

Comparing Dr. No (Young 1962) to *Casino Royale* (Campbell 2006)

“What's the best Bond film,” is a question asked by first time viewers and 007 aficionados alike. Everyone seems to have an opinion and frankly it comes down to comparing apples to oranges because of the vast differences between iterations of the franchise. So while the best film cannot be discerned, the evolving model of the films can be observed. Essentially there are three mainstream versions of Bond, the one seen in the original Ian Flemming novels, The Sean Connery through Pierce Brosnan Bonds, and then the Daniel Craig Bond. (*Why We Still Need 007*).

The biggest cinematic change in the franchise was presented in Daniel Craig's revival of *Casino Royale* (Campbell 2006). This was the first time the model of the old school, suave, indomitable gentleman that was presented in Sean Connery's *Dr. No* (Young 1963) was completely altered and reshaped. This is not to say that Dalton, Brosnan, Niven, or Moore's portrayal of Bond were exactly the same as Connery's but is pointing out the fact that the timeline that exists throughout Bond films was begun anew, and there was a large tonal shift (The new James Bond, Thomas).

The obvious changes to the film are seen through Bond being “more serious, more muscular, and less witty”(The new James Bond, Thomas). Instead of focusing on these changes this essay is going to discuss the more complex modifications to the series such as the fallibility of James Bond, representation of women in the two films, and the perception of masculinity. The two films that will be compared are *Dr. No* (Young 1962) and *Casino Royale* (Campbell 2006).

From watching the two movies it is evident that Sean Connery's James Bond is always the perfect representation of Her Majesty's Secret Service, but Craig's Bond is riddled with character flaws. First off Craig's bond is not a 00 agent yet but is trying to prove his prowess as an agent. This is far different from Connery's already notorious and esteemed status as an agent. This switch helps show Bond as a progressing character with a larger arc throughout each episode.

Another character change is that instead of defeating his enemies with ease, without sweat, and never without tarnishing a fine tailored suit, Craig's bond can bleed. The overall tone of *Casino Royale* is far more violent and intense than any of the previous franchise iterations, and this is definitely evident through the things Bond goes through. This is evident through the torture scene at the boat yard in the movie.

Since Bond is able to bleed and does not have a godlike status, it makes his character more three dimensional and brings a new perspective on the franchise that enriches it to the point where it can reach a modern audience. This shift is really important culturally because it redefines what the ideal man is. Instead of seeing the ideal man as one who is irresistible to women, drinks, smokes, and is invincible, the ideal man is seen as rugged, strong, but his flaws are acknowledged.

Women are not given great representation in the James Bond series. In *Dr. No* it is essentially a boys club as far as authority goes. The command at MI6 is composed of a white male Q, and a white male M. Also the villain, Dr. Jullius No, is another white male. The only women are those that are interested in pursuing a relationship with Bond.

In *Dr. No* Bond has three sexual encounters with women who seem to have very little ability to resist him. They are usually side characters without the ability to protect themselves or make tough decisions. This reinforced the concept of patriarchal power dynamics and negative stereotypes towards women. In *Casino Royale* Bond has two partners who are much stronger characters. His most intimate companion Vesper Lynn actually betrays him and almost best him at the end (*James Bond, Sex and Masculinity*).

Vesper Lynn is a character that all of the other bond films lacked. She was a 3-dimensional character that had confusing wants and needs, and ultimately thought through them for herself. She did not choose to just do what James said but actually chose to go against him. She was not the simple noir female fatale but she was far more than that. She was neither fully good nor evil and made James actually care about her. Having a character that can best James Bond as a female is empowering and a big step for the series.

The character of Bond has always been influential on younger generations of especially men. They see the agent as someone who represents the epitome of class, success, and someone who lives the exciting life they wish to lead. The concept of Bond being irresistible to women in *Dr.No* promoted a sense of toxic heteronormativity and disregard for women that negatively impacted society. His masculinity is defined by the women he gets close to and the people he is able to best (*Gender and Sexuality Politics*).

In *Casino Royale* Bond is still up to his same old antics of pursuing women and bad guys, but it does not define his masculinity and character any more. He seems to get emotions for the girls he finds interest in and he has to chase them instead of just giving them an award winning smile and ordering a vesper.

Craig has no problem taking orders from Judi Denche's portrayal of M. This is a far contrast to the flirty antics he used to engage in with Money Penny from *Dr. No*. There is now a sense of balance between the power dynamic between masculinity and femininity (*James Bond in World and Popular Culture*).

Looking at the changes seen in this franchise is really important because of the scope and reach that it has to impact society. The James Bond franchise highlights an ideal way to portray a person's life and it is immensely important for this picture to be evolving as society changes and progresses. From looking at these two movies it is evident that there is a shift between the mediums that mimics society's progressive concepts.

With a new Bond coming around the corner, this topic is incredibly pertinent right now and should be taken seriously. Making Bond a character that people can model themselves after is something that still needs to be worked on and explored. Simply changing the sexuality of the character Q is not enough.

Works Cited

Barber, Andrew. "James Bond, Sex and Masculinity." *RELEVANT*, 7 June 2017,
www.relevantmagazine.com/culture/movies/james-bond-sex-and-masculinity/.

Burgess, Susan. "Gender and Sexuality Politics in the James Bond Film Series: Cultural Origins of Gay Inclusion in the U.S Military." *Polity*, vol. 47, no. 2, 2015, pp. 225–248.,
www.jstor.org/stable/24540298. Accessed 7 June 2021.

Campbell, Martin, director. *Casino Royale (2006)*. MGM, 2006.

James Bond in the 21st Century : Why We Still Need 007, edited by Glenn Yeffeth, and Leah Wilson, BenBella Books, 2006. ProQuest Ebook Central,
<https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.pointloma.idm.oclc.org/lib/pointloma-ebooks/detail.action?docID=900417>.

James Bond in World and Popular Culture : The Films are Not Enough, Cambridge Scholars Publisher, 2011. *ProQuest Ebook Central*,
<https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.pointloma.idm.oclc.org/lib/pointloma-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1107079>.

Thomas, Steven W. "The new James Bond: and globalization theory, inside and out." *CineAction*, no. 78, 2009, p. 32+. Gale Literature Resource Center,
link.gale.com/apps/doc/A206593259/LitRC?u=sand82993&sid=googleScholarFullText&xid=c166d6d6. Accessed 8 June 2021.

Young, Terence, director. *Dr. No*. MGM Home Entertainment, 2006.

