James Bond’s “Pussy” and Anglo-American Cold War Sexuality

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The James Bond movies are the longest-running franchise in film history, making 007 the most iconic spy figure in international cinema. Likewise, Fleming’s novels enjoyed immense popularity during the Cold War, especially after John F. Kennedy announced in an interview with Life magazine that From Russia with Love ranked as one of his top ten favorite books. In fact, at the time of Fleming’s death in August 1964, over thirty million copies of Bond books had been sold, and two years later, at the height of Bond mania, that number had doubled to sixty million (Giblin 24). When inflation is considered in the calculations, the cinematic versions of Fleming’s novels reflect equally impressive numbers; From Russia with Love (1963), Goldfinger (1964), Thunderball (1965), Diamonds Are Forever (1971), The Spy Who Loved Me (1977), and Goldeneye (1997) all rank among the top one hundred highest grossing films of all time (“List of Highest Grossing Films”).

With Penguin Books re-releasing the Bond novels, many people are now turning (or returning) to Fleming’s work, and what is perhaps most striking to these twenty-first century readers is the stark political incorrectness that the author employs. As several academic pieces on James Bond reveal, the spy clearly views non-British cultures as far inferior to his own, and these views are usually depicted through Fleming’s villains who, to Englishmen, are racial others. These characters, which include Bulgarians, Italians, Germans, Yugoslavs, Russians, Koreans, Turks, and Americans, are the victims of shameless racial stereotypes and ethnic slurs (Amis 75). For example, in his first novel, Casino Royale, Fleming describes the local Bulgarians as “stupid, but obedient” and notes that they are merely used by the Russians “for simple killings or as fall-guys for more complicated ones” (27). In Diamonds Are Forever, American gangsters are described as “mostly a lot of Italian bums with monogrammed shirts who spend the day eating spaghetti and meatballs and squirting scent all over themselves” (18). Likewise, many of Fleming’s villains, in both the novels and the films, possess sexual deviancies and physical abnormalities demarcating them as degenerate enemies. Stromberg, in The Spy Who Loved Me, possesses webbed hands; Scaramanga, in The Man with the Golden Gun, sports three nipples; Kidd and Wint, in Diamonds Are Forever, are homosexual henchmen, and in the cinematic version of the story, Blofeld dresses in drag. These narrative devices suggest that the James Bond franchise is unwilling to acknowledge that individual differences exist among any nationality or race; the individual is reflective of the whole, and in the world of Bond, no nationality is safe from criticism—except, of course, the British.

However, English nationalism is not only embodied in Fleming’s villains; the novels also reveal perceived cultural supremacy through the bodies and sexuality of the series’ women. In From Russia with Love, Bond is able to seduce Tatiana

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Romanova, a Russian agent who is originally sent to seduce and destroy Bond; this plot twist links 007’s sexual prowess to his national potency by literally placing Britain on top of Russia, as their affair signals Tatiana’s desire to defect to the United Kingdom. The link between female bodies and national governments is also apparent in the story when Rosa Klebb, the head of operations and executions for SMERSH, informs Tatiana of her assignment to beguile Bond. Here, Klebb tells the young Russian, “You will seduce [Bond]. In this matter, you will have no silly compunctions. Your body belongs to the state. Since your birth, the State has nourished it. Now your body must work for the state” (77)—and in fact, Klebb’s own body and sexuality reflect the inhumanity and deviancy of the Soviets. Fleming describes Rosa as a neuter who sleeps with both men and women. “She might enjoy the act physically, but the instrument was of no importance . . . and this psychological neutrality . . . relieved her of so many human emotions and sentiments and desires. Sexual neutrality was the essence of coldness in an individual” (59). Klebb is also described, in general, as a hard, unattractive, and even monstrous woman and torturer. As Christine Bold notes, Klebb’s body and her ambiguous sexuality reflect the equation that never fails in the Bond novels: “beauty, heterosexuality, and patriotism go together; ugliness, sexual ‘deviance’ and criminality are linked equally irresistibly” (174) for the novels’ villains. Thus, it is unsurprising when Bond describes Gala Brand, the British heroine in the novel Moonraker, as “reserved, loyal, and virginal” (73).

However, in the James Bond films, Albert Broccoli and Harry Saltzman chose to erase much of the sexual deviance–national deviance theme found in Fleming’s novels in order to cater to a more prudent US film industry. As Guy Hamilton, one of the series’ directors, notes, explicit homosexuality and other types of sexual “crudeness” were unacceptable to American movie professionals. For example, when Goldfinger was released in 1964, American censors refused to allow Pussy Galore’s name to appear on any promotional materials for the film. Instead, she was denoted by the title “Miss Galore” or “Goldfinger’s personal pilot”; censors also tried, albeit unsuccessfully, to have her name changed to Kitty Galore in the film itself. Additionally, Hamilton states that while the British censors were only concerned with the amount of violent content, “the American censors were concerned only with the sex—to the point of lunacy” (Giammarco 33). He recalls that in Goldfinger,

if you look in one of the scenes, behind Bond a hundred yards away there are a couple of girls running past, and you can see a flash of a bare breast. But the censor spotted that immediately. So what I would do is put things in for him to cut out, and then I’d roll on the carpet saying, “But that ruins the whole scene!” By doing that, it would come down to “Okay, you can get your two cuts”—which I didn’t want anyway—“if I can keep the other three which you’re making such a fuss about.” (33)

This conservatism presented a problem for Broccoli and Saltzman because in the novels, Bond’s national prowess is so dependent on the gap between his sexual potency and the sexual deviancy of the foreigners he encounters. How, then, could American filmmakers tinker with Fleming’s formula and play outside the parameters of explicit sexual deviancy in order to elevate 007’s cultural superiority? How too did these changes morph the literary Bond formula while still speaking to the sexual roles inherent in Cold War America (and to a lesser extent, Britain)?

To answer these questions, I would like to investigate the adaptation of Goldfinger from print to screen. While later films deviated further from Fleming’s novels, Goldfinger, along with Dr. No and From Russia with Love, adhered relatively closely to the novels’ plots and can therefore be considered genuine adaptations of Fleming’s work, and works that helped set the formula for future Bond films. Equally important is that the literary version of Goldfinger employs homosexual characters to demarcate the deviancy of a foreign nation—in this case, the United States via the lesbian Pussy Galore. Yet oddly, Fleming also
develops a British homosexual, Tilly Masterson—who rejects Bond for Pussy—in order to comment upon the relationship between England and America and the women’s movement in general. Of course, the American cinematic version of Goldfinger had to erase the erotic relationship between these two women, and it instead transformed the characters into heterosexuals, or at least into characters whom less savvy audiences would only suspect as lesbians if they had read the novel first. As a result of this homosexual erasure, Broccoli and Saltzman had to find other ways of representing British national prowess. But before I discuss the changes they made, it is important to first discuss how Pussy and Tilly’s sexuality works in the book and how these characters reflect the sexual attitudes of both Britons and Americans during the Cold War.

As mentioned, a character’s “deviant” behavior in the Bond series is used to mark that person’s national weakness, and this formula is certainly applied to Pussy Galore. Pussy is the leader of the Cement Mixers, a well-respected all-lesbian gang from the Bronx, and Goldfinger hires the group to help him break into Fort Knox and steal the US gold supply. While Pussy plays a less significant role in the book than she does in the film—indeed, she does not show up until three fourths of the way through the novel—her character immediately helps Fleming link her sexual deviancy with American degeneracy, a trope that is developed through her lesbian criminal activities and through the reason that she offers Bond for becoming homosexual in the first place: “I come from the South,” she states. “You know the definition of a virgin down there? Well, it’s a girl who can run faster than her brother. In my case, I couldn’t run as fast as my uncle. I was twelve. That’s not so good James. You ought to be able to guess that” (191). Here, Fleming specifically implies that Pussy’s lesbianism emerges from the familial and cultural dysfunction of the American South, and given the Bond formula, this deviancy can only reflect the degeneracy of the United States.

Yet this formula of sexual deviancy equaling national deviancy runs into complications with the book’s other homosexual, Tilly Masterson, precisely because she is British. Importantly, however, Fleming does not use Tilly’s love for women to criticize England’s national sovereignty; rather, it serves as a warning against the feminist movement taking place in the late 1950s. This becomes apparent when Bond describes Tilly as one of those girls whose hormones had got mixed up. He knew the type well and thought they and their male counterparts were a direct consequence of giving votes to women and “sex equality.” As a result of fifty years of emancipation, feminine qualities were dying out or being transferred to males. Pansies of both sexes were everywhere, not yet completely homosexual, but confused, not knowing what they were. . . . He was sorry for them, but he had no time for them. (162–63)

Here, Bond implies that Tilly is not really homosexual, but simply confused as to her preferences, and that this confusion is not directly the fault of Britain, but of the feminist movement in general, which Bond disdains. However, the passage does acknowledge the danger of Britain’s national enfeeblement if the move toward sexual equality produces citizens who embody gender traits not traditionally associated with their sex, such as effeminacy in males, “butchness” in females, or homosexual desire in general.

This warning against homosexuality and its ability to weaken Great Britain would have held real-life relevance for British readers given the betrayal of the Cambridge Spies: Kim Philby, Guy Burgess, Donald Maclean, and Anthony Blunt. These four high-ranking officials in the British government and secret service passed on sensitive information to the KGB, and the group served the Soviets in one capacity or another for over thirty years. More important to this article, however, is that Burgess was a flamboyant homosexual, Blunt was a more discreet gay man, and Maclean was also suspected of having homosexual tendencies despite being married with children. All three cases provided a legitimate real-life link between communism and homosexuality during
the Cold War, and indeed, in *From Russia with Love*, Fleming discusses the treachery of Burgess and Maclean, remarking that “homosexuals [are] about the worst security risk there is” (84).2

On a similar note, Pussy and Tilly’s lesbianism would have also resonated with American Cold War readers who feared the degradation of their national moral fiber through sexual deviancy. As Elaine Tyler May points out in *Homeward Bound*, many Americans during the Cold War feared the unleashing of nuclear energy and the social and sexual fallout of the atomic age. “Many contemporaries,” she writes, “believed that the Russians could destroy the United States not only by atomic energy but through internal subversion.” Americans reasoned that their “national strength depended upon the ability of strong, manly men to stand up against communist threats”; therefore, normal heterosexual behavior culminating in marriage represented “maturity” and “responsibility,” while those who were “deviant” were, by definition, irresponsible, immature, and weak (82). In other words, heterosexual men who were “slaves to their passions” could be easily duped by seductive women working for the communists,3 and homosexual men were viewed as “pansies” who lacked the virility that the nation so badly needed. As a result, the country had to be on moral alert, and many postwar experts prescribed family stability and traditional gender roles as the antidotes to these dangers.

Such beliefs became manifest in the way that many Americans viewed homosexuality and heterosexual promiscuity. As May notes, during the Cold War, many high-level government officials truly believed that there was a connection between communism and sexual depravity. Indeed, the Republican national chairman, Guy Gabrielson, claimed that “sexual perverts . . . have infiltrated our government in recent years,” and he insisted that they were “perhaps as dangerous as the actual Communists” (qtd. in May 82). Statements such as this led many anticommunists to investigate homosexuals, and the FBI mounted a full-scale effort to discover the personal sexual habits of those under suspicion of subversive behavior and those who were seeking government employment. Even in the private sector, employees’ sexual behavior was considered a legitimate focus of investigation, as sexual deviants “were allegedly security risks because they could be easily seduced, blackmailed, or tempted to join subversive organizations since they lacked the will and moral stamina to resist” (83). To curb sexual deviancy in America, the government and numerous family agencies promoted early heterosexual marriage and traditional gender roles to keep the moral fiber of America intact. Women were encouraged to be subservient in the bedroom so that their husbands could attain sexual satisfaction, thereby eradicating the desire to search outside the marriage for fulfillment. Likewise, women were instructed to learn how their domestic skills could help their families and communities survive a nuclear attack by stocking their pantries full of canned goods and knowing how to cook with primitive utensils, such as grates and bricks, in the event that neighborhood homes were destroyed (91–92).

Given this social climate, it is no wonder that *Goldfinger* resonated with both British and American Cold War readers. Fleming confirms their worst fears in the novel by developing women who do not engage in monogamous heterosexual relationships, but who instead opt for sexual deviancy and employ their energies in activities that weaken Western prowess. After all, Pussy is a criminal, robbing homes in the Bronx, and she and her gang later agree to help the Russian-employed Auric Goldfinger rob the national gold depository in Fort Knox. While Tilly Masterson is not as direct a threat to Britain—she and Bond are only working for Goldfinger to discover his plan and save their own lives—Tilly’s lesbianism still warns the British about going too far with sexual equality and homosexual tolerance; it is ultimately her lust for Pussy that leads to her death in the novel. More specifically, Tilly is attracted to Pussy’s confidence and beauty, so when things become dangerous at Fort Knox, she refuses to follow Bond to safety and instead chooses to stay with Pussy, who she believes will protect her. However, Pussy fails in this role, and Tilly is killed by Oddjob during the robbery attempt. As
Bond remarks when he finds her body, “Poor little bitch. She didn’t think much of men... I could have got her away if only she’d only followed me” (176).

It is ironic, however, that while Fleming chose to observe the conservative fears about women and their destructive sexuality, the hero, 007, is a single man who sleeps with several women throughout the series. Under the same moral code of the Cold War that demonized nonmarital sex, Bond’s promiscuity should have likewise been viewed as subversive and weak, but instead, Fleming uses Bond’s heterosexual exploits to achieve the opposite effect—they actually promote British strength. As Loelia Ponsonby, Bond’s secretary in Moonraker, remarks, a woman working for intelligence cannot have an affair with someone outside the office without immediately being seen as a security risk. For the secret service’s male agents, however, “marriage and children and a home were out of the question if they were to be of any use in the field,” and therefore, they had “an excuse for fragmentary affairs” (10). In other words, because men had to sacrifice domestic relationships to be effective intelligence officers for their country, men like Bond not only earned a license to kill, but also a license to love whomever, whenever, and this secondary license often worked in the national interest. After all, the result of Bond’s affair with Tatiana does not merely result in hedonistic indulgence; his sexual sagacity seduces Tatiana to the West, actually weakening communism and bolstering British sovereignty.

A similar ending is found in Goldfinger when Bond is able to reclaim both his own and his nation’s sovereignty when he turns Pussy straight via his “authentic” masculinity and sexual savoir faire. As Pussy explains to Bond, she only liked women because she had never met a real man before (presumably, America had none), and on the last page of the book, 007 goes so far as to suggest that he can not only eradicate Pussy’s lesbianism, but he can also erase the scars of her past abuse by merely making love to her—an argument with which Pussy seems to agree. Shortly before they sleep together, Bond tells Pussy, in a voice reminiscent of a parent’s, to “lock that door... take off that sweater and come into bed. You’ll catch cold.” And Pussy, Fleming writes, “did as she was told, like an obedient child.” When Pussy then goes on to explain her past sexual abuse by her uncle, Bond replies, “All you need is a course of TLC... Short for Tender Loving Care treatment. It’s what they write on most papers when a waif gets brought into a children’s clinic” (191). Pussy then remarks that she would enjoy such treatment and wonders when it will start; Fleming concludes the book with these lines: “Bond’s right hand came slowly up the firm, muscled thighs, over the flat soft plain of the stomach to the right breast. Its point was hard with desire. He said softly, ‘Now.’ His mouth came ruthlessly down on hers” (191). This final passage reduces Pussy, who is previously described as a brash gangster from a tough New York neighborhood, to a “child” and a “waif,” while Bond is able to play the knowing parent and doctor who can “cure” her homosexuality. In this scene, then, Bond’s sexual prowess can tame even the toughest, most independent women, and by extension, Britain can subdue even the most powerful, deviant nations in the world—a trope that British readers would have appreciated, as many feared that England was becoming too cozy with its American cousin. Additionally, by restoring Pussy’s heterosexual desire, Bond is able to persuade her to turn against the novel’s Russian-employed criminal, Auric Goldfinger, and align herself with the West—a tactic that again links normative heterosexual desire with national stability.

Here, then, I return to this article’s main question: If sexual deviance in the Bond novels works to directly bolster both Bond’s masculinity and national potency, how are the American film versions able to sustain these characteristics when the sexual deviance-national deviance text is erased? After all, Goldfinger moviegoers who had not read the book would probably not guess that either Pussy or Tilly was originally a lesbian, so how did Broccoli and Saltzman ensure that Bond and Britain still embodied staunch masculinity and cultural superiority? The most obvious answer is that in the cinematic world of Bond, 007...
simply became *more* masculine, *more* sexually desirable, *more* heterosexual than the others around him; he, in other words, became hyper-heterosexualized. This is accomplished in *Goldfinger* in numerous ways. The most apparent is that Bond is the most conventionally attractive male—and hence the most desirable male—in the movie. After all, Goldfinger is redheaded, overweight, and pasty looking; Oddjob is likewise overweight (and important for Fleming, Korean); and the host of other secret service agents who appear in the film, including Felix Lieter, M, and Q, are all much older than Bond and depicted more as grandfatherly figures than as sexy “international men of mystery,” to borrow a phrase from Austin Powers.

However, the screenplay writers also manipulated the narrative in *Goldfinger* to establish Bond’s sexual primacy. In the novel, readers learn that Goldfinger, while a heterosexual, engages in deviant erotic activity—namely, he enjoys covering his lovers’ nude bodies in gold paint. This theme, though, is erased in the film, allowing Goldfinger to appear as a “normal” heterosexual. Yes, Jill Masterson still dies in the movie because she is entirely covered in gold paint (usually a small patch of skin is left uncovered so as not to asphyxiate the skin), but no erotic reference is made in the film as it is in the book. And it is clear that Oddjob, not Goldfinger, has painted and killed the character. The only thing that separates Bond from Goldfinger, then—both men possess great cunning and Goldfinger is clearly richer—is their desirability to women, and here, Bond clearly triumphs. For example, at the start of the film, Bond asks Jill Masterson (Tilly’s sister) why she works for Goldfinger, to which she replies, “He pays me.” Bond then asks exactly what services she provides Goldfinger, and Jill adamantly retorts that she does not sleep with her employer. A similar scene occurs later in the film when Pussy, who has been transformed from a New York gangster into Goldfinger’s personal pilot, explains to Bond that Goldfinger hired her because she is “a damn good pilot,” and not because she provides any erotic service to her boss. In the film, however, these women’s refusal to sleep with Goldfinger is not for his lack of trying. In one scene in which he and Pussy are sitting outside his Kentucky ranch, Goldfinger begins to seductively stroke her arm in an unmistakable attempt at foreplay. However, Pussy makes it clear that there is to be “no trespassing” on her body, after which Goldfinger quickly removes his hand. This attempt at seducing Pussy, which never occurs in the novel, clearly marks Goldfinger’s sexual ineptness and undesirability. However, Bond manages to easily seduce Jill Masterson within minutes of meeting her, and more important, he is able to seduce the resistant Pussy Galore at the end of the film. In fact, it is his seduction that makes Pussy realize the madness in Goldfinger’s plot, which is now to detonate a nuclear device at Fort Knox in order to make the US gold supply radioactive. As a result, she informs the American authorities of the plan and tricks Goldfinger by replacing the lethal gas her pilots were meant to drop on the fort with a benign one. Once again, then, Bond’s seduction of Pussy makes her shun Goldfinger and align herself with Britain and the right side of the American law. (It is also worth mentioning that while Pussy’s homosexual desire is largely erased in the film, Broccoli and Saltzman still linked her criminality to her refusal of traditional gender roles. In other words, it is clear in the film that Pussy is highly independent and content to run a flying school for other women. Not surprisingly, then, Pussy’s engagement in a traditionally male-dominated field and encouragement of other females to work outside the home is linked to their criminal activity of dropping lethal gas on unsuspecting Americans.)

The other major change between the novel and the film (and this is true of practically all the James Bond films) is that the movie is much more laden with technological devices. In *Goldfinger* alone, viewers are introduced to grappling hook guns, homing devices, and an Aston Martin that slashes tires, ejects passengers, and spills oil to deter pursuers. The inclusion of such devices undoubtedly added visual and creative stimuli for viewers, so much so that new gadgets unveiled in 007’s meetings with Q are now essential to the
cinematic Bond formula. However, the heavy emphasis placed on technological gadgetry did more than just provide moviegoers with “ooohs” and “aaaahs.” For one, these devices helped portray Britain as a technologically superior nation, but more important to this article, Bond’s comfortableness with and adeptness at using weapons (Bond always seems to handle Q’s complex devices without actually reading the manuals or listening to Q’s lectures) bolsters Bond’s masculinity. Indeed, scholars Tony Bennett and Janet Woollacott have argued that in the Bond films, “(007’s) sexuality has become fetished on to machinery” (203), and this trend has continued into the Pierce Brosnan films. In these movies, as Martin Willis points out, Bond is able to use technology to penetrate and destroy his enemies’ bodies, allowing for “the final mode of penetration—that of the sexual liaison with which the Bond films invariably conclude” (158). The link in Goldfinger between weapons and sexuality is often made manifest in the minor details of the film. In one scene, Bond jokes that he always carries his gun because of a sexual inferiority complex, and when Goldfinger’s laser beam threatens to kill Bond, it is not accidental that the super spy is strapped to the table spread-eagle and the laser slowly inches toward his groin, threatening his virility. More telling, however, is the start of Goldfinger, when Bond enters a posh nightclub just after planting an explosive device nearby. When he enters, he sees a group of men intently watching an exotic dancer performing in the center of the group, a woman who is successfully eliciting the gaze of each of the twenty-odd men surrounding her. Bond looks at the dancer for a brief and casual moment before his bomb detonates, causing most everyone in the nightclub to run for safety, including the group of ogling patrons. The explosion leaves the dancer looking lost without her group of men to adore her, and she storms out of the nightclub, clearly upset with the spy; however, in a few moments, all is well, as Bond is found undressing the dancer in her suite. As in the Brosnan films, Bond employs technology to not only destroy the enemy, but to also eradicate the gazes—or rather, the desires—of any possible male competitors, allowing him an opportunity to engage in his own “explosion” with the dancer a few minutes later.

And just as Pussy and Tilly’s lesbianism spoke to Allied readers’ concerns about nontraditional gender roles in the 1950s and early 1960s, Broccoli and Saltzman’s emphasis on the relationship between explosives and sexuality spoke directly to the frustrations of Cold War viewers, who were asked to “fight” a war without actual weapons. To illuminate this point further, consider the link between sexuality and weapons during and prior to World War II. During the 1930s, the term bombshell first emerged to refer to a sexy woman, and other terms such as a knockout or a dynamite woman also followed this pattern; all marked the increasing recognition of female sexuality as powerful and explosive. WWII pilots also understood this relationship when they named their bombers after their girlfriends and decorated their planes with erotic portraits. Additionally, the makers of the bikini took the suit’s name from the Bikini Islands, where the hydrogen bomb was tested. The manufacturers, who were responding to a wartime shortage of fabric, chose the name bikini four days after the bomb was dropped to suggest the swimwear’s explosive potential (May 97–98). For men of the World War II, then, feminine sexuality and modern weapons that could destroy the enemy were intricately linked. In other words, men (and especially American men) were able to express their desire for sexy women outside the confines of marriage through their war activities and were able, in a sense, to tame female sexuality by linking it to the weapons that they released and controlled. The paralysis of the Cold War, however, was that such bombs could not be used without risking a nuclear holocaust. During the Cold War, citizens were asked to fight a war without conventional/sexualized weapons, thereby frustrating wartime notions of masculinity and virility. The James Bond films work to alleviate that frustration, if only through fantasy, by linking Bond’s hyperheterosexual nature with his adeptness at detonating bombs and using other technological firepower to both destroy the enemies and get the girls.
If the formula of James Bond changed from print to screen, however, viewers did not seem to 
mind too much. As mentioned, James Bond is the 
longest running and most commercially successful 
cinematic franchise of all time, and when Gold-
finger was released in 1964, it became the highest 
grossing film in both England and America that 
year and earned $125 million worldwide. One 
reason that both Fleming’s novels and their Amer-
ican adaptations achieved such success is that 
they directly spoke to different concerns of An-
glo-American audiences. The novels reflected 
the national deviancy-sexual deviancy theme embed-
ded in the American 1950s Cold War mentality, 
which supported the view that sexual “perverts” 
had intentions to weaken the nation’s moral fiber 
and established heterosexual desire (even if it 
wasn’t confined to marriage in the Bond series) 
as the key to national strength. This theme, 
especially given the unveiling of the Cambridge 
Spies, would have also resonated with British 
readers, who, perhaps more realistically, feared 
the communist—homosexual link. As the films 
erased this sexual deviant—national deviant theme 
to cater the more conservative American film in-
dustry, Bond became even more hyperheterosex-
ualized than he was in the books and transformed 
into the ultimate fantasy playboy for viewers on 
both sides of the Atlantic. Indeed, in the novels, 
Bond presents an amiable view toward sex and 
is certainly not the sexual magnet in extremis that 
he is in the films. In Casino Royale, for instance, 
Bond admits that he greets women with a “mixture 
of taciturnity and passion” and that the “lengthy 
approach to a seduction bored him almost 
as much as the subsequent mess of disen-
tanglement.” In Moomaker, Fleming also writes 
that 007 spent his leisure time playing cards, play-
ing golf, and making love “with rather cold pas-
sion” to one of three similarly disposed women 
(9). However, the more sexually suave Bond of 
the big screen, with his adeptness at employing 
conventional weapons, had a place in the West 
because he helped alleviate the repressed sexuality 
of the Cold War and the wartime frustrations of 
moviegoers who felt impotent in their quest to 
defeat the East.

Notes

1. On this topic, see Bruce Rosenberg and Ann Harleman Ste-
wart’s Ian Fleming; Christoph Linder’s The James Bond Phenom-
emon; Jeremy Black’s The Politics of James Bond: From Fleming’s 
Novels to the Big Screen; and James Chapman’s License to Thrill: A 
Cultural History of the James Bond Films.

2. It should be noted that not all of the Cambridge Spies would 
have been unmasked by the time Goldfinger debuted in 1959. Bur-
gess and Maclean, who worked for the Russians for roughly a dozen 
years, defected to Russia in 1951. However, Philby worked for the 
Soviets for twenty-three years, until his defection in 1963, and Blunt, 
who worked for the KGB for roughly thirty years, was not un-
masked until 1964.

3. This fear was perhaps not as paranoid as it sounds. Just like the 
fictional Tatiana Romanova in From Russia with Love, real-life So-
viets women were used by the KGB to gain information during the 
Cold War. According to Frederick Hitz, the KGB was renowned for 
routing sexual “honey trap” operations. On these missions, Soviets 
would send “swallows” to seduce Western businessmen in their hotel 
rooms in Moscow or Allied servicemen and Occupation officials in 
Berlin or Vienna after the Second World War. Recordings would be 
made of these sexual escapades, and the photographs or films would 
then be used as blackmail when the KGB threatened to expose the 
Westerner if he did not cooperate with intelligence (99–100). It ap-
ppears, however, that most honey trap operations were run in Europe, 
and few, if any, Soviet women were sent to the United States to 
seude American men.

4. The Bond films and their technological explorations even in-
spired the CIA. According to Antonio Mendez, a former CIA op-
erative, the agency was so inspired by the facial recognition program 
featured in A View to a Kill that the Defense Advanced Research 
Projects Agency (DARPA) funded the creation of a realistic version 
of the invention for the CIA.

5. While explicit homosexuality is absent from the Bond series, 
several of 007’s villains have embodied gender traits not traditionally 
associated with their gender in the films. Rosa Klebb, as aforemen-
tioned, appears physically masculine in the cinematic version of 
From Russia with Love; Grace Jones, who plays May Day in A View 
to a Kill, likewise delivers a macho performance aided by her mus-
cular build; and the mannerisms and speech patterns of Mr. Wint and 
Mr. Kidd in Diamonds Are Forever are unmistakably effeminate. The 
recent Brosnan villains, however, tend to be depicted more as racial 
others or disfigured people. To cite just two examples, neither Gust-
av Graves nor Zao in Die Another Day possesses overtly feminine 
traits. In fact, Graves most embodies arrogance and aggressiveness. 
Both, however, are physically deformed; Zao is a North Korean who 
has diamonds encrusted in his face as the result of an explosion, and 
Graves, also a Korean, has undergone extensive treatment to look 
like a white European male. Likewise, Renard in The World Is Not 
Enough cannot feel any pain as the result of a bullet that lodged in his 
brain, but again, he does not possess traits that could be considered 
overtly feminine. It seems, then, that the direct link between sexual 
deviancy and national deviancy was particularly important during 
the Cold War era but has since faded in importance in recent years. 
This may help to explain why Bond has also appeared more “human” 
in recent films. For instance, Bond is injured at the start of The World 
Is Not Enough, and he is alienated by “M,” who views 007 as 
tainted goods,” in Die Another Day. Bond can afford to tout these 
flaws, which may make him appear less “masculine,” because he no 
longer derives as much of his prowess from being pitted against 
sexually degenerate villains.
Works Cited


Mendez, Antonio. E-mail interview. 27 Jan. 2004.


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