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## Table of content

<b>1. James Bond's Evolution.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2. Bond Girls .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2.1 Primary Bond Girls .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2.1.1 Their Relationship with Bond .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2.1.2 Their Professions .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>2.1.3 Their Evolution.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>2.2 Secondary Bond Girls.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>2.3.1 Their Relationship with Bond .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>2.3.2 Their Purpose .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>2.3.3 Possibility of Evolution? .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>3. Miss Money Penny .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>3.1 Her Profession.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>3.2 Her Relationship with Bond .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>3.3 Her Evolution .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>4. Women in Power .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>4.1 Judi Dench as M .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>4.1.1 Her Relationship with Bond.....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>4.1.2 Her (limited) Power .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>4.1.3 Her female Empowerment .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>4.2 Rosa Klebb.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>5. The Evolution of Female Characters.....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>6. Bibliography.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>6.1 Primary sources.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>6.2 Secondary sources .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>6.3 Websites.....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>6.3.1 Websites with an author .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>6.3.2 Websites without an author .....</b>	<b>18</b>

## 1. James Bond's Evolution

Being the longest-running saga in history, thriving over 50 years ago and still thriving today, James Bond is probably the definition of evolution. The movies often being seen as a reflection of society and the status quo, the character, with all his missions, gadgets, and villains, has always changed with society. As our society has become more politically correct and the focus of feminism, the “organized effort to give women the same economic, social, and political rights as men”<sup>1</sup>, was also laid on pop culture, the sexist and demeaning tone towards women in the novels and the early movies in particular, was not sustainable anymore.

But how and how far have the women of Bond evolved? To answer this question, I will analyze the women of *From Russia with Love* (1963), *Casino Royale* (2006)<sup>2</sup> and *Skyfall* (2012). Two traditional female roles, the Bond girls and the role of Moneypenny, as well as one woman in power are examined per movie. The films were chosen because of their long gap, because they both feature traditional characters as well as exceptions and because both are critically acclaimed and showcase examples of good James Bond movies.

## 2. Bond Girls

At this point, the Bond girls, with all their surroundings, are as well-known and as crucial as James Bond himself. And just like 007, “their roles have the ability to change and yet remain the same” (Bayard 10). Because of this, Bond girls have been categorized into the Primary Bond Girl, the Secondary Bond Girl, and the Bond Girl Villain (Bayard 10-11). The ensuing chapters compare the Bond Girls of the two movies, focusing on the Primary and Secondary Bond Girls, as the Primary Bond Girls in both films function as the Primary and the Bond Girl Villain. The two movies were chosen to be compared because of their similarities in Primary Bond Girls and Sylvia Trench as a special Secondary Bond Girl.

### 2.1 Primary Bond Girls

Primary Bond Girls are the movies' main female characters. They are not only important to the plot, as they function as “proactive decision makers” (Bayard 21)

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<sup>1</sup> <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/feminism> (download on 6 November 2020)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.007.com/the-films/> (download on 7 November 2020)

and help move the storyline forward, but are also important to Bond. They are typically some sort of sexual challenge to Bond but have built up an intimate relationship with him by the end of the movie. Despite this, the Primary Bond Girl usually changes after one movie and is treated, as Dan Mills quotes Eleanor and Dennis Pelrine, “a series of love ‘em and leave ‘em episodes” (Mills 148).

### 2.1.1 Their Relationship with Bond

One important feature that all Primary Bond Girls share is that they form some kind of deeper relationship with James Bond. Tatiana Romanova’s (Daniela Bianchi)<sup>3</sup> and Bond’s relationship in *From Russia with Love* can be summarized in one word: one-sided. While Tatiana’s feelings for 007 are clearly fake initially and part of her mission, they quickly transform into real love after she spends the night with Bond. The strength of her love is being shown through the fact that she abandons her mission and thus betrays her country by helping Bond steal the Lektor and in the end even killing her former boss Rosa Klebb to save him. 007 clearly does not feel the same for her. While she is distracted by their affair, his focus still lies on his mission. This dynamic is especially shown when Bond’s ally Kerim is killed and he questions Tatiana. He tells her that he is aware of the trap and asks her to tell him all she knows, while abusing her physically, by first manhandling her and, after she denies her mission, even slapping her. Romanova makes it clear to Bond that she is hurting, to which he replies, “I’ll do worse than that if you don’t tell me” (*From Russia with Love* Chapter 23). From this short exchange between the two characters, one can see that Bond does not care about Romanova and is even ready to kill or torture her for more information. When further questioning her motive, all Romanova can say, is that she is in love with James. He dismisses her confession of love with an annoyed “Sure.” (*From Russia with Love* Chapter 23). This shows that she is very much in love with him, even being okay with him abusing her. They have a clear power dynamic, with Bond being the dominant one and the one in control, physically as well as mentally. Romanova’s love makes her weak and submissive to Bond, as she is unable to concentrate on her mission or anything else than Bond, while he is annoyed at her. Inga Bruckhorst analyses their relationship in this way: “[...] Romanova [wird] eher zu einer zusätzlichen Belastung für Bond,

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<sup>3</sup> [https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0057076/fullcredits?ref\\_=tt\\_cl\\_sm#cast](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0057076/fullcredits?ref_=tt_cl_sm#cast) (download on 7 November 2020)

und er scheut sich auch nicht, ihr dies immer wieder deutlich zu zeigen. Das ändert jedoch nichts an ihren Gefühlen für Bond.” (Brunckhorst 56) I agree with her viewpoint. Romanova’s dependence and submission is especially stressed in this scene and Bond hitting her underlines the power he holds over her. As she still declares her love for him, while not giving him any information, she becomes irrelevant for the plot, for Bond and for Bond’s masculinity. She is present, but only passive and just as eye-candy for Bond and the viewers. As 007 has already managed to conquer her sexually and with her love, he has already proven his masculinity and libido, therefore Romanova is passive, unhelpful and unprofessional for the rest of the film (the ending being an exception), while being intensely dominated by Bond. By killing Klebb, she proves her love and loyalty to Bond once again. This does give her some power and dominance back, as she is the one saving Bond’s life.

To sum up, it can be noted that whilst her character has a dominant, smart, and independent basis, Tatiana Romanova is easily overpowered by Bond. Therefore she is only a puppet to slightly support Bond during his mission and move the plot forward, while her bigger purpose is to make Bond look powerful and manly, by being submissive. This power dynamic is often used in James Bond films and just in media in general to reaffirm the typical feminine and masculine roles.

In *Casino Royale* the power dynamic is less obvious. In their first conversation Vesper Lynd (Eva Green)<sup>4</sup> is portrayed as witty and intelligent and is not afraid to criticize Bond and his risky plan, taking a negative stance toward his work. It looks like Bond cannot dominate her during their first conversation, as she is able to keep up with his wit and his comments about her origin and is doing the same to him. But while Bond is right about everything he assumes about Lynd, Vesper is only able to figure out that he is an orphan. Her surprised reaction to his confirmation that he in fact is an orphan, makes her seem less witty and intelligent, as it shows that while Bond’s theories about her life are well calculated, hers are only guesses (Amacker and Moore 153). “Bond knows Vesper, but Vesper does not know Bond.” (Amacker and Moore 153) This makes him superior to Vesper, pushing her back into her naïve and dumb Bond Girl role, which she tries to break out of during this scene. But it is impossible for her to be as confident and strong as her male

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<sup>4</sup> [https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0381061/fullcredits?ref\\_=tt\\_cl\\_sm#cast](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0381061/fullcredits?ref_=tt_cl_sm#cast) (download on 7 November 2020)

opponent. James has to characterize her as insecure with a “prickly demeanor” (*Casino Royale* Chapter 8), implying that her confidence and strength are not real and only a cover up. She has to be more vulnerable than Bond for him to be seen as more masculine. Her independence and strength set up an often-used double standard for women and men. While nobody has a problem with 007 being overly confident and most times downright arrogant, Vesper is seen as cold and her confidence is equated with arrogance in a negative way.

The main difference between the two relationships is, that Bond actually cares about Vesper, taking their relationship to another level. Not only does he sit in the shower with her to calm her down after helping him to kill two men and risks his life for her, but he also, most importantly, gives up his job for her. This puts them on the same level and when they enter their real relationship, Bond does not have the upper hand anymore and is vulnerable. This also is shown through the fact that Vesper is the one who initiates them having sex, putting her in control. But looking at this the other way, one could also state that this is another example of 007 overcoming any obstacle and always getting what he wants from the Bond Girl (Bayard 23). Bond’s vulnerability is stressed, when Vesper turns out to be working for the villain and she betrays Bond. She gets the upper hand, by having outsmarted him. However, he is so in love, that he still tries to save her, but as Vesper doesn’t want to be saved, he is not able to do so (Amacker and Moore 147). This leads to Vesper’s suicide. His intense and painful reaction shows, that his feelings are real. This again puts her in power. She was actually able to turn Bond around and make him resign. But as so often in *Casino Royale* this power gets taken away from Vesper once again, by Bond dismissing Vesper and their whole relationship with, “The job’s done, and the bitch is dead” (*Casino Royale* Chapter 16). “He relegates everything he has just experienced to simply part of the mission [...] and by stripping Vesper of her identity, making her the bitch, he pushes away any feelings or experiences that might threaten his hyper masculinity [and power].” (Amacker and Moore 147) During the whole movie Lynd and Bond challenge each other’s dominance, with Bond nearly always winning. There is a real relationship that shows the more vulnerable side of Bond, but it is made sure that he seems strong and masculine by the end of the movie. His character tries to break out of his toxic masculinity but is pressed back into it with in the end painting Vesper as a bitch and a traitor.

### 2.1.2 Their Professions

Looking at the two women, they both appear rather independent in the beginning. Both are introduced to James Bond through their jobs. Tatiana Romanova works as a cipher clerk for the Soviet Intelligence organization (SMERSH) and is chosen to seduce Bond in a trap set up by SPECTRE to make it possible for them to seek revenge on Bond for killing their agent Dr. No and to get the Lektor. In her first scene, she is mostly presented as powerless and shy and is dominated by her superior Rosa Klebb. But while clearly being uncomfortable, she still stands up for herself when being asked about her three past lovers, by scrutinizing the purpose of such a personal question. She is put in place by Klebb immediately and goes back to being submissive. The same happens with James Bond. After he knowingly falls into her trap and finally meets her in Istanbul in his bedroom, she is confidently lying in his bed, waiting for him while only wearing a black velvet choker. This is a “perfectly calculated seduction” (Patrick). Even though Bond is aware of that, he still cannot resist her sex appeal (Partick). This makes her seem powerful and in control of Bond. Through SPECTRE unknowingly filming the two through a two-way mirror, the power of her sexuality is slightly taken away from her, as the viewer is made aware again, that Romanova is just a puppet owned by SPECTRE. When meeting him again, she is not portrayed as smart and educated, as she clearly is, given that she works as a cipher clerk and Klebb even mentions, that “[her] work record is excellent” (*From Russia with Love* Chapter 6) during her interrogation scene. Instead she is distracted by Bond and her, at this point in the film, real sexual and romantic attraction to him. Because of this she is stripped of basically all her power and is completely dependent on Bond. This directly affirms a stereotype often used in movies: women’s first priority are men, love and finally marriage, while men concentrate on their profession (Dozier 202). This originates from the belief that women are dependent on men and a family and cannot exist outside a relationship, therefore finding a husband is more important to them than their occupation. Men do not need women and are able to live outside marriage, feeling no or at least less pressure to find a partner.

Vesper introduces herself with “I’m the money” (*Casino Royale* Chapter 8) to Bond and the viewer, and with that phrase her job background is explained quickly and accurately. She operates as a liaison agent from HM Treasury’s Financial Action Task Force and manages Bond’s funds for the poker tournament with Le Chiffre.

Here the first similarity becomes apparent. Both Vesper and Tatiana have a purpose and a reason to be around 007: their professions. But while Romanova is kind of bad at her job, even giving up her mission for Bond, Vesper is more focused on her position and places it above Bond. One of her most powerful moves in the film is denying James the five million dollars he needs to re-buy into the tournament after losing his stake. She holds her own and even when Bond starts to verbally and physically abuse her, she does not back down. This shows power and strength and gives her a kind of superiority that she however can't have over Bond as it would hurt his masculinity, making him look less powerful and dominant. This is why the power is again partly taken away from her, as he gets funded by the CIA through Felix Leiter. This makes her and her decision less important, as 007 gets the money anyway and she loses the power she held over him (Amacker and Moore 153). This is a common thing in both movies: Romanova and Lynd somehow gain power through their job, but it is immediately taken away from them.

To sum up, both Tatiana Romanova and Vesper Lynd have an important profession, that also moves the plot forward and is relevant to Bond. While they both get power through their job, it is always quickly taken away from them. This does not mean, that they have no power or that I am of the opinion, that their job is unnecessary. It is important and especially in *From Russia with Love*, I would go as far as calling the fact that Romanova is a cipher clerk and has no husband female empowerment. But seeing just how fast Romanova neglects her mission and fully dedicates herself to Bond shows, that there is no feminism or female empowerment behind giving her a profession. It is another way to show just how irresistible James Bond is, by making a woman basically forget about her job and her country because of a man. With Vesper it is different. She does not give up her job for 007 and stands by her decisions and opinions, but she still gets her job's importance taken away from her, making sure that she is never able to overpower Bond.

### **2.1.3 Their Evolution**

I think the character of the Primary Bond Girl has evolved. Vesper Lynd is more independent and dominant in *Casino Royale* than Tatiana Romanova is in *From Russia with Love*. While they both come from a smart and independent basis and are both portrayed with a demanding profession, Romanova is easily dominated and controlled by Bond, neglecting her country and mission for him. She takes the



submissive and inferior role to make 007 look more masculine and powerful, stressing the stereotype of the typical masculine and feminine gender roles. Vesper Lynd on the other hand is not so easily dominated, holding her ground towards Bond and even betraying him, which makes him seem vulnerable. However, the evolution does not mean that Vesper Lynd's character is not sexist, it just is less sexist. She still always ends up being overpowered by Bond and playing the submissive role, just in a less obvious way than Romanova did.

## 2.2 Secondary Bond Girls

Secondary Bond Girls play a much smaller role in the James Bond movies, but are still always represented. They are present in just a few scenes and are much less important for James Bond, the plot and the audience. Still they are included in nearly every movie of the saga and therefore must be included.

### 2.3.1 Their Relationship with Bond

Sylvia Trench (Eunice Gayson)<sup>5</sup> probably has the closest thing to a relationship any Secondary Bond Girl ever had, as she appears in two movies *Dr. No* and *From Russia with Love*. Being introduced to Bond in a casino and then waiting for him in his apartment to seduce him, her role as the Secondary Bond Girl in *Dr. No* is quickly established. Their quick exchange directly leading to an affair, as Bond has to run to his next mission, is a typical Secondary Bond Girl plot: she is not important to Bond, but he obviously can't resist spending a night with her. However, when she reappears in *From Russia with Love*, it is made clear that she is somewhat special to Bond. Her appearance in the movie is still kept short, as she only shares a picnic with Bond before he gets a call from Moneypenny urging him to come to the office. I would not go as far as saying Bond and Trench are in a relationship, but she is less disposable to Bond than the usual Bond Girl. They both desire each other, but due to Bond always being called away, while Sylvia waits for him, he seems to be the more dominant in their relationship. He decides, when they meet and when they have sex and holds the power, while Trench is more submissive, always begging Bond to stay when he gets a call from the office. Even though their

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<sup>5</sup> [https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0057076/fullcredits?ref\\_=tt\\_cl\\_sm#cast](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0057076/fullcredits?ref_=tt_cl_sm#cast) (download on 7 November 2020)

relationship is special, as it is longer than just one shared night, the power dynamic is still typical for a relationship with the Secondary Bond Girl.

While Sylvia Trench's relationship falls out of the line of the typical Secondary Bond girl, Solange (Caterina Murino)<sup>6</sup> and Bond's shared plotline is a prime example for a Secondary Bond Girl. Meeting Bond through her husband Alex Dimitrios, who loses a poker game to Bond, she attracts Bond's attention, and he takes her on a ride in his newly won Aston Martin DB5 to his house for a drink. Bond only uses her to get information about her husband, which is confirmed as he leaves as soon as he has the needed information. Even though Solange is aware of Bond's real interest in her, she is still willing to have sex with Bond. The only thing that falls out of the Secondary Bond girl plot, is that they end up not having sex, as Bond has to leave. Her sexual freedom could be seen as female empowering, but she, as many Secondary Bond Girls, ends up being tortured and killed by Bond's enemies. This is her punishment for "not conform[ing] to traditional gender roles due to [her] 'easiness' and sexual freedom" (Bayard 26).

### 2.3.2 Their Purpose

While the Primary Bond Girls tend to have the purpose of moving the plot forward, the only purpose of Secondary Bond Girls often is to prove Bond's libido. This also applies to the two women in *From Russia with Love* and *Casino Royale*.

Sylvia Trench has nothing to do with the plot line. She solely functions as eye candy for Bond and the audience. She is in the movie to satisfy Bond's libido and hyper sexuality and prove how many women he has. The audience is also not informed about her backstory or a potential occupation. This again stresses Bond's hyper masculinity and displays traditional gender roles, by Bond, the man being the one with a career. She is only used as an object to make Bond look better.

This is the same with Solange. She only exists to make Bond look more masculine and irresistible. Her being married to a bad guy, also stresses Bond's superiority to the villains and again how irresistible he is: Solange is married and on the side of the villain, but she still wants to have sex with Bond. The only difference is that Solange has something to do with the plot, as Bond gets information out of her. Bond only sees her as a sex object and a means to an end.

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<sup>6</sup> [https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0381061/fullcredits?ref\\_=tt\\_cl\\_sm#cast](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0381061/fullcredits?ref_=tt_cl_sm#cast) (download on 7 November 2020)

Both characters are neither important to the plot nor to Bond or the audience and are seen as disposable objects only existing to please and benefit James Bond.

### 2.3.3 Possibility of Evolution?

Looking at the premise of the characters of Secondary Bond Girls the question arises, if a role with such a sexist and misogynistic base even has the possibility of evolution. In my opinion, it is not possible for them to evolve. Their whole existence in the saga is based solely on satisfying Bond and his libido. It is not feasible for the Secondary Bond Girl to exist outside of Bond's affair with them, as they have no other purpose than being a sexualized object with no relevance to the plot. The only way of making the Secondary Bond Girl more feminist would be to strip her of all her essential characteristics, which would lead to her not fitting in the Secondary Bond Girl role anymore. This means that the only way of making the Secondary Bond Girl truly feminist and not sexist or misogynistic would be to remove her role from the movie.

## 3. Miss Moneypenny

Miss Moneypenny is M's secretary and has been present in more movies than any other character, except for James Bond himself (Brabazon 203). I will be comparing Miss Moneypenny in *From Russia with Love*, portrayed by Lois Maxwell<sup>7</sup> and in *Skyfall*, played by Naomie Harris<sup>8</sup>, as Moneypenny is not featured in *Casino Royale*. *Skyfall* is fitting as it is from the same Bond era as *Casino Royale* and because Moneypenny's character was reinvented in the 2012 movie.

### 3.1 Her Profession

Miss Moneypenny in *From Russia with Love* is tied to her office in London and takes orders from M. She is present, but not relevant to the plot and the mission. Instead, she seems unprofessional, for example when she eavesdrops on M's meeting. (*From Russia With Love* Chapter 17) This leads to the devaluation of the profession as secretary, as the competence of male co-workers of James Bond is

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<sup>7</sup> [https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0057076/fullcredits?ref\\_=tt\\_cl\\_sm#cast](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0057076/fullcredits?ref_=tt_cl_sm#cast) (download on 7 November 2020)

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1074638/fullcredits?ref\\_=tt\\_cl\\_sm#cast](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1074638/fullcredits?ref_=tt_cl_sm#cast) (download on 7 November 2020)

highlighted, while Miss Money Penny is portrayed as unprofessional and negligent. The job of secretary has been a typical occupation for women and has been stereotyped as an undemanding job even women can do. This is also how Money Penny's work in the office is portrayed (Brunckhorst 81). She is not equal to her co-workers but works for them instead of with them. Still, I would consider her character somewhat progressive and feminist, as she as Tara Brabazon notes, "moved beyond the home and lived outside [of] marriage" (Brabazon 213). This means that even though the norm for a woman was to be a housewife for a job in the sixties, Money Penny in those films was represented as a working woman, dependent on men as far as M and Bond, but independent regarding a husband. This is different in *Skyfall*. She is introduced to the viewer as Eve, a field agent who is working together with Bond on a mission in Turkey. It is made clear, that she is inexperienced and inferior to 007, as she is more passive on the mission, following Bond along and communicating with M, while Bond is actively fighting. She also messes up twice during their assignment. First, she misses the fleeing suspect and then accidentally shoots Bond, while he is fighting with their target on top of a train. This leads him to fall into the water and to be presumed dead. Her inabilities put her in an inferior sidekick position rather than an equal co-worker position. Eve is suspended from field work and is reassigned to desk duty. However, she still partakes in missions with Bond. She is sent to Macau to support him during his mission, first only watching passively, but then saving his life by knocking out one of his opponents. However, at the end of the movie, she explains that she is not made for field work and that she will remain in her desk job. After this, she finally introduces herself to Bond and the audience, revealing herself as Money Penny. *Skyfall* is seen as Money Penny's origin story. Her storyline can be interpreted in both a feminist and an anti-feminist way. It could be argued that she makes the choice of staying in her office job, instead of going back into the field. This is female-empowering, as it is her decision to be a secretary, even though she could potentially work as a field agent. The job of secretary becomes a settlement and choice rather than the only option for women. But at the same time, Money Penny is portrayed as less able than her male colleagues and her decision to stay in her desk job position is more based on a lack of ability and knowledge than her preference. This initiates the same stereotype already mentioned above: the job of secretary is depicted as an undemanding profession, that even women can do as

they are not skilled enough to work in higher positions. This narrative is stressed again by Bond himself, as he tells Moneypenny that “[fieldwork]’s not for everyone” (*Skyfall* Chapter 15). With this statement, he underlines “the intersection of age and gender” (Dodds 277) that is visible in *Skyfall*. It is insinuated that older and experienced male agents, like Bond himself, belong in the field and with that in the more active and demanding job, while younger females are better fitting in less demanding and more passive positions. It also conveys the impression that women provide the role of a sidekick or assistant, while men are portrayed as equal colleagues (Dodds 277).

All things considered, it seems like Moneypenny’s work in *Skyfall* compared to *From Russia with Love* has shifted into being more active, as she actually participates in the mission rather than just sitting in her office and being irrelevant to the plot. But she is still portrayed as inferior to Bond and his capabilities. Even though she breaks out of the typical Moneypenny secretary occupation, it is just used to stress, how women are not made for active and demanding jobs and should settle for less demanding professions like being an assistant

### **3.2 Her Relationship with Bond**

The relationship between Miss Moneypenny and James Bond probably is the longest we will ever see Bond in. Their flirty banter is a traditional characteristic of every Bond film.

It is evident in *From Russia with Love* that even though there is playful and humorous flirting, it will not lead to a sexual relationship, as the interactions are kept harmless, with not a lot of physical contact or sexual innuendo, making it clear that their relationship will remain unconsumed. This differs in *Skyfall*: Bond and Moneypenny talk more offensively, with many sexual innuendoes. Their flirting also is more physical, Bond for example starts to fiddle with Eve’s shirt while she is shaving him and it is unclear if they had sex afterwards as the scene ends before the audience gets to know where the flirtatious conversation leads.

The biggest difference is, who Moneypenny represents in the movies. In *From Russia with Love* Moneypenny is seen as the bored secretary waiting for Bond to return to London, similar to a housewife. She is good enough for a flirt, but not interesting enough to sleep with. She is the opposite of the exotic and exciting Bond Girls, who are the main object of James Bond’s sexual desire. This projects the

desires and interests of the male viewer, who are believed to be less interested in the tame secretary as she reminds them of their wives and more focused on an exciting adventure with the Bond Girl. Neither the male viewer nor Bond is interested in sleeping with Moneypenny, leading their relationship to remain unconsumed (Brunckhorst 66). In *Skyfall*, Moneypenny does not represent the housewife waiting at home, but is made more interesting and desirable for Bond and the male viewer, as she participates in missions and follows 007 to exotic places. She also dresses more revealingly on their mission in Macau, making her seem more sexual and more in the focus of Bond's sexual desire. Nonetheless, the minute Sévérine, the Bond girl, arrives, she becomes his sexual focus and Moneypenny is again left behind.

### 3.3 Her Evolution

In conclusion, Moneypenny's portrayal did evolve from *From Russia with Love* to *Skyfall*. While she only functions as another woman desiring James Bond, being portrayed in the role of a boring secretary, she becomes her own character in *Skyfall*. She gains plot relevance and is portrayed as an agent rather than an unprofessional secretary. But Moneypenny is still not equal to Bond in *Skyfall* and is at the end of the movie reduced back to being in an assistant position for a man and is still portrayed as not being able to work independently.

## 4. Women in Power

In this chapter, I want to take a look at two women in power in the Bond movies. Firstly, I will analyze Judi Dench's female M in *Casino Royale*<sup>9</sup>. In the second part, Rosa Klebb's character in *From Russia with Love* will be scrutinized.

### 4.1 Judi Dench as M

After being played by men for a long time, in 1995 in *GoldenEye* the role of M, the head of MI6 and James Bond's boss, is finally played by a woman: Judi Dench. With the new Bond era starting with *Casino Royale* not only the character of Bond himself got reinvented, but so did the portrayal of M by Judi Dench.

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<sup>9</sup> [https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0381061/fullcredits?ref\\_=tt\\_cl\\_sm#cast](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0381061/fullcredits?ref_=tt_cl_sm#cast) (download 7 November 2020)

### **4.1.1 Her Relationship with Bond**

The relationship between James Bond and M could be described as parental, with Bond behaving childlike, always trying to rebel against his mother M. He does not accept her boundaries and keeps invading her private life. This transgression into M's personal life is something never done in previous films (Amacker and Moore 149). Even though Bond keeps acting up against his boss, growing affections of 007 towards his boss are hinted at, when he sits in his new Aston Martin reading the accompanying letter, he states "I love you too, M." (*Casino Royale* Chapter 8) while smiling (McNeely 160). The relationship between James Bond and the female M is more personal than in the earlier movies, evolving even more in later films of the Craig-era like *Skyfall*, where Bond views M in a maternal role (Patton 323).

### **4.1.2 Her (limited) Power**

M is the head of MI6 and as such has and wields a lot of power. However, looking at the power dynamic between her and James Bond in *Casino Royale* it becomes clear, that her influence over 007 is limited. By not accepting M's boundaries concerning her private life, Bond asserts power over M. She has to gain it back, by successfully manipulating 007, as she tells him to go into hiding, knowing he will do the opposite and follow his lead. "By making M unabashedly manipulative, the filmmakers have imbued the character with [...] authority and power" (McNeely 160). But at the end of the film Bond is entirely in control by not only giving M orders, but also by not sharing information about the mission with her. (Amacker and Moore 150). Even though M is a woman in a powerful position, she is stripped from nearly all of her control and power by 007. However, it should be noted that this is not specific to the female M, but Bond often goes against M's orders or outsmarts him.

### **4.1.3 Her female Empowerment**

While the female M is celebrated as an empowering female character, as she is a woman in a male-dominated career, others have raised the question, whether or not Judi Dench's portrayal of M is empowering for women. The problem is that she only has male attributes and her femininity is only shown through the fact that she is a woman, but not through her behavior. This stresses the stereotype that women are only taken seriously if they act and look like men. This leads to women not

being able to relate to her role and not feeling empowered by her. She is differentiated from the other women in the saga, again stressing the stereotype that women cannot be both smart and sexual. On surface level the female M seems like an emancipated female role. Still, after a closer look, it becomes apparent that she is not relatable for female viewers and therefore is not a good example for female empowering (Brunckhorst 65).

#### 4.2 Rosa Klebb

Another example of a woman in power is Rosa Klebb in *From Russia with Love*, portrayed by Lotte Lenya<sup>10</sup>. She is an important member of SPECTRE and is a main force behind the plan to steal the Lektor and to kill Bond, is Tatiana Romanova's boss and also has power over the male SPECTRE assassin Red Grant. This all seems pretty progressive, as the film is from the sixties and women in powerful positions ruling over men were not common. But if you take a look at Rosa Klebb's true femininity in the movie, it becomes clear that she is stripped of all features that a desirable woman in a James Bond movie has and that she portrays the stereotype that women cannot be smart and powerful while being desirable and sexual. Lisa Funnell describes her as a "[...] short, stocky, middle-aged white wom[a]n who [is] conservatively dressed and appear[s] androgynous [...]" (Funnell 203). She does not have the features women usually have in Bond films and is portrayed as undesirable to Bond and the viewer. This sexual uninterest goes both ways, as she is homosexual. Even though her sexuality is not confirmed in the movie, it is indicated in the film and confirmed in the novel by Ian Fleming. Her femininity and her gender are used as another characterization of evil and bad in the movie. Her role is not female because Ian Fleming or the writers of the script wanted to empower or represent (gay) women, but to make her less likable and challenge the, at that time, British normality. Women in powerful positions were not the norm and gay women were still seen as evil and wrong. The villain has to be unlikable for the audience to root for the Bond the hero and to justify violence against the villain. Rosa Klebb's justification is through her heritage (Soviet Union), her physical appearance, her powerful position as a woman and her homosexuality. It stresses that she is from the Soviet Union, a communist state, which was seen as evil during

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<sup>10</sup> [https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0057076/fullcredits?ref\\_=tt\\_cl\\_sm#cast](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0057076/fullcredits?ref_=tt_cl_sm#cast) (download on 7 November 2020)



the Cold War. In communist countries, it was common earlier to have women in powerful positions working above and with men instead of merely for men. By contrast, women in western countries were still rarely in positions ruling over men (Wolanski). Rosa Klebb's position again goes against the western status quo, therefore making the viewer uncomfortable.

Rosa Klebb's character as a gay woman in a powerful position is not used for female empowerment or to represent homosexuality, but to emphasize her wickedness through making the audience uncomfortable as Klebb goes against the normality of the Western World for the sake of justifying Bond's violence against her.

## 5. The Evolution of Female Characters

To answer my proposed question, I do believe the women of James Bond have evolved. While the female characters of the Primary Bond Girl and Money Penny in *From Russia with Love* are openly dependent on the man James Bond, always submissive and inferior and can only exist through Bond, the women of *Casino Royale* and *Skyfall* are much more independent and challenge Bond's power and dominance. Women in power in *Casino Royale* do not only exist to make the viewer uncomfortable like Rosa Klebb, but are supposed to represent women working in male dominated occupations. But here lies the problem, while M's character exists and technically is female empowering, she lacks relatability and with that is much less empowering and reprehensible than she could and should be. The role of the Secondary Bond Girls is the only character that has had no evolution whatsoever, which is regrettable, but looking at her whole premise and purpose inevitable. While the sexism and misogyny in *From Russia with Love* is clearly portrayed, *Casino Royale* is less obviously sexist but still based on sexist and anti-feminist stereotypes, feeding into the internalized sexism and misogyny of the audience instead of using more offensive sexist portrayals.

The women of James Bond have evolved because they had to, not because the writers wanted them to. The sexist and misogynistic formula had to be changed to still be accepted by society and to keep the movies popular. It became less sexist not for the sake of feminism or female empowerment but to satisfy the viewers.

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