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### *Goldeneye: A Movie of Mirrored Roles*

James Bond—shaken not stirred, the hero of the 007 film series. He's witty, he's violent, he's charming, and he always manages to pull off the impossible. Whether its taking down entire terrorist cells, blowing up weapons facilities, or gunning his way through mobs of Russian soldiers, Bond has always played an interesting role in film culture. The movies are mediocre in the eyes of critics, and yet the series has been going strong for decades.

So, what is it about Bond movies that make them so appealing? Is it the array of gadgets, the corny one liners, or the all famous Bond Girls? There has never been a Bond movie without a Bond Girl... A name given to women Bond saves and has sex with in his adventures. The Bond Girls are clearly marketed in the movies as sex symbols, Bond sees them as so, and thus so does the audience. This brings us to one of the most problematic reoccurring themes in the Bond franchise: gender. Bond's gadgets and enemies are always changing, but his attitude towards women is static across generations. There's no other way to put it: Bond is a classic alpha male who saves the girl and rides away into the sunset most times. Very few movies have challenged this tried and true formula, but one in particular sticks out.

Released in 1995 and directed by Martin Campbell, *Goldeneye* was well received by audiences. In the movie, James Bond is tasked with going to Russia to shut down a satellite EMP device known only as the Goldeneye device after it is tested on a weapons facility in Russia.

Bond has to fight against Colonel Ourumov, his deadly assassin partner Xenia Onatopp, and Bond's old partner now defector, agent 006, Alec Trevelyan. The movie has all the gadgets people have come to love and all the cheesy writing to fill in the scenes where vehicles aren't exploding, or people aren't being shot.

Throughout the movie we see many upheld norms of white male domination and power, but we also see several characters stray away from what would be considered the societal expectation. *Goldeneye* is a movie of mirrored roles and characters. This paper will approach the topics of gender, power, and hegemony through studying 6 important characters in the film, and their mirrors. Does *Goldeneye* fit in with the hegemony, or does it go against it? Unsurprisingly, it's a little bit of both, though *Goldeneye* does quite a few things differently when depicting the woman's role in the series, and the power of the characters is clearly distributed differently.

The first and most prevalent character to zoom in on is 007 himself. James Bond retains his classic role in *Goldeneye* as the macho white male hero who's just witty enough and more than violent enough to smash the opposition and save the day. Bond, played by Pierce Brosnan, has sex with a woman sent to assess his mental state nearly 20 or so minutes into the film. The first major scenes with Bond show him blowing up a Russian weapons facility, racing cars, and cutting to black before he has sex with his therapist. From the get-go, audiences see basically what James Bond is all about. Violence, power, and sex appeal are Bond's defining traits. The movie doesn't try and downplay these themes at all, as evidenced by the fact that we see all three in under half an hour (in a 2 hour movie). In this sense, Bond acts as *the* representation of classic hegemonic ideals being upheld in the film. He is the "control" that we can compare the more "experimental" characters to, beginning with Bond's mirror, Alec Trevelyan.

Trevelyan dies in the movie's opening scene, but in a surprising plot twist, he ends up being alive albeit physically scarred across his face with burns caused by Bond's own mines. Trevelyan ambushes Bond and reveals that he has switched sides; he's working with a rouge Russian cell now, and Bond is just an old friend who's in the way of Trevelyan's rise to power. We see many of the same traits in Trevelyan's character that we see in Bond, but because he's working with Janus and the Russians, we're supposed to see Trevelyan as the bad guy. In a sense, he is Bond's shadowy doppelganger.

Trevelyan and Bond battle throughout the movie, most of the time with their female partners at their sides. We're given a classic "unstoppable force against an immovable object" scenario as Bond and Trevelyan battle throughout the latter part of the film. Neither is able to outdo the other until the very end, where Trevelyan's arrogance causes him to make a foolish mistake while fighting Bond on a ladder that is suspended over a concrete dam. Trevelyan—like Bond—is defined by his lust for power and his penchant for violence. In many ways, Trevelyan is trying to become more like Bond. He wants to wield the same power and have the same influence that Bond does, but despite having all the same skills, he can never reach that level.

Trevelyan also provides some of the more disturbing dialogue in the movie, truly upholding hegemonic power ideals over women. In one scene where Trevelyan has kidnapped Bond's partner, Natalya Simonova, he forcibly kisses her and says, "James and I used to share everything, absolutely everything. To the victor go the spoils," before forcibly kissing her once again. Clearly Natalya is being treated like an item here, quite literally she's called a spoil of war. Just another object Trevelyan has won in his mad bid for power. In the train we see Trevelyan surrounded by his material wealth, and from his dialogue, he is clearly thinking of adding Natalya to that wealth.

Trevelyan's objectifying of Natalya might be much easier to see and understand, but it is no different than what Bond does not only in this film, but across the series. Audiences see it as more romantic because the Bond Girls always fall in love with 007, but his treatment of them and the way he speaks to them shows us that Bond—like Trevelyan—sees women as something for him to conquer, nothing else. This leads us to the next male character, Boris Grishenko, Natalya's old coding partner.

Though not playing a huge role, Boris has a few important scenes for the context of this paper. In the beginning of the movie, we see Boris sending Natalya what looks like cartoonish images he made of her in her underwear. She rolls her eyes and walks over to Boris, who shows off his coding ability to her and makes a few sex jokes. Natalya isn't shown as offended or taking any of it seriously, and we learn throughout the movie that Boris is there for comic relief. He is described by another woman to Natalya as, "Not being able to know a woman even if she came and sat on his face," so we're told as viewers that Boris' jokes and advances are more childish than anything else.

This is interesting though, because literally Boris is doing very similar things to what Bond does with women, but he's passed off as immature and childish because of his role in the movie. He wears glasses and is clearly a bit of a dork, so when Boris sexually harasses Natalya, we see it more like "look at the silly nerd trying to flirt" even though his behavior is completely unwarranted. Because Boris is written like comic relief, it might be harder to hate him than say, Trevelyan or Bond. Unfortunately, his writing and character seem to be normalizing workplace sexual harassment rather than be funny. Why then, is Natalya not offended by Boris? There are a number of answers, but it could be because she is one of the strongest roles in the movie, while still acting as the film's Bond Girl.

Natalya Simonova is a second level programmer working on the Goldeneye device until Colonel Ourumov, Xenia Onatopp, and Boris betray the Russians working there and turn the Goldeneye device on them. Xenia is tasked with leaving no witnesses to the betrayal, but Natalya survives using incredible wit and deception. Natalya is the film's Bond Girl, but she really didn't feel like it. She was on her own for most of the movie, investigating the betrayal and trying to stop the Goldeneye device herself. Of course, she has a scene where she's in her underwear on the beach (and viewers are given an awkward forced panty shot) before she has sex with Bond, but this doesn't happen until late in the movie, and it never feels like the focus. Natalya wields guns, fights soldiers, and even saves Britain from being hit by the Goldeneye device. This is what sets her apart from traditional Bond Girls, and what sets her apart from hegemonic ideals.

Though it isn't a glorious shootout scene filled with action, Natalya changes the input codes for activating the Goldeneye device before Boris and Trevelyan can launch it. What makes this even better is she does so after Bond tells her not to move. He wants her to sit back and hide while he, the knight in shining armor, does all the "man's work". Natalya—not being one to sit back on her heels—decides to sneak past the guards while Bond distracts them, and she gets into the computer room, changing the codes and effectively saving Britain from losing all their electricity in an EMP strike.

Natalya plays an important role in the story, not just as Bond's partner, but as a *woman* in power. Neuendorf describes women in Bond films as "Prominent..." and "pivotal to the storylines," (Neuendorf et al. 747), but not in the way a typical hero might be important. Neuendorf, like many others, recognizes that women are sex symbols in Bond films, and often appear as objects for men to claim. While this still happens with Natalya, her power in the film's story is undeniable. She goes against Bond's wishes, even saying that Bond doesn't matter to

her, and in the events of the film, she's the one that stops the Goldeneye attack, not Bond. She's also the one that eventually secures an escape from the destroyed Goldeneye base, and in a sense, *she* rescues Bond.

While Bond and Trevelyan stand clearly as hegemonic idols, Natalya stands far against the hegemony and gives women watching the film someone to cheer for. Like Bond though, Natalya has a mirror image, an evil doppelganger. Xenia Onatopp is perhaps the most violent character in the film, and though she gets killed by Bond, her power and influence must be looked at.

Russian assassin and agent Xenia Onatopp plays a big role in *Goldeneye*. She kills dozens of soldiers and researchers in the Goldeneye's test facility, though is fooled by Natalya, the woman who would eventually help get her killed. She is often trusted with taking down men that pose a threat to the person she is protecting, whether that be Colonel Ourumov or Trevelyan. Xenia is hyper sexual, even her name is a play on words (Onatopp). Neuendorf talks about double entendres like this being used throughout the Bond films' history. Going with this characterization, Xenia is depicted as a hyper femme-fatale—she often chooses to kill with her charm and sexuality—quite literally. She kills a captain during sex, and seems aroused not only by violence, but danger as well. This is something we typically see with Bond's character, and Xenia takes it to the next level.

She is often seen as very sexually aroused by her life being in danger, or in situations where she is killing others. Natalya, her mirror, is only seen as sexual in a few scenes. She is the more reserved computer programmer, whereas Xenia is an assassin who's clearly good at what she does. While Xenia obviously depicts a powerful female lead, she is also clearly one of the villains, and her death fits in with the trope of sexual females dying in film while the "pure" or

“virgin” females survive (Natalya is seen as the pure woman in this scenario). It’s hard to tell where Xenia fits into the hegemony, because her character both supports it and fights back at it. The last and perhaps most compelling character to study is Bond’s boss, M. Like Natalya (and maybe Xenia) M stands as a strong pillar against the hegemony, and she’s so unique that she doesn’t even have her own mirror.

M is Bond’s handler and a high standing official in the organization of MI6. People answer to her, and she orders men around throughout her scenes. M has reached a sort of Nietzsche-esque “Übermensch” role in the films as the woman with the most power, comparable to no other. She is resistant to Bond’s charm and seems to dislike Bond a great deal. She tells Bond that she thinks he is a, “sexist, misogynist dinosaur” and tells him she has no problems sending him to his death on a suicide mission. M puts Bond in his place and says what’s on the minds of many critics of the series. In a surprising twist, we see M (played by an older woman) have the most control over Bond. Though her role in the film is brief, M’s dialogue and general presence is felt. As said before, M has no mirror, as she has reached a place above most of the other characters in the movie, including their golden boy, James Bond. In my mind, M stands as the biggest pillar against hegemonic ideals in the movie and shows that the directors and producers were at least self-aware of the flawed character they’d made with James Bond.

So, the question still stands after all of these character by character case studies: where does *Goldeneye* fall with the hegemony? Like many Bond films, it reproduces ideas of dominant male leads using violence and arrogance to get what they want, but it also does something different with the female roles. Of course, there is the Bond Girl role, but Natalya Simonova acts as more than a plaything of Bond. She works for herself for most of the movie and without her help, Bond would’ve failed his mission. Xenia is perhaps one of the most dominant violent roles

in the film, even more so than Bond himself. She shows a lot of power but falls into predictable tropes that are still problematic for women's roles. Then there is M, who stands on her own as the most powerful female in the movie with no counter, no mirror. She is described as, "disrupting the normative ageing and prescribed age-gender roles," in the films (Krainitzki, 32), and it shows. *Goldeneye*, like many movies (or any piece of media) doesn't completely dedicate itself to upholding hegemony or combating it. The best way to take this film is case for case. There is definitely a lot of good to be seen, but as always, there is content that could use some work. Overall though, in a series infamous for objectifying women and making men into power hungry sex maniacs, *Goldeneye* does a good job in at least beginning to maybe change the culture of 007.

#### Works Cited

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