a cinematic figure. Up until this point in the film series, the character of James Bond had been one without a past, a figure whose private life and background remain largely unknown to the viewers. During his conversation with Vesper in the dining car of the train, however, they start questioning each other about their childhood and personalities. This triggers the creation of a second Bond as we did not know him before. This idea of a different Bond who is a human being rather than an immortal action hero and spy is aesthetically expressed by the window in the background in which Bond and Vesper are reflected; the window, whose dimensions replicate those of the cinematic frame itself, functions as a screen for the projection of alternate identities. The creation of this second identity is facilitated by the train journey as the action narrative is temporarily suspended.

Train scenes that are somehow outside of the main narrative time of the film recur in the Bond series: this is explicit at the end of *Live and Let Die* (1973), when Bond and Solitaire are about to board the train which will take them back to New Orleans. At the train station, Bond's colleague from the CIA, Felix Leiter, accompanies the two to their carriage and asks: "I still don't see why you want to travel this way. I mean, what the hell can the two of you do on the train for sixteen hours?" Bond and Solitaire then look at one another, whereupon Bond stares at Leiter for a few seconds, pats Solitaire's arm, and says: "Say goodbye to Felix, darling." Thus, at a point when the action narrative seems to be concluded, the train becomes associated with non-action, boredom, and – implicitly – sex. This aligns the train with the endings in which Bond has sex on a boat – scenes sometimes quite literally disconnected from the main narrative, as in *Dr. No*,

when Bond lets go of the rope linking his small boat to the larger boat which is supposed to tow him and Honey Rider back to the Jamaican mainland.

These contrasting narrative modes have a counterpart in cinematography, with Bond's train rides being linked to two aesthetically distinct principles. One revolves around maximum commotion, speed, visual confusion, and loud sounds – generally, hypermobility and a violent assault to the senses. The other principle revolves around stillness, slowness, softness, and smoothness. Often – but not always – this opposition takes the form of a visual and aural contrast between inside and outside. The outside shots frequently accentuate the train's violent machinery, the steam, and the forceful penetration of the landscape (for example, in *From Russia with Love* and *The Spy Who Loved Me* [1977]). The inside of the train is often a calm space; warm colours dominate and the sound of the train is reduced to a minimum. As Bond and Solitaire start playing cards at the beginning of their train journey in *Live and Let Die*, for instance, we initially get almost no sense of movement: the train is barely audible, and we see a static shot of Bond and Solitaire in their cabin. Only gradually does the odd camera tilt upwards and track backwards to reveal the moving landscape. In other words, movement is banished from the interior of the train. But even the movement of landscape is softened by the lighting and the focus, which makes the background look unreal; as the window replicates the film screen, cinema itself seems tamed. The aesthetics in *Casino Royale* are similar, but here even the initial exterior view of the train is filmed in a very gentle way, with a panoramic shot recorded by a slowly moving and turning camera, showing the train softly gliding along the landscape on a curving railway line, accompanied by extradiegetic music. Here, the entire train seems to be part of the landscape.

The two narrative and poetic modes we have identified do not, however, neatly map onto each other. Thus, while the external shots of the train figuratively link it to the violence of the action narrative, in a literal sense these shots actually serve no narrative function at all. Rather, they celebrate movement *per se*, constituting what Kristin Thompson would call cinematic excess (1977).¹¹ In addition to this, the contrast between inside calm and outside violence collapses repeatedly as the action narrative re-erupts in the midst of the train journey. Typically, the longer a journey lasts, the more frequently the film cuts to external shots of the train. This tension repeatedly culminates in the breaking down of the boundary between inside and outside. The prototype is *From Russia With Love*. Here, the opposition between inside and outside shots collapses at the pre-

11 We would like to thank Robert Burgoyne for drawing our attention to this.

cise moment when the façade of Bond's apparent fellow agent breaks down and we learn that he really belongs to the underground organisation SPECTRE. In the fight that follows between Bond and his antagonist, Red Grant, the boundary between inside and outside literally breaks down as the window is shattered, but also figuratively, as the aesthetic elements previously characterising the outside shots are brought into the train, like the darkness of the night (echoed in the suddenly dark compartment), visual confusion, and hypermobility (the camera itself is unleashed). Similarly, the smoke emerging from Bond's gadget-laden suitcase repeats the smoke of the train's steam engine. Wind and the sensation of speed create disorientation for both the spectator and the characters, and there is a drastic increase in sound. The machinery of the train, as it were, is pulled into the compartment and figuratively represents what goes on inside it.

At the same time, the action narrative itself becomes a symptom of the anxieties of technological modernity. Nicholas Daly has argued that industrial modernity is "predicated on the intellectual separation of people and machines," but precisely for this reason "obsessively replays the meeting of the two" (2004, 2). Starting his discussion with nineteenth-century representations of trains, Daly argues that this obsession has reverberations to the present day. In the Bond series, the train is repeatedly the locus where the separation of people and machines is first questioned and then re-established. This is especially clear in the aforementioned scene in *Live and Let Die*, when the apparent containment of the threat reveals itself as an illusion and the henchman Tee Hee re-emerges on the train. Interestingly, Tee Hee is himself part machine; his right arm is a metal claw. Tampering with the electricity on the train to cut the power to Bond's cabin, he belongs to the realm of the machine. In the ensuing fight, both the train and the attacker are stripped of their soft covers and reveal their mechanical cores (Tee Hee's clothing is ripped from him to reveal his metallic arm, just as the damage done to the interior of the cabin reveals the mechanical core of the train). But the threat is also present from the beginning of the scene: first, in the visual disruption of the seemingly peaceful train by a wagon that carries some sacks; later, a cut disrupts the quiet scene in Bond's compartment and shows us the cargo area – the sound is suddenly louder, and the setting industrial. This is followed by a literal cut as Tee Hee cuts open the sack in which he has hidden himself; the association between the two cuts draws attention to cinema's own machinery, which becomes linked to both the metal arm and the train itself. Bond's fight with Tee Hee is thus also a fight with the machine, and this unexpected eruption after the narrative seems concluded suggests that the

action narrative also stands in for the management of technological anxiety, a management in which the cinematic machine participates. At the end of *From Russia with Love*, Bond rejects scheduled time (“we won’t always be working on the company’s time, will we”) just before he throws the reel of film on which Bond and Tatiana Romanova had secretly been filmed while having sex into the water. The reel, reminiscent of a train’s wheel, is relinquished along with the scheduled time epitomised by the train.

SPATIO-TEMPORAL ORDERS AND DISORDERS

As Wolfgang Schivelbusch has shown, the introduction of the railroad in the nineteenth century altered the experience of space and time: the new space-time order was thought of as “abstract and disorientating” and the train was no longer part of the landscape “but seemed to strike its way through it” (37). This abstract spatio-temporal order manifests itself in the railway network and its related schedule. The railway does not move along winding roads embedded in the landscape, but epitomises a mechanical order that follows straight lines and connects points in as little time as possible, for “[t]he railroad knows only points of departure and destination” (Schivelbusch 1986, 38). Tim Ingold argues that Western modernity imposes a geometrical and linear construction of space and time on the landscape: “The traveler who departs from one location and arrives at another is, in between, nowhere at all” (2007, 84). Time and space are reduced, and the landscape that flies by is turned into a spectacle (Schivelbusch 1986, 38); the coordination of train schedules led to the regulation and standardisation of time, first nationwide and later worldwide. Mobility, then, has an ambivalent status in modernity. For Cresswell, modernity is marked by a “tension between a spatialized ordering principle seen by many to be central to modernity, and a sense of fluidity and mobility emphasized by others” (2006, 16). In other words, the very mobility that produced modernity’s abstract order has an excess which threatens to haunt and undo this order.

We argue that the trains in the Bond series dramatise this tension, and we will show how this plays out in two films. The train journey in *From Russia with Love* is linked to a rigorous spatio-temporal order. Even before Bond and Tatiana attempt to escape to England by taking the Orient Express in Istanbul, the logic of the schedule dictates the narrative, culminating in their running to the station, just in time for the departing train. Within the first moments on board, we see a train schedule hanging next to Bond’s compartment as well as a map of Europe inside the cabin. Both the schedule and the map appear repeatedly throughout

the train sequence; they foreground the temporal and spatial imperatives that govern the narrative. Cinematically, this manifests itself in a montage sequence where we see a map of the region superimposed on the wheels of the train and various views of the train as it speeds from Belgrade to Zagreb; the disappearance of the map coincides with the train's arrival in Zagreb. The journey is reduced to a few seconds, and to a connection between points; the mobility of the train is here literally absorbed into a stable cartographic order. On the level of narrative and cinematography, mastery of the action is tied to mastery of the train and its space-time.

However, the multiplicity of schedules given in the film both represent and question this establishment. The train has its own schedule, but Bond aims to subvert the official schedule by arranging for an unscheduled stop in order that he and Tatiana might cross the border. Bond's schedule, in turn, is absorbed by yet another, invisible schedule governed by SPECTRE, which causes Bond's schedule to fail; this new schedule also aims to disrupt the official schedule by interrupting the railway line so as to give time to Red Grant to escape from the train after he has killed Bond. When Grant, who is masquerading as a British agent, Captain Nash, explains his plan to Bond, he gets out a map and says "explain it better on a map" just before knocking Bond out; here, the map quite literally becomes a tool of power. Yet the plurality of schedules also creates confusion and challenges the idea of a single master schedule. The initially uninteresting and almost non-existent in-between spaces along the train's route generate new points of departure or destination for the characters. And it is no longer the arrival of the train at set destinations which structures the journey, but the pick-up time organised by either Bond or SPECTRE somewhere along the line. In the end, Bond regains control; he successfully manages cartographic space and scheduled time – and the (geopolitical) order he stands for prevails. Yet the viewer is left with the sense that this spatio-temporal order is not stable. Initially, the train's mobility is geopolitically unaligned; in the excess of its movements, and through the various ways in which opposing characters attempt to manipulate the train's schedule at various points, it creates the possibility of subverting the order it represents.

The possibility of subverting the train's order finds its counterpart in the multiple identities adopted by characters on board the train. Tatiana, the Russian undercover agent, becomes the English wife of Bond, who becomes David Somerset; and the SPECTRE agent Red Grant assumes the identity of Captain Nash. As Bond is hoodwinked by Grant's cover of Britishness, national identity

itself is destabilised. This destabilisation is linked to the mobility of the train and its capacity for not just literal but also figurative dislocation. When the mechanical violence of the machine breaks into the compartment during Bond's fight with Grant, the characters' different façades break down along with the illusion of a quiet and protected inside space. The aesthetic confusion that now also marks the train's interior is representative of the disorder which threatens to undo the spatio-temporal order of the train, and the identities and power positions linked to it.

A very different representation of the train is given in *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* (1969). Here, the train appears as a mere part of the scenery; it neither governs the narrative nor the cinematic machine. It seems to be only a means of bringing tourists to a holiday destination in the Swiss Alps and is slow enough for the passengers to lean out of the open windows and marvel at the passing landscape. The train's violent machinery is entirely absent here. At the station where the train journey ends, the viewer gets a glimpse of various shops and their windows. In one of them, we see a photograph of a Swiss landscape that has been hung up on the inside of the glass. Mirrored in the same window, the train's reflection appears to pass through the landscape shown in the photograph, which is hard to recognise as such and could be mistaken for a reflection of the real landscape. The shot reinforces the idea of a tourist train; indeed, it almost dissolves into the landscape, which is portrayed as a commodified spectacle. Furthermore, the train station is represented as a terminus; the train does not seem to depart from it, and we see no other trains departing or arriving. Railway activity is reduced to an absolute minimum and the train is deprived of its mechanic power. In what follows, Bond is picked up at the train station by a horse-drawn carriage that evokes an atmosphere that is even more rural, touristy, and leisurely than the mode in which the train was represented before. The carriage and the train thus become linked and the former can be seen as a continuation of the latter; indeed, the tracks it leaves in the snow closely resemble railway tracks. The train, as it were, is embedded into the landscape and becomes a part of it; it becomes disembodied to the extent that only its tracks are left and its place is filled by a slow and outdated means of transportation.

Yet the viewer knows, of course, that the apparently timeless holiday space is a mere façade; that the clinic Bond will visit is not what it seems; and that Bond himself is not the harmless visitor he pretends to be in this scene – and neither is the man we see waiting at the station and holding up a newspaper, who turns out to be spying on Bond. Rather ironically, one of the headlines on the

front page of his newspaper reads “19 people killed in rush-hour train crash.” This links the idea of the train to danger and death, which is in stark contrast to the leisure-bound train we actually see in this sequence. The unnamed spy, then, is linked to a violent disruption of the railroad, and the train we see becomes a touristic façade that hides the potentially destructive effects of technological modernity. The spy narrative manifests this disruption, and the ravished gaze of the passengers as they look out of the train and consume the landscape is undercut by a series of secret glances – by Bond, by the spy, and by Irma Bunt, the woman receiving Bond at the train station, to whose question “Have you had a good journey?” Bond answers, “No, quite intolerable, I’m not a good traveller, I’m afraid.” This is, of course, a blatant lie, and Bond’s role as a confident world traveller will concern us in the next section.

RAILWAY GEOPOLITICS

As Sue Beeton points out, a distinguishing feature of the Bond series is the production of images from exoticised locations around the world: “Bond movies revel in showcasing exotic locations, many of which are, or have become, major tourist destinations. [...] This focus on location filming [...] is a trademark of the Bond movies and has had an enormous influence on our image of, and response to, these places, often exoticising previously unknown sites” (2015, 93). This connects the series to a tradition that begins with the Lumière brothers and links travel, tourism, and the cinema. The exoticised places are consumed as a spectacle by filmgoers in the same way that the Swiss landscape is consumed by the tourists in *On Her Majesty’s Secret Service*. Yet these locations typically turn out to be charged with geopolitical significance. Advancing the notion of popular geopolitics, Marcus Power and Andrew Crampton argue that “film is important in the study of critical geopolitics because it represents a constitutive element in the production of political geographies and because political spaces, places and landscapes are implicit tools in the production of film” (2007, 5). Klaus Dodds, who has worked extensively on the geopolitics of James Bond,¹² contends that “a study in the popular geopolitics of Bond can be used to reflect on the cultural history of Britain and the post-war loss of empire. [...] [P]art of the films’ enduring appeal

¹² See especially Dodds (2003, 2005) as well as Funnell and Dodds (2017). Dodds provides the most thorough analysis of the geopolitical work performed by the Bond series; the more descriptive work of Jeremy Black (2001, 2004) is mainly concerned with tracing the intentions of Fleming as well as the makers of the films, and comparing real-life geopolitical events with their representation on the page and on the screen.

lies in the fact that they frequently reflect (however obliquely) on Britain and the prevailing geopolitical conditions during and after the Cold War” (2003, 148). Dodds’s argument that the Bond films negotiate global geopolitical anxieties forms an important background for our analysis of the poetics of the train in the films. Yet while Dodds is mainly concerned with the geopolitical constellations which the films respond to and transform, we argue that their poetic and narrative form itself has geopolitical relevance. In *From Russia with Love*, the spatio-temporal order of modernity, cinematically constructed by a complex web of narrative and poetic elements, is finally managed by Britain: Bond ends up controlling the schedule and the map, despite some serious challenges. James Chapman argues that the Bond series constitutes “a nationalist fantasy in which Britain’s decline as a world power did not really take place. One of the ideological functions of the Bond narrative is to construct an imaginary world in which the Pax Britannica still operates” (1999, 39). The train is the vehicle of this imaginary in *From Russia with Love*. Britain emerges as the main player in the Cold War, and Bond’s final mastery of the train, with London as the repeatedly-invoked final destination, places Britain at the imaginary centre of the political world and as the inheritor of progress and technological modernity (ironically at a time when British Rail was going through a serious crisis and a third of the network was closed).¹³

In *The Spy Who Loved Me*, the train similarly transports a geopolitical vision – this time, one of British-Russian cooperation in the détente of the 1970s. As the Russian General Gogol dispatches Bond to Sardinia with Russian agent Anya Amasova, he is convinced that their teamwork “will help to make Anglo-Soviet cooperation a reality.” While we hear Gogol’s voice off screen, we see Bond and Anya turning to look and smile at one another. This is followed by a cut to a view of a train rushing diagonally towards the camera, which establishes the train as the vehicle for this collaboration. What follows is a flirtatious exchange which links railway travel, sex, and political cooperation. As Bond comments on Anya’s

¹³ While some commentators have argued that the Bond films, unlike the novels, “privileged an assumed Western supremacy that was premised on Anglo-American cooperation” (Street, 187) or that “the Bond cycle[] was from the outset American backed” (Novell-Smith, 10), both in terms of content and production history, others insist on the special role accorded to Britain even in the film series. Thus, Jeffrey Richards notes that “James Bond and CIA agent Felix Leiter function as partners in a special relationship but in a reversal of political reality, with the American as the junior partner” (2001, 136; cf. also Dodds 2003, 136). Chapman adds that the dominant position of Britain is occasionally ironised in films from the seventies onwards (2006, 816).

“healthy appetite,” with clear sexual undertones, Anya replies: “It must be traveling by train. I always enjoy it.” As they discuss the peculiar situation of not being able to talk to each other openly despite being “in the same business” because they are “with rival companies,” Bond notes that “we’re not rivals at the moment” while they exchange significant glances. The sexual connection between Bond and Anya, then, in turn functions as a trope for the geopolitical collaboration between Britain and the Soviet Union. While the shot of the train in itself serves no narrative function and falls into the category of cinematic excess, its placement in the middle of a sequence that aligns sexual and geopolitical union figuratively connects it to both.

Yet the role of the train in *The Spy Who Loved Me* is more complicated, and its link with sexual union and political cooperation emerges against the background of its simultaneous association with destructive violence. As Bond and Anya withdraw to their cabins, we see Anya sensually posed against the door separating her from Bond; just as she starts taking off her dress, the scene is interrupted by another very brief outside shot of the train, this time filmed laterally. The shot stands in stark contrast to the quiet interior shots that precede it: it is hypermobile and visually confusing; the train is filmed in close-up, which accentuates its speed as the lights of the windows flash by nervously in the dark; and the loud rattle of the train, coupled with the piercing sound of its horn, disrupts the silence. Following immediately on shots of Anya undressing, the train is again erotically charged, yet here it also foreshadows a threatening form of sexuality. This becomes clear a few moments later as we see Anya walk to her wardrobe in her nightgown only to find the villain Jaws awaiting her inside it, ready to assault her. In its intrusive violence, the sudden appearance of Jaws parallels the previous disruption of the peaceful scene by the shot of the train, and this association is confirmed visually and acoustically: as Jaws appears, the horn again violently pierces the silence (matching Anya’s scream) and, without diegetic motivation, the sound of the train suddenly becomes much louder (as in the parallel scenes in *From Russia With Love* and *Live and Let Die*). At the same time, a fast camera movement towards Jaws visually disrupts the previously calm scene. In this scene, then, the train is linked to sexual violence and the threat of rape. With his metal teeth and superhuman strength, Jaws – like Tee Hee in *Live and Let Die* – is himself part machine, and his sexual threat figures a dangerous encounter between human and machine.

Once again, then, it is Bond’s intervention that controls the dangerous excess represented by the mechanical order of technological modernity (and here,

this excess meets Thompson's cinematic excess), channels the motion of the train into controlled sexuality, and completes the geopolitical union. When Bond has used the entire interior of the train to catapult Jaws out of the train, effectively managing the machine, the inevitable seduction of Anya is accompanied by a significant change in the aesthetic portrayal of the train. As they enter Anya's compartment, Bond asks her "Still enjoy travelling by train?" as the sound of the train becomes almost entirely muted, and subsequently replaced by soft extradiegetic music. Just as Bond begins to take off Anya's nightgown, there is another cut to a final exterior shot of the train, which soon dissolves into a shot of Bond and Anya in a horse-drawn carriage in Sardinia. This concluding shot is an almost exact repetition of the shot at the beginning of the scene, thus completing the frame in perfect symmetry. Yet, significantly, the train is now softened: its sound is gentle, the headlights appear less piercing, the light and the focus are generally softer, and the final dissolve itself constitutes a gentler transition than the hard cut at the beginning of the scene. The machine has been tamed, and its initially unaligned or at least ambivalent force now fully signifies the sexual-political union between the two characters. The outside threat is thus necessary to consolidate the physical and political union, and the train first has to be *turned* into the vehicle of this union. The geopolitical alliance is thus the product of a careful fabrication on the railroad as sex and politics merge on the eroticised train.

TRACKS AND TRACKING: ENTERING THE DIGITAL AGE

Finally, we would like to turn to the train sequence in the newest Bond film, *Spectre*, which self-consciously refers to a number of previous train scenes, notably *The Spy Who Loved Me* and *Live and Let Die* (in repeating the unexpected intrusion of an aggressor), *From Russia with Love* (in recalling the glamorous interior of the Orient Express), and *Casino Royale* (in suggesting a romantic alternative for Bond when Madeleine asks him whether he could imagine a different life for himself). Bond and Madeleine's journey on a train in North Africa on the way to the lair of the master villain, Oberhauser/Blofeld, is thus also a journey into the history of Bond films. At the same time, the train evokes a bygone colonial era – the train's age, the wooden interior, the silver in the dining car, the luxury on board (Bond has his clothes pressed), and the costumes all contribute to this, and the soft lighting, the gentle extradiegetic music, as well as the cinematic reduction of the movement and sound of the train to a barely perceptible minimum create a nostalgic atmosphere. This nostalgic mode initially dominates as the

scene is presented as a pause in the narrative. This sense of narrative detachment is reinforced by the spatial configuration of the train; two sets of Venetian blinds on the outer and inner windows shut out the outside world, and though the window in Bond and Madeleine's cabin is not shielded by blinds, the landscape beyond it is so overexposed and hazy that it is aesthetically distanced.

Yet this return to an earlier era – cinematic and otherwise – is also foregrounded in its unreality, and as such needs to be read in relation to the film's overall concern with spectrality. This is indeed inscribed in the film's very title, the significance of which extends far beyond the name of the criminal network to which it refers (which, itself, spectrally returns to the Bond series after an absence of forty-five years). It also extends beyond the resurrection of Bond's half-brother, Franz Oberhauser, long thought dead by Bond. It extends, as we will see, to the film's relationship with a past that is both geopolitical and cinematic, but in order to understand this, we need to address the figure of Madeleine Swann, in whom the film's nexus of spectrality and desire is concentrated. Indeed, Madeleine herself is connected to spectral resurrection, and in several ways. Most obviously, she functions as a reincarnation of Vesper Lynd, replacing her after a long period of mourning on the part of Bond. After Vesper, she is the second woman to sit down to dinner on a train with Bond in the Daniel Craig era. Yet Madeleine is also entangled in a web of intertextual references that reinforce her association with an irrecoverable past. As she appears in an elegant (yet distinctly old-fashioned) evening dress, Bond's mesmerised gaze repeats that of Scottie in Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1958) as he witnesses the apparent reincarnation of Madeleine Elster in Judy. In its obsession with death and the dead, *Spectre* as a whole resonates with *Vertigo*, but the train scene clearly restages the encounter in Hitchcock's film (which is, of course, itself a re-enactment of a previous encounter *within* the film). Beyond the name 'Madeleine' itself, this is most evident in the use of the colour green,¹⁴ by which the scene in *Vertigo* is commonly remembered: if Hitchcock's Judy/Madeleine appeared in a green dress in the midst of green neon light, advancing towards Scottie after entering the room through the door, the dress of *Spectre*'s Madeleine repeats the pale, ghostly green of the former, accentuated by the green of the seats and curtains; this Madeleine, too, emerges through a door and advances towards Bond, who – like Scottie – rises as he stares at her. The references embedded in Madeleine Swann's name extend to the first volume of Marcel Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu*, which is

14 For a discussion of the use of green in *Vertigo*, see Catania, Blennerhassett, and Emerson.

entitled *Du côté de chez Swann* (1913) and includes a famous scene in which the narrator's happy childhood memories are triggered by the taste of a *madeleine* (the French pastry) mixed with tea – a scene to which, of course, Hitchcock's *Vertigo* already refers.¹⁵ In her spectral appearance, then, Madeleine embodies and focuses the desire for a lost past.

Madeleine's spectrality is connected to the spectrality of the train itself. The train functions as a ghostly train in several ways, not only by effecting a transport into a lost imperial past (when colonial trains in North Africa functioned as the long arm of empire) and the past of the Bond series. Aesthetically, the spectrality of the train is most evident in a long shot of the train that interrupts the scene taking place inside; the train appears unnaturally slow, its sound is muffled, and it is bathed in a bright mist that almost makes it disappear in the centre of the image; the ghostly gliding of the train is musically accentuated by a long-drawn sliding sound. This is followed by a cut back to London, where we see M sitting at a dinner table in a Victorian hotel, surrounded by nineteenth-century paintings and cartoons. The slow tracking shot in the Victorian interior replaces the forward movement of the train, advancing in the same direction; both the train and the camera function as vehicles into the past (to which M and the Double-O programme belong, as C emphasises throughout the film). This sense of the train belonging to a different era is corroborated by its narrative role. Indeed, the eruption of action and narrative in the midst of the seemingly peaceful and detached train journey only superficially repeats the previous intrusions of Tee Hee and Jaws. At first sight, the scene follows the familiar pattern of initial disruption, violent fight, and eventual expulsion of the attacker, though this time with a much more active Bond girl, who – rather than being drugged (*From Russia with Love*), folded up against the wall in her bunk (*Live and Let Die*), or passing out on her bed (*The Spy Who Loves Me*) – now cooperates with Bond in warding off the threat, which again involves the partial destruction of the carriage. At the end of the scene, violence is once more converted into sex, and the train and its mobility (reinforced by the agitated cinematography) are charged with erotic energy, so that the preceding fight retroactively assumes the status of an elaborate foreplay. However, while the scene is familiar from previous films, it is also – and this is the crucial point – entirely pointless. Bond and Madeleine are picked up by a car as soon as they arrive at a station in the desert, and it soon

15 Richard E. Goodkin traces the intertextual links between *Vertigo* and Proust's masterpiece; he argues that "Hitchcock's 'Madeleine', like Proust's, is thus the embodiment of the central experience of reliving the past" (1987, 1173).

becomes clear that Oberhauser had long been waiting to meet Bond in person, and certainly did not seriously intend to get rid of him before that. In the end, then, the train fight is an empty rehearsal of a familiar scene.

Of course, the reason *Spectre*'s train scene serves no narrative function is that the real threat lies elsewhere: in the digital global surveillance system which is figured as the principal global threat in the film. Physical combat accordingly functions as an inadequate response and can only be evoked in the mode of nostalgia (and, to a certain extent, irony). And the film subtly stages the train's relationship to digital tracking. Fighting global surveillance in London, M instructs Q to stop tracking Bond by using "Smart Blood," telling him that precisely because they always know where Bond is, the other side has access to the same knowledge ("if we can track him, so can others"). After this, we see Q and Money-penny staring through the window of the Victorian hotel before the film cuts back to a panoramic shot of the train, with the editing suggesting that they are looking at the train – which is, of course, precisely what they have been doing by using digital technology. Significantly, a similar cut from London to a panoramic shot of the train in North Africa already occurs at the beginning of the sequence, just after C tells M that global surveillance is the future, and that the old secret service is dead. Right before the cut, C turns his head, as if to look at the train, which visually suggests exactly what M announces later on – namely that he, too, can track Bond. The two cuts absorb the train in digital technology; with global tracking, the train – and with it, location and physical action – become obsolete. The train, then, only *seemingly* constitutes an independent sphere of action for Bond and Madeleine; it is, in fact, framed and monitored by C and Oberhauser/Blofeld, who turn out to be working together (thus merging terrorism and the Joint Intelligence Service into the same global threat).

Cinema itself participates in the film's engagement with digital technology. Indeed, CGI played an important part in the making of the train scene, as visual effects supervisor Zave Jackson explains: "Other assets we created included a full CG train [...]. In several exterior shots we extended the train from four to seven carriages [...]" (qtd. in Frei par. 12); the inside fight scene, too, makes extensive use of CGI (par. 13). Yet, as Jackson goes on to explain, the use of CGI is mainly designed to remain invisible and enhance realism (par. 15). Orit Fussfeld Cohen notes a tension between the CGI-enhanced "realistic authenticity" of Bond's masculine physicality and the "virtual, unstable foundations" of his "digital action body" in recent Bond films (2016, 117-118). Along similar lines, the train in *Spectre* is simultaneously an intense bodily realm and a digital construct;

indeed, it is, paradoxically, digital technology itself which produces the spectre of physical authenticity. The train's framing by digital technology (tracking, surveillance) within the film is thus replicated on the level of production, and the hyperrealism of the digitally enhanced image¹⁶ – perhaps unwittingly – contributes to the ghostly appearance of the train (this is most evident in the outside shots of the train: the spectral aesthetics of one of the shots has already been discussed, and the nocturnal panoramic shot following Q and Moneypenny's gaze through the window of the Victorian hotel combines colourful dreaminess with digital precision). The panoramic shots that frame and interrupt the sequence reinforce the idea of tracking: the mobile camera, filming the train from a distance and moving in the same direction, suggests the invisible gaze of surveillance. This is especially true for the final aerial shot, which shows the train from afar at sunset, now looking tiny. On the one hand, its post-orgasmic quietness contrasts with the violent and sexual storminess of the preceding scenes; on the other hand, it suggests an observing presence and thereby recalls the extreme high-angle shot of M and Moneypenny walking through a courtyard just before the train scene.

In *Spectre*'s train sequence, then, the nostalgia for empire is tied to a digitally enhanced nostalgia for the body in lived space that we also find in *Skyfall*, the train scene in which was similarly created with the help of CGI. This returns us to our initial discussion of the train in *Skyfall*, framed by the digital screen of Moneypenny's rifle. In both films, the train scene is curiously detached from the main narrative. In *Spectre*, as we have seen, its narrative importance evaporates; in *Skyfall*, it has the status of a prologue before the credits. In both films, the train is out of place and absorbed by digital technology.

CONCLUSION

As we have shown, the railway journey in the Bond series functions as an ambivalent figure of technological modernity, mobilising a range of cultural associations linked to the train that go back to the nineteenth century. We have identified two narrative and poetic modes that coexist, interact, and depend upon each other – one that signifies technological progress, mobility, and violent action, and another that projects rest, quiet, and stability. The spatio-temporal order epitomised by the train is tied to a specific geopolitical order in the individual films; its very hypermobility both constructs and potentially deconstructs this order. The poetics of the railroad is mobilised to negotiate specific global anxiet-

16 While *Skyfall* was filmed digitally, *Spectre* was filmed on 35mm film (see Shu 2015).

ies revolving around the Cold War in *From Russia with Love* and *The Spy Who Loved Me*, and the digital surveillance network in *Skyfall* and *Spectre*, tied to fantasies about Britain's position in a post-imperial world. In a time where the train is no longer at the forefront of technological progress,¹⁷ the Bond series uses the railroad and its own cinematic technology to think about the transformation of geopolitical and geo-technological orders, and precisely through this it projects different versions of nostalgia – for empire, for the body, and for the order of the train itself.

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17 This narrative is complicated by the arrival of high-speed trains, which marked the beginning of what David Banister and Peter Hall call the "The Second Railway Age" (1993). The train in *Casino Royale* is the first film in the series to depict a high-speed train, and its associations with quiet and rest should be read in the context of this recent technological development, which adds a new dimension to the perceived smoothness of modern transportation.

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