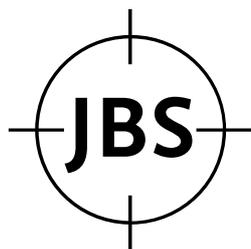


# The Bond Phenomenon

## Theorising a Popular Hero – A Retrospective

TONY BENNETT

My purpose in this article is to raise a series of problems concerning the aims and principles of textual analysis, the means by which it should be conducted, and the claims that can be made for it. I shall do so by considering a range of theoretical problems involved in the study of a cultural phenomenon – “the Bond phenomenon” – defined and constructed in relation to a popular hero. This might seem to be inventing difficulties where none exists. Isn't the nature of “the Bond phenomenon” obvious, something that can be regarded as pre-given to analysis by the texts in which Bond functions as a central character? To some extent, this is true. Yet this obviousness conceals certain difficulties and peculiarities. For example, if this definition is accepted, it is not easy to determine precisely where to draw the boundary lines which separate the “texts of Bond” from other texts. The Bond novels written by Fleming are obvious candidates for inclusion. So are the various Bond films. But how are the relations between these to be construed? And how should the Bond continuation novels written by John Gardner, Christopher Wood, Kingsley Amis, and Raymond Benson (among others) be classified and analysed? Further, what significance should be accorded to



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the vast range of other texts – interviews with the films' leading actors, advertisements, fanzine publications – in which the figure of Bond features prominently?

These are not just practical questions. Rather, they point to a series of quite intricate theoretical difficulties involved in studying a phenomenon constituted by a range of texts grouped together by virtue of the hero figure they share and jointly construct. In order to analyse a cultural phenomenon so peculiarly constituted, it will be necessary to use methods of analysis which both depart from and call into question more usual procedures, whereby texts are organised into sets as objects for analysis in terms of their relationships to (say) an author or a period or a literary movement. Indeed, it will be necessary to question the assumption that texts can be thus grouped into stabilised sets – whether with reference to an author, a genre or whatever principle of classification might be proposed – if the full range and variability of their signifying functioning, their operation in history, are to be adequately understood. “The Bond phenomenon”, I shall argue, can best be conceptualised as a phenomenon located within the intertextual relations which have been constructed by (and have comprised the theatre for the operation of) the signifier “James Bond”. This entails studying the individual texts which comprise the “texts of Bond” in the light of the shifting orders of intertextuality within which they have been culturally active during different moments of “the Bond phenomenon”. This, in turn, entails developing methods of analysis whereby changes in the signifying functions attributable to the individual “texts of Bond” can be understood as the product of periodic reorganisations of the internal configuration of that textual set.

However, rather than considering these difficulties in the abstract, it will help if I first review the various moments which have characterised Bond's existence as a popular hero. This will serve to establish the degree and type of cultural presence which the figure of Bond has exerted in post-war British popular culture. It will also place the theoretical problems alluded to above in their appropriate context by showing just how mobile and slippery a phenomenon we have on our hands in studying a set of intertextual relations constituted around a popular hero.

## THE MOMENTS OF BOND

007 JAMES BOND, HM SECRET SERVICE AGENT, and undoubtedly the most famous of them all. Born for dangerous adventures, bred to take hardship, pain and fearful threats with cold courage, trained till his six senses respond instantly to the menace of a situation, educated to be a gentleman –

but one who can mix it with the best and the worst of them as the occasion demands – he is the true hero of our day and age (*007, James Bond in Focus* 1964).

This assessment of Bond's significance within the gallery of popular heroes is typical of the claims that have been made for Bond by publishing apparatuses with a vested interest in his commercial promotion. Pan Books, who published the paperback editions of the Bond novels in Britain from 1955 to 1977, claimed that Fleming had created in Bond "a fictional character unrivalled in modern publishing history" or, in another formulation, "the most famous secret agent ever". Similarly, the *Daily Express*, when launching its strip-cartoon version of Bond in 1957, introduced him as "the sardonic secret agent who stormed into popularity as THE post-war fiction hero..." (quoted in Pearson 1966, 300). These claims have been shared by the critics. Alexander Walker christened Bond the "man of the decade" (1974, Ch. 9), whilst Kingsley Amis – perhaps Bond's most persevering advocate among the literary intelligentsia – argued that the Bond novels were the most successful instance of the secret agent genre ever written (1965, 144). Although clearly partisan, these claims have proved well-founded. Viewed collectively, the Bond novels and films have been internationally popular for over a half of a century.

Judged by commercial standards, both the novels and the films have been extraordinarily successful. It is true that, initially, the novels reached only a limited and a socially restricted readership, largely amongst the metropolitan intelligentsia. The first imprint of *Casino Royale* (4,750 copies), published in April 1953, had sold out by May of the same year, and the title sold more than 8,000 copies on its second imprint in 1954. *Live and Let Die*, published in 1954, sold more than 9,000 copies in its first year of publication. Conceived of as "literary" sales, such figures were quite respectable, but in relation to the market for popular fiction they were relatively small beer. Nor did the novels make much headway initially outside Britain. *Casino Royale* was turned down by three publishers in America on the grounds that it was "too British" for the American market; and when it was eventually published there by Macmillan it sold less than 4,000 copies. (It did rather better when published subsequently by the American Popular Library under the title *Too Hot to Handle*.) However, there were signs of interest in Bond from American television. CBS paid Fleming \$1,000 for the right to produce an hour-long television adaptation of *Casino Royale*, and later (1956-7) Fleming was asked to write a script for NBC. (In the end, this was not used, although it formed

the basis for the plot of *Dr. No.*) There were also signs of an awakening interest in the film industry when, in 1954, Sir Alexander Korda asked to see an advance copy of *Live and Let Die*. However, it is only in retrospect that these overtures seem portentous of greater things to come. By 1955, when Fleming had added a third title – *Moonraker* – to the list, the novels had been printed only in hardback editions, and none had sold more than 12,000 copies in Britain: Fleming’s total earnings from sales were less than £2,000. According to Pearson, his biographer, Fleming had decided by mid 1955 that his financial return from the Bond novels no longer justified the effort he put into them (1966, 257). Accordingly, he conceived of *From Russia with Love* as his last Bond novel, determining to kill his hero off on the last page.

The first turning-point in both the degree and social reach of Bond’s popularity came in 1957. Pan had published a paperback edition of *Casino Royale* in 1955 and added *Moonraker* in 1956, thus pushing the British sales for the Bond novels in those years up to 41,000 and 58,000 respectively. It was 1957, however, that witnessed the first stage in the transformation of Bond from a character in a set of fictional texts to a household name. This was chiefly attributable to the serialisation of *From Russia with Love* in the *Daily Express*, and the same newspaper’s publication later that year of a daily strip-cartoon of Bond. The effects of the *Daily Express*’s promotion of Bond on the sales of the Bond novels are easily discernible. Sales rose from 58,000 in 1956 to 72,000 in 1957, 105,000 in 1958 and 237,000 in 1959. This was the first moment in the history of Bond as a popular hero, but a moment still characterised by a limited and socially restricted popular appeal. It was also a moment characterised by a specific ideological inscription of Bond as first and foremost (if not exclusively) a Cold War hero. Finally, it was also during this period that Bond first became a subject of “public concern”, as evidenced by the development of a moralising criticism preoccupied (as is ever the case) with the effects the Bond novels might have on “other people”.

This contrasted markedly with earlier critical reactions to the Bond novels. Initially, in terms of both Fleming’s stated intentions and the presentational policies pursued by his publishers (Jonathan Cape), the Bond novels were installed ambiguously between “literature” and “popular fiction”, conceived of as both aesthetic and marketing categories. Writing later, in an attempt to categorise his work, Fleming argued that “while thrillers may not be Literature with a capital L, it is possible to write what I can best describe as “Thrillers designed to be read as literature””, and cited Raymond Chandler, Dashiell Hammett, Eric

Ambler and Graham Greene as his models in this respect (1963, 14). Although it is clear that Fleming kept a weather-eye on the market for popular fiction, it is equally clear that, at least initially, this was not the market he had primarily in view. In a letter to CBS in 1957, quoted by Pearson, he wrote:

In hard covers my books are written for and appeal principally to an 'A' readership, but they have all been reprinted in paperbacks, both in England and in America and it appears that the 'B' and 'C' classes find them equally readable, although one might have thought that the sophistication of the background and detail would be outside their experience and in part incomprehensible (1966, 299).

That Jonathan Cape had a similar market in view is evident from the sleeve designs they commissioned. Such designs are one of the primary means whereby literary texts are assigned a place in relation to other such texts, subjected to a preliminary ideological definition, and inserted into available aesthetic categories. The sleeves of the first edition hardback imprints of the Bond novels thus consisted typically of a collection of objects associated with either espionage or luxurious living or both, and connoted the category of superior quality, "literary" spy-fiction. Furthermore, evidence from reviews in the literary weeklies of the period suggests that this is precisely how they were regarded and read initially. Such reviews both addressed and sought to produce a "knowing reader" familiar with or apprised of the literary allusions deployed in the Bond novels, and who would read and appreciate them as flirtatious, culturally-knowing parodies of the spy-thriller genre. They thus functioned as critical legitimators, making the novels permissibly readable by discounting their evident chauvinism and racism. The "knowing reader", it was implied, aware that Fleming was writing tongue-in-cheek, would not be affected adversely by these aspects of the novels to the degree that s/he (but mainly he) was able to appreciate their purely formal role in parodying, by means of excess, the earlier imperialist spy-thrillers of such writers as John Buchan and Cyril McNeile.

The moralising criticism which accompanied the increased popularisation of the Bond novels sought not to produce a "knowing reader" but to protect the "untutored reader" from undue harm. Paul Johnson's attack on the "sex, sadism and snobbery" of the Bond novels in a *New Statesman* article is probably the best known critical reaction of this type (1958, 430-2). Also influential, however, was an article by Bernard Bergonzi in *The Twentieth Century*, accusing Fleming of gra-

tuitous sex and violence and of falling short of the literary and moral standards set by Buchan and Chandler (1958, 220-28). Bond as a popular hero clearly required different treatment from the Bond who had earlier functioned as a cult-figure for the intelligentsia.

By comparison with the novels, the Bond films were instantly successful and have remained spectacularly so in terms of box-office receipts, their rate of profitability, and the size and composition of the audience they have reached. And this in spite of what was initially at best a lukewarm and at worst a savagely hostile critical reaction: "Dr. No...no, no. Too inept to be as pernicious as it might have been. Costly gloss flawed by insidious economy on girls. Superannuated Rank starlet tries to act sexy. Grotesque" (Cameron 1962, 560). The sales figures tell a different story. By 1976, the film *Dr. No* had earned global profits in excess of \$22 million. *From Russia with Love* grossed takings of \$460,186 during the first week of its release in New York in 1963. *Thunderball*, released in 1965, had grossed takings of \$45 million by 1971 and, in the same year, *Diamonds Are Forever* earned \$15.6 million during the first twelve days of its release. And of course in the film industry, nothing succeeds like success. Cubby Broccoli and Harry Saltzman, co-producers of the early Bond films, experienced great difficulty in capitalising the production of *Dr. No*. In the end, they had to settle for a budget of \$950,000 and for only a little more than \$1 million in financing *From Russia with Love*. *Thunderball*, by contrast, cost \$6.6 million; *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*, \$8 million; *Diamonds Are Forever*, \$7.2 million; and the production budget for *The Spy Who Loved Me* was \$13 million.

The success of the films totally transformed the market for the novels. Their impact on paperback sales in Britain is clearly discernible. As might be expected, there is a close connection between the release-dates of particular films and the peak point in the sales graph for the individual novels on which those films were based. The release of *From Russia with Love* in 1963 saw the British sales for that title peak at 642,000 in the same year; the release of the film *Goldfinger* in 1964 pushed the novel's sales up to their peak of 964,000, and so on. However, the relationship is not entirely that of a one-to-one correlation. The peak of the sales for the novel *Live and Let Die* (618,000) is reached in 1964, for example; and whilst the release of the film of that title lifted paperback sales from their previously flagging level of 10-20,000 annually to 240,000 in 1973, this was well below their earlier peak. Equally important, this level of sales was not sustained for any period of time: only 14,000 copies were sold in 1974. The story is much the same for *Diamonds Are Forever*: sales peaked at 592,000 in 1964, and then rose again

from 14-15,000 annually in the late 1960s to 77,000 on the release of the film in 1971, maintaining that level for a couple of years before falling back to the sales levels of the immediately preceding period.

Indeed, the peak point in sales for each title occurs some time in the period between 1963 and 1966. Equally important, there is a marked lift in the sales of all the Bond novels over the period from 1962 (1,315,000) to 1967 (1,804,000), a lift that was especially pronounced in 1963, 1964 and 1965 with sales of 4,468,000, 5,858,000 and 6,782,000 respectively. Sales of this magnitude were entirely unprecedented. Something of their significance can be gleaned from the fact that ten of the first eighteen paperbacks to sell over a million copies in Britain were Bond novels. This, of course, was the period of the first cycle of Bond films, that is, those starring Sean Connery: *Dr. No* (1962), *From Russia with Love* (1963), *Goldfinger* (1964), *Thunderball* (1965) and *You Only Live Twice* (1967). After this period, the release of new Bond films resulted in increased sales only for the individual titles from which they were derived. For example, in 1973 sales increased only for *Live and Let Die*; sales of most other Bond novels actually fell significantly from their 1972 level. The effect of the first cycle of Bond films, however, was to revivify the market for the Bond novels as a whole. It was as an integrated set, rather than as individual titles, that the Bond novels sold over this period.

Apart from directly recruiting an international audience of their own, the films had similar effects on sales of the Bond novels in other countries. In France, Bond was virtually unknown until the release of the film *Dr. No*. Two of the novels had been published in translation, but sales had been so sluggish that the publishers (Plon) had decided against publishing any of the remaining titles. In 1964, however, 480,000 copies of the Bond novels were sold in France; *France-Soir* serialised the novel *Dr. No*; *Elle* magazine made Bond its male hero for the summer season, and by 1965 sales of the novels were topping the two million mark. Similarly, in Italy, where the novels had been published in translation since 1958, the release of *Dr. No* occasioned such a spate of Italian films exploiting the 007 trademark that United Artists had to threaten legal action for breach of copyright. In Denmark and Sweden, the Daily Express strip-cartoons of Bond were published in comic-book form; a strip-cartoon of Bond even appeared in Yugoslavia. Perhaps the most distinctive development in America was the appropriation of Bond by *Playboy*, which serialised *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* in 1963, *You Only Live Twice* in 1964, and *The Man with the Golden Gun* in 1965, in each case within a month or so of the initial hardback publication dates. At the

same time, *Playboy* also instituted, as a regular feature, photo-articles on “The Girls of James Bond”, as did magazines like *Mayfair* and *Penthouse* in Britain.

Finally, the early 1960s also witnessed the widespread use of the image of Bond in advertisements and commodity design (Tornabuoni 1966, 13-24). Thus severed from its originating textual conditions of existence, the figure of Bond assumed a semi-autonomous and quasi-real character, functioning as a “free-floating” signifier. In the predominant forms of its use, this served to coordinate and condense a series of overlapping ideological concerns which centred on the construction of gender-identities and a new style and image of Englishness. Perhaps most typically, the figure of Bond functioned as an ideological short-hand for the appropriate image of masculinity in relation to which feminine identities were constructed – as in the case of a French lipstick advertised as “a good Bond for the lips”, or an Australian brand of women’s lingerie marketed under the slogan, “Become fit for James Bond” (Moniot 1976, 25-33). In this respect, the figure of Bond was one of those privileged and “button-holing” signifiers – what Lacan calls *points de capiton* – within the ideological construction of gender-relations and identities (1968, 273-75). In a period that experienced a considerable cultural redefinition – a flux and fluidity – of gender identities, the figure of Bond furnished a point of anchorage, in relation to which the sliding of meaning that had been introduced into the ideological construction of gender relations was not halted but pinned down to a new set of signifying coordinates. Bond also functioned in the context of “swinging Britain” as an embodiment of the then prominent ideological themes of classlessness and modernity. He was a key cultural marker of the claim that Britain had escaped the blinkered and class-bound perspective of its traditional governing elite, and was in the process of being modernised in a thoroughgoing way as a result of the implementation of new, meritocratic forms of political and cultural leadership.

The early 1960s, then, constituted a second significant moment in Bond’s career as a popular hero. Indeed, to adopt the hyperbole of Bond’s publicity writers, it constitutes the moment of Bond. In comparison with the late 1950s, and periodic resurgences of interest prompted by the release of each new Bond film in the 1970s and 1980s, the impact of Bond in this period was a peculiarly concentrated one. Except for 1966, the films were released on an annual basis from 1962 to 1967: 22,790,000 copies of the Bond novels were sold in Britain between these years, compared with the 1,506,000 copies sold between 1955 and 1961, and the 3,565,000 sold between 1968 and 1977. In advertising, fashion, and commodity design the figure of Bond was omnipresent. He was a household

word, an established point of cultural reference in everyday language, and an integral component of popular consciousness, capable of acting as a carrier of meanings even for those who had neither read the novels nor seen the films. Furthermore, the social reach of Bond's popularity had expanded significantly. No longer a cult-figure for the metropolitan intelligentsia, nor (less exclusively) a political hero for the lower middle-classes, the figure of Bond functioned as a popular icon in ways that cut significantly (if also unevenly and contradictorily) across class, generation, gender and national divisions.

Apart from being the period in which Bond's popularity manifestly peaked, the early 1960s can also be counted as "the moment of Bond" in the sense that his popularity was unrivalled by that of any other cultural figure. Indeed, this was true for the greater part of the 1960s when, in its taken-for-grantedness, the figure of Bond assumed the role of a coordinating signifier in British popular culture, an established point of reference to which a wide range of other cultural practices referred in order to establish their own cultural location and identity. Most obviously, Bond functioned as either an explicit or an implied point of reference for the rival spy-thrillers which flooded the bookstalls, the cinema and the television screens in both Britain and America in the mid 1960s, such as the novels of Len Deighton and the films derived from them, like *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.*, *The Avengers*, and so on. Each of these either negotiated its own specific cultural space and sphere of ideological action within the region of the spy-thriller, or had such a space negotiated for it by critics who constructed relationships of similarity to or difference from the figure of Bond. Len Deighton's hero (anonymous in the novels, but portrayed as Harry Palmer in the films) was thus both likened to and distinguished from Bond: like him, he is a British secret agent, but unlike him, a working-class anti-hero. The significance of this is not that such comparisons were made, for that is an inevitable aspect of the construction of intertextual relations in popular fiction; but that where they were made, it was always Bond who furnished the point of comparison. Other fictional heroes were likened to or distinguished from Bond; it was never the other way round.

In short, it was in this period that the longer term cultural and ideological currency of the figure of Bond was established. The distinguishing characteristic of the third moment in Bond's history as a popular hero – roughly, from the 1970s onwards – consists in its selective and strategic activation of that currency, together with the more episodic and ritualistic nature of Bond's popularity. The point has already been made that in the 1970s the Bond films, released every two

years rather than annually as in the 1960s, had a more localised impact on novel sales, promoting them as individual titles rather than as an integrated set. Perhaps more important – and not unrelated to Sean Connery’s replacement by Roger Moore in the screen role – the figure of Bond played a less vital role in British popular culture, less vital in terms of its cultural and ideological resonances. The spin-offs from the Bond films and the use of Bond-derived motifs in advertising remained legion, but the markets aimed at had shifted significantly. In the 1960s, the Bond image and Bond products had a close association with constructions of sexuality and nationhood. The dominant sponsored products of the 1970s, by contrast, were technological (Rolex watches), whilst the majority of spin-offs were designed for children: Corgi cars, helicopters and rockets; Airfix kits of *Moonraker*; Action Man-type dolls of Bond and Jaws; even 003½ pyjamas. As a popular figure, and more so as the decade progressed, Bond had markedly descended the age-scale and was more closely linked intertextually to the genres of science fiction and the *Superman* films than to the spy-thriller. Perhaps more importantly, by the 1970s Bond was a historical figure, a legend from a past age. The popularity that accrued to him was in part attributable to the way the Roger Moore films alluded to popular memory, played with its associations, and in the process rearticulated the image of Bond, connecting it to new tendencies in popular culture. The films of this period – *Live and Let Die* (1973), *The Man with the Golden Gun* (1975), *The Spy Who Loved Me* (1977) and *Moonraker* (1981) – are thus characterised by what can perhaps best be termed a double-referential structure. Parodying the earlier films and the figure of Bond associated with the 1960s, they also selectively activated the established currency of Bond; and in doing so, they reorganised its cultural associations by referring it to more contemporary developments in popular culture, such as science fiction spectaculars in the case of *Moonraker*.

Bond’s popularity, then, became not only more localised as a more or less isolated occurrence every two years, but also more routinised – especially when, after 1975, the transmission of a Bond film by the British television station ITV on Christmas Day established a regular place for Bond in the “way of life” of the British people. Whereas in the 1960s the audience for Bond films consisted in the main of adolescents and young adults, by the time *Moonraker* was released in 1979 the audience consisted mainly of parents with pre-adolescent children. Local cinemas booked the Bond films for the school holidays alongside or as an alternative to Disney films, and the Bond imagery was used to advertise instant- whip ice-creams and peanuts. All this suggests that “the moment of Bond” had

passed – not in the sense that Bond was dead, but rather that the figure of Bond operated as a dormant signifier, inactive most of the time, but capable of being reactivated periodically, albeit in a fairly ritualised manner.

To summarise, I have so far singled out a number of distinct moments in the history of Bond, first as a cult-phenomenon, and subsequently as a popular hero. In doing so, I have sought to indicate the respects in which the figure of Bond has changed between these various moments. The Bond of the late 1950s, for example, is not the same Bond we encounter in the early to mid 1960s. No longer exclusively or even primarily a Cold War hero (in all the films, Bond is pitted against SPECTRE or an equivalent organisation of international criminals, and never directly against the Soviet Union), the figure of Bond assumed a much wider range of ideological and cultural reference in coordinating a series of intersecting ideological concerns which centre on the themes of Englishness, classlessness, modernity and sexuality. Differently constructed during different moments of the Bond phenomenon, “James Bond” has been a variable and mobile signifier rather than one which can be fixed as unitary and constant in its signifying value and function.

To some extent, of course, such changes are the product of new additions to the “texts of Bond.” The Bond of the late 1950s was an exclusively literary phenomenon, whereas in the 1960s it was a compound product operating in the relationships between Fleming’s novels and films derived from them. However, it would be mistaken to regard such additions as simply expanding the “texts of Bond”, without at the same time reorganising that textual set and modifying the signifying function and value of individual texts within it. My concern in what follows is to identify the means by which the “texts of Bond” might be studied in the light of the ways in which, as new texts have been added, they have been hooked into different spheres of ideological and cultural action. This has been achieved by virtue of changes in the signifying function of Bond as the figure which floats between and connects them as parts of a related textual set. I begin by examining the rather peculiar properties of the signifier “James Bond”, and the means by which it has been constructed and reconstructed.

## **WHO IS BOND?**

Who indeed? Sean Connery? Roger Moore? Ian Fleming? The question of Bond’s “real identity” has been obsessively pursued, especially in the columns of various fan club publications, where at times speculation on the issue has assumed metaphysical proportions. There have also been considerable material interests at

stake in the question. When Roger Moore replaced Sean Connery in the screen role, publicity posters neatly combined the two, pressing metaphysics in the service of material interests in announcing: “Roger Moore is James Bond.” Read in its context, this assertion of an unmediated identity between two non-identities (Roger Moore and James Bond) was simultaneously a disavowal of the opposing statement it implied, and whose terms it sought to uncouple, namely “Sean Connery is James Bond”. Yet this disavowal (“Sean Connery isn’t James Bond; Roger Moore is”) cancels out the equation of the two non-identities (Roger Moore and James Bond) which the announcement seeks to establish. The denial that Sean Connery is James Bond, since it requires the construction of Bond as a figure who can survive the process of reincarnation, entails that Roger Moore is not and cannot fully become James Bond either. In being detached from an earlier incarnation (Connery) in order to be reincarnated in Moore, the figure of Bond is “floated” as an identity complete in and of itself. For only James Bond can be James Bond. Bond is a mythic figure who transcends his variable incarnations. He is always identical with himself but never the same; he is an ever mobile signifier, fleshed out in different ways and subject to different ideological inscriptions and material incarnations at different moments in the history of the Bond phenomenon.

It is in this respect that Bond can be regarded as a popular hero – that is, as a signifier installed ambiguously between the world of fictional characters and that of real persons – as distinct from being merely the principal protagonist in a body of popular fiction. Bond’s place in the gallery of popular heroes, however, is a curiously complex one, in that the figure of Bond has been constructed through the combination of two different systems for the production of popular heroes – one operating via the transformation of fictional biographies into quasi-real ones, and the other via the transformation of real biographies into semi-fictional one. There are thus clear similarities between the processes whereby the figure of Bond, originally a character in a set of related fictions, has been transformed into a quasi-real person, even to the point of being the subject of a “fictional biography” (Pearson 1973), and those whereby other fictional characters such as Robinson Crusoe and Sherlock Holmes have assumed a mythic identity in popular consciousness. However, the close association between the figure of Bond and the constructed screen and off-screen identities of the actors playing Bond – and, in certain quarters, the person of Ian Fleming – is evidence of the reverse process, which is best exemplified by the star system, whereby real biographies become fictionalised and blend with screen identities in the con-

struction of a mythic figure poised midway between the two (as in the cases of Marilyn Monroe and John Wayne, for example). Produced in the interaction between these two processes, the figure of Bond consists of elements of fiction translated into a mythic identity, which has accumulated an added “reality effect” in subsuming within it elements of real biographies transformed into exemplary fragments of the myth.

Although the characterisation of Bond as a popular hero may seem obvious enough, its implications for both the concerns and the procedures of textual analysis are far-reaching. Consideration of an analogous case will help to identify these problems and the means by which they might be resolved. Ian Watt notes the extent to which the figure of Robinson Crusoe has assumed a quasi-real identity severed from the originating textual conditions of its existence as a character in the novels of Defoe. How did this come about? Watt’s explanation proceeds in terms of the “fit” between the figure of Crusoe and “three essential themes of modern civilization,” which he designates as “‘Back to Nature’, ‘The Dignity of Labour’ and ‘Economic Man’” (1951, 97). This “fit”, however, is construed as a manufacture produced by and within the range of texts and discourses through which the figure of Crusoe (as a quasi-real being) has been constructed, rather than as a natural fit established by a spontaneous coincidence between these themes and the character of Crusoe as portrayed in the novels of Defoe. In considering the different ways in which the figure of Crusoe has been constructed and mobilised ideologically – as a figure of radical individualism in the educational project of Rousseau’s *Emile*, for example, or as the very image of *homo economicus* in the discourse of classical political economy – Watt argues that each constitutes a partial and selective reading of the characterisation of Crusoe in the works of Defoe. His purpose in doing so is partly to “correct” such one-sided readings by restoring the “real” Robinson Crusoe. Yet in some respects, the effect is the opposite of that intended. In charting the various “mutations” to which the novels of Defoe have been subjected via the constant reworking of the figure of Crusoe, Watt’s analysis suggests that these originating texts have remained culturally active only (or at least mainly) in their “mutated” forms. They have been read only as always-already culturally activated, humming with meanings produced by the figure of Crusoe in its functioning as a mobile signifier, condensing and articulating – but always in different permutations – a series of converging ideological themes. So much so that those originating texts now reach us as already covered with a dense sedimentation of accreted meanings, which no amount of archaeological spade-work can remove in order to uncover the “texts

themselves” as they supposedly once were – in the intending mind of the author, say, or in the receptive mind of some posited original group of readers.

Michael White’s essay on the production of an “economic Robinson Crusoe” supports this conclusion (1982, 115-42). White takes issue with the view that the construction of Crusoe as the very figure of *homo economicus* can find some referent or justification in Defoe’s text. Rather, he suggests, the “economic Robinson Crusoe” – that is, the representation of Crusoe as “a calculating economic agent who distributes his time according to the requirements of maximising utility in production and consumption” (122) – must be viewed as an ideological production made possible by the development of “certain theoretical or discursive conditions (such as the categories of Marx’s *Capital*)” (116), as well as by the reorganisation of the intertextual relations in which Defoe’s novel was inserted and read in the nineteenth century, as a result of the intervening literary tradition of the Robinsonade. In demonstrating the respects in which the ideological production of the “economic Robinson Crusoe” was the result of specifiable discursive and intertextual conditions (rather than as a hitherto unnoticed aspect of the novel which was always there, waiting to be discovered), White concludes that “there are no such things as literary texts with fixed meanings which exist independently of the uses to which the texts are put” (139).

The operation of the star system reveals processes of a similar kind. In his discussion of the construction of character within the cinema, Richard Dyer argues that the “always-already-signifying nature of star images” may function contradictorily in relation to other aspects of characterisation (name, speech, action, and gesture) at work in a particular film (1981, 265). The foreknowledge of star-images – derived from previous films, fanzines, publicity handouts, biographies, interviews, newspaper features, and so on – which audiences bring with them to the cinema – constitute a metasignifying system which may powerfully disorganise (or make more complexly polysemic) the other sign-clusters at work in a particular film. One of the cases Dyer cites is that of the character Lorelei Lee, played by Marilyn Monroe in Howard Hawks’ *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1953). There is a massive disjunction, he argues, between Monroe’s star-image (as the personification of an essentially innocent and narcissistic sexuality) and the characterisation of Lorelei as a “cynical gold-digger” effected by the other aspects of character-construction at work in the film – so much so that “the character of Monroe-as-Lorelei becomes contradictory to the point of incoherence” (266).

The realm of myth which popular heroes supposedly inhabit thus turns out to have more precise and more physical coordinates. The domain in which they operate is the intertextual. They function as “floating signifiers”, active in producing meaning in the circulations and exchanges between texts: mediating between and connecting the textual and the intertextual, they activate the former by means of the latter. In doing so, as the object encountered by a reader in historically determinate relations of reading, they produce the intertextually organised text. An understanding of the effects of such “floating signifiers” thus requires methods of analysis which will go beyond the concerns of purely textual analysis, in the sense that what has to be analytically “netted,” so to speak, are transformations and shifts in the nature of the cultural and ideological business which is conducted around texts by means of the shifting operation of such signifiers.

It is possible, in the light of these considerations, to specify more clearly the nature of the Bond phenomenon and the precise form of its constitution. As a popular hero, the figure of Bond has functioned as a moving point of reference within the sphere of popular culture, condensing and articulating – but in different mixes during the different “moments of Bond” – a series of ideological discourses which centre on the themes of gender, sexuality and nationhood. In doing so, the figure of Bond has operated (and has been constructed) in the circulations between considerable and constantly accumulating numbers of texts, different in identity and in their relations to one another at different moments in Bond’s career as a popular hero. These texts include the Bond novels, their serialisations, the films, interviews with the films’ stars and with Ian Fleming, photo-feature articles on “the Bond girls”, and many more. Added to these are the sedimentations of the figure of Bond in the world of objects. In *Mythologies* (1972), Roland Barthes shows how habitual representations of the social order get tangled up with everyday objects, so that myth or ideology assumes in these an objectified form. In the same way, the figure of Bond has become tangled up in the world of things through its use in advertising and commodity design, with the result that a series of coded objects (lipstick, lingerie, Action Man-type dolls) float in intertextual space like textual meteorites, highly condensed and materialised chunks of meaning. In short, the Bond phenomenon consists of a mobile set of intertextual relations, a phenomenon whose significance is constituted by the part it has played in the shifting cultural and ideological relations between rulers and ruled in post-war Britain.

It is clearly impossible to analyse a cultural phenomenon so constituted merely by studying the various “texts of Bond” one by one and sequentially. To stabilise them as objects for analysis in this way would be to abstract them from the shifting orders of intertextuality through which, at different moments, their actual signifying functions and effects have been organised and reorganised. On the contrary, the various “texts of Bond” must be analysed in the light of the ways in which the relations between them have been ordered and reordered at different moments in Bond’s career as a popular hero. To do so entails jettisoning the assumption, so powerfully implanted in our intellectual culture, that texts constitute the place where the business of culture is conducted.

It is thus necessary, in order to resolve these difficulties, to query the status conventionally accorded to the concept of “the text” in literary and film studies. Pierre Macherey inaugurated such a questioning when he disputed the view that the study of literature consists in the study of literary works conceived of as finally fixed and finished products. Supposing, he asked, that literature doesn't consist of finished works? What then will studying a particular text entail? It will mean, he argued, not just studying the text concerned but also “everything which has been written about it, everything which has been collected on it, become attached to it – like shells on a rock by the sea-shore forming a whole incrustation” (“An Interview with Pierre Macherey” 1977, 7). Instead of regarding the text as a completed given which is to be studied on its own terms, Macherey here directs attention to the history of its use, namely the perpetual remaking and transformation of it in the light of its inscription within a variety of social, institutional and ideological contexts. This is not the familiar and unexceptionable demand that such considerations might be worthy of study in their own right, but only as extrinsic factors which have no essential bearing on texts or the way they should be studied. On the contrary, it requires the study of texts to be approached via an analysis of the different ways in which they have been culturally activated as a result of their inscription in different social, institutional and ideological contexts. Indeed, it requires us to abandon the notion of “the text” as an entity separable from its variable inscriptions, or at most, to entertain that notion only as a methodological fiction.

The following section outlines the implications of this view for the way in which the “texts of Bond” might be constituted as objects for analysis. It does so by considering the peculiarities which result when the principle of classification in relation to which texts are grouped into sets is furnished by the hero figure which such texts compositely construct.

## THE TEXTS OF BOND

Relating a conversation with a young relative with literary ambitions who described himself as an author, Fleming recalled that he replied: “Well, I describe myself as a Writer. There are authors and artists and then again there are writers and painters” (Pearson 1966, 14). What’s the difference? Michel Foucault has argued that “the name of an author is a variable that accompanies only certain texts to the exclusion of others”, contending that in this – its discriminatory use – it functions as a sign of value:

Discourse that possesses an author’s name is not to be immediately consumed and forgotten; neither is it accorded the momentary attention given to ordinary, fleeting words. Rather, its status and its manner of reception are regulated by the culture in which it circulates (1979, 19).

But what of texts which are classified and circulate under the name of a writer rather than that of an author? Is the functioning of the category of “the writer” merely negative (signifying “not an author”) or does it have positive and distinctive effects of its own? Questions such as these have tended largely to be neglected. Perhaps more to the point, scarcely any consideration has been given to the problems posed by texts which do not circulate under the name of an author or writer, but under the name of their hero.

In this respect, as in many others, the case of Bond both resists and challenges the usual critical procedures whereby texts are grouped into sets as objects for analysis. It refuses the terms of reference proposed by author-based or even genre-based schools of criticism, in as much as (in the culturally preponderant form of their social circulation) it is as “texts of Bond” that the Bond novels and films have been grouped together and distinguished from other textual sets. Yet although they are constructed as a unity in relation to the figure of Bond, the films and novels are radically heterogeneous in the originating conditions of their production, their generic conventions and the means of expression they use. They also differ in terms of the name-ensembles under which they circulate; for contrary to the presuppositions of many schools of author-theory, texts usually circulate not under one name but many. Indeed, close examination of the material form of the various “texts of Bond” reveals a bewildering variety of names, but all organised within a definite order of priority, such that the name “Bond” overwhelms all other names and the contending principles of textual classification they putatively embody.

Thus whilst most of the written fictions in which Bond functions as the central protagonist bear the name of Fleming, not all of them do. Several Bond novels bear the names of other writers. *Colonel Sun* is by Robert Markham, a name which conceals another name, Kingsley Amis, the “real writer” behind the pseudonym of Markham; *Licence Renewed* bears the name of John Gardner; the novelisations of the films *The Spy Who Loved Me* and *Moonraker* are by Christopher Wood; the authorised biography of Bond bears the name of Pearson. An added complication is that one of the novels which bears Fleming’s name (*The Spy Who Loved Me*) was not written solely by Fleming, whilst another (*Thunderball*) was based on a film script he wrote with Kevin McClory and Jack Whittingham, whose names, as a result of legal action, are now appended to this title. Yet in terms of publishing and marketing operations, sleeve design and so on, all these texts are grouped together and circulated under the name of Bond. In all cases, the name of Bond dwarfs that of the writer, and it is undoubtedly as “texts of Bond” that they are bought and read. It is not the writers who culturally activate the reading of these texts, but the figure of Bond.

There is also a legal aspect of the functioning of the name of Bond. Whereas copyright is usually vested in an author, copyright in all the Bond novels – including those of “Robert Markham” (alias Kingsley Amis), John Gardner, and Christopher Wood, as well as those of Fleming – is held by Glidrose Productions, the company Fleming established to manage his Bond interests and which, shortly before his death in 1964, he sold to the city firm of Brooker Brothers. The copyright which Glidrose Productions holds, however, is not in the works of Fleming but in the name of Bond. It is thus in the strict legal sense that Pearson’s “fictional biography” of Bond and the novels of “Markham”/ Amis, Gardner, Wood, and others are presented as “authorised” versions of Bond. Bernard Edelman has shown that the category of the author has an aesthetic-cum-legal function, although more so in French than in British or American law (1979). It groups a set of texts under the sign of “art”, thereby establishing their cultural status, whilst simultaneously establishing property rights in those texts for the person named as their author. In the case of the Bond novels, the power of “authorisation”, in the legal sense, has passed from the writer to his creation. The various writers have been eclipsed by the figure of Bond not only culturally but also legally. It is Bond who functions as the primary legal subject – a name with rights to be protected and claims to be advanced – in relation to the “texts of Bond”.

This applies to the films too. With the exception of *Casino Royale* (the film rights to which were bought by Gregory Rafferty in 1955, and which was subsequently made into a film by Woody Allen) and *Thunderball* (produced by Kevin McClory), film rights to all the Bond novels have been controlled by Eon Productions, the company established by Cubby Broccoli and Harry Saltzman to produce the first Bond film, *Dr. No*. These rights, after a legal settlement with Kevin McClory in 1965, included an exclusive legal title to the use of Bond as a film-character, and to the use of the name “Bond” in film description. As with the novels, however, the films circulate under a diversity of names: it may be the name of the controlling production company (Eon Productions), or of the distributors (United Artists), or the producers (Saltzman, Broccoli, McClory), or the directors (Terence Young, Lewis Gilbert, Guy Hamilton, Peter Hunt), or the stars (Sean Connery, Roger Moore). Again, however, the name which overrides them all and which is culturally preponderant in grouping the films together and activating them for consumption as a related set of texts is that of James Bond.

In the case of texts which bear the name of an author, Foucault argues, “the manner in which a text apparently points to this figure who is outside and precedes it” (1979, 14) determines how and where the boundary lines which distinguish one set of texts from others are to be drawn. In the case of literature, it groups all fictional texts written by the same person into a compositional unity, and draws other texts written by that same individual – letters, diaries, articles, unpublished manuscripts, and so on – into association with these. The situation is entirely different when the figure to whom “a text apparently points” is neither outside nor precedes it, but is operative within it as its hero. The resulting textual set is not conceivable as the opposite of the type produced when author-based principles of classification are in play. It is not the result of the lack of application of such principles, and as such merely negative in its effects. Rather, it is a rival system of classification, which is positive in its effects to the degree that, owing to its preponderant cultural weight, it either forestalls or overrides the operation of author-based principles of classification. The Bond novels which bear the name of Fleming, for example, are thus no longer (although they once were) constitutable into a related set of texts which derive unity from their relationship to the figure of Fleming (conceived of either as author or writer), and in the process brought into association with the other texts written by him, such as *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*, *Thrilling Cities*, and his journalistic essays. They are pointed away from their creator and towards the net of intertextual relations established via their creature. Similarly, the film *Dr. No* is first and foremost a “text of Bond”,

and, in relation to this, its grouping within auteur-theory as part of the oeuvre of its director, Terence Young, is culturally secondary. This is not an impossible classification, but one which has been inhibited by the fact that the text has already been made to point in another direction.

It is therefore the figure of Bond, the signifier which floats between and connects them and which they jointly construct, that forms the Bond novels and films into a related set in spite of their manifest differences in other respects. By the same token, the functioning of the figure of Bond locates these texts within the considerably expanded set which constitutes that signifier's theatre of operations: interviews, fanzine publications, newspaper features, photo-articles, John Barry's 007 theme music, the impressive list of hit singles derived from the films (Shirley Bassey's "Goldfinger" and Nancy Sinatra's "You Only Live Twice", for example), and many more. How are the relations between these various "texts of Bond" to be represented? One possibility would be to view the Bond novels written by Fleming as providing the support for the other texts within the set, and to construe the latter as transformations of the former – to fix the novels as a static point of reference, and to view everything else as better or worse adaptations of these. Such a construction, which privileges the moment and the forms of Bond's origin, is impossible to maintain. The "texts of Bond" consist of a constantly accumulating and "mutating" set of texts, "mutating" in the sense that new additions to the set do not merely expand it, but play into and connect with the pre-existing "texts of Bond" in such a way as to reorganise the relationships, transactions and exchanges between them kaleidoscopically. None of the texts in which the figure of Bond is constructed can be regarded as privileged in an absolute or permanent sense. Rather, each region of the textual set can be regarded as privileged in relation to the others depending on the part it plays (in different ways and at different moments in the Bond phenomenon) in the construction and circulation of the figure of Bond.

Fleming's Bond novels are thus undoubtedly privileged in the sense that, historically, they came first. As the originating texts of the Bond phenomenon, they have functioned as a textual source for the films, supplying their titles and (albeit sometimes loosely) their plot elements. They have also functioned as textual legitimators in relation to the films, both culturally in the sense that an authentic film must be based on a Fleming source, however indirectly, and legally in the sense that Eon Productions acquired the sole legal right to use the name of Bond in film classification and description. From these points of view, the films can be regarded as secondary and derivative in relation to the novels. From the

point of view of their role in the construction and reconstruction of the figure of Bond as a popular hero, however, the films have arguably been privileged in relation to Fleming's novels throughout successive phases of Bond's popularity since the release of *Dr. No* in 1962.

This is not merely to say that many more people have seen the films than have read the novels. Rather more important is the fact that, for most readers/viewers, the films came first and the novels second. This suggests that, for the majority of readers, the films have constituted a determination which must be taken into account in assessing their relationship to and mode of reading the novels. This entails a more complex construction of the relationship between the films and the novels than that which is usually applied in the case of films adapted from some pre-existing fictional source. Normally, such relations are construed as unidirectional: the film concerned is viewed as a creative transformation of its fictional source, the task of analysis being regarded as that of assessing the degree of the former's departure from the latter, and measuring the differences between the two as if the fictional source itself remained an untroubled origin, unaffected and undisturbed by its adaptations. Whilst at one level the Bond films may be analysed in this way, it is clear that they have also exerted a reactive and transforming power on the novels themselves. For the films have been influential determinations in the social and ideological relations of reading, within which for the most part, and by most people, the novels have been read. The films have culturally activated the novels in particular ways, selectively cueing their reading, modifying the exchange between text and reader, and inflecting it in new directions by inserting the novels into an expanded intertextual set.

To consider the organisation of the reader's identification with Bond as the central protagonist in the novels will throw some light on these issues. The identification of the (male) reader with Bond is established of course by the construction of the relationships between the principal *dramatis personae* (Bond, the villain, and "the girl"). However, the precise nature of the mind's-eye image of Bond, which animates the reader-hero identification and fills out the figure of Bond in specifying its cultural resonance, will vary according to the reader's specific mode of insertion within the intertextual relations which bear on his/her reading of the novels. O.F. Snelling alludes to these issues (1964). He came to the Bond novels through a prior acquaintance with the tradition of the imperialist spy-thriller, represented by Buchan and McNeile, and relates that his mind's-eye image of Bond was essentially that of the English gentleman-hero as portrayed

by Hoagy Carmichael in a series of Hollywood films in the 1930s and 1940s. It is likely that identifications of this sort, in which the figure of Bond is made to echo to the tunes of an earlier set of texts, predominated during the first phase of Bond's career as a popular hero. Certainly, the screen identities of most of the actors initially considered for the part of Bond – James Mason, Trevor Howard, David Niven (Fleming's preferred choice), Richard Burton, and James Stewart – reflected a tendency to assimilate Bond into the tradition of English ruling-class heroes.

The casting of Sean Connery as Bond was an intentional break with such culturally latent patterns of identification. With the need to appeal to the American market primarily in mind – and in view of the more demotic character of American popular heroes – Broccoli and Saltzman wanted Bond to be portrayed as a “man of the people,” stalking within the Establishment but distinguished from it iconographically in terms of physical appearance and voice: Connery's plebeian ruggedness and manifest corporeal presence contrast with (say) the aristocratic frailty of Niven, and his Scottish burr is attractively mid-Atlantic rather than specifically English in its associations. They also wanted the part to be played laconically, but with an underlying aggressiveness rather than with the pointed cool of the aristocratic hero. Connery seemed to fit the bill. As Broccoli put it: “He looked like he had balls” (Walker 1974, 187).

The point of this is not to measure the difference between Fleming's characterisation of Bond and the screen portrayal of him by Connery, but to show the effects of the latter on the way the novels have been read. To account for these effects, it is necessary to dispute the assumption that the character of Bond in Fleming's novels has ever been available to be read in a way which has not been profoundly affected by the reader's specific “pre-orientation” to the novels. This is produced by his or her insertion in the orders of intertextuality which, in different ways for different groups of readers in different circumstances, hover between text and reader, connecting the two and dissolving their separate identities in the process. The process of reading is not one in which reader and text meet as abstractions, but rather one in which an intertextually organised reader meets an intertextually organised text. The exchange is never a pure one between two unsullied entities, but is always “muddied” by the cultural debris which attaches to both texts and readers in that domain of the intertextual which constitutes the terrain of their encounter. Snelling's mind's-eye image of Bond, for example, cannot be construed as an “original” or “true” response to Fleming's novels, in relation to which the subsequent portrayal of Bond by Connery can be

counted as a distortion. Rather, it is an identification produced by the “pre-orientation” of a male reader, of a specific age, as a result of his biographically specific (but not untypical) mode of insertion within the sphere of intertextual relationships. Women readers, as Kingsley Amis has noted, are likely to have construed the character of the hero differently, in as much as their reading of the Bond novels is more likely to have been culturally activated through a prior acquaintance with romance fiction. Viewed in this perspective, Bond is construable as a latter-day Byronic hero, “lonely, and melancholy, of fine natural physique which has become in some way ravaged, of similarly fine but ravaged countenance, dark and brooding in expression, of a cold or cynical veneer, above all enigmatic, in possession of a sinister secret” (1965, 36).

Whatever the nature of the reader’s earlier and pre-film images of Bond, however, the screen incarnation of Connery/Bond is likely to have overridden them even as evoked in reading the novels themselves. We have Fleming’s word for it that this was true even for the author/ writer. “Not quite the idea I had of Bond,” he said of Connery, “but he would be if I wrote the books over again” (quoted in Passingham, n.pag.). The films have culturally activated the novels in these and other ways that cannot be undone so as to yield an unfettered access to those texts. So far as the contemporary relations of popular reading are concerned, the Bond novels now reach us already “humming” with meanings established by the films, and as a consequence they are hooked into orders of intertextuality to which initially they were not connected.

This is not to suggest that the films are privileged in anything other than a relative sense. For these, too, reach us as already culturally activated, constituted to be viewed in particular ways. Interviews with Sean Connery and Roger Moore, and the actresses who have played opposite them, have been particularly influential in this respect. These have usually taken the form of “parallel texts”, providing abbreviated or substitute “sideline” narratives which function as synecdoches in relation to the “full texts” to which they refer, Whilst texts of this type come last (chronologically speaking) in the system of intertextual relations through which the figure of Bond has been constructed and put into circulation, their role when viewed from another perspective can be regarded as of a primary significance. They have functioned, in effect, as “hermeneutic operators”, selectively organising and re-organising demotic readings of both the films and the novels, “cueing” the way they should be read by proposing – albeit indirectly – an appropriate framework of ideological and cultural reference.

The organisation of such items is particularly worthy of note. In the case of texts which circulate under the sign of an author, that author is usually constructed in biographies or interviews as a figure standing behind the text, an issuing source of meaning which also serves as a guarantor of unity, a point of integration capable of resolving apparent contradictions between texts which bear that author's name. But interviews with the stars of the Bond films have been organised in accordance with different principles. Here, to put the matter in terms of Foucault's formulation, the figure to which the text points – or, more accurately, is made to point – is not one which is “outside and precedes it” (the author) but one which is simultaneously outside and inside it: the actor as a cypher for the figure of Bond. This figure runs alongside and adjacent to the film text, complementing it by a seeming mimesis which is at the same time an active “over-coding”. The result has been the construction of a series of micro-narratives in which the “real” biographies, views, and values of the stars fill out, but are also filled out by, the character of the hero and that of “the girl”.

Connery's famous *Playboy* interview affords an appropriate illustration in its construction of Bond/Connery as a composite figure, a unified subject to whom the same values are ascribed. Interestingly enough, Connery rejects this equation between himself and Bond when the interviewer touches on the development of his career:

Let me straighten you out on this. The problem with interviews of this sort is to get across the fact, without breaking your arse, that one is not Bond, that one was functioning reasonably well before Bond, and that one is going to function reasonably well after Bond (1965, 76).

However, this is a mere interruption, a refusal of the invitation to merge the two identities which, in the rest of the interview, Connery (or is it Bond speaking?) implicitly accepts. When asked which of Bond's characteristics he most admires, Connery replies:

His self-containment, his powers of decision, his ability to carry on through till the end and to survive. There's so much social welfare today that people have forgotten what it is to make their own decisions rather than to leave them to others. So Bond is a welcome change (ibid.).

That's Connery speaking about Bond and his "world of values." Here now is Connery speaking about Connery and his values:

If there is a malnutrition of any kind in this country – and I think there is – it's self-inflicted. The only competition you'll find today is the conflict between those few who try to correct a wrong, and the majority who hope it will just cure itself in the end (ibid.).

Bond/Connery, Connery/Bond: the two are indistinguishable, welded into a single figure which articulates and condenses the ideological themes of a self-reliant and competitive individualism.

The figure of Fleming has also been made to stand in precisely this way in relation not just to the Bond novels but to the entire set of texts comprising the "texts of Bond" – that is, as a cypher, significant not in his own right but as one more site for the continued reproduction, expansion and incarnation of the figure of Bond. Various fragments of Fleming's biography have assisted greatly in this, such as his coverage of the Moscow show trials for Reuters in 1933, his war-time service as deputy to the Director of Naval Intelligence, and the assistance he purportedly rendered American Secretary of State Dulles in establishing the CIA. All these associations with the world of real-life espionage have greatly facilitated the construction of Bond as a quasi-real character. Biographies and reminiscences of Fleming have thus, so to speak, "Bondised" his various experiences and exploits in order that the figure of Bond might then be "Flemingised." It is exclusively in this guise – as a real-life embodiment of exemplary fragments of the myth – that the figure of Fleming has been constructed in "hermeneutic operators" such as fanzines, which bear most directly on the social organisation of demotic readings of the Bond films and novels.

However, to add a further complication, the figure of Fleming has also been constructed in another guise, and made to stand in relation to the Bond novels which bear his name as, if not their author, at least their writer. Although the predominant form of their circulation has been as "texts of Bond", Fleming's Bond novels have also been circulated (together with other texts bearing Fleming's name) as precisely "texts of Fleming", discursively organised so as to be read in a "literary" or cultivated way. I have already alluded to these considerations in my earlier remarks concerning the attempted middle-brow literarisation of Fleming's Bond novels via the critical production of a "knowing reader". This constituted an attempt to organise the reading of the Bond novels along culturally

stratified lines, to reproduce relations of cultural superiority or inferiority in the contrasting ways these were available to be read. The “knowing reader” was thus recruited as the subject of a reading in which pleasure was aestheticised; and the possession of cultural capital was confirmed in the superior vantage-point it afforded in relation to vulgar readings, which failed to see beneath the superficial violence, snobbery and sexuality of the novels to appreciate their redeeming literary qualities and mythic antecedents. However, the history of this literarisation of Fleming – contained mainly in the pages of the *Spectator*, the *London Magazine* and the like – is not merely a critical history. It is also a material history, and a history of classifications.

It is the latter in the sense that “writer” functions like “author” as a principle of classification and as a means of valuing texts. (A “writer” is what Fleming claimed to be, and this is how his name comes to be attached discursively by critics to those texts which bear it.) Yet “writer” functions differently from “author.” How? How are life and work related to one another in the case of texts which circulate under the name of a writer rather than that of an author? Foucault argues that the way an author’s name is discursively attached to a body of texts varies from one region of textual production (poetry) to another (philosophy). In the case of literary criticism, he attributes three effects to the functioning of the category of the author. “The author”, he argues, “explains the presence of certain events within a text, as well as their transformations, distortions, and their various modifications (and this through an author’s biography or by reference to his particular point of view, in the analysis of his social preferences and his position within a class or by delineating his fundamental objectives)” (1979, 22). This is precisely how Pearson constructs the relationship between the life of Fleming and Fleming’s Bond novels. The plots of the novels are construed as transformations of Fleming’s real-life experiences, which are in turn construed as the raw materials of the novels, such as his visit to a health clinic, his journey from New York to Florida by the Silver Meteor (*Thunderball*), his trip to the races at Saratoga (*Diamonds Are Forever*), and his visit to the bird colony of Inagua (*Dr. No*). Similarly, Pearson also construes Bond as an emanation of Fleming: Bond’s background is also Fleming’s background; Bond’s preferences (martini, sauce Bearnaise, scrambled eggs, Sea Island cotton shirts) are also Fleming’s; Bond’s accomplishments (golf, cards, underwater swimming) are also Fleming’s, and so on.

The author, Foucault also argues, “is a particular source of expression who, in more or less finished forms, is manifested equally well, and with similar valid-

ity, in a text, in letters, fragments, drafts, and so forth” (ibid.). David Cannadine has obliged us with precisely such a construction of Fleming, drawing into compositional unity his Bond novels, journalistic writings and non-fiction books in tracing the homologies between Bond's political and social views, especially on “the condition of England,” and those directly expressed by Fleming in his other writings (1979, 46-55). Perhaps the most important effect Foucault attributes to the category of the author, however, is that of neutralising the contradictions in a series of texts. “Governing this function”, he writes, “is the belief that there must be – at a particular level of an author’s thought, of his conscious or unconscious desire – a point where contradictions are resolved, where the incompatible elements can be shown to relate to one another and to cohere around a fundamental and originating contradiction” (1979, 22). It is this aspect of the author function which has been lacking in the discursive construction of the relations between Fleming and the texts bearing his name. And it is in this disparity that we can see that the author/writer distinction does not merely distinguish the valuable from the non-valuable text; it also effects a differential distribution of critical procedures between the two. Where the name of the writer does not function as that of an author, it is a sign that what is lacking is the hermeneutic demand for unity or consistency of meaning. Biographical criticism accordingly articulates the relations between life and work differently in the two cases. Life, work and meaning are tied into an indissoluble unity in the case of the author – the whole life, the whole work and a whole meaning. But in the case of the writer, life is connected to work only associatively, via homology at the level of their respective parts, and there is no attempt to knit the two together as unities.

There’s another difference, too. I have argued elsewhere that criticism, in order to value a text, must also value the life of its author: “a text that is valuable for life should be seen as the product of a valuable life.” (1981, 160). Where it is a question of a writer rather than an author, the principle may operate in reverse. Here, as sign and justification of their mutual lack of value, life may be tied to the work by the “bad side” only. In the case of Fleming criticism, the most noted example of this is David Holbrook’s *The Masks of Hate* which, in deploring the Bond novels as dehumanising – as “gilded faeces” – in turn construes them as the product of a series of alleged psychological disorders in Fleming (1972, 138).

Finally, the circulation of the Bond novels as “texts of Fleming” is also in part a question of the material history of their publication. Close examination of this reveals, in the case of each novel, not a single text which can be privileged as the “original”, but an incredible heterogeneity of texts, each inscribed in different so-

cial and ideological relations of reading by different publishing apparatuses. Such considerations are of considerable importance, even though usually they are totally neglected in most schools of criticism. In its fetishistic concern with “the text” in some pure and limiting condition of “in-itselfness”, most criticism treats the variant material forms in which texts are reproduced as inconsequential and mere containers for “the text” which is the critic’s concern. Yet only intellectuals read “texts.” Most people read books, and books are different even when they appear to be the same (because they have the same title, and bear the name of the same author). Depending on their material form and the context in which we encounter them – a railway bookstall, say, as against a specialist bookstore – books reach us, to a degree, predigested: they make the text they contain available to be read in certain ways, and pass it on to us as (in part) already read, already humming with meanings. It is this aspect of the author function which has been lacking in the discursive construction of the relations between Fleming and the texts bearing his name.

I have already referred to these considerations in my earlier comments on sleeve design. By contrast with the sleeves for the first edition hardback imprints of the Bond novels, which had literary associations, the design on the paperback editions printed in the late 1970s consisted of one or more exotically but scantily clothed women placed beside or astride a large golden gun. In thereby cueing, as their central concern, the subordination of women to the regime of the phallus, such covers culturally activated the novels in a specific way, bringing them more into line with the primary sphere of ideological action in which the figure of Bond was inscribed by publicity posters for the films of the period. Anthologies and serialisations bear witness to a number of more specific and localised inscriptions of the Bond novels. These (or parts of them) have been anthologised in collections of spy stories, gambling stories, golf stories, card stories, tales of erotica, travel stories and crime stories. This suggests that, outside the academy, the categories in relation to which reading is defined are more fluid and varied than the genre divisions posited by literary theory. Of the many serialisations of the Bond novels, those which appeared in *Playboy* are the most relevant to our current concerns as forming part of an attempt both to aestheticise and intellectualise the Bond novels. Each of the serialisations was accompanied by reproductions of oil paintings depicting scenes from the novels; these were specially commissioned for the occasion and were signed by the artist. *Playboy* also attempted to install Fleming, via a series of interviews and articles by him, in a position of some importance in the magazine’s pantheon of modern intellectuals by estab-

lishing him as an author of a body of works of implied literary merit. It should be added that these serialisations, articles and interviews were usually accompanied by photo-essays of “The Nudest Miss Bond” type, their predominant function thus being to serve as an aesthetic and intellectual “pre-text” for *Playboy*’s monthly diet of male voyeurism.

#### ANALYSING THE BOND PHENOMENON

My purpose in this article has been to define the Bond phenomenon, and in doing so to query the supposition that it might be studied principally by means of a textual analysis of the Bond novels and films, and by regarding other texts (reviews, interviews, fanzines and the rest) only as supplementary evidence to be cited in support of the analysis of the “primary” texts. The nature of the Bond phenomenon resists the terms of theorisation suggested by any such distinction between “primary” and “secondary”, in so far as the relative cultural weight and role of the texts of Bond have varied in the different moments of Bond’s career as a popular hero, and within different social and ideological relations of reading. This does not merely require us to include in the analysis a wider range of texts than those which are usually constituted as the focus of critical attention; it also has implications for the way in which each of these texts should be approached.

These can best be formulated in terms of the consequences of the functioning of a popular hero as a principle of textual classification. The interest of the Bond phenomenon is that it provides a peculiarly telling instance of the problems involved in theorising the connections between texts and social processes. It is clear, however, that such connections are not made once and for all time. On the contrary, the various texts of Bond have been connected to, disconnected from and reconnected to diverse spheres of ideological, social, political and cultural concern; and this has happened in accordance with shifts in the functioning of the figure of Bond, which they have constructed compositely in different moments of the Bond phenomenon. Given that their sphere of cultural action has been constituted and reconstituted incessantly in relation to a mobile point of reference, it is not possible to locate a fixed context which might stabilise their signifying functioning, that is, their meaning in history. The different moments of Bond testify to the insertion of the Bond novels within kaleidoscopically shifting relations of intertextuality, as well as to pronounced changes in the “hermeneutic operators” brought to bear on them. In view of this, if we are to net analytically the variable cultural and ideological business that has been conducted around, by, and through these novels, it would be singularly unhelpful to take as

the point of departure for analysis either the novels as given (the texts on one's desk, so to speak), or the novels as constituted in a supposedly originating exchange between Fleming and his contemporary cultivated public. Rather, it is necessary to take account, at every stage in the analysis, of the intertextual relations through which the actual reading and specific social uses of the novels have been modulated. This, in turn, entails construing such intertextual relations not as secondary phenomena, but as determinations which actively press in upon and powerfully reorganise the specific texts which fall within their orbit of activity.

This is not to suggest that the case of Bond is unique and requires the use of uniquely specific methods and procedures. On the contrary, its value is the strategic one of calling into question the usually unproblematic, author-based principles of textual classification which form the mainstay of most critical practice – the means by which texts are abstracted from the history of their rereading and rewriting, and fixed to the stabilised context constituted by the moment of their origin. The case of Bond is of considerable interest not only in itself but also because it throws into relief the problems – rapidly accumulating in recent debates – concerning the status of “the text” and the sort of ontological status it is to be conceived of as having within the critical enterprise.

The view of the text as a discrete unit of meaning which is pre-given to criticism and requires to be investigated “on its own terms” has been criticised most tellingly, perhaps, by Jacques Derrida. According to Derrida, writing (by virtue of its very constitution as writing – that is, as material notations iterable from one context to another) necessarily exceeds the model of a closed cycle of communication which is necessary to constitute a given text as “having a meaning”. The iterability of the written mark – or by extension, any other material notation – liberates the text from any possible enclosing context, whether it is the context of the original moment of writing and/or reception favoured by historical criticism, or the semiotic context of the code (to the extent that it can be detached from the chain of significations in which it is originally inserted, and its meaning modified “by inscribing it or grafting it into other chains”) (1977, 182). This is precisely what has happened with the various texts of Bond. Where Derrida is slightly misleading, however, is in suggesting that texts are “free-floating” travellers, wandering hither and thither in the intertextual of their own volition. What should be stressed is not so much their “iterability” as their “inscribability” – their ability to be written into a potentially infinite variety of signifying contexts as a result of

changes in the discursive and classificatory practices of a wide range of cultural and ideological institutions.

Related problems have been raised by developments in the study of the audience, though more so in the case of film and television than literature, where theorisation of the processes of reading has rarely advanced beyond investigation of the position of the “implied reader” produced by the operation of the modes of address at work within specific texts. Once the question of variable reader/ viewer response is introduced, however, the issues, as Stephen Heath has noted, are too often reduced to a choice between two abstract and polar extremes:

Debate around particular films often stumbles over the issue of effectivity, ‘the real effect of a film’, deadlocks on notions of – on a choice between – either ‘the text itself’, its meaning ‘in it’, or else the text as non-existent other than ‘outside itself’, in the various responses it derives from any individual or audience; the text ‘closed’ or ‘open’. The terms are weak on both sides: to hold that a given text is ‘different for everybody’ is as much the end of any consequent political analysis and practice as to hold that it is ‘the same for everybody’; the implication of the latter is the possibility of a definitive analysis able to determine the use-value of a film in abstraction from the actual historical situation of its use; that of the former is a malleable transparency of the particular film to the determinations of the particular individual or audience, thus removing in the end all real basis for supporting through political-cultural analysis any film or films against any other or others (1978, 104-05).

What Heath recommends is not an easy synthesis of some “middle path” between these extremes, but to displace the terrain of their opposition:

The reading of a film is neither constrained absolutely nor free absolutely but historical, that history including the determinations of the institution cinema, the conditions of the production of meanings, of specific terms of address in films, a film. The property of a film is not yours or mine, whether makers or spectators, nor its; it is in a number of instances of relations across the film’s pre-construction, passage and construction that engage the spectator-subject in a multiplicity of levels of reading, reception, response (105).

That's a helpful formulation of the problem in that it focuses attention not just on the text or the audience, but on the mesh of variable historical determinations which mediate between and connect the two in differing and particular social and ideological relations of reading/viewing. The limitation of most audience-research to date, however, has been its tendency to theorise these processes one-sidedly in locating the reader/viewer (but not the text) within this matrix of conditioning relationships. Broadly speaking, attention has focused on two considerations and the relations between them: the part played by the ideological discourses which mediate between text and reader in inflecting the way that text is perceived and read; and the part played by the individual's location (in class, gender, racial and national relations) in conditioning his/ her access or exposure to different ideological discourses. David Morley has combined these two concerns productively in his study of the audience for the television programme *Nationwide*, where he argues that the question of reading "is always a question of how social position plus particular discourse positions produce specific readings; readings which are structured because the structure of access to different discourses is determined by social position" (1980, 134).

The advantages of this approach are considerable. It enables individual readings to be patterned into identifiable clusters whose distinguishing features are explained by the operation of both cultural (discursive) and structural (social positional) factors. Its most crucial shortcoming, however, is that it leaves the virtual identity of the text intact. Readings may vary but they are still construed, when all is said and done, as readings of the same text. In the case of a programme like *Nationwide* (the life of which is ordinarily limited to a single transmission) this assumption may be justified. But in the case of texts which have a longer life, and which are available to be read and reread in different contexts, account must be taken also of the cultural operators which bear directly on those texts and preorientate their reading by culturally activating them in particular ways. In such cases, it is necessary to take account of the cultural operators which, bearing on texts and readers alike, modulate the exchange between them; and to construe reading/viewing as processes which take place between culturally operated readers and culturally operated texts.

Space does not permit a detailed elaboration of the implications of this view for studying "the texts of Bond". Nevertheless, some indications can be given. Reading Bond is not and cannot be a question of simply reading the films and novels conceived of as self-contained texts available to be read "on their own terms". Nor is it a question of producing readings of the Bond novels and films

that one would wish to defend as “more correct” than other readings. What is aimed at is a reading which “hovers” mid-way between the novels and the films and those other texts of Bond which, in various ways and various moments, have reorganised the field of intertextual relations within which they have been culturally active. Our aim would be to net analytically not “the meaning of the Bond novels and films” but the spheres of meaning in which they have been floated as a result of the different regions of cultural and ideological action to which they have been yoked by virtue of the changing orders of intertextuality in which they have been inscribed. Put another way, it would be a question of reading the novels and films so as to make them hum and reverberate with the full range of the ideological and cultural traffic that has been conducted around them in British popular culture.

This could be done only by introducing a radical hesitancy into the analysis, such that the novels (whilst provisionally focused as the objects of analysis) would also be dissolved simultaneously as possible objects of analysis. They would be dissolved in the sense that, before they could be frozen as fixed points in the analysis, they would be dispersed incessantly into the shifting orders of intertextuality which have regulated the real history of their cultural activation. Such an approach to the Bond novels and films would be one which would cancel itself out in advance as a reading of the novels and films as such. In my view, this would be quite appropriate – not only for the enterprise I have been outlining here, but also for any endeavour to open and interrogate the diverse, complex and always unfinished history of the signifying functioning of textual phenomena in society.

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