

### Representation of the Bond Girl

The first Bond film was made in 1962 which is called Dr.No. This film was based upon the novel which was written by Ian Fleming.

The world during that period, was at a time where after the second world war, there was conflict between Russia and Britain and the United States of America, the period of the “Cold War”.

In those times there were lots of secret government, undercover agents and conspiracy theories.

Although the first Bond movie was made a long time ago, and the movies has continued being made until the most recent date of 1999. They are still popular now with the young and old.

The James Bond character is able to appeal to a wide variety of the audience, because the audience can identify not only with Bond but also with an array of characters such as Money Penny, M, Bonds boss, Q, the virtuoso with gadgets and a variety of other characters.

However, there are also things which are expected in each Bond film. Bond’s Vodka Martini is “shaken, not stirred”, Q’s gadgets are expected and anticipated by the audience. Also Bond’s theme tune, which is used regularly to enhance the dramatic moments and is instantly recognised wherever heard.

The Bond girl provides the audience with sexuality and feminism, they fulfil the fantasy figure, just as much as Bond.

The audience will expect there to be a Bond girl, there to fall helplessly in love.

She is necessary for the audience expectations to be fulfilled, because the audience almost certainly expects the Bond girl and James Bond to have some sort of affair and it is certain that James Bond needs to complete the mission with the Bond girl.

Whether or not the Bond girls are to be taken seriously has changed over the years.

For example, the Dr.No film in comparison to Tomorrow Never Dies. The Bond girl in Dr.No (Honey Ryder), seems vulnerable, not to be taken seriously.

She looks to Bond for protection, but James Bond also patronises her, which makes her rely on him in times of danger. She also collects shells and sells them, to make a living. Whilst on the other hand, Wai Lin from Tomorrow Never Dies, is to be taken seriously; she is a martial arts supreme, also an agent of the “Chinese people’s External Security Force. She is able to take care of herself in times of danger and can use her brain to get out of difficult situations.

But in general, I think that the Bond girl was included originally not to be taken seriously otherwise they wouldn’t be called “girls”.

The purpose of the Bond girls in the films, is that they are to be viewed as a sexual icons, who are scantily dressed and fall in love with Bond, but, ironically, Bond cannot complete the mission without the assistance of the girl.

I think the connection of her being a girl rather than a woman, is that she is not to be taken as seriously as a woman is. For example, “girls” are known to be innocent, vulnerable, youthful looking, fall in love easily and easily pleased. Which is how the Bond girls are represented in the film. But, “women” are taken seriously; they are independent, professional and expect commitment.

I think it influences the way we think about the Bond girl because she is called a “girl”, the audience expects her to behave like a girl, and to be dependant, vulnerable and sexy. Ready to respond to 007’s charm.

This tells us that her role in the Bond film is to be like a property to Bond, and to be a possession of his.

You can see this from the sexually hinted names, which go back to the first Bond film. For example, Pussy Galore, Octopussy, Holly Goodhead, Plenty O’toole, Chu me and Onatopp.

These sexually hinted female names add to the fact that are there to sexually please him, in some sort of way. Their names are also a “tongue in cheek”, quite light-hearted humorous element of Bond.

I think that it is harmless for women to be represented in such a way because they are being called “girls” and being represented in such a way that girls can behave.

I think being a Bond girl is a key to success for the actress who plays her, because the audience and the media expects the Bond girl to act in a certain way and the comparison will be made between her and the Bond girls from the past, they all play the same character but each have a different quality.

Denise Richards who played Christmas Jones, in the movie Tomorrow Never Dies, says that:

I don’t understand the whole negative perception as far as Bond girls go...they’ve all done very well and they are great actresses.

This means that she thinks, playing a Bond girl shouldn’t have such a negative association to it. These Bond girls are recognised for the time during the movie but after that most actress seemed to disappear and fame has been taken away.

Denise Richards a.k.a Christmas Jones also adds that:

A few people asked me if I was afraid of being typecast as a Bond girl, but I think its my responsibility to change, evolve and work with different actors...he had (the director) some really strong ideas about keeping my character strong and sexy, but not a bimbo – not just a trinket on Bond’s arm.

She says that her character is strong and sexy, not just a trinket on Bond’s arm, which means that the Bond girls fame does not just rub off Bond, but they each have their own glamorous identity.

This tells us that the audience can identify with these Bond girls and how the representation of them has changed over the years.

They have changed; for example the Bond girl “Honey Ryder” from Dr.No is a dependant character, beautiful, but she needs Bond, whilst Wai Lin from Tomorrow Never Dies is quite the opposite.

The names and the skills of the Bond girls have changed over the years, for example Tracey di Vincenzo from On Her Majesty’s Secret Service; her profession is rich girl, and her skills were: to be beautiful and humorous. In the more contemporary Bond movies, Xenia Onatopp from Goldeneye which was made in 1995. Her profession was an ex-soviet fighter pilot, KGB assassin, and her skills were using her thighs to crush people to death, the skills between the girls are very different.

For the Bond girl in the film On Her Majesty's Secret Service, the film makers wanted us to think that a girl was simply, a girl and that couldn't be compared to James Bond's masculinity, and because she was shown as a girl she was not given a sexual name, whereas Xenia Onatopp had a more sexually-hinted name. These women do not seem like real women, and seem more like fantasy figures of the audience imagination. The fact that there is no reference to past girls tells us that Bond, is a man who isn't looking for commitment; he wouldn't like to settle down and likes to have fun with women but moving on from one to another and not looking back.

The detailed scene analysis is of two scenes between, Honey Ryder in Dr.No filmed in 1962 and Wei Lin in Tomorrow Never Dies filmed in 1999.

#### Detailed Scene Analysis – Dr.No [1962]

Setting – it is set on a beach, an exotic location, white sand and palm trees, the connotation is secluded, romantic and exotic.

The type of shot when we first see her is a long shot, which connotes her sexual potential.

She is singing “underneath the mango tree” and collecting shells to sell them, which connotes her childlike behaviour and innocence, she is also dressed in a white bikini, signifying her sexuality.

She grabs her knife and says “who's that?” this connotes that she is unsure but will defend herself, when she says her name, James Bond replies by saying “it's a pretty name”, which means he is talking to her like a child, and this adds to that fact that she has a sexually-hinted female name.

The type of shot when they are walking together on the beach is a medium shot; he is much taller than she is, which connotes his masculinity.

She is on Crab Quay collecting shells to sell, which connotes her child like-ways but she has found a simple way to make money; she doesn't have a real profession.

When they are hiding behind the sand, his arm is around her waist, which is trying to show that she needs protection.

His head in the shot is positioned above hers which indicates he is in charge.

Honey says, “there is a dragon” and describes it, which connotes her almost childlike belief in monsters.

After the boat has been damaged Bond says “what are we going to do with her”. Which is as if she isn't there, she's viewed as a possession of his. This shows that in the 60s, women weren't seen as equal to men, they could be seen as objects.

Her clothing changes, she is now wearing a white shirt. Which is covering but still revealing when wet.

The setting changes to a river which connotes danger.

While they are hiding in the reeds, she says, “something is biting my foot” which seems quite childlike, and she sounds like an upset little girl.

When Bond kills the soldier, Honey responds by gasping, holding her hands to her face, she then asks why? Which shows her innocence; the audience can see she is not used to murder, but James Bond is.

The story of the man in Kingston is that, he had “raped” her and she killed him with a spider, which connotes that her reactions were like the instincts of an animal, which also contradicts her innocence, showing she isn't as innocent as she seems.

Then she asks Bond, “do you have a woman?” which highlights his appeal as a man.

Bond doesn't respond and is interrupted by Quarrel; he avoids the question which suggests that he is single and that he isn't a man for commitment.

The setting changes to a night swamp, which suggests that they are entering a more dangerous scene.

When the "dragon" comes, she joins him behind the tree; because she was frightened which shows that she needs his protection.

She fights when captured – but then is easily overpowered which suggests that she will give fighting a go, like an angry child.

This is the Detailed Scene Analysis – Tomorrow Never Dies [1997].

The type of shot when the scene begins is a long shot of heads popping above the sea which is quite exposing – so they are equal from the beginning.

In the helicopter she says to Bond "you're following me around..." which indicates that she will argue against and question Bond.

The clothing she wears whilst she is in the carver building is, Black trousers, white shirt – cropped red jacket, which is simple almost masculine. Carver describes her as a member of the "Chinese People's External Security Force", which is like a stereotypical male role, but she is a woman.

In the section before the escape, she seems calm but assertive which indicates that she is in control.

Most of the shots of Bond and Wei Lin, before they escape are medium shots, with both in frame, rigid poses. Which suggests that she is almost his equal.

The type of actions when they first escape are kicking and fighting, which shows that she is familiar with street fighting.

The practical advice she gives Bond about the banner is, "use the banner" which shows that she is useful in dangerous situations, and can use her brain.

The position of her arms when they are on the bike, is around Bond but because of the handcuffs, which suggests some intimacy between them but because of the unavoidable circumstances.

Her response to him, when he told her to get on the back of the bike was :

"are you trying to protect me?" which suggests that she doesn't need protection.

When she is showering, she is wearing a white see-through top, which emphasises her sexuality; Bond should find her attractive. He is an easy target for glamour.

She grew up in a rough neighbourhood, which suggests she is streetwise, and "can look after herself".

The type of shot when she says "don't get any ideas", is an extreme close-up, looking up at him, which is suggesting intimacy.

She tricks him by chaining him to a drain pipe, which shows she is able to trick him when he is occupied.

She changes her clothes into the typical look, of a Vietnamese woman, which shows she can easily fit in.

The type of fighting she uses is martial arts, which connotes her masculinity and potential viciousness.

When she is fighting, Bond is on the street but is unsure whether or not to approach her, which shows that she doesn't need him.

The pace of the fight scene is fast, lots of sound effects, kicks to the head/body.

Which suggests that she can keep up in a violent environment.

There are a few similarities and differences despite the 35 year gap, between the two girls.

The similarities are that they both dress in a glamorous style, although Honey Ryder dresses a little more revealingly, which brings out their sexuality and that they are both willing to do what it takes to defend themselves, for example, when Honey grabs her knife and asks “who’s that”, when she sees Bond for the first time, and Wei Lin uses her martial arts to defend herself.

The differences are that Wei Lin is made to look more equal to Bond, in the posters which advertise the two movies. Wei Lin is holding a gun, and the gun personifies Bond’s masculinity, and now that the girl is holding the gun, it shows that she has some of Bond’s masculinity. But the girl in the other movie is in a state of undress, and only Bond is holding the gun which signifies that he is in control.

Wei Lin is more masculine; she is able to fight with men and win, whilst Honey will put up a fight but is easily over powered.

The differences are also how they are portrayed in their period of time. In the 1960s the Bond girl was made to look more like a possession, that they were controlled and weren’t capable of being independent. Whilst the Bond girls in the 1990s look like women who are in control, independent and women who have professional careers, but still look glamorous and beautiful.

I don’t think that Honey would be an acceptable Bond girl in the 21<sup>st</sup> century because Bond girls have changed to be almost as equal as Bond and she is able to fight and has skills which are quite masculine, which Honey Ryder has none of. Honey would be dependent of Bond, which Bond girls in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are not.

The defences which I can offer the Bond girls as actresses, are that they are respectable women, with professional careers. That they are able to use their intelligence in decision making moments, but these are not always true because they made to be seen as utter fantasy figures.

The criticisms are that their careers are unrealistic for the average women and often seem like a joke, that they cannot think for themselves, they rely on Bond for everything, that they are only there when Bond saves the world, to look good on his arm.

My opinion is that I think Bond girls should be criticised because their careers are unrealistic and they never appear in a movie for the second time, which means that they are quite forgotten about after the movies are made and the media stops paying attention to it.

### Conclusion

I think that the Bond girl will continue to be a part of the Bond institution and that is quite an empowering image for young women who watch it because, it will make them think differently about these girls. And the Bond girls themselves will acquire a greater responsibility and a greater role to play in each movie. I don’t think that this will matter because, James Bond will always be the main character, and continue to add his presence in the movie, which the audience will always pay attention to. I think that the Bond girls will not have to make such a immense change to their character but will have to change gradually.

They will continue to have their sexual image and glamorousness to trade with.

