

## “The Man with the Midas Touch”:

### The Haptic Geographies of James Bond’s Body

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James Bond is frequently referred to as “the man with the Midas touch.” In Greek mythology, King Midas was believed to be able to turn everything he touched into gold. He was given this ability by God Dionyssus who warned Midas about the super-power. At first, Midas saw it as a blessing since everything he touched, from a grape to a table, turned into gold. However, after he accidentally transformed his daughter into a gold statue, Midas begged Dionyssus to relieve him of his golden touch and return his daughter to him. Once that happened, Midas began to share his wealth with others as a form of perpetual atonement for his previous avarice. The story about “the man with the Midas touch” is not only about the extraordinary power to touch and feel but also serves as a cautionary tale about how touch can be dangerous and disastrous.

This descriptor “the man with the Midas touch” was first used in the title track for the film *Goldfinger* (Guy Hamilton 1964) and seemed rather apposite for a super-spy that was already thrilling audiences with sensual stories of seduction, revelation, and calculation. While the lyrics of the song are about the arch-villain and gold bullion merchant Auric Goldfinger, the opening credit sequence emphasizes the similarities between Bond and this villain by projecting images of both men onto a female body painted in gold. The parallels between these two characters continue throughout the film, following their informal encounter at a hotel in Miami.

After exposing Goldfinger's cheating at a card game with a fellow hotel guest, Bond makes love to Goldfinger's female 'escort' Jill Masterson who was made complicit in the deception. As Catherine Haworth argues, "both Bond and Goldfinger 'consume' women in a way that serves to highlight their characterization as strong, powerful, and selfish men" (¶10). However, their actions, and more specifically their bodies and touches, are framed differently in the narrative:

While Bond's voracious sexual appetite is used (not unproblematically) to valorize his masculinity as a virile and irresistibly attractive 'ladies man,' Goldfinger's attitude towards women is seen as a perverse extension of his warped personality, thematizing his gold-lust and desire for wealth. (Haworth ¶10)

When the female singer warns golden girls of "the man with the Midas touch," this lyric arguably applies to both Bond and Goldfinger, albeit it in very different ways. As Masterson discovers at the beginning of the film, the price to be paid for the wrong kind of touch (i.e. a sensual and highly desired touch from James Bond) is death as Goldfinger has his female companion suffocated afterwards by covering her from head to toe in gold paint. Unlike the Greek myth, there is no redemption for the 'girl' in the film.

James Bond is body-focused spy whose physique and touch communicate powerful messages about identity and power in the franchise. The emphasis on Bond's body was heightened when Ian Fleming's novels were adapted into films, and the casting of Sean Connery, an ex-bodybuilder, for the title role was significant in conveying an almost animalistic virility. Scholars such as Laura Marks have explored how film appeals to the senses since it cannot technically represent smell, touch, and taste.<sup>1</sup> Unlike literature where internal sensations can be described in vivid detail, film is a visual media in which internal thoughts, feelings, and sensations are expressed externally and usually through the body (unless there is a voice over

narration). As the Bond films transitioned generically from spy thrillers to action films,<sup>2</sup> they have increasingly focused on the body of Bond as the locus of his identity and film-making practices have played their part in sustaining that transition.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, action is a body-focused genre that is defined primarily through the sheer excess of visual spectacle. One only has to think of how the opening shot of Bond striding across the screen with a sense of purpose before turning and pointing his gun towards the viewer is emblematic of his kinesthetic and proprioceptive qualities. As noted by Yvonne Tasker, narrative elements in action films are often “subsumed within the spectacular staging of action sequences employing star bodies, special effects, artful editing, and persuasive music” (6-7). Film-makers, including the Bond franchise, have proven adept at using close up body shots, focus alteration, and sensual imagery to appeal to touch. Thus, it is important to explore the representational and body politics of Bond franchise and the messages being conveyed through Bond’s touch and feeling.

Bond’s body and haptic encounters need to be examined across various situations, spaces, and contexts. The discussion of the haptic geographies of James Bond should include a consideration of how his body is defined as being fit, sensual, technical, memorializing, and calculating, as well as the ways in which his body changes in accordance with shifting generic and gendered codes in the franchise. Bond, as M noted in *Casino Royale* (Martin Campbell 2006), might be a “blunt instrument” but his apparent bluntness should not obscure something equally fundamental: he is a touchy-feely and sensuous secret agent. Without that touch and without that feel, he would be a ‘dysesthetic instrument’, and ultimately less likely to serve Queen and Country with any great distinction.

### **Haptic Geographies of James Bond**

Haptics or touch is a primary form of non-verbal communication. Touch not only conveys different social messages but it also takes place in particular social contexts and carries with it definite notions of power.<sup>4</sup> In the Bond films, Bond's body operates in different environments like the office, bedroom, and the villain's secret lair, and his haptic encounters in each space communicate powerful messages about this identity and role in each film. We use the term 'haptic geographies' to explicate how the sensuous experiences of touching and feeling manifest themselves in sites and spaces and the awareness of those moving through those environments.<sup>5</sup> As a spy, Bond has had to learn through experience and training: to be aware of his body and its relationship to the wider world, to monitor what his body is capable of (and what it is not), and to consider how his ability to touch and feel can be crucial to mission success. To take a brief example, in *From Russia with Love* (Terence Young 1963), Bond is shown to be carefully examining his hotel room in Istanbul and uses his touch to investigate a picture, phone, ceiling light, and mirror in order to discover if the room is 'bugged'. As he performs this evaluation, the familiar James Bond theme music plays, building to a climax when he discovers that the phone in his room has been tapped. In his account of *Sensuous Geographies*, Paul Rodaway identifies a "haptic matrix" and argues for an appreciation not only of touching but also of being touched, and for reaching out as well as positioning oneself within reach (47). In this scene, lasting little more than two minutes, Bond illustrates well how he uses his 'heightened senses' to careful effect. But his 'Midas touch' is not infallible as the film never shows him inspecting the alternative room he was offered after complaining to the hotel management that his original accommodations were 'unsuitable'.

One reason why James Bond outlives his adversaries and thus continues to operate as an effective 00 agent is his haptic qualities. He is a man acutely aware of his own body and its

relationship with others. He enjoys a keen sense of movement and is able to swim, run, climb, crawl, scramble, and fight with considerable aplomb. He understands the need to position his body in ways that appear both physically and sexually dominant but is also discreet when he needs to hide himself or placate his superiors. All of this occurs in particular sites and spaces that are, on the one hand, shaped and governed by social rules/conventions such as M' office, the hotel lobby, and at formal dinners, and on the other hand, are composed of non-human elements that Bond can utilize with considerable distinction. On numerous occasions, Bond has saved his own life as well as the lives of others by using his innate capacity to improvise with unlikely sounding objects such as an electric fan in *Goldfinger* (1964), which he throws into bathwater in order to electrocute a potential assailant who is on the verge of shooting him. His capacity to survive depends, over and over again, on his touchy-feely body.

#### i) The Fit Body

The body of James Bond is presented as the ideal of masculinity and is diegetically contrasted with the physique of the arch-villain in order to reaffirm his physical superiority as hero. This approach was first utilized in the early Bond films in order to convey the impression that Bond was fitter than his primary adversaries. From *Dr. No* (Terence Young 1962) onwards, Bond's body has been an essential element contributing to mission success. In the vast majority of films, there is at least one scene in which Bond appears shirtless or with an open button down shirt, which showcases his slender but toned chest; he might be seducing a woman, getting dressed after a sexual encounter, or engaging in some form of leisure activity like tanning by the pool. He is also depicted with a 'well-dressed body'—a body that is equally at home in swimming trunks as it is dressed in a dinner jacket and suit. While others have noted Bond's conspicuous

consumerism<sup>6</sup>, our interest is in exploring how the franchise sought to convey a sense of physical fitness in association with fashion and other artefacts of consumer culture.

In comparison, Bond's fiercest opponents in the 1960s have a noticeably larger body mass and some can even be described as overweight and at times oddly dressed. In *Goldfinger* (1964), Auric Goldfinger does not appear shirtless as he plays cards by the pool but his round stomach appears to protrude through the buttons of his golden shirt, which fits him snugly. His large and powerful henchman, Oddjob, also moves slowly and clumsily in a formal suit but his ability to use his bowler hat as a weapon is essential given his limited range of mobility. Naturally, Bond is able to defeat both men using his fitness and agility while disarming a nuclear bomb (in the case of Oddjob) and bringing a wayward plane under control (in the case of Goldfinger). Similarly, Emilio Largo in *Thunderball* (Terence Young 1965) does not appear shirtless but his rounded figure is emphasized when he wears a black form-fitting diving suit. While his henchman Vargas is notably slender, he is shown to be the literal opposite of Bond. As Largo says to Vargas within Bond's earshot, "Vargas does not drink. Does not smoke. Does not make love. What do you do, Vargas?" Both men offer visual and sensual contrasts to Bond who appears competent and confident, conveying the impression that Bond is fitter, physically and sexually, and thus is more inclined to be victorious over his opponents.

Bond is also presented as being a younger and more vital hero. Although Bond is in his late thirties and early forties, he never comes across as being too old to engage in physical action or seduce a beautiful woman, however younger she might be than him.<sup>7</sup> Even a visit to the health farm Shrublands in *Thunderball* (1965) sees Bond not only seduce one of the care-workers but also identify a person of criminal interest. In comparison, many of his main adversaries appear noticeably older than him, which sends the message that they are past their physical and sexual

prime. For instance, villains like Goldfinger, Brad Whittaker in *The Living Daylights* (John Glen 1987), and Frank Sanchez in *License to Kill* (John Glen 1989) have receding hairlines and this works to age them over Bond. Moreover, Sanchez who is a comparably younger villain, is never shown making love to his girlfriend but rather taking revenge on other men who display interest in her. In addition, Karl Stromberg in *The Spy Who Loved Me* (Lewis Gilbert 1977), Aristotle Kristatos in *For Your Eyes Only* (John Glen 1981), and Elliot Carver in *Tomorrow Never Dies* (Roger Spottiswoode 1997) have grey hair that ages them at least a decade over Bond. Emilio Largo also has grey hair and the age difference between him and his kept woman Domino is so great that he tells people that he is her ‘guardian’ in order to save face. This naturally renders Bond a more suitable romantic match for Domino and the film illustrates this point by having them first meet in bathing suits underwater in the Bahamas. And like all villains, these men rely heavily on their hench people (and their collective touch) to do most of the physical labor in their films, and this further contributes to the impression that they, the evil geniuses, are incapable of matching Bond on a physical, let alone sexual, level.

Bond is also presented as being able-bodied and he is often contrasted with a villain who has a physical impairment that limits him physical and/or socially. The villain in *Dr. No* (1962) has metal claws for hands and has difficulty holding onto objects. He is better at crushing objects like Kananga’s bodyguard Tee Hee who uses his mechanical right arm equipped with a pincer to deadly affect in *Live and Let Die* (Guy Hamilton 1973). Emilio Largo is missing an eye and has to wear an eye patch over it. In *The World Is Not Enough* (Michael Apted 1999), Renard suffers from congenital analgesia, a rare condition in which a person cannot feel pain or indeed any sensation. This renders Bond more capable of pleasuring Elektra King. LeChiffre in *Casino Royale* (2006) has a malformed tear duct that causes him to sporadically and uncontrollably cry

tears of blood that stand out on his notably pale complexion. Raoul Silva in *Skyfall* (Sam Mendes 2012) experienced facial disfiguration when he attempted to kill himself with a cyanide tablet; he wears a palette in his mouth to hide the deformity. In all of these cases, Bond as an able-bodied and sensual man (see below) is contrasted with a villain who suffers from a physical impairment, which is assumed to also be detrimental to their libido. Bond is not subject the social stigma that is often associated with the loss of a body part or its function; rather his body shape and associated scars function as a living record of his physical plights, confirm his masculinity in action, and serve as sources of fascination for the many lovers who have caressed his body.

Unlike the primary adversary featured in each film, Bond fights various hench people who frequently possess abnormal/unhuman strength and/or abilities. For example, Jaws appears in both *The Spy Who Loved Me* (1977) and *Moonraker* (Lewis Gilbert 1979) with metal teeth that can cut through metal and bone. May Day featured in *A View to a Kill* (John Glen 1985) is an abnormally strong woman, which the film suggests might be the result of genetic experimentation. Xenia Onatopp in *GoldenEye* (Martin Campbell 1995) has the ability to suffocate her opponents with her legs while Mr. Stamper from *Tomorrow Never Dies* (1997) is the muscular protégé of a doctor who tortures people for a living. Bond films convey the impression that hench people who possess super-human abilities and are genetically or mechanically altered are somehow cheating when they face Bond. Audiences are left with this impression of Eric Kreigler's artificially enhanced body in *For Your Eyes Only* (1981). His extraordinary strength and powerful grip, however, prove fatal as Bond uses them against Kreigler who he pushes to his death after he picks up a large stone to throw. In each case, Bond's normative body is contrasted with these unnatural and genetic anomalies. This works to position Bond's fit body as the ideal in comparison with his opponents who are too effete and/or weirdly



strong by comparison. His adversaries may be stronger or smarter but their bodily excesses and detriments prove to be their downfall.

## ii) The Sensual Body

The body of James Bond is also presented to the audience as highly sensual. Bond's heroism is rooted in the British lover literary tradition and *Dr. No* (1962) established his reputation as a man who 'radiated' sexual magnetism. As such, his ability to excite, seduce, and sexually satisfy women serves as a visual and haptic signifier as of his libidinal masculinity—he makes women swoon (such as Penelope Smallbone in *Octopussy* [John Glen 1983]) and his touch proves electrifying (as Miss Money Penny exhibits in *Dr. No*). Throughout the Bond series, women are affected by his charm and virility, even those decades younger than him. The teenage skater, Bibi Dahl, in *For Your Eyes Only* (1981) is smitten on first meeting Bond in Italy, and after hugging Bond she warns him, "I could eat you up alive." Jeremy Black notes that Bond's sensuality also functions as a tipping point in the films as he is able to align women with his mission and moral plight (107-109). Bond sleeps with numerous women in each film from primary characters like the Bond Girl to secondary figures who appear fleetingly in roles such as hotel receptionists and chance encounters in bars and casinos. Moreover, the Bond franchise clearly demarcates good from bad women via domestication:

In order to be presented as a 'good' character, the Bond Girl is expected to submit to the will and libido of James Bond, forfeiting her own liberated sexual identity for a domesticated one. By comparison, women who embrace their liberal sexualities and refuse to adhere to the 'Bondian' standard of normative femininity are presented as 'bad' and are violently punished. (Funnell, "Negotiating" 201)

Through his serial seduction of women, the franchise not only defines the heroic identity of Bond but also shapes the impression of the women with whom he sexually interacts, and the manner in which he seduces them. Even the lesbian character Pussy Galore in *Goldfinger* (1964) cannot resist his charms, however forcefully imposed.

During these lovemaking scenes, the films send messages about how audiences are supposed to read these haptic encounters. On the one hand, there are a number of scenes that emphasize Bond's connection with a particular woman. While the sexual act might not be shown on screen—i.e. we usually see the foreplay and the aftermath—the soundtrack often signals the type of heightened emotions being experienced. For instance, *Octopussy* (1983) features a romantic soundtrack that uses the melody from the title track “All Time High.” This creates the impression that Bond is making love to a woman rather than simply having sex with her. On the other hand, there are scenes in which Bond engages in coitus with a female villain and a musical score is notably absent. This occurs in *GoldenEye* (1995) whereby Bond's haptic encounter with Xenia Onatopp is coded differently. During their conversation and foreplay, there is no music playing, which suggests that this interaction might not end the way that Bond expects. When Onatopp begins suffocating Bond with her legs—a sexually charged image that is presented through an aerial (or bird's eye view) shot that is enhanced by Onatopp's manic screams—the tone of their encounter changes and Bond spends the remainder of the scene trying to dislodge himself from her deadly (sexual) grip.

The Bond films also convey messages about what is considered to be appropriate touching. While Bond can sleep with multiple women in each film, sexually liberated and debauched women are judged harshly for their sexual appetites and desires. Women who challenge Bond's status as a sexual aggressor are typically presented as ‘bad’ women who need

to have their characters and their touches tamed. In *Thunderball* (1965), Fiona Volpe is depicted as a black widow assassin who uses her body and sexuality to forward her agenda (much like Bond); she disarms her targets with her sensuality and then kills them. During her haptic encounter with Bond, she not only dominates him in bed but also ridicules him afterwards. Volpe states,

“But of course, I forgot your ego, Mr. Bond, James Bond, who only has to make love to a woman and she starts to hear heavenly choirs singing. She repents and then immediately returns to the side of right and virtue. But not this one!” All at once, Volpe rejects domestication, challenges the notion of ideological repositioning, and unrepentantly proclaims her status as a “bad girl” in the film. (Funnell, “Negotiating” 202)

In the Bond franchise, sexually aggressive women like Volpe, May Day in *A View to a Kill* (1985), Xenia Onatopp in *GoldenEye* (1995), and Elektra King in *The World Is Not Enough* (1999) are coded as deviant and thus require (social and sexual) repositioning. After they reject Bond’s attempt at domestication following their haptic encounters with the British spy, these women are killed off in their films since they threaten the traditional gender roles and representational politics that have long structured the series.<sup>8</sup> Bond’s touch cannot be seen to fail him.

The Bond franchise also uses sexuality to contrast the (hetero)normative sexuality of Bond with the sexual aberrance of his opponents. In the early Bond films, homosexuality was perceived and presented as a form a sexual deviance. This problematic impression worked to equate homosexuality with notions of criminality and moral impropriety, and thus rendered these villains in the franchise more deplorable. For instance, in *From Russia with Love* (1963), Bond competes with lesbian Rosa Klebb for the affections of Bond Girl Tatiana Romanova. Klebb’s

caressing of Romanova in the former's office is depicted as unwanted and exploitative given Colonel Klebb's military ranking. In the end, Romanova chooses Bond over her lesbian suitor, killing Klebb in the final scene of the film. In *Diamonds Are Forever* (Guy Hamilton 1971), Bond battles against two gay couples. He defeats the lesbian bodyguards Bambi and Thumper by drowning them in a pool and kills the gay assassins Kidd and Wint in the final scene of the film. Moreover, in *Skyfall* (2012), Silva makes sexual advances towards Bond, which works to vilify him even more, thus rooting the Craig era films in the problematic representational politics of the Connery era films. Homosexual characters in the Bond franchise are consistently positioned as having the wrong kind of touch.

In addition, the depiction of Bond's frequent haptic encounters with women is contrasted with images of villains who cannot or do not sleep with women. For example, arch-villain Ernst Stavro Blofeld who appears across numerous early Bond films—*From Russia With Love* (1963), *Thunderball* (1965), *You Only Live Twice* (Lewis Gilbert 1967), *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* (Peter Hunt 1969), and *Diamonds Are Forever* (1971)—is more interested in petting his white pussy cat than seducing the multitude of (white) women who appear in his films and eventually sleep with Bond.<sup>9</sup> In *OHMSS*, moreover, the older 'butch' female villain Irma Bunt stands in sharp contrast to the swooning young women Bond encounters at Piz Gloria. In *For Your Eyes Only* (1981), the villain Kristatos is infatuated with his teenage skating protégé Bibi Dahl but does not (or perhaps cannot) seduce her. His affections are deemed inappropriate when compared to Bond who rejects Dahl's sexual advances deeming her to be too young (or a child). In *The World is not Enough* (1999), Renard is unable to sleep with the licentious Elektra King since he lacks the ability to feel physical sensations. Instead, it is Bond who is able to sexually stimulate and satisfy King using his 'Midas touch' and a bucket of ice.

Thus, the sensual body of Bond forwards powerful messages regarding his heroism and normative masculinity as defined through his haptic encounters and diegetic comparisons with other characters in his films. Perhaps, Goldfinger was the most perceptive of all the villains Bond has ever faced, when he threatened to castrate him with a laser beam. Despite the danger, Bond is able to talk, scheme, fight, or sleep his way out of any unpleasant situation. The only time when he truly requires saving occurs in *Casino Royale* (2006), when it is obvious that LeChiffre would have tortured him to death and in the process destroyed his male sex organs. Even after this terrible ordeal, Bond proves that he is able to make love to Vesper Lynd, which works to further cement the power of his libidinal and normative masculinity. He has not lost his loving touch.

### iii) The Technical Body

James Bond also possess a technical body as he engages with his surrounding environment and displays a mastery over technology, nature, and even outer space. He demonstrates his vast and intuitive knowledge of technology by using his 'Midas touch' to deactivate the atomic bomb in *Goldfinger* (1964), skillfully removing the solarplex agitator in *Man with the Golden Gun* (Guy Hamilton 1974),<sup>10</sup> and bringing an out of control plane under his control in *Tomorrow Never Dies* (1997). However, Bond's intuitive understanding of technology is something that evolves over the course of the franchise and parallels his changing relationship with Q, the inventor who develops all of Bond's spy technology. In the Connery era films, Q is presented as being more knowledgeable about technology than Bond. He often provides Bond with detailed tutorials on how to use the gadgets he has created. In *Goldfinger*, Q's instructions for the modified Aston Martin are so long and detailed that the scene fades out to suggest that a great length of time has passed. Years later, when Q reveals the modified car in *The Spy Who Loved Me* (1977), Bond

drives off without listening to Q's instructions and is able to use all of the gadgets expertly including transforming the car into a submarine (Jones ¶12).

Bond's mastery of technology is also clearly gendered. This is notable in the film *Tomorrow Never Dies* (1997) when a much older Q introduces Bond to the new BMW 750iL. The car is defined by two key features. First, the operational computer has a female voice since Q believes that Bond would respond more attentively to a woman than a man, and this component works to strongly gender the car. Bond even uses feminine pronouns to describe the car when he says "let's see how she responds to my touch." Second, the car can be driven by remote control and Bond is far more adept at operating the vehicle than Q. Bond not only demonstrates that he has a greater 'Midas touch' than the car's inventor, but this touch is notably gendered suggesting a link between Bond's mastery with technology and supremacy in the bedroom. The car is later destroyed in a violent conflict in a car park in Hamburg but not before Bond has used the extraordinary technology to effectively neutralize some adversaries dispatched by Elliot Carver.

Throughout the series, Bond drives cars with hi-tech modifications that allow him to easily out-manuever his opponents. The Bond brand has most strongly been shaped by the Aston Martin, which makes appearances in numerous films throughout the series including *Goldfinger* (1964), *The Spy Who Loved Me* (1977), and *Skyfall* (2012). His relationship with various models of the car—using the vehicle for his mission and then disposing of it—takes on gendered connotations (given the gendering of cars within car culture) and arguably mirrors the relationships he has with women in his films. In fact, cars play a key role in defining Bond's relationships with women. Bond's strongest female allies and adversaries often demonstrate their comparability and/or compatibility to him through driving. But their touch is represented in

rather different ways. Bond is saved by Japanese agent Aki driving her Toyota 2000GT in *You Only Live Twice* (1967) but Bond marvels at the car's advanced technology rather than at Aki's driving skills. Other Bond Girls get to perform their roles rather more dramatically: Anya Amasova saves Bond by driving a van into Jaws in *The Spy Who Loved Me* (1977),<sup>11</sup> Melina Havelock drives Bond out of trouble in a yellow Citroën 2 CV in *For Your Eyes Only* (1981),<sup>12</sup> Wai Lin physically maneuvers her body while handcuffed to Bond on a motorcycle in *Tomorrow Never Dies* (1997),<sup>13</sup> and Camille Montes picks up Bond and helps him evade capture in *Quantum of Solace* (Marc Forster 2008).

However, Tracy di Vincenzo arguably demonstrates the most superior driving skills. She first appears in *OHMSS* (1969) driving a Cougar Eliminator, a popular muscle car of the era, as she speeds past Bond on a coastal road. This peaks Bond's interest and initiates his wooing of her. Later in the film, she saves Bond from Blofeld and his hench people by picking him up at an outdoor ice skating rink and driving through a stock car race, impressing Bond who is in the passenger's seat (Nepa ¶10). When they finally seek refuge in a barn, Bond proposes to di Vincenzo as she has clearly demonstrated her comparability and compatibility to him. Moments after they marry, however, she is killed in a drive-by shooting while sitting in the passenger's seat. The film ends with a shot of Bond clutching her lifeless body while sitting in the driver's seat of the car. Had she been driving (and controlling her own destiny), she might have survived the ordeal but the price to be paid by Bond would have been certain death.

Additionally, many of Bond's strongest female adversaries are proficient behind the wheel. When Fiona Volpe first meets Bond in *Thunderball* (1964), she offers him a ride to his hotel. She drives at break-neck speed and Bond looks noticeably uncomfortable in the passenger's seat. Her positioning as a wildcard in the film is manifested by her lack of caution

behind the wheel. Xenia Onatopp is also introduced to Bond on the road in *GoldenEye* (1995). Driving a red Ferrari 355 GTS, she challenges Bond and his silver Aston Martin to a race. The two speed along a winding mountain road until Onatopp spins out. The scene is sexually charged as Onatopp seems to gain pleasure by driving at such dangerous speeds. She is contrasted in the scene with the frightened Caroline, a psychologist sent to evaluate Bond who is sitting in his passenger seat. Bond ends up seducing Caroline in his car after the high-speed race with Onatopp. The Bond films forward the impression that women drivers need to be brought under Bond's control (and domesticated) via his sexual touch; if that does not work (i.e. if they remain Bad Girls and do not transform into Bond Girls), they will have to be killed off in their films.

#### iv) The Memorializing Body

Bond also possesses a memorializing body. Given the episodic nature of the franchise, there is limited intertextual referencing across the films especially when compared to other action series in which sequels allude to characters and events that have taken place in previous films.

However, there are a few occasions in the Bond franchise where Bond's body and/or touch encourage transtextual remembering. In *OHMSS* (1969), Bond sits in his office after he resigns from M16. This is the only film in which Bond is located in *his* office as his primary domain is the field. According to Marlisa Santos, memory comes into play as Bond begins cleaning out his desk. She writes:

As he re-discovers various artifacts from past missions (Honey Ryder's knife from *Dr. No* [1962], the garrote-watch from *From Russia, With Love* [1963], the re-breather from *Thunderball* [1965]), the theme music from those films plays, to provide the viewer with a connection to the previous Bond chronology.<sup>14</sup> This was a deliberate reinforcement of



the Bond character history to aid in the transition to a new actor, but the effect provides an unintended depth to this incarnation of Bond: a sense of the past, to link to his duty and obligation to the future. (¶7)

In this scene, memory is being invoked for a variety of purposes—such as transtextual connection, narrative clarity, and characterization—and is signaled through his touch and the material objects he fingers.

Another example of memory takes place in *For Your Eyes Only* (1981), which opens with Bond walking through a cemetery. In the scene, Bond carries a bouquet of red roses and places them beside the gravestone for Tracy di Vincenzo—Bond's wife who was killed at the end of *OHMSS* but whose death was not mentioned in the four films that followed. This unexpected reference (in the chronology of the film franchise) plays a key role in defining the significance of the action sequence that follows. It turns out that Blofeld, who is (partly) responsible for di Vincenzo's death, has taken control of the helicopter in which Bond is travelling and intends to kill him. This thrusts a somber Bond into action who must climb out of the aircraft in order to get into the pilot's seat and bring the helicopter under his control. He then picks up a wheelchair bound Blofeld and drops him into an industrial scale drum (presumably killing him). While these events make sense on their own, they take on greater significance when considered in relation to the 1960s Bond films in which Blofeld serves as Bond's arch-nemesis. Moreover, by connecting this action sequence to Bond's grieving at the cemetery, it frames his actions as vengeance for his late wife.

Memory is also invoked through iconography. As noted by James Chapman, the introduction of a new actor in the title role is usually accompanied by the intertextual referencing of established James Bond iconography (such as the tuxedo and martini) in order to create a

sense of continuity across the episodic franchise (207). While *Casino Royale* (2006) includes this iconography, it also deviates from tradition by connecting Bond to the legacy of the Bond Girl. In the inaugural Bond film *Dr. No* (1962), James Bond spies Bond Girl Honey Ryder exiting the sea wearing a white bikini with a dagger attached to her belt.<sup>15</sup> This image “effectively positioned the first Bond Girl as an erotic object of the gaze” (Funnell, “I Know” 467). In *Casino Royale*, this well-known Bond Girl iconography is referenced in relation to Bond and not his love interest Vesper Lynd:

Bond is submerged in the ocean and enters the shot by dramatically lifting his head out of the water in slow motion, taking a notably deep breath... This scene presents the exposed muscular body of Bond as spectacular, passive, and feminized, positioning Craig in the role of Bond Girl as the visual spectacle of the Bond film. (ibid. 467)

The depiction of Bond and the spectacularization of his body via Bond Girl iconography signals a shift in the generic and gendered conventions governing the franchise. Later, Bond’s body is positioned as the object as the gaze as it is longingly caressed by Solange Dimitrios and then Lynd.

The Craig era Bond films continue to use memory differently given their serial nature. *Casino Royale* (2006) is a prequel and provides the origin story of James Bond. *Quantum of Solace* (2008) and *Skyfall* (2012) serve as more traditional sequels given the continuation of the storyline across all three films. As a result, memory and specifically the process of remembering via touch plays a central role. This is most notable with Lynd. Although she dies in the arms of Bond at the end of *Casino Royale*, her presence can be felt throughout *Quantum of Solace*. This is one reason why the film does not have a Bond Girl proper since the characteristics of the Bond Girl have been divided between Lynd’s memory (and Bond’s continuing love for her) and

Camille Montes (who serves as a good partner in action but never sleeps with him). The sexual interlude provided by British consulate contact Strawberry Fields proves to be a stern warning to Bond. After their haptic encounter, Fields is murdered by Dominic Greene's henchmen and left in a death pose reminiscent of Jill Masterson in *Goldfinger*; she is found lying face down on a bed naked and covered in oil. Chastened by her death and still mourning the loss of Lynd, Bond parts ways with his female partner Montes rather than pursuing a romantic relationship with her making *Quantum of Solace* the first film in the series in which Bond does not end up with a Bond Girl. The memory of Lynd is embodied through an artefact, the Irish knot necklace she wears throughout most of *Casino Royale*. This was a present from her fiancé that she took off when she fell in love with Bond. After her death, Bond holds on to necklace and the memory of Lynd until he confronts her fiancé at the end of *Quantum of Solace*, revealing him to be a spy who uses service women to gain access to government secrets. After Bond interrogates the man off-screen and has him arrested, he drops the necklace in the snow as he walks away from the building, signaling that he is done with Lynd and is ready to move on. Rarely has there been an artefact that holds as much significance to Bond across more than one film.

#### v) The Calculative Body

Finally, James Bond possesses a calculative body that is defined by how he feels his way through missions. This is one way in which the franchise embodies Bond's instincts. A good example occurs in *Moonraker* (1979) when Hugo Drax invites Bond to hunt pheasant while staying at his country estate in California. Unbeknownst to Bond, or so the audience believes, an assassin is hiding in the trees ready to shoot him. While it initially appears as though Bond has missed the shot when the birds fly away, Bond has actually killed the sniper who falls out of the tree

moments later. His instinct for survival coupled with a rapid calculation of distance enabled Bond to prevail, much to the surprise of Drax and the audience. It is often in staged encounters whether it takes the form of sporting activities such as shooting, horse riding, and golf, and/or when Bond is trapped in tight spots that his capacity to calculate and evaluate potential winning strategies is revealed.

While Bond appears omni-competent in the first four decades (or 20 films) of the franchise, the Craig era films feature the origin story of Bond and show how he develops his ‘Midas touch’ through trial and error. For example, at the beginning of *Casino Royale* (2006), Bond and a colleague are tasked with detaining bomb-maker Mollaka in Madagascar. While the two are conducting surveillance at a cock-fighting match, Bond notices that his younger and less experienced partner is frequently touching his ear in order to hear his communication device. Although Bond quickly instructs the man to stop touching his ear, Mollaka has already noticed this action and flees the vicinity. This leads to a physically demanding parkour-inspired chase sequence. After this event, M describes Bond as a “blunt instrument”, and this descriptor certainly applies to his approach and tactics in Madagascar. Such is his determination to pursue Mollaka that he virtually destroys a foreign embassy and violates numerous diplomatic protocols in the process, creating an international incident.

Later in the film, Bond participates in a high-stakes poker game in order to bankrupt LeChiffre and turn him into an informant for M16. Bond explains to Vesper Lynd that Texas Hold-em poker is a game of observation and physical control: it requires a player to carefully observe her/his opponents in order to discover their “tell,” their unconscious physical reaction to their hand. As a result, “the poker table in *Casino Royale* can be understood as an allegorical battlefield, an arena for the spectacle of masculinity whereby players attempt to defeat their

enemies through exercisable physical control” (Funnell, “I Know” 467). While playing against LeChiffre, Bond believes that he has uncovered his opponent’s tell, which consists of LeChiffre touching his face when he bluffs. Bond, however, has been tricked by LeChiffre and is knocked out of the game as a result. Bond tries to rectify the situation by taking the ‘blunt instrument’ approach and resorting to violence; he picks up a steak knife and intends to kill LeChiffre. He is stopped, however, by CIA agent Felix Leiter who suggests a different course of action. Leiter stakes Bond who reenters the poker game and eventually defeats LeChiffre. In the film, Bond learns an important lesson about how and when to use his body; that a soft touch can be just as, if not more, effective than brute force and that he can defeat an opponent by controlling, mobilizing, and directing his body in strategic ways.

This capacity to utilize a soft or forceful touch reveals itself again in *Skyfall* (2012). While recovering in Turkey after an accidental shooting and mission meltdown, Bond displays remarkable composure by drinking a shot of alcohol while a scorpion crawls along his hand. He later traps the creature inside the glass and thus completes a drinking challenge for money. The power of his touch varies throughout the film from extracting bullet fragments from his own chest with a knife to constructing a bomb that destroys his childhood home in Scotland. While his body is visibly ageing and at times threatens to fail him,<sup>16</sup> his ‘Midas touch’ prevails (to the extent of making vigorous love to femme fatale Severine in the shower of Silva’s yacht) even when his adversary Silva appears to have outwitted him.

### **In/Out of Touch: Regulating James Bond and His Missions**

A consideration of the haptic geographies of James Bond reveals the ways in which his body operates in a variety of environments and how his touch in particular conveys important

messages about his identity and role in the films. Bond is presented with a fit body that serves as the heroic ideal as it is contrasted with the physiques of his opponents who are too weak or unnaturally/inhumanly strong by comparison. His body is sensual and his haptic encounters with women help to confirm his libidinal masculinity and establish his (hetero)normative superiority in the films. Bond's body is also technical as he demonstrates his mastery over various forms of technology and specifically cars, which are coded feminine in his films. In addition, Bond has a memorializing body that recalls key events in an episodic series and conveys powerful messages about the changing generic and gendered codes in the franchise. Finally, Bond possesses a calculative body that he can direct in strategic ways depending on the situation. As the "man with the Midas touch," Bond's body and his haptic encounters draw attention to the representational and body politics governing the franchise.

Beyond corporeality, touch also plays a metaphoric role in the franchise. When Bond is sent on missions, he is required to 'keep in touch' with M16. Bond is provided with a certain degree of autonomy to conduct his investigations and "pump" his sources for information (as suggested by M in *Tomorrow Never Dies* [1997]). However, he is expected to reach out to M16 if he requires assistance and to inform them when the mission has been completed. On numerous occasions, however, Bond puts off communicating with M16 in order to have sex with his Bond Girl and this results in some awkward encounters with his boss and other dignitaries who are trying to express their gratitude for a job well done (e.g. Margaret Thatcher in *For Your Eyes Only* [1981]). For Bond, corporeal touch and specifically sex takes precedence over all other forms of communication, however apparently vital. It also provides the franchise with many opportunities to inject humor into the final scenes of the films such as Bond being caught *in flagrante delicto* with his Bond Girl Dr. Holly Goodhead after returning to earth from outer

space in *Moonraker* (1979). As Q says to both M and his Soviet equivalent “I think he’s attempting re-entry” without noticing that Bond was no longer in space.

Bond is also presented as being ‘out of touch’ in the franchise. In the early films, this was one way to confer Bond’s class status. For instance, in *Goldfinger*, Bond explains that “there are some things that just aren’t done, such as drinking Dom Perignon ’53 above the temperature of 38 degrees Fahrenheit. That’s just as bad as listening to the Beatles without earmuffs!” Later he has dinner with the Bank of England chief and is accused by M of lecturing the senior banker on the merits of a particular type of brandy. There are many other examples of Bond noting his preference for particular highbrow/niche/non-mainstream drinks, food, clothing, watches, cars, and so forth. This emphasis on aspects of elite culture played a key role in connecting Bond to the gentlemanly tradition of heroism from which he has his roots. Bond’s world is the casino, hotel, and restaurant, and not the café, disco, and pub. And in each of these elite environments, Bond knows how to occupy the space, and how and where to use his touch.

By the 1990s, however, Bond is presented as being out of touch in other ways. In *GoldenEye* (1995), M describes Bond as being a “sexist, misogynistic dinosaur,” signaling that Bond is out of touch with the changing gender politics of the 1990s. She also refers to him as “a relic of the Cold War”, and this helps to root him in the colonial/Cold War past rather than the modernizing present. In both cases, the franchise presents the impression that while the world around Bond might change, he remains relatively the same and in a time of crisis we need a hero who embodies traditional British values and practices to save us. But there are challenges along the way. In *The World is Not Enough* (1999), the promise of personal security by Bond is not enough to prevent a female associate of the villain Renard from committing suicide. Bond’s sensual touch usually prevails but it appears a little less certain in terms of outcome. By the mid-

2000s, Bond is presented as lacking touch or at least tact in *Casino Royale* (2006) and by *Skyfall* (2012) he has lost that touch completely. As a result, *Skyfall* functions as a redemption narrative in which Bond has to recover his bodily strength and (re)discover his mental fortitude in order to develop into the iconic superspy who is gifted in perpetuity with a ‘Midas touch.’ But in order to do that, others have to pay a heavy price and most notably M who dies in his family’s chapel at Skyfall. Bond’s comforting touch offers a little solace in her final few moments of life.



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## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> For a detailed discussion, see Marks' *The Skin of Film* (2000).

<sup>2</sup> For a detailed discussion of James Bond and film genre, see Chapman's *License to Thrill* (2000).

<sup>3</sup> For a detailed discussion of the shift towards a more body-based heroic aesthetic in the Craig era, see Funnell's "I Know Where You Keep Your Gun" (2011).

<sup>4</sup> For a detailed discussion, see Woods' *Gendered Lives*.

<sup>5</sup> For a detailed discussion, see Paterson's "Haptic Geographies" (2009).

<sup>6</sup> See Cooper et al.'s "Brand-Self Identity Narratives in the James Bond Movies", *Psychology & Marketing* (2010).

<sup>7</sup> Once an actor is considered to be too old (e.g. Sean Connery, Roger Moore), he is replaced in the franchise by a younger actor who takes up the title role. Some critics and fans would argue that both Connery and Moore should have been replaced before their final outing as Bond in *Diamonds Are Forever* (1971) and *A View to a Kill* (1985) respectively.

<sup>8</sup> In *Thunderball*, Volpe is accidentally killed by her allies while dancing with Bond.

<sup>9</sup> *OHMSS* is an exception as Blofeld expresses sexual interest in Bond's fiancé Tracy di Vincenzo.

<sup>10</sup> In this scene, the mechanical body of Bond is contrasted with (and inadvertently challenged by) the clumsiness of his Bond Girl Mary Goodnight who accidentally turns on the machine by hitting the switch with her butt. However, Bond is able to overcome this obstacle and dislodge the solarplex agitator.

<sup>11</sup> For a detailed discussion, see Jones' "Women Drivers" (forthcoming).

<sup>12</sup> For a detailed discussion, see Berns' "Sisterhood as Resistance in *For Your Eyes Only* and *Octopussy*" (forthcoming).

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<sup>13</sup> For a detailed discussion, see Funnell's *Warrior Women* (2014).

<sup>14</sup> A similar approach is taken in the design of the opening title sequence, which features images from the previous Bond films in order to root *OHMSS* within the franchise.

<sup>15</sup> *Die Another Day* (Lee Tamahori 2002) pays homage to this iconic scene by introducing Bond Girl Jinx Johnson emerging from the sea wearing a bikini and a dagger.

<sup>16</sup> For a detailed discussion, see Dodds' "Shaking and Stirring James Bond" (2014).