

Maria-Theresia-Gymnasium

Facharbeit des Kollegiaten

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im Leistungskurs Englisch

Kollegstufenjahrgang 2007/09

Shaken and Stirred –

The Constant Reinvention of James Bond 007



Abgabetermin: 30. Januar 2009

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1. Introduction: The Art of Entertainment

Some consider James Bond films an essential part of our culture¹ while others might dismiss them as lowbrow and repetitive. Whatever way we choose to look at it, the inescapable fact remains that today, when asked to recount a typical James Bond plot, almost anyone will be able to describe a basic storyline, since practically all Bond films are based on very similar plots. It is indeed very true that these films are unique in the sense that they seem to have preserved so much of their structure, their essence, whilst still managing to attract generations of viewers to admire film after film.

Naturally many critics deny Bond and his (re-)creators any credit for this, following the widespread opinion that film should follow the idea of "art for art's sake", as prescribed by intellectual greats such as Théophile Gautier² and Edgar Allan Poe. Of course there is truth in this, as it would be wrong to judge anything merely on popularity. Yet popularity always has its reasons, and the immense following James Bond enjoys and has enjoyed cannot possibly be dismissed as coincidental.

This manuscript aims to illustrate and chart the development of a series of films that is rightly labelled as the most successful of its kind, spanning 22 films in 46 years. Needless to say, this development is a compilation process involving manifold aspects of the films. These aspects range from cinematic and technical advances to changes in social and political relations within the world of James Bond. They mirror, to a certain extent, the respective trends at the time of each film's production. For example, the latest film "Quantum of Solace" is packed with modern-day, fast-tracked action as opposed to the moderate pace at which the plot of 1962's "Dr. No" unfolds. In this case, the changes are very much in line with technological advances and trends in the film industry.

However, as with anything that is to appeal to generation after generation and still remain true to its key elements, keeping Bond up to date has required more than simply upping the film's pace. The Eon production team has – figuratively speaking – been walking a tightrope in order to balance society's trends with what I will henceforth describe as the "Bond Formula". This term is to signify a collection of characteristic ingredients that over the years have come to be nearly irreversibly associated with Bond.

In order to capture this formula and its development, I have grouped what I consider to be its most intriguing elements in three chapters, titled "Cult Cultivation", "The Ladies", and "Bond's Change of Character". I will first explain how Eon Productions consciously

¹ McKay xi

² Meyers Lexikon

built and fed a fan culture surrounding their films in order to assure their long-term success. The second chapter is devoted to women, their changing status, importance and behaviour within the films and how these changes reflect to some extent the changes in our society. The last chapter will then focus on the man himself, Bond, James Bond, and illustrate how and why his character changes over time. Finally, I conclude by expressing my personal opinion on what actor and which film capture the essence of Bond best.

I would like to clarify that any description of the aforementioned formula and its ingredients will inevitably be a subjective one, and one that cannot cover the entire spectrum of what makes these films so special. Despite this, I intend to portray the Bond films' essential attributes, and how they have changed over time in order to maintain their appeal.

2. Main Part: The Development of the James Bond Films

2.1. Cult Cultivation

2.1.1. Brand, James Brand

Over the years, “Bond” has developed into a global brand. The overpowering success of “Dr. No” and the huge following of its hero initially came as a surprise to Albert R. Broccoli and Harry Saltzman, the heads of Eon Productions. But they were nevertheless quick to become aware of their product's economic potential, and founded “Danjaq S. A.” back in 1962. This holding company was to manage all copyrights and trademarks related to Bond. All kinds of 007 paraphernalia were brought onto the market, and proved to be a huge success, with Danjaq registering seven-digit annual turnovers by 1965³.

These early successes with 007 products were part of a wave of fascination for Bond in the sixties, often referred to as “Bondmania”⁴. Articles such as Bond clothes, jewels, even Bond sandwich makers were successfully marketed at a time when film merchandise as we know it today was still rather uncommon if not inexistent. This shows the scale of the hype surrounding Bond. And even though this wave ebbed following the resignation of Sean Connery and his replacement by George Lazenby as the new Bond for “On Her Majesty's Secret Service” in 1969, Danjaq and Eon continued to explore the economic potential of their trademarks.

Danjaq also profited greatly from product placement. Fleming had created a character known for his upper-class but not necessarily arrogant taste, letting him drink Taittinger

³ Tesche 279

⁴ Chapman 90-91

champagne and Russian vodka, wear Rolex watches and most importantly drive an Aston Martin. At first, these brands were also shown in the films, but soon Eon and Danjaq started to replace them, opting to grant the privilege of a company's name or product being included in the films to the highest bidder. Though one can of course argue that the money generated helped raise the films' budgets, making the normally suave Bond wear a Seiko wristwatch inevitably results in a loss of authenticity. When seeing these products feature most of us will notice an unpleasant aftertaste of what we might perceive as exaggerated commercialisation.

It is here that the economic exploitation of the film's licensing rights starts to conflict with what a business analyst would call the 007 brand's "core values"⁵. This term signifies the key notions a brand aims to represent and be associated with. The list of core values is of course subject to definition by the brand's company, and should form the basis of any major decision within it. These values are usually rooted in tradition and heritage, enhancing the brand's appeal to consumers' taste for familiarity and continuity. So when Bond is seen driving a BMW or worse, a Ford rather than his usual Aston Martin, I would say the "value" of expensive and elegant British taste is betrayed. If one interprets the "Bond Formula" mentioned in the introduction as a compilation of these values, one would have to say that in this case, the producers have strayed from their formula.

However, it must be said that in the latest films, Bond drives his traditional Aston Martin, only occasionally resorting to other makes when his own car isn't available. Furthermore, Barbara Broccoli recently claimed that the only substantial deal in place with Aston Martin is one of cross-branding, meaning that Eon Productions and Aston Martin include each other's products and franchises in their advertisements⁶.

2.1.2. Structural Consistency

To build a successful movie series, conjuring a potent idea, with appealing characters and enough material to stretch out over a number of films is not always sufficient. What must be created is a common thread between the different films of the series, something to set them apart from other productions of the same or of a similar genre, a bond so strong that the success of one film can be carried on to the next. But how is this achieved in Bond's case?

⁵ de Chernatony 122-123

⁶ Hülsen/Tuma 173-174

On the most superficial level, namely that of the structure of the films' plot, the "Bond Formula" has stayed remarkably consistent. All of Eon's films start with (or, in the case



Taken from the gun-barrel sequence in "Dr. No"

of "Quantum of Solace", end in) the so-called gun-barrel sequence. It begins with a series of white circular dots crossing the screen horizontally, the last one of the dots lingering onscreen and, once the others have gone, growing to become the opening of a gun-barrel, seen from within the gun. Through this opening, we then

see Bond, and the opening follows Bond as he moves across the screen, suggesting that the gun is held by someone with the intention of shooting Bond. Once Bond arrives at the centre of the screen, he turns and shoots, causing the screen to be covered with the assailant's descending blood, and the opening of the gun-barrel to wobble and disappear⁷.

This example of ever-recurring elements in the plots of Bond films is just one of many. Other almost equally ever-present elements are the short preludes depicting Bond on a previous mission, followed by the opening credits with sparsely clad women dancing in the background. These sequences I have listed usually make up the first ten or fifteen minutes of a Bond film, and the differences from one film to the next in these first minutes are trivial. This sets the tone for the rest of the movie, as its plot invariably includes Bond saving the world from a megalomaniac villain whilst still finding time to seduce a beautiful woman at some stage along the way. I think the message is clear: the storylines of Bond films hardly differ from each other.

Whether one chooses to praise or criticise this, there is no denying the fact that such recurring and thus familiar elements seems to play a large part in making the films successful. When watching a Bond film, we are usually quite pleased to be presented with more or less exactly the kind of storyline we had expected. We expect a Bond film to be packed with intimidating villains, stunning Bond Girls, and wild chases on all kinds of vehicles in all kinds of exotic places. We expect to see all this, but we also want each film to outdo its predecessors in order to keep it exciting. We want to go home thinking of how we could integrate some of the style, class, charm and wit of James Bond into our own lives.

Despite being rooted in the commercial interests of the producers, a consistent structure in terms of the plot has brought Bond a large base of loyal fans. Given the Bond

⁷ Goldfinger 1

films' huge successes and immense following, it is fair to say that Eon have created something like a cult. And since this cult provides their films with a great platform for success, they have been doing everything they can to cultivate it by only gradually changing their winning formula.

2.2. The Ladies

2.2.1. Discrimination

There has been a long-standing discussion on the subject of racism in the Bond films. Fleming himself is known to have had racist tendencies, and this has certainly been transferred to his books. Though the films were more politically correct, certain aspects could certainly be interpreted as xenophobic or racist.

Take “Dr. No”, for example. Even though Bond certainly sets himself apart from his snobbish compatriots in the sense that he is tougher and more straight-forward, he still resorts to rather impolite treatment of his black contact Quarrel. Starting with Bond’s tone and approach to Quarrel, who, by contrast, calls Bond “Sir” or “Captain”, Bond’s rudeness culminates on the island “Crab Key”, where he orders Quarrel to go fetch him his shoes⁸, not exactly what you would call respectful.

However, this kind of behaviour may also be explained on the grounds that Quarrel is simply Bond’s boatman and “understudy” of sorts, thus inferior in rank to an MI6-agent and Commander. And though one might note that Eon seem to have tried to make their villains look more intimidating by casting foreigners for the roles, like the German Gert Fröbe as Goldfinger, these patterns can be explained with the producer’s aim of appealing to as diverse an audience as possible, and maintaining a sense of Bond protecting his country against threats from the outside.

A further element of questionable political correctness in the novels is the discrimination of homosexuals⁹. This is to be seen on screen, with the two gay henchmen of the evil Blofeld called Mr. Wint and Mr. Kidd finding pleasure in ruthless and sadistic killing before being despatched by Bond, who casually mocks their homosexuality in the process¹⁰. This however remains the only Bond film in which homosexuality is discriminated against in such a way.

Intolerant attitudes on the grounds of racist or heterosexist considerations seem to be largely confined to Fleming’s novels and rarely surface in the films, but it is significantly

⁸ Dr. No 1

⁹ Black 105-106

¹⁰ Diamonds 1

harder to prove that the films are not sexist. True, the chauvinism might not be as explicit as it used to be in films like “Goldfinger” (1964), where Bond dismisses his masseuse with the phrase “Dink, say goodbye to Felix – man talk” and a slap on the behind¹¹. This kind of unmasked sexism may be outdated, but as Bond Girls continue to be given telling names like Pussy Galore, Plenty O’Toole, Mary Goodnight, and, in the new film “Quantum of Solace”, Strawberry Fields, a certain level of cheekiness is certainly upheld.

It is up to each viewer to decide for him- or herself whether the films cross the line of appropriateness or not. To me, the “breaches” of political correctness, especially related to the role of women, should not be taken all too seriously. In fact, there are many who point out that as the series has evolved: not only have women come to be equal to Bond in many respects, they can even – in ways – be seen as superior.

2.2.2. Early Advances

It would be wrong to claim that the early Bond Girls started off as helpless sidekicks, who’s only function is Bond’s entertainment. They certainly do get involved in the plot, the prime examples being Miss Taro in “Dr. No”, Tatjana Romanova in “From Russia With Love” and Pussy Galore in “Goldfinger”, all of whom start off on the villain’s side and take on Bond with what initially seems to be a good chance of success. However, the fact that Bond overcomes their attempts to resist and outwit him with apparent ease denounces the way these first three movies cling to the image of Bond as a kind of guardian who knows what is best for the ladies he decides for. This image is conveyed in an even stronger way by the first main Bond Girl, Honey Rider, played by Ursula Andress in “Dr. No”. She is partly depicted as naïve, believing indigenous stories of a dragon, and is dependant on Bond’s leadership and protection as soon as she is in any real danger. Still, Andress herself points out that she nevertheless portrayed a “new type of woman”¹², referring to her athleticism and the fact that her character is, despite her clinging to Bond, able to defend herself. This becomes evident when she is shown threatening Bond with a knife and later tells him that she once even killed a man. She is quite self-assured and strong-willed, but the scale of the menace she faces makes her look to Bond as her protector.

¹¹ Goldfinger 2

¹² Bond Girls Are Forever pt. 1

The image of strong-willed, yet ultimately submissive women was quite well suited to the sixties, with the touch of independence generally viewed as modern and liberal. And it



Ursula Andress as Honey Rider in “Dr. No”

is exactly this property that was allowed to resurface stronger than ever in 1965’s “Thunderball”, featuring Bond’s revenge-hungry accomplice Domino. She needs more than just romance to agree to help Bond as she seeks to avenge her Brother’s death. At the end of the film, it is she who kills the villain, and not Bond. Tough Domino is not the first Bond Girl to do this, the fact that she does it mainly for her own revenge and not necessarily as a service to Bond was unprecedented in 1965. One might say that the ending of “Thunderball” is the result of a cooperation of Bond and Domino, rather than a matter of Bond using a woman as a tool, like in the earlier movies. She is the first Bond Girl not to change her initial plans for Bond’s sake, and strike a deal with him before cooperating.

Volpe, the other Bond Girl in this film, can be described as a classic “femme fatale”. She succeeds in seducing and misleading Bond, and almost has him killed while dancing with him. However, Bond manages to use her body to catch the bullet at point blank, making her the first female villain to die by what is arguably Bond’s doing¹³.



Brandt seduces Bond and then leaves him behind on a crashing plane in the following scene. Taken from “You Only Live Twice”

When it comes to a woman double-crossing Bond like Volpe does, the epitome of such behaviour is perhaps provided by the next film, “You Only Live Twice”. Here it is



Helga Brandt, who works for the villain, Blofeld. Once on her own with Bond, she pretends to fall for his offer of money and freedom and change sides, only to attempt to kill him in the very next scene. Bond is made to look uncharacteristically naïve, and unaware of the fact that he is walking into a trap. What demonstrates Brandt’s ruthlessness and unpredictability so impressively is the fact that there is no more than a lap dissolve to separate a scene in which the couple start making love, and a scene in which Brandt uncovers her true intentions and leaves Bond trapped in his seat in a crashing plane¹⁴.

¹³ Thunderball 1

¹⁴ Live Twice 1

2.2.3. Love and Marriage

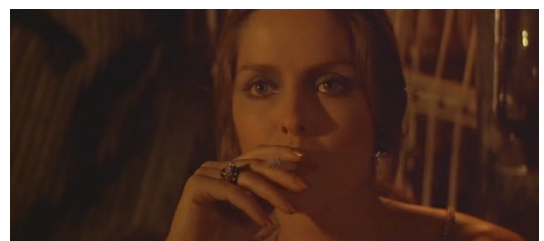
In the development of the entire series, “On Her Majesty’s Secret Service” starring George Lazenby for the first and last time as Bond, is in almost every respect, a once-off. The film was seen as too much of a break with traditions, and Lazenby himself was considered too soft and boyish, and unable to live up to the high standards set by Sean Connery. The probably most blatant break is brought along by Bond not only falling in love with, but even marrying Tracy di Vincenzo. I think it was too early to add this dimension of emotions to the series. The assimilation process of a suicidal countess and a secret agent with a long-standing tradition of non-commitment to women is simply not convincingly conveyed. The only evident difference in character to previous Bond Girls seems to be that Tracy is mentally unstable after a difficult childhood, and thus is even more in need of Bond to protect her. However, one would expect Bond to simply exploit this weakness to get at her father’s contacts, and not marry her.

As a result of the underwhelming box-office figures and the widespread protests at this change of course, the following Bond Girls reverted to being less attached to Bond, with Tiffany Case leading the line alongside the returned Connery in 1971’s “Diamonds Are Forever”. Her slightly boyish and yet sassy appearance is mirrored by her character as she proves herself as a force to be reckoned with. Her rebelliousness and self-centeredness is best denounced by the last line of the film, in which she talks about retrieving the stolen diamonds rather than succumbing to Bond’s attempts at seducing her¹⁵.

2.2.4. Moore of the Same?

In 1973, Roger Moore became the second actor to attempt following in Connery’s footsteps. He was significantly more successful than Lazenby, as his first few films portrayed a more classic Bond, who rarely surrenders control of any situation, especially when it comes to women. His casually humorous attitude tends to compensate for his otherwise often rather rude behaviour towards his female counterparts. As Moore needed to establish himself as an agent with charm but authority, there was little room at first for more emancipated women.

Moore’s third film “The Spy Who Loved Me” (1977) finally features a Bond Girl to rival Tiffany Case in terms of self-sufficiency and stubbornness. The Russian Anya Amasova is the first female character to be equal in rank to Bond. Both Bond and



Amasova sedates Bond in “The Spy Who Loved Me”

¹⁵ Diamonds 2

Amasova are their respective countries' top spies and the pair have more than just that in common. Amasova greatly embarrasses Bond by beating him to the microfilm coveted by both their agencies, using a knock-out gas emitted from the tip of a cigarette to render him unconscious¹⁶. This means she beats Bond with his own tricks. Still, I think it would be exaggerated to describe her as an absolute equal to Bond. Despite her many minor “victories” in their ongoing rivalry, it is ultimately Bond who saves the day in the film's great showdown, sinking the villain's ship and then rescuing the helpless Amasova from his doomed hideout.

This kind of woman is to be found in practically every one of Moore's following films. They feature Bond Girls that take on roles normally occupied by Bond, or men in general, as they often have a knack for science, and become increasingly involved in combat.

2.2.5. A Mixed Bag

The aptitude displayed by the Bond Girls in Moore's films stands in stark contrast to the passive and slightly naïve role of Kara Milovy in “The Living Daylights”. Yet as this film signifies Timothy Dalton's Bond debut, this perceived backward step can be interpreted as yet another move to help a new actor to gain credibility as the film's driving force.

I find this theory confirmed in the way Milovy's successor, Pam Bouvier, played by a boyishly but still elegantly short-haired Carey Lowell, represents the complete antithesis to her predecessor. While both are agents, Dalton's second main Bond Girl is significantly tougher, very much taking part in the action and offering Bond genuine help, as opposed to Milovy's rather feeble attempts. Another reason for Milovy's “weak” image may be the fact that at the time of release (1987), feminist movements had come and gone to make way for a more relaxed approach to what might have been interpreted as sexism in earlier years. This gave the producers the freedom to vary the Bond Girls' characters more than in Moore's time.

2.2.6. The World Is Not Enough For Women

Pierce Brosnan's first two films marked the return of many old traditions, but when it comes to women they were quite a goldmine of innovation. Many were startled when Judi Dench was revealed as the new M, and rightly so. After all, this meant that a woman was now officially superior to Bond, which had so far been unheard of. Dench brings a kind of toughness to the role her male predecessors



Judi Dench as M in “Goldeneye”

¹⁶ Spy Love 1

never had, denouncing Bond as an arrogant chauvinist and making sure he knows that she is not to be messed with, and immune to his charm¹⁷. This picture of a tough female boss fitted in very well with contemporary trends, as many women became increasingly career-oriented in the nineties.

When comparing women of the Brosnan era to earlier times, the next character whose development has leapfrogged is Miss Money Penny. She had hitherto been one of the most constant elements in the series, never wavering in her badly concealed affection for Bond, trying to grasp his attention but getting little more than what is most fittingly described as a few harmless flirts. In “Goldeneye” she is played for the first time by Samantha Bond, and takes a stance similar to M’s as she purposefully destroys all illusions Bond might have had about her private life. She tells him about a date she recently had to prove that she is quite capable of taking care of herself without Bond. Her point is underlined by a bit of symbolism when she insists that he be the first to pass through the doorway¹⁸

When it comes to the actual Bond Girls, the tradition of them being scientists or agents in their own right was carried on into Brosnan’s films, with no more revolutionary changes in behaviour or character evident. The “evil” ladies however, reached their peak with Brosnan. First, there is henchwoman Xavia Onatop in “Goldeneye”. Her telling name is very appropriate, as she is the first woman to be shown “on top” while (nearly) having sex with Bond. But not only does she take control in this symbolic fashion, she also kills a man by squashing his chest between her legs, a trick she also tries on Bond. She is of course unsuccessful, but still her scene with Bond in the sauna¹⁹ conveys a mixture of sexual and physical danger no previous Bond Girl possessed.

To me “The World Is Not Enough”, released in 2000, represents a high point in terms of women’s emancipation within the Bond series, as finally a woman is shown to be pulling the strings in the villain’s camp. Renard, a man who has lost his tactile senses, provides the ideal villain, but it turns out that it’s not he who seduced the rich and beautiful Elektra King into following him. In fact, it is the other way around. Bond and MI6 notice King’s evil too late, as King kills a number of their staff before capturing M. She can’t execute her plan for world domination, as Bond prevents a nuclear catastrophe at the last moment, but she is the first woman Bond makes love to and later kills.

¹⁷ Goldeneye, 1

¹⁸ Goldeneye, 2

¹⁹ Goldeneye, 3

2.2.7. Quantum of Roundness

Eva Green as Vesper Lynd, the woman whom Bond falls in love with in “Casino Royale” (2006), acts the part of a remarkably intriguing character. At first glance, Vesper hardly differs from her predecessors: By 2006, for a woman to double-cross Bond and sarcastically dismantle his ego was nothing special any more. However, Vesper is so central to the plot that Green gets to play in enough scenes with intimate conversation to add credibility and roundness to her character, which she masters impressively.



Eva Green as Vesper Lynd in “Casino Royale”

Vesper exposes her shock and anxiety after witnessing a man’s strangulation by cowering under a cold shower, fully dressed and letting herself be consoled by Bond²⁰. First of all, previous Bond Girls would hardly have had such a problem with Bond killing people. The earlier films, after all, didn’t question Bond. But secondly, and most crucially when analysing Vesper, her predecessors could not have shown such a level of true intimacy and vulnerability without losing face. They would have been marked as weak, and would have failed to rid themselves of this tag. Not Vesper. She opens up to Bond, but only temporarily, finding comfort in his arms only to rebuild her – albeit slightly less icy – wall of sarcasm. By the time the two have dinner together it is Bond who tries and fails to make any significant advances with his compliments, and appears to surrender his hopes by pointing out he recognises her necklace as a sign of love from another man²¹.

Vesper’s ultimate sacrifice (she commits suicide in order to save Bond) and the effects it has on Bond, which carry on into the next film if not further, stand testimony to the strength of her character. Furthermore, an in my opinion utterly convincing Eva Green conveys her character’s roundness so convincingly that one is inclined to fully understand Bond’s feelings for her.

The latest Bond Girl, Olga Kurylenko as Camille Montes, doesn’t seem to live up to the high standards set in “Casino Royale”. However, it is unlikely that her character was supposed to match her predecessor’s appeal, as Bond is supposed to remain “faithful” to the memory of Vesper in this film. Admittedly, this does not stop him from sleeping with the later murdered Strawberry Fields, but then again a Bond film without any sex would be hard to imagine. Kurylenko doesn’t really get the chance to shine, as the film is rather short of intimate scenes. I would nevertheless say that Camille fulfils her role as Bond’s

²⁰ Casino 1

²¹ Casino 2

temporary accomplice, united by a common enemy. One might even go as far as to say that she helps show the ever-more present human elements in Bond, proving that he can also save or help a woman without requiring her love in return.

2.3. Bond's Change of Character

2.3.1. Fierce but Charming

The development of the on-screen Bond's character has been defined by numerous factors. First, of course, there is Fleming's image of Bond, often seen as a reflection of the author himself. A man with a life-style often described as hedonistic, with an etonian background and a most unethical attitude to women, Fleming certainly does appear to share some traits with the Bond most of us know from the films. Sinclair McKay writes "Bond is Fleming's dream of a self that might have been"²², quoting Fleming's biographer John Pearson. The result was a snob, chauvinist, tough, business-like and efficient Bond, who "consumes" women along with alcohol and tobacco, but who, behind it all, does get entangled in self-reflection and depression.

The cinemas' Bond needed to differ decidedly. For one thing, aspects of Bond's character famously denounced as "sex, snobbery and sadism"²³ by left-wing journalist Paul Johnson in 1958 could not be fully transferred to the screen without risking censorship and controversy. Secondly, the idea of a depressed hero must have been nowhere near the kind of idol Eon intended to create. When "Dr. No" premiered in 1962, British film was littered with so-called kitchen-sink realism, a genre usually devoted to describing characters caught up in the dullness of their insignificant lives and relationships. A brilliant Sean Connery, whose mere body-language oozes the decisiveness and ruthlessness prescribed by Fleming, still succeeds in combining his hard-man qualities with an entertainingly cheerful light-hearted cockiness. This latter attribute is in no way based on the novels, but, as Stuart Fernie points out, serves to give the films a kind of surrealistic edge²⁴, making the audience forget potential psychological problems a "real" person would endure when placed in Bond's situation. A complex and indecisive character was not looked for in the sixties, and so it was not offered by Bond.

There still remain some scenes in which all the light-heartedness and dry humour Connery had to offer could not justify his character's actions. Here, a scene taken

²² McKay 345

²³ Johnson

²⁴ Fernie



James Bond (Sean Connery) shoots Prof. Dent in "Dr. No"

from “Dr. No”, where Bond shoots an unarmed Professor Dent ²⁵ can be used as an example. Bond’s ruthlessness and the apparent pointlessness of this act would normally seem to require some form of contextual justification. It is here that we notice an extremely strong sense of right and wrong, of good and evil personified by Bond and the villains, respectively. Thus Bond is the epitome of right, in turn rendering all his actions right as well. Connery’s commanding physical presence paired with his deep voice and masculine Scottish accent helped support his portrayal as a man to depend on.

Take this perception of the infallible hero and add credibility by surrendering any claim to be taken all too seriously, and there is the early Bond in a nutshell. These conceptions help his character avoid complexity, the audience settling for hints of depth in character in the shape of sophisticated and dry witticisms. All potential creases in the character of a man who kills in cold blood are ironed out by the omnipresent fact that he is the hero, and therefore his judgement is unquestionable.

2.3.2. Replacing the Irreplaceable

Bond’s character and the changes to it have been hugely dependant on the different actors that have taken on the role. This is why the structure of these chapters is based on the succession of actors cast to play it. So far, Bond’s character and indeed the whole films were built and established around Connery, so when he quit the role, he left behind a void that proved very hard to fill. The balance between the uncompromising spy, the charming gentleman and the eternal womaniser is not easy to hold, and George Lazenby’s failure to win over the audiences and, notably, the producers, stands testimony to this. His very appearance, younger and less experienced looking than Connery, to the point that one might call his features too “soft” seems to



George Lazenby as James Bond in “On Her Majesty’s Secret Service”

have doomed him from the start. One of the very first scenes of his film “On Her Majesty’s Secret Service” from 1969 sums up the reasons for his failure to me. After a car chase and an action sequence that both do indeed live up to Connery’s standards, Bond is left with the attackers beaten, but without the woman he saved from suicide, who drives off in her car. He is left alone to say “This never happened to the other fellow!”²⁶. A sophisticated joke perhaps, but one at the expense of Lazenby’s image, which from then

²⁵ Dr. No 2

²⁶ Her Majesty 1

on is that of a bit of a “softy”. This impression is reinforced when Lazenby’s Bond pretends to be the timid and sexually inexperienced Sir Hillary, a part he plays worryingly well. Had Connery been the actor, these kind of scenes would be taken for a joke, the contrast to the macho he usually portrays causing quite some comic effect. But for an as yet unproven Lazenby this, even more so than the fact that he marries, must be seen as the stumbling block.

One might argue that Roger Moore had a slightly easier task to master, his direct predecessors being the unpopular Lazenby and the entertaining but visibly aging Connery in “Diamonds Are Forever”. Like Lazenby, he too eventually sacrifices some of his authority over women, but as I explain in an earlier chapter, not before firmly establishing that he is, and always will be, in the driver’s seat. Moore’s Bond was by no means a perfect reproduction of Connery’s, as he leaned more towards slick trickery and one-liners to make up for his lack of physical presence. He did so quite successfully, however, as he remains the man to have played Bond more than anyone to date.

The differences between Connery’s and Moore’s Bond are most vividly illustrated by a juxtaposition of two scenes taken from “From Russia With Love”²⁷ and “Live and Let Die”²⁸. Both depict an epic fight with the villain’s henchman in a train compartment near



Sean Connery as James Bond in “From Russia With Love”, and Roger Moore in “Live and Let Die”



the end of the film, when everything seems settled, only for Bond to have to prove himself in combat one more time. Not only is Connery’s fighting sequence significantly longer, it is also much more violent and close, compared to Moore who exchanges a few punches with the claw-handed Tee-Hee before disposing of him in comic fashion, cutting the chords in his mechanic arm and then throwing him out of the window. Though both times Bond comes out on top, the fashion in which the two actors conclude their fights could hardly be any different. Connery gets a significant beating and is almost strangled, narrowly winning a fifty-fifty struggle, Moore coolly cracks a joke once having disposed of Tee-Hee, before climbing into the stunning Solitaire’s bed.

So the key to his success in being accepted as the new Bond lies again in the aforementioned triangle consisting of “the uncompromising spy, the charming gentleman and the eternal womaniser”. Moore gave his Bond all three of these attributes with less of the

²⁷ From Russia 1

²⁸ Let Die 1

physicality and violence that Connery had applied, adopting a more discreet but effective style. This can be seen as suiting the changing zeitgeist, with post-war ideals of heroes making way for a more composed and elegant version.

2.3.3. Time for a Real Man?

However well the comic elements that became increasingly central to Bond's character may have worked out, after seven films in twelve years with Moore as Bond, both the actor and his trump card – witticisms – seemed stretched. Consequentially, it might have



Timothy Dalton as James Bond in “The Living Daylights”

sounded perfectly logical for Eon to choose a more serious Bond, someone who could bring back some of Connery's guile. Timothy Dalton, was cast, whom Prof. James Chapman labels “a classically trained Shakespearean actor”²⁹ and who is

generally viewed as the most sinister Bond, some even rating him as closest to Fleming's prototype. The producers' intention to portray a more serious, masculine figure is signalled from the start. Just before the opening credits of 1987's “The Living Daylights”, a lady on her yacht explains on the phone how she is bored with “playboys” and longs for a “real man”³⁰. Of course a moment later, Bond drops onto her boat with a parachute and brusquely grabs her phone. Without going into any further detail, it is clear that Dalton is made out to be the “real man” women have been longing for. Intriguingly, Moore is often described as quite a “playboy” making this scene all the more sophisticated in illustrating the differences between the old and the new Bond. Most significantly, this scene, also used in a trailer for the film, proves that the new, rougher interpretation of Bond is quite intentional, and not just derived from the choice of actor.

True to his reputation as an actor for character roles, Dalton clearly intends to add more depth to his role. He himself phrases it as follows:

“We know that good and evil are combined in an individual, and that good must triumph. But unless you have both, you don't have the conflict either within the individual or within the world. It's one of the curious fascinations that made the character interesting, believable.”³¹

I think the last word cited marks the greatest difference of Dalton's approach to any of his predecessors, and thus signifies Bond's character in Dalton's two movies. To Dalton, for

²⁹ Chapman 198

³⁰ Daylights 1

³¹ Chapman 198

a hero to be credible, he must live through all the complications that come with his two-facedness. He is in a way no different from his enemies in that he is ruthless when it comes to reaching his goal. However he has a conscience which often conflicts with his actions, though at the same time forcing him to carry on with his duty for the greater good. Dalton was the first actor to try and create a more human, more normal Bond by expressing the feelings a normal person would feel in Bond's position.

This might sound reminiscent of a previous passage in this paper, and it should. I state that Connery and indeed Moore sought to lend their characters a kind of psychological invincibility by consciously avoiding realism. I personally rate Dalton's two films as refreshing, with Bond's newly-found sincerity adding a whole new dimension to the genre. Sadly, however, the films endured a mixed reception, which is generally attributed to the partially severe and abrupt changes to the formula as set up by the previous films.

2.3.4. Mosaic Bond

After "Licence to Kill" in 1998, legal issues caused a disruption in the hitherto relatively regular production of Eon's Bond films. This cleared the road for a number of other action thrillers to shine something hardly appreciated as Eon tried to keep their franchise alive. However, in the six years until the release of the next film, "Goldeneye", clearly gave the production staff some time to think.

The next film was supposed to restart a series that many had believed finished, for it seemed espionage was no longer an issue after the cold war. Also, a significant portion of the cast needed to be replaced. Most of them were past their best years and didn't appear to have the freshness needed to carry the franchise into the nineties. Dalton himself resigned during the legal dispute, and even the producer, Albert R. Broccoli passed on his duties to his daughter Barbara and Stepson Michael G. Wilson.

The six-year break may have been a burden, but it was also a great opportunity for a fresh start. It freed the production team from trying to create continuity relative to the last film, leaving them free to roam and pick the cherries of past films to combine them and shape a character that combined all of the strengths Bond was renowned for. The Irishman Pierce Brosnan was bestowed with the difficult yet arguably enjoyable task of acting out this new-but-old mosaic Bond.

Described by M as a "relic of the cold war"³², the new Bond is a man whose era is believed by many to have passed, and who now falls victim to quite some hitherto unheard of mocking by the likes of enemies, contacts, allies, M and even Miss Money Penny.

³² Goldeneye 4

Dalton's Bond had demonstrated a quantity of rebelliousness towards his superiors, even handing in his resignation to pursue revenge, but in the context of the old and established MI6 office this had seemed out of place. Now however, with the roles of M and Moneypenny recast, the more complicated relationships within MI6 became credible. Brosnan's Bond subtly maintains a certain amount of Dalton's rebelliousness, takes the open mocking and criticism levelled at him in his stride, and proves his critics wrong with his deeds.

The scene that, in my opinion, best sums up these new aspects to Bond's character and relations takes place near the start of "Goldeneye". He receives a message from Miss



Pierce Brosnan as James Bond in "Goldeneye"

Moneypenny in his car, briefing him on a suspicious woman he has encountered³³. On hearing the news that M wants him to ask for permission before seeking contact with the lady, Bond simply grins, revealing that he will follow his instincts

and has no intention of asking for anyone's permission. The message concludes with Moneypenny wishing him goodnight, but not without mockingly assuring all the doubters that she has finally gotten over her eternal crush, and Bond is now no more than a colleague with an oversized ego.

In my opinion, this new found vulnerability, as well as the rebel image are the two key ingredients to the "new" Bond introduced in 1995. They are accompanied by just a touch more witticisms and one-liners than were used in Connery's years, though Brosnan uses them somewhat more sparingly than Moore, conserving their effect and avoiding ridicule. Key differences to Dalton's Bond are an increase in humour, a more subtle form of resistance towards superiors that is always in the best interests of Queen and country and not just of Bond's own (as was arguably the case in "Licence to Kill"), and, crucially, the return of the light-hearted but certainly not seriously self-contemplative superspy. Though Bond's qualities are put into perspective by a supporting cast consisting of much stronger characters than ever, he remains the best at his job, and an idol in every sense, including psychological stability.

2.3.5. Revival?

Brosnan's films were highly successful. "Die Another Day", his last as Bond, got the highest box-office return of the four he featured in. The actor himself let it be known that

³³ Goldeneye 5

he was indeed planning on doing at least one more title as 007, but it eventually came out that he no longer enjoyed the support of his producers. Broccoli and Wilson opted for a change of course, with a new Bond and, as it turned out, a very new concept. The reason they give today for this development is that Bond needed to be “carried into the twenty-first century”³⁴, as Wilson claims in an interview. However, most critics agree that the revolution of the franchise set to come was inspired by contemporary movies, most notably the Bourne trilogy³⁵. Broccoli denies connections to Bourne, preferring to claim that the new Bond is based on the kind of realism displayed in Connery’s aforementioned fight on the Tran Siberian Express³⁶.

A revolution was promised, and one look at the next Bond film, “Casino Royale” (2006) is enough to prove that this promise has been fulfilled. While previous films had always started with Bond as a proven and longstanding secret agent, this film starts with a man still busy obtaining his famous licence to kill, a process, it is explained, that requires two executions. And these are not completed with a deft piece of trickery, some eye-catching stunt and an injection of dark humour. Daniel Craig, the first blond Bond and as such a very controversial choice, steps up and ruthlessly kills his two targets with no more than a wry smile briefly visible on his lips. Especially the first kill makes it clear what Broccoli means by a return to more “brutal and realistic”³⁷ fights. Shown entirely in black and white, Bond wrecks a public toilet while wrestling with his victim, drowns him a washbasin and then shoots him when it appears that he isn’t really dead.



Daniel Craig as James Bond in “Casino Royale”

Bond’s reaction to the sight of what he thinks is a drowned man is not a cheeky one-liner à la Moore or even Connery. Instead, a close up of his sweaty face looking down on the evidence of his deed is shown, revealing that he seems

to be contemplating what he has done. He is also breathing heavily, indicative of the strain of the wild tussle he has just concluded³⁸. Craig is obviously playing a character who thinks and feels like any of us would when put in his position. By portraying a man who is not entirely comfortable with what he does, he conveys a human element of Bond’s character that wasn’t to be found in previous films.

³⁴ Hülsen/Tuma 172

³⁵ McKay 349-350

³⁶ Hülsen/Tuma 172

³⁷ Hülsen/Tuma 172

³⁸ Casino 4

Craig's Bond also falls in love with a lady called Vesper, who seems to sacrifice herself for him. Bond's search for the ones responsible for her death is recounted in Craig's second film, "Quantum of Solace", which marks the first time a Bond film merits being labelled as a real sequel. It is supposed to portray the inner conflict in Bond between a lust for revenge and his duty, though many critics are disappointed by the lack of intimate scenes necessary to show this conflict. I agree that except for banal comments on the matter by M and the logic of the plot, there is little evidence of Bond actually having these feelings³⁹. Intimate scenes are rare, as Bond seems to hide his implied sentiments behind a screen of self-protection that is sadly never pierced.

Still, none of these motives play a role in any of the non-Craig films, and the breaks in tradition "committed" by the producers, directors and Craig himself has been criticised by many, whilst being praised as a true reanimation of the franchise by others. I think the "new" Bond we are presented with needs time to develop, and look forward to watching his future progress, for unlike Dalton, Craig has Eon's on his quest of reinventing the series.

3. Conclusion

3.1. The Essence of Bond

Eon's Bond films have been an amazing success story. So what are the essential elements of their formula? First of all, one must be aware of the fact that a good Bond film is intended to simply entertain. It does not do so with a strikingly surprising or innovative plot – most of the series' plots are very similar, and frankly this constitutes a great part of its appeal. A Bond film depends on things we know it will always contain: incredible stunts and action sequences, beautiful women and hideous villains shape 007's world. In fact they have shaped it for so long that their mere inclusion in a film raises our spirits when we see a new Bond film, making it seem pleasantly familiar.

But there is more to Bond. For 46 years, the films have supplied us all with idols to look up to in the shape of Bond himself, or his changing female companions. Each of these women have embodied the ideals of their respective generation, offering women access to the world of Bond, enriching it with not only their beauty, but also their increasingly strong and proud character. In the contexts of their respective eras, I believe it wrong to label the "Bond Girls" as mere playthings.

³⁹ Fernie

The fact that the figure of Bond himself serves and has served as an idol is self-evident. The attributes that have made him an idol are manifold and have been subject to change, as our expectations of an idol have changed over time. The different actors entrusted with the task of fulfilling these expectations have done so by adapting them, changing the character they portrayed in order to suit the ideals of their time.

To me, the essence of Bond is, in one word, escapism: the power to lead generation after generation into a world of fantasy, a world made to fit our ideals and dreams that always seems strangely familiar despite being so different from our real lives.

3.2. My Ultimate Bond

There remains the eternal question of which actor and which film best capture this sense of escapism. As for the best actor, I choose Sean Connery. I don't justify this choice with his superior box-office returns (taking inflation into account), that would be too blatant a reason. Even the fact that he provided the blueprint for all the actors who came after him would be too feeble a reason for selecting him.

What makes the difference for me, is that he is simply the only actor I believe would have been able to act out every single "incarnation" of Bond. I could imagine Connery starring in every one of the films, while his successors, however skilled, all seem to possess some of Connery's strengths in excess, whilst lacking others.

I am not saying that the others aren't convincing idols of their respective eras, but to me Connery is more than that. His dark humour and repartees would make him a hit in Moore's films, with his physicality and sternness he could aptly replace Dalton, and as he has proven after his time as 007, the Scot is also quite capable of acting out rounder characters like Craig does. Brosnan comes closest to Connery's array of talents, though to me he lacks a bit of masculine fierceness.

When it comes to the films, I must admit that despite my admiration for Connery, I was best entertained by "Goldeneye". It best sums up the key ingredients of a Bond film, and gives it added depth and a brilliant platform for wit by starring an amazing Judi Dench. It is also Brosnan's best appearance as Bond. It makes me wonder how Connery would have fared had he been part of this film.

As for future films, I think the franchise is in good hands. Though Craig and the films he has starred in remain controversial, the new direction the films are taking seems promising to me. In this respect I trust the Broccoli family to continue to tweak the "Bond Formula" in such a way that Bond remains entertaining to us. If the forty-six years

between the release of “Dr. No” and “Quantum of Solace” have demonstrated one thing, it is that Bond can adapt to anything.

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“Thunderball”, 1965

“You Only Live Twice” (Live Twice), 1967

“On Her Majesty’s Secret Service” (Her Majesty), 1969

“Diamonds Are Forever” (Diamonds), 1971

“Live and Let Die” (Let Die), 1973

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“For Your Eyes Only”, 1981

“Octopussy”, 1983

“A View to a Kill”, 1985

“The Living Daylights” (Daylights), 1987

“Licence to Kill”, 1989

“Goldeneye”, 1995

“Tomorrow Never Dies”, 1997

“The World Is Not Enough”, 1999

“Die Another Day”, 2002

“Casino Royale” (Casino), 2006

“Quantum of Solace”, 2008

“Bond Girls Are Forever”, 2002 (Documentary)

5. Erklärung

Ich erkläre, dass ich die Facharbeit ohne fremde Hilfe angefertigt habe und nur die im Literaturverzeichnis angeführten Quellen und Hilfsmittel benutzt habe.

Poing, den 29.1.2009 _____