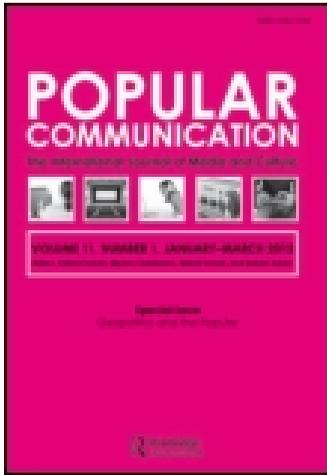


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### The Geopolitical Audience: Watching Quantum of Solace (2008) in London

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# The Geopolitical Audience: Watching *Quantum of Solace* (2008) in London

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This article argues for the intersection of popular geopolitics and audience studies in audience power. This is demonstrated through a survey of viewers attending the James Bond film *Quantum of Solace* (*QoS*) at three theatres in the greater London area. Geography emerged as relevant to audiences in three forms. First, geography was understood as a catalyst for resource-based wars, providing an opportunity to reflect on these conflicts and their future likelihood. Second, geography serves as a difference engine for producing tension and excitement. Finally, geography emerged through the situatedness of viewing and rhizomatic nature of subjectivity. However, these geographies must be understood as part of a larger geopolitical assemblage that is animated by audience power. In conclusion, we argue for an understanding of geopolitical space as constituted through audiences' constituent power to produce topologies. While audiences did not transform *QoS* into a radical text, this potential remains latent.

## INTRODUCTION

This article is a contribution to ongoing and inter-disciplinary research into audiences and their engagement with film and filmic-related texts. While we retain an interest in the James Bond films, and specifically Daniel Craig's portrayal, our analysis is in large part informed by a move away from primarily text-interpretative approaches. As a series of scholars have noted, including Barbara Klinger (1989), Martin Barker and Kate Brooks (1998), Janet Staiger (2000), and Thomas Austin (2002), the manner in which audiences engage with film is far broader and varied than a simple analysis of the film/text itself would indicate. Attention has been brought to bear

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on the everyday habits and routines associated with cinema going, with due recognition being given to the manner in which films are immersed in a wider culture of reviews, gossip, teasers, poster campaigns, advertising, and the like. These have been described as prefigurative materials and are considered to be important in providing interpretative cues for multiple audiences. This is especially relevant to understanding the Bond franchise, in which expectations are produced through decades of films and pop culture relevance.

Released in 2008, *Quantum of Solace* (*QoS*) took in more than \$586 million at the box office worldwide, with a production budget of \$200 million (for reviews of the recent James Bond films, see Chapman, 2007; Comentale, Watt, & Willman, 2005; Linder, 2010). Following *Casino Royale* (2006), which grossed \$590 million, Daniel Craig's portrayal of James Bond invited a great deal of professional, academic, and fan-based commentary (for an academic example, see Funnell, 2011). In a radical change from the Bond films of the 1970s and 1980s, especially those featuring Roger Moore as the British superspy, James Bond was shown to be more vulnerable, obstinate, and obsessed with revenging the death of his lover, Vesper, rather than exhibiting fidelity to "Queen and country." Closer to Timothy Dalton's moody portrayal of Bond, Craig's Bond is bad tempered, paranoid, and considered by his superior M to be a security risk to both the United Kingdom and United States. As M tells Bond in *QoS*, "You are so blinded by inconsolable rage that you don't care who you hurt. When you can't tell your friends from your enemies it is time to go." The decision to cast Daniel Craig as James Bond was a deliberate intervention on the part of the film producers to adjust the so-called Bond formula. How did audiences make sense of this adjustment, and what role, if any, did place, space, and scale play in the manner in which those audiences we surveyed make sense of this particular film text?

As our research suggests, the renewed contemporary popularity of James Bond with audiences is due to the kind of fast-paced storytelling deployed within the Hollywood action-thriller genre—Daniel Craig's Bond is always on the move, often relying on his smartphone for urgent updates and location-based intelligence. Further, his portrayal of Bond is one in which the camera lingers on his "hard body" in a manner in which Susan Jeffords (1994) identified as indicative of Ronald Reagan's presidency and US geopolitics in the 1980s. Bond's mobility and ruggedness are stress-tested. In *QoS*, for example, Bond's mission takes him from Italy to Haiti to Austria and finally to Bolivia where the film's denouement unfolds. Through site-specific encounters, the narrative advances to include Bond attempting to breach a mysterious criminal network, ultimately confronting the villainous mastermind whose plan is to control the water resources of a South American country. The rapid progression of the narrative coupled with moments of rapid editing is designed to convey a sense of urgency and paranoia about who might be trying to track him down while in pursuit of his quest.

More broadly, this article emphasizes the possible interconnections between audience studies and popular geopolitics, thereby enunciating our broader argument for the interrelationship between spatial theory and media/cultural studies. Geographers have argued in the past that space and place are not inert, and indeed in *QoS* places are more than simply backdrops. They both provide opportunities for further development of and reflection on the complex motives driving Bond to uncover the Quantum network and also leave viewers with a sense that places might offer resonances and traces which will empower future episodes of Bond. However, we argue that such an approach short-changes the depth of intersection between audiences and geography. This article begins with a review of the literature in critical (and particularly popular) geopolitics, arguing for a heightened appreciation of the audience as assemblage, constituting a geopolitical space in which topological power is in a constant state of becoming. After a brief outline of our

methodology, which is rooted in our theoretical argument but also relies on existing methods within audience studies, this article shifts to the empirical analysis of questionnaires provided by three London-based *QoS* audiences. Our analysis indicates that geography structures not only the narrative arc of the Bond film but also audience engagement and response to *QoS*. The article concludes by extrapolating a research agenda in which geography is not only central to audiences' processes of meaning-making with regard to *QoS* but also goes further to argue that audiences are implicated in the production of space and, therefore, of geopolitics. This insight should position audience studies well for the current era of Media Studies 2.0 in which fewer distinctions are possible between media producers and consumers (Hermes, 2009). Further, it indicates that recent theorizations of the audience can inform new understandings of geopolitical space that prioritize the role of audiences in constituting geopolitical space.

### GEOGRAPHY AND AUDIENCE STUDIES

Popular geopolitics, the theoretical starting point for this research, is a subset of a project within the discipline of geography known as critical geopolitics (for an overview, see Dodds, Kuus, & Sharp, 2012). Critical geopolitics is the poststructuralist study of geopolitics, in which geopolitics is understood to mean a set of discourses through which global space is constituted and partitioned (Ó Tuathail, 1996). Geopolitical discourse has traditionally been divided into three categories for heuristic purposes. Formal geopolitical discourse refers to the discourse of theorists, academic or otherwise, who formulate abstract understandings of global space. Perhaps the most (in)famous contributor to formal geopolitics in recent times has been Samuel Huntington (1996), whose division of the world into seven (or eight) civilizations has informed, tacitly or otherwise, American foreign policy through its discursive formulation of the Islamic world.

The perceived existence and usefulness of this spatialization has carried over into practical geopolitical discourse, which refers to the strands of geopolitical discourse associated with statespersons, military leaders, and other official spokespeople of the international system (Kuus, 2011). This is evident in many dimensions of American foreign policy; some would argue that the War on Terror was formulated (at least by some) with Huntington's thesis in mind, but less controversially the thesis is evident in the changing institutional structures since the September 11, 2001, attacks, with both President Bush and President Obama appointing an Envoy Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the Muslim world (Sada Cumber, followed by Rashad Hussein).

Popular geopolitics, in contrast to the first two categories, refers to the forms of geopolitical discourse that constitute these spatializations in everyday life, especially among nonelites (Dittmer, 2010). This work has usually taken the form of analyses of media artefacts such as magazines (Sharp, 2000), cartoons (Dodds, 2007), comic books (Dittmer, 2007), films (Dalby, 2008; Dittmer, 2007; Dodds, 2010), newspapers (McFarlane & Hay, 2003), radio (Pinkerton & Dodds, 2009), and video games (Power, 2007). As such, it has maintained the focus of critical geopolitical scholarship on elites' deployment of discourse despite nominally being about the geopolitical everyday (Dittmer & Dodds, 2008; Müller, 2008). Recent work has attempted to engage with audience research, but this work is dwarfed by the larger popular geopolitical tradition which is more text-centered in its focus (Dittmer, 2008a; Dittmer & Larsen, 2007; Dodds, 2006).

Recent work in audience studies has worked to reshape the field in the face of the so-called Media Studies 2.0 paradigm (Hermes, 2009). The baseline for this work has been three tenets worked out in the preceding paradigm:

First, [ . . . ] the reception experience, for most people, is not so solipsistic or idiosyncratic that people cannot communicate important aspects of their experiences and discover shared viewpoints with others through talk. [ . . . ] Second is a common understanding that texts practically always are polyvalent and polysemic [ . . . ]. Third, most now also recognize that it is necessary to distinguish between insightful expert scholarship that analyses or interprets creative texts from a particular theoretical perspective, and research on the understandings and subjective experiences of the everyday “consumers” of those same cultural products. (Davis & Michelle, 2011, p. 561)

This baseline has largely been accepted within popular geopolitics although there has not been much elaboration. Much of the baseline insights of popular geopolitics are already found in audience studies, given how scholars have grappled with how viewers make sense of local, national, and global scales and spaces, armed with spatial metaphors such as flow (e.g., Kumar & Curtin, 2002).

The baseline of popular geopolitics that has been taken up by extant work in audience studies includes space/place and scale. Space and place are in many ways the *sine qua non* of geography, yet geographers do not view place and space as essential, immutable entities; rather, space and place are constituted in, and through, social relations. As such, they are multiple, fragmented, heterogeneous, internally contested, and in process. Generally speaking, place is understood as a focal point of experience within webs of relations and meaning-making while space emphasizes interaction and flows (Castells, 2000).

Paul Adams (2009) has identified four ways in which media relate to space and place. Media in space refers to the geographic distribution of media infrastructure across the earth’s surface. For the purposes of this article, that category would incorporate the locations of film studios, shooting locations, and the theatres in which movies are viewed, among other things (such as internet infrastructure that facilitates downloading to iPads or other viewing technologies). Spaces in media refer to the topological social space produced through mediation. In regards to this article, we might consider websites frequented by expectant fans seeking access to trailers before they appear in theatres. While the website itself exists on a server somewhere (media in space), it also exists as a virtual space through which people can “meet” and interact with one another.

For his last two categories, Adams switches to a consideration of place. Places in media refers to representations of places, such as that common to travel advertising or travelogues. In this article, attention is paid to the construction of places through their usage as settings in film; of course, for film production there is often a disjuncture between where filming is actually conducted and where the scene is set. Nevertheless, these artificial place images help constitute that place through their relational engagements and therefore become part of that place. The final category, media in place, pays attention to the ways in which media are embedded in various places (or not). The complex questions of media in the classroom are particularly salient to academics: most instructors agree that mobile phones should be turned off in the classroom, but students seem to contest this, at least with regard to text messaging. What about laptops? Certainly useful for note-taking but just as likely (if not more so) to be used for Facebook during lectures. These policies (and their contestation) are part of what constitute the classroom as a particular kind of place. For our purposes, it is easy to see some of the same questions applying to film consumption. Are mobile phones ringing in the theatre? To whom, and for which films, are trailers shown prior to the film? Can sound from neighboring theatres be heard during quiet moments of your own film? The ability to shape where and when media are permitted is a deeply political question

and arguably a geopolitical one as well—as the recent revelations of a British “spy rock” being left outside the Russian Foreign Ministry by MI6 attest.

Of course, geographers do not have a monopoly on space/place, and scholars in cultural and media studies have long considered how audiences interpret and use texts differently given their geographic locations (e.g., Gillespie, 1998). Postcolonial theorizing of this topic has ranged from Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1979), in which power is unevenly distributed among actors, to more contemporary concerns with cultural hybridity (Kraidy, 2005; Kumar, 2006). Much of this work can even be considered geopolitical, for example, the investigation of Israeli reception of the US television show *Dallas* (Katz & Liebes, 1984) and other engagements with everyday and banal nationalisms (Billig, 1995).

The second way in which popular geopolitics can dovetail with the concerns of audience studies is through a deep and nuanced engagement with scale. A vast literature in media studies has focused on globalization and its effect on media flows and consumption (e.g., Appadurai, 1996; Berry & Kim, 2009). Contesting the hegemony of the global has been a particular concern of geographers, as notions that “the earth is flat” (Friedman, 2005) and “the end of geography” (O’Brien, 1992) have struck particularly close to the bone. Therefore, geographers have approached scale in a highly nuanced fashion. Particularly useful for audience studies is the work of feminist political geographers, who have contested the very notion of scale by seeing it as the effect of topologies of power (on topologies of power, see Allen, 2003; on feminist notions of scale, see Sharp, 2007). Thus, even popular scales such as the body, the neighborhood, the nation, and the globe should not serve as the basis for analytical division but should instead be seen as produced through a politics that is “grounded but translocal” (Katz, 2001, p. 1231).

Lately, work examining scale has dovetailed with assemblage theory (Delanda, 2006) through the common adoption of a relational ontology. Understanding place and space in this way has implications for our understanding of power; if places are produced relationally through their interaction with other places (Massey, 2005), then the local is grounded but so is the global. By denying the global its place at the top of the scalar hierarchy, it becomes feasible to trace the constitution of global phenomena through horizontal networks of interactions situated in particular places, enabling resistance to global capital and other purportedly totalizing forces (Gibson-Graham, 2002). Such an approach seems to connect well with the active audience paradigm, which signalled the possibilities of appropriation or subversion of global discourse by local groups (Fiske, 1987). However, neither seeing power as residing purely at the scale of global hegemony nor as entirely diffuse among local audiences and therefore negligible accurately expresses the complexity of audience encounters with mass mediated texts (Morley, 2006). Such encounters are neither unpredictable nor devoid of pattern.

Jack Bratich (2005, p. 246) avoids the hazards of structure/agency and local/global by seeing audiences as constituent parts of a media/human assemblage:

Audience power refers to the creative processes of meaning making, the appropriation and circulation of affects, and the enhancement of these very capacities. It does not simply refer to people watching, reading, or listening to mediated texts (no matter how active the consumption). In the traditional transmission model of communication, for instance, the audience is assumed to refer to people who are at the endpoint of the chain of media communication. Audience constituent power, however, does not come after production (located elsewhere). It highlights the collective invention of values, significations, and affects—in other words, the very production of culture itself.

In the language of critical geopolitics, Bratich conceptualizes audiences as not just rooted in their geography (and therefore constituted by it) but also as *constituting* the geography itself. In the language of audience studies, he argues that the power of audiences has been trapped within the binaries of power/resistance and global/local, but that it can be understood as autonomous. In this way power (whether of audiences or of cultural industries) can be understood as divided against itself, as relational, in a way not appreciated before.

These insights remained at the forefront of our methodology, which explicitly traces the interrelations of film, space/place, and scale through the case of *QoS*. Our findings allow for a reconsideration of audience consumption through the lens of relational spaces that far exceed the geographies traditionally associated with consumption.

### MAPPING THE AUDIENCE

Martin Barker and colleagues have been highly active in the pioneering of new forms of audience-based research on cinema (Barker, 2006; Barker & Mathijs, 2007). Similarly, we were interested in how embodied audiences attending the recently released *Quantum of Solace* (2008) produced meanings, affects, and experiences from an encounter with the 2008 James Bond adventure. Our choice of the Bond film was deliberate because we wanted to both understand how and why British-based filmgoers engage with the spy thriller genre in general. We wanted to make sense of the links between the geopolitical narratives of Bond and production of various elements of viewers' embodied subjectivities, such as geographical memory and somatic markers.

In terms of implementing our research strategy, we initially carried out a review of trade press reviews of *QoS* and accessed online forums such as the Internet Movie Database (IMDb) to consider initial assessments of the film. The sheer diversity of these kinds of resources is striking, ranging from professional reviews and citizen reviews to fan sites and DVD product recommendations. The intention here was to see what kind of filmic engagements elite (or fan-elite) viewers of the film had reported, while at the same time wishing to understand better how our questionnaire respondents might have prefiguratively accessed the film prior to its public release (Gray, 2003). It acknowledges, explicitly, the importance of taking seriously prefigurative materials relating to the film text (see Austin, 2002). Thus, this step informed our questionnaire construction and subsequent analysis.

The second step in our method was to distribute questionnaires, with a mix of closed and open-ended questions, at three cinemas in the Greater London area. These were selected to achieve a variety of audiences. Leicester Square (Theatre 1), home to London's film premieres and high ticket prices, was selected as one site in order to access urban (and possibly cinemaphilic) audiences. This particular site was deliberately selected because of its central location and likelihood of attracting a diverse range of cinema viewers. Richmond (Theatre 2), a wealthy suburban center outside of central London, was chosen as a second site to access local commuters and families. Compared with central London theatres such as Leicester Square and large out-of-town multi-screen complexes, the theatre itself is smaller, with fewer films from which to select. The third site was Egham (Theatre 3), an exurb of London, which serves as a town center for those inhabiting London's "green belt" and periphery. It is popular with students and young people in general because of its location within a large complex of shops and eateries.

One hundred questionnaires were distributed to *QoS* viewers at each site, each questionnaire paired with a postage-paid envelope for return to the research team. We sought and received

permission from the cinema managers to distribute the questionnaires but were allowed to do only after the film screenings were completed. The response rates were 27%, 28%, and 20% for theatres 1, 2, and 3, respectively, which is not untypical in terms of replies to questionnaire-based research. The impact of the theatre's spatial configurations (screen size, seating arrangements and the like) were not discernable in any of the surveys. Additionally, we were not permitted to record within the theatre. Therefore, there clearly is scope for additional research that considers the spatial configurations of the movie theatres themselves, and their possible implications for viewer engagement.

In composing and analyzing the questionnaires, we wanted to draw out a number of general themes. First, we looked for the relationship between the film and viewers' sense of reality—did the film, for example, accurately depict a particular place or amplify some kind of wider geopolitical truism? Second, we wanted to see how the viewers' subjectivities shaped their somatic experience of the filmic event: which geographies, virtually embedded in their memory, were co-present with the geography in the film? Finally, we wanted to see how new geographies were produced through the filmic event which would become memories to draw on in future geopolitical events. To draw out these themes, our questionnaire addressed not only motivations for seeing the film and other conscious decision-making processes associated with the Bond franchise but crucially also inquired about particularly memorable scenes and plot developments. These questions were intended to address the virtual dimension of the film-going experience, as memories are encoded as somatic markers in ways that can affect future moments of the political (Connolly, 2002). In this way we attempted to attend to the discursive and the somatic, without soliciting a particular engagement with the geopolitics.

### REFLECTING ON *QUANTUM OF SOLACE*

While it is certainly true that *Quantum of Solace* was viewed by respondents in a variety of ways, such as pure escapism, a narrative of Bond's revenge and redemption (for the events previously depicted in *Casino Royale*), and as psychological drama, many also engaged (in an unsolicited manner) with the geopolitical context of the movie. One respondent in Leicester Square reflected on the film afterwards and provided a response which can serve as a key to the broader body of responses:

[T]he message, whilst quite low key, was true to life in so much as (1) I think it was Jimmy Carter who, in the seventies said in the next century we would see conflict over water, and control of it. (2) Multinationals acting as kingmaker in the third world. The odd coup here, support of a dictator there – never happened, has it?!, and (3) CIA & USA ready to have anyone over [beat them up] just so Billybob back home can keep driving his 12MPG Buick.

Like this single respondent, collectively our respondents engaged with geopolitical themes primarily in three ways. First, many viewers focused on the inclusion of water in the film's narrative as a resource over which states will compete, in much the same way as oil and natural gas have often been theorized in both academic work and punditry with some warning of a new generation of "resource wars" (Shiva, 2002). Second, viewers focused on the role of corporations in undermining state governments of the developing world. This is a relationship that did not necessarily surprise any viewers but one that was recognized and provoked a certain ironic pleasure in enjoying the film's central premise. Finally, and perhaps most significantly, viewers used the film

to reflect on the various places portrayed within the film, drawing on the film to reaffirm or revise their geographical imagination. A common thread through all three geopolitical responses is the relational space produced between the lived geographies of the respondent and the places/spaces of the film, which produces a filmic event unique and particular to each viewer. Collectively, these events can be understood to constitute a topology of geopolitical space.

The geographical situatedness of the respondents was reflected in comments both about why they saw the film and how respondents understood James Bond as a character. Some respondents answered both of these questions through reference to a British identity with which they associated themselves (and with which they associated the James Bond franchise). For instance, when asked why he or she had come to see the film, one viewer in Leicester Square responded: “Isn’t it the law? Or is it just about the only successful thing we can make, so we’d better support it. Or maybe it’s just a good film.” The “we” of the response is an assumed commonality among the viewing audience. Other viewers were less positive as they still judged the film with reference to British standards. For instance, one viewer from Egham responded that the movie was disappointing because it was “too American . . . [it is] not upholding Bond traditions,” while another from Richmond wrote that it had “too much fighting; not typical for British movies.”

Both observations perhaps point to a wider debate about how Daniel Craig’s portrayal of James Bond has blurred British and American heroic male iconography. The Bond franchise deliberately cast Craig as Bond as a means to refocus attention on the character’s physical prowess and his physical and emotional struggles as he embarks on a career as a secret agent (Funnell, 2011, p. 461). Indeed, the character of James Bond was absolved of this purportedly un-British behavior by many other respondents who had no problem with his engaging in violent action around the world. For instance, one viewer from Richmond wrote that Bond “has morals when it comes to protecting Britain; however, he does not care about collateral damage. He seems like a decent hero. He is not a mercenary.” By situating Bond as a moral agent through his attempt to secure the UK’s borders, but ignoring “collateral damage” (i.e., those killed while Bond operates overseas), the viewer associates Bond with the War on Terror’s articulation of a “global security envelope” such as that promoted by then-Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff in 2005. However, it would be a mistake to assume that the entire audience in London viewed Bond in this way; indeed the audience predictably (for London) was multinational in origin and engaged with notions of “Britishness” in relation to their own identity in a variety of ways, which is apparent in the following sections.

## Resource Wars

When respondents referred to geopolitics in their answers (again, these were unsolicited references), it was most often used to reference the geopolitical framing of the film as within a world of declining resources, which will lead to inevitable conflict among geopolitical actors (for a critique, see Dalby, 2009). For much of the movie, this geopolitical plot appears to be about oil and natural gas, a topic that features substantially in many contemporary news accounts that are rooted in the notion of peak oil and in Western, Russian, and Chinese interventions in regions such as the Middle East, Central Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, and the Arctic in order to secure the world’s remaining petroleum reserves. Indeed, for much of the film, Bond operates against both the interests of the US and UK governments, which collaborate with the villain of the film (Dominic Greene) to obtain oil rights. However, the resource wars’ narrative of *Quantum*

of *Solace* involves a bait-and-switch. Dominic Greene obtains the resource development rights to a portion of the Bolivian highlands that are bereft of oil and natural gas only to reveal later that it is the water of the highlands that he is going to privatize and ration to the lowland populations to make larger profits.

This bait-and-switch appears to have caught many viewers' attention, with many respondents noting that the movie had surprised them with the water angle. Two viewers in Leicester Square noted that it was "interesting that water was the 'baddies' commodity" and that the film had caused her or him to gain "awareness of the earth's natural resources and their value. Also, the plight of the millions in other countries without water supplies." One viewer from Richmond resisted this framing, drawing on their own experience: "I work in the environment sector so water resources are part of my 'daily' concerns. I don't know how I would react if it were a new topic." Despite this, three respondents from Egham described water as a "precarious" and "precious resource," suggesting that the film had resonated with their geopolitical imagination. Viewer engagement with the resource wars frame went still further, connecting the film to their preexisting geographical and moral imaginations.

When asked if the movie had caused him or her to reflect on anything beyond the film, one respondent in particular went beyond description of water as an issue and tied it to notions of social justice:

Yes—the manipulation of big governments—and their greed for world resources—Also I feel that personally that water is a more important issue to man than oil (well, to Western world's oil perhaps not) and that this will be the next war despite our rainy summer! Water is being transported now from Wales to France, etc., so yes in a sense *Quantum of Solace* has a point if the world was not at war ideologically we could share resources. Ethnic people suffer at the hands of the West. It's the impoverished that always suffer more.

This sense of social justice frequently led to a questioning of the artificial distinction between the scale of the individual and the realm of global geopolitics. In some responses, the collapse of these scales is grammatically implicit, as in this comment from a viewer in Leicester Square, who argued that the movie made him or her think about "how far some people/governments are (or might be) prepared to go to own natural resources such as oil and water." Other viewers (this one from Richmond) went even further, implicating individuals in the perceived immorality of their government's actions:

[The movie caused me to think] that people are greedy and we don't really know what our governments are really doing. We try to live moral lives; however, we are not criticising governments for their perhaps questionable methods of securing scarce resources for us. Rest of world suffers while developed nations profit off of them.

A viewer at Leicester Square raised similar questions but also used the fictional elements of the film as a buffer from the moral implications: "Do any of the things in the film really happen in real life?" Similarly, a viewer at Egham responded that the movie "made me wonder what happens that we don't know about." In both formulations, the questions of morality raised by the film are insulated from the viewers' conscience, perhaps as part of an engagement with the film primarily as escapism and only secondarily as geopolitical. However, this does raise an intriguing possibility that the decision to recast and shoot the newer Bond films in a manner that emphasizes a darker and less comedic representation of the spy might provoke in turn a more sustained engagement with the geopolitical implications and manifestations of the franchise.

## Globalization and Governance

Tangential and yet related to the above discussion is an engagement by viewers with the elements of the film that showed multinational corporations ascendant over state governments of the developing, and to a lesser extent the developed, world. The film portrays the attempts by Dominic Greene to engineer the overthrow of Bolivia's democratically elected government and privatize the country's water infrastructure via his shell corporation, a purportedly eco-friendly organization known as Greene Planet. By linking green corporate practices with environmental damage and social hardship in the developing world, the filmmakers not only caught viewers' attention but also generated consideration of these topics. One viewer from Richmond said that the film caused him or her to ponder "the practice of 'Green Wash' [deceptive eco-advertising by corporations] and the power of multinationals on governance." Similarly, a viewer at Egham said that the film made him or her consider the "nature of international politics and its moral flexibility," as well as the "nature of [the] Green agenda and energy market shifts."

One viewer at Leicester Square drew on his or her personal experience to argue that the film had an essential truthfulness about it in regards to the role of multinational corporations in global governance: "I worked in Indonesia and the issues [of] how large corporate companies [decide] the minimum wage in countries such as Haiti [are true]. I can relate to these issues from personal experience." The social and environmental effects of this kind of governance were perceived by one viewer from Leicester Square in the film itself: "Luxurious hotel and desert scenes [bring] home just how much money some people have against how poor some people are. And just how beautiful this planet is—many natural beauty spots—even deserts."

As that last quote indicates, landscape and place in *Quantum of Solace* played a key role in the becoming of viewers' experiences. In the following section, the way in which viewers attributed geopolitical value to various locations within the film is reported. Given the centrality of place to the Bond genre (Dodds, 2003, 2005), it is not surprising that a great number of viewers' comments focused on various locales. Indeed, our understanding of the relative paucity of viewer engagement with this frame *vis-à-vis* the resource wars frame relies on notions of place. The influence of corporations on Latin American dictatorships (Greene allies himself with, and eventually betrays, a Bolivian general who wants to be president) is perhaps such an established element of viewers' geopolitical imaginations that it does not surprise them the same way that water wars do. One respondent from Richmond wrote that the film made him or her consider "the violence of South America and the corruption." Similarly, a viewer at Egham highlighted the banality of the link between US intervention in South American politics: "Naturally [I] enjoyed the references to the current geopolitical climate, including references to water wars, South American dictatorships, and the role of the United States." Using this explanation as a bridge, we now turn our attention to the ways in which place generally, and locations specifically, were understood by our respondents.

## Place

While much of the existing literature posits that place serves as a key element of the Bond formula, this audience research confirms that viewers derive significant satisfaction from the use of filming locations that are deemed glamorous. For instance, viewers who liked *Quantum of Solace*

often described the film in similar ways, implying that the conventions of the Bond formula are well-known by at least some filmgoers. As one respondent from Leicester Square summarized the formula: “Fast cars, pretty women, fantastic world locations, plenty of action.” When viewers did not like the movie, it was often because they felt that it did not live up to the promise of the formula. As one viewer at Richmond argued, “No gadgets, the women were beautiful but my girlfriend Natascha is more beautiful, location not exotic, action too fast.”

Indeed, much of the pleasure purportedly derived by viewers came from the fulfilment of these generic expectations; the pleasure of place among Bond filmgoers appears tied to the touristic gaze (Urry, 2002). With respondents mentioning the film’s “exotic, beautiful tropical, and fantastic world” locations in addition to its “panoramic views of sand,” only one viewer responded as anything but enthusiastic for the role of place within the Bond formula: “Whilst the ‘views’ are great, the plot is more important, and in this case didn’t need any help from the locations. No more baddies’ space stations, secret submarines or ice palaces!”

The doubling of the spy’s and the tourist’s gaze results from the hypermobility of both categories—each derives his or her subjectivity from their capacity to transgress borders and observe that which is different, returning home with her or his cosmopolitan subjectivities bolstered (Dittmer, 2008b). Several respondents, especially in the case of Italy (which dominated the list), provided evidence of the doubling of these gazes through the explicit referencing of an enhanced desire for tourism. One respondent referenced Bolivia while other destinations such as Haiti were not mentioned at all as a tourist destination—a situation likely not to change in the aftermath of the tragic loss of life following the earthquake in 2010.

This perhaps hints at the limits of the touristic gaze in reference to the Bond formula; some destinations are deemed suitable only for agents of the Crown, as they function in the film as a source of danger for both Bond and Britain. Drawing on the work of Edward Said, it is clear that the tourist/spy (and Britain or the West more broadly) is produced as masculine, active, and yet innocent while the spaces through which the tourist/spy travels are produced as feminine, passive, and yet threatening (Black, 2004; Tesfahuney, 1998). This point is condensed effectively in the response of one female respondent from Richmond who ties together gender, spycraft, tourism, and gendered embodiment in an introspective moment: “yep, stay away from men that work in MI6; travel more; I’m attracted to powerful men; the actress made me want to go on a diet.” The evaluation of self in relation to Bond (attracted to, yet afraid of, a relationship with a Bond-like character; a desire to travel like Bond and be embodied as a Bond girl) indicates the ambivalent nature of many viewers’ engagements with the Bond formula, and in particular place. It is to the viewers’ production of particular places portrayed in the film that we now turn.

## Bolivia

Bolivia serves as the final scene of conflict in *Quantum of Solace*, with Bond arriving as a rogue agent to stop Dominic Greene’s plan to overthrow the government and privatize the water supply. As such, numerous landscapes are presented to the view, including La Paz and desert highland regions (it should be noted that the actual location stand-in for Bolivia was Chile). Bolivia was the most memorable setting for our respondents, although this is at least partly attributable to its use in the film as the setting for the film’s climactic action. Indeed, many respondents mentioned the final battle, which takes place in a hydrogen-powered eco-hotel purportedly in the Bolivian

highlands. During the battle, the hotel's hydrogen cells begin to explode in a flaming chain reaction that produces the kind of spectacle for which the Bond movies are famous. For instance, one viewer from Leicester Square said that his or her most memorable location was "the final part with the destruction of the building with fire and explosions. It seemed to go on for some time and is [therefore] likely to stick in one's memory." Similarly, another viewer from that same theatre wrote that he or she remembered "the desert hotel denouement—it was exciting, visually stirring and I felt that the lead female character was in peril, so was excited." This visceral response speaks to the viewing of *QoS* as not only a moment of geopolitical meaning-making but also as a somatic event.

Interestingly though, the film's climax was only a minority of the respondents' memories of Bolivia from the film. Another minority view of the memorable places in the film focused on the cultural and urban landscapes of Bolivia. Several respondents identified Bolivia as a place they had been to before as tourists, or conversely because it was a place about which they had limited knowledge. For instance, one viewer at Richmond wrote that he or she remembered Bolivia and previously had only "impressions about these places from books"; another wrote that he or she remembered South America (this respondent, from Leicester Square, did not mention Bolivia by name) because it had "so much culture." Some respondents used the film to reflect on Bolivia's location within the global hierarchy of development—a respondent from the same theatre remembered "South America's portrayal [as] lacking development," while one from Egham remembered the "Bolivia scenes—showed the poverty and interesting people and hats—and the dogs." Collectively, these memory recalls indicate that Bolivia was consumed by some respondents as a location of socio-economic difference. Of course, it is worth noting that some viewers responded to Bolivia because of other kinds of engagement with the location, such as being "born there" or because he or she is "interested in Hispanic culture."

However, far and away the most common memory of Bolivia from the film was the desert landscape of the Altiplano. This, again, took the form of the consumption of difference, as in the following quote from a viewer at Richmond about what he or she remembered: "The deserts of Bolivia (if they are in Bolivia) and the people—nothing like it in England." This knowing form of viewing (while enjoying the scene, the respondent correctly questioned its representational validity; these scenes were shot in the Atacama Desert) was rare among the respondents, who wrote primarily about the affective and representational quality of the landscapes. In particular, respondents focused on descriptions as "stunning," "vast," "dry," "dusty," "barren," and "striking and stark." In many ways, these responses were the most descriptive in the questionnaires, with the visual overriding other considerations. One respondent from Egham described the "interesting shades of color" in the desert, while one from Leicester Square wrote, "I also like quirky photos, so the shot of the iguana/lizard in the Bolivian desert stood out for me. Just thought it was a lovely bit of cinematography in such an action packed film." In short, Bolivia was consumed as a landscape of both physical and cultural difference; it would be difficult to characterize this engagement as critical.

## Siena

A filming location less exotic to many of the viewers but nevertheless a big tourism destination is Siena in Tuscany. This destination was memorable both for the action-packed car chase scene

and for the scene in which Bond's chase of an assassin is juxtaposed with the famous horse race associated with the Palio di Siena. Excluding responses that were specific to the action elements of the scenes, the most significant number of responses to Siena was keyed to the aesthetics of the locale. Respondents from Leicester Square found Siena "picturesque" and remembered it "especially. The roof tops, colors, etc.—I love the place myself," while a viewer from Richmond described Siena as "very scenic & relaxed, [a] holidays feel." As that last quote indicates, respondents' affection for this locale seems to be intimately linked to their own tourist experiences of the place, with viewers at Egham remembering the scene because "it was recognizable" and inspired "memories of holidays"; a viewer from Leicester Square noted that he or she "was involved in a coach accident along the same stretch of road just before we arrived at our hotel some years ago." Other respondents from Richmond remembered those scenes because "I have been there a number of times" and because "we always love to see places that we've been to." Siena was thus primarily rendered memorable through reference to tourist landscapes with which many viewers were familiar, rather than through a place-based montage meant to heighten the drama and intrigue.

### Other Locations

Interestingly, respondents rarely mentioned the film's scenes in Austria, perhaps because the film did not have a significant action sequence and because the opera house (even if the staging of Puccini's *Tosca* with due emphasis on murder, suicide, and love seemed designed to highlight Bond's personal predicament) was not distinct enough or sufficiently culturally familiar as a specific geographic landscape (unlike the Palio di Siena or the desolate desert of Bolivia). However, Haiti was mentioned significantly more often, most often in relation to the speedboat chase. Interestingly, a few respondents indicated the scene held pedagogical value for them. One respondent from Richmond indicated that "Haiti looks awful—will never go there!" and another felt that the film had given him or her a "good feel for the place."

Nevertheless, one viewer from Leicester Square responded through a personal connection to Haiti, finding the scene memorable because "I have friends there." A similar personal connection produced the only response to Kazan, the location of the film's denouement. A viewer in Richmond remarked that he or she remembered the scene in Kazan because "it doesn't look like Russia really." Thus, the experience of the film did not mesh with the respondent's experience of the "real" place. Interestingly, the one location in the film of which every viewer in our survey had experience, London, was only mentioned by two respondents, both at Richmond—one noted London because it was the city in which they lived, and one argued that the movie "made me think of London; seeing 'M' always does." The latter comment implies a linkage between M's role as representative of MI6 and London as the capital of the United Kingdom.

## CONCLUSIONS

Joke Hermes (2009, p. 113) has argued that with the advent of Media Studies 2.0 audience studies must be remade, as old distinctions between fans, audiences, and producers are disappearing:

The underlying suggestion is that identity construction and specific media texts or practices are linked via viewer or reader fandom. The insight that such links are not direct but part of discursive webs of meaning reaching far outside the individual media text seems to have been lost. [ . . . ] In as far as we want to know about a genre or a series, such work needs careful contextualisation, grounding and theorization, which is not, usually, offered.

This commitment to both geographical context and the traces that connect such places in relational spaces is something apparent in the above analysis. Despite the highly localized nature of our research on *QoS* (filming was based out of nearby Pinewood Studios, and all our audiences attended cinemas in the Greater London area), the event of filmic viewing relied on an assemblage of far-flung geographies. This assemblage includes the circulation of bodies through networks of tourism and migration as well as the circulation of place images and narratives of geopolitical order. Equally, the harnessing of scalar identities such as British or Western in subjective viewing processes relies on the composition of these scales in relational spaces. These relational spaces are not so much bordered as they are marked by thresholds of relational intensity that emerge from rapid drop-offs in circulations (of bodies, texts, and so on) from one space to another. In short, geopolitics (and geography more broadly) offers not only a means of understanding the grounded processes of becoming by which audiences experience an engagement with film, but it also offers the possibility of resituating audience studies to fit within Media Studies 2.0.

Making life even more difficult for the audience researcher, is the fact that other notions [beyond the distinction between consumers and producers] are likewise on their way out. Such as the idea that texts [ . . . ] have clear-cut boundaries and thus can be distinguished from their context, or stand out in a flow. (Hermes, 2009, p. 112)

Reading this quote against the understanding of spaces and scales as composed via the assemblage of both material objects (bodies, media) and the discourses inscribed in them implies that not only is geography central to any viewing event but also that audiences are key to the production of geopolitics and geography more broadly. This topological understanding of space offers a central role to audience power in the emergent production of space, and therefore in circuits of geopolitical power.

Thus, not only does popular geopolitics have insights to feed into audience studies, but audience studies have something to contribute to popular geopolitics. Popular geopolitics becomes not the final domain in which geopolitical discourse is mainstreamed, but instead a vast media/human assemblage that operates in and through a range of scales, constantly becoming something new, as affects and meanings ripple through it.

Within this methodological shift, the audience is no longer tied to its problematized representation, but returned to the milieu of immanent creative forces. It is this sphere of audience powers that motors those problematizations in the first place, as well as offers the site and resource for new potentials of becoming and collectivity. Among these potentials remains the question of whether audience power has the antagonistic will to struggle that could motor future cultural production, and what forms these powers will take. (Bratich, 2005, pp. 262–263)

In the case of *QoS*, the geographies of assemblage connected far-flung places within the space of the filmic experience: viewers gathered in particular places to watch the film, bringing with them virtual memories of previous travel and text. The film itself was materialized in Pinewood Studios but carried within it representations of both its place of origin (Britain) and a range of postcolonial and other sites through which British identity was enacted. The film, however, only matters in that

it is animated by its exposure to audience power; the audience produces the topological space in which geopolitics can be enacted. In this case, it is difficult to imagine Bratich's "antagonistic will" emerging from the *QoS* experience given the ambivalent audience engagement with Bond's masculinity and mobility. However, the current architecture of geopolitical power is at best a tentative and partial hegemony, waiting for audience power to push the assemblage into new configurations of media, space, and place.

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