

“Brave New World”: The New Q, Masculinity and the Craig Era Bond Films

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In *Spectre* (Mendes 2015) Ben Wishaw reprised his role as Q, head of MI6’s Q Branch, and the man behind James Bond’s life-saving gadgets and weaponry. They met for the first time in *Skyfall* (Mendes 2012) and this encounter helped to reset the relationship between Q and Bond, in keeping with the theme of old versus new that was very much a part of this 50th anniversary Bond film. Q tells Bond that, “I’m your new Quarter-master”, as they sit side by side on a bench in London’s National Gallery, in front of Turner’s painting of *The Fighting Temeraire* (1838), an evocative metaphor for Bond as an ageing agent.¹ “You must be joking” scoffs Bond in judgement of him for looking too young and inexperienced to handle the job. Yet in the course of the conversation that follows Q is able to match Bond with some witty comebacks, (re)establishing the mutual respect and trust between them that the film further develops. This is carried over into a second appearance in *Spectre* when Q is given a more expansive brief. At the end of the meeting scene in *Skyfall*, having matched Bond’s witty repartee, Q stands up and leaves Bond with a Walther PPK gun and a radio transmitter. He wishes him good luck in the field and politely reminds him to return the equipment. “Brave new world” says Bond now alone, talking aloud to himself, but also a deliberate aside to the film audience about what Q’s demeanour might represent for Bond and the franchise.

Like M’s secretary Miss Money Penny, Q was noticeably absent from *Casino Royale* (Campbell 2006) and *Quantum of Solace* (Forster 2008), the first two films of the Daniel Craig era. She also returned in *Skyfall* and *Spectre* alongside other Bond formula classics such as gadgets. The fact that *Skyfall* has been widely understood as a reconfirmation of the old Bond traditions is in part supported by the reinstatement of Q back into the franchise, but in line with the well-designed system of “continuity and change” that scholars such as James

Chapman describe as operational in the Bond films (196). The reintroduction of a character like Q is significant, as it is also important to consider how this might update the franchise, and help Bond to adapt to changing times and appeal to new audiences. Other supporting characters in the Craig era films—the new Eve Moneypenny played by Naomi Harris and Judi Dench’s role as M—have received some extended critical attention, not least because of a recent collection of essays on the representation and role of women, femininity, and feminism in the Bond franchise (see Funnell 2015).

To date, however, there has been very little discussion of Q, other than in relationship to Bond’s technology and the standard Bond formula (see Willis 2009; Omry 2009). Furthermore, this critical writing was published before Ben Wishaw’s casting in the role of a younger Q and the re-introduction of the character into the film series. This paper will address this gap in scholarship, specifically focusing on the new generation Q, in order to contribute to the debate about Bond’s representational politics, and specifically the construction and contestation of hegemonic masculinity in the Craig era films *Skyfall* and *Spectre*.²

Past Q

It is difficult to discuss the new Q though without first taking into consideration the Q of the pre-Craig era Bond films, especially as embodied by Desmond Llewellyn in *From Russia with Love* (Young 1963) onwards. During the Sean Connery era, the scenes where Q equips Bond with the latest technology became a staple component of the on-screen Bond formula thanks in large part to the famous exchange in Q’s workshop in *Goldfinger* (Hamilton 1964) when he introduces Bond to his Aston Martin DB5, explaining the car’s various modifications and gadgets. In terms of how to play the scene, director Guy Hamilton apparently clarified for Llewellyn that Q should appear antagonistic towards Bond because of

the way that he treats Q's inventions (Pfeiffer and Lisa 210). Consequently, Q is noticeably irritated with Bond throughout the *Goldfinger* briefing scene, treating him with thinly veiled irritation, and pointedly telling him "I never joke about my work, 007". Though first spoken by Q much later in *The Spy Who Loved Me* (Gilbert 1977), the phrase "Now pay attention 007" also became iconic of his seriousness and even exasperation at Bond and the reckless mistreatment of his gadgets while in the field. During the 36 years in the role, Llewellyn appeared in 17 Bond films alongside five of the official Bond actors to provide an enduring connection.³ However, the character of Q does not remain unchanged from film to film; rather his demeanour and attitude can be said to range from grumpy genius to protective mentor (Dodds, "It's not for Everyone" 215). This relationship history between Q and 007 has implications for how we understand the new version of Q and the interactions between Daniel Craig's Bond.

Following *Goldfinger*, a typical Bond film usually contains at least one scene with Q briefing Bond about his new gadgets. It is notable however that over time the older Q was increasingly used for comic relief in scenes, delivering some particularly cringe-worthy lines including the list-topping "I think he's attempting re-entry, sir" in *Moonraker* (Gilbert 1979) during the banter-filled Roger Moore era. The long relationship between Bond and Q reached the stage of mutual—if not barbed—affection by the Pierce Brosnan films and in Llewellyn's last appearance in *The World is Not Enough* (Apted 1999) Bond looks concerned when it seems like a frail-looking Q is hinting that he is about to retire. Descriptions of Llewellyn's Q likewise tend to reflect the public affection that developed in recognition of his character-defining appearances in the films, and the lab and workshop-based Q scenes as a familiar element in the Bond franchise, even if Q sometimes joins Bond out on a mission. For years, a number of terms like fatherly (Moore 73), crusty (Black 118), and dotty (Frayling 192) have

been used by a wide range of scholars and commentators to describe Q, and serve to emphasise his difference from Bond as an action hero and icon of masculinity.

The classification of Q as ‘boffin’ merits some further consideration. Robert Jones has charted the emergence of the stereotypical boffin character in British film in the period from 1945 to 1970, tracing the origins back to the public image of scientists in World War II, as mythologised in the portrayal of Barnes Wallis in *The Dam Busters* (Anderson 1955) and later continuing in the form of Q. According to Jones, the archetypal boffin in post-war British war films is defined primarily by *his* occupation, and the outsider aspects of his status as advisor, meaning that while he can be seen as heroic, acting on behalf of Britain, he also serves a somewhat ambivalent figure characterised by his expertise, obsessiveness, eccentricity, and separateness from others.⁴ Jones argues that these defining traits of the boffin are exhibited by Llewellyn’s Q in the Bond films in contrast to the Bond character. He states that where “Bond is the cool, unemotional professional who fits in anywhere”, Q in comparison “looks out of place everywhere but in his workshop, and seems like an outsider in the harsh world of espionage in the field” (41). As Martin Willis also observes, the choice of John Cleese to play Q’s assistant R in *The World is Not Enough* and then replace Llewellyn in the role in *Die Another Day* (Tamahori 2002) heightened the overtly comic aspect of Q as eccentric scientist in the Brosnan era, and by extension associations with the boffin stereotype. R is simply a figure of ridicule. In the Craig era, by way of contrast, the new Q maintains a sense of continuity with some necessary changes to the portrayal of the character appropriate to today’s social and cultural (in addition to technical and even geopolitical) contexts.

Tech Geek Q

Played by Wishaw in *Skyfall* and *Spectre*, Q still performs much the same function in supporting Bond and assisting him in his missions, but appears noticeably younger and more computer-savvy than in previous Bond films. Though the relevance of the post-war boffin stereotype to the Q scenes in *Skyfall* and *Spectre* undoubtedly persists in the broader sense, the new Q has more often been described with other labels such as tech nerd and geek (sometimes used interchangeably), which call attention to the shift in the character in accordance with wider cultural trends in the twenty first century (see Ball 2012; Wilde 2012). To provide some context for the rise of geeks in films, television, and other forms of media, scholars explore how the IT boom since the 1980s and the advent of the Internet in 1990s gave rise to cyber-culture and the increasing value afforded to technological knowledge in today's world. Words like nerd and geek have been used and to some extent even reclaimed to reflect more positive associations than they did in the past, especially in terms of social and sexual status (see Bell 2013). Like all such popular stereotypes, that of the male geek is far from meaningless, and might be understood in relation to discourses about gender, including the idealised or hegemonic version of masculinity embodied by film heroes like James Bond.

It is worth considering that prior to Wishaw's Q, another prominent representation of the young male tech geek in the Bond franchise was Russian computer programmer Boris Grishenko, played by Alan Cummings in *GoldenEye* (Campbell 1995). Grishenko is a talented computer hacker who works alongside Natalya Simonova, employed by the Russian government, but is involved in Alec Trevelyan's plan to hijack the Goldeneye satellite. Unsurprisingly, as a Bond henchman Grishenko reinforces the negative aspects of the male geek stereotype in appearance and behaviour, including poor social skills. He is also untidy looking and is characterised as obnoxious, infantile, and decidedly misogynistic. When Simonova exclaims "You're such a geek" in response to his lewd jokes at her expense, her

use of the term is derogatory, and another female technician scoffs and jeers, “He wouldn’t know a woman if one came up and sat on his head”.

In *GoldenEye*, Grishenko’s geekiness is mainly played for laughs and comic relief and the character is probably best remembered for his particularly garish Hawaiian shirts, nervous habit of twirling and clicking pens when he is working, and the arrogant catchphrase of “I’m invincible!” In the *Skyfall* sequence at the National Gallery, Wishaw’s new Q makes a knowing reference (for Bond fans at least) to MI6 no longer providing exploding pen gadgets, the same weapon given to Bond by the old Q in *GoldenEye* and used to save the day when it is accidentally detonated by Grishenko.⁵ In *Skyfall* Q gives Bond just two devices, while he himself uses the MI6 network and his computer skills to battle cyberterrorist Raoul Silva on the technology front, and in *Spectre* they again come to the fore to foil the launch by Max Denbigh (whom Bond dubs ‘C’) of the Nine Eyes intelligence-gathering global surveillance program and thwart Blofeld. As such not only is this Q reasonably hands-on, with the ability to work both inside and outside of the system, but the character is given a more active and even assertive role, albeit to a large extent still of a technological nature.⁶ However, with so much at stake Q makes mistakes on occasion, for example in *Skyfall* when he plugs Silva’s laptop into the MI6 network allowing the villain to hack the system and escape captivity. Despite the recurrent theme in the Craig era of Bond somehow being old-fashioned or outdated in a world increasingly dominated by sophisticated technology, he is re-inscribed as the man of action in the final showdown where he takes down Silva using his physical prowess and some handmade traps. With this in mind two observations can be made about the new Q as a tech geek in an age of global technology networks, and in the context of the modern spy thriller in relation to Bond’s heroic masculinity as a 00 field agent.

First, there is the question of what it might mean to talk about fieldwork in these two recent films in particular. On the one hand, as noted by Klaus Dodds, fieldwork in the Bond

films “is essential to Bond’s identity, and his craft depends on his ability to negotiate a diversity of places and contexts in which his physical and social skills will be tested” (“It’s not for Everyone” 218). Dodds adds that “The fieldwork undertaken is often improvised, and one where he is largely trusted to complete his mission independently” (Ibid. 218). However, as discussed previously, on occasion Q has joined Bond in the field, though his role is not as a field agent. In *Thunderball* (Young 1965), for example, Q travels to the Bahamas to outfit Bond with his equipment. Similar appearances occur in other Bond films over the years including *Moonraker* and *Octopussy* (Glen 1983), but this fieldwork goes furthest in *Licence to Kill* (Glen 1989) when Q arrives in the fictional Isthmus city to help Bond despite him acting as a rogue agent. The new Q similarly demonstrates his loyalty to Bond in *Spectre*. As a result, Q has an extended role in the film when, having helped Bond to disappear on a rogue mission, he himself escapes capture by some SPECTRE agents while assisting Bond in the field in Austria. Moreover, he plays an important part in the film’s London-set finale, assisting Ralph Fiennes’ M take down of the traitor C, while other helpers like Moneypenny and Bill Tanner remain off-screen, as they are stationed away from the main action.

On the other hand, as Jim Leach observes, the effect of others like M and Q increasingly using technologies within the context of the narratives of the films is that, “it breaks down the distinction between home base and field of action that has been central to the Bond formula” (35). In *Skyfall* Bond’s response to Moneypenny that fieldwork is “not for everyone” is, among other things, a (grating) masculinist reminder of his superior status as the ultimate secret agent. Yet in the same film both former MI6 agent Silva and Q observe that as an operative in the field Bond is in many ways outdated. Silva explains that he can easily create global havoc from the comfort of his deserted island that is also a high-tech lair: “Just point and click”. Earlier in the film, during his bout of verbal sparring with Bond in the National Gallery, Q quips that “I can do more damage on my laptop sitting in my pyjamas

before my first cup of Earl Grey than you can do in a year in the field”. Despite this storyline, by the end of *Skyfall*, Bond is not only ready to return to the field of action, but it is clear that he cannot and should not be replaced, as he has proven his resilience and has been resurrected (see Dodds, “Shaking and Stirring James Bond”). However, where in *Casino Royale* Craig’s Bond is seen breaking into M’s home and hacking into her computer in order to gain information, in *Skyfall* and *Spectre* he relies on Q as the genius computer hacker to provide technological assistance. That Bond requires Q to use his more advanced computer skills to gather intelligence from the SPECTRE ring he has taken away from Sciarra and fend off the attack by Blofeld in *Spectre* is surely a sign that fieldwork these days may involve being armed with a laptop *and* a gun. In both cases, the sequences in *Spectre* where Q engages in battle with the enemy in a virtual arena are crosscut with spectacular action sequences when Bond performs the more traditional role of action hero. Previously, in *Skyfall*, when Bond asked Q why he was needed if technology is now so important, Q replies “Every now and then a trigger must be pulled” to which Bond responds “Or not pulled, it’s hard to know which in your pyjamas.” This statement is qualified in the final scenes of *Spectre* when Bond chooses not to exercise his licence to kill and shoot dead an unarmed Blofeld. However, the frequency of this particular approach wouldn’t make for a particularly entertaining Bond film—at least, if Bond is judged as an action franchise!

The second and related point centres on the connections made between gender, sexuality, and technology in the Bond films. The signification of Bond’s relationship to technology has been well discussed, especially in terms of mastery and fetishisation. Martin Willis has argued in particular for Brosnan’s portrayal of Bond as a “technological maestro” (170). The best example of this occurs in the Q scene in *Tomorrow Never Dies* (Spottiswoode 1997) where Bond is instinctively able to operate his new car remotely and much more effectively than Q who only manages to elicit jerky movements. In this scene there is an

obvious connection between Bond's easy mastery of the car's controls and his male sexual potency. The implication seems to be that the older Q is impotent by comparison. Certainly, according to Willis, "Brosnan's Bond is not simply extending his sexuality through technology, he is transferring that sexuality from his own body onto the hardware itself" (174).⁷ If Brosnan's Bond is "technological rather than physical", as Willis (169) puts it, then Craig's Bond is identified as physical rather than technological, relying more on his hyper-masculine body and less on spectacular gadgets. *Spectre* is something of a departure in this respect, given how critical the exploding watch given to Bond by Q is to the plot, and the return of special in-car modifications, which Bond uses with mixed effect. Bond's use of the gadgets in the prototype Aston Martin DB10 he has stolen from Q Branch is, in this instance, hampered by the fact that he lacks Q's support and instruction on what the new car is capable of doing. This is quite different from past films in scenes like the one in *The Spy Who Loved Me* (Gilbert 1977) when Russian agent Major Anya Amasova operates the Lotus Esprit S1 having previously stolen the blueprints from MI6, or in *Tomorrow Never Dies* when Bond is shown to have a spontaneous grasp of Q's gadgets. For a time in *Spectre*, during the main car chase in Rome, it is Bond's lack of mastery that is a source of humour as he struggles to identify and operate the switches labelled "Atmosphere" and "Backfire". In this case Bond's frustration at Q's gadget labels and switches creates light-hearted comedy, when "Atmosphere" triggers the in-car sound system, and the "Backfire" machine gun fails because there has been no ammunition loaded in the gun. The humour of the sequence quite obviously plays with audience expectations, only to return to the Bond formula. After all, Bond's selection of the "Exhaust" flame thrower and "Air" ejector seat serve as reassuring balance suggestive of his natural instinct for timing and survival.

Crucially, in *Skyfall* and *Spectre*, the signification of Q's relationship with technology also becomes important in a way that it had not previously been. David Bell and others

discuss “the geek as a way of doing masculinities” (77). Technology is said to play a central role in this since it is a crucial component in how geek masculinity is defined and valued in popular culture. In particular, Bell describes the geek as an emergent purveyor of “techno-masculinity” with the ability to both resist and reinforce hegemonic masculinity (80). This resonates with the new Q of the Craig era Bond. In his new guise as computer geek, Q doesn’t just keep the hero equipped with the right device, he also uses technology effectively, rather than ineptly, albeit software rather than hardware. He can also hold his own when verbally sparring with Bond. In this manner, the techno-masculinities of Q and the action-masculinities of Bond are intimately connected if occasionally antagonistic. They ultimately depend upon one another in order to secure legitimacy in the modern digital spying era.

(Re)Fashioning Q

Beyond technology, the new Q has another obvious connection to geek culture through quirky ‘geek chic’ styling. In 2012, the first official publicity image of Wishaw as Q in *Skyfall*, with Craig’s Bond in his signature suit standing in the background, looked suitably geeky wearing black thick-framed glasses and a shirt and tie under a V-necked cardigan. Other artefacts used to dress and accessorise the character like his Scrabble Q mug, and his fishtail parka, can be judged against the glamorous “shaken not stirred” fantasy of Bond and his much-imitated sartorial choices, including the custom-made suits. Q’s attire might be regarded as being no less fashionable or stylish, and now recognised as “on trend” by film critics and fashion media.

Matters of lifestyle, fashion, and dress have always been essential to the Bond phenomenon, including Ian Fleming’s spy novels. Fleming said that he included details like familiar products and brand names in the novels to help round out Bond and make the reader believe in the character (*Playboy* 100). On screen, the clothing worn by Connery was

important to establishing his image as Bond and signify sophistication, especially the suits tailored for him by Anthony Sinclair in London originally at the request of *Dr No* (1962) director Terence Young (see Cook and Hines 2005). Following in these footsteps, Tom Ford served as the tailor for Craig's Bond in *Quantum of Solace*, *Skyfall*, and *Spectre*, and his wardrobe is specifically designed to accentuate his fit and muscular body. *Skyfall* and *Spectre* costume designer Jany Temime has also explained how she used clothing in particular to establish Q and reflect his alternative masculinity (see Phili 2012). For the introductory meeting scene in *Skyfall* she dressed Q in a fishtail parka over a jacket and tie to emphasise his difference from Craig's Bond. Compared to Bond looking smart but conservative in a well cut suit, Q looks slightly offbeat and younger in his parka, jacket, and glasses, which help to emphasize the generational gap between the men that is being directly referenced during their exchange. The casual way that Q is dressed might be taken both as a sign of a high degree of self-confidence and a symptom of immaturity, but the oversized parka in this scene certainly makes him look even younger and more diminutive than Craig's Bond. The slight build, narrow face, and dark floppy hair of Q further support this contrast with Bond's hard (if supposedly out of condition) physicality.

In this context, the star-image of Wishaw outside of the Bond films is worth noting, though a detailed analysis is beyond the scope of this particular paper. Prior to his role as Q, Wishaw was best known for his celebrated stage performance as Hamlet in Trevor Nunn's 2004 production, and his film credits included Sebastian Flyte in *Brideshead Revisited* (Jarrold 2008) and the lead role of John Keats in the biopic *Bright Star* (Campion 2009), each time playing a fragile and damaged character. More recently, Wishaw appeared alongside Eddie Redmayne in *The Danish Girl* (Hooper 2015) and in the BBC television espionage drama *London Spy* (Smith 2015) to much critical acclaim and considerable press attention, which is unavoidable since his role as Q in *Skyfall* and *Spectre*.⁸ Though Wishaw is not

muscular or representative of the traditional male ideal like Craig, he might also be regarded as a sex symbol and has certainly become a style icon in the media.⁹ Notably, at the time of *Skyfall*'s release, Wishaw was photographed for a wardrobe feature in the British *GQ* Bond special November issue (Don 222-7), and he was named in *The Guardian*'s fashion section as one of the best dressed people of 2012 (see Cartner-Morley, Chilvers and Cochrane 2012). In 2013, Wishaw starred in Italian fashion house Prada's autumn/winter advertising campaign, and in 2015 he appeared in *Esquire*'s UK December issue in a spread about overcoats (Getz Mezibov 196-201). Meanwhile, on the internet, especially Bond fan sites such as Remmert van Bramm's *Bond Lifestyle* and Matt Spaiser's *The Suits of James Bond*, Wishaw's clothing, accessories, and image as Q has been catalogued, looked at, and admired in a way not dissimilar in principle but different in form to Craig's Bond.

As an aside it is interesting to observe that when at the mountain-top Hoffer Klinik in Austria in *Spectre* Wishaw's Q demonstrates a sign of cultural competence and an ability to fit in that is normally reserved for the Bond character. Typically, when in some exotic setting, a casino, bar, or hotel, or some other location, Bond effortlessly displays his cultural competence by knowing how to behave, and essentially fitting in. In the past the Bond character has been no stranger to health resorts and research clinics, including Shrublands in *Thunderball*, and the Alpine research institute in *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* (Hunt 1969). Like many other locations in the Bond films these settings also offer Bond the opportunity to display his sexual potency—in *Thunderball* he swiftly beds nurse Patricia Fearing, and in *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* he meets a group of women undergoing treatment and has sex with two of them. However, in *Spectre* when Q appears at the bar of the trendy glass-walled Hoffer Klinik Bond is looking somewhat reflective, tense, and unusually out of place, having been told by Madeleine Swann that she doesn't need him. To compound matters, his drink order—a vodka Martini—is rejected by the bartender who

informs him that the spa doesn't serve alcohol. Unexpectedly, Q instead steps in to order Bond a "prolytic digestive enzyme shake" without consultation. However, at the end of the scene when Q has left and the barman arrives with the health drink, Bond delivers the obligatory glib witticism to rise above the situation and (re)assert his masculinity, when he says to the bartender: "Do me a favour would you? Throw it down the toilet. Cut out the middle man".

00Q

The Q-Bond relationship in *Skyfall* and *Spectre* has attracted some considerable interest, especially in recognition of the reworked age dynamic, and the nature of the rapport between the characters. At the age of 32 at the time of *Skyfall*'s release, Wishaw was the youngest actor to play Q. Though in his mid-40s Craig wasn't the oldest actor to portray the character of Bond. When compared to the origin story of *Casino Royale*, which continues into *Quantum of Solace*, focusing on the growing pains of new "00" agent, *Spectre* follows in the steps of *Skyfall* and emphasises that Bond is ageing (Dodds, "Shaking and Stirring James Bond" 121). Casting someone younger than Bond in the role of Q also has an impact on the connection between the characters. Previously, in the Bond films the Q-Bond pairing normally worked along the lines of Q taking on a paternal or perhaps schoolmasterly role to Bond's frustrated adolescent. Played by Llewellyn for over three decades, the longer Q stayed in the franchise the more the character (if not the scenes he was in) came to represent maturity, wisdom, and experience (Dodds, "It's not for Everyone" 215). The introduction of Wishaw's Q instantly and visibly reversed this aspect of the Q-Bond relationship. In particular, the National Gallery meeting scene in *Skyfall* sets up this Q as a fresh young upstart in contrast to Craig's Bond looking worn and weathered as an experienced 00 agent. Although there is still something

gently antagonistic about the new Q-Bond scenes, in *Skyfall* and *Spectre* there is also a playful, teasing quality to their relationship, and perhaps even a new sexual undercurrent.¹⁰

One scene from *Skyfall* that immediately gained attention is the charged scene in which the villain Silva has Bond tied to a chair, unbuttons his shirt, and runs his hands over Bond's chest and legs. During the scene Bond asks Silva "What makes you think this is my first time?" Michael W. Boyce is right to say that this question is significant because it "complicates the traditional heterosexual Bond masculinity when Bond responds to Silva's sexual advances with the allusions to his own history of bisexual or homosexual experimentation" (279). The new Q-Bond relationship can also be analysed in light of this question, making the interactions between them rich in potential for sub-textual interpretation. For example, Elizabeth Nielsen reads the beginning of the meeting scene between Bond and Q in *Skyfall* as a romantic pick up largely because of the public setting outside of his MI6 workshop, and because at first he does not identify himself to Bond who is there waiting for him (141). She also demonstrates how other scenes might be open to this approach by reflecting on the intimate shaving scene that takes place in the film between Moneypenny and Bond. In the scene, when Moneypenny arrives at Bond's hotel room in Macau, he asks her why she has been sent and she teases that "Q's afraid of flying". For Nielsen this points toward an alternative version of events: "Since her assistance seems to consist of shaving him with a straight razor and a great deal of sexual tension and then providing him with some attractive yet underutilized backup up at the casino, the possibility of Q filling these roles instead is an intriguing idea" (142). There would seem to be some irony that in the film the 'straight' razor scene between Bond and Moneypenny is suggestive but supports Bond's heteronormative sexuality even while possibly allowing for the co-existence of a queer subtext.

In *Spectre*, the potential for (re)interpretation exists by following the intersection of technology, gender, and sexuality in the Bond films. At the beginning of the scene in Q's lab, on impulse Bond picks up a large assault rifle from a display and handles it confidently until Q wordlessly takes it away from him; Bond can look but cannot touch. In the same scene, when Bond receives a "smartblood" nanotechnology tracking injection from Q, the pause that Q leaves after "You may feel a small..." and "...prick" is delivered in a manner that might seem sexually suggestive. Later on, when Bond steals the Aston Martin from Q's lab he teasingly leaves him a chilled bottle of champagne in its place. These actions can be interpreted as light-hearted jokes but also playful flirtation.

In fact, this isn't the first time that Q's masculinity has been interpreted as alternative, even queer, in relation to Bond. Queer theorist Judith Halberstam argues that in *GoldenEye* Bond's dominant masculinity is "primarily prosthetic" in that its construction relies on his technological gadgetry and is least convincing when compared to the female masculinity of M, or the masculinity of Q who supplies him with the gadgets. According to Halberstam, "It is no accident that the science nerd is called Agent Q. We might read Agent Q as a perfect model of the interpenetration of queer and dominant regimes – Q is precisely an agent, a queer subject who exposes the workings of dominant heterosexuality." (4) Halberstam further says that the effect of these supporting characters is to provide "a remarkable representation of the absolute dependence of dominant masculinities on minority masculinities" (Ibid.). Though this argument is in reference to the Brosnan era, the reading of Q as representing an alternative masculinity compared to Bond is valuable, and perhaps even more relevant to the new version of the character.

The new Q-Bond chemistry has proved inspirational for some creators of slash fanworks online, and the 00Q "ship" (from relationship) has emerged since *Skyfall* with artwork and writing that fills in the gaps, continues and extends Q's relationship with Bond as

a noncanonical same-sex pairing. These fanworks include fiction, art, and videos based on the Bond/Q pairing that explore romantic and erotic interactions between the characters. For example, the shaving scene between Moneypenny and Bond is indeed reimaged in some fanworks of this type with Q in the place of Moneypenny to make the scene explicitly homoerotic, and sometimes graphically sexual. Other fanworks for the 00Q pairing devise new scenarios involving the characters, including marriage and domestic life, which is equally subversive when it comes to Bond. As Nielsen comments in her discussion of 00Q fanworks, based on some interviews and a survey of fans, in pairing Bond and Q the characters get “framed as complimentary opposites” (143). In this respect the 00Q fanworks sit alongside the films to provide another version of how Bond and Q might operate in relationship with one another.

Brave New Q

There will be many questions about what will happen next for the Bond franchise, especially whether the current Bond actor will remain in the role for another film or two, and what a change might mean for secondary figures like Q. Bond obviously remains the central focus, but supporting characters like Q can do more than just provide possibilities for his character development. On the one hand, as representative of an alternative form of masculinity associated with new technology and in tune with the shift in gender norms in the twenty first century, the new Q can pose a challenge to Bond’s masculinity, and status as a masculine icon. The new take on Q provided a way to freshen up the Craig era Bond films, move past the origins story, and reintroduce some light-heartedness (see *Skyfall* International Theatrical Marketing Strategy 2012). On the other hand, the new Q does little to disrupt the fantasy of white, male dominance. This becomes especially apparent in *Skyfall* when Q, like Bond, can recover himself and retain his job, whereas Moneypenny ends up behind a desk, and Dench’s

female M is succeeded by Fiennes' Gareth Mallory. Certainly, one of the main criticisms of these last two films has been their reaffirmation of the regressive gender politics that defined earlier Bond eras (see essays in Funnell 2015). Of course, such contradictions and tensions between brave new interpretations and the familiar formula have become part of the tradition of the Bond films and their criticism. Though the end of *Skyfall* features a renewed Bond standing on the top of the MI6 office building overlooking the London cityscape, the end of *Spectre* is somewhat ambivalent. Bond drives away in his (old) Aston Martin DB5 with his (new) love interest Madeleine Swann having left Q standing in his workshop. There is little doubt that Bond will return in some form, but the question is whether this particular Q will still be there waiting for him.

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Notes

¹ When Q sits down next to Bond he looks at the painting and remarks “It always makes me feel a little melancholy. Grand old war ship, being ignominiously hauled away to scrap... The inevitability of time, don't you think? What do you see?” Bond does not shift his gaze, but responds “A bloody big ship”. This exchange about the painting, and the painting itself, is one of many references to the question of whether Bond, and by extension the traditional field agent, is still needed today. The exchange also emphasizes the different responses of the two men to the painting. Where Q’s response is analytical and sensitive to the symbolism of the artwork, Bond deliberately takes a literal approach and his assessment is blunt.

² Masculinities scholar R. W. Connell defines hegemonic masculinity as “the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of the patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women” (77). For a detailed analysis of the rewriting of Bond’s masculinity at the beginning of the Craig era, see Cunningham and Gabri (2009).

³ In contrast, once Lois Maxwell was considered too old to play Miss Money Penny the character was recast to bring in a younger actor. After 14 Bond films, and over twenty years in the role of Miss Money Penny, for *The Living Daylights* (Glen 1987) Maxwell was replaced

by Caroline Bliss who was 26 years old at the time. The role of Miss Money Penny has since been recast twice with Samantha Bliss and Naomi Harris. For a detailed discussion focused on Miss Money Penny, including discussion on how gender and age intersect in the Bond franchise, see Dodds, “It’s not for Everyone”.

⁴ The ambivalent quality of the scientist character as portrayed in cinema is also noted by Christopher Frayling who discusses in *Mad, Bad and Dangerous? The Scientist and the Cinema* that they have always been a source of both fascination and fear. He says that we can continue to expect this in the twenty first century (223).

⁵ An exploding pen is also given to Bond by Q in the unofficial Bond film *Never Say Never Again* (Kershner 1983).

⁶ According to a leaked script draft for *Spectre* Q’s role at one time might have actually extended beyond the technological. In the early version of the script, in the third act when Bond and Q are held captive by the villain, Q instinctively grabs a gun in order to shoot a guard and save Bond. Bond observes in response that “Sometimes a trigger has to be pulled”.

⁷ For further discussion of the role of technology in this scene and the relationship to Brosnan’s Bond also see Jones (210-11), and Funnell and Dodds (128).

⁸ Having refused to answer questions about his persona life and sexuality for a long time, in 2013 post-*Skyfall* Wishaw also publically came out as gay.

⁹ For a detailed discussion of the signifying currency of Craig’s Bond in British lifestyle magazines at the release of *Quantum of Solace*, including his construction as a style icon for men, see Hines.

¹⁰ In development of the old Q-Bond parent/child relationship and in the context of the emphasis placed on Bond’s personal relationships with men in *Skyfall* and *Spectre*, the new Bond-Q relationship might act like brothers. When viewed this way the playful teasing

between Q and Bond is set in contrast with the fraternal rivalry between Silva and Bond, and Blofeld as Bond's adoptive brother.