ONE JOB, TWO CHARACTERS: JAMES BOND VS. MAURICE CASTLE

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Abstract: *The paper analyses the differences between two literary characters that illustrate the same profession, that of secret agent: Ian Fleming's James Bond and Graham Greene's Maurice Castle. The two are contrasted in point of family background, age, marital status, abilities, enemies, friends, missions, gadgets, etc.*
Key words: *hero, agent, secret service, gadget, mission.*

The spy stories became very successful at the beginning of the 1950's, as a consequence of the beginning of a Cold War between the East and the West. The first James Bond book appeared in 1953, and was followed by several others, the last to be published in 1966. Their main character was presented like an extraordinary human being, whose courage, ingenuity and resources had no limits. He soon became a real national hero, a symbol of the secret agent capable of defending the Western World against any threat. But this model imposed by Ian Fleming was rejected by other writers. With *The Spy Who Came In from the Cold* (1963), John Le Carré changed the espionage novel from an adventure book into a refined intellectual exercise about treason, honour, truth and duty. His more complex character, a symbol of contemporary ambiguity, was appreciated and praised by Graham Greene, who created a similar kind of spy in *The Human Factor* (1978). Maurice Castle, Greene's protagonist, was in total antithesis to Fleming's hero. Constantly afraid, with no extraordinary gadgets at his disposal and with an almost routine existence, Castle was actually intentionally meant to illustrate the non-glamorous side of the secret agent's life.

In order to identify the possible causes of the differences between the two characters, one should perhaps start with the general background against which the books were published.

The period following World War II was dominated by two opposed tendencies. On the one hand, there was an explosion of colour, of energy and of optimism, as a reaction to the destructions, rationing and sacrifices caused by the war. 1956 is conventionally seen as the beginning of "the golden age", a period of development characterized by consumerism, made possible by the increase in production and individual income. Moreover, the decade 1960-1970, witnessed the so-called "sexual revolution". It was the era of the "New Morality", of the female contraceptive, which allowed women to become active partners in relationships with men. On the other hand, 1956 was also the year of the crisis of the Suez Canal, which clearly showed that Britain lost its importance on the international level in favour of the United States, and marked the ending of Britain's imperial period. At the same time, people became obsessed with the possibility of a nuclear explosion that would destroy everything in a second. As a consequence of these two tendencies, the need was felt for a hero that would suit both, colourful and resourceful, but also capable of defending his country against all evils.

The 1970's witnessed a social and economic crisis, which led to a rising level of unemployment and consequently to racial intolerance, directed especially against the Asian immigrants. In 1973, the producing countries increased the price of petroleum, which brought about the end of "the golden age". The beginning of the 1970's is the

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period with the strongest social conflicts in 20th century Britain. A common strike of the miners, firefighters, civil servants, and of the employees of electric power stations and railways brought chaos to the entire country, forcing the Conservative Prime Minister to declare a state of emergency, to reduce the working week to three days and to ration electric power. As a reaction to this state of affairs, the people returned to the discussions about "the English life style", about rediscovering the values typical of rural life, and about saving the English soul. Graham Greene's novel presents a grim reality, with a hero whose inner life reflects the turmoil of the society contemporary to him.

What is remarkable is that both authors were secret agents themselves, activating during World War II. Fleming was a naval officer and at one point he took charge of 30 Assault Unit, a group of specially trained commandos who were sent on specific intelligence missions. He was involved in the planning of the countermeasures which would have been taken in case the Spaniards had decided to attack Gibraltar. Greene was recruited to the MI6 service by his sister Elisabeth and was posted in Sierra Leone during the war. Both authors drew on their experiences. James Bond took his name from that of a real American ornithologist, an acquaintance of Fleming's, and his adventures are partly based on his creator's. The figure of his boss was inspired from that of Admiral John Godfrey, Fleming's superior in British Naval Intelligence during the war. In its turn, *The Human Factor* makes reference to real spies and real situations, while the character Maurice Castle seems to have been based in its turn on Greene's boss, the double agent Harold "Kim" Philby, though the writer denied this. Anyway, "If Maurice Castle of *The Human Factor* owes anything to Philby, it is the belief that there are higher loyalties than that to one's country." (DONAGHY 1983: 16)

Bond is the hero of 14 books written by Fleming: *Casino Royale* (1953), *Live and Let Die* (1954), *Moonraker* (1955), *Diamonds Are Forever* (1956), *From Russia, with Love* (1957), *Dr. No* (1958), *Goldfinger* (1959), *For Your Eyes Only* (1960), *Thunderball* (1961), *The Spy Who Loved Me* (1962), *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* (1963), *You Only Live Twice* (1964), *The Man with the Golden Gun* (1965), and *Octopussy/The Living Daylights* (1966). Most of the books present Bond travelling to some colourful place in his attempt to defeat the negative character who has plans and possibilities to destroy the world. He meets one or two beautiful women in the process. Sometimes he is captured and tortured by his enemies, but always he manages to destroy them, get the girl(s) and save the world.

Maurice Castle is just the hero of the novel under discussion. He leads an apparently ordinary life, having an uninteresting job in section 6A of MI6, coding telegrams. The section deals with East and South Africa, where there is never any real emergency. The problem appears when a leak is discovered. Castle's assistant, Arthur Davis, is suspected at first. He is even eliminated, but then it appears that Castle himself is the leak, being also an agent for the KGB. The novel ends with his escape to Moscow. Though he expects his wife and stepson to follow him as promised, apparently this will not happen.

Bond is the son of a Highland Scots father and a Swiss mother. Both his parents were killed in a climbing accident when he was eleven, leaving him a yearly allowance. He joined the British secret service in the late 1930's, and at the beginning of the war, he turned to the navy, becoming commander.

Castle's parents were English. His father, an old-fashioned GP, died. His mother, decorated during the war, is 85 and lives in East Sussex. Castle visits her once a month, together with his family, but it is a tensionate occasion, disliked by all of them. Castle is a graduate in history, and has been in the secret service for more than 30 years.

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Bond is in his late 30's. He has a dark, sunburned, clean-cut face, with a three-inch scar down his right cheek. His eyes are wide and level under black brows. His hair is black, parted on the left, and carelessly brushed so that a thick black comma falls down over the right eyebrow. His nose is longish and straight, and his mouth wide and finely drawn but cruel. (cf. *Casino Royale*). He is 1.80 m and has about 76 kilograms, is self-assured and determined and very successful with women whom he conquers without wasting his time in courting them. Among these, Vesper Lynd (*Casino Royale*), Tatiana Romanova (*From Russia, With Love*), Vivienne Michel (*The Spy Who Loved Me*), Kissy Suzuki (*You Only Live Twice*). "His body indeed belongs to the state, and without fail he learns to align his personal desire with professional duty." (COMENTALE, WATT, WILLMAN eds. 2005: 13), using sex to obtain secrets or seduce enemy spies. He also got married, in *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*, to Teresa (Tracy) Draco, daughter of the head of a crime syndicate, and ex-wife of the Italian Count Giulio di Vicenzo. Their first meeting placed Bond in the position of a romantic hero: he saved her when she tried to kill herself by jumping into the sea. He fell in love with her because she needed him, and because he felt the need to protect and look after her. Unfortunately, Tracy was killed on their wedding day by Bond's enemy Ernst Stavro Blofeld.

Castle is 62 years old, a little over the age of retirement. Actually, he would like very much to retire and he dreams of the nice quiet life he will have then with his family. He also experienced the loss of a wife. She was killed in the bombing of London during World War II. As he was sterile, he had loved his wife as if she had been his child as well. After her death, he could never speak about her because he blamed himself for not being able to protect her or die with her in the bombing. At the time he was safe in Lisbon. Unlike Bond, who gets over his pain by changing women, Castle chose to enjoy the delights of matrimony again. He met his second wife in Pretoria, where she was one of his agents. He fell in love with her gradually, during the first year of their acquaintance. But his relationship with a Bantu woman was infringing the Apartheid law. Afraid more for her than for himself (since he had diplomatic immunity), he asked his superiors to take him away on account of the fact that he might be vulnerable. He left Pretoria and met Sarah at Hotel Polana in Lourenço Marques. They got married in England seven years ago. Sarah had come to Hotel Polana pregnant. He accepted this and loved the child who was born, Sam, as if he had been his. Actually, nobody questions Sam's identity. Moreover, Castle rejects the idea of having a child of his own on account of the fact that he sees enough of himself when he looks in the mirror. The Castles' marriage "displays deep affection, mutual respect, a natural, unforced sexual passion, and a surprising degree of pleasure in ordinary rhythms and rituals of domestic life; it is the first such relationship between principal characters in Greene's novels and might be taken for a model were it not for the terrible secrecy – ironically a consequence of the strength of their love – that haunts Castle." (HOSKINS 1999: 241)

Bond is a skilled golfer and cardplayer, an excellent driver and an expert at shooting. His favourite drink is vodka martini, shaken, not stirred, and his weapon is a Beretta pistol, exchanged later for a Walther PPK. He has a flat in Chelsea, and drives a Bentley or an Aston Martin.

Castle has no special abilities, unless we take into consideration his capacity of keeping a low profile. He tries hard not to attract attention upon himself. He considers routine important to compensate for the strangeness of his profession. Therefore for more than 30 years he has had lunch in the same pub near St. James's Street, not far

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from his office. Every day he arrives home from work at 7.30 and has dinner with his family at 8.00. He is always punctual and always prepared to justify his actions. He is trusted precisely because he is boring, though good with paperwork. He drinks whisky J&B, but only home, has no gun and lives in a semidetached house bought on a mortgage in King's Road, Berkhamsted. He does not live in grand style, not wanting to make himself conspicuous among the teachers who live in the neighbourhood and who do not have much money to spend on house improvements. Castle does not have a car. He goes to work by bicycle and by train.

Some of Bond's most redutable enemies are: Le Chiffre (*Casino Royale*), Mr. Big (*Live and Let Die*), Hugo Drax (*Moonraker*), Dr. Julius No (*Doctor No*), Auric Goldfinger (*Goldfinger*), Ernst Stavro Blofeld, Emilio Largo (*Thunderball*), Francisco Scaramanga (*The Man with the Golden Gun*). They work for various organizations like SMERSH or SPECTRE, are self-employed or represent the interests of Castro or of USSR.

Castle's enemy is Cornelius Muller, one of the heads of BOSS, an organization he clashed with in Pretoria. At that time, Muller had tried to convince Castle to give up Sarah. Now the two old enemies have to work together, exchanging information on a project in which South Africa, USA and England are partners. The project, called Uncle Remus, has something to do with tactic bombs. Castle even has to receive Muller in his home.

Sometimes Bond is helped along by friends, among whom Rene Mathis, Quarrel and Felix Leiter appear in several novels. His enemies are also helped by friends.

Because of the peculiarity of his situation, Castle does not have friends, only allies. In the beginning, his friend seems to be his assistant, Arthur Davis, who is the only one who visits the family and is appreciated by Sam because he knows how to play hide-and-seek. Then, Castle has friendly feelings for Carson, the communist agent who had helped Sarah leave South Africa, but also for Boris, his control in London, the man whom he can talk to about anything and who helps him run away when he is discovered as a traitor.

Bond's adventures take him to various places, some exotic, like: Royale-les-Eaux (resort in France) in *Casino Royale*, New York, Florida, Jamaica in *Live and Let Die*; USSR, London, Istanbul, Orient Express, Paris in *From Russia, with Love*; Sussex, Paris, London, Bahamas in *Thunderball*; London, Swiss Alps, Munich in *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*; London, Tokyo, Kyoto, Fukuoka, Kuro Island in *You Only Live Twice*.

The foreign places Castle goes to are Pretoria, Lourenço Marques (Mozambique), and Moscow. There is nothing exotic about any of them. Pretoria and Moscow are gloomy places, where Castle feels threatened, if not for himself, then for Sarah. Lourenço Marques appears as a more desirable place, because it is the place where he and Sarah met in safety and the place where Davis dreams of going.

Bond's missions include preventing: the financing of SMERSH operators with pirate hoard (*Live and Let Die*), the destruction of London with a nuclear rocket (*Moonraker*), the running of a diamond smuggling pipeline out of Africa into the United States (*Diamonds Are Forever*), his own assassination (*From Russia, with Love*), the deflecting of U.S. test missiles from their projected course (*Doctor No*), the blackmailing of Western governments by threat of hijacked nuclear bombs (*Thunderball*), the infecting of Britain with crop and livestock pests (*On Her Majesty's*

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Secret Service) or just winning at the casino to recoup misappropriated SMERSH funds (*Casino Royale*).

Castle's "mission" is, as we said, to code telegrams in his office. His "mission" as a double agent is to give the communists information about South Africa, as he wants to help Sarah's people, but totally rejects the idea of telling them anything about his own country. However, in the end of the novel he will find that all along the communists have been using him for their own purpose, and he did not help anybody.

The 1950s and early 1960s represented the age of the gadget: sophisticated cars, domestic appliances, trains, planes and space saving devices were more and more used to make life easier and faster. Consequently, they are also present in Fleming's books. In order to be able to perform his mission, Bond has at his disposal a series of gadgets made by Q. The initial stands for Quartermaster, and the person behind it is the head of Q branch, the fictional research and development division of the Secret Service. He equips Bond's "spy briefcase" with: ammunition between the leather and the lining of the spine, money in the lid, a flat throwing knife in each of the sides, a cyanide suicide pill in the handle, and a tube of Palmolive shaving cream hiding the silencer for his Beretta, packed in cotton wool. Courtesy also of Q, Bond's Bentley has a supercharger and his Aston Martin has headlights that can change colour to provide disguise in case of a night-time chase, a radio receiver, reinforced bumpers and a gun in a secret compartment. Bond's enemies also have various gadgets, like guns hidden in canes or carpets of steel spikes used to stop cars.

Neither Castle nor his enemies have any gadgets. Not even a microfilm, or invisible ink, or cars. As "aids" to his job he uses books bought from the bookshop Halliday & Son. He usually buys two copies of the same book, *War and Peace*, *Clarissa* or Trollope, one for himself and one supposedly for a friend with whom he discusses them. Actually, he uses them to code his reports. When he is helped to escape to Moscow, however, he benefits from a successful disguise as a blind man and a false passport in the name of Partridge.

Bond's boss is known as M. Probably the initial comes from his actual name, Admiral Sir Miles Messervy (cf. *The Man with the Golden Gun*).

Castle has several "bosses". His direct superior is Watson. Then, there is Colonel Daintry, the person responsible with security, who seems to be the most humane and human of the service. A very lonely person, divorced and having a daughter about whom he does not know much, he takes Castle with him at her wedding in order to have somebody by his side. He is the only one that opposes Davis's elimination on account of the fact that they only have circumstantial evidence against him. Robert Hoskins points to the fact that Daintry is Castle's reverse. While Castle's love of his wife and child lead him to treason, Daintry's devotion to his country and job leads him to the loss of his family. The absolute boss is Sir John Hargreaves, called C, a man who seems less preoccupied with the fact that he is involved in murdering Davis than with keeping things that happen in his department hidden from Parliament and from the British public. There is another official that plays a special role in the action: Dr. Emmanuel Percival, Davis's "executioner", who is also single because he has always preferred fishing to women. With the exception of Watson, about whom we do not find out much, what these men have in common is that they betray the most basic principles of their jobs. "Members of the secret service, of the armed forces, and of the police, as well as quite a few politicians – in short, those who are employed to guard and protect human freedom – are very often betrayers of their most basic trust. They conceal this betrayal under a cover of ensuring order or of guarding the regime against

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so-called external or internal enemies. As Greene's novels suggest, however, the truth is that these embracers of respectability and secrecy are concerned only about their own careers and their success, which are only partially linked to the success of the institutions in which they serve. Hence, these so-called public servants could not care less about betraying the trust the public has given them and performing terrible evils. Furthermore, as indicated, very often these so-called guarders of democracy and freedom have become totally desensitized to the evils they perpetrate." (GORDON 1997: 40)

In Graham Greene's novel, James Bond appears as Arthur Davis's ideal. A graduate in mathematics and physics at the University of Reading, Davis had joined the team precisely because he had thought that his job and life would resemble those of his favourite hero. He dreams of challenging missions, atomic secrets and gadgets à la Bond, at the same time comparing his life style with that of his ideal. Davis wears colourful clothes, drives a Jaguar, drinks port, bets on horses and lives in a central apartment with two roommates, but he is extremely lonely and unhappy. Though he envies the way in which Bond gets one woman after another, his heart belongs to Cynthia, a secretary who works in their department and who seems to ignore him, getting closer to him only few days before his death. The fact that the character ends up dying shows clearly that for Greene the superspy model has become superfluous. Davis is totally maladjusted, and cannot survive in a world which leaves no room for dreaming.

As one can notice, there are many differences between Bond and Castle. Still they illustrate the same profession and display characteristics that can identify them as characters that are at the same time positive and negative. Bond is totally devoted to his country, but is an antisocial womanizer. Castle, on the other hand, is a devoted family man, but a traitor of his country. The faults of both can be explained by their situation. Which is worse is to be decided by each reader of their adventures. Good and evil are not easy to separate. The age of the totally positive character is gone. In literature, as in real life, people have to live divided between the opposing tendencies that exist within each of us. After all, "There is another man within me that is angry with me" (cf. Thomas Browne) was one of Greene's favourite quotations.

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