

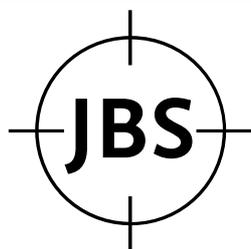
“Melted Your Cold Heart Yet?”

Amatonormative Masculinity in *Casino Royale* and *Spectre*

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When discussing James Bond, whether the literary or film version, one cannot escape the topic of masculinity. An assertive, violent, muscular womaniser, Bond may be what comes to mind if asked for an example of stereotypical or even hyper-masculinity. In popular culture as well as in academic discourse, Bond’s masculinity has been a site of contention among scholars. Especially with the reboot of the Bond films, the topic has gained new prominence. While some scholars argue that Craig is the most progressive Bond yet (Chapman 2007, Cunningham and Gabri 2009, Johnson 2009), others maintain that little has changed and that Bond is still just as sexist, racist, and all-around bigoted as he always has been (Tincknell 2009, Racioppi and Tremonte 2009, Anderson 2017).

Much research has been done on sexuality regarding both the Bond Women and Bond himself, but an analysis of romance and romantic attraction has been largely missing. However, romance plays a crucial role in the rebooted films, specifically Bond finding, losing, and mourning his romance with Vesper Lynd, as well as eventually finding a new romantic love with Dr. Madeleine Swann. The importance of these relationships and romance itself is emphasised by other characters’ comments, which construct and functionalise romance as something



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Bond should strive for above all else. This predominance of romance as the key to and ultimate *raison d'être* of interpersonal relationships often goes unremarked upon because it seems to be the natural way of life. Following the lead of Elizabeth Brake in *Minimizing Marriage: Marriage, Morality, and the Law* (2012), I use the term amatonormativity to refer to this phenomenon: the prioritisation of romantic love over everything else.

This essay explores how even though the rebooted Bond franchise is, by some, lauded as progressive, especially with regard to gender expectations and gender expression (Cunningham and Gabri 2009), a different perspective reveals other findings. Bond's seeming liberation from stereotypical masculinity and the apparent turn of Bond Women (love interests Vesper Lynd and Dr. Madeleine Swann in particular) towards an explicit and outspoken embodiment of feminism, is instead a pseudo-progressive attempt to appear more liberal. However, in *Casino Royale* (2006) and *Spectre* (2015), amatonormativity can be seen to reinforce Bond's normative masculinity.

The normative masculinity that is part of each of the films' gender relations can be differentiated into two types: Normative Masculinity Type 1 and Normative Masculinity Type 2. Both types are a version of an idealised masculinity which Bond displays on numerous occasions in the films. They are characterised as follows. Type 1 is essentially hypermasculinity as defined by Avi Ben-Zeev et al., which will be called Type 1 in this paper for the sake of clarity:

The hypermasculine male is characterized by the idealization of stereotypically masculine traits, such as virility and physicality, while concurrently rejecting traits seen as feminine and thus perceived as antithetical and even inferior to machismo, such as compassion or emotional expression. (2012, 54)

These traits are further expanded by Mosher and Sirkin's Hypermasculinity Inventory. It contains three aspects: "(a) callous sex attitudes towards women,¹ (b) violence as manly, and c) danger as exciting" (1984, 150). Hypermasculinity, then, is how Type 1 manifests. Type 1 presents itself when Bond's job and his country are his priority and he has no romantic interest (or said interest is unattainable). He is an agent, a killer, and capable of great and unflinching violence. He is also

1 Arguably, this is not entirely accurate for Bond's liaisons, but the franchise certainly portrays it that way. An in-depth analysis of Bond's promiscuity as morally questionable will be available in a forthcoming article in the *Journal of the International Symposium of Students of English, Croatian and Italian Studies*.

demonstratively heterosexual, promiscuous, and emotionally closed off – all traits that are covered in the Hypermasculinity Inventory. The violation of such aspects means that Bond’s status as a “real man” is threatened. A loss of Type 1 masculinity means a loss of masculinity altogether. This comes with several consequences because, as Judith Butler reminds us, “gender transgression is invariably punished” (2011, 110). For Bond this would amount to loss of male privilege and loss of respect, narrative agency, and his heroic status in the patriarchal Bond universe. Unless, of course, Bond does not lose his masculinity but shifts to a different, more socially acceptable kind – still unmistakably masculine, but depicted as a more mature and responsible alternative: Normative Masculinity Type 2. Normative Masculinity Type 2 functions less obviously with regards to its hegemonic base. It contains a more (seemingly) liberal attitude towards women and considers violence and promiscuity to be morally questionable. While Type 1 manifests as hypermasculinity, Type 2 manifests mainly as toxic masculinity, which is “a (heterosexual) masculinity that is threatened by anything associated with femininity (whether that is pink yogurt or emotions)” (Banet-Weiser and Miltner 2015, 171). To be affected by toxic masculinity one could, in stark contrast to the traits listed in Mosher and Sirkin’s Hypermasculinity Inventory, be a feminist, a pacifist, and put off by danger and still feel one’s masculinity threatened by pink yogurt or emotions. Bond exhibits Type 2 when he has a romantic interest, which then becomes his new priority. It sees him giving up his job and the violence that goes hand in hand with it in favour of monogamy and displays of emotional vulnerability. In other words, he gives up all that could be considered morally questionable (namely killing and being promiscuous) and becomes a more “normal” or socially acceptable character, if one with a dark and hypermasculine past.²

What triggers this shift from Normative Masculinity Type 1 to Normative Masculinity Type 2? As mentioned above, one of the key differences between the two types is the absence or presence of a romantic interest. The love interests in question are Vesper Lynd (*Casino Royale*) and Dr. Madeleine Swann (*Spectre*) – many other Bond Women feature in the rebooted films as well, of course, but

2 While Bond is recovering from genital torture in *Casino Royale*, Lynd reassures him by saying “If all that were left of you was your smile and your little finger you’d still be more of a man than anyone I’ve ever met”. Lynd hereby implies that Bond is so masculine that nothing can threaten his masculinity, that no man can surpass it. She frames masculinity as a competition – not one that Bond should not participate in, but one that he has already won, which helps portray Bond’s shift to Normative Masculinity Type 2 as a maturation and not a loss of masculinity.

their relationships with Bond are not of a romantic nature. Lynd and Swann are awarded a special status within the rebooted franchise and are marked as decidedly different from other Bond Women, in part because they are the ones who have attracted Bond's romantic affection. However, it is not just Bond's relationship with them that is exceptional; it is the fact that they are so different from other Bond Women that makes Bond susceptible to romantic attraction to them. The following scene in *Casino Royale*, showing Bond and Lynd relaxing at a beach, acknowledges this:

Lynd: "Does everyone have a tell?"

Bond: "Yes. Everyone. Everyone except you. I wonder if that's why I love you."

Lynd: "You love me?"

Bond: "Enough to quit and float around the world with you."

This is the only time this sentiment is explicit rather than implicit: Bond loves Lynd precisely because she is exceptional and worthy of the overhaul in his lifestyle which such romantic attraction necessitates. The implicit differences between Lynd and Swann and Bond's many other sexual partners are numerous. Both Lynd and Swann are of equal professional standing with Bond. In *Casino Royale*, Lynd's job (as a treasury official) is crucial to the mission's and thus Bond's success: she controls the money Bond uses to try and win against antagonist Le Chiffre in a high-stakes poker game. She has the power to deny him more money, which is needed for him to continue playing and to have a chance of beating Le Chiffre. She is aware of her power from the very start of their professional relationship, pointing out to him that she will only approve further monetary help if she "deem[s] it a prudent investment". Swann is just as crucial to the mission in *Spectre*. Her knowledge is necessary to decrypt her father's coded message, which ultimately leads to the discovery of the antagonist's secret lair and his (temporary) demise. Both women are career oriented – if one more blatantly successfully so than the other. Bond points out Lynd's desire to be taken seriously and to be respected by her colleagues and superiors, as well as her aspirations to climb the career ladder of Her Majesty's treasury. Swann has already climbed rather high in that regard. She studied at Oxford and the Sorbonne University in France, spent two years with Médecins Sans Frontières, and has a doc-

torate in her field. Both Bond Women, then, are of a similar standing professionally speaking.

However, their exceptionalism is not limited to their professional lives. While the verbal sparring they engage in with Bond is not reserved for these two Bond Women in particular, their adamant criticism of his life choices and values is. Other Bond Women may enjoy verbal sparring with Bond, such as Solange Dimitrios in *Casino Royale*, Camille Montes in *Quantum of Solace* (2008), or Lucia Sciarra in *Spectre*, but they do not criticise Bond's attitudes or life decisions, whereas Lynd and Swann do.³ Lynd, for instance, points out just minutes after meeting Bond for the first time that "MI6 looks for maladjusted young men who give little thought to sacrificing others in order to protect Queen and country", the implication being that she thinks of Bond as maladjusted. In a similar vein, Swann questions his career choice: "Why, given every other possible option, does a man choose the life of a paid assassin?" Both of them have strong opinions about Bond's life choices, few of them positive.

Another aspect that sets them apart from other Bond Women is their initial but adamant rejection of Bond's advances. Both Lynd and Swann are demonstratively uninterested in him, going so far as to insist on physical barriers such as a securely locked door (*Casino Royale*) or, in Swann's case, a more symbolic gesture, a canopy between them at night, which she draws with the accompanying comment "Don't think for one moment that this is where I fall into your arms, seeking solace for my dead daddy". Both women also frequently enforce their boundaries by ignoring Bond's flirtations and telling him off for approaching them. Overt "feminine counter-discourse", as Tincknell calls it (2009, 105), is limited to Lynd and Swann. That both women resist Bond's womanising "rescues [the films] from simplistic accusations of 'sexism'" (ibid.) and makes Bond himself, in entering romantic relationships, seem more progressive and thus more marketable to audiences. Thus the audience is, from the very first moment of Lynd's and Swann's introductions, overtly and repeatedly made aware of the difference between these women and others Bond has encountered. They are romantically involved with Bond, crucial to the missions at hand; and they criticise Bond's life choices and confidently offer a "feminine counter-discourse" (ibid.).

This combination may indeed seem progressive at first glance, but much of the films' portrayals of apparent progress with respect to gender relations are

3 The ever-critical Moneypenny is the exception, here, but she retains a special status in-between Bond Woman and colleague. A potential relationship is always teased at but never actualised. Nevertheless, this only further proves why this exception is viable – she is a quasi-romantic interest.

disclosed as superficial. Both Lynd and Swann alter Bond's life considerably precisely because of their romantic connections with him. Their feminism cannot co-exist with Bond's misogynist Type 1 masculinity. The actualisation of the romantic potential thus necessitates a shift to Type 2, which is at first glance more congruent with their feminism. However, what ultimately enables them to trigger this shift is the incommensurable importance assigned in the first place to the romantic potential of their relationships to Bond; that is, amatonormativity. Amatonormativity consists of "the assumption that a central, exclusive, amorous relationship is normal for humans, in that it is a universally shared goal, and that such a relationship is normative, in that it should be aimed at in preference to other relationship types" (Brake, 88-89). The concept reveals that Bond's seeming liberation from gender expectations is rooted in deeply normative value judgments. It is no surprise that amatonormativity has not been widely discussed because this assumption is so ingrained in society that few think to question it. As one cause for this, Brake rightfully points to our "romantic-love obsessed mass media and consumer culture" (ibid., 124). We are, indeed, surrounded every day by romance and the special importance it retains in our cultural lives, whether it be in film, television, radio shows, or in everyday conversation with relatives, friends, acquaintances and even strangers. Romantic love is presented as the epitome of "normal" human relationships.⁴

Given the ubiquitousness of romance in our culture, it is unsurprising that similar trends are to be found in James Bond films as well. Not only do these discourses have an effect on Bond himself and on how other characters perceive him, they are also pervasive enough to affect other characters' respective portrayals. One aspect of the films that demonstrates this is that romantic relationships are present even when entirely irrelevant to the plot. In *Spectre*, Bond calls Eve Moneypenny in the middle of the night looking for information on Franz Oberhauser. Moneypenny is shown to be in bed with a male companion and gets

4 An example of the lack of cultural discourse around this issue is relative disregard for aromanticism, a romantic orientation that is defined by an absence of romantic attraction. Aromantics do not experience romantic attraction and thus do not fall in love. This orientation is not widely known and, unsurprisingly, there has not been a lot of research on it. In fact, aromanticism tends to be mentioned only as an afterthought in studies on asexuality (Przybylo 2016, 183) – there is no research solely on aromanticism itself. A closely related but better represented issue within the discourse of romance and sexuality studies is singlism. DePaulo and Morris discuss legal as well as social discrimination of singles, including negative stereotyping as "immature, insecure, self-centered, unhappy, lonely, and ugly" (2006, 251).

up and leaves the room so as not to be overheard. The following exchange takes place:

Bond: “Who was that?”

Money Penny: “No one.”

Bond: “No, it wasn’t.”

Money Penny: “It’s just a friend.”

Bond (*disbelieving*): “At this time of night?”

Money Penny: “It’s called life, James. You should try it sometime.”

Money Penny’s companion remains nameless and unimportant to the plot, although apparently not unimportant to Money Penny. This is not only about a sexual relationship but romantic involvement as well, even if at first glance either could be the case. Bond does not require any external encouragement to engage in various sexual relations, after all,⁵ and Money Penny’s companion is staying overnight – which, in the entire collection of rebooted films, is the only time when it is implied that Money Penny enjoys a romantic relationship with another character.⁶ While it could be argued that this scene depicts Money Penny as attempting to conceal the fact that she is sexually but not romantically involved with her guest, this seems a lot less likely. If, nevertheless, this interpretation is chosen, her utterance “[i]t’s called life, James” may be a defence of her enjoyment of casual sex, which Bond engages in mainly, but not exclusively, on missions. Regardless of which interpretation is chosen, however, both result in an emphasis of the strengths of amatonormativity, as non-romantic sexual relationships are discouraged and considered to be less than romantic relationships – less presentable, less acceptable, less valuable. Assuming that this exchange is

5 A particularly telling scene takes place in *Skyfall*, when Bond spends the time after his “death” on a beach in Turkey. His days are filled with alcohol and sex. Showing him in a bar perpetually drunk, risking his life playing with a scorpion, would have sufficed to make his life crisis evident, and yet the audience is also presented with a gratuitous sex scene.

6 Bond spends the night after sex only with two women: Vesper Lynd and Madeleine Swann, his romantic interests.

about romance, Bond's question "[a]t this time of night?" draws attention to the fact that romance is connected to certain social scripts. A friend staying overnight is not believable to Bond and likely not to many in the audience either – it would be a violation of amatonormativity (Brake, 89). There is an age factor to this, of course: sleepovers are acceptable in one's childhood and teenage years, and perhaps it is also acceptable in one's younger adult years to stay at someone's place overnight if one is too inebriated to get home safely. Yet questions will be asked if there is no "excuse" for this behaviour (such as inebriation), especially if the person staying over is of a different gender from one's own, as is the case in this scene. There is also the fact that Money Penny's rather half-hearted lie is so obviously set up as a lie that a non-standard arrangement that may involve a (queer-)platonic partner⁷ or friend staying the night is framed as unthinkable and even impossible. Indeed, Money Penny's statement that "[i]t's called life, James" also frames romance as a natural part of said life. It even implies that, without romance, life would not be "normal". Added to Money Penny's encouragement that Bond "should try it sometime", it is clear that a life without romance is portrayed as a questionable, even unnatural choice, because romance is assumed to be universally desired. According to Brake, "[v]iolations of amatonormativity would include dining alone by choice, putting friendship above romance, cohabiting with friends, or not searching for romance" (89). Money Penny strongly suggests that a romantic relationship would be good for Bond, but her phrasing appears almost patronising – perhaps based on the misconception that "[s]ingles are seen as lacking a sense of responsibility as well as having empty lives" (ibid., 93). Money Penny, then, represents the voice of amatonormativity, and Bond does not question this. He goes along with the social script by not believing her claim of having a friend over and is amused rather than offended by the suggestion to follow her example.

What is implied by Money Penny and Bond's exchange is that a) there are certain rules to friendship that cannot be crossed, and b) that romance is somehow "more" than friendship. The comment "[i]t's *just* a friend" (emphasis mine) clearly positions friendship as less than romantic relationships and simultaneously reinforces the rules that friendship is forbidden to break without becoming romantic (in this case, staying overnight). Bond's amusement, especially, naturalises these rules – even he, with his unashamed preference for promiscuity, recognises and, through his reaction, reinforces these rules. While he himself does entertain casual night-time guests, even if they do not stay the night, he draws a

⁷ Queerplatonic relationships are "non-romantic significant-other relationships of 'partner status'" (Chasin 2015, 177).

different conclusion regarding Money Penny – perhaps a hypermasculine assumption that women are incapable of having and enjoying one-night stands. In combination with Money Penny’s reflection of her companion as being “no one”, it is implied that while a friend is *no one*, a romantic partner is *someone*. The person’s relevance in Money Penny’s life is completely changed by the absence or presence of romantic feelings she has for them. Of course, assuming this is a universal experience, as amatonormativity would have it, Money Penny’s suggestion that Bond try out a romantic relationship for himself is the natural next step in her role as his undercover assistant, helping him not just with the mission at hand but with his life in general. After all, finding romantic love is just as pressing a matter as avoiding being murdered by the enemy in a car chase. This scene is a very telling example of amatonormativity and even of discrimination against those who are not in a relationship. Being single is to either be found lacking or to be suspected of hiding something – the “crazy cat lady” who supposedly fills the void in her life with her pets comes to mind, or the “confirmed bachelor” who is thought to actually be gay and closeted. This type of stereotyping and discrimination “is widely practiced. Its existence is not controversial. What is controversial is the claim that it is wrongful discrimination and not simply justified preferential treatment” (Brake, 93). This form of discrimination “benefits members of central, exclusive, sexual love relationships” (ibid.). While Bond’s status as romantically unattached is not depicted in such *cliché* terms, the principle remains the same. At the point in *Spectre* during which the above conversation with Money Penny takes place, Bond has not even met Swann, and yet he is already being set up for the shift to Normative Masculinity Type 2. Romance, we sense, is inescapable. Even for James Bond.

Another example is the portrayal of M’s love life. M is in a powerful position as head of MI6 and viewers are frequently made aware of the fact that work is her priority. The many screens in her home connecting to MI6 Headquarters, including in her bedroom and her bathroom, are a testament to this, as is her insistence on putting the job above personal sentiments.⁸ Her partner’s existence has no bearing on the plot of any of the rebooted films, and yet it is pointed out that M is married (to a man, of course). The first and only time he is shown is in *Casino Royale*, lying in bed as M answers a call from work, his relationship status with M as of yet unspecified. (His voice is heard later, in *Quantum of Solace* (2008), calling to M in her bathroom.) However, considering that he is present in M’s

8 In *Skyfall* she explains without regret that she left one of her agents, the antagonist Silva, to suffer torture at enemy hands in exchange for a deal that would benefit MI6.

well-connected home at all, and that M takes a phone call discussing highly sensitive information while he is in the room, it is safe to assume that this is not a one-night stand with a stranger. The third time he is mentioned is in *Skyfall* (2012), where he is revealed to be M's late husband. It is obvious that this character's existence is not crucial to either the plot or M's – or anyone else's – character development. One might question why he exists at all and come to the same conclusion that Linda Racioppi and Colleen M. Tremonte do: "The audience is reassured that this female head of MI6 not only has a personal life but that it is 'normal' and 'natural'" (2009, 193). "Normal" and "natural" are the key words here. Despite her powerful professional position, which Cunningham and Gabri consider to be a breach of gender roles (2009, 87), M is still within the boundaries of what is considered socially acceptable because she is married. The scenes thus function as a tool of humanisation, satisfying both institutional heterosexuality⁹ and an amatonormative society. The *status quo* persists.

Another scene, in *Spectre*, shows Bond conversing with minor antagonist Mr. White, who does not have much time to live because of the thallium that has been administered to his body by Blofeld. Bond needs information that Mr. White is unwilling to provide because he is protecting someone. The conversation goes as follows:

Bond: "You're protecting someone. Your wife?"

Mr. White (*laughs bitterly*): "She left long ago."

The conversation is longer than this, of course, but the part of the exchange relevant to this essay consists of these two lines. Noteworthy is Bond's immediate assumption that it is his wife that Mr. White is trying to protect. This is not only a hetero- but also an amatonormative assumption. The first protection-worthy type of relationship that comes to Bond's mind is marriage, followed not much later by the suggestion that Mr. White has a son or daughter he wishes to protect. Non-marital or -familial relationships are, by implication, portrayed as unworthy of consideration, which demonstrates once again that "amatonormativity

9 Stevi Jackson uses this concept rather than the more common term heteronormativity because "as an institution heterosexuality, while exclusionary, also governs the lives of those *included* within its boundaries in ways that cannot be explained by heteronormativity alone" (2006, 108, emphasis in original), and M certainly is included within those boundaries.

discourages investment in other kinds of caring relationships” (Brake, 89).¹⁰ Far from encouraging a loosening of these constraints, the films instead reinforce them. Other characters’ attitudes towards romance are not limited to their own romantic concerns, however. Amatonormativity also heavily influences how other characters perceive and interact with Bond. For instance, Bond’s ally in *Casino Royale*, René Mathis, asks Bond during a private moment: “How’s our girl? Melted your cold heart yet?” The implication is that Bond’s heart is cold and unyielding when he is not in love. The rather telling “yet” implies that the figurative melting of Bond’s heart is inevitable – that finding romantic love is inevitable. Bond is not lacking in non-romantic relationships; he has a bond with M, for one, and develops a friendship with Mathis (and later on, in *Skyfall*, with Mon-eypenny and Q). Even though he has known Mathis for about as long as he has known Lynd, there is nothing to insinuate that Mathis, and thus friendship, is melting Bond’s heart. Romance alone has the potential to reach Bond and thus humanise him in a similar manner to M’s humanisation through marriage.

The “special status” of romantic attraction is not only emphasised by friends such as Mathis, however. Bond’s adversaries seem to have much the same opinion. One scene in *Spectre* that underlines this is Bond’s torture by Blofeld. The aim of the torture (by hypodermic operation) is to tamper with Bond’s memory, to render him unable to recognise faces and to make sure that “[h]e dies not knowing who [Swann is]”. At one point during the scene, Blofeld *faux* laments: “The daughter of an assassin. The only one who could have understood him”. Purely logically, this seems an unlikely assumption for Blofeld to make; only within the context of the pervasive frame of amatonormativity and its naturalising function of romance can this assumption go unchallenged. Considering that Bond is surrounded by numerous colleagues throughout the film (M, Mon-eypenny, Q, Mathis, Tanner, and Felix Leiter), as well as other other double-0 agents, whose existence is suggested by the number of Bond’s status, one would think that, within the whole of MI6, it is rather likely that there are quite a few

10 The second line leaves the audience with two possible interpretations: either a) Mr. White’s wife is not worth going after in the eyes of the enemy because she left, or b) Mr. White’s wife is not worth protecting from the enemy because she left. Regardless of which interpretation one chooses – both are valid options – the end result is that an absence of romantic involvement and commitment renders her irrelevant. If romantic feelings are not shared by White and his wife, it is impossible to hurt him by going after her. The underlying assumption in either scenario is that Mr. White would not care if she were hunted down by his enemies precisely because he is no longer romantically involved with her.

people who are capable of understanding him. Swann, on the other hand, may be the daughter of an assassin, but she does not live a life “in the shadows”, as M would call it. Nevertheless, she is singled out by Blofeld as exceptional and thus more important than any of Bond’s other non-romantic attachments. As it turns out, Blofeld is unwittingly correct in his assumption, for at the end of *Spectre*, when Bond chooses to leave MI6, nothing of Bond’s identity remains but that of his role as a romantic partner. He is, essentially, isolated in his newfound Normative Masculinity Type 2. Regardless of whether the relationship with Bond is one of cooperation or antagonism, then, the underlying groundwork of any interaction with him is the assumption and expectation that romance or the potential for romance is and should be something Bond seeks out. The value of romance as all-important is apparently so universal, then, that the gap between two completely opposite sides of a moral spectrum (good and evil) is bridged by this common normative enforcement; and the supposed freedom Bond gains from leaving Type 1 behind is disclosed as mere assimilation to a different set of social norms.

Douglas A. Cunningham and Richard Gabri argue that Bond’s vulnerable moments with Lynd in *Casino Royale* (in particular his statement “I have no armour left. You’ve stripped it from me. Whatever is left of me, all that I am, I’m yours”), are a sign of a new gender openness in the franchise (82). This scene is certainly unusual for a Bond film; being vulnerable and open about his feelings is not one of the characteristics James Bond is known for. To regard this new side of his character as a sign of shifting gender ideologies in the franchise is only a superficial analysis, though. Instead of taking it at face value what needs to be analysed is that which is not shown. Vulnerability that is visible to this extent only occurs in two scenarios: someone close to Bond dies, or he is with a romantic interest.¹¹ Non-death related vulnerability is limited to time spent with Bond’s romantic interests, Lynd and Swann. There is, for instance, a scene in *Casino Royale* in which Bond comforts a distressed Lynd after she has witnessed – and helped – Bond kill two men. After disposing of the bodies, Bond returns to the hotel room to find Lynd sitting in the running shower, clearly traumatised by the events. He joins her (fully clothed), reassures her, holds her hands, and strokes her hair. With Swann, Bond’s vulnerability occurs in the form of an emotional confession. After Blofeld threatens to and actually does penetrate Bond’s brain with a needle in order to make him unable to recognise faces, Bond says to

11 In the case of Vesper Lynd, the two coincide at the end of *Casino Royale*, when Bond clutches her lifeless body to himself.

Swann: “I’d recognise you anywhere”.¹² The fact that these examples of Bond’s vulnerability are limited to moments he shares with his romantic interests suggests that the possibility of gender openness is drowned in the predominance of toxic masculinity and amatonormativity, which are rooted not in openness but in adherence to normative constraints. The concept of toxic masculinity is crucial to the interpretation of these instances: if Bond’s masculinity is threatened, in this case not by pink yogurt but emotions, it makes sense that he can only show vulnerability when with a woman – when no male peers are present to witness his wavering masculinity.¹³ Bond’s romantic attraction to Lynd and Swann is precisely what enables his vulnerability. While it is not technically wrong to suggest that Bond transgresses gender boundaries, he only transgresses those of Normative Masculinity Type 1 and in his movement to Type 2; he does not, however, as Cunningham and Gabri suggest (297), free himself from the confines of traditional gender expression.

Bond’s non-sexual affection for both Lynd and Swann is also showcased during the traditional sex scenes in both *Casino Royale* and *Spectre*. With both women, Bond pauses the proceedings and takes a moment to look lovingly at his partner and to smile at her tenderly before they continue. This, coupled with the emphasis on the type of non-sexual intimacy mentioned above, sets a stark contrast to how Bond treats other Bond Women who he is not romantically – but may be sexually – involved with. While he arguably does not mistreat them, Bond certainly does not show the same level of care to the other women he beds as he does his romantic partners Lynd and Swann.¹⁴ Once again, amatonormativity is shown to operate at the heart of Bond’s most precious relationships: the romantic relationship is presented as a “special site[] of value” (Brake, 5) where Bond goes the extra mile, while his other, non-romantic relationships do not get any such treatment. This is hardly surprising, perhaps, considering that “[o]ur

12 Either the needle missed its mark or romantic feelings can overcome medical realities – Bond’s utterance suggests the latter, since it implies that he would recognise Swann regardless of the circumstances. One could argue, of course, that exaggeration and impossibilities are simply the nature of film and fiction, but taking into account the reboot’s gritty psychological realism (Cunningham and Gabri, 93) does lead to the question why this liberty is taken here with this particular subject matter.

13 While Blofeld is present during the exchange between Bond and Swann, the conversation is portrayed as only being heard by the two of them, thus not making Blofeld a witness of Bond’s emotional vulnerability.

14 Bond’s physical relationship with Sévérine, a sexual trafficking victim in *Skyfall* who sees Bond as her only chance to escape her current life, provides for questionable consent but is not framed as such in the film.

culture focuses on dyadic amorous relationships at the cost of recognizing friendships, care networks, urban tribes, and *other intimate associations*" (ibid., 88, emphasis mine), which "undermines relationships other than amorous love and marriage by relegating them to cultural invisibility or second best" (ibid., 98). The centring of Bond's romantic relationships above all others thus further strengthens the films' conservative outlook on interpersonal relationships.

This special site of value is what makes romance so inescapable even, or perhaps especially so, for Bond. The special position both Lynd and Swann occupy demonstrate the considerable impact that romantic love has upon Bond's life. With Bond's shift from Normative Masculinity Type 1 to Normative Masculinity Type 2 also comes a complete change of lifestyle. In both *Casino Royale* and *Spectre*, we see that Bond gives up everything: his home, his job, and his social connections. In *Casino Royale*, he leaves behind his recently gained double-0 status and his beloved M; in *Spectre*, it is his job, the newly-found friendly relationship with the recently appointed M, and the support system of his colleagues (Moneypenny, Q, and Tanner). The climax of the latter film illustrates in simple binary terms Bond's choices: as he stands over the helpless Blofeld, one way lies M, symbolic of all of MI6 (duty, professionalism, friendship), and the other way lies Swann (freedom from duty, passion, romantic love). Bond looks both ways before walking towards Swann. In his choice of romance over duty, Bond becomes compliant with a new set of normative social expectations (romantic commitment, potential marriage), cleverly disguised as the ultimate step towards freedom and happiness. This choice seems especially jarring because we do not actually know who James Bond is if he is not doing his job, bantering with colleagues or friends, and charming and sleeping with (nearly) every woman he meets. The questions that present themselves, then, are: who is James Bond when he is not 007? What does he do with his newfound freedom? The brief time he spends happily with Lynd in *Casino Royale* before her death is filled with confessions of love and physical affection, both sexual and non-sexual, but not much else; and Bond's happily ever after in *Spectre* happens off-screen, after the film's conclusion. Bond has turned from double-0 agent, colleague, and friend, to simple lover. As Brake points out, "[a]matonormativity prompts the sacrifice of other relationships to romantic love and marriage and relegates friendship and solitudinousness [sic] to cultural invisibility", which "create[s] the conditions for separation of individuals from the community" (87). This is certainly the case for Bond's decision on the bridge in *Spectre*. Indeed, marriage does not seldomly lead to loss of friendships, as Askham (1984) gathers from a series of interviews with married individuals. The same loss of friendship can apply to non-marital

romantic relationships – Bond’s decision to favour his romantic relationship at once separates him, apparently permanently,¹⁵ from everything that had value in his life, thus leaving him isolated.

In *Casino Royale* and *Spectre* especially, the franchise thus strengthens its conservative position on gender, sexuality, and romance while attempting to appear open-minded and progressive. This works rather well because Lynd’s and Swann’s utterances and behaviours certainly seem to be feminist at first glance, and Bond’s new masculinity, his transition from Normative Masculinity Type 1 to Normative Masculinity Type 2 prompted by his love for these women, does transcend the type of masculinity hitherto expected from Bond. Amatonormativity plays a key role in the perception of this change as positive and liberating. The importance of romance in everyday life and media, as well as the assumption that everyone seeks and prioritises romance over all other relationship types, guides audiences’ and academics’ evaluation of the values propagated in the films. Amatonormativity’s normative and thus constraining frame remains hidden and therefore cannot be recognised as easily as that of, for example, heteronormativity or institutional heterosexuality. Romance melts Bond’s heart and changes Bond’s values, his outlook on life, and his job – and, of course, his relationships (romantic or otherwise); indeed, it changes Bond himself. Romance is shown to be ever present, all powerful, and even necessary for happiness and to live a worthy life. If this seems less progressive than the films appear at first glance to be, this is precisely the point. Christoph Lindner’s concern following the release of *Casino Royale* that the series would not continue to be as progressive in successive iterations (2009, 1) – as well as Anderson’s prediction that “the conventions of any franchise tend to both restrict the malleability of its tropes and norms and preclude progressive possibilities within its universe” (2016, 66) – were unfortunately accurate. Where scholars hoped for gender liberation for both Bond and the Bond Women, there is pseudo-feminism and a different (but just as restrictedly) normative form of masculinity.

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15 At the end of *Spectre* Bond and Dr Swann drive off together without any apparent intention to return.

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