How Many Is That Now? Casual Sex as a Moral Failing in the Rebooted James Bond Films

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Research article

How Many Is That Now? Casual Sex as a Moral Failing in the Rebooted James Bond Films

The question of sexuality has been much discussed in Bond scholarship. However, much of it has focused on Bond Women's sexuality. Entirely lacking in current Bond discourse is the analysis of how Bond's own sexuality is policed by institutional heterosexuality and corresponding normative gender expectations both within the franchise as well as in academic discourse. My paper addresses the issue of this policing with special attention to promiscuity. I will be looking at all films featured in the rebooted series in order to show that the policing of sexuality is not limited to the Bond Women. I argue that even though the character of James Bond stands for sexual freedom, the franchise frames casual sex as a moral failing that is ultimately punished in not just the Bond Women but also in Bond himself. In conclusion, this project sheds new light on how patriarchal standards affect everyone and how modern media advocates for the repression of sexuality under the guise of sexual liberation.

Keywords: promiscuity, gender, morality, monogamy, sexuality

INTRODUCTION

James Bond is a character that evokes many associations regardless of whether one has seen any Bond films or read any Bond books. Some of these associations may be expensively tailored suits, fast cars, technologically advanced gadgets and, of course, guns. One that will certainly come to mind for most people, though, is the Bond Women. They are omnipresent not only in the books and films but also in the academic discourse. There has been much debate on how their portrayal furthers or prevents the progressive portrayal of women in media and how they do or do not transgress gender boundaries (e.g. Bennett and Woollacott 1987, Johnson 2009). With interest reawakened with the reboot of the Bond films these issues are once again part of an ongoing discussion. Some pundits argue that sexuality plays a key role in the Bond Women's conservative (e.g. Tincknell 2009) or progressive (e.g. Hovey 2005) depiction. Bond's own sexuality, however, has received little attention, especially in regards to how it guides the viewer's perception of his moral righteousness or lack thereof. This paper will examine all four films currently featured in the rebooted series concerning the portrayal of Bond's sexuality. Drawing on sexuality and masculinity theory, it argues that Bond's promiscuity is framed as morally questionable[32] and thus as a threat to his moral superiority that needs to be overcome— a judgement made by friends as well as foes and even by Bond himself. This paper will analyse comments made by the characters in these categories and how they establish a connection between casual sex and immorality as informed by gender norms and institutional heterosexuality, followed by a discussion of how monogamy is portrayed as Bond's saviour from moral decay, brought to him by the virtuous Bond Women Vesper Lynd and Dr Madeleine Swann.

NEGATIVE ATTITUDES TOWARDS PROMISCUITY BY ALLIES

A correlation between Bond's promiscuity and a questionable morality is first implied in *Casino Royale*, the first film of the rebooted series. Bond meets love interest Vesper Lynd for the first time and is confronted with a far from welcoming greeting. Only a few minutes after the initial meeting Lynd calls him out for his moral

[32] I refer to morality in the descriptive rather than the normative sense here.

shortcomings: "MI6 looks for maladjusted young men who give little thought to sacrificing others in order to protect Queen and country" (Casino Royale 57:29), with Bond being one of said maladjusted young men. Her disapproval of this willingness to sacrifice others is clear, but does not remain an isolated judgement. She adds that "having just met [Bond] [she] wouldn't go as far as calling [him] a cold-hearted bastard …, but it wouldn't be a stretch to imagine [he] think[s] of women as disposable pleasures rather than meaningful pursuits" (*Casino Royale* 57:43).[33] The very phrase "women as disposable pleasures" is telling: sex, specifically casual sex, has explicitly stated moral implications - not continuing a sexual relationship with some is equated with disposing of them.

It is a popular belief among radical feminists that having sex with someone is using them (Brake 67). Catherine A. MacKinnon even goes so far as to suggest that "coercion has become integral to male sexuality" (44) and that it is "difficult [for women] to distinguish [sex and rape] under conditions of male dominance" (ibid., 45). While this sort of radical opinion is by no means universal, it is nonetheless undeniable that sex without the context of romance and commitment may be considered unacceptable in societies influenced by an absolutist morality that relies on institutions such as marriage, family, and heterosexuality (*Sexuality* 106). While this absolutist morality is "deeply rooted in the Christian West and in the Islamic East …, it is today a much wider cultural and political phenomenon …", which has informed major legal changes in Britain as well as other countries which "continued to define sexual offences until the 1960s, and sometimes beyond" (ibid.) As Jamieson points out, however, "[a] morality that only sanctioned sex within marriage has been largely replaced by one that sanctions sex among consenting adults in loving relationships regardless of marriage, and for some regardless of heterosexuality" (Jamieson 396). Rosenthal et al, for instance, have found in a study comprised of qualitative interviews that participants differentiated between sex as love and sex as desire, with the former being associated with safety and normality and the latter with danger, disease and deviance, which led the interviewees to view sex as positive only when sanctioned by the involvement of

[33] Of course, there is no plausible way to explain these insights in the story itself because Lynd has indeed, as she points out, just met him. However, viewers are familiar with Bond's promiscuity regardless of whether they have seen a Bond film before or not – it is an integral part of the iconic character Bond has become.

romance (45). While these views are certainly influenced by the HIV crisis (ibid.), Weeks points out that the link between sex as desire and danger is far from new (*Sex, Politics and Society* 27). Indeed, Matsick et al point out that even consensually non-monogamous relationships are perceived more negatively when they are strictly sexual (46). According to this line of thinking, then, and as Lynd implied in her statement mentioned above, the problem is not that Bond has sex at all – it is that he is not in a committed, monogamous, romantic relationship with the women he sleeps with.

This is a judgement M, Bond's superior and head of MI6, seems to agree with. After Bond Woman Miss Fields, who sleeps with Bond, is found dead shortly after, M chides: "Look how well your charm works, James. They'll do anything for you, won't they? How many is that now?" (*Quantum of Solace* 01:15:38). A similar questioning takes place after the death of another Bond Woman, Solange[34], with M's rhetorical question of "I'd ask you if you can remain emotionally detached, but I don't think that's your problem, is it, Bond?" (*Casino Royale* 54:38). Bond is essentially being blamed for their deaths, both because of his sexual involvement with them and the apparent lack of emotional attachment that has led him to engage in said involvement. This implies not only that a) casual sex, for Bond, can only take place without any type of emotional attachment and b) that said absence of attachment goes so far that he is not emotionally affected by whether his partner lives or dies. The recurring connotation of casual sex with immorality is hardly surprising given this assumption.

While it may at first seem feminist to have female characters, one of them a romantic interest at that, point out and criticise Bond's womanising, this line of argumentation suggests that women cannot freely decide in favour of casual sex and indeed that casual sex is something Bond does *to* women, not *with* women. The result is the framing of women as victims of male sexuality instead of people with the agency to make their own decisions about sex, thus infantilising them and denying their sexual autonomy. "[T]here is an (often unarticulated) assumption that in heterosexual relations it is women who are damaged by non-monogamy" (Jackson and Scott 154), in fact, and this assumption clearly underlies the portrayal of Bond's promiscuity as well. It further denies the Bond Women

[34] I refer to her by her first name to make clear the distinction between her and her husband, for whom there is no first name mentioned in the film. Both their last names are Dimitrios.

agency by "subtly exonerate[ing] them[] from the 'responsibility' of having
had casual sex" (Beres and Farvid 385) and making them victims of the apparent crime of casual sex – which leaves Bond to be the perpetrator.

NEGATIVE ATTITUDES TOWARDS PROMISCUITY BY ENEMIES

The immorality of Bond's promiscuity is an issue both allies and enemies can agree on. In *Spectre*'s torture scene, antagonist Ernst Stavro Blofeld ties Bond to a chair to drill a needle into his brain, the aim being to make him unable to recognise anyone (specifically his newly found love interest Dr Madeleine Swann). In an attempt to increase the mental torture for both while the physical torture takes place, he asks: "Of course, the faces of your women are interchangeable, aren't they, James?" (*Spectre* 1:49:45) and adds that Dr Swann, once the needle has found the right spot in Bond's brain, would be "[j]ust another passing face on [Bond's] way to the grave" (ibid., 01:49:50). Both statements are telling – they not only single out romantic love as being special and more valuable than merely sexual relationships but at the same time imply that casual short-term relations without the commitment that is assumed to be part of romance are *less than*. An arrangement that is short-lived is worthless both in the eyes of friend and foe and assumed by them to be so in Bond's eyes as well. Blofeld's utterances assume a universal understanding and agreement that short-lived sexual encounters are a) worth less and b) devoid of any and all emotional investment. The audience is implicitly invited to agree – is, even, expected to agree: it is framed as universal knowledge, after all. Bond's casual relationships are thus relegated to irrelevance, and with them, consequently, the women he has them with. Dr Swann's special status as a romantic interest is, then, threatened to be revoked if the torture is successful and she faces the possibility of being forced to join the other faceless, apparently irrelevant women Bond has been with.

This notion has no basis in logic or reality, of course. Melanie A. Beres and Panteá Farvid report that in their study of women's experiences with casual heterosexual sex, one woman they interviewed had set the boundary that she would not engage "in intercourse during the first sexual encounter" (383) in order to avoid a repetition of an experience which left her being ignored after having intercourse with a partner on the first date (ibid.). However,

"this did not have the intended effect" (ibid.), which is far from surprising. Brake points out that which is apparently not obvious to all: "Objectification is a psychological state, and hence not directly remediable through external structures …" (70) such as, in this case, the rule of waiting to have intercourse. "Legal marriage", she states, "does not create the psychological state constitutive of respect" (ibid.) and neither does a small number of partners or longevity of a relationship. It thus follows that the simple fact that Bond is promiscuous is not indicative of emotional detachment and immoral treatment of women. Nevertheless, the franchise portrays his promiscuity as a signifier of exactly this.

This connection with immorality is further solidified by drawing a parallel between Bond and another villain: Silva. In *Skyfall* Bond seduces Sévérine, who then leads him to Silva's secret island where both are promptly captured. Sévérine is tied up, equipped with a glass of scotch on her head and supposed to serve as a target for shooting practice, first for Bond, then for Silva, who tells Bond that "[t]here's nothing… nothing superfluous in my life. When a thing is redundant it is eliminated" *(Skyfall* 1:14:44) and proceeds to shoot Sévérine. She is redundant and thus cast aside, which in this case means her death. Casual sex, too, is often regarded as using someone only to discard them afterwards (Shalit 66, Beres and Farvid 383). This scene makes the same connection by making an example of Sévérine: she is redundant to Silva because she has betrayed him and she is redundant to Bond because she has brought him where he wants to be after he has seduced her. The connection is obvious: Bond's discarding of women puts him in a narrative parallel to a more drastic kind of discard. His moral superiority is threatened by his promiscuity because "[h]eterosexual practices that deviate from a narrow romantic-companionate norm are morally suspect" (Seidman 58) and align him with the antagonist.

This comparison does not end with the explicit parallels with Blofeld and Silva, however. While Bond is, by his very profession as an agent of MI6 and thus his presupposed hero status, constructed as an opposite to the villains, he remains an unstable one, always in danger of crossing one too many (sexual) boundaries and hence forfeiting his moral superiority. Nevertheless, his remaining virtue needs to be displayed to maintain this uneasy balance. With the antagonists' illegal and immoral actions marking them as antagonists, but Bond not being restrained by either the law or infallible morality, something needs to set them apart, especially because Bond seems to be always teetering on the edge of moral corruption. This

difference can be found mainly in the contrast of Bond's treatment of women, which seems positively feminist when compared with that of the antagonists': Le Chiffre has a female partner, but is short-tempered
with her and perfectly willing to let his enemies cut her arm off if it spares him (*Casino Royale* 1:13:46); Dimitrios neglects his wife and flirts with other women (ibid., 32:19; 31:36); Greene is a patronising misogynist (*Quantum of Solace* 23:00); General Medrano is a rapist (ibid., 1:10:41; 1:27:42). While they seem perfectly heterosexual, they have little regard for women and exclusive, monogamous and loving relationships. Bond is often the one who, when he meets their partners, provides a contrast by treating them comparatively more decently.

Nevertheless, the antagonists mentioned above demonstrate yet another aspect of the connection between immorality and promiscuity. Especially General Medrano's expression of his lust for and hatred of women by raping Camille Montes' mother and sister and attempting to rape a waitress and Montes herself, as well as Dimitrios's unfaithfulness to his wife, solidify the connection between immorality and promiscuity and even link promiscuity to sexual violence. Bond, by having short-lived sexual relationships and frequently changing sex partners, is once again threatened by the possibility of becoming too similar to the antagonists because monogamy is seen as inherently providing security (Jackson and Scott 156) and promiscuity, ergo, as inherently unreliable, immoral, and villainous – a constant threat to Bond's moral superiority over those he fights in the name of Queen and country.

Institutional Heterosexuality as an Indicator for Morality

What saves Bond from being too immoral to retain his hero status is twofold, however. On the one hand there is his comparatively better treatment of women, mentioned above, on the other hand the matter of institutional heterosexuality, which Stevi Jackson describes as follows:

> [t]he concept [of heteronormativity] has become widely used as shorthand for the numerous ways in which heterosexual privilege is woven into the fabric of social life, pervasively and insidiously ordering everyday existence. It is, however, often used as if it were synonymous with institutionalized heterosexuality. But *as* an institution heterosexuality, while exclusionary, also governs the lives of those *included* within its boundaries in ways that cannot

> be explained by heteronormativity alone. (108, emphasis in original)

So even if someone is "*included* within its boundaries" (ibid., emphasis in original), they[35] will still be affected by institutional heterosexuality – which is certainly the case for Bond. It is also crucial to avoid neglecting the fact that institutional heterosexuality is not just about heterosexuality as a sexuality – it is also closely intertwined with questions of gender (ibid., 117).

Institutional heterosexuality relies on the existence of the gender binary. If there were no strict categories of what men and women are, there could be no "opposite"[36] sex or gender attraction and thus no heterosexuality. When gender boundaries are crossed heterosexuality as an institution is threatened. Judith Butler offers the example of the diagnosis of gender identity disorder (GID). This diagnosis was mainly reserved for transgender individuals[37], and while the ethics and necessity of such a diagnosis are hotly debated by both scholars and activists (*Undoing Gender* 76), this will not be further discussed here. The crucial point of the diagnosis for the purpose of this paper is that it is often misused by those who believe that gender dysphoria is not a sign of being transgender but of being homosexual (ibid., 78). Early sexologists Havelock Ellis and Richard von Krafft-Ebing popularised this inversion theory[38]: If a woman has masculine traits she is homosexual; the same applies to feminine men (Krafft-Ebing 262-4, Ellis qtd. in Newton 567). Gender and gender presentation, then, are closely intertwined with heterosexuality if these arguments are to be believed. As Butler points out, however, "the correlations between gender identity and sexual orientation are murky at best" and "it would be a huge mistake to assume that gender identity causes sexual orientation" *Undoing Gender*: 79). This means, simply put, that a man can have

[35] Singular they will be used throughout this paper to ensure gender neutrality.

[36] It has become an increasingly popular argument that sex is just as much of a social construct as gender. For further information see Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble*.

[37] It has since been replaced by gender dysphoria, which is no longer classified as a disorder (see DSM 5).

[38] This is, of course, highly problematic and while outdated, still historically relevant, especially as it has had a far reaching impact on e.g. research and counselling (Rees-Turyn 2).

any sexual orientation regardless of how masculine he considers himself or is considered to be by others. This applies to women as well, of course, and to others who do not identify with either binary option. If a person is neither male nor female, it becomes altogether impossible to predict their sexual
orientation even if one subscribes to the inversion theory, which thus strengthens Butler's point.

If someone remains within the boundaries of institutional heterosexuality that usually means they also remain within the appropriate gender boundaries. What is or is not considered masculine or feminine is culturally constructed, as Butler points out:

> If gender attributes … are not expressive but performative, then these attributes effectively constitute the identity they are said to express or reveal. … If gender attributes and acts, the various ways in which a body shows or produces its cultural signification, are performative, then there is no preexisting identity by which an act or attribute might be measured; there would be no true or false, real or distorted acts of gender, and the postulation of a true gender identity would be revealed as a regulatory fiction. (*Gender Trouble* 192)

On a similar note, R. W. Connell points to hegemonic masculinity as culturally constructed. According to her, it "can be defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women" (77). It is important to note that these gender practices are not a permanent trait people have but specific behaviours they engage in (ibid.). Because hegemonic masculinity is subject to change and encompasses not just one but several behaviours, real people can rarely meet all of its standards (ibid., 79). Fictional characters, however, have no such limitations (ibid., 77).

While Connell argues that even if "not a fixed character type, always and everywhere the same" (ibid., 76) there can only be one type of hegemonic masculinity at a time (ibid., 77). However, according to Gail Bederman, this kind of approach "obscures the complexities and contradictions of any historical moment" (7). She points out that there can be no one definition because "many contradictory ideas about manhood are available to explain what men are, how they ought to behave, and what sorts of powers and authorities they may claim" (ibid.) at any given point in time. This is indeed the case with

the two masculinity models established in the forthcoming article "'Melted Your Cold Heart Yet?' Amatonormative Masculinity in *Casino Royale* and *Spectre*"[39], which shall only briefly be summed up here: Normative Masculinity Type 1 manifests as hypermasculinity as defined by Avi Ben-Zeev et al.

> The hypermasculine male is characterized by the idealization of stereotypically masculine traits, such as virility and physicality, while concurrently rejecting traits seen as feminine and thus perceived as antithetical and even inferior to machismo, such as compassion or emotional expression. (54)

Normative Masculinity Type 2 manifests, among other aspects, as toxic masculinity, which is "a (heterosexual) masculinity that is threatened by anything associated with femininity (whether that is pink yogurt or emotions)" (Banet-Weiser and Miltner 171). While Type 1 relies on "(a) callous sex attitudes towards women[40], (b) violence as manly, and c) danger as exciting" (Mosher and Sirkin 150) and considers a violation of these aspects a threat to the man's status as a "real man", Type 2 contains a more (seemingly) liberal attitude towards women and violence is considered morally questionable. The same is the case for promiscuity. Bond switches between these two types depending on whether he is romantically involved with someone, in which case he displays the more mature[41] Type 2 and leaves promiscuity behind, or not, in which case he displays Type 1, including promiscuity. While his involvements with women strengthen his displays of masculinity in both cases, Type 1 is framed as morally questionable and irresponsible, Type 2 as the opposite. In both cases, however Bond (unlike the antagonists)[42] adheres to the boundaries instated by institutional heterosexuality, and thus also does not violate the gender boundaries institutional heterosexuality is based on either, while the same

[39] Awaiting publication in the *International Journal of James Bond Studies* in May 2019, title subject to change.

[40] Mosher & Sirkin describe one of the traits as "callous sex attitudes towards women" (ibid.), which is arguably not entirely accurate for Bond's liaisons, but the franchise certainly portrays it that way. This will be further problematised in Chapter 3.3: "The (Im)Morality of Sex and Sexual Availability".

[41] (at least it is portrayed as such in the films)

[42] Silva (*Skyfall*) is the perhaps most obviously queercoded and gender-nonconforming villain.

cannot be said of his enemies. While all villains violate the given rules in various ways, Le Chiffre and Silva serve as the most obvious examples because of the homoeroticism they enact with Bond. The homoeroticism in *Casino Royale*'s torture scene is obvious, especially when Le Chiffre points out that Bond has "taken good care of [his] body" (*Casino Royale* 1:43:06), a statement that doubles as a threat of sexual overtures towards a bound and helpless Bond. Bond's response to having his genitals beaten being "the whole world's going to know that you died scratching my balls" (ibid., 1:45:12), however, relegates this erotic potential to a tool of humiliation for Bond to use against Le Chiffre, thus using his enemy's tool for his own purposes. Even though Le Chiffre is the one holding the rope that is threatening to maim Bond permanently, the power dynamic shifts with this simple phrase. Suddenly, Bond has the power to threaten and humiliate his enemy even though he is at his mercy, physically speaking. Of course, Le Chiffre dies not much later, leaving Bond and thus institutional heterosexuality with the last word.

Another scene that plays even more explicitly with homoeroticism takes place in *Skyfall*. Silva, who is ambiguous in his gender expression (Anderson 84) – something that is usually associated with members of the queer community - touches Bond intimately and taunts him with his sexual advances right up until the moment Bond asserts that he is not particularly bothered:

> Silva (touching Bond): How you're trying to remember your training now. What's the regulation to cover this? Well, first time for everything.
> Bond: What makes you think this is my first time?
> Silva (ceasing to touch): Oh, Mr Bond! (*Skyfall* 1:12:11)

Once again, the suggestion of homoeroticism is a tool that is used in an attempt to upset the enemy and force them into submission. However, Bond quickly turns the power dynamic on its head as he does with Le Chiffre, only this time he pre-empts Silva's sexual threat by suggesting that it would not, in fact, be his first time. This leaves us with two possible interpretations: Bond may have either a) been threatened with unwanted sexual advances before, or b) has slept with men (whether that is tied to a non-heterosexual identity or not). Scholars have been reluctant to acknowledge either option, even going so far as to call Bond's statement "feigning of homoerotic experience" (Anderson 82). This may well be true, considering that this implication happens only once and is never

mentioned again in any of the rebooted films, and of course that Bond is never shown as being attracted to anyone who is not a woman. However, the lack of acknowledgement of non-heterosexual possibilities shapes the discourse about Bond, which in turn shapes how we think about this iconic figure and his masculinity. If there is no space for a non-heterosexual Bond in academic discourse, that means there is no space for a non-heterosexual Bond period. Despite a sparse hint to the contrary, Bond remains firmly within the boundaries of institutional heterosexuality while Silva thoroughly violates them.

There are several facets to Silva's suggested (a)sexuality as well, though. His deviation from heterosexuality does not stop at implications of homosexuality - when he stops taunting Bond with homoerotic overtures after a lack of satisfactory reaction, he states that "all the physical stuff, it's so dull, so dull" (*Skyfall* 1:12:41). This disinterest in "the physical stuff" strongly suggests that Silva is coded as asexual[43] as well as gay, thus removing him even further from fitting the ideal of institutional heterosexuality and thus the moral compass that keeps Bond, if precariously so, on the side of the angels.

> Indeed, as Tony Bennett and Jane Woollacott point out about Fleming's 7th novel, "… we recognise the good in Bond and the evil in Goldfinger because the first is loved by women. That is to say, the good, as has already been pointed out, is the sexual biological force" (Lilli qtd. in Bennett and Woollacott 161). While Bennett and Woollacott seem to conflate romance and sexuality, their statement still holds true when applied to the rebooted films. Viewers can separate Bond from the antagonists, despite the fact that both commit illegalities and immoralities, because Bond is, if precariously so, sexually and thus morally correctly aligned within the patriarchal order (116).

NEGATIVE ATTITUDE TOWARDS PROMISCUITY BY BOND HIMSELF

Negative comments about promiscuity are not limited to allies and enemies, however. Bond himself, too, makes a connection between casual sex and immorality. A very telling scene takes place in *Quantum of Solace*. Felix Leiter, a colleague from the CIA, and

[43] Asexuality is a sexual orientation defined by an absence of sexual attraction. Blofeld (*Spectre*), too, is portrayed as not having any sexual or romantic interest.

Bond are having a drink at a bar. Leiter has been pressured by his superior to make contact with Bond in order to keep him in one place long enough to eliminate him, as the CIA's newest deal with the antagonist Greene, a morally and politically corrupt businessman who operates under the guise of activism, requires. Bond is aware of this plan, though, and says to Leiter: "That's what I like about U.S. Intelligence. You'll lie down with anybody" (01:19:00). This implies that a) sexual promiscuity requires a lack of (moral) standards, and that b) sexual promiscuity is connected to immorality, is indeed immoral in and of itself, perhaps because of the association with the perceived dangers of transgressing the marital, monogamous ideal associated with it (Seidman 58). The fact that Bond himself is the one to make this connection is rather ironic, considering that he is far from being a poster child of monogamy.

SEXUALLY ACTIVE BOND WOMEN ARE UNRELIABLE

The unstable moral compass supposedly evoked by promiscuous sexual behaviour applies not only to Bond himself but also, perhaps more obviously so, to the Bond Women. They "are ultimately blamed for, or at least contribute to, the threats to social decency and the unstable political climate" (Anderson 79), not least because of their involvement with both the antagonists and Bond, either simultaneous or successive. Lynd, for example, is, unbeknownst to Bond, a threat to the mission because of her romantic relationship with a man who fakes his own kidnapping to force her to give up a large sum of the treasury's money. This threat is not limited to the mission, however – long-term commitment and monogamy are in danger as well. She is turned double agent to save her boyfriend's life and thus, depending on one's perspective, cheats on either or both him and Bond.

A lack of reliability is present in the portrayal of other Bond Women too. Solange (*Casino Royale*) and Sciarra (*Spectre*) are both married to an antagonist. Both are sexually involved with Bond as well and the contradiction of their relationship with both hero and antagonist, but especially their promiscuity, makes them untrustworthy. They are easily swayed to betray the antagonist when a sexual offer is made from Bond – the threat of being swayed back the other way is ever present because their loyalties do or should lie elsewhere because of their marriage.

The same threat of moral ambiguity becomes apparent when Bond uses his charm to make women do something they perhaps would

not otherwise do, and which could have serious negative consequences for them. He convinces a hotel receptionist to give him sensitive information about another customer that she would not be
allowed to share in good faith (Casino Royale 29:39), for instance, and charms an airport worker into lying to the government for him (Quantum of Solace 45:47). A more prominent Bond Woman he sways is Miss Fields (ibid.), who is supposed to send him back when he arrives at the airport and instead ends up sleeping with him. She readily expresses her displeasure with herself, which only causes Bond to be smug about his achievement. There clearly are differences between the Bond Women, but they have one thing in common: they are ultimately punished for their sexuality, whether that is with death (Solange, Lynd, Sévérine, Fields), or by loss of some form. Their being charmed by Bond, sometimes despite their intentions, not only means that "the women are not granted their own sexualities, nor are they given the freedom to explore their sexualities; [but] rather [that] heterosexual males evaluate the women's behaviour and decide their fate" (Anderson 80).

> This may be the case because, as Gayle Rubin points out, Modern Western societies appraise sex acts according to a hierarchical system of sexual value. Marital, reproductive heterosexuals are alone at the top of the erotic pyramid. Clamoring below are unmarried monogamous heterosexuals in couples, followed by most other heterosexuals. (107)

By not fitting the ideal of the top of the hierarchy, the Bond Women therefore are morally questionable and, through their involvement with Bond further implicate him in immorality by association and, partially, even causation. Bond himself, of course, fits the latter of these categories too, leaving him with heterosexual privilege but nevertheless not enough moral propriety to fit the conservative Western values of long-term marital monogamy.

VESPER LYND AND DR MADELEINE SWANN: PARAGONS OF MORAL VIRTUE

Two exceptions in the large number of Bond Women loom large: Vesper Lynd and Dr Madeleine Swann. Lynd, who betrays Bond in order to save her boyfriend and kills herself afterwards, is redeemed from her moral failings, which makes it possible for her to regain her special status posthumously: Ironically, her desire for

commitment and monogamy are also what redeem her in the end. Lynd dies a martyr, choosing death because she cannot live with her betrayal of Bond. Her commitment to her boyfriend is what makes the betrayal palatable, and her desired but impossible commitment to Bond
are what redeems her even in Bond's eyes eventually. This redemption is made complete by a text Bond receives from her after her death, containing a name relevant to the mission. She has moved from being unreliable (Racioppi and Tremonte 188) to helping the mission at the same time that she is freed from immoral restraints of nonmonogamy.
Dr Swann needs no redemption because she is not shown to be involved with anyone but Bond. Not even any past relationships are mentioned. Her moral righteousness is additionally repeatedly emphasised by her choice to cut all ties with her father, an antagonist active in several criminal organisations Bond is fighting to destroy.
Neither Lynd nor Dr Swann, then, have any casual sex but are shown as being interested only in a committed, monogamous long-term relationship. While Lynd is flawed but redeemed and pays the price of redemption with her death, Dr Swann has an immaculate moral compass from the start which is reflected in her lack of promiscuity.

COMMITED MONOGAMY – THE SAVIOUR FROM IMMORALITY?

By entering relationships intended as long-term[44] with both sexually and thus morally correctly aligned women that is either not broken up at all, as is the case with Dr Swann, or broken up only through one participant's demise, as is the case with Lynd, Bond is depicted as being saved from the constant threat of immorality posed by his promiscuity.
A particularly telling scene takes place in *Casino Royale*, when Bond confesses: "You do what I do for too long and there won't be any soul left to salvage. I'm leaving with what little I have left" (01:51:00). A long-term relationship and the job, which is associated with promiscuity, stand in opposition to each other and cannot co-exist because one is morally right and socially acceptable while the other is morally questionable and unthinkable in polite society.

[44] It is, at least, intended to be long-term, even if this does not turn out to be viable in *Casino Royale* and is unlikely to be the case in the upcoming fifth film that will follow *Spectre*.

This immorality is pointed out frequently by Dr Swann. She criticises the "sick life" (*Spectre* 01:17:47) her father led before his death and which Bond is leading now. The following exchange between Bond and Dr Swann clarifies how the co-existence of his job (and thus promiscuity) and a long-term commitment could be regarded as impossible:

> Dr Swann: Why, given every other possible option, does a man choose the life of a paid assassin?
> Bond: Well, it was that or priesthood.
> Dr Swann: I'm serious. Is this really what you want? Living in the shadows? Hunting? Being hunted? Always looking behind you? Always alone?
> Bond: But I'm not alone.
> Dr Swann: Answer the question.
> Bond: I'm not sure I ever had a choice. Anyway, I don't stop to think about it.
> Dr Swann: What would happen if you did?
> Bond: Stop?
> Dr Swann: Yes.
> Bond: I don't know.
> Dr Swann: You know, I think you're wrong.
> Bond: I am?
> Dr Swann: We always have a choice. (*Spectre* 1:28:49)

The implication Dr Swann makes here is that Bond's job and the immorality she associates with it are what leads to him being alone. Bond's disagreement "but I'm not alone" (ibid., 1:29:09) could refer either to his various sexual partners, or to the company he currently has in the form of Dr Swann herself – it cannot be said with certainty which is the case. Regardless of which interpretation one may choose, Dr Swann's passing over of this protestation is telling. If his casual partners are meant, the implication is that they are not important enough to count. This would be unsurprising considering that, according to Brake, special value is attributed "to exclusive amorous relationships", which "implies that alternatives such as celibacy, singledom, care networks, and friendships lack a central human good" (94). If Dr Swann is meant, she likely does not want to encourage any association between her and his "sick life", much less let him assume that her involuntary involvement in it will continue. She does, however, encourage him further to rethink his life. She strongly suggests that if he were to reconsider his job and the promiscuity that goes hand in hand with it, he would also not need to be alone anymore, thus suggesting that the promiscuity and

loneliness as well as commitment and emotional well-being are inextricably linked.

This idea is further established when Bond and Dr Swann meet M at a safe house. It has been a while since Bond has seen any of his colleagues in person and M promptly assures him that it is good to have him back – Dr Swann, meanwhile, remains in the background and looks particularly unhappy. Upon everyone leaving the safe house together, the plan is to change location by car. Bond assumes that Dr Swann will be joining them, but she tells him that she "can't go back to this life" (*Spectre* 1:55:36), thus leaving him to decide between commitment to her and his job and thus casual sex, even though she says that she is not "going to ask [him] to change" (ibid., 1:55:39).

The same values are propagated when, after Lynd's death, M states that "it'd be a pretty cold bastard who wouldn't want revenge for the death of someone he loved" (*Quantum of Solace* 8:24). Since Bond does want revenge, so much so that the entirety of *Quantum of Solace* is dedicated to it,[45] this saves him from being said bastard. He is mourning not just the loss of his partner, but also the loss of his safety from promiscuity, and thus loss of his guaranteed moral righteousness. Nevertheless his moral compass arguably stays on track – at least in M's view - because it is guided by the memory of his commitment to Lynd. This inevitably leads to the conclusion that Bennett and Woollacott are right: repositioning someone sexually is repositioning them ideologically (117), even if they are referring to the Bond Women and not Bond himself. By having Bond enter committed long-term relationships only with women who are interested exclusively in romantic, monogamous relationships and portraying them as saving Bond from the moral decay that apparently goes hand in hand with his status as a double-0 agent, the franchise makes an ideological statement about what constitutes moral virtue.

CONCLUSION

As this essay has shown, the policing of sexuality in the rebooted Bond films is not limited to Bond Women but extends to Bond himself as well. Promiscuity is condemned as immoral and

[45] The revenge for Mathis' eventual death, in contrast, is limited to one brief line towards the end of the film (1:25:58), which once again shows that romance takes priority over any other form of relationship. The dead women Bond is not romantically involved with are not avenged.

inherently connected to villainous pursuits, an attitude that is shared by Bond's allies as well as enemies and even by Bond himself. Bond, by being promiscuous, is constantly threatened by the possibility of becoming too similar to the antagonists and thus losing his hero status, which is based on his moral superiority over his and England's enemies. Nevertheless, he never tips over the edge, as his adherence to the rules of institutional heterosexuality and his comparatively better treatment of women do separate him, if precariously so, from the villains. He is ultimately saved from his always impending loss of moral righteousness by choosing committed long-term monogamy with the morally redeemed Vesper Lynd and the morally impeccable Dr Madeleine Swann over relations with frequently changing, casual sexual partners.

There is no knowing how the franchise will handle these topics in the future, although a continued conservative message does seem likely. Dr Swann is, as of yet, alive and well – it remains to be seen if this will still be the case in the next Bond film, which will likely be the last starring Daniel Craig. What happens to her and thus Bond's guarantee of moral righteousness remains to be seen.

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