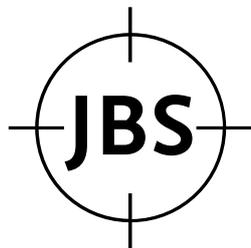


# The Role of Accent as a Class Marker in the James Bond Films

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Within British, and certainly English, society, the accent referred to as Received Pronunciation (RP) has existed, and largely continues to do so, as a prestige accent. While its origins are tied to the Southeast, it otherwise exists as a class-based accent and is thus not tied to region. In its more conservative varieties, such as U-RP (Upper-Class) (Wells 1982a), this accent represents the upper-classes, and middle/upper-middle class speakers in varieties such as Near-RP and mainstream RP respectively (Wells 1982a; Wells 1982b). Thus, an English individual from the North, South, or anywhere else within the country can speak RP, given that anyone within England can be a member of the upper-echelon class groups. As such, an accent associated with the upper classes in England will have the connotations of this group bestowed upon it; likewise, accents perceived as working class will have the associated connotations in interlocutors' minds. Connotations can, of course, be both positive and negative, but given the linguistic capital ascribed to RP as a marker of its speakers' wealth, status, and power (Bourdieu 1991), then this becomes a fitting accent for literary characters for whom such attributes are desirable. In terms of Fleming's literary James Bond, Tony Bennett explains that "the screen identities of most of the actors initially considered for the part of Bond", such as James Mason and David Niven, "re-



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flected a tendency to assimilate Bond into the tradition of English ruling-class heroes” (2017, 22). The accent of the ruling-classes has always been RP.

It is important to point out, however, that RP is not monolithic, as suggested earlier. John Wells (1982b) in fact discusses varieties of RP, such as U-RP, mainstream RP and adoptive RP: for example, U-RP is a variety associated with characters, whether real or fictitious, such as “upper-class army officers; to that of a Noel Coward sophisticate; to that of a Terry Thomas cad; to that of the popular image of an elderly Oxbridge don; and to that of a jolly-hockey-sticks schoolmistress at an expensive private girls school” (280). Wells further references the use of RP by individuals who did not otherwise speak this variety from childhood – adoptive RP – which can become the mainstream variety when it otherwise becomes a more natural aspect of an individual’s everyday linguistic repertoire. Moreover, Wells discusses the adoptive variety as a linguistic by-product of drama schools, explaining that “although the former insistence on RP for all roles except comic/rural/domestic/working-class ones has now largely disappeared, drama schools in Britain still insist on the students mastering ‘Standard English’, by which is meant RP as the standard pronunciation” (284). There are different phonological realisations for these three varieties of RP of course, a topic which is beyond the scope of this article. However, the societal implications are that there is a spectrum of RP varieties, from those perceived, as is U-RP, as representing the aristocracy, to varieties which may have more regional influence such as near-RP (but not to the extent the speaker is necessarily marked as being immediately identifiable to a specific city region – for a further discussion see Baratta 2021).

That RP displays internal variety is still valid in the present day, but given that it has been almost forty years since Wells’ publication we need to consider the more current linguistic landscape in Britain. More modern connotations of RP, certainly U-RP, might involve notions of snobbery and arrogance (Hughes, Trudgill, and Watt 2012), and Alan Cruttenden explains that some perceive RP as “class-ridden, outdated and limited to a small minority in southern England” (2014, 78). Sebastian Faulks (2011) indeed references the criticism levelled against both Fleming and his character on the basis of snobbery. This might seem at odds with the cinematic James Bond given that the character has evolved alongside changes in society – a reflection of the films’ staying power since 1962. Therefore, more modern perceptions of an accent regarded as elitist might not be seen as fitting for a character who otherwise changes with the times and seeks to appeal to a broad, rather than limited, audience.

It is also important to consider that BBC English – once synonymous with RP – now involves the use of a variety of regional British accents, as can be heard in newscasts throughout the country. This has implications for literary characters, as a reflection of a more egalitarian approach to accent in Britain. Indeed, the character of Doctor Who, for whom the first eight incarnations spoke RP, made news when the series was renewed in 2005, with Christopher Ecclestone’s Doctor speaking with a Mancunian (Manchester) accent. The film series *Kingsman* features a working-class Cockney-accented hero, Gary Unwin (played by Taron Egerton), depicted initially as a Chav.<sup>1</sup> In the first film of the series, Unwin is in fact told by his recruiter (for what is ostensibly a secret service organisation) that “being a gentleman has nothing to do with one’s accent”. Though just two examples, they do suggest that British cinematic heroes need not be restricted to a singular accent and (suggested) singular class background.

However, within the cinematic world of 007, the character of James Bond<sup>2</sup> has, since 1962’s *Dr No*, spoken with an accent that could be described as reflecting a privileged background for the character, even for the actors who are/were not English in the first instance. Or put another way, the accents of Bond largely lack a consistent regional quality, and thus are perceived as more neutral. Sean Connery’s Scottish accent occasionally came through, though, in what was nonetheless an RP-influenced accent – what Wells might describe as “near-RP”. This variety is perceived as indeed “educated”, “well-spoken”, “middle-class” (1982b, 297), and does not allow for its speakers to be identified to a specific region within Britain (or a region within Australia or New Zealand – this has relevance for George Lazenby: though he is Australian, his accent as Bond was clearly RP-influenced). Thus, it is argued that RP of some form (or certainly an accent largely perceived as “neutral”), has been the accent used for all actors portraying James Bond.

From this starting point, the purpose of this article is to discuss how this accent, varieties notwithstanding, is a) entirely necessary to reflect the character of James Bond – a character of power and class requires an accent which connotes such; and b) despite societal changes – and subsequent changes to the character on screen – it is arguably unlikely for future actors to portray the character with a regional British accent. Thus, RP of some description is an accent which will remain for the immediate future within the cinematic world of James

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1 “Chav” is a disparaging term for a working-class British individual depicted as aggressive, and often wearing sportswear and “bling bling” style jewellery.

2 In this article, the focus is solely on the official EON Bond films and hence references to the character will be restricted to the six actors to date who have played this role.

Bond, as to equate the character with the working-classes, regardless of future changes to Bond's race or even gender, would arguably not be compatible with what is an otherwise essentialist aspect of the character.

### THE CLASS IDENTITY, AND ACCENT, OF BOND

Before discussing the implications of accent for the cinematic character of James Bond, there are certain broader dispositions to consider that exemplify Bond, with associated connotations of "the good life", reflecting a degree of cultural capital (Bourdieu 1991). Pierre Bourdieu (1984) extended his discussion of cultural capital to three sources: objective, embodied, and institutionalised. A respective example of each would include cultural goods/property (e.g. art); behaviour and dispositions (e.g. language use); and qualifications (e.g. educational certificates). Taking each of these in turn, we can easily obtain cinematic evidence for Bond's cultural capital.

In terms of institutionalised capital, the fact that Bond started his career as a commander in the Royal Navy would require him to have a university degree in the first instance. Working as a secret agent for the British Secret Service also requires professional credentials, qualifications, and clearances. Regarding embodied capital, the cinematic Bonds have demonstrated their knowledge of fine wines (*For Your Eyes Only*), which variety of wine should accompany a particular meal (*From Russia with Love*), the inner-workings of a "disappointing" brandy (*Goldfinger*), and even the original vintage in which a sherry is based (*Diamonds Are Forever*). We might also consider the cinematic Bond and his ability to identify a particular caviar, itself a luxury item (*On Her Majesty's Secret Service*); and even an understanding of Stradivarius instruments (*The Living Daylights*). Moreover, the wearing of fine attire, use of fine cars, and taking expensive means of travel (*Moonraker*) all contribute to a cinematic picture of, what might be considered, a cultured and privileged English gentleman. Or, to put it another way, it is highly unlikely that the cinematic Bond has ever been perceived as anything other than upper-class, or at least upper-middle class, if indeed class is being used as a focal point of discussion.

Moreover, the use of an accent that reflects a degree of prestige in British society is a clear indicator of Bond's embodied capital from a linguistic perspective, not to mention Bond's knowledge of languages *per se*, all demonstrated in various films over the years: Japanese, Italian, Arabic, Pashto, Portuguese, Russian, and Greek. Put together, we have a well-travelled, university-educated, and refined polyglot, which is highly suggestive of displaying cultural capital from multiple perspectives. And such characteristics and personal background fit well

with an accent which itself reflects capital. In this manner, accent is a linguistic representation of disposition and background.

While cinematic incarnations of Bond have varied from the books' otherwise static depiction, the starting point is rightfully centred on Bond's class background. Fleming's *Dr No* was described by critic Paul Johnson as involving nothing more than "sex, snobbery and sadism" (431). Stephanie Jones further acknowledges the depictions of upper-class and subsequent cultural capital in the film version of *Dr No*, in terms of "the dinner jacket, the silver lighter, and cigarette case. The framing picks out the immaculately fitted black tie outfit and the character's hands manipulating a cigarette holder. The hands are well groomed" (2017, 2). While Jones further references the use of upper class English accents in the film, the suggestion is made that the cinematic Bond was markedly different from the literary version. Robert Shail references, for example, the toning down of the books' "white colonialism, patriotism, and a British society stratified by class" and discusses how Connery depicted "modern, and potentially classless, sophistication" (2008, 153-154). Jones refers to "the ambiguous origins of Connery's Bond" (9), as implied through his accent.

Regarding Connery's "ambiguous" accent as Bond, both James Chapman (2007) and Jones point out that it would not be perceived as English, but not necessarily entirely Scottish either. Jones nonetheless references vocal notes of Connery's Edinburgh upbringing, with even some Irish inflection (Hill 2006). Bennett does refer to Connery's accent as involving a "Scottish burr" but an accent which "is attractively mid-Atlantic rather than specifically English in its associations" (22). Thus, we might declare that Connery did not, in fact, use an RP accent. However, I argue that Connery's accent as James Bond would be nonetheless perceived as fitting for this gentleman spy, by virtue of a) clearly not representing a working-class Edinburgh accent; and b) having removed the more local, identifiable sounds, this means that his accent would be more difficult to consistently pin down to a specific region – be it a region in England or Scotland. Any moments in which Connery's Scottish tones were heard were just that – moments. Otherwise, Connery used an accent which was RP-like in its phonological realisation. This is a key aspect of RP, in that it functions to remove all trace of regional origin in the speaker and, instead, replace such with a class-based identity. One implication of this is that negative stereotypes associated with the working-class are subsequently removed, or certainly reduced (Kerswill 2009; MacFarlane and Stuart-Smith 2012; Baratta 2018; Baratta 2021).

Jones in fact argues that, given the potential for Connery's accent to be perceived as perhaps not quite one or the other, this can lead to a perception of social mobility which in turn could reflect individuals who have indeed modified their regional accents to varieties perceived as more neutral, less regional (see also Donnelly, Baratta and Gamsu 2019). This would also suggest a move away from a more overtly classist, that is snobbish, depiction of the cinematic Bond. However, accent modification in the context of social mobility would strongly suggest a modification to a less regional variety (Baratta 2018; Strycharczuk et al. 2020), as opposed to accentuating one's regional tones. This would again maintain a linguistic picture of an individual whose accent, even if ambiguous to region, is less ambiguous regarding class background.

Josh Saunders (2020) explains that in his early days of acting, Connery was indeed told to tone down his Edinburgh accent on the basis of being more comprehensible, reflecting a practical concern, but also on the basis of his own success in the acting industry. This latter point implies that a broad, regional accent may have been a hindrance based on the potential for negative stereotyping. Geoffrey Macnab in fact explains that Connery's "pronounced Edinburgh accent grated on the nerves of numerous casting directors" (2020).

It must be said that there is a need for audiences to be able to understand the actors who portray Bond. If Bond actors speak with broad regional accents, then it is entirely possible that overseas audiences, those tied to countries in which English is the native language in particular (i.e. where there would not be a need for dubbing), might not understand the dialogue. This is not to suggest that certain accents are inherently difficult to understand. Any difficulty in comprehension is arguably tied to a lack of exposure, which applies less to RP, but more so to regional accent varieties. And this might even extend to countries in which English is not the native language, with evidence for non-native speakers' familiarity with RP (Chiba, Matsuura and Yamamoto 1995; Dalton-Puffer, Kaltenboeck & Smit 1997; Timmis 2002; Howlader 2010; Carrie 2016; Wong 2018). Thus, the use of an accent which is perceived as more "neutral" helps to ensure overseas audiences, such as the United States, can understand the dialogue as it is spoken with a familiar British accent. This points to a purely practical issue and not a class-based one. Nonetheless, a class-based perspective applied to the character of James Bond and explored from a linguistic lens is a valid approach.

RP, or certainly an RP-like accent (to be discussed), is not merely used for purposes of audience comprehension in countries such as the USA and Australia, for example. Its cinematic connotations are also understood, certainly in terms of lending a certain authority and gravitas to characters, which can be seen in

films such as the original *Star Wars* to more recent films such as *Lord of the Rings*, with RP suggesting power and authority (Achyetuni 2020). Power and authority, of course, can have different connotations if used to depict a member of the evil Galactic Empire versus a Jedi master versus an English spy. Nonetheless, RP, or an accent certainly perceived as largely neutral, can help to promote the image of an English gentleman spy, with inherent dispositions reflective of cultural capital such as high-end clothing, fine cuisine and expensive cars, as referenced earlier. Rosina Lippi-Green in fact discusses the “manipulation of language variation to establish character” (1997, 104) in film and media. This suggests a symbiotic relationship of sorts, in that an accent of societal prestige in Britain – and one that existed prior to the film industry – was a natural choice for the speech of an English spy. Its use within the Bond films, to include the characters of M and Q as well as Bond himself, in turn helps to perpetuate RP’s status.

### ACCENT PERCEPTION IN BRITAIN

Accents which might be perceived as prestigious within Britain – even “standard” – are those that seek to remove the salient features (Labov 1972), distinctive vowels (Cruttenden), or what I refer to as phonological giveaways (Baratta 2021), referring to specific phonemes in specific contexts which can serve to immediately identify the speaker to a specific region, even a local area. Given that negative associations are still made of regional British accents, such as Liverpool, Birmingham and Glasgow (see Coupland and Bishop 2007), then the avoidance of such accents, notably broad varieties in particular (Baratta 2021), can lead to more positive perceptions of the speaker, if only by virtue of removing the negative perceptions.

To illustrate, let us consider the words “nurse” and “back”, both realised with an RP accent and a (broad) Liverpool accent:

Nurse

RP [nɜ:s]

Liverpool [nɛ:s]

Back

RP [bæk]

Liverpool [bax]

The issue at hand is not the phonemes *per se*; there is nothing inherently “good”, “bad”, “sexy”, “trustworthy” and so on regarding the RP use of /ɜ/ in “nurse”, or the voiceless velar fricative /x/ as heard in the Liverpool pronunciation of “back”. Rather, as language acts as a proxy for various categories tied to the speaker’s identity, whether at the national, local, racial, or class-based level, then stigmatised identities and the connotations of such are placed on to the accent and, in turn, the speaker, a point I had made earlier. Patrick Honeybone (2007) references the negativity associated, in some interlocutors’ minds, with the Liverpool accent, such as crime, poverty and unemployment. It is such negative associations, then, that are “heard” in the accent and not the sounds *per se*. While some might argue that there is a certain sound symbolism and thus specific sounds are inherently positive or negative, this is not the case. John Belchem discusses the use of certain sounds such as the aforementioned velar fricative /x/ in a broad Liverpool accent as suggestive of “congestion in the upper respiratory tract” (2006, 33); if so, then we might argue that this is suggestive of a certain inherent negativity, in this case, illness. However, the same sound can be heard in the Spanish use of the letter “j”, as in *jamón*. Arguably, however, as heard in Spanish, the perceptions of the same sound might be very different. However, an accent designated by Liverpudlians as “posh Scouse” (with Scouse a reference to a native of Liverpool), would not use the velar fricative as described in the example above. Here is a clear example of avoidance of a phonological feature whose presence indicates a broad accent; its absence has the opposite effect.

Nonetheless, even if sound symbolism *per se* is not the issue regarding public perception of accents within Britain, perceptions are indeed a dominant factor in terms of how accents – and their speakers – are evaluated. As acknowledged, an accent is needed for a leading cinematic character to ensure global comprehension and this need is also a key consideration in the choice of an accent that will help to ensure comprehensibility. But once again, we need to consider that the use of regional accents, even when they might otherwise be largely understandable within Britain at least, also carries negative stigma. The stigma is reflective of perceptual dialectology (PD), which Chris Montgomery explains is reflective of how individuals identify others based on their accent, for positive or negative. The point here is that an interlocutor’s region of origin can affect how they identify someone else’s accent when said accent derives from an outside re-

gion. Not merely a case of identifying a given speaker based on their accent, the issue here is based on how the speaker is identified in terms of associations and perceptions regarding their implied level of capital, or lack thereof. As Montgomery notes, “[s]tigmatised dialect areas” (2012, 658) are particularly identifiable and again, stereotypes of the speaker as a result can occur (see also Silverstein 2003). Given the particularly negative stereotypes of regional British accents, with the Birmingham accent referred to as “the *bête noire* of British urban varieties” (Coupland and Bishop, 84), such negative reactions are avoided for a cinematic character who portrays an image of elegance and sophistication. Again, linguistic capital is thus needed as a reflection of the overall societal capital that is attached to the character of James Bond.

I had referenced Jones’ point earlier, that Connery’s accent as Bond was suggestive of social mobility but without the deployment of a more discernible RP accent *per se*, suggestive perhaps of U-RP. However, it is equally the case that precisely because Connery did not use a more discernible regional accent, and one suggestive of working-class origins, that audiences were able to still perceive his character as reflecting the upper-class, or certainly a degree of social mobility. There is indeed evidence that even in modern-day Britain, accent modification is a means to signal social mobility (Donnelly, Baratta and Gamsu; Strycharczuk et al.). Specifically, those with regional accents are not defaulting to RP *per se*, but removing the more discernible regional features from their accents and as such, speaking with less broad accent varieties.

Strycharczuk et al. in fact discuss General Northern English, an accent which has phonological similarities across several Northern English city regions, by removing, in part, the phonological features that would otherwise identify the speakers more immediately as being from a specific city region. This is also described as Standard Northern English (Honeybone; Cardoso et al. 2019), suggestive that perceptions of “standardness” in relation to British accents are based on the loss of more identifiable features once again, which Strycharczuk et al. refer to as stigmatised features. Thus, the deletion of such phonological features serves to enact less broad regional accents, which makes the speaker difficult to pin down to a more specific region. This in turn means that it is less likely for the potential negative stereotypes to be applied, precisely because a specific locality is less discernible in the speaker’s accent. Like RP, then, more general varieties of regional accents allow for the removal of regional specificity and thus, serve to remove the negative connotations, perhaps broadly reflective of what Nikolas Coupland and Hywel Bishop refer to as “RP-like accents” (85). Thus, embodied

capital in the form of linguistic usage need not be tied to U-RP or RP *per se*; it is instead linked to a variety of accents which nonetheless serve to render the speaker, partly at least, “placeless”. As a result, the speakers of such accents can still connote a higher-class level and the associations, such as education, which accompany it.

Previously I have proposed a trichotomy approach to regional British accents as a placeholder concept (Baratta 2018; Baratta 2021), reflecting broad, general, and neutral varieties of accents. This also links with social class, in that broad accents are often associated with the working classes, more general varieties less so. A telling point is made by Peter Trudgill, who explains that “it is usually possible to tell which broad region of the country middle-class speakers come from. And working-class speakers can usually be pinpointed even more accurately as to their geographical origins” (2002, 173). Thus, the retention of specific phonological features which serve to mark a (broad) regional accent might also convey working-class background, which, I argue, would be inconsistent with the character of James Bond.

In closing this section, the following points are reiterated. First, even more modern connotations of RP which may involve negativity (Hughes, Trudgill, and Watt) do not change RP as a means to depict individuals – here a cinematic character – with implied dispositions tied to social prestige such as wealth, education, and cultural capital as a result. Second, even in the absence of a more discernible variety of RP, such as Connery’s accent, the removal of the more regional features nonetheless allows for a degree of embodied capital to be implied, crucial to the character of James Bond. Finally, social standing can be conveyed in, as will be described, a lack of complete consistency regarding the Bond actors’ accents, which reflects British attitudes toward accent and implied class level and social prestige: accents which are not reflective of the most upper-class RP are still reflective of social standing if they also serve to remove the more identifiable regional features; thus, a linguistic happy medium is possible to still convey a higher class level and this, as a societal aspect of Britain, is reflected in the Bond films.

#### **THE ACCENTS OF THE BOND ACTORS POST-CONNERY**

George Lazenby’s single film as Bond – *On Her Majesty’s Secret Service* – involved the use of an RP accent, though he is Australian. Larry Getlen (2015) acknowledges that as part of Lazenby’s preparation for Bond, he did indeed take elocution lessons. John Brosnan (1972) refers to Lazenby’s Australian accent coming through on occasion, however, referring to an Australian James Bond as some-

what of a contradiction. Nonetheless, that Lazenby derives from a Commonwealth country arguably helped to give some credibility as opposed to, say, an American taking on the role of an English spy (though American actors John Gavin and Adam West were indeed approached, if not signed, to take on the role, with American Barry Nelson having portrayed Jimmy Bond in the 1954 TV show *Climax!*).<sup>3</sup>

Interestingly, the Australian accent is itself divided into three varieties, as part of the trichotomy approach referenced earlier: cultivated, general, and broad. The cultivated variety, while spoken by a minority, is very much reflective of RP. Examples of cultivated Australian speakers include Cate Blanchett and Geoffrey Rush. One phonological example in which this accent reflects RP pronunciation can be heard in the word “bay”, which would be realised as [beɪ] in both accents. If this word is spoken with a broad Australian accent, it would be more immediately – and unambiguously – identified as being Australian, sounding more like the word “buy”. Again, Lazenby’s absence of a clearly identifiable Australian accent, replaced by what might be perceived as a neutral accent for the most part, allows the audience to perceive him in a more “neutral” manner from a linguistic point of view, suggesting that his character is perceived as wholly fitting for the character of 007. This allows for the suspension of linguistic disbelief, in that his Bond is subsequently perceived as a regionally-neutral Englishman. Moreover, while Lazenby poses as the genealogist Hilary Bray during his time at Blofeld’s lair, he switches to a more clearly identifiable variety of RP, arguably U-RP, voiced by the actor George Baker.

Bennett claims that the Bond character functions, more so at his 1960’s peak, as “a popular icon in ways that cut significantly (if also unevenly and contradictorily) across class [...] divisions” (9). This might be reflected in the use of an accent which is not perceived to be excessively upper-class, thus not U-RP (with the exception referenced above, where Bond is in character as someone else in the first instance). This is again suggestive of an accent which is somewhat of a happy medium in that it avoids a variety of RP deemed to be more reflective of the aristocracy, and yet does not use a broad, more clearly identifiable regional accent.

One modern variety of RP which allows for a happy linguistic medium perhaps is Northern Near-RP (Wells 1982a), suggestive of Northern English phonemes being deployed, but not to the extent that the speaker is immediately identified as being from the North, let alone a specific city region within. If we

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<sup>3</sup> See the *Time to Bond* website: <https://timetobond/blog>.

further consider more current realisations of RP, Cruttenden references a modern variety, also referred to as Standard Southern British English (SSBE). Beverley Collins and Inger Mees regard SSBE as “non-regional pronunciation” (2013, 4), and a variety used by the younger generation. If we consider this in the context of Wells’ (1982b) focus on varieties of RP, then there is a suggested range, as referenced earlier, from Near-RP, which does involve some regionality, possibly an offshoot of regional RP to U-RP; modern RP, or SSBE, would exist somewhere in between.

The point here is that all the Bond actors have used accents which feature somewhere along this RP spectrum (Wells 1982a). Thus, while some regionalisms might have marked the speech of Connery (and, as will be discussed, Dalton’s accent), the overall linguistic picture is one of an otherwise neutral accent, with “neutral” a placeholder concept for accents which otherwise do not immediately, if at all, reveal the speaker’s regional or local origins. This ties in with individuals who declare that they do not “have an accent”. What they really mean is that they do not have a stigmatised accent, precisely because of their accent’s otherwise unmarked qualities. A key finding of research reveals that even for regionally-accented individuals, such regional variation is reduced amongst educated and middle-class speakers (Cardoso et al.; Strycharczuk et al.), again linking to the removal of phonological giveaways.

Roger Moore was in fact the first English actor to portray the character of James Bond clearly using a more identifiable RP accent. Jones further references Moore’s persona of an “upper class gentleman”, in part due to his previous role in *The Saint*. Perhaps Moore’s portrayal of James Bond as “something of a playboy” (Jones 2017, 7, 9) also ties in with his use of RP. In this case, the alignment of an accent perceived as posh with a character who enjoys the life of an epicure is fitting. We see Moore’s Bond fly Concorde on his journey to Rio, where he stays at a fancy hotel – in the “president’s suite”, no less. Moore’s Bond also sports a Rolex watch, at least in his initial Bond films, enjoys Bollinger champagne, as well as smoking cigars (presumably Cuban) in his first two Bond films. Moore also concurs with the villain Scaramanga’s choice of fine wines, himself an epicure of sorts employing a *cordon bleu* chef, Nick Nack, as well as Bond approving of the villain’s choice of champagne at the end of *The Spy Who Loved Me*. Such a luxurious lifestyle is not tied solely to the Moore Bond films of course, and does give the impression somewhat of a *bon vivant* for all the cinematic Bonds. Again, this all combines to reflect a high degree of cultural capital, and linguistic capital (as a subcategory of embodied cultural capital) is subsequently required for such a character.

Timothy Dalton, while born in Wales, was raised in the town of Belper, England from an early age. Belper is located in Derbyshire in the North of England. While Dalton might represent an individual who speaks adoptive RP based on his training at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (RADA), his Northern tones can sometimes be heard. Indeed, Jones points out that Dalton's use of RP "does slip at points" (9). This is notable in the film *Licence to Kill*, in the scene where Dalton meets with the villain, Sanchez, at his home. In character as Bond, Dalton explains that "things were about to turn nasty", a reference to his (Bond's) capture by fellow agents who are pursuing Sanchez. Dalton's pronunciation of "nasty" clearly reveals his Northern roots, as it is pronounced as [nasti], as opposed to RP [nɑ:sti]. The use of a front vowel /a/ is a marker of Northern speech overall, as heard in words such as "bath". The same word in the South would retain the use of a back vowel /ɑ/ – [bɑ:θ].

Connotations of the English North – and subsequent accents – can suggest being "common" (Montgomery 2015). This would not be in keeping with the character of James Bond. Indeed, when Christopher Eccleston took over the role of Doctor Who, there were television parodies of his role, based not just on his accent but on the stereotypes of Northern England which emanated from his accent. In one TV sketch, we see Ecclestone's supposed family sitting in the living room at home, dressed in *Star Trek* costumes and speaking with broad Mancunian accents but also, wearing flat caps – a supposed symbol of the English North. This is an example of how accents can create a "mental image" of the speaker (Wells 1982b, 279). Nonetheless, in keeping with an otherwise consistent use of an RP accent, Dalton's Bond is reflective of upper class and in part because of his own acting history – having attended RADA and being classically trained, in addition to having performed in costume dramas and having played aristocratic roles (e.g. *Wuthering Heights*' Heathcliff).

Pierce Brosnan is Irish, but moved to England as a boy. His own accent in the Bond films is again suggestive of being regionally-neutral, that is not quite able to be identified to a specific city, or locality within. Some of Brosnan's speech does suggest his Irish origins, notably the scene in *Goldeneye* where Bond is first meeting with his old nemesis Zerkov in a bar. But it is fleeting, as perhaps Connery's Scottish tones were, thus leading again somewhat to linguistic ambiguity (at times), but a lack of ambiguity in terms of the positive connotations of such an accent, however. Again, this is broadly in keeping with the functions of RP as a whole, which is to remove regional origins. Granted, an accent perceived as regionally neutral is not synonymous with RP, but it implicitly

shares a key function. This is described by Susan Ramsaran (2015), who argues that RP serves as a standard for other accents to emulate, not in terms of its sounds *per se*, but based on the function of the speaker being able to avoid regional identification; this would not be possible if speaking with a broad regional accent. In this sense, Bond actors have utilised accents which, once again, range from immediately identifiable RP (Moore) to a variety influenced by regionalisms perhaps but otherwise regarded as neutral (Connery).

With Daniel Craig, Bond was rebooted in what was possibly the most significant move to date in the Bond series. Here, we see a James Bond who has only just been awarded his Double-O status and is chastised by M for essentially being rough around the edges. In *Casino Royale*, Bond drives a Ford, wears casual clothing for much of the film and does not care whether his vodka martini is shaken or stirred. By the film's end, however, we have seen Craig's Bond don the familiar tuxedo and utter the immortal lines, "Bond, James Bond". Craig does not speak with a hint of a local accent, despite being raised near Liverpool as a boy. His use of RP, however, is reflective of a less conservative variety, and more suggestive of a mainstream variety (Wells 1982b). The opening scene between Bond and the crooked agent Dryden is commented on by Jones in terms of the use of accent. Jones suggests a relationship that reveals class, in that "Dryden's English accent is more clipped than Bond's" (15), perhaps suggestive of a more conservative variety. What is important to note is how the use of a conservative variety of RP serves to personify Dryden. For example, to go alongside his clipped RP accent, Dryden is dressed in leather gloves, a dress shirt, and an overcoat. Furthermore, Jones explains that Dryden "serves to exemplify the class-bound, stiff-upper-lipped, quipping man of the secret service" (ibid). This persona need not be tied solely to RP-accented individuals, regardless of internal variety, but it does not appear incompatible at all with such an accent in this context, more so given the implied rank between a senior staff member (Dryden) and the young novice (Bond).

There was much public outcry at the choice of Craig for the sixth cinematic rendition of James Bond. He was derided for having blond hair and being perceived as too short to play the character. Granted, the literary Bond has black hair and stands at six feet tall. Craig, however, does have the physical attributes often used to describe Bond in the novels. In the Ian Fleming novel *Moonraker*, for example, the character of Gala Brand describes Bond in terms of being "a bit cruel in the mouth, and the eyes were cold" (1955,169). Moreover, Bond's suggested overall persona in the novels of an agent who is world-weary and who can reveal his inner demons at any moment is captured with Craig's interpretation of

the character. That aside, and despite some accusations of Craig not being refined enough to play the role,<sup>4</sup> Craig nonetheless retains an RP accent. Whether or not audiences felt Craig's use of a posh accent was incompatible with his otherwise "rough" persona is unknown. But the use of this accent is arguably a telling feature of James Bond, an oral ID for a character who is, throughout his cinematic adventures, essentially a member of society's elite, though arguably, Craig's Bond in particular does not give the impression of being elitist.

We might look to the Bond fans themselves to obtain valuable information regarding their perceptions of Bond and his accent. As but one example of a fan site, *MI6 Community* includes discussion on this very subject. Posting as "Matt007", a fan ranks the various accents in terms of Brosnan's accent being "too light and inconsistent", whereas Moore's accent is characterised as "smooth as silk and deep". Another posting, by "soundofthesinners", characterises Dalton's accent as "having a Northern edge".<sup>5</sup> Some of the comments reflect overall vocal quality (e.g. smooth) and not accent *per se*, but this nonetheless provides a brief sample of the various fan-based comments to be found online on the myriad Bond fan sites and forums. And to do further justice to this discussion, albeit from a more purely phonological perspective, detailed samples of all six Bonds actors' speech would need to be transcribed. However, it has hopefully been demonstrated that accent in the Bond films has served to mark the character as belonging to a segment of society that is posh, but not too much, an individual whose world revolves around the finer things in life, but not to the extent of an aristocratic and private-schooled individual, but certainly not an individual who is perceived as a working-class hero either. This reflects a character who exhibits cultural capital, with linguistic capital an offshoot of such, but in a way that seeks to avoid extremes. While we cannot identify all Bond actors' accents as one monolithic variety, we can confidently identify them as exhibiting features which seek to avoid the extremes of the working-classes and the aristocracy, yet in doing so, help to portray James Bond as nonetheless representing class and sophistication. Thus, while each Bond actor's accent might change somewhat, along with the portrayal of the character of Bond more obviously, all six versions of Bond have arguably been regarded as reflecting a singular character trait, forged, in part, by accent.

We might also consider the fact that the Bond actors reflect all three countries of Britain in terms of their national origins, to also include a Common-

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4 See [www.danielcraigisnotbond.com](http://www.danielcraigisnotbond.com).

5 See [www.mi6community.com/discussion/8060/bonds-accent](http://www.mi6community.com/discussion/8060/bonds-accent).

wealth country and the Republic of Ireland. This represents a certain openness to the casting of Bond, in that he need not be portrayed by an English actor. Indeed, Albert Broccoli had even considered a Dutch actor – Hans De Vries – to replace Connery, according to the *Time to Bond* website.

Unsurprisingly perhaps, a discussion of Bond's nationality can be found on online forums, alongside all manner of Bond-based topics of course. A comment posted on a fan site in fact references a quote from *Goldeneye*, delivered by Bond to the villain, Alec Trevelyan – “for England, James”. However, there has nonetheless been a degree of national diversity in Bond casting, with its implied linguistic diversity. This suggests a degree of egalitarianism but one that still exists within an otherwise essentialist aspect of the character – the cultural capital the character embodies and which audiences expect. Bond fans have inevitably complained from time to time that the series has become stale and predictable, but if the formula is tinkered with too much, the series risks no longer being the Bond series. As of this writing, it is impossible to know who will replace Daniel Craig as the next 007. There have been discussions of changing Bond's gender or his race (e.g. Idris Elba, Henry Golding). However, one aspect which is argued not to be subject to change is Bond's accent.

## **CONCLUSION**

This article has discussed the role of accent in the cinematic version of James Bond, arguing that all six actors have used accents which sit along a suggested RP spectrum. While there is clearly not a uniform accent amongst the actors who have portrayed Bond, there has been a uniform effect of using an accent of some kind that is arguably perceived as neutral. This effect is to once again remove regionality, at least to the extent that one's regional, let alone local, origins are silenced in the case of RP speakers, or diminished, in the case of Connery's accent or more specifically, Near-RP varieties. This allows for the character of James Bond to be perceived not merely as upper-class, or subsequently not be perceived as working-class. Rather, it also achieves a broader goal of the character being perceived as somewhat of a sophisticated and classy everyman, neither a snob nor a plebeian. This might suggest a middle-class persona, but here the focus is not merely on class but rather on the wider consideration of appealing to a broad audience, made up of various nationalities, ages, and, indeed, class levels.

In modern-day Britain, suggested linguistic mediums consisting of accents which avoid extremes of U-RP and the more broad regional varieties can allow individuals to signal a class-based identity that suggests mobility, education and a degree of cultural capital as a result. This is reflected in the cinematic James

Bond, who has used a variety of such accents since *Dr No* in 1962. The Bond films have changed in many ways since then, reflecting not only the changing mores and values of society, but also reflecting the different actors' interpretations of the role. This has allowed for the playfulness of Moore's Bond, to the more serious and harder edge brought to the role by Dalton. And while some fans have complained that the changes have taken Bond away from his roots and what makes a Bond film a Bond film (notable in the divisive ending of *No Time to Die*), audiences are not ready to see Bond depicted as a working-class hero, and nor do they want to see a snob either. Thus, as a means to appeal to a wide audience, the use of specific accents helps to achieve this goal, presenting a Bond who exhibits cultural capital in a manner that is accessible to a global audience. This suggests that cultural capital can be open to all perhaps, and not necessarily based on birthright. Bond is an epicure, a lover of fine food and wine; a speaker of several languages; university-educated; previously, an officer in the Royal Navy; and a member of Her Majesty's government. Taken together, this background for the character is highly suggestive of displaying cultural capital and regardless of differing interpretations of the character, the Bond actors all inherit this background to the character they are portraying. As such, the capital is an inherent part of James Bond and thus an accent of linguistic capital is required.

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