

“Jason Bourne is Dead.”

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Abstract

The paper discusses the hero of The Bourne Series under the theoretical perspective of Fredric Jameson's notion of the death of the subject to show that even the fabled hero of the espionage saga is a subject whose existence is over. The paper, using textual analysis as its method, discusses that the hero has been created in the laboratory and is only one of many similar creations of the mother program. The hero attempts to show his uniqueness and stamp his individuality on things by seeking revenge and by taking on the powers that be but these attempts fail to accord him any individuality. Bourne realizes the futility of his struggle and gives up his attempts and adopts anonymity. The study also shows that Jason Bourne has only surfaces and lacks any true identity.

Keywords: *Death of the Subject, Jason Bourne, Postmodernism*

1. Introduction

The study discusses Fredric Jameson's notion of the death of the subject with reference to the hero of *The Bourne Series*. The assertion the paper makes is that Bourne is a postmodern product—a mélange of human ingenuity and skill, scientific, psychological and behavioral modification brought about through uber technology, and controlled through pervasive surveillance. The aim of the paper is to show that Jameson's notion holds true even to the seemingly heroic and unique protagonist of the action film franchise who represents the rebel against the government's ambitions of dominance.

Theoretical Perspective: Death of the Subject

One of the key characteristics of postmodernism for Fredric Jameson is the death of the subject. Jameson asserts that with the move to late-capitalism the subject has lost their significance and has come to cease to exist. The “death” of the subject for Jameson means “the end of the autonomous bourgeois monad or ego or individual” (Jameson, 1991, p. 15). The modernist subject suffered from anxiety and paranoia but the subject still had an individual self that could suffer. The modernist subject had a style as unique as a fingerprint and this unique style pointed to the existence of and was a result of “a unique self and private identity, a unique personality and individuality” (Jameson, 1983, p. 114). Jameson looks at Edward Munch's *Scream* as a depiction of the modernist subject. The subject existed and could feel and expressed the feelings in the form of the scream. There is paranoia and anxiety but these exist because the subject as a feeling being exists. With the advent of postmodernism the subject ceases to exist and thus the expression of the paranoia or anxiety also becomes an impossibility.

Jameson in *Postmodernism and Consumer Society* acknowledges the view that the subject never really existed. It was only a construct, propounded to make the society believe in the individual selves of the people. But Jameson prefers the interpretation that asserts that the subject existed as an individual in the previous era, that of “competitive capitalism”, but that “individualism” and “individual subjects” have ceased to exist with the advent of postmodernism (Jameson, 1983, p. 115). For Jameson it is not a matter of choosing between the two interpretations. What matters is not whether the individual existed in the past or it ever existed, what matters is that the subject is dead in the postmodern age.

For Jameson the death of the subject means the subject lacks agency. In the globalized world of multinational corporations that transcend geographical and national boundaries and that override

concerns of race, class, religion and dogma the individual just does not have a role. The multinationals fight among themselves for a larger share of the market and they battle out among themselves for supremacy where the individual is at best a spectator of these battles. Even those opposed to these multinational corporations come together to form big groups and deny the individual any role in the opposition to the corporations. Their collectivization denies the individual any agency and contributes to the death of the subject.

For Jameson the postmodern subject suffers from schizophrenia, where schizophrenia is not a psychological disorder, but a condition of the postmodern subject whereby the subject is turned into a prisoner of the present, restricted to believing that only the present exists without streaming into the future. The postmodern schizophrenic has a more intense awareness of the present moment than a modernist subject had. Thus the postmodern subject feels more vividly and feels more intensely but without the notion that the present will fade away and pass. The postmodern subject enjoys the present as if it will remain forever.

Another facet of schizophrenia on the postmodern subject is the subject's fragmentation. The subject fragments into many selves where each aspect is true but each is of only a little importance because there are so many surfaces to the subject. Another way of looking at the fragmentation of the subject is that the subject does not have a real self. All the subject has to them are surfaces and no reality. Thus, for Jameson, the postmodern subject only has surfaces and there is no deep reality to the subject. Jameson uses Andy Warhol's portraits of Marilyn Monroe to illustrate his notion. Warhol's portraits are screenprints. They are made in such a way that copies may be produced without affecting any change in the portrait. So the brushstroke can be reproduced any number of times, exactly and without much effort on the part of the artist since the subject of the painting too is reduced to a commodity that can be captured in the same way in unlimited numbers. The screenprints reduce Monroe to a surface that can be captured over and over again and that too easily. The fact that the screenprints capture and reproduce a surface in a mechanical manner illustrates that the postmodern subject is just a surface and there is no inner or hidden persona or truth to be captured.

2. Literature Review

Subject

Key theorists attest to the death of the subject in postmodernism proclaimed by Fredric Jameson. Lyotard and Foucault do not consider the issue to merit much debate because for them the death of the subject in postmodernism is a fact. "Ideology, language or the unconscious" are for them the causes of the death of the subject who they term "a proton pseudo" (Zima, 2015, p. 133).

Theodor Adorno belongs to the Frankfurt School and is not a postmodernist but he has a lot in common with postmodern thought and questioned the existence of the subject before Jameson rang the death knell of the subject. He had seen the looming death of the subject in the growing influence of organized bodies and the dominance of ideology in his works *On the Fetish Character in Music and the Regression of Listening* and *Minima Moralia: Reflections on a Damaged Life*.

Terry Eagleton who followed Jameson's idea keenly and came up with comments on Jameson as early as 1985 agrees with the postmodern deconstruction of the subject. Whereas the "humanist bourgeois subject" was "free, active,, autonomous and self-identical" the postmodern subject in addition to being "dispersed and schizoid" (Eagleton, 1988, p. 144) is a "decentred network of libidinal attachments, emptied of ethical substance and physical interiority, the ephemeral function of this or that act of

consumption, media experience, sexual relationship, trend or fashion." (Eagleton, 1988, p. 145) He agrees with Jameson that the "strenuous monadic agent" of modernism or early capitalism is now "a shibboleth" (Eagleton, 1988, p. 145).

Booker (2007, p. 34) agrees with Jameson's notion that "the increasing complexity and fragmentation of experience" world has led to the fragmentation of the subject and hence its death as a unified entity. He links Jameson's argument for the fragmentation of the subject with Lacan's work. The complexity of the world has increased and it provides a fragmentary experience to the individual and this forces the individual to lose their sense of temporal continuity which in turn leads the person to experience the world "somewhat in the manner of a schizophrenic". In his analysis of films he feels that the character of Leonard Zelig in Woody Allen's *Zelig* seems to "epitomize the kind of discontinuous postmodern subject described by Jameson" (Booker, 2007, p. 34) because he has developed a chameleon-like ability to take on the appearance and personality of other people and has "no real identity of his own" (Booker, 2007, p. 34).

The Bourne Series

Stephen Mulhall sees the theme of *The Bourne Series* as the quest of the identity of Jason Bourne who starts off without even knowing that Jason Bourne is the name his handlers at the CIA assigned him and gets to know that he is actually David Webb. Mulhall sees Bourne's quest of his origin and identity as coming to nought. Mulhall is also interested in forging a link between the actor and the character asserting that Matt Damon made the role his own.

Reiber and Kelly (2014) look at Bourne in the context of other spy/espionage film heroes particularly James Bond, the iconic British MI6 agent created by Ian Fleming. They trace Bourne's differences from Bond in his lack of gadgetry, reliance on physical combat, lack of a sense of humor and the multiple conflicts at a personal level. But Bourne is more self-sufficient than Bond and relies on his own talent whether physical or technological to get out of tricky situations.

Kerrigan (2010) sees *The Bourne Series* as more about the directorial style of Paul Greengrass, who directed two of the films in the series than about its lead, Matt Damon. Paul Greengrass was able to propel himself into a higher category of directors due to the films in the series. Viewers were not interested in the franchise due to the character or the world of espionage. Plenty of films offer a glimpse into the dark world of espionage but it was Greengrass's depiction of the anarchic action that too in inhabited city spaces that attracted viewers to the film.

Wesley Alan Britton (2006) sees in *The Bourne Series* the reconfiguration of the spy-hero. Bourne is not Bond who relies on special tailored-for-him gadgets to fight evil. More importantly he sees Bourne's difference from Bond in the way they construct their identities. Bond is the symbol of moral authority against efforts to bring in a reign of terror or dominance. Bourne on the other hand is a victim of authority attempting to destroy the powerful. Bourne represents "a confused man in confused times" (Britton, 2006, p. 182) and in this redefines the contours of the espionage film genre for the present times.

3. Discussion

Identity

Bourne's is a quest of identity. Bourne's first appearance on the screen in *The Bourne Identity* (Crowley & Gladstein, 2002) as a lost soul who has no recollection of who he is typifies the status of the subject

in the postmodern world. Bourne is found floating on water in the middle of an ocean by a fishing boat. The doctor on board the boat find an electronic capsule-like object embedded in Bourne's hip and thus Bourne is revealed as a man under surveillance. Bourne's answer to the questions: "What's your name?" is a simple but telling: "I don't know" (Crowley & Gladstein, 2002). Bourne is thus established as a subject who has no identity but one who is at the same time intriguingly the subject of someone's interest due to the tracking device embedded in his body. Bourne tries to get his head around his dilemma of not only not knowing who he is but of not knowing how to figure out his identity. He yells at the helpful doctor:

"No it doesn't start to come back. The knots are like everything else. I just found the rope and I did it, the same way I can read, I can write, I can add, subtract, I can make coffee, I can shuffle cards, I can set up a chess board...but it's not coming back, Godammit, that's the point...We get in there tomorrow, I don't even have a name" (Crowley & Gladstein, 2002).

Bourne tries his best to recall his past and his identity but he has to go to port without a name and without any idea of his identity. The only glimmer of hope he has is to retrieve the information from the device planted in him and trace it back to the people who put the device there.

Bourne seems to think that he has hit the jackpot when he opens the locker in his Swiss bank. The passport in the locker carries his picture and he is able to deduce that he is Jason Bourne, an American citizen living in Paris, France. A smile of contentment plays on his lips as he reassures himself: "My name is Jason Bourne" (Crowley & Gladstein, 2002). The postmodern hyperreality is evident here: a technological system and entity is telling him his identity. A passport tells him who he is and thus being in the *system* makes a postmodern subject whoever they are. The databases are more real than the real world and prove the existence of entities and subjects. This shows the death of the subject because the subject's existence is merely a matter of being an entry in the database.

Surfaces without depth or reality

Bourne's quest of his identity leads him to only surfaces. It is almost as soon as Bourne finds out that he is Jason Bourne—"My name is Jason Bourne. I live in Paris" (Crowley & Gladstein, 2002)—that other identities crop up proving Bourne to be a subject with only surfaces without any reality. The lower tier of the safe-deposit box contains a number of passports which show Bourne to be Gilberto do Piento, a Brazillian, Lemanissier Nicolas a Frenchman, Foma Kiniaev, a Russian, Paul Kay a Canadian and John Michael Kane. It is interesting to note that Bourne—much like the viewer—accepts Jason Bourne to be his identity for the simple reason that it was on the first passport he sees in the safe-deposit box. Later, on the run from the police, this identity can take him into the relatively safer recess of the US Consulate in Zurich. Thus the identity of being Jason Bourne is nothing more than an identity that the subject picks up for convenience but he makes the mistake of thinking this to be his real identity for he thinks of himself as Bourne. Because this name appears on the grid his pursuers also give him the identity of Jason Bourne.

Bourne falls into the trap of imagining his identity to be real. He cheats death on two occasions: Wombosi's bullets and exposure at sea. Being unnamed and without any identity take their toll on him psychologically and he finds solace in becoming Jason Bourne. He says to himself as if to force himself into believing it: "I'm Jason Bourne" (Crowley & Gladstein, 2002). Listening to his voice say the phone number when he calls his Paris apartment offers little proof of his identity but this is all the proof his

shattered nerves need to find solace in. He quickly sinks into the delusion of thinking himself to be really Bourne and sits in his Paris apartment looking at a catalogue telling himself: "I think I'm in the shipping business" (Crowley & Gladstein, 2002). He is knitting his own identity from whatever scraps of information he can find but at the same time he conveniently disregards the evidence of his extraordinary ability and how he perceives his situations from a point of view of threats and opportunities. Soon information emerges that makes his identity of being in the shipping business salesman untenable but though he removes the tag of the boat salesman he retains the identity of Jason Bourne. This identity has all along been just a surface—a name stamped next to his picture in a passport—and thus shows that Jason Bourne is just a surface among many surfaces of the same subject.

Bourne's relation with his identity is not straightforward. When he redials the last call from his Paris apartment he switches to his identity of John Michael Kane but at this point in time he is not exploiting the many surfaces he has. He is just unsure of his true identity and thinks that he may actually be John Michael Kane. This is borne out when he says to Marie after his visit to *Alliance Securite Maritime*: "I'm definitely Kane. I just had a meeting as Kane and he knew me as Kane. So I'm definitely Bourne. I'm also just definitely Kane. It's all just boats. I got blueprints and cameras and security systems" (Crowley & Gladstein, 2002). Marie is more logical about this. She says: "But if you are John Michael Kane whose body do they have in the morgue" (Crowley & Gladstein, 2002). Bourne's confusion is highlighted when it is seen in contrast with Marie's logical approach and the two visit the morgue to find out if Kane really exists. This shows that Bourne is struggling to cope with the many identities he has. Establishing his link with Wombosi, however, gives him clarity as to who he is and he tells Marie in cold plain words: "I'm an assassin" (Crowley & Gladstein, 2002). The information is disquieting for Marie who breaks down and starts distrusting Bourne, even accusing him of being capable of killing her. For her the bond between them is over: "The only thing we had in common was that neither one of us knew who you were. We are past that now" (Crowley & Gladstein, 2002). She cannot deal with this surface that has appeared and wants to break away from him. But Bourne is more stoic about it and seems to accept it. There is no drama here and Bourne accepts this. I feel he accepts this because after dealing with evidence that shows him as Bourne and also as Kane he is coming round to the fact that he has surfaces and that the identity of the assassin is deeper than these surfaces.

Even as he hides, in Goa, India, away from the control of Treadstone and the CIA the fact of being an assassin haunts him. However, this realization does not end his quest for identity. *The Bourne Supremacy* opens to show that Bourne has crafted a new identity in Goa, India. This is an identity of a blissful domestic life. The picture of Bourne and Marie on the mantel dispels all doubts that this is not their home. The bliss is not enough to keep Bourne's nightmares of his past from haunting him. Bourne, on Marie's egging, continues his attempts to recapture his past life and to determine his true identity by keeping a diary. The fact that they work together to piece information together to construct Bourne's identity shows that they have created an identity of homely bliss. Bourne's explanation to Marie of why Kirril, the assassin sent after him by Yuri Gretko, is able to catch up to them is "We got lazy" (Marshall et al., 2004). The feeling of being a couple enjoying domestic harmony made them stay in one place for too long and the enemy forces were able to track them down. It was the lure of the identity that kept them tied to Goa but this identity too proves to be only a surface and comes to end with the bullet that pierces Marie's skull.

Bourne is forced to adopt the identity of an avenger. He decides to go back to the world of espionage and black operations from which he was running away. This is not something he had wanted to do but Marie's death forces him to adopt this identity which he like Hamlet did not seek but which unlike

Hamlet he is eager to fulfil. It will not be an exaggeration to say that this is a role that Bourne excels in. He works with alacrity, skill and a single-minded devotion and brings all the culprits to book in addition to giving the CIA the black sheep in their midst which they had been looking for, for decades.

Bourne redeems himself as an avenger. He kills Marie's killer and also brings his master, Yuri Gretko, to justice. But it is not enough to erase the identity of being a killer. Abbott says to him: "There's no place it won't catch up to you. It's how every story ends. It's what you are, Jason, a killer. You always will be" (Marshall et al., 2004). His identity remains that of a killer throughout. The motive may be one or another, justified or not but the fact remains that the most dominant identity is that of an assassin.

At the end of *The Bourne Supremacy* (Marshall et al., 2004) Pamela Landy informs Bourne of his real name: David Webb of Nixa Missouri, and asks him to come in to get more details. But Bourne refuses the offer and goes away into hiding. After his experiences and after finding out whatever he has found out about himself Bourne is not interested in finding out more about this purportedly true identity of David Webb because he knows this is just another surface without any real significance.

Identity based on a template like a screenprint

The first indication to the fact that there are others like Bourne is Conklin's statement: "I want them all activated" (Crowley & Gladstein, 2002). Conklin talks of Bourne not as an individual but as a robot because he is one of many who have been programmed with "behavioral software" and can be told what to do. Conklin tells Ward Abott that Bourne will return because "they always do" thus signifying that there are others like Bourne who have been conditioned and trained through behavioral modification (Crowley & Gladstein, 2002). The Professor, sent to kill Bourne tells him: "I work alone like you. We always work alone" (Crowley & Gladstein, 2002). Bourne may feel that he is getting a clue about his identity but actually the clue means that his identity is not that of an individual but of a produced commodity—where he is just one of many killers—that Treadstone created through pills.

Later Conklin asserts that Bourne is little more than a costly experimental creation. He tells Bourne that he is "US government property" and goes on to call him a "malfunctioning \$30million weapon" (Crowley & Gladstein, 2002) and thus shows that Bourne is more of a machine and a physical possession than a human being and a person. Bourne's identities as a person are all created identities. In fact, as Conklin points out, the identity of John Michael Kane was the only one which he had crafted himself. The only identity that is real is that he is a creation ala Frankenstein's monster which turns against the creator.

Pamela Landy and Abbot, even as they play their game of power, share a view of Bourne as a creation. Pamela says to her staff: "We ran this guy's life with total control for all those years [so it should not be difficult to track him]" (Marshall et al., 2004) thus showing that Bourne is for her only an object to be controlled. She is surprised when Nicky informs her that Bourne may be acting of his free will. Abbott refers to their control over Bourne when he says: "His mind is broken. We broke it" (Marshall et al., 2004). Hence Bourne is only a machine which can be manipulated and controlled. The fact that Abbott and Landy discuss whether or not to "terminate" (Marshall et al., 2004) Bourne also shows that they view Bourne as a mere creation.

Nicky Parson has had close contact with Bourne and other subjects of the Treadstone program and she refers to the subjects as "they" (Marshall et al., 2004). The interpretation that she looks at the subjects as barely human subjects of an advanced scientific experiment gathers strength from the tone, the lexical

choice and the content when she says: “They don’t make mistakes. They don’t do random” (Marshall et al., 2004).

The fact that Bourne is tasked with and made to complete a mission that is not authorized even under the black operations program of the secretive Treadstone shows that he is just a tool to be used by whoever is in control. Conklin uses Bourne to take out Vladimir Neski on the personal agenda of hiding his embezzlement. Seen thus, Bourne is just a weapon without free will and thus erodes any claim of Bourne being a subject with agency and free will.

Bourne’s creator assesses that while Bourne may have broken from the program he will never find any peace because forsaking the program means forsaking “a key component of his identity” (Damon, Greengrass, Goodman, Marshall, Weiner, & Smith, 2016). Dr. Hirsch feels that Bourne can be made to re-enter the program if he is manipulated in the right manner. Dr. Hirsch’s prognosis shows that for the agency Bourne is only a subject who cannot exist unless controlled and who can be controlled and manipulated even if he strays from the course.

Even CIA Director Dewey looks at Bourne as a tool to be used. He says to Bourne: “You didn’t come here for revenge. You came here because you know it’s time to come in” (Damon et al., 2016). Bourne has exhibited his independence but for the powers that be he is still a trained machine-like programmed human weapon. Bourne had said in his training: “I’ll be whoever you want me to be” (Marshall, Crowley, & Sandberg, 2007) and the powerful still treat him like the trainee who will adopt any identity they choose for him. This is why Heather Lee is interested in him. Underneath her pretense of sympathy for Bourne she actually wants to use Bourne to get data to make the new subjects better. She creates her argument for bringing in Bourne: “Bourne’s been off the grid for a long time. He’s been hiding in the shadows. He’s seen things. He knows things that could help us. Bringing him back in, is the smart move” (Damon et al., 2016). Nicky helps Bourne see off the challenge posed to his existence by the CIA but even she finds it difficult to take him as an individual. She tries to rope in Bourne and exploit his skills for her agenda. She has been trying to expose the black operations run by the CIA and she knows Bourne can be invaluable to the fulfilment of her agenda. She tries to rope him by mentioning that the CIA is launching a new program that is worse than Treadstone and when this fails to stir Bourne to help her she changes her track and tries to exploit him emotionally. She informs Bourne that his father was involved with the Treadstone program. Thus Nicky too views Bourne as a subject and not a human being with free will and determination.

Bourne, an individual?

Bourne’s realization that he is just one of many is a watershed for him. The quest for identity acquires another dimension and he vows: “I’ll end it” (Crowley & Gladstein, 2002). Bourne’s major quest, therefore, is not to assert his personality. He has come to terms with being an assassin but he wants to show that he is not just another assassin, he is special, he can turn the tables on the powers that be and make them pay for persecuting him.

Conklin’s assault on Bourne is ruthless. He turns Bourne’s world upside down and shows him who he is. Like the *Men in Black* he does not exist. His contribution to the mission is not his special set of skills but the fact that he is “invisible.” Conklin boasts that even Nicky a desk agent can be sent to kill but Bourne’s specialty lies in the fact that he does not “exist” (Crowley & Gladstein, 2002). Furthermore, Conklin denies him agency by asserting total control over him. He says that Bourne must explain his failure and that Bourne cannot take any decision on his own. This only makes Bourne strengthen his

resolve to show that he is an individual, unique and different from all others. Conklin's statement: "I don't think that's [forsaking Treadstone] a decision you can make" (Crowley & Gladstein, 2002) sets Bourne on the mission of asserting his independence from Treadstone and the powers that be.

The Bourne Supremacy (Marshall et al., 2004) sees Bourne coming back to the folds of the world of black operations to seek not just revenge for Marie but to assert his individuality, difference and independence. He says to Nicky: "What were my words? What did I say? I said leave me alone, leave me out of it" (Marshall et al., 2004). This is Bourne avenging not just Marie's death but also the agency's denial of Bourne's existence as an independent subject. It is the same motive that eggs him on in *The Bourne Ultimatum* (Marshall et al., 2007) where he stays the course to seek revenge from the agency for not leaving him alone. He says to Marie's brother: "Someone started all this... and I'm going to find them" (Marshall et al., 2007). He is bent upon asserting his individuality by taking revenge from those who deny him individuality. He recalls the waterboarding and other traumatic training techniques he was put through and this builds his anger and frustration at having been used like an animal. He recalls scenes of being dunk in water and being told to kill a man without knowing if the man was innocent or a terrorist. Nicky puts his ordeal, which for Bourne is just sketch images, in words: "Jason, that wasn't some one-off initiation. Daniels and they did that to you over and over again. That's how they... [trained you]" (Marshall et al., 2007). Having been treated like a mindless animal angers Bourne and the denial of independence that he sees in not being let alone are the causes of his assault on the agency and its staffers.

Bourne does show agency and independence when he takes on the CIA and its operatives. Landy did not expect this free will from the subject of an experiment and questions in disbelief: "The objectives and targets always came from us. Who's giving them to him now?" (Marshall et al., 2004) but Nicky who has seen more of Bourne and others like him can sense the change in Bourne better and she answers: "The scary version? He is" (Marshall et al., 2004). Nicky realizes that Bourne has become independent and is no longer a machine that the CIA can control. Bourne's exploits where he tears apart the network of shady deals and greed are far too many to recount here. It will suffice to say that Bourne being able to elude the CIA, discover those who had framed him and wreak vengeance on them and still being able to elude him shows a degree of independence and individuality. He does seem to have lived up to his words of being free of the influence of the CIA. But it is too early to get carried away to label it his individuality. For one the CIA still does not acknowledge him, neither as an experiment gone wrong nor as a hero who pinpoints the black sheep hiding in the CIA and Pamela Landy who Bourne propels into the higher echelons of power can give him only an "off the record" (Marshall et al., 2004) apology.

Bourne goes, at great personal risk, to Russia to see Neski's daughter. He wants to tell her that he killed her parents and that it was not the murder-suicide as it had been presented. He reveals the information and then apologizes to the little girl. This "concrete moral reparation" (Mulhall, 2016, p. 176) can be seen as his attempt to assert his individuality. He is a trained killer and by showing human compassion he wants to assert that he is not like those who created him or like others who were created with him. He was given the identity of a killer and he is trying to reconstruct his individual identity of being a compassionate human being capable of repentance. That he goes to Marie's brother and apologizes to him strengthens the reading that Bourne wants to show a human face and thus assert his individual trait of compassion. But this is not enough. He cannot redeem his humanity and get rid of the surface, which is one of his many, of being a killer. His confession to Nicky shows his frustration with not being able

to erase this unwanted surface: “I’ve killed people and I’ve tried to apologize for what I’ve done, for what I am. None of it makes it better” (Marshall et al., 2007).

The reading that Bourne is hunting the CIA big guns to stamp his individuality is supported by the fact that Bourne puts the lives of his fellow operatives in danger. All he wants to do is to show his individuality and difference from the others and for this he goes to the extent of putting the lives of all the other assets in danger. Stephen Mulhall observes that Bourne’s actions have the “unintended consequence of placing all his fellow operatives at lethal risk” (p. 184). This is a major reason The Asset in *Jason Bourne* (Damon et al., 2016) wants to hurt Bourne. The Asset was caught as a result of Bourne’s expose of the black operations. He was tortured and could get out only after two years of captivity. The fact that he cares more for asserting himself than for the lives of others like him shows his desire to stamp his individuality at any cost. The fact that Bourne carves his name in the wood at one of his hideouts that Aaron Cross later comes across in *The Bourne Legacy* (Marshall, Crowley, Weiner, & Smith, 2012) shows Bourne’s desire to become an individual.

Bourne disappears at the end of *The Bourne Ultimatum* (Marshall et al., 2007) and this disappearance is an announcement that he has stopped his attempts to assert himself as an individual. He earns sustenance through participating in street fights. When Nicky wants to reel him in to help her expose the shady black operations of the CIA, he refuses. Bourne’s reply to Nicky is the manifesto he has come to adopt after his failure to assert his individuality:

Bourne. What does that [exposing the CIA] have to do with me?

Nicky. Because it matters. It matters...

Bourne. Not to me. It doesn't. All that matters is staying alive. You get off the grid. You survive.

Thus it is that Jason Bourne learns that in the postmodern world survival is the name of the game. One cannot strive to assert their individuality. One has to learn to accept being a no-body and live like a nonentity. He has skills and has the ability to achieve the miraculous but even that cannot turn him into an individual. The lesson Bourne learns is one of accepting anonymity and being a nonentity. The interpretation is supported by Matt Damon’s views, (Damon performed the role of Jason Bourne in the series) in an interview: “the story of this guy's search for his identity is over, because he's got all the answers” (Murray, 2016) and the answer very clearly is not to stand out and be an individual but to disappear and cease to exist.

Bourne is heroic by any standard. For one he has agency and a very special set of skills (Taken). He tells Marie:

I can tell you the license plate numbers of all six cars outside. I can tell you our waitress is left handed and the guy sitting at the counter weighs 615 Pounds and knows how to handle himself. I know the best place to look for a gun is the cab of the grey truck outside and at this altitude I can run a full half-mile before my hands start shaking” (Crowley and Gladstein, 2002).

Bourne’s skills are far too numerous to name and illustrate. It would suffice to say that an indication to his skills is the fact that he single-handedly dismantles the CIA’s dark programs into smithereens. Yet Bourne is such a subject of the postmodern world in that his daring accomplishments cannot raise him

above the level of a dead subject. He voices his frustration at being a dead subject: “How can I know all that and not know who I am?” (TBI). Bourne’s quest does lead him to his purportedly true identity: David Webb but by the time he gets to this identity he is aware that even David Webb is not his true identity.

It becomes clear in *Jason Bourne* (Damon et al, 2016) that Bourne has forsaken his earlier ideology of wreaking havoc on the agency. Christian Dassault, like, Nicky, wants to win him over to his side but Bourne answers curtly that he does not want to be part of Dassault’s mission of taking down “the corrupt institutions that control society” (Damon et al., 2016). He does go after Dewey and The Asset but that is once again because of revenge. It is no longer the same impulse of standing out. There is no threat akin to the one he made to Conklin. When he meets Heather Lee to listen to her offer of bringing him back within the folds of Iron Hand, he knows that she is deceiving him but he does not burst out as he did with Conklin or Abbott. He leaves with a promise to think about the offer. It is only indirectly that he communicates to let Lee know that he knows she is trying to ensnare him. This lack of directness and the fact that he does not challenge her sly games are further proof that he has given up on being an individual.

4. Money

Bourne’s quest for identity is throughout a funded project. It is not just a project of blood, toil and tears but it is an endeavor supported by money. The first step of his journey is funded by the boat’s captain who gives him a little money in exchange for his help on the boat. Despite being overwhelmed by the information he finds in his locker he is sharp enough to take the money—notes of currencies of a number of countries—from the locker. He uses this to finance not just his travel but to buy loyalties and to bribe people for information. He pays Marie an outrageously large amount, \$20000, to take him to Paris in her car. He thus buys not just a means of travelling incognito but buys Marie’s loyalty too. At the morgue he pays the officials to let him see the dead body that has been planted there as his. Thus he is part of the postmodern consumer culture.

The subject of surveillance

Bourne is a subject of surveillance by the CIA. The moment the powers that be find out that he is alive they devote their resources to tracking Bourne. This tracking is done through technological means that are purportedly meant to make people’s lives safer and more convenient. In all the five films of the franchise Bourne is tracked through cameras set up for monitoring traffic, keeping an eye on street movement, airport or railway terminal cameras and computer data meant to keep a record of citizens across international borders. The fact that no specialized gadgets or satellites are used to track Bourne shows the pervasive nature of the surveillance he is a subject of. A comparison with *Enemy of the State* will serve to clarify my point here. In Tony Scott’s *Enemy of the State* the protagonist gets to possess data that can sabotage a powerful CIA boss’s career and ambitions and he becomes the subject of their surveillance. But this surveillance is carried out through specialized and person-specific gadgetry. They devote an entire satellite to track him, install listening and tracking devices in his shoes, belt buckle, and pen and install spy cameras in his home. When he is out in public they monitor him through agents holding listening devices. Bourne’s surveillance is essentially different. He is monitored but through means that are not specifically meant for him and whose ubiquity makes surveillance a plausible possibility. Bourne, however, is tracked through means that have the primary purposes of being a convenience or instrument to help the community function. Thus the subject loses individuality and becomes an easy target for surveillance.

It is worth noting that Bourne was under surveillance even before he became Jason Bourne. Nicky reveals that Bourne was being watched even as he was serving in the army. Bourne father, a mentor of the Treadstone program designed to create subjects, could not stop his son's surveillance. This only shows the weakness of the subject who can be under surveillance all the time.

5. Conclusion

The study leads me to say that Jason Bourne, the hero of *The Bourne Series* illustrates the death of the subject. That he is a skilled operative far superior to the above ordinary personnel tasked with controlling and eliminating him is a fact but his skills and agency pale when it is seen that Bourne's agency amounts to little more than shenanigans as he fails to counter the dominance of the powers that be. Power remains with the faceless and Bourne admits defeat. He attempts to be an individual but recedes into the darkness of anonymity when he fails to assert his individuality. Above all he cannot change the fact that he was psychologically programmed to be a killing machine at the beck and call of the agency. Bourne's assertion "Jason Bourne is dead" is meant as defiance but in another way it captures the death of the subject in the postmodern world.

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