

## The Manichean Situation Between Ideology and Subjectivity



### Political Science

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**Viorella Manolache**

PhD., Scientific Researcher III, Institute of Political Sciences and International Relations, Romanian Academy, Bucharest, Bd. Iuliu Maniu 1-3, Corp A, et.7, Sector 6, Bucharest, Romania

#### ABSTRACT

*The present study involves the expansion of Umberto Eco's scheme to include the elements from Skyfall (2012), providing a pretext for reconstructing the functional-combinatorial mechanics of the intersection of the political philosophy and literature – cinematography. The study also draws on the body of Romanian critical studies, confirming/contesting their ability to reflect the dilution or fragile/fragilising weakening – in postmodern fashion – of identity/subjectivity. Between the Manichean situation and / or ideology, the Bondian world remains a construct divided between the artistic scaffolding and the ideological choice and/or rhetorical demands.*

#### INTRODUCTION: THE READYMADE EFFECT

Within the mechanical-reproductive framework of grammatised/ technologised space, the image triggers a given cultural construct, of participative observation, thereby reinforcing Linda Hutcheon's [1] remark that postmodernism recalibrates the relationship between ideology and subjectivity, while at the same time investigating the nature and formation of subjectivity, notwithstanding the many assaults from poststructuralist philosophical-literary theory, Marxist political philosophy and/or Freudian/Lacanian psychoanalysis.

Translated to film, postmodernism overtly blurs the clear lines of demarcation between *high art* and *mass* culture [2], the effect of which being a dilution and fragile/ fragilising weakening of identity under the combined pressure exerted by consumer society, bureaucratisation and rationalisation.

This brings us to the first aim of this study that of confirming the evidence supporting the idea that postmodern film recalibrates the role of ideology in the construction of the subject as an openly representational strategy or, in the words of Linda Hutcheon, an original-parodic creation as a *soft* scenario for the processes of representation.

In accepting Fleming's *literature-as-collage* style of writing as a synoptic translation of the blurred contradictions of consumer culture with all its experimental arsenal, combining both literary traces and raw reportage with all the disguises of the *readymade* as a means of delivering literary invention, this study sits comfortably with Eco's ideas in respect of the construction of the character/subject resulting from an ideological decision or purely rhetorical necessity, and thus functions as a tool for understanding the most recent Romanian commentaries, with a specific focus on James Bond's latest cinematographic outing, *Skyfall* (2012).

Analysing the internal composition of the James Bond films, Andrei Gorzo [3] notes that their cinematographic ingredients did not (until 2012) have the benefit of a *combinatorial* effect – 2012's *Skyfall* providing an excess of urbanity and *joie de vivre*.

The *readymade* effect – with all its vacillations glissades from *psyche* to the formal objectives/structurally conventional strategies as a formal method – is denounced by Eco [4] precisely by revealing the conventional rules at work in the creation of the functional-combinatorial mechanics found in the latest instalments of the 007 saga, starting with *Casino Royale*.

Tautologically redundant, with traces of self-ironic metadiegetic (postmodern) references [5], cinematographic transcription can be interpreted in terms of a condemnation of its own clichés. This comes as no surprise, given that Eco had already identified in Fleming's technique the carryover effect, a flirtation with

kitsch and an unstable montage of the alternation between *guignol* and the *nouveau roman*, placing Fleming among the (in no sense clichéd) exploiters of an experimental arsenal, notwithstanding the strong revival (until *Skyfall*, Eco denounced the lack of ironic detachment) of the operation of the industry of evasion.

#### THE MANICHEAN SITUATION...

Placing the cinematographic product between conception and intuition, within a classic(ising) form/formula, Lyotard [6] draws attention to the fact that the image is subordinated to narrative movement and framed and edited so as to reflect the story/prepare the critical event forming the climax and to extract the consequences.

Ideologically, Lyotard's assertion states that such movement is subject to the authority of a general form, without being authorised by it.

This is in fact a form of *acinema*, something located between immobilisation and extreme mobilisation, an arterial means of representing the symmetry of intensities, whether through stasis – “the living picture” – or agitation – *lyrical abstraction*. This, however, comes with the necessary observation that, filmical(ly), *sovereignty is wholly allergic to totality*, the encounter of a plane, scene or chain necessary to the “functional” narrative in respect of the overall project, feeding the feeling of incompleteness, the raw provisionality.

In fact, Fleming remains Manichean for operative reasons: re-tolerance; democratic in his conscious evasion of the very same schemes and recognition of nuances, distinctions and contradictions; and “fascist” in his characteristic incapacity to move from mythology to reason and the resort to myth/fetish – aspects alluded to in the introductory warning, according to which *everything that is narrated is entirely true* (Eco, 2003:162-163).

The perspectives promote Bond as a cult personality [7] in the sense of a positive propaganda cleansed of political purpose and commercially loaded, with an ideology that is far from dictatorial and packed with the *Bondian* ingredients of an ideology of an artistic nature.

Eco had already predicted the diminution of Russia's status as country to feared in current consciousness, which explains the fact that *Skyfall* reaches out to other political-geographical regions that are corrupt from the inside – something easily conveyed through the transformation of the Manichean general(ising) structure into a mere personal scheme/issue.

#### ... AND/OR IDEOLOGY

In the same vein as Umberto Eco and Kingsley Amis, Andrei Gorzo believes Raoul Silva contains all of the more important el-

ements of the negative characters created by Fleming: continental origins, unclear sexual orientation, physical deformity, etc., placing the model within an increasingly weakened, half-serious ideology that has moved from the sci-fi elements discussed by Eco to a low-tech setting loaded with a partially disguised coquettish humour.

According to Lyotard, game situations such as these serve to confirm the preference in the 1960s for a form of authority over filmic narrative, precisely through the acceptance/toleration of moments of relative arrhythmia that do not definitively herald the arrival of the climax of the story.

Eco called these permutations play situations/non-accidental interpretations of the plot as a game, while also drawing a comparison with the classic scheme of a police/detective/action novel, not in terms of the variation of events, but in terms of returning to a known scheme of recognition of a familiar model by the reader/viewer.

In fact, one immediate observation is that, while feigning a departure from the Flemingian structure and taking the existing dichotomies more towards *old vs. new, light escapism vs. a new dark sophisticated image, Bond the charismatic spy vs. a vulnerable/ageing Bond, Skyfall* takes itself too seriously. The *travelling* (this time back to his origins) confirms what Lyotard, considering the transcendental factuality as inherent to sensation, called the sovereign effect.

To the Lyotardian question – Is descriptive time merely a suspension of narrative time, or is it another form of time altogether? – and its discussion in the context of debate about the origins of rhetoric and poetics, one possible answer, in the sense of Eco, focused on the Flemingian choice between an ideological decision and rhetorical necessity, takes into consideration the fact that rhetoric, in the original Aristotelian understanding, remains an art of persuasion that must conquer plausible argument and relies on *endoxa* – the opinions shared by the majority of people (Eco, 2003:162).

This comes with the observation, in keeping with Lyotard, that between *the art of doing* and *the art of saying* reality, filtered through description, represents but a thick brush stroke of an element of the recounted reality.

Sovereignty is the antithesis of authority; or, rather, it is alien to it. It opens up a world – neither permitted nor forbidden, neither good nor bad, neither tall nor short, neither white nor black, or rather all of these – of good and evil, intent on not upsetting anything and making itself forgotten, and which functions as an alternative model (Lyotard, 2000).

In respect of the decline of the Althusserian-Lacanian methodologies – both weak(ening) and radicalised in terms of commentaries from the field of cultural studies, approximating “contingent regularities, albeit separate from the approaches of ideological frames with a reductive effect – like Andrei Gorzo, we cannot overlook the ideological-aesthetic assault in the guise of new forms/formulas, notwithstanding the arrogance of the *authority-specificity* argument.

In discussing Raoul Silva’s statement that *there is a first time for everything*, the more serious studies about the creation of the villain in *Skyfall* are all tempted to seek an unusual pattern in the way the character is created.

This is a visible trap to the extent that, as this study mentions from the very beginning, devoid of essential mutations the villain acquires/discards colour, precisely in the sense of relying on the basic dichotomies.

Umberto Eco mentions this general immobilisation when defining in the functional scheme the fact that the *villain* was born in an ethnic region stretching from Central Europe to the Slavic countries and the Mediterranean basin, is of mixed of blood, has complex or obscure origins, is asexual/abnormal and is endowed with creative skills, making his monstrosity a general characteristic.

## CONCLUSIONS

Interpreting the profile of Raoul Silva in terms of a videological form of character construction, we cannot overlook his placing within an ideologically regulated world, vis-à-vis an entire field of biological-political-cultural virtualities.

In keeping with Gilles Deleuze [8], we can easily accept the description of the means of technical image management by accepting that “cinema is a formula of image reproduction at a given moment” or is the perfected channel for a new reality.

Both James Bond and Raoul Silva hail from the same model – *the last remaining survivors with a changed nature*, whose encounters take place either on an abandoned island or in the place where Bond spent his childhood, a connection/intersection which pushes the limits of the “movement of re-territorialisation”, triggering a machinistic-impulsive acceleration of direct contact – in a palpably sexual manner, confirming, in Freudian vein, the structural-unconscious-productive logic of the villain.

In fact, the *villain* in *Skyfall* is nothing more than a platform for subjective machinism, with a connection to schizo-mechanical rhizomatism with the purpose of guaranteeing the meta-modelling of the libido [9].

On a quest to *eliminate redundancy*, Raoul Silva confirms I. Manolescu’s [10] idea, based on two modes of populating spatial temporality, *real* and/or *virtual*, that there has been a distributive/alternative remodelling of the villain in terms of the *hacker*, who, breaking into the matrix, erases his own traces, is like a shadow that is “both present nowhere and absent everywhere”.

Loaded with monstrosity, *blond* for the first time, thick eyebrows, shorter than remembered by those he worked with before, bulging eyes, a prosthesis holding his right hand side in place, his innards burnt by the hydrogen cyanide behind his molar tooth, Raoul Silva – *to whom life clang like a disease* – acquires different-than- human attributes, again for the first in the *Bondian* scheme, midway between a *failed project* and *another-than-human* recipe.

## REFERENCE

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