

Winter 2011—VOLUME 6, ISSUE 2

# THE MIDWAY REVIEW

A JOURNAL OF POLITICS AND CULTURE



ISAAC DALKE *profiles* A MYSTERIOUS IDENTITY  
JACK FRIEDMAN *punctures* THE AMERICAN SITUATION  
TOMI OBARO *promotes* MAD MEN'S RACIAL TENSION  
NAUSICAA RENNER *progresses* POSTMODERN LITERATURE  
JACOB ALANSO *presents* A NEW JAMES BOND



# THE MIDWAY REVIEW



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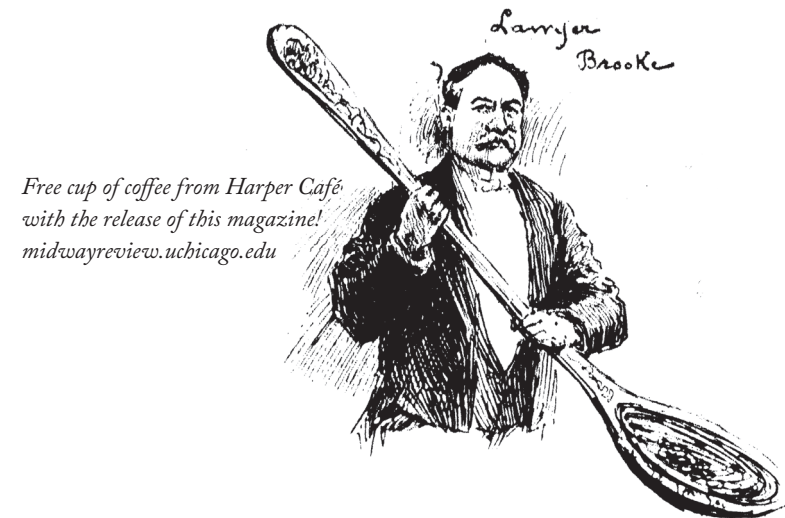
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## Contents

THE MYTHOLOGY OF BOB DYLAN: A STUDY IN SOCIAL IDENTITY . . . . .	3
A man of many identities, and his refusal to abide by any of them, results in tension.	
THE REAL CULTURE WAR: THE VALUES BATTLE WE SHOULD BE HAVING . . . . .	7
Beyond the numbers and the polls, a deeper culture of dissatisfaction with and distrust of government has been bubbling underneath the surface for quite some time.	
MAD MEN AND RACE: A CRITICAL LOOK . . . . .	11
When <i>Mad Men</i> attempts to placate the complaints of a few aggrieved bloggers or to succumb to the pressures of political correctness, the authenticity of the show rapidly disintegrates, and more importantly, the quality of the show suffers.	
THE SEARCH FOR ENGROSSMENT . . . . .	15
Trivialities have surely begun to structure our lives in the same way that they structure novels, so that small objects and actions become significant.	
A NEW BOND . . . . .	23
It is not the character itself that has changed, but the rest of the world, and the fact that for the first time he is shaped by that world in ways outside of his control.	

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# *The Mythology of Bob Dylan: A Study in Social Identity*

Isaac Dalke

One's very own free, unfettered desire, one's own whim, no matter how wild, one's own fantasy, even though sometimes roused to the point of madness—all this constitutes precisely that previously omitted, most advantageous advantage which isn't included under any classification and because of which all systems and theories are constantly smashed to smithereens.

—Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Notes From Underground*

*Isaac Dalke  
is a second-year  
in the College  
majoring in  
Sociology.*

AS A PERSONAL COMMENT IN *Notes from Underground*, Fyodor Dostoevsky tells us, “The author of the diary and the diary itself are, of course, imaginary. Nevertheless it is clear that such persons as the writer of these notes not only may, but positively must, exist in our society.” The author which is referenced is Dostoevsky’s ‘underground man,’ a caustic and embittered character riddled by conscious contradictions and an aversion to anything that might stifle him with a label. He is a commonly explored literary archetype, appearing across genres and across media from Mersault in Albert Camus’ *Stranger* to Travis Bickle in Martin Scorsese’s *Taxi Driver*.

These examples and their iterations either take a heavily invested stance in the protagonist or are in the first person. The reason for this can be attributed to an aspect peculiar to the underground man: He is underground, alienated and unidentifiable to all but himself. But if, as Dostoevsky asserts, these individuals exist in the world, then there is an additional element added to their existence: society. These individuals cannot exist simply on the fringe, but must be in others’ midst. In this context, how society perceives them from a casual vantage point is just as important as how they perceive society.

The tension between a man intent on shirking the concept of identity and those who surround him is nowhere more evident than in the life of Bob Dylan. Any simple internet search can bring to light the basics of Bob Dylan’s life: Born Robert Zimmerman, of Duluth, Minnesota, to a Jewish family, he was at first interested in rock and roll before discovering folk music and entering the scene in the area around the University of Minnesota. From here, he moved to New York City and spends the rest of his life in the public’s domain. However, while Wikipedia can quickly draw up his life’s trajectory, Dylan has never been one to stick to his own reality.

Before his jettison into the public spotlight, much mystery surrounded Dylan's origins. In large part, Dylan himself was the main perpetuator of this ambiguity. In his autobiography, *Chronicles Vol. 1*, he describes his first encounters with his first label, Columbia Records, and the head of its publicity department:

I strolled into his office, sat down opposite his desk, and he tried to get me to cough up some facts, like I was supposed to give them to him straight and square... I told him I was from Illinois and he wrote it down. He asked me if I ever did any other work and I told him that I had a dozen jobs, drove a bakery truck once... I said I'd worked construction and he asked me where... I hated these kind of questions. Felt I could ignore them... didn't feel the need to explain anything to anybody.

As is typical, Dylan doesn't provide an explanation for his reaction to the questions. But the discomfort with and animosity towards anything that might serve to characterize him is evident.

This elusiveness flows over into his musical output as well. The musicologists Michael Cherlin and Sumanth Gopinath are able to identify 18 discrete vocal styles, ranging from yodeling to sneering, on his album *The*

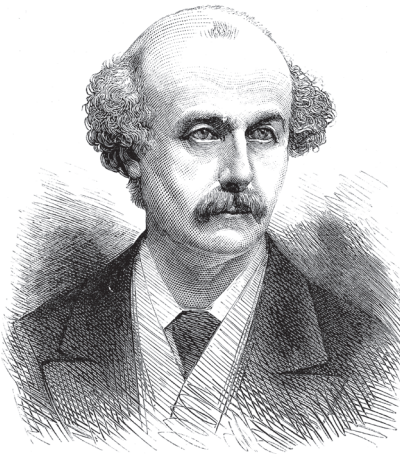
*Freewheelin' Bob Dylan* alone. This corresponds to 12 distinguishable characters, a list that includes a "country wise man," a "drunk fool," and "Abe Lincoln filtered through Raymond Massey." All of this is to say nothing of the persona shifts on subsequent albums, such as the metamorphosis to silky country singer on *Nashville Skyline* and the distinctive gospel edge to the records made while Dylan was a born-again Christian.

This wide variety of style in his musical output is contrasted by the literal branding of his work with his image. Three of his first four albums contain his name in the title. And these albums and their

outtakes contain songs such as "Bob Dylan's Dream," "Bob Dylan's 115TH Dream," "Bob Dylan's Blues," and "Bob Dylan's New Orleans Rag." The outcome of such marketing is to create a very tight bond between the music and the image of Dylan as a person. There is a cynical explanation to this phenomenon: putting his name on everything serves as a promotion tool to highlight the fact that Dylan was writing original songs.

Indeed, much was made of Dylan's ability to write his own songs in an age when most people were not willing to create their own material. But Dylan engaged in this practice of self-promotion within his own music. Let us consider the song "Bob Dylan's Blues" off of *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan*.

Doc Holliday  
filtered through  
Bob Dylan.



## UNITARIANISM

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As the track begins and he starts to play the guitar, Dylan breaks the musical flow of the album to speak directly to his audience: "Unlike most of the songs nowadays, are being written uptown in tin pan alley, that's where most of the folk songs come from nowadays, this, this is a song, this wasn't written up there, this was written somewhere down in the United States." Dylan then gives us an earful of that harmonica for which he is so well known.

Within this dichotomy arises a peculiar irony of Dylan's music: While as an individual he remains hard to pin down, he is simultaneously promoting the music as a means to provide him with an identity of sorts. "Bob Dylan's Blues" is not the only place where Dylan seems to engage directly with his listeners. Take the song "Bob Dylan's 115TH Dream" off the album *Bringing it All Back Home*. The song begins with Dylan strumming along, his rough voice singing, "I was riding on the Mayflower/When I thought I spied some...", at which point Dylan and his band fall into laughter. In the background, we hear, "okay, take two" and immediately the whole group joins Dylan as they fall into perfect rhythm and play through the song. To whom that manic laughter is directed, we can't be sure. But there is an ephemeral aura hanging in that pre-track banter that all but demands the listener to reach towards the man behind the music. However, when we begin to reach for that man, all we can find is an entangled and elusive figure of mythic proportions.

The propensity to perpetuate a self-made myth remains with Dylan to this day. On *60 Minutes* in 2004, Dylan discusses his hatred of the conception of him as a prophet. But when asked about his constant touring, Dylan answered, "It goes back to that whole destiny thing. I made a bargain with it a long time ago, and I'm holding up my end." When asked whom the bargain was with, Dylan responded "With the chief commander." Who this 'chief commander' is, Dylan won't tell us. But this tradition of the eternally damned bluesman runs deep, perhaps most famously embodied in the Robert Johnson who sold his soul to the devil at a crossroads in rural Mississippi in exchange for fame as a blues guitarist.

In many ways, the life of Bob Dylan is as mythical as Robert Johnson's. At the very least, there is a sense that Dylan and his music embody something larger than life, leading to a common labeling as the 'voice of a generation.' Cherlin and Gopinath suggest the versatile quality of Dylan's music is a large part of why many people consider Dylan to embody a specific point in time. The two write, "As a child of the post-World War II period and its new mass media and culture, Dylan's generic and vocal shifts evoke the switching of channels—on the radio and even the television—that facilitated an immediate access to a new sound or sensibility." In this sense, the way in which Dylan approached his music is symbolic of that generation to which the 1960s belonged.



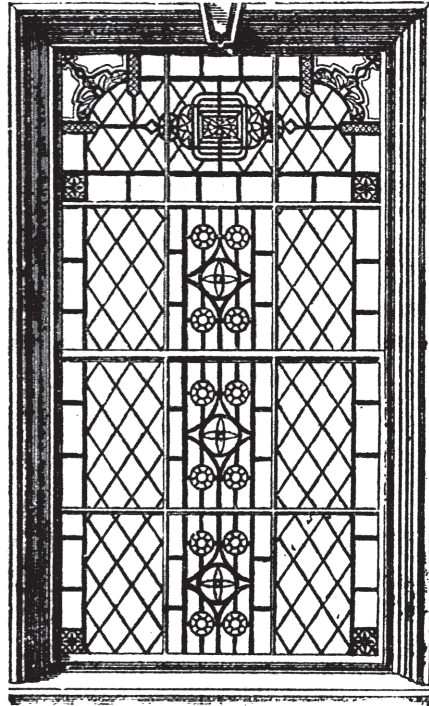
[Bob Dylan]  
with mask  
of glass.



Indeed, the idea of Dylan as the ‘voice of a generation’ has been persistent. But, as we have seen, this is exactly the sort of labeling which Dylan abhors; the trajectory of his career can be read as an attempt to outrun this sort of concrete identity. Thus, Dylan gains traction as the bitter and embattled underground man, with one exception: He has no underground to which he can retreat.

A man of many identities, and his refusal to abide by any of them, results in tension. Not only a tension within himself, as countless acts of literature have explored, but a tension with those that surround him. So what we have in Dylan is a man who demands ambiguity and a public that demands something to fill that void. The vacuum left by this tension is ultimately filled by how one wants to view that vacuum. In the end, Dylan is governed by a sort of ‘identity of the collective.’ His refusal to define himself simply allows for everyone else to define himself for him.

This is exactly the phenomenon marked by the incessant labeling of Dylan. When *Time* put together its list of the 100 most influential people of the 20TH Century, the list included the likes of Mahatma Ghandi, Albert Einstein, and Franklin D. Roosevelt. Also on that list was Bob Dylan. Of Dylan, the publication labeled him “master poet, caustic social critic and intrepid, guiding spirit of the counterculture generation.” Despite his best efforts, Dylan’s legacy doesn’t seem to be going under reconsideration any time soon. ❧



*Fenêtre sans Rideaux.*

## *The Real Culture War: The Values Battle We Should Be Having*

Jack Friedman

THE POLITICAL LEFT, RIGHT, AND everyone in between would probably agree that Americans are heirs to a tradition of hard work, vision, and a deep emotional connection to the struggles that have shaped the reputation of the United States around the world. From Lincoln's crusade to save the union, to Teddy Roosevelt's "Strenuous Life," to JFK's "ask what you can do for your country," our civic folklore is steeped in a certain set of values that state that passivity cannot possibly deliver results and a stronger, fairer nation. But today's American culture seems to be defaulting on those values more than it is living up to them, a trend that is souring the national conversation and our optimism for the future.

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History.*

When we experience such dearth of strong leadership across the major sectors of American public life, anxiety about the decline of the United States consistently reemerges. Former Governor Ed Rendell (D-PA) made a splash in December when, agitated by the postponement of a Philadelphia Eagles game due to forecasted inclement weather, he complained that the United States had become a "nation of wusses." While the weather may have been dangerous enough to merit the postponement, Rendell took a defiant step in publicly recognizing an aspect of the phenomenon of mediocrity that is leaving many Americans uneasy about our nation's future.

The dialogue motivated by Rendell's comments goes far beyond the recent discussion on the size of government, a critique of President Obama, or a riff on the good old days. Both the culture of government and the larger American culture could truly benefit from a clear-eyed assessment of the general encroachment of a lethargic, self-entitled, presumptuous ethos with the potential to destroy the engine that has fueled the past triumphs of the United States of America.

To those for whom a nationwide trend towards an uncertain future is increasingly apparent, there is no better evidence than the state of government. It is an institution currently fraught with shortsightedness and an aversion to the unpopular stances that it will take to get both parties building a top-flight education system, lowering the debt and deficit, and restoring our prestige abroad. There are few people of any ideological stripe who have much confidence in the intentions and capabilities of the vast majority of elected officials. Congress's approval rating fell to a record low



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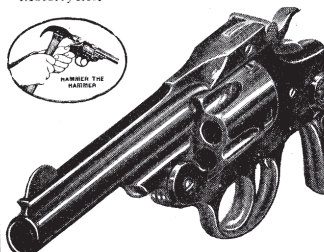
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13 percent in December, according to Gallup. The president, while personally popular, has often failed to hold the attention and confidence of the American people. His approval ratings have consistently remained above the gutter occupied by Congress, but he has struggled to live up to the lofty expectations set by his 2008 campaign.

But even beyond the numbers and the polls, a deeper culture of dissatisfaction with and distrust of government has been bubbling underneath the surface for quite some time. This often self-righteous anger is fairly irrational, considering that the major contributing factor is the government's habit of capitulating to voters' demands for record low taxes, record high spending, and their apparent aversion to any compromise whatsoever. Those who point out these increasingly embarrassing hallmarks of modern government are not necessarily decrying an expansion in its size or authority—in fact, it is a criticism commonly found across the policy spectrum. Their critique really highlights government's inability to ask for any semblance of sacrifice or cooperation from an increasingly disengaged public.

Observers of the current trend cannot blame public officials for their capitulation to voters' insinuations. There would certainly be more thoughtful work coming from their offices if we operated in a media environment more accepting of the need for mature debate and more complex decision-making. Throughout the 20TH century, America relied to a significant degree on a Cronkite-style press corps to provide a plethora of objective news options to its citizens, not to promote the infotainment-driven echo chamber that has come to define our cable news era. Just as government officials feed constituents exactly what they want to hear to ensure high re-

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election odds, the media feeds consumers what it feels they want to hear in order to enhance their bottom line. Producers mix reality television, political drama, and actual news together, apparently unconcerned with the dissonant, often hurtful programming devoid of context and substance being promulgated by their outlets. The perpetually active technology that has come to define the modern public sphere only exacerbates and magnifies the problem.

Even these two major institutions cannot be given all the blame for the shortsighted, instant-gratification-obsessed culture gripping the nation. But surely some of the blame sits with their abdication of the traditional leadership posts that ensured a measure of stability throughout the “American Century.” “In the absence of genuine leadership,” writes Aaron Sorkin in his hit 1995 film *The American President*, “people listen to anyone who steps up to the microphone.... They’re so thirsty for [leadership] they’ll crawl through the desert toward a mirage, and when they discover there’s no water, they’ll drink the sand.” In the reality of 2011,



*Dr. Otto Diderod,  
cultural analyst  
under the  
New School.*

the leadership gulf is wide enough on enough fronts that Americans are guzzling what the government, and even local mainstays like grade schools and sports leagues are serving: everyone is a winner, it is possible to get everything for nothing, and we, as the greatest democratic experiment in the history of democracy, are entitled to shortcuts to home plate. In short, ‘we’ve paid our dues.’

But beyond the obvious structural benefits of a sounder grip on the reality of the necessary hard choices, reversing the trends described above would help us to restore a sense of equilibrium to the values that have historically put America ahead of other driven nations. The progression towards liberties, freedoms, and cultural comity in our country has seen intense setbacks and difficult days, and is by no means over. Time and again, when the moment to step forward has arisen, we have returned to the demanding commitment to our values system in order to keep perfecting our union. Now, when we do manage to acknowledge and try to confront the challenges facing 21st century America, politicians and media figures instead resort to bickering, name calling, and violent rhetoric antithetical to the ethos that once spurred democracy to make progress. While America has never been a nation of cool tempers, we certainly could improve upon the rancor and division that is currently burying the potential for unity, respect, and acknowledgement of each citizen’s individual value to the larger framework of the nation’s concerns.

As an important contemporary case study, President Obama, though he has stumbled in many other areas, has consistently embodied this spirit of reconciliation, self-evaluation, and respect for historical context. The multifaceted, nuanced approach he takes to the compelling issues of our time might not excite the strategists’ thirst for scoreboard politics, but

his attempts to tread a fine line on the major issues facing the country is a useful example that is challenging the American people to consider just what kind of country this is. If opponents of the practical, legislative component of his philosophy were to acknowledge the possibilities of his measured, conciliatory tone when proposing their own views, we would be in for the most productive civic debate in decades. However, his critics on both the left and the right are, so far, incapable of matching the president's moderate rhetoric, or, in most cases, his thoughtfulness. Through their refusal to relinquish quasi-pavlovian reactions to any discussion he has initiated about the foundation the country's future is being built upon, they have impeded any potential for a genuine policy conversation to occur.

The president, a consensus-builder by nature, has been consistently dragged into the mire since taking office. In recently attempting to go back and please the interests that were threatened by the first two years of his presidency, some see a triangulating politician looking for another term. They are not entirely wrong. But beyond the politics, the president as a person seems vitally committed to the decency and community that we as a people are so starved. President Obama would do well to frame his centrist outreach as more than politics; rather, as it is an attempt to heal the divisions forged in the early pursuit of his more ideological agenda items. If the media could latch onto that spirit, if the Congressional Republicans (and, for that matter, Democrats) could latch on to that spirit, if Obama really does mean well, then perhaps we can forge ahead meaningfully.

The deficit, though unbelievably high, should not frighten us. The war in Afghanistan, though seemingly intractable, should not lead us to despair. The end of American excellence in the world will not be brought about by these problems, if we approach them honestly. It would be brought about by a complete submission to this culture of complacency and entitlement, an outcome that looks more possible every day if we don't wake up to these macro-problems. Whoever is elected, wherever the country moves in the next few years, we should hope that direction is a realistic, optimistic and vigorous one. To meet the future, we will need to call upon the spirit of one of Illinois' most well known governors, Adlai Stevenson, who famously remarked:

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# Mad Men and Race: A Critical Look

Tomi Obaro

THAT MAD MEN IS ONE of television's most critically-acclaimed programs should not come as a surprise. Matthew Weiner, executive producer, and his army of writers have steadily raked in a generous number of awards and his show has topped many cynical critics' "Best TV Shows of the year" lists. It has won the Emmy Award for Outstanding Drama Series for the past three years, and not without good reason.

*Mad Men's* sweeping treatise on the lives of a group of affluent ad executives in the misogyny-rife 1960s has generated stunning performances, fascinating characters and, of course, killer costumes. The show is continuously lauded for its historical authenticity and strict attention to detail. *Mad Men* parties have become de rigueur, and its once obscure stars now grace the pages of entertainment tabloids and act in big-budget film productions. But despite all the critical approval, *Mad Men* has had its share of detractors and they increasingly express concern with the show's treatment of one particularly controversial topic: race.

Latoya Peterson, writing for *Slate's* "Double xx" blog argued in 2009 that "minorities are shown in glimpses around the edges of narrative," and that the show's avoidance of fully developed black characters signifies a certain cowardice on the part of the writers. She writes:

If the show ignores race again, then it is truly written by cowards. Would it be so difficult to show Carla crying for the little girls killed at the 16th Street Baptist Church? Would we get a different glimpse of this rarefied world if Hollis gets promoted beyond elevator boy? Could the show's writers and producers stomach having one of their characters—Pete Campbell or Roger Sterling—drop a racial epithet with the same ease which with they do misogynistic comments? Or is it, as a friend of mine summarized, that "misogynists are cads and racists are monsters?"

Another African-American blogger, Michael Ross, offers similar sentiments in a more recent article. Writing in *The Root*, he argues that by the fourth season of the show, there should already be some black copywriters working at the fictional Sterling Cooper Draper Pryce. He asserts, "Far from just being a pc move, including black people in the *Mad Men* universe makes sense in the context of history." He then goes on to cite the work of Jason Chambers, who wrote a book about African Americans in advertising agencies during the 1960s.

*Tomi Obaro is a third-year in the College majoring in International Studies.*



The general sense from a small, but vocal, number of African-American cultural critics was that *Mad Men* needed to include more developed African-American characters.

Fortunately for Peterson and Ross, the *Mad Men* writers appear to have been listening. Unfortunately for fans of the show, the results have been disastrous.

*Mad Men* thrives on what I like to call casual discrimination. The main characters drop sexist remarks and express racist stereotypes with the

same ease and aplomb with which they light their cigarettes and mix their mid-morning cocktails. The effect is shocking at first, like when Pete Campbell, a smarmy account executive, calls the Asian family his co-workers hired to sit in his office "Orientals" as a prank. Or when Joan, head secretary, tells Peggy, then a new hire, that she should wear more revealing clothing. The show does not flinch from these hard truths of its time; as much as it paints a glamorous picture of handsome men in tailored suits and beautiful women in gorgeous gowns, it does not hide the rampant bigotry that pervaded the era.

From the very first episode of the show, it is clear that *Mad Men* is about a specific group of people—upper-middle-class WASPs, with a closeted gay and feisty Jew thrown in for good measure. The characters in *Mad Men* are privileged and their encounters with minorities are few and far between. The show reflects this reality wonderfully. The only black people the viewers see are servants: bellhops, nannies, elevator men. There are no Hispanics. No Native Americans. Not to say that these people did not exist. Obviously, they did. But when viewed through the myopic lenses of the good people of Sterling Cooper Draper Pryce, they might as well not have.

When *Mad Men* attempts to placate the complaints of a few aggrieved bloggers or to succumb to the pressures of political correctness, the authenticity of the show rapidly disintegrates, and more importantly, the quality of the show suffers. In season 1, Paul Kinsey, a copywriter at the firm, has a relationship with an African-American woman, Sheila White, and it was easily the weakest plot line of the whole season. His girlfriend is never developed as a full-fledged

Princess  
through a  
'brown-eye'  
lens.



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character and it seems as if even the writers were aware of the tepidity of the storyline, for she is quickly written off after a few episodes. Sheila's presence was clearly an attempt to ease a few of the über-sensitive consciences of the white, liberal demographic who make up the show's primary audience.

Another attempt to introduce a more substantial African-American character occurs in season 4, when Lane Pryce, financial officer for the firm, reveals his affair with a black Playboy bunny. Not only does the revelation come out of nowhere, with absolutely no prior evidence to suggest that this affair was ongoing, but the chemistry between the two actors is sorely lacking and the character, once again, is utterly one-dimensional. She, too, quickly disappears after one episode.

I bring up these failed efforts to show how *Mad Men* flounders when it tries to introduce more substantial African-American characters solely to appease the complaints of a few. As stated before, *Mad Men* is a show about a specific social niche. To suddenly include a compelling subplot about Carla the maid's marital troubles would be entirely out of place given the show's context.

Racism is not always blatant. One of the many crimes committed against racial minorities in the 1960s was their complete marginalization by most white Americans. *Mad Men* thrives when it demonstrates this firsthand. But when the show tries to self-correct this marginalization and essentially revise history by writing in two-dimensional minority characters in a flimsy attempt to adhere to current political correctness standards, it loses some of the tenacity that makes *Mad Men* one of the most fascinating shows on television. ☞

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HE winter rain was falling fast  
As up Broadway a stranger passed,  
Who carried, smiling down on us,  
A huge umbrella, labeled thus: —  
"GUANACO."

His hat was dry, his coat beneath,  
Dry as a falchion in its sheath;  
While, banner-like, above him hung  
This wonder in an unknown tongue  
"GUANACO."

In sudden gusts he saw the raid  
On silk umbrellas, London-made,  
He saw them turning inside out,  
And from his lungs arose a shout —  
"GUANACO."

"Tempt not the Storm," the "Peeler" said,  
"The Danger-Signal 's floating red,  
Our prophet 'PROB' has prophesied."  
Just here the same deep voice replied,  
"GUANACO."

"Beware the sign-boards tumbling crash;  
Beware the chimnies gone to smash!" —  
This from a boy in snug retreat: —  
A voice replied far up the street,  
"GUANACO."

At four, the rain still pouring down,  
This man was seen away up town,  
Still grasping in his hand a stout  
Umbrella, painted round about,  
"GUANACO."

A traveler was that evening found  
In sweetest slumber on the ground,  
And by him, neatly skinned and stark,  
The thing they call at Central Park  
"GUANACO?"

There in the twilight, cold and gray,  
Hideless, but beautiful it lay: —  
While — better far than Mansard roof —  
The man's whole suit was WATER-PROOF  
GUANACO!

W. W. Denslow Del

# UMBRELLAS



## *The Search for Engrossment*

Nausicaa Renner

CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE IS MARKED BY the tendency termed by critics like James Wood as ‘hysterical realism’ to write ‘big novels.’ Hysterical in the broad label refers to the chaos, to the brand names, to overwhelming (super)market—in other words, simply a general term that is characteristic of the produced subject in the mass-produced world. Unfortunately, this kind of reading submits to the discourse of consumer-critical post-modernism, falling prey to wordplay and manically formulated descriptions. How should we understand this trend in recent literature and its much-lauded partisans? I suggest an investigation into and reformulation of the category of the engrossment of the reader to make productive sense of these texts.

The structure of these novels—of which the most famous authors are Thomas Pynchon, David Foster Wallace, Jonathan Franzen, Don DeLillo and more recently Zadie Smith—poses a much more intriguing analysis of culture that goes beyond a Marxist critique of capitalism or a Saussurian obsession with language. One result of producing such long works is the absence of unity in their plots; as novels get longer, the gravity of each word and phrase decreases, by necessity—this is why short stories may be considered “perfect” and novels never are. Admirers of this genre mistakenly maintain the same level of interest in diction and rhetoric for the course of a hysterical novel, to the detriment of connections between passages and among words. Thus the extravagance of each passage in a novel distracts from the lack of coherence in the narrative, and this lack of coherence is largely neglected as symptomatic of the style. The unresolved plot is as crucial to the emptiness of these books as the void created by the hysteria of words and information.

To examine this issue in closer detail, I’d like to turn to the related literary movement of magical realism, which produces novels of similar length that add a gothic or mystic element to their extravagance, and for whom the absence of resolution is all the more grating. Take, for example, the works of Haruki Murakami. *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* is over 600 pages long, begins with the main character’s cat running away, and search leads to an un-summarizable non-sequence of surreal events, nominally resolved by the re-appearance of the cat. The movement of the novel certainly relies on the addictiveness of the prose, and yet the content means nothing. Reviews harp about the intrigue of an exploration of banality—an unemployed man whose

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English Language  
and Literature.*

*Engrossment:  
found.*



life gains vivacity after a mundane event—and this is correct, but not on the level of plot. The novel gains life as the dependence on the character's cat is gradually weaned and displaced onto the words and descriptions themselves.

The idea that weaving plots in which nothing is explained is more true to real life than the fairy-tale ending or highly constructed narratives is sorely mistaken. And neither can the format of these novels can be chalked up to the contemporary version of stream of consciousness. Perhaps the idea is to make the boring interesting, and thereby give the reader back his imagination, allow him to discover the delight of trivialities in his own life. However, the reader relies too much on the author for this to be possible;

the strength of storytelling and cunning turns of phrase are specifically something that the reader cannot do himself. The reader's imagination falters and reading a novel is not a cry for inspiration, but rather for engrossment.

Engrossment is sentence-by-sentence satisfaction, and sacrifices the delayed gratification of a well-formed plot to the joy of looking up words and detangling microcosms. This is essentially a change in the teleology of literature, whose aim becomes instant and constant captivation of the reader rather than critical engagement.

Orhan Pamuk's *The Museum of Innocence*, essentially a romance novel cloaked by the premise of a museum populated by trivial items imbued with meaning during the course of a love affair, is the epitome of momentary focus, which requires that simple acts like smoking cigarettes in unison be given "transcendental importance":

I sometimes think that our love of cigarettes owes nothing to the nicotine, and everything to their ability to fill the meaningless void and offer an easy way of feeling as if we are doing something purposeful. My father, my brother, and I each took a cigarette from the packet of Maltepes offered to us by the elder son of the deceased, and once they were all lit with the same burning match that the teenager artfully offered us, there followed a strange moment when all three of us cross our legs and set about puffing in unison, as if enacting a ritual of transcendental importance.

Trivialities have surely begun to structure our lives in the same way that they structure novels, so that small objects and actions become significant—think of overanalyzing relationships, for instance, or lucky charms. But why do we feel the need to displace causality—to attribute the origins of things—into meaningless objects? Displacement cannot be explained away as merely a mark of post-modern culture or more generally of consumerism. Rather, I propose that it is a reaction to the inescapability of determinism. Because it has been enforced and reinforced that everything can be explained by positivist science, we have turned to a belief in something like the butterfly effect, which says that even the smallest action can have a massive ripple effect. The smoking of a cigarette, then, instead of being attributed to an addiction to nicotine, opens up a fountain of possible effects and meaning. Note especially that in the Pamuk quote above, smoking is a "ritual," or maybe it could better be said that smoking replaces a ritual. Like in *The Museum of Innocence*, part



Take it  
back now,  
y'all.




Harvey Burdel,  
magnetist..



of this is surely retrospective, a desire for souvenirs and images that recall certain moments in our lives. But when we travel and collect these souvenirs, it is in anticipation of later times when we'll be in need of the comfort of memory, that is, souvenirs and photographs are not just the residue of times past, but what we have already determined will be those memories. Thus, even here, in an effort to fight the determinism of scientific causality, we are succumbing to a certain kind of determinism by creating it ourselves.

Fortunately, some novelists are moving subtly away from this unproductive mode of writing. Roberto Bolaño's *2666*, five intertwined novels published in one volume, like Murakami's novel, reveals the key to only the largest mystery of its plot. *2666*, however, challenges the stamina of its reader with more than 200 pages of descriptions of murders. Each murder is individually engrossing, but they run together in memory so that the details of each are lost. Perhaps Bolaño means to inflict guilt upon his reader here, not for his reader's inability to keep track of the individual murders on a humanistic level, but for his narrow focus on each crime and his subsequent inability to make sense of the crimes as a whole. This is mirrored in the novel by a detective who cannot solve the murders himself; the limited comprehension so highlighted results in a critique of engrossment.


But while the long-format novel may be moving away from minutiae, the opposite seems to be happening to shorter forms. The most recent issue of *Granta Literary Magazine*, "The Best of Young Spanish Language Novelists," specifically refers to the deceased Bolaño as a paternal figure: "Now we have expanded beyond the English language to bring you the next Mario Vargas Llosas and Roberto Bolaños." *Granta* aims to give us "A glimpse of the literary future," but most of its stories merely shrink the formula provided by writers like Bolaño. The problem is not merely that the stories fail to escape postmodernist discourse (about half the stories refer to consumerism or the 'void')—which I doubt will disappear for a long while to come—but that they succumb to irresolution dribbled with lightly intriguing observations: "couplehood: the abjection of observing and participating in the other person's obsessions" in "Gerardo's Letters," or "Spending is about the fear of dying" from "Eva and Diego."



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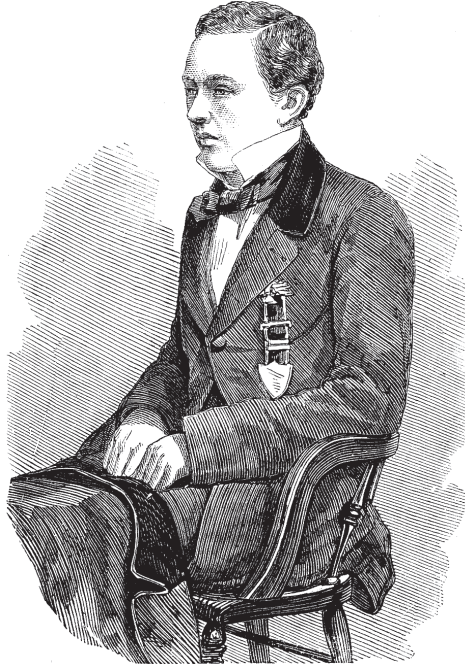
- Knowledge a Young Man Should Have.
- Knowledge a Young Husband Should Have.
- Knowledge a Father Should Have.
- Knowledge a Father Should Impart to His Son.
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Like 2666, the most promising of the stories contain subtle criticisms of the formulaic story that is supposedly ameliorated by clever prose. "The Hotel Life," for instance, begins as a dull story about an idiosyncratic hotel reviewer, but becomes intriguing when a completely unanticipated pornography shoot taking place in the reviewer's room simultaneously surprises both character and reader. This story takes what would have been a perfectly acceptable basis for a story based on a mundane job, and forces the reader to realize how boring the first half of the story had been. Furthermore, it disrupts the continuity of plot, and reasserts the story on the level of narrative. The best story of the collection fuses perversity of plot with elegance of language. Andrés Barba's story "The Coming Flood" begins with the line, "First her ears hear; they open. Then her eyes can see; they open. Her face, a revolving door, swings open and shut, open and shut." She, Mónica, fantasizes about getting a small horn attached to her forehead, and thus nominally addresses the disfiguring phenomenon of plastic surgery. But the prose, in its deliberateness, does submit to self-pitying complaint about the modern world. Instead, even in translation, the language works on a higher level. The first sentence cannot be fully understood until the very end, requiring an investment of the reader not demanded by simple engrossment.

I endeavour here to find a way past what others have called a dead-end in literature by refusing to surrender to it. Hysterical realism, under the influence of deconstructionism, discovered a way to compel the reader with form within content, but I suggest at least a partial return to form, not above, but in symbiosis with content. &



*Un  
descontento  
profundo.*

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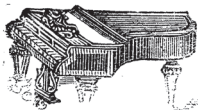
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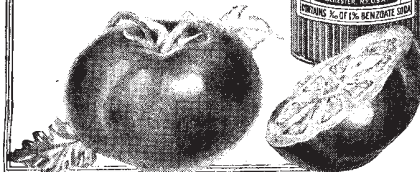
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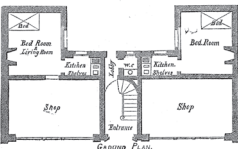
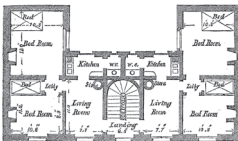
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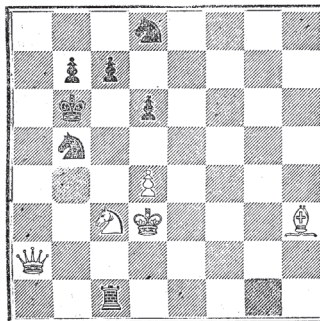
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**WHITE.**  
White, playing first, to mate in five moves.

**MATCH BETWEEN MESSRS. MORPHY AND LOWENTHAL.**

**GAME XI.**  
(Sicilian Opening)

**WHITE (Mr. L.)** **BLACK (Mr. M.)**

1. P to K 4th. P to Q B 4th.  
2. P to Q 4th. P takes P.  
3. K Kt to K B 3rd. P takes P.  
4. Kt taken P. Q Kt to Q B 3rd.  
5. Kt to Q Kt 5th. P to Q B 3rd.  
6. Kt to Q Kt 5th (ch). B takes Kt.  
7. Q takes R. Q to K 2nd.  
8. Q to K Kt 3rd.

(Mr. Lowenthal's original talent for chess  
was equal to his acquired, he might, perhaps,  
suffer to occupy a place in the first rank of  
living players, but—with all the advantage of  
tact, and more knowledge of what can be  
gained, by force or the positions and im-  
pulses that one player has formed previous  
to some—he will never, we fear, in any sustained  
struggle with a powerful and practical player,  
do more than snatch a stray game. He has  
not a particle of self-reliance. If, through  
his great practical and theoretical gen-  
ius, with every doubt, he can at the out-  
set acquire a superiority, as in the present  
instance, he will consider through that  
advantage, score the game; but, if his spring  
fail, he rarely or never recovers himself.)

9. Kt to K B 3rd. Kt to K B 3rd.  
10. P to Q B 3rd. P to Q 4th.  
11. Q to R B 3rd. R Kt to R 4th.  
12. P to K Kt 4th. P to K Kt 3rd.

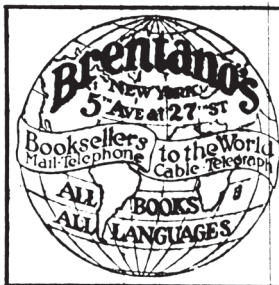
(This is well played, and ensures the gain of a  
piece.)

13. Q Kt takes K P.  
(If he retorted the attacked Knight to

**WHITE (Mr. L.)** **BLACK (Mr. M.)**

14. Kt to R 4th. White replied with Q to K B 3rd  
and P to R 4th.  
15. Q to K 2nd. Q Kt takes Kt P.  
16. Q taken Kt. P to R 4th.  
17. Q to Q Kt 5th (ch). B to Q 2nd.  
18. Q to Q Kt 3rd. P to Q 5th.  
19. Q takes Q Kt P. Castles.  
20. Kt to Q 7th. Q to Q 3rd.  
21. K B to Kt 2nd. P to R 5th.  
22. P to Q B 4th. P to R 4th.  
23. Q to K 7th. B to K 3rd.  
24. Q to Q B 7th. Q to K Kt 2nd.  
25. Q takes Q (ch). K takes Q.  
26. Kt to Q Kt 5th. Q R to Q Kt sq.  
27. P to Q B 5th. Kt to K B 4th.  
28. P to Q Kt 4th. K to B 2nd.  
29. Castles. P to K Kt 3rd.  
30. R to Q 2nd. R to Q 2nd.  
31. Q to R 4th. K R to K Kt sq.  
32. R to K B 3rd. R to K B 3rd.  
33. R takes Q P. Q R to K Kt sq.  
34. P takes R. R takes B.  
35. K to R 2nd. Kt to R B 5th.  
36. B to K B sq.  
And very shortly Mr. Morphy  
surrendered.

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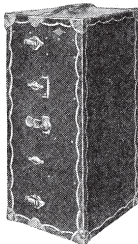
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## *A New Bond*

Jacob Alonso

THE JAMES BOND FRANCHISE IS possibly the only film series to have survived, mostly uninterrupted, from the Cold War to today. However, most critics have pointed out that Daniel Craig's 'New Bond' appearing in *Casino Royale* (2006) and its sequel *Quantum of Solace* (2008) is somehow different than the Bond of Sean Connery, or for that matter of Ian Fleming, the author of the Bond novels. The New Bond is more muscular, less dressed, and well, less witty too. I want to suggest that as the character was re-molded to a contemporary audience, there was a more fundamental change that took place between *Casino Royale*, based on Fleming's 1953 eponymous book, and the entirely new *Quantum of Solace*. The latter film represents a radical break from the Cold War themes of most of the Bond repertoire, epitomized by *From Russia with Love* (1963), and instead incorporates some ideas from globalization theory embodied by such recent films as *Syriana* (2005), *Babel* (2006), and *Children of Men* (2006). I would like to examine this transformation in Bond as a reflection of shifting global politics, and thus place his character in the context of globalization studies in film.

It is tempting to see the old Bond films as a sort of global commentary. Indeed, Bond has always been a condensation of social anxieties of the time: *From Russia with Love* (1963) centers around Cold War Soviet tensions, *Moonraker* (1979) is about the space race, and even the post-Berlin Wall film *Tomorrow Never Dies* (1997) is about multinational media corporations. I would go as far as saying that *Die Another Day* (2002) was even ahead of its time, dealing with blood diamonds four years before the much-celebrated DiCaprio flick *Blood Diamond* (2006) did. But the old Bond films are characterized by a preoccupation with the agent's various personal exploits. The most enjoyable portions of the old Bond films bask in his masculinity (or misogyny), sexual accomplishments, and lifestyle of leisure punctuated by incidental threats to the Crown. Take Sean Connery's quintessential Bond in *You Only Live Twice* (1967): A license to kill given by Britain's shadowy M16 extends throughout the whole world, imbuing Bond with a supra-sovereignty that can only be truly enforced by an imperial power. His behavior perfectly embodied the old International Relations paradigm of Great Power politics established by a post-wwII system—Britain and the USSR had the military power (represented by the ubiquitous threat of nuclear

*Jacob Alonso  
is a fourth-year  
in the College  
majoring in  
Political Science.*

war), and that alone made them central to the story. The villain is the inverse: extra-national and borderless, representing the axiomatic hegemonic fear of enemies who cannot be treated like a nation-state—think the American preoccupation with rogue states. He is the epitome of the non-state actor.

Something happened, though. The New Bond, seen in *Quantum of Solace*, is different.

*Upon the  
eve of the  
cringe.*



To understand this change, I think we need to look more closely at the villains. *Quantum of Solace's* Dominic Greene, a sort of entrepreneurial-villain, is guilty of attempting to manipulate water prices in order to secure a piece of seemingly barren desert in Bolivia, in the process aiding the coup d'état of a Bolivian general. He also involves his ecological nonprofit organization, Greene Planet, in his grand scheme of regional domination. I think what is interesting here is that unlike other organizations of Bond villains, Greene Planet works *within* the global system of international relations—it may even *be* the system itself. Dominic Greene has the full backing of the CIA. Unlike previous Bond villains, he doesn't threaten the stability of the international system with nuclear annihilation or total financial collapse. His motives are actually quite familiar, following the typical monopolistic economic thinking reminiscent of figures like Vanderbilt and other robber barons of 19TH century America. In this way, it is Bond who has to work outside of the system, while Greene inhabits a legal gray-area secretly supported by the CIA. This is the inversion of the 1960s Bond to a stateless rogue

actor. Steven Thomas and Hardt and Negri suggest that the nation state no longer constitutes the center of power, and in the world of the New Bond, this means that the state constitutes a decentralized network of power actors. This New Bond is bound up in a world that determines his life but that he cannot control. In a liberal democratic world system unified around a sort of solipsistic abhorrence of individual violence, the New Bond suddenly appears, well, villainous. This suggests that a globalized Bond is legally and morally detached from the international system because of the very qualities that made him previously valuable—a supra-nationality embodied in his license to kill.

What the new villain shows is that the New Bond lives in a world where the individual is not necessarily *for or against* an overwhelming and complex system of global forces (such as in his relationship with SPECTRE), but is intractably *within* it.

*Casino Royale* may help to clarify this point because the 2006 remake can contrast so well with the 1967 original film. In the original, Le Chiffre is the head of SMERSH, a rogue Soviet counterintelligence agency. Shadowy, yes, villainous, yes, but also very much the rogue arm of a global superpower. The organization remained underground not to assist in its operations, but to ensure that their actions did not trigger global war. In the 2006 remake, the villain is not an individual *per se*, but a series of middlemen, such as Le Chiffre and Mr. White, who represent an abstract entity which is embedded in the structure of society itself. This is in contrast to the old quintessential Bond villain who worked outside of the global system (and therefore threatened it). The danger was in the villain's distance from society, rather than the danger, as in the 2006 remake, of the villain's colusive proximity to global financial and political institutions. As Thomas points out, Dominic Greene's true crime lies in his manipulation of global actors to create local disasters. Our contemporary Mr. White warns Bond that "the first thing you should know about us is that we have people everywhere." It is paradoxically not money (nor nuclear weapons), but interpersonal relationships that constitute power. "Money is not as valuable to our organization," Mr. White reveals, "as knowing who to trust."

And in this sense we can talk about globalization as both an economic process of integrating goods and services, and as a relationship. What makes globalization so threatening to the new Bond is not in the economics (Britain is as powerful as ever), but in the way the New Bond can relate to his world. He has become the outsider. Looking at *The Kite Runner* (2007), another film by *Quantum of Solace's* director Marc Forster, we see that a story of interpersonal relationships is told not only through the characters, but also through their relationships to international institutions and global conflicts. *The Kite Runner* portrays a young boy trying to survive in the background of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the ascension of the Taliban, and breakdown of the state. The danger for the film's protagonist is that he may somehow become lost within an international conflict, placed outside of the world and thus made irrelevant. His relationship with others is inextricably connected to his relationship with a world totally outside of his control.

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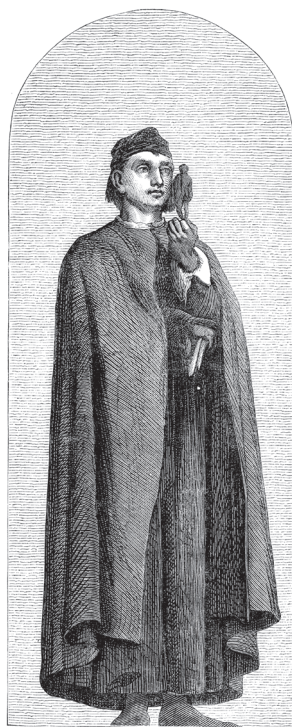
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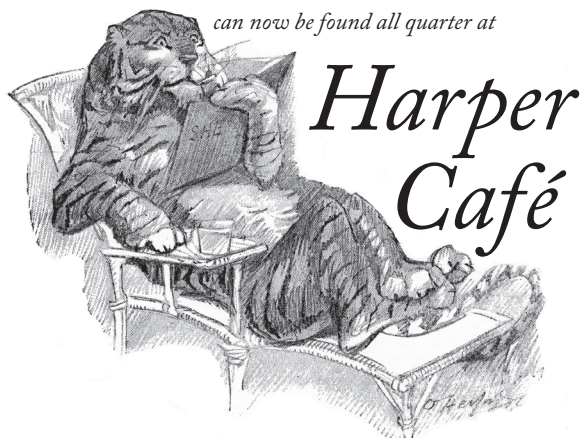
*new bond();*

And I argue this is what makes the New Bond so, well, new. It is not the character itself that has changed, but the rest of the world, and the fact that for the first time he is shaped by that world in ways outside of his control.

So what then does Bond mean to us today? As I have noted, the series demonstrates a change taking place in the ways that an individual places him or herself in the world. The New Bond represents a sort of acrimonious cynicism and distrust in the structure of transnational processes. But our smooth-talking hero is, above all, misplaced. The flagbearer of Anglo-American cultural domination is suddenly naked in a much more vulnerable way (embodied in the New Bond's non-sexual relationship with the "Bond girl" in *Quantum of Solace*). As Hardt and Negri describe, the imperialism of yesterday has disappeared, but it has been replaced by a new regime diffuse and filtered into nearly everything social, political, and economic. For the New Bond, globalization is always lurking in the background. ☞

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