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Conventions are Forever: The influence of medieval romance narrative conventions on female agency in the Bond film franchise.

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Abstract

The iconic Bond girl has been the subject of considerable scholarly interest; quite rightly this has mainly focused on areas such as 'stereotypical' female behaviours, chauvinism and the sexual objectification of women. In a unique analysis, I consider female agency in the Bond franchise from an entirely new perspective. Reading Bond girls through a medieval lens, this thesis argues for the influence of medieval romance convention on female agency in the Bond films. Highly formulaic, and rarely deviating from the expectations of the genre, Bond films are shaped by the conventions of medieval romance narrative; characters in the Bond franchise find counterparts in medieval texts, with the most obvious being Bond himself, the modern-day knight. The thesis identifies four personae common to female characters in medieval romance narratives and Bond girls: the seductress, the 'formidable' woman, the damsel-in-distress, and a sub-group of the seductress, the 'fluffer'. Taking each of these personae in turn, the four chapters offer in-depth, comparative analyses of the behaviours and agency of women across the two eras. The thesis explores the five chivalric virtues depicted on renowned Round Table knight, Sir Gawain's shield - *fraunchyse* (compassion), *cortaysye* (courtesy), *felaȝschyp* (loyalty), *pité* (devotion to God), and *clannes* (freedom from lust), which together make up a medieval knight's *trawþe* (truth). Identifying commonalities and differences between the nature of these romance virtues, and the five comparable virtues comprising Bond's own honour code, reveals small but significant differences between Bond's chivalric virtues and those of Gawain and other medieval knights. The study shows how women performing each of the four identified personae target or exploit these virtues and exhibit similar agency, regardless of the era they inhabit. The thesis concludes by acknowledging medieval romance conventions as key ingredients of the Bond film franchise's success, and looking to the future, asks how the next incarnation of Bond will follow in the footsteps of *No Time to Die* (2021).

Key words: medieval romance convention, female agency, Bond film franchise, personae, chivalric virtues.

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Contents

Abbreviations

CIA: Central Intelligence Agency.

IMDb: Internet Movie Database.

KGB: *Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti* [Committee for State Security].

MED: Middle English Dictionary.

MI6: Military Intelligence, Section 6.

NASA: National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

NSA: National Security Agency.

OED: Oxford English Dictionary.

SMERSH: *Spetsyalnye Metody Razoblacheniya Shpyonov* [Special Methods of Spy Detection].

SPECTRE: Special Executive for Counter-intelligence, Terrorism, Revenge, and Extortion.

A Note on the Texts

The thesis will feature four main body chapters; chapters one to three will each focus on women adopting a specific persona, and feature a primary medieval text, at least one secondary medieval text, and a selection of Bond films. Chapter four addresses the presence of 'fluffers' in all of the selected Bond films, and considers their potential medieval counterparts in the medieval texts. For the purposes of this thesis, primary texts will be quoted in Middle English with accompanying translations, while translations alone will be given for secondary medieval texts. For *Sir Gawain*, the original text will be quoted with a translation in square brackets directly below it. Here is an example:

> Ho watȝ þe fayrest in felle, of flesche and of lyre,
>
> And of compas and colour and costes, of alle oþer,
>
> And wener þan Wenore, as þe wyȝe þoȝt. (ll.943-945).
>
> [She was the fairest of all in her person, in body and face, and in figure, complexion and bearing, and lovelier than Guinevere, so the knight thought]

There is some variation in the spelling of the characters' names between the medieval texts; for consistency, one version of each name has been adopted.

As *The Canterbury Tales* is written in language more recognisable to modern readers, the original text will be referenced with translated words appearing in bold, as shown below:

> That **synnes** Crist went never but **onys** [since; once]
>
> To weddyng, in the Cane of Galile,
>
> That by the same **ensampul** taught he me [example]
>
> That I ne weddid schulde be but **ones**. (ll.10-14) [once]

In both instances, the analysis that accompanies each section of text is given to reinforce its meaning. *The Canterbury Tales* will be transcribed from *The Riverside Chaucer* edition, focusing specifically on *The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale* and *The Franklin's Tale*. *Le Chevalier de la Charette* (*The Knight of the Cart*) was originally written

in medieval French and the modern English edition used is translated by William Kibler (1981). The versions of the remaining texts used will be *The Quest* (trans. W.W. Comfort, 2000) and *Le Morte d'Arthur* (ed. Helen Cooper, 2008). Where medieval terms are used they will be italicised; while it is not a foreign language *per se*, a modern audience would be unfamiliar with the terminology.

Introduction

Reading medieval romance conventions into Bond

The universal appeal of the James Bond phenomenon, spanning seven decades, has attracted the attention of numerous scholars. In recent decades, Robert Arnett (2009) considers the structural narrative elements in the Fleming novels, while Tony Garland (2009) examines the Bond formula in the novels and films. Sue Burgess (2015) and Phoebe Pua (2018) are among many critics to highlight chauvinism and powerful masculinity in the Bond film franchise. Equally, female stereotyping is seen as a recurrent motif throughout the films and has been widely studied by critics such as Noël Carroll (1990). Inevitably, over such a wide timespan, the Bond films have had to strike a careful balance between narrative continuity and societal change.

There seems to be a general consensus that 'by keeping in step with the zeitgeist, the franchise has guaranteed its longevity […]' (Hochscherf *et al*., 2013:299). Frequent reincarnations of Bond have posed challenges and offered opportunities, due to the different physical appearances and personae of each successive actor. Jonathan Murray notes that '[…] Connery swaggers, Moore smarms, Dalton suffers, and Brosnan is self-satisfied' (2016:4). However, although audience perceptions of Bond's character will be impacted by the actor portraying him, Bond's underlying philosophy remains unchanged. In James Chapman's view, even the more brooding nature of the Brosnan era Bond films, are simply 'old wine in new bottles' (2007:213).

While societal changes have undoubtedly shaped the evolution of the Bond films over successive decades, this thesis emphasises the films' formulaic nature and will be the first study to read the "Bond formula" through the conventions of medieval romance, arguing that romance conventions are a major influence on female agency across the Bond franchise. The films, I argue, are not a reflection on real life or current trends but part of an age-old story-telling tradition – a fantasy. The male/female relationships are no more realistic than the gadgetry or technology. Each Bond film replicates the telling of a traditional tale in a modern context and although there are often tweaks to the recipe, the main ingredients never change. The 'Bond formula' dictates that Bond is a fit,

masculine, virile, heterosexual, well-educated man. He is manipulative and intimidating, with the strength and capacity to face mortal danger (Dodds & Funnell, 2018:2), a description that would equally fit that of a medieval knight. The Bond films work by blending tradition with innovation; they rely on repetition with difference. Within a modern context, they mirror the motifs of medieval romance, featuring gadgets (weapons), glamorous locations (courts), action sequences (jousts and battles), fiendish villains (the Green Knight), and beautiful companions (Guinevere). With their combination of adventure and ironic humour, the Bond films are contemporary incarnations of medieval romance narratives. Bond presents with '[…] a set of values that blends ancient Greek philosophy and medieval romance. Bond displays practical wisdom, courage and other virtues that comprise a chivalric, comic hero' (Taliaferro & Le Gall, in South & Held, ed. 2006:96).

Bond films have always featured cutting-edge technology, beautiful women, and villains with fantastical schemes to achieve world domination; predictably, Bond emerges victorious and narrative convention remains unscathed. Even with Bond's apparent death, in the most recent film *No Time to Die* (2021), the conventions of the genre will almost certainly return in subsequent films. This thesis aims to read Bond through a medieval lens in order to show how female agency in the films is rooted in the conventions of medieval romance. In line with the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) (2023) definition, agency is taken to mean the 'ability or capacity to act or exert power'. Female agency, therefore, does not necessarily relate to a woman's status, but dictates her capacity to exercise power and to determine, or control, a course of events; agency allows women to make their own choices, achieve their aims, or simply maintain the *status quo*. The thesis proposes to add significantly to our understanding of Bond and Bond girls by exploring the agency of women, as here defined, in the films, and demonstrating that women's 'stereotypical' behaviour in particular narrative contexts is not necessarily reflective of the era in which the films were first produced, but rather reflects characteristics similar to those displayed by women in English medieval romance narratives of the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries. This is relevant as it shows that the Bond films do not just reflect the position of women in late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century society, but are also following a script dictated by the much more deeply-rooted traditions of the English medieval romance genre. Seen in this light, the Bond girl

is far from being the one-dimensional generic character of general consensus but emerges as a nuanced character whose agency, agenda, and motivation can all be categorised, appreciated, and understood through the vocabulary of medieval romance. The Virgin Mary/Eve dichotomy, casting female characters in late medieval narratives as damsels or seductresses for example, allows for a better understanding of a Bond girl's complexity. Equally, reading medieval romance narratives through their modern-day adaptations in Bond casts the romance narratives themselves within a unique critical light, and so affords an opportunity to re-examine the motivations of medieval women, particularly those who appear in visions and whose seduction of medieval romance heroes has tended to be regarded as evidence of 'demonic' interference in the progression of the quest. Read through the Bond films and through the cast of seductresses who seek to derail Bond's various missions, the thesis shows how these medieval seductresses are not just 'demonic' but in fact play an important role in reinforcing the standards of chivalry, by testing the mettle of medieval knights in romance narratives across time.

Bringing Bond movies to bear on medieval romance therefore offers a novel approach to both genres and, through comparative analysis, will add significantly to our knowledge and understanding of the characteristics and motivations of women in Bond and romance, and of the important roles these women play in upholding the conventions and expectations with which romance readers and Bond audiences are familiar. Although the Bond films and novels have long been the subject of critical inquiry (Chapman, 2007; Funnell & Dodds, 2015a/b; Hines, 2018; South & Held, ed. 2006), this thesis will be the first full-length study to examine the films in relation to medieval romance conventions. In so doing, it builds on previous scholarship which has begun to engage with Bond and chivalric literature but takes this scholarship in different directions by emphasising the importance of medieval romance narratives as a lens, specifically, on female agency in Bond. Meir Sternberg, for example, compares the beheading scene in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (*c.*1375) with the fantastical schemes of Bond villains (1983:148), but Sternberg's focus on the medieval material offers a lens on better understanding the Bond villain rather than on understanding female agency or narrative convention, as here. In 2009, Chapman observed that the Bond series had been neglected by serious film historians, and that many analyses had

been undertaken by fans (8-9); however, there still remains critical interest in 'stereotypical' Bond girls and sexual activity (Rushton, 2007; Funnell & Dodds, 2015b). Burgess notes that 'the longevity of the Bond series and its centralization of gender and sexuality make it an excellent site through which to explore […] sexual activity and service to the state' (2015:230). By focusing here on how medieval romance narratives add to our understanding of the Bond girl as shaped by centuries of literary convention, this thesis echoes Chapman's call to take Bond seriously by encouraging future critics to engage with Bond as a product of deep-rooted narrative traditions, and not just a mirror onto the cultural moment of each film's production in the late twentieth, and twenty-first centuries.

The earlier Bond films divided opinion, with some critiquing the movies on ideological grounds, and others dismissing those concerns and accepting that Bond was a form of popular entertainment (Chapman, 2007:5). Carroll notes that, as in many similar films, 'men are characterized as active agents; […] women are objects of erotic contemplation' (1990:351). In the films, stereotypical

> Bond "*girls*", a now pejorative term in itself, often play independent, highly intelligent roles […]. However, as autonomous as these characters are initially depicted, they are often identified as an adjunct to Bond […] or in terms of their relationship to other male characters. (Neuendorf *et al*., 2010:750).

Robert Arp and Kevin Decker claim that '*Objectification* is everywhere in the James Bond film series: Bond constantly uses others to gain information, the upper hand, or sex' (in South & Held, ed. 2006:202). Burgess sees the Bond series as full of regressive gender and sex roles (2015:230), and although this statement certainly applies to many of the women in the franchise, there are a few exceptions, for example May Day in *A View to a Kill* (1985) and Elektra King in *The World is not Enough* (1999). There are also situations in which women manipulate Bond by using their sexuality in order to gain the upper-hand. This concept of reciprocal sexual objectification is seen for example in Bond's hot-tub exchange with Pola Ivanova in *A View to a Kill* (Arp & Decker in South & Held, ed. 2006:205). Even in these instances, however, women are unlikely to be successful, as they are always outwitted by Bond. While reciprocity was intended to show the power women can possess, the reality is that the female character is often

made into a figure of ridicule. Even female names in earlier Bond films like Honey Ryder and Dr. Goodhead appear derogatory, and although the names might have changed, in the most recent films the expectations and functions of the female roles have not. Even here, the introduction of more complex female traits serve mainly to reinforce aspects of Bond's personality such as his emotional vulnerability (Garland, 2009:181), and in doing so, empathy is engendered for Bond rather than his female companions. Some progress has been noted; throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, women's roles in Bond films became more significant and sophisticated, and Bond occasionally became the subject of the same objectification that most Bond girls experience (Arnett, 2009:11). In *Casino Royale*, in a scene similar to that when Honey Ryder emerges from the sea in *Dr. No* (1962), a semi-naked Bond steps out of the water onto the beach. The norm, however, is that although women are omnipresent in the Bond movies, they are merely vessels through which Bond can display his seductive charms. This argument is supported by the fact that Daniela Bianchi, who played Tatiana Romanova in *From Russia with Love* (1963), along with many other early Bond girls did not even voice her own on-screen character (Chapman, 2007:66) and the voice actors for the films went uncredited.

Female stereotypes are further reinforced by the fact that in 1985 the Bond franchise's production team deemed that Lois Maxwell, the woman playing Moneypenny in the earlier films, had become too old to make Bond's on-screen pursuit of her plausible (Leach in Funnell, ed. 2015a:30). It is also noteworthy that while the Bond films have always featured fantastical villainous plots, it was not until the early 1990s that the producers believed that audiences would be able to suspend their disbelief sufficiently to allow a woman to take on the senior position of 'M'. Interestingly, when Stella Rimington was appointed Director General of MI5 in 1992, the producers' view on a female M changed (Leach in Funnell, ed. 2015a:30-31) and there was an acceptance that Bond's world could also have women in prominent roles. However, as Lisa Funnell and Klaus Dodds note, 'If the women appear too powerful, resourceful, and capable, they are then literally put in their place' (2015b:369); several powerful women, including M, fail to survive in the franchise.

Of course, women are essential to Bond's success, being one of the main characters that an audience expects to see, alongside the Bond villain. Bond girls have

to be perceived as 'beautiful' or in other words to conform to whatever physical ideal is prevalent at the time a particular Bond film is being produced. In the main, the Bond girl has the largest female share of the limelight in the movies, and through

> her multiple changes of costume, a Bond Girl will simultaneously embody the seductive *femme fatale*, the athletic field agent, or the professional career woman. Her identity does not stick to any of these archetypes, but is constantly done and undone. Her femininity is not prescriptive, but a performative masquerade facilitated by costume (Germanà, 2019:211).

The role of villain is almost always occupied by a male figure, a notable exception being Elektra King in *The World is not Enough* (1999). Bond has two main aims in each film; he has to defeat the villain and promote Western ideals, the latter being a particularly important focus during the Cold War era (1947-1991). 'The Bond character represents male masculinity in a heroic form, in the context of service to the government as a secret agent throughout the Cold War period and beyond' (Burgess, 2015:231). *From Russia with Love* (1963) and *The Living Daylights* (1987) are two films which clearly foreground the struggle between the ideologies of East and West. This motif is not replicated in the more contemporary movies, which focus on plots with topicality to a post Cold War era audience, revolving around terrorism, ecological disaster, or plain monetary gain.

A motif that remains unchanged across Bond's seven decades is the idea that sexual activity with Bond is sufficient to convert any woman to his beliefs. Female agency in Bond is dictated very much by the plot, and Garland suggests that Bond's sexual 'conquests' have clear aims: to extract information, to establish an alibi, gain a helper, or 'redeem' the female (2009:180) – a concept I will explore in women performing each persona, in successive main body chapters. Umberto Eco (1981) notes that 'in winning "the girl" from the service of the villain and, in the process, into his own bed, Bond "repositions" her both sexually and ideologically' (cited in Bennett & Woollacott, 1987:74). Charles Taliaferro and Michel Le Gall have also explored the 'redemption' of Bond women by way of 'chivalrous sex', and have argued that Bond's sexual 'conquest' of women often empowers the women in question to switch their political or ideological allegiance, absolving '[…] their sin and guilt from association with the criminal

mastermind' (in South & Held, ed. 2006:103). The Bond girl inevitably becomes a desexualised or 'disarmed' *femme fatale*; her transgressions inevitably subordinate her, and her sexual consummation with Bond re-establishes the *status quo* (Garland, 2009:183). Interestingly, a Bond girl presenting as a traditional damsel-in-distress does not become a target of seduction for Bond until she is deemed 'safe'; the vulnerability associated with this persona appears to render a woman sexually unavailable – a topic explored further in Chapter 3.

According to Eco (1966), Fleming's Bond books follow a predictable pattern; Bond is tasked to avert a devious plan by a maniacal villain, who

> not only earns money but helps the cause of the enemies of the West. In facing this monstrous being Bond meets a woman who is dominated by him and frees her from her past, establishing with her an erotic relationship interrupted by capture, on the part of the villain, and by torture. But Bond defeats the villain, who dies horribly, and rests from his great efforts in the arms of the woman. (Eco translated by R. A. Downie, in Schoenberg & Trudeau, ed. 2008:203).

The Bond films adopt the same formula, and also exemplify the trappings of wealth and power; James Bond epitomises Western society's patriarchal, individualistic culture by embodying the heroic ideal. '[…] Bond single-handedly takes on any "bad guy," saves the world and always gets the girl. Bond accomplishes these feats by the power of his wit and more importantly through violence' (Neuendorf *et al.*, 2010:759). He is personified in the films as a stereotypical, sex-typed male, in line with many contemporary adventure-romance heroes such as Indiana Jones, John McClane of the *Die Hard* film series, and Batman. Funnell states, 'Genres are gendered and action films are coded as masculine' (in Hines, ed. 2016:90), however women such as Lara Croft (*Tomb Raider*), Katniss Everdeen (*The Hunger Games*), and Ripley (*Alien*) assume the mantle of hero with consummate ease. The obvious question therefore arises as to why Bond has never been 'reincarnated' as a woman. In today's more feminist zeitgeist and with the advent of the #MeToo movement, it is remarkable that the Bond producer, Barbara Broccoli, recently reiterated that while his ethnicity can be fluid, Bond could never be female (Michallon, 2020; Shoard, 2018). A female Bond would leave the

franchise most certainly shaken; even as the presentation becomes a bit slicker, the special effects more dramatic, and the gadgets more fantastical, the content stays the same. When the later Brosnan films relied too heavily on gadgetry and special effects, they literally lost the plot (Hochscherf, 2013:301). Change needs to enhance the story not replace it, otherwise audience expectations are subverted. Reading Bond through a medieval lens emphasises the formulaic nature of Bond narratives and the importance of key character types within them.

This thesis explores female agency across a range of personae familiar to scholars of English medieval romance: seductress, 'formidable' woman, and damsel-in-distress, all of whom fall under the 'umbrella term' of *femme fatale*. The inclusion of the damsel-in-distress may appear incompatible with this term; however, my identification of the 'damsel-*sans*-distress' presentation of this persona in chapter 3 will justify its inclusion (see p.188 below). A persona will be defined as an assumed character, or role adopted by a performer (OED, 2023); 'personae' are preferred over stereotypes, which tend to be employed in a derogatory sense, and as Gloria Alpini states can prove problematic for women, because they often set unattainable standards (2005:40). Inevitably, societal differences will impact on the form of a particular persona, but I argue that the core elements of that persona are still clearly identifiable, even across the large timespans that form the basis of my comparison between medieval texts and modern-day Bond films. In romance, the classic seductress is not necessarily the subject of power, but its carrier; these women use their charms to derail the quests of noble men. Mary Slavkin explains of medieval seductresses that these 'femmes fatales aggressively attack or use their sexuality to entrap men' (2019:66). The chameleonic 'formidable' woman is unpredictable and unruly; this *femme fatale's* '[…] most striking characteristic, perhaps, is the fact that she never really is what she seems to be. She harbors a threat which is not entirely legible, predictable, or manageable' (Doane, 1991:1). Lastly, the ubiquitous damsel-in-distress is perhaps the least expected of these personae to perform the role of the *femme fatale* in medieval romance and Bond. However, damsels present with an extremely complex persona, open to exploitation by any who adopt it. Each of these personae are exemplified within the selection of medieval texts here examined; comparisons are made of these medieval character types and those women whom I identify as adopting one of these personae in the eight films from the Bond franchise.

In romance, the genre that most clearly reflects the cultural renaissance of the twelfth century and the courtly love traditions that emerge in literature around this time (Ashe, in Kreuger, ed. 2023), women's roles became somewhat dichotomous. They are delineated as passive, through purity, or active, through sexual desire, with women represented as sharing the characteristics of either Mary (the ideal woman) or Eve (the femme fatale) (Cox, 2001; Rossignol, 1995; Wood, 2012). Many female stereotypes depicted in later works, for example Victorian romances, give the false impression that medieval women were all damsels-in-distress. There is also a view that with the advent of the culture of courtly love, women were still 'expected to be the perfect lady, whose deportment and manners do credit to her breeding; the perfect wife, whose submission to her husband is only equalled by her skill in ministering to his ease' (O'Pry-Reynolds, 2013:40). However, although many medieval women appear to be restricted to roles such as 'maiden, wife, mother, widow, and very occasionally nun', in reality, these women also took on more responsible roles, as men from the medieval gentry were often absent for a multitude of reasons (Cooper, 2008:224). Equally, in medieval romance, the roles that women perform within or outside of marriage are also more complex, and a maiden, wife, or widow might perform the role of seductress, 'formidable' woman, or damsel-in-distress. Complications arise in that older women, once post-sexualised, a term used by Pua (2018:94), can be powerful mother figures. This is clearly seen in the introduction to the Bond franchise in 1995 of a female M played by an older actress (Judi Dench). Pua postulates that, distanced from youthful femininity, M performs an almost matriarchal role. Age appears to neutralise powerful women and returns their influence to within the bounds of patriarchal norms (2018:95). In this thesis, I focus my discussion on the portrayal of women in English medieval romance literature rather than on the role and status of women in English medieval history. To do this first requires an understanding of medieval romance conventions.

Medieval romance: origins and conventions

Romance is notoriously difficult to define; it was not initially used to describe a genre but to differentiate texts that were written in the vernacular language (*romanz*) from those penned in Latin (Barron, 1987:1). Helen Cooper also notes that *en romanz* was a term used by writers or orators to mark their translation of a text from Latin into the vernacular languages of Western Europe (2008:11). Even *Sir Gawain and the Green*

Knight, now considered exemplary of Arthurian romance within the English literary tradition, would not have been categorised as such when it was written; romance was not considered as a literary genre until the seventeenth century (Parrish Jamison, 1991:45). Writers in the Middle Ages had no agreed terminology to classify genre, '[…] *narratioun* emerged only at the end of the period, and the nearly synonymous *proces* was never widely popular. As a result, Middle English writers classify their narratives with a number of different terms […]' (Strohm, 1971:348). Further, John Finlayson states that 'by almost common consent, all narratives dealing with aristocratic *personae* and involving combat and/or love are called *romances*, if written after 1100' (1980:45). Given the complexity of romance, regardless of the form the text adopts, certain features can be attributed to it; '[…] *any* of the features that might be taken as definitive for [romance] may be absent in any particular case without damaging that sense of family resemblance […]' (Cooper, 2008:9).

One of the earliest acknowledged romance writers, the Arthurian French poet Chrétien de Troyes, was writing in the 1100s (Archibald, in Kreuger, ed. 2023:74), at a time where there is no clear evidence the term 'romance' was being used. However, W.T.H. Jackson suggests that Chrétien's work can only be fully understood if its audience is aware of the 'romance conventions' within which Chrétien was writing, and this leads Jackson to assert '[…] that there had been established by 1160 an idea of what the romance should represent' (1974:12). Romance serves to exaggerate and satirise contemporary expectations and highlight their flaws. Roger and Laura Loomis argue 'much of the glamour of medieval romances resided […] in their portrayal of the splendours of castle life, the gorgeous festivities, the sumptuous feasts, the great hunts' (1957:325). Northrop Frye (1957) defines romance as '[…] a wish fulfilment or utopian fantasy, which aims at the transfiguration of the world of everyday reality […]' (cited in Jameson, 1975:138), and this view is supported by Joerg Fichte, who sees the world of romance literature as one '[…] in which an elementary order reigns supreme and the good always defeats the bad' (in Boitani & Torti, ed. 1998:153). It is conceivable that Chaucer's pilgrims saw romance as wish fulfilment; they had the same expectations about romance as we do today – that they are fantasies and take place in a self-contained fictional world. In this context Laura Ashe suggests that

> ‘Fictional’ does not only mean ‘invented’; it means, in an implicit contract between reader and (imagined or real) author, material which we understand need not be true, which indeed cannot be known to be true. (in Kreuger, ed. 2023:17).

Romances are not considered to be factual historical accounts; the modern view is that they take place in a self-conscious fantasy world independent of the social norms of everyday life. ‘Romance is […] a mode of writing underpinned by imaginative use of the symbolic and fantastic, by idealism, and by universal motifs such as quest and adventure’ (Saunders, 2004:4).

The nature of romance is chameleonic, frequently changing to align itself with popular genres of the time. Cooper explains that ‘the abiding appeal of romance resulted partly from its familiarity and its infinite adaptability […]’ (2008:6). W.R.J. Barron notes that the same conventional motifs pervade all romances: ‘the mysterious challenge or summons to a mission; the lonely journey through hostile territory; the first sight of the beloved; the single combat against overwhelming odds or a monstrous opponent’ (1987:5). Cooper also defines the conventions of romance as being inclusive of exotic settings, subject-matter concerning love or chivalry, and high-ranking characters (2008:10). Romances certainly include archetypal characters, such as the knight in shining armour and the damsel in distress, and Carol Parrish Jamison explains that ‘the romance sets up ideals of behavior. Knights and ladies must be aware of the proper etiquette of love, and the knight must not neglect the duties of his profession’ (1991:51). This is comparable to the Bond series which is very formulaic, but has evolved to take account of the prevailing zeitgeist in which successive films were produced.

The term ‘conventional’ is often used disparagingly, and yet conventions enable a shared understanding of a particular genre to develop and with that the potential for endless variations on a theme. ‘This ability to vary the pattern, to make a conventional shared motif new and surprising, pervades early romance’ (Cooper, 2008:15). Beautiful women are a mainstay of romance and irrespective of societal or cultural change, men in medieval romance always find them irresistible. Further, beauty alone is ineffectual; it is the agency beauty confers on women that is important. Romance and the ideas of chivalry are also inseparable well into the sixteenth century. The word ‘chivalry’ derives

from '*chevalier*' or knight, and many chivalric ideals were set out in the ceremonies of knighthood. Associated with the gentry, knighthood was unattainable for the majority of the population, who could only experience chivalrous deeds vicariously, as readers of romance.

> The chivalry of romances was perhaps rare in real life, the feasts are more splendid, the clothes and jewels are more wonderful, the battles and adventures more fantastic. But all the time the background and the adventures, though idealized and exaggerated, are essentially mediæval (Wilson, 1968:193).

Chivalric language honoured the warring classes and highlighted the aggressive nature of society; violence is a central theme in medieval chivalry, and anger the main mode of retaliation in chivalric literature (Lynch, in Busby & Dalrymple, ed. 2006:8; Stroud, 1976:326). The chivalric romance ethic presented a hero striving towards a potentially unattainable goal, and channelling aggression solely into a justifiable cause. There are clear parallels, therefore, between the 'chivalrous' knights of medieval romance and the violence that we have already noted as intrinsic to the character of Bond.

The chivalric code was a significant aspect of medieval society and governed the manner in which the gentry behaved in fictional works. The code was based on loyalty and allegiance, and though unwritten, its rules were considered unbreakable and enforced by general consensus. Richard Kaeuper suggests that chivalry is a difficult term to define; in the simplest sense it exemplifies bravery in combat, but it is also used as a collective term for all knights as a distinct social group. Taken in a more abstract form, it embodies the ideals or ethos associated with medieval knights. In the romance literature of medieval society these three usages often intertwine (in Kreuger, ed. 2000:97). Courage was also paramount in medieval chivalry, as was a knight's moral judgement, though the ability to differentiate between right and wrong was occasionally blurred by strict adherence to the chivalric code. Chivalry was so pervasive in medieval society that it applied to whole organisations, for example King Arthur's court, as much as to specific individuals. Thomas Farrell notes that *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* can be read as a test of the chivalry of King Arthur's court, as well as of Gawain's individual ability to uphold the code (1988:18). This ethos mirrors that of the Bond films both in

structure and ideals; the films take the form of a quest, a motif deeply embedded within the romance genre. ‘A quest romance is essentially linear, following the line taken by the protagonist’s journeyings. The "plot" will consist largely of a series of adventures encountered along the way' (Cooper, 2008:46). However, not every romance takes the form of a quintessential quest; there are physical quests and more spiritual journeys of self-development. A good example of the latter is the tale of the rapist knight in *The Wife of Bath’s Tale*, where the emphasis is more on what happens within him – on his moral development – rather than on his actual journey. ‘Despite the uniqueness of the hero within each romance, the kind of learning process [that each undergoes] is designed to be exemplary so far as the reader is concerned, to offer a model of how to act and how not to act’ (Cooper, 2008:52).

As noted briefly above, another concept deeply embedded in medieval society, and reflected in medieval romance, was courtly love; a term coined by modern critics, its exact definition remains unclear, but the role it plays in the Middle Ages was nevertheless well understood. Courtly love was a tradition ‘[…] shared by the aristocracy of medieval Europe from the twelfth century onwards, and its constantly reiterated themes must have fulfilled an important psychological function for poets and for contemporary audiences’ (Boase, 1977:101). Sarah Kay explains that it ‘[…] emphasizes a link between love, its social setting (the court), and its ways (courtliness): the set of social qualities and skills required for distinction at court’ (in Kreuger, ed. 2000:84). Significantly, courtly love and chivalry were interwoven, with the former being a method through which to demonstrate chivalrous behaviour. Men had to see women as their inspiration if they were truly to adhere to courtly love rituals (Forbes, 2007:3); it also enabled women to experience being held in a high regard, as an embodiment of the courtly love ideal (Ragland, 1995:5). While the portrayal of courtly love was predominantly positive, much like chivalry, in reality it was not perfect; women could not rebuff the advances of a man adopting courtly love techniques, regardless of how strongly they wanted to refuse (Moorman, 1960:170). Chaucer understood women desired ‘sovereignty’, and we will see this when turning to discussion of the Wife of Bath and her *Tale* in Chapter 2, not in the sense of women being dominant but simply being given freedom to make their own choices on things that affected their lives. With this in mind, the woman ‘[…] who insists on her freedom to love where she will, and who sets

out to win the man she has chosen, is not only endorsed but celebrated' (Cooper, 2008:227).

My thesis forges links between medieval romance and Bond, recognising their conventions and the extent to which these shape the characterisation and presentation of women on page and screen. This aids our understanding of female agency in medieval romance and Bond, and our appreciation of both the conventionality and complexity of characters so often dismissed by audiences and critics as stereotypical 'Bond girls'. Although operating through different media and centuries apart, Bond and medieval romance can be seen as equivalent genres, sharing common narrative motifs; both feature heroes facing challenges, including female temptation, and reinforce the triumph of good over evil.

> Let us recall for a moment the pairs of characters that we have paired in opposition: M is the King and Bond the Cavalier entrusted with a mission; Bond is the Cavalier and the Villain is the Dragon; the Lady and Villain stand for Beauty and the Beast; Bond restores the Lady to the fullness of spirit and to her senses […] (Eco translated by R. A. Downie, in Schoenberg & Trudeau, ed. 2008:204).

Eco's analysis of the Bond novels draws clear parallels between the characters of medieval romance and the Bond franchise; Fleming suggests chivalric allusions in his Bond novels, evoking the myth of St George in *Goldfinger* (1959) (Chapman, in Grant ed. 2018:132), and describing Bond's mission in *You Only Live Twice* (1964) as being to slay the dragon of death (Chapman, 2007:26). Although medieval romance convention cannot be proven to have directly or self-consciously influenced either Fleming, or the directors and producers of Bond films, intertextuality can be unconscious. Richard Maibaum, the screenwriter, or co-screenwriter, for four of the films studied in this thesis: *From Russia with Love*, 1963; *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*, 1969; *A View to a Kill*, 1985; and *The Living Daylights*, 1987, is acknowledged to have remained faithful to Fleming's texts, transcribing from them to produce his screenplays (Black, 2005:125; Chapman, 2007:113). There is therefore an evocation of Bond as a modern-day knight by the screenwriters, which allows this thesis to make a valuable contribution to 'cultural mapping'.

Cooper suggests that '[…] early romances most often focalize predominantly through the man, but they also spend considerable time exploring the minds of their women' (2008:225-226), allowing female readers or listeners to empathise with their heroines. In support of this argument, there is the fact that the Wife of Bath tells a romance tale, while lines in *The Nun's Priest's Tale* suggest a female readership for romance: 'This storye is also trewe, I undertake / As is the book of Launcelot de Lake, / That wommen holde in ful greet reverence' (ll.391-393). Also, Ashe notes that women were 'the frequent patrons and equally involved audience for these romances' (in Kreuger, ed. 2023:20).

The Bond films are analogous to romance texts in that they are culturally equivalent to listening to a storyteller. 'Storytelling was for the Middle Ages a form of entertainment. Today, the theatre, the cinema, radio, and television have largely taken its place, but our medieval ancestors, deprived of these blessings, were content to listen to tales […]' (Loomis & Loomis, 1957:vii). From the thirteenth century onwards, medieval romance poems, with their knights in shining armour and damsels in distress, were the Bond films of their day. The shift into vernacular language and the degree of oral transmission prevalent at the time made romances accessible and appealing to people at every level of literacy and intelligence. The engagement with romances by wide audiences helped to propagate romance motifs that influenced subsequent literary works. Although many of the actual stories, delivered by word-of-mouth, do not survive, the conventions of their narrative did. Due to the wide availability of vernacular texts, women were deeply involved with literature written from the mid-twelfth century onwards, and formed a significant part of the audience for these and other works, exerting an influence on their development (Ferrante, 1997:107-108). Romance endorses personal choice for the heroine and establishes her generic identity. Until the end of the fifteenth century the majority of literature in England was only produced in manuscript form. Following the advent of the printing press, the demand for manuscripts grew and literature became far more accessible, but it is important to note that – even in their written, or printed, form – medieval romances are at root tales primarily designed for performance before a listening audience (Treharne, 2010:xxv-

xxvi). ‘Romances […] always do their audience the kindness of placing a primacy on telling good stories’ (Cooper, 2008:12), appealing to male and female audiences alike.

As primary texts, I have chosen three medieval romances that feature each of the required personae: Lady Bertilak, in the anonymous late fourteenth-century Arthurian romance poem, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (*c*.1375), adopts the role of seductress; Alisoun, in Chaucer’s *Wife of Bath’s Prologue and Tale* (*c*.1400), presents as a ‘formidable’ woman; and Dorigen is cast as a damsel-in-distress in Chaucer’s *The Franklin’s Tale* (*c*.1400). J.R. Hulbert considers that *The Canterbury Tales* could be used as an exemplar of fourteenth-century life. ‘[Chaucer] combined individual features with typical ones in such a way as to gain vividness and realism […]’ (1949:825). Additional women performing the personae of seductress, ‘formidable’ woman, and damsel-in-distress are also identified in a selection of other late medieval Arthurian romances: *The Quest of the Holy Grail* (unknown author, *c*.1210) (Guinevere, and Perceval’s sister), *The Knight of the Cart* (Chrétien de Troyes, *c*.1180) (a damsel, and Guinevere), and *Le Morte d’Arthur* (Sir Thomas Malory, *c*.1485) (Elaine, Guinevere, Perceval’s sister, and various damsels).

Eight Bond films drawn from five decades (1963-2006) will be examined, and have been selected to include all actors playing Bond alongside Bond girls adopting the seductress, ‘formidable’ woman, and/or damsel-in-distress personae. Chapter 1, focusing on the agency of the seductress, will feature: Tatiana Romanova, *From Russia with Love* (1963); Miranda Frost, *Die Another Day* (2002); and Vesper Lynd, *Casino Royale* (2006). The ‘formidable’ women of Chapter 2 will be: Tracy Di Vincenzo, *On Her Majesty’s Secret Service* (1969); May Day, *A View to a Kill* (1985); and Elektra King, *The World is not Enough* (1999). Chapter 3 highlights the agency of the damsel-in-distress, looking at Dr. Holly Goodhead, *Moonraker* (1979); Stacey Sutton, *A View to a Kill* (1985); Kara Milovy, *The Living Daylights* (1987); and Dr. Christmas Jones, *The World is not Enough* (1999). The thesis will explore how women presenting with these personae - the seductress, the ‘formidable’ woman, and the damsel-in-distress – across both eras challenge the moral codes of medieval knights and Bond. Consideration will be given to the agency each woman holds and the fate that befalls them.

In the course of the analyses of female agency in the Bond films, additional 'dispensable' women were identified. The term 'fluffer' has been used to describe such women in the Bond films whose roles were purely to enhance his sexual appeal (Burnetts, in Funnell, ed. 2015). This term is being appropriated here because it describes the performance of these women perfectly. If they share a common purpose, it appears to be purely to increase Bond's sexual prowess. They seem to reinforce the belief that the main Bond girl will obviously fall for his charms, and abandon her allegiance to the villain in exchange for a short-lived dalliance with Bond through the actual or implied depiction of sex on screen. Surprisingly, 'fluffers' are also evident in the medieval material, although their function is diametrically opposed to the Bond 'fluffer' – serving to increase the chivalric virtue of knights who do not succumb to their seductions. The agency of 'fluffers' is explored in Chapter 4.

This thesis will not consider the Bond novels written by Ian Fleming for a number of reasons; logistically, they cover a much shorter time span than the films and are far less accessible to the general public, and as Chapman points out, 'by the time that academics had started taking Fleming seriously, James Bond had transcended his origins as a hero of a series of popular novels and had become nothing less than a cultural phenomenon' (2009:4). Many of the Bond films are either based on short stories or scripted by other writers; the book plots also often vary greatly from the films, with *Moonraker* being an excellent example of this. Unlike the film, which is set in Venice, Rio de Janeiro and outer space, the novel takes place entirely in England, and although Hugo Drax still features as the main villain, his nefarious scheme is completely different. The 'Moonraker' nuclear rocket of the novel is replaced by 'Moonraker' space shuttles and deadly nerve gas in the film (Chapman, 2007:164). Perhaps most importantly, the books contain more explicitly sexist content than the films; an obvious example of this being apparent in *Casino Royale*, where the portrayal of a female M in the film is directly at odds with Fleming's chauvinistic depiction in the original novel (Arnett, 2009:12). The films translate better for popular audiences; they have adapted to societal change, removing undesirable motifs such as the blatant objectification of women, while maintaining the predictable aspects of the franchise (Racioppi & Tremonte, 2014:16). The novels do not have as wide an audience as the films and do not stretch across the decades in the same ways as the Bond films and medieval romances. Also, albeit rather

counter-intuitively, as medieval romances were 'performed', the films are therefore closer to them than the texts of the novels.

Bond's code and Gawain's pentangle

To compare the respective agency of medieval women and Bond girls adopting each persona, a methodology has been established which necessitates an understanding of the moral codes under which knights and Bond respectively operate. Medieval knights were bound by the ethos and ideals of the chivalric code; although unenforceable, its unwritten rules dictated the virtues that knights must uphold.

> There was no single age of chivalry that stretched from the eleventh or twelfth centuries to the fifteenth century and beyond, and there was no single code or ideal for how aristocrats should behave during that period. (Taylor, in Kreuger, ed. 2023:243).

This thesis therefore adopts a version of the chivalric code as exemplified through a passage in one of its primary medieval romance texts – *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Here, Gawain is being dressed and armed prior to setting off on his journey to face the Green Knight (ll.568-618), and scrupulous attention is given to every aspect of his attire. Although his armour will prove useless in his challenge with the Green Knight, his appearance must, nevertheless, uphold the standards of knighthood. The description culminates in the appearance of his shield (l.619), which has an image of the Virgin Mary imprinted inside it to give him courage in troubled times. 'In þe inore half of his schelde hir ymage depaynted, / Þat quen he blusched þerto his belde neuer payred' (ll.649-650) [her image depicted on the inner side of his shield, so that when he looked at it his courage never failed] (Barron, 2001:67). The text then focuses on the pentangle at the shield's centre, a symbol of fidelity dating back to Solomon.

> Hit is a syngne þat Salamon set sumquyle
>
> In bytoknyng of trawþe, bi tytle þat hit habbeȝ,
>
> For hit is a figure þat haldeȝ fyue pynteȝ,
>
> And vyche lyne vmbelappeȝ and loukeȝ in oþer,
>
> And ayquere hit is endeleȝ; […] (ll.625-629).

> [It is a symbol that Solomon devised once upon a time as a token of fidelity, appropriately, for it is a figure which contains five points, and each line overlaps and interlocks with another, and it is unbroken anywhere] (Barron, 2001:65).

The five points of the pentangle symbolise the five chivalric virtues of knighthood that together make up a knight's *trawþe* (truth), defined as 'fidelity to others, to promises, to principles; faith in God; moral righteousness; personal integrity' (Barron, 2001:11). These five chivalric virtues are: *fraunchyse*, or compassion, 'roughly translated, generosity, and openness of heart, mind and hand' (Coote, 2012:420); *cortaysye*, or courtesy, which is consideration for others; *felaȝschyp*, or fellowship, generally accepted as loyalty to fellow knights and courtiers; *pité*, or devotion to God; and *clannes*, or sexual cleanness and the avoidance of lust. Failing in any one of them will compromise a knight's chivalry, and their representation on Gawain's shield, through the interlocking and unbroken five-pointed pentangle, makes it clear that if a knight fails in any one virtue, he breaks the pentangle and hence breaks his *trawþe*. This thesis will explore how women adopting various personae challenge *trawþe* by targeting these pentad virtues. It will also highlight a paradox in knighthood, insofar as adhering to courtly love etiquette can compromise one or more of the pentad virtues. Lancelot's *trawþe* is threatened by his devotion to Guinevere and his desire to serve her whatever the cost. Gawain is also placed in an impossible position when Lady Bertilak's exploitation of courtly love techniques first compromises his *felaȝschyp* to her husband, and then his *pité*, by not revealing the gift of the girdle as per his promise. Both knights are still celebrated as heroes, even though they are clearly flawed; perhaps the fact that they remain 'human' under their armour allows their failings to be overlooked.

Bond's armour is more metaphorical, but he is also impacted by a paradox; he must enhance his 'sexual reputation' and succeed in his mission, while remaining respectful of women's agency. Like the knights, Bond must walk a fine line between chivalrous and inappropriate behaviour. His modern-day pentad is also remarkably similar to the medieval version previously discussed; Taliaferro and Le Gall (in South & Held, ed. 2006:106) describe Bond's *cortaysye*, shown in his suave manner, expensive clothing, and meticulous etiquette. They note how Bond identifies Captain Nash in *From Russia with Love* as an assassin because he orders red wine with fish. In spite of being regularly thrust into life or death scenarios, Bond always ensures he looks his best. He is

seen straightening his tie in a submarine during the pursuit of an assassin on the Thames in *The World is Not Enough*. Bond's *fraunchyse* is beyond question; a good example is when he comforts Vesper Lynd after they are attacked by Obanno's men in *Casino Royale* (see p.57 below). Working relationships with M, other British spies, and a range of international agents, notably Felix Leiter, show his commitment to *felaȝschyp*. The virtue of *pité* has a less religious connotation for Bond, being more associated with patriotic devotion to Queen and country than to God. Equally, although the medieval virtue of *clannes* appears entirely incompatible with Bond's *modus operandi*, he clearly has a pentad virtue associated with 'sexual conduct'. Both Bond and medieval knights must by mindful of their sexual behaviour; whereas a knight must remain chaste, for Bond, the sexual 'conquest' of women is paramount. Rushton notes that a significant part of the Bond myth is that he can have sexual intercourse with any woman he likes (in Hopkins & Rushton, ed. 2007:27). This theory is supported by Funnell and Dodds who claim that Bond cannot be seen to fail in his conquest of a woman (2015b:127). Garland explains that 'gratuitous scenes of Bond's sexual liaisons with beautiful women are the mainstay of over forty years of Bond films' (2009:180). Bond's virtues evolve over time; just as knights' behaviour is tempered by attitudes around courtly love and the Church, so Bond's actions are modernised by societal expectation. The Bond formula must be continuously tweaked, but never subverted; '[…] those films which have deviated furthest from the usual narrative conventions, such as *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* (unhappy ending) and *Licence to Kill* (non-secret service storyline), have been the least successful' (Chapman in Lindner, ed. 2009:113).

The first main body chapter will explore the agency held by women adopting the seductress persona. It will examine their role in derailing men's quests, the strategies they employ, and the fate that befalls them. It will begin by analysing the actions of Lady Bertilak with regard to Gawain in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (*c*.1375):

> […] the most artistically accomplished and most singular Arthurian poem in Middle English. It has no obvious immediate source, either in French or English; although it contains plot elements and motifs found elsewhere in Arthurian romance, its combination of them is unique. (Larrington in Fulton, 2009:252).

It will go on to identify and discuss women with similar personae in *The Quest of the Holy Grail* (*c*.1210), and moving in to the Bond era, women performing as seductresses will be considered in three selected films: Tatiana Romanova (*From Russia with Love*, 1963), Miranda Frost (*Die Another Day*, 2002), and Vesper Lynd (*Casino Royale*, 2006). *Sir Gawain* focuses on Lady Bertilak, a seductress, who is tasked by her husband to seduce Gawain, and compromise the integrity of King Arthur's court. She is a logical choice because her pursuit of Gawain mirrors the actions of many Bond girls in seeking sexual attention from Bond. The strategies utilised by seductresses will be analysed in three sections: 'agency through sexual allure', 'agency through challenge', and 'agency through deception'. Synopses for the texts and films covered in this chapter are given in Appendix 1.

The second chapter will examine the agency afforded to the 'formidable' woman, with a main medieval focus on Alisoun, in *The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale* (*c*.1400), highlighting her challenges to preconceived notions around gendered behaviour and patriarchal order. Other medieval women who subvert stereotypical expectation will also be included, for example Guinevere, in both *The Knight of the Cart* (*c*.1180) and *Le Morte d'Arthur* (1485). Consideration will also be given to women who achieve 'formidability' through the use of magic: Dame Brusen (*Le Morte d'Arthur*), the hag (*The Wife of Bath's Tale*), and Morgan le Fay (*Sir Gawain*). 'Formidable' women have also been identified in a selection of the Bond films: the self-serving Elektra King (*The World is not Enough*, 1999), the headstrong Tracy Di Vincenzo (*On Her Majesty's Secret Service*, 1969), and the independent May Day (*A View to a Kill*, 1985) showcase a similar range of strategies to their medieval equivalents. The chapter will examine these strategies by virtue of sections devoted to: 'agency through status', 'agency through manipulation', and 'agency achieving sovereignty'. Synopses for all texts and films covered in this chapter are included in Appendix 1.

Dorigen, the main female protagonist of *The Franklin's Tale* (*c*.1400), will be the central figure of chapter 3, as she showcases the ubiquitous persona of the damsel-in-distress to perfection. A far more complex persona than expected, the 'damsel' role is adopted by many other medieval women, such as two damsels that Bors encounters on his adventures; a disinherited damsel, and an abducted damsel (*Le Morte d'Arthur*, *c*.1485). The main focus for the Bond analyses will be Kara Milovy (*The Living Daylights*,

1987), alongside Dr. Holly Goodhead (*Moonraker*, 1979), Stacey Sutton (*A View to a Kill*, 1985), and Dr. Christmas Jones (*The World is not Enough*, 1999). Given the very varied presentations of the 'damsel' persona, this chapter, rather than focusing on specific strategies that 'damsels' employ, will instead devote sections to: the 'traditional damsel', the 'resourceful damsel', and the 'rational damsel'. Synopses for all texts and films covered in this chapter are included in Appendix 1.

Chapter 4 serves to explore the agency of 'fluffers', initially seen in the Bond films, but subsequently identified in the medieval material. The *modus operandi* of these women, who inhabit all personae, is similar in both eras, but the objectives behind their actions are very different; the agency of Bond 'fluffers' is in part employed to improve his 'sexual reputation', whereas medieval 'fluffers' demonstrate agency that reinforces knights' chastity. The chapter will be divided into two sections which examine the role of two types of 'fluffer': 'recipients', women who receive sexual favours as payment for services rendered; and 'initiators', who actively seek sexual liaisons but without explicitly impacting on the hero's quest. 'Fluffers' have been identified in a range of medieval texts and all of the selected Bond films, whose synopses are included in Appendix 1.

Romance presents as a 'meme', which Cooper views as 'an idea that behaves like a gene in its ability to replicate faithfully and abundantly, but also on occasion to adapt, mutate, and therefore survive in different forms and cultures' (2008:3). It is considered here as a combination of a situational motif (court/glamorous setting), a symbolic theme (good vs. evil, East vs. West), along with particular character roles (hero vs. villain). Other more fantastical features, such as heroes performing superhuman feats are as prevalent in medieval romance as in Bond. These tropes are intrinsic to the genre and essential to the form of entertainment it provides (Taylor, in Kreuger, ed. 2023:244). I hypothesise in this thesis that the conventions of the romance genre also contribute to defining female agency, and I apply this hypothesis to an analysis of female agency in both medieval romance and modern-day Bond films. This unique angle on Bond offers an original contribution to Bond scholarship to date, as although some Bond critics have noted parallels between Bond and medieval romance – for example Sternberg (1983) compares the fantastical plot of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* with the outlandish schemes of Bond villains – such studies have not been undertaken at this level of detail.

In the Bond films, even in the face of major social change, such as the #MeToo movement, Bond's women still inhabit the same personae evident in their medieval counterparts. 'Thus, for the most part we read not of women who overturned the patriarchal regime but of those who "negotiated the system" […]' (Howell in Moran & Pipkin, ed. 2019:24). Bond may simply be a traditional tale in a modern setting, and female agency can change but only within a conventional formula that maintains patriarchal order. In spite of feminist influences in the present day, there is still no expectation that a female Bond will appear any time soon. If convention is to be followed, a reversal of gender roles from a male to a female Bond hero would likely subvert medieval romance convention too much. Bond cannot be female; a statement of fact when viewed not from a sexist perspective but through a medieval lens.

Chapter 1

The Agency of the Seductress

The iconic Bond girl is an ever-present feature of the Bond films and an essential ingredient in their recipe for success. Her physical appearance has evolved over time, keeping in step with the zeitgeist of the day: the curvaceous blonde morphing into a slimline brunette; the pale English rose into a Jamaican beauty. Every Bond girl can be summed up physically in just two words: stunningly beautiful. 'If the character of James Bond was the kind of man that many men supposedly wanted to be in the 1960s, by all accounts men longed for the beautiful women that he meets' (Hines, 2018:122). The Bond girl is no simple caricature and far more than just a pretty face; she is a vital element of the Bond formula, and her agency has increased over time. Often considered to be a seductress, upon closer inspection her persona is in fact far more varied and fluid. Bond girls certainly adopt the seductress role with consummate ease, but for many it is not the persona they chiefly inhabit on screen. For example, Elektra King (*The World is not Enough*, 1999) uses seduction as a weapon against men, but, as we will see in Chapter 2, this is only one tool in the vast arsenal of a 'formidable' woman (see p.77 below). Equally, Kara Milovy (*The Living Daylights*, 1987) clearly has seductive appeal and yet gains most of her agency from playing the damsel-in-distress role, to be explored further in Chapter 3 (see p.139 below). Bond films have become increasingly self-aware regarding the franchise's treatment of women, with Susan Burgess noting that 'Stereotypically masculine behavior had begun to appear unattractive and vaguely distasteful […]' during the period between 1987 and 2002 (2015:238). The *modus operandi* and physical appearance of the Bond seductress has necessarily evolved over time due to societal pressures.

> […] to make Bond more of a sympathetic and believable character to his audience, [the writers] have to continue to respond to feminism and cultural concepts of virtue. This means creatively spicing up Bond's relationships without relying on the objectification of women. (Arp & Decker, in South & Held, ed. 2006:213)

This chapter will focus on women who behave as seductresses for most of their appearance on screen and will show the range of techniques they use and how their

agency can be compromised by choosing the wrong strategy or the wrong moment to employ it. The chapter defines a seductress as a woman who persuades a man 'to desert his allegiance or service' or leads a man astray, tempting him away from his intended course of action (OED, 2021). What follows will view the aim of seduction as the derailment of the hero's quest and as reliant on a woman's beauty, but not necessarily on her sexual desirability. As most, if not all, Bond girls adopt the persona of seductress at some point on screen, this chapter focuses on specific Bond girls who maintain the seductress role for the majority of the time. Three main characters selected for this chapter are: Tatiana Romanova (*From Russia with Love*, 1963), Miranda Frost (*Die Another Day*, 2002), and Vesper Lynd (*Casino Royale*, 2006). The role of seductress as performed by each of these Bond girls will be compared and contrasted to that of Lady Bertilak in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (*c*.1375) and other seductresses in medieval romance; in order to do this, the chivalric virtues associated with Gawain's pentangle will be considered. The pentangle on Gawain's shield is the emblem of moral perfection and its pentad represents five chivalric virtues: *fraunchyse* (compassion and magnanimity), *felaȝschyp* (loyalty to others), *clannes* (freedom from lust), *cortaysye* (consideration for others), and *pité* (devotion to God and duty) (ll. 651-654) (Barron, 2001:10). Taken together, the pentangle's virtues represent a token of *trawþe* (truth), championing fidelity to others, to promises and principles, and to moral righteousness.

Romanova appears alongside Sean Connery, working under orders from superior officer, Rosa Klebb. Romanova is deceived into thinking that she is helping her country and not an enemy organisation to secure a decoding device. Frost assists Pierce Brosnan's Bond while operating as a double agent in league with Gustav Graves, an influential but corrupt businessman; female NSA (National Security Agency) agent Jinx provides a valuable ally for Bond. Lynd is trying to raise funds to secure the release of her boyfriend from an enemy organisation, aiming to achieve this by collaborating with Daniel Craig's Bond to bankrupt Le Chiffre, a criminal businessman. Care has been taken to select seductresses from both early and more recent Bond films and to include films featuring three different actors who play Bond, to ensure that the agency associated with the seductress persona is not influenced by the personality of the Bond actor on screen. The thesis also notes the presence of other women in the selected films who neither contribute to, nor detract from, the mission, and the role of these women will

be explored in more detail in chapter 4 to determine what, if any, agency they demonstrate. These women are: Sylvia, a previous conquest of Bond's, and two unnamed gypsy women in *From Russia with Love*; Verity, a fencing instructor in *Die Another Day*, and Solange, Dimitrios' girlfriend in *Casino Royale*.

Meir Sternberg notes that the Bond stories are formulaic, beginning with:

> […] the disclosure of the assignment in M's office; passing through the stages of exploratory action and clash, which usually result in Bond's being captured by his adversary; and ending in miraculous escape and counterattack, where the battered hero fights his way to victory and sexual reward. (1983:145).

This description appears to reduce the agency of the Bond girl to that of a prize, or 'reward', for him to enjoy after successfully completing his mission. This chapter aims to show that Bond girls employing a seductress persona can demonstrate high levels of agency, even if only temporarily. The Bond girl is actually a complex character and Lisa Funnell details how she transitions through different phases: the English Partner (1962-69), the American Side-Kick (1971-89), and the American Action Hero (1995-2002). Indeed, by the time Lynd appears in 2006, she clearly fulfils the remit of the latter in being '[…] a physical and intellectual match to Bond, […] presented as a sexually equal and thus heroically comparable character' (Funnell, 2011:465). Late medieval romance also follows a similar highly-conventionalised structure developed over three centuries, which as Carol Parrish Jamison observes '[…] begins at a specific court from which knights wander in search of adventure' (1991:49); the protagonists are typically assigned arduous tasks and rewarded upon their completion. Nathaniel Griffin notes that this form of romance centres on 'outward forms and ceremonies' and that it places great emphasis on status and on codes of conduct defined by it (1923:53-54). In romance, the main element is a challenge to world order and a hero capable of restoring it; in medieval tales the ability to impart morality is also vital. The genre is not based in reality; W.T.H. Jackson states that 'unreality […] is the first principle of the romance genre. It is this unreality which gives it that independence and flexibility of morality and imagery which are its greatest glory' (1974:15). This suggests that romance has always been seen as a means through which to escape reality, a sentiment also supported by Frederic Jameson,

who notes that romance is a 'fantasy […] which aims at the transfiguration of the world of everyday reality […]' (1975:138).

In their respective fantasy worlds, the chivalrous knights are similar to Bond in that they adopt behaviours expected by their audience to reestablish patriarchal order or the *status quo*. The focus is always from the hero's perspective and champions chivalric virtues, or in Bond's case, Western values. When presented with a mission to complete, both Bond and medieval knights usually encounter at least one woman, often a seductress, who tries to thwart them, and both are governed by a series of predominantly unwritten codes which dictate how the characters should behave. For medieval knights, this means negotiating the minefield of courtly love and working within the constraints of the chivalric code. For Bond, it means being successful in every aspect of the mission, including seducing the majority of the women he meets. 'Through Bond's serial seduction of women, the franchise […] defines the heroic identity of Bond' (Funnell & Dodds, 2015b:127), and an important consequence of this is the extent to which it defines the agency of Bond's women. Seductresses are frequently 'redeemed' by Bond (see p.6 above); 'the plots work to reposition a woman who is "out-of-place" sexually and politically' (Denning, in Lindner, ed. 2009:69), through sexual 'conquest' by Bond.

Two medieval romance texts, *Sir Gawain* (*c*.1375), and *The Quest of the Holy Grail* (*c*.1220), will be analysed in this chapter and the former, featuring the seductress Lady Bertilak, will be used as the main medieval work. Medieval women operate under an entirely different set of limitations imposed mainly by the Church, and it is important to keep these moral and religious influences in mind when considering their agency as seductresses. Descriptions of these women often focus on the richness of their garments rather than on any detail of their physical features; their beauty lies in the 'eye of the beholder' or at least the imagination of the reader. Lady Bertilak's allure is made clear by Gawain's favourable comparison of her with Guinevere (*Sir Gawain*, ll.943-945).

The damsel in *The Quest* who attempts to seduce Perceval is only described in terms of his perception of her: 'looking at the damsel, he thought her so fair that he had never seen her equal for beauty' (p.100). If anything, medieval women benefit from not being meticulously described; they are able to fulfil every reader's idea of perfection and

despite the restrictions they work under are able to display all the traits of their modern-day counterparts. Charles Brooks' observation, although of Renaissance women, is equally true for women in medieval romance or present day: 'Every woman […] has within her both the need to submit and a will to dominate, and the harmony of the character depends on the balance between the two' (1960:353).

Medieval romances like *Sir Gawain* were common and these texts serve to highlight the major flaws within the romance convention of adhering strictly to courtly love and chivalric etiquette, insofar as it inevitably allows women, like Lady Bertilak, to manipulate a situation to their advantage. Women in romance resort to using deception as a strategy to gain agency – a female technique replicated in the Bond series. Focusing on the agency of Lady Bertilak allows comparisons to be drawn, firstly with other women in medieval romance and then with the selected Bond girls. Lady Bertilak is a logical choice because she demonstrates many aspects of the seductress persona: sexual allure, challenge, and deception, performing each skilfully and moving between them with fluidity. The actions that define her persona are explicitly employed to bring shame on Arthur's court by derailing Gawain's quest to face the Green Knight.

Seductresses target men's weaknesses and, given that Gawain is a 'prominent medieval philanderer whose reputation for numerous love affairs has become well-known in modern criticism of romance literature […]' (Benson, 1965 in Rushton, 2007:28), Lady Bertilak uses her agency to exploit that vulnerability. She is very beautiful but has to adopt several strategies in order to woo a reluctant participant. Gawain believes that facing the Green Knight is his 'test', but in reality his ability to rebuff Lady Bertilak is what is being judged. Gawain faces the monstrous Green Knight in a test of valour and emerges victorious. However, Lord Bertilak (as the Green Knight) then reveals that the real test of Gawain's honour and integrity happened earlier '[…] in the bedroom, at the hands of his wife, and not at the Green Chapel, at the hands of the Green Knight' (Fisher, in Krueger, ed. 2000:152). Although it is only revealed towards the end of the tale, the plot is orchestrated by Morgan le Fay, who is angered by Guinevere's lack of respect for her. As we will see later in this chapter, this 'throw-away' treatment of le Fay's agency is paralleled by M's revelation about Lynd's true motives at the end of *Casino Royale*.

Another medieval woman to be linked to the *Sir Gawain* analysis in this chapter is a disinherited damsel who tempts Perceval in *The Quest* (*c*.1200). It is worthy of note that medieval damsels are often figured in medieval romance as demonic creatures disguised as beautiful women, who place temptation into the paths of their male victims in order to test the men's *pité* and allegiance to God or King. Rosalyn Rossignol notes that 'Perceval and Bors are tempted by women (actually demons) proffering sexual favors' (1995:53). They treat their quarry in the same way as a hunter would its prey, trying to find the most successful method through which to ensnare the animal. The ideology of English chivalry is paramount in *Sir Gawain* (Larrington, in Fulton, ed. 2009:253) and having fallen victim to Lady Bertilak's temptation, Gawain manifests this cultural perception of women as dangerous seductresses capable of derailing quests and ruining men's reputations.

'"Bot hit is no ferly þaȝ a fole madde
And þurȝ wyles of wymmen be wonen to sorȝe,
For so watȝ Adam in erde with one bygyled,
And Salamon with fele sere, and Samson eftsoneȝ –"' (ll.2414-2417)

["But it is no wonder if a fool behaves foolishly and is brought to grief through the wiles of women, for Adam while on earth was thus beguiled by one, and Solomon by many different women, and also Samson."] (Barron, 2001:161).

He then pleads for his transgressions to be excused, given that so many great men have fallen into the same trap.

"And alle þay were biwyled
With wymmen þat þay vsed.
Þaȝ I be now bigyled,
Me þink me burde be excused." (ll.2425-2428).

["and all these were deceived by women with whom they had relations. If now I am deluded, it seems to me I ought to be excused."] (Barron, 2001:161).

The rationale behind comparing medieval romance and the Bond franchise is to show the similarities between the two genres and to contextualise Bond films alongside

their medieval counterparts. The Bond seductress persona is multi-faceted and shares many commonalities with her medieval counterpart. She meets audience expectation, both as an integral part of the highly-formulaic Bond films and the highly-conventionalised narratives of medieval romance. We can, then, learn something of the traditions of Bond seductresses by setting them in a medieval romance context. Examining the Bond series through a medieval lens is therefore a novel approach that contributes to previously published scholarship on Bond and medieval romance, by considering in detail how far the Bond franchise participates within a centuries-long romance tradition stretching back at least as far as the English romance parodies of the late 14th century.

Agency through sexual allure

When a monstrous Green Knight appears at King Arthur's court and issues a challenge to receive an undefended axe blow, Gawain accepts on behalf of his king and beheads the knight. However, the headless knight then picks up his head and reminds Gawain that under the terms of their agreement he must present himself at the Green Chapel in a year's time to suffer a return blow. The Green Knight rides away and the court resumes its Christmas revelry, although Gawain is nervous of the potential adventure to come against a completely unfamiliar adversary, 'neither knight nor supernatural creature but a fusion of both' (Barron, 2001:7). Given the size and strength discrepancies between the eponymous characters in this poem, the Green Knight is clearly favourite to win the contest and Gawain is understandably fearful for his life. His rash action in attacking the knight, in '[…] response to the stranger's challenge provides an important clue to the development of the hero's character in this poem' (Weiss, 1976:361) and may go some way to explaining his later circumspection when dealing with Lady Bertilak. The beautiful lady (we later learn) is tasked to seduce Gawain, and given his reputation as a serial womaniser, her task appears at first glance to be fairly straightforward. Cory Rushton comments that 'Gawain usually remains the same, eager for and often unable to resist sexual encounters; he rarely gives the consequences much thought' (in Hopkins & Rushton, ed. 2007:37). Indeed, following an adventure at the castle of maidens, *The Quest* documents how Gawain feels unable to repent his ways while speaking with a hermit, even at the expense of forfeiting a prominent role in obtaining the Grail. The hermit begs him to: '"forsake this wicked life which you have lived so long, you might

yet be reconciled with Our Lord"'. Gawain simply replies that he cannot 'bear the burden of doing penance' and the hermit leaves him, aware that his advice will not be taken (p.54).

It is interesting then, that before Gawain sets off on his mission, a section of *Sir Gawain* details his ceremonial arming; it emphasises the amount of gold on his armour and suggests that Gawain in chivalric virtue is as free from imperfection as the gold. The detailed description of his armour is surprising in that it will be of absolutely no use to Gawain in his encounter with the Green Knight; he is not permitted to defend himself from the Green Knight's blow. Gawain's pentangle and associated virtues (see p.19 above) seem to emphasise Gawain's nobility and commitment to truth, but these, rather than protecting him in battle, will instead offer Lady Bertilak opportunities to seduce him. When Gawain arrives at Lord Bertilak's castle, he has already faced many tests of his courage, each one compounded by hunger and the cold winter weather. Alone and fearful of the task that lies ahead of him, his gratitude for Lord Bertilak's hospitality immediately leaves him vulnerable to exploitation.

Gawain's temptations start as soon as he accepts lodgings at the castle for the Christmas festivities. His armour is removed and replaced with soft garments; he accepts sumptuous feasts and the opportunity to fulfil his religious duties. It is at the chapel that he first meets Lady Bertilak, said to have the best figure of any woman as well as having a desirable bearing. The initial description of her shows Gawain's view of her as the fairest in the land.

> Ho watȝ þe fayrest in felle, of flesche and of lyre,
>
> And of compas and colour and costes, of alle oþer,
>
> And wener þen Wenore, as þe wyȝe þoȝt. (ll.943-945).
>
> [She was the fairest of all in her person, in body and face, and in figure, complexion and bearing, and lovelier than Guinevere, so the knight thought.] (Barron, 2001:81).

Earlier in the story, Queen Guinevere ('Wenore') is portrayed as the epitome of beauty (ll.74-84), so to describe Lady Bertilak as more beautiful than her is very high

praise indeed. The elderly lady accompanying her is described as being highly revered but physically unattractive:

> A mensk lady on molde mon may hir calle, for Gode!
>
> Hir body watȝ schort and þik,
>
> Hir buttokeȝ balȝ and brode;
>
> More lykkerwys on to lyk
>
> Watȝ þat scho hade on lode.
>
> (ll.965-969)
>
> [A lady much honoured in this world, she may truly be called! Her body was short and stout, her hips bulging broad; more pleasing to the taste was she whom she was leading.] (Barron, 2001:83).

It is not at this point in the text revealed that this is in fact Morgan le Fay, the instigator of the plot. Gawain is delighted at the attention lavished upon him by Lady Bertilak and her ladies-in-waiting and spends the festivities in their company until he concedes he must resume his journey to the Green Chapel. Nervous of his impending encounter with the Green Knight, Gawain is then relieved to discover that the Green Chapel is close by, and he accepts his host's pleadings to stay for the three nights until New Year's Day. He is entirely unaware of a plot by his host and Morgan Le Fay to derail his quest; Lord Bertilak, an avid hunter, then regularly leaves Gawain alone with Lady Bertilak, who takes the opportunity to partake in her own hunt of him. The text often draws parallels between Lord Bertilak's literal and Lady Bertilak's metaphorical hunts; they each alter their strategies and intensify their efforts as the resistance of their prey – the hunted game and hunted Gawain – increases. It is worthy of note that any hunt tends to end in the death of the prey and this might suggest a similar fate for Gawain. Lord Bertilak also persuades Gawain to agree to a game, exchanging whatever he gains in the castle each day for the spoils of the hunt. In spite of the fact that his last agreement to a 'Christmas game' at Camelot, at the outset of the poem, led to his current predicament, Gawain readily accepts. His position as a revered guest leaves him bemused as to what he will find to fulfil his part of the exchange agreement – at least,

that is, until Lady Bertilak appears in his bedroom as soon as her husband has left to hunt. She suggestively sits down next to him on his bed.

> And ho stepped stilly and stel to his bedde,
> Kest vp þe cortyn and creped withinne,
> And set hir ful softly on þe bed-syde, (ll.1191-1193).
>
> [And she, stepping softly, stole up to his bed, lifted up the curtain and crept inside, and seated herself very carefully on the bedside.] (Barron, 2001:95).

Naked at this point and disquieted by her presence, Gawain feigns sleep in order to work out his next move. 'And sayned hym, as bi his saȝe þe sauer to worthe, / with hande.' (ll.1202-1203) [he protects himself by making the sign of the cross] (my translation). This is perhaps because he is unsure whether he is confronted by a real woman or the vision of a demonic seductress, known to regularly ensnare knights in medieval romance narratives; for instance, in *The Quest*,

> […] supernatural vessels […] are associated with a sequence of women – or at least apparent women. The first is the beautiful damsel who attempts to seduce Perceval and who turns out to be Lucifer in female disguise. (Cooper, 2008:132).

However, Lady Bertilak does not vanish in 'a puff of smoke' and her agency is extremely high here, given that she can exploit his womanising reputation safe in the knowledge that she is carrying out her husband's wishes. Carolyn Dinshaw notes that 'Gawain, back in the castle, is involved in a sort of indoor hunt: the lady creeps into his bedroom and tries to seduce him into sleeping with her while her husband is off in the woods […]' (1994:206). Lady Bertilak makes it clear that she has captured Gawain, even going so far as to explain that the men are away hunting, everyone else is in their beds and the door is securely locked (ll.1231-1233).

Gawain spends the morning in bed and at the mercy of Lady Bertilak's repeated flattery; she even goes as far as to say that she could choose no better husband than him: 'Þer schulde no freke vpon folde bifore yow be chosen' (l.1275) ["no man on earth would be chosen in preference to you"] (Barron, 2001:99). Constrained by his *felaȝschyp*

to Lord Bertilak, he responds by being grateful for her appreciation and promising to be a loyal knight, but rebuffs any suggestion of intimacy.

> Þaȝ ho were burde bryȝtest þe burne in mynde hade,
>
> Þe lasse luf in his lode for lur þat he soȝt / boute hone,
>
> Þe dunte þat schulde hym deue. (ll.1283-1286).
>
> [Though she was the fairest woman the knight had ever known, the less warmth there was in his manner because of the fate he was going to without respite, the blow that was going to strike him down] (Barron, 2001:99).

His rebuttal of her also adheres to courtly politeness or *cortaysye*, but she is determined to make him succumb to her seduction. Despite his attraction to her, Gawain is more fixated on his imminent fight with the Green Knight, and when Lady Bertilak then begs a kiss from him out of courtesy, he agrees that she may kiss him on the understanding that she will not ask for another. 'I schal kysse at your comaundement / […] so pleade hit no more' (ll.1303-1304) ["I shall kiss at your command […] so urge it no further"] (Barron, 2001:101). Gawain then spends the day being entertained by Lady Bertilak and her elderly companion (Morgan Le Fay). When darkness falls and Lord Bertilak returns with the spoils of his hunt, he offers venison to Gawain who gives him a kiss in return. Although Gawain refuses to reveal where he received the kiss, making it clear that this was not part of their agreement, this signals to the lord a degree of success on his wife's part. For Lady Bertilak, it is clear that simply making herself sexually available does not afford her sufficient agency to tempt Gawain into abandoning his principles.

Temptations of the flesh are also at the forefront in *The Quest*, which documents the adventures of a group of knights, collectively and individually, as they search for the Holy Grail. Prophecy foretells that three knights will find the Grail, of which two will be virgins and one will be chaste. Therefore, when several knights including Perceval are dispatched from King Arthur's court at the request of King Pellés to retrieve the legendary Grail, they are warned that inviting their romantic partners to accompany them on the quest is forbidden.

> "Hear ye, lords of the Round Table who have sworn to enter upon the Quest of the Holy Grail! Nascien the hermit sends you word by me that no one shall take with him upon this Quest either lady or damsel lest he fall into mortal sin: […] Because of these words it came about that no one took with him his wife or friend" (p.22).

However, the lack of female company leaves the knights susceptible to temptation on their journey and allows for the introduction of unnamed damsels who test their commitment to God and the quest. Given that the knights are noble men, seductresses provide them with the opportunity to uphold the chivalric code by not succumbing to their ministrations. In Chapter VI of *The Quest* (p.69), the virginal Perceval is considered and an incident is recounted where he comes across a disinherited damsel. Perceval has previously been warned by both his aunt and a wise man that he will be tested to ensure he is worthy of finding the Grail. Having been transported to a remote island by a demonic horse (p.87), Perceval encounters a woman claiming not only to have knowledge of Galahad, but also a means of escaping from the island. Although in reality a demonic temptress, this woman refers to herself as a damsel in distress and states that knights of the Round Table are honour-bound to aid such women.

> "[…] no one who is a companion ought to deny a damsel in distress when she asks him for his aid. You know well that this is true, for when you took the place given you by King Arthur, you swore as the first oath you took that you would never deny a damsel's request for aid." Then he said he had certainly taken this oath, and that he would gladly help her in accordance with her request. (pp.99-100).

The damsel engages Perceval in lengthy conversation and in the heat of the afternoon sun offers him shelter in a silk tent her servants have constructed for him. Having stripped him to his tunic, the damsel encourages him to sleep and they share a sumptuous meal when he awakens. Perceval's naivety is highlighted here; unlike Gawain, he has no inkling of the damsel's real identity and becomes captivated by her beauty as they share a meal. When offered wine it is made so delicious by her company that he drinks to excess and finds her sexually irresistible.

> Then looking at the damsel, he thought her so fair that he had never seen her equal for beauty. She caused him such pleasure and delight by the elegance he saw in her and by the gentle words she spoke, that he desired ardently to possess her (p.100).

The damsel's agency is extremely high at this point and she raises it further by continuing to resist his advances. 'If the lover is enslaved by the mere sight of the lady, it is likely that he will do anything to honor her, anything to decrease the distance between them' (Jackson, 1974:17). Eventually, aware that her ministrations have had the desired effect, she agrees to be his in return for a promise that he will henceforth do her bidding.

> "Do you promise me as a loyal knight?" said she. He answered, "Yes." "Then I will resign myself," said she, "and will do your pleasure. But know of a truth that you have not desired to possess me so much as I have desired you. For you are one of the knights in the world upon whom I have most cast my eyes." (pp.100-101).

The damsel's servants undress her and place her in an elegant bed in the middle of the tent; Perceval takes his place by her side, but on reaching for the covers he sees his sword lying on the ground. Stretching over to lean it against the bed he sees a red cross carved on the pommel:

> At once he came to himself. He crossed himself upon the forehead, when behold! the tent was overturned, and such a thick cloud of smoke surrounded him that he could not see a thing; and he smelt such a stench all about him that he thought he must be in hell. Then he cried with a loud voice, saying: "Fair gentle Father Jesus Christ, let me not perish, but succour me with your grace, or otherwise I am lost!" (p.101).

When his eyes reopen the tent has vanished and the damsel, who has boarded a ship, calls out that he has betrayed her and sets sail on a sea of flames. In line with many other seductresses seen in *The Quest*, the damsel has actually appeared in a vision and is in fact a demon sent by the devil to corrupt the noble knight. Realising how close he came to betraying his allegiance to God and the quest, Perceval swings his sword and

inflicts a deep gash on his thigh. Resting by some rocks at the shoreline, he is joined by a Good Man he met previously, who questions what has happened to him.

> Then the good man came ashore and sat down on the rock near Perceval and said to him: "How have you been getting on?" "Badly, sire," said Perceval; "for a damsel came near leading me into mortal sin." Then he told him how it had come about. […] "I am sure the devil sent her here to put me to shame and deceive me. And I would surely have been disgraced, had it not been for the sign of the cross which restored me to my right mind and memory." (p.103).

It is not uncommon in late medieval romance for seductresses to assume the persona of a damsel-in-distress in order to exploit the obligation that knights hold to help such women. The neediness associated with a 'damsel' presentation can also lure men into a false sense of security. This scenario is exemplified perfectly by Perceval, who only becomes aware that he is dealing with a vision at the very last moment. The Good Man explains that the damsel's actions would have had far reaching consequences and his words serve as a moral warning for those who may be tempted to follow Perceval's example. 'By emphasizing woman's evil and seductive powers the Church modulated from a theological outlook to a political procedure that had as its pragmatic goal putting woman back in her place' (Kaufman, 1973:144).

By seeming to appeal to men's *cortaysye* and *fraunchyse* and yet by actually challenging their *clannes*, *pité*, and *felaȝschyp*, seductresses are able to distract their targets from the real focus of their seduction. Gawain believes he has resisted temptation and yet Lady Bertilak gains agency by threatening his *pité*, when he fails to disclose the gift of the girdle in his request for absolution, and his *felaȝschyp* when he conceals it from Lord Bertilak. In today's more permissive society, the 'pentad' that makes up Bond's *trawþe* differs from a medieval knight's, and yet Bond's 'code of honour' still presents ample virtues for a seductress to exploit. Where knights are devoted to God and duty, and Gawain specifically to the Virgin Mary, Bond is dedicated to 'patriotism' and a love of Queen and country; his loyalty to fellow agents, Western values and his mission mirrors that of *felaȝschyp*, while the *cortaysye* shown by knights finds an equivalent in the diplomacy that Bond must employ. The main differences occur

in Bond's response to seductresses; it is mandatory for him to be romantically involved with several women, so that his renown can increase proportionately to the number of his seductions. Bond shares 'Gawain's charismatic openness to serial exploits' (Hahn, in Kreuger, ed. 2000:220), leaving him open to temptation by beautiful women, but unlike Gawain, Bond is always expected to succumb, and these sexual encounters serve to enhance his legendary promiscuity. In the case of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Gawain has accepted a challenge to uphold the honour of Arthur's court and must remain focused on his mission; *clannes* is essential to his success.

In *From Russia with Love* (Connery), Romanova is a beautiful blonde who works for the Russian Consulate in Istanbul. She is handpicked by Klebb, a colonel in Ernst Stavro Blofeld's organisation SPECTRE (Special Executive for Counter-intelligence, Terrorism, Revenge, and Extortion), to derail Bond's mission to obtain the Lektor decoding device. Romanova has been fooled into believing that she is working for the Soviet organisation SMERSH (Spetsyalnye Metody Razoblacheniya Shpyonov [Special Methods of Spy Detection]), and doing a noble deed on behalf of her country. Bond is initially unenthusiastic when told that Romanova will be his contact during the mission but becomes more receptive to the idea when he sees her picture. Mirroring the initial approach of Lady Bertilak with Gawain, Romanova's first encounter with Bond is in his bedroom. The slim, willowy blonde is waiting for Bond in his bed, naked under a duvet, when he enters the room armed with a pistol.

Bond: *points his gun at her*. "So you are Tatiana Romanova."

Romanova: "My friends call me Tatiana."

Bond: "Mine call me James Bond. *They shake hands*. Well, now that we've been properly introduced …"

Romanova: *pushes away Bond's gun*. "Careful! Guns upset me."

(*From Russia with love* (1963) Directed by Terence Young [DVD]. United Artists).

One of Bond's main goals appears to be to increase his 'sexual reputation' by becoming sexually involved with at least one woman during his missions. Rushton states that

> Eroticism and the heroic go hand in hand for today's audiences: the male hero is often only as good as his ability to bed attractive women […] An integral part of the James Bond myth is that Bond can have any woman he wants, despite (or perhaps because of) his misogynistic attitudes […] (in Hopkins & Rushton, ed. 2007:27).

In claiming that guns make her uncomfortable, Romanova opts to play on her vulnerability; a somewhat suspect strategy given that she is naked in a stranger's bed. It does however create the impression that she is someone who needs protecting and gives her an opportunity to lull Bond into a false sense of security. Bond and Romanova are filmed having sexual intercourse so that SPECTRE can use the footage of his liaison with a foreign spy to explain his alleged suicide, after scandalising the British government and its intelligence agencies. Bond's actions are in stark contrast to Gawain's more noble rebuff of Lady Bertilak's advances. Bond's behaviour code demands that he is irresistible to Romanova, but that in consummating their relationship he must remain completely in control of every aspect of the encounter; to fail in this could threaten his *trawþe* by compromising his patriotism or diplomacy. Connery's Bond carries this off with aplomb, in spite of David Niven initially being considered for the role. As a former body-builder, Connery had an 'edge' that stylish, public school educated 'gent' Niven lacked; his killer instinct and rugged good looks fitted Bond's persona to perfection (Black, 2005:113). Indeed, Fleming's letters reveal that he approved of Connery's casting from the outset. '[…] The man they have chosen for Bond, Sean Connery, is a real charmer – fairly unknown but a good actor with the right looks and physique' (Fleming, ed. 2015:227).

While on surveillance in *A View to a Kill*, Roger Moore's Bond meets a willing and potentially dangerous partner – previous conquest and Russian agent Pola Ivanova. Almost immediately after meeting, they are shown naked in a hot tub.

> Ivanova: "That feels wonderful."
>
> Bond: "Feels even better from where I'm sitting. *He starts massaging her back*. Would you like it harder?"
>
> Ivanova: "James, you haven't changed."

Bond: “Well, you have. You’re even lovelier.”

Ivanova: “James, that night in London when I was with the Bolshoi …”

Bond: “Ah, what a performance.”

Ivanova: “In my dressing room later … did you know; *she turns to face him, and puts her left hand on his right cheek*, I was an agent with orders to seduce you?”

Bond: “Why do you think I sent you three dozen red roses?”

Ivanova: “Hm, now that was a performance.”

They kiss.

Bond: “Quite the coincidence, us running into one another like this. Come on, tell me the truth.”

Ivanova has been ordered to acquire a cassette tape that is in Bond’s possession.

Ivanova: “Let’s not talk shop. Let’s put on something more inspirational.”

Bond: “Why not?” *Bond gets out of the hot tub to shower; Ivanova finds a copy of the tape that she wants and tries to leave*.

Bond: *in the shower* “Pola.”

Ivanova: “Yes, darling.”

Bond: “You know something? Tomorrow I shall buy you six dozen red roses.”

Ivanova: *She speaks while walking to the door*. “How lovely darling. I can’t wait.” *She leaves*.

Bond gets out of the shower as Ivanova is seen running into the street and getting into the Russian General’s car.

The General: “The tape?” *He smiles and they play the tape, but realise that it has been switched*.

(*A View to a Kill* (1985) Directed by John Glen [DVD]. United International Pictures).

Ivanova has very little agency here; not only is she operating under someone else's instructions, but Bond has already pre-empted her acquisition of the tape. He exploits her attempts to manipulate him and compromise his loyalty to the mission and in doing so sends a message to the Russians that he is one step ahead of them. In spite of their previous history, Bond obviously views Ivanova as entirely dispensable.

In *Die Another Day*, Brosnan's Bond and MI6 (Mission Intelligence, Section 6) agent, Frost, work alongside NSA agent, Jinx, in investigating Graves. Bond's first contact with the slim and athletic-looking Jinx, who is investigating Graves' right-hand-man Zao, is when she emerges from the sea in a scene similar to the one involving Ursula Andress depicted in *Dr. No* (1962).

Jinx walks to the bar. She stops to dry herself off, looking in the opposite direction to the bar.

Bond: "Magnificent view."

Jinx: *Stops towelling off, and looks at Bond at the bar*. "It is, isn't it? Too bad it's lost on everybody else."

Bond: "Mojito? You should try it." *Passes her his drink; she tries it*.

Jinx: "Giacinta Johnson. My friends call me Jinx." *She reaches out to shake his hand*.

Bond: "My friends call me James Bond. *They shake hands*. Jinx, you say." *Puts cigar in his mouth*.

They have a short interchange about Jinx and luck.

Bond: "Oh, I'm just here for the birds, ornithologist."

Jinx: "Ah, ornithologist, huh? Wow, *looking at the binoculars, which Bond has positioned near his genitals*, now there's a mouthful." *He puffs smoke*. So you're gonna be busy tonight with the owls then, huh?"

Bond: "No owls in Los Organos. Nothing to see 'til the morning. Not out there, anyway."

Jinx: "So what do predators do … when the sun goes down?"

Bond: "They feast … like there's no tomorrow." *Bond takes a drink*.

They are in a hotel room kissing each other passionately; both are now naked.

Jinx: "Are you always this frisky?"

Bond: "I've been missing the touch of a good woman."

Jinx: *opens a flick-knife*. "Who says I'm good?" *She uses it to slice and eat a piece of a pear, and they kiss again*.

(*Die Another Day* (2002) Directed by Lee Tamahori [DVD]. 20th Century Fox).

Jinx is wearing a skimpy bikini and has obviously attracted Bond's attention as she reaches the bar. She then engages in *repartee* with him, countering his reference to being at the water's edge for 'birds' with a *double entendre*: 'now there's a mouthful' in response to the word 'ornithologist.' It is possible that she is referring to the length of the word, but given that she makes this observation while simultaneously looking at his genitals, it is not likely. Jinx further enhances her seductive power by slicing a pear and eating it in front of Bond. The whole exchange suggests that there is a much more equal distribution of agency between them. As Jinx does not need 'redeeming' (see p.6 above) and there are no operational restrictions on his actions, Bond is able to accept a consensual liaison in the knowledge that it will increase his prowess; Jinx simultaneously enhances his 'sexual reputation' and reinforces his loyalty by forging bonds with an ally. The agency of the women using sexual allure differs significantly for Bond and medieval knights. Gawain is constrained from submitting to sexual temptation by his code and the moral values of his time; for Bond, succumbing is a key part of his identity, and this often reduces the agency of the women using sexual allure significantly.

Agency through challenge

Where sexual allure alone is insufficient to derail a hero's quest, seductresses employ an additional weapon from their arsenal, and turn to challenging a hero's renown. Having had a degree of success the previous day, evidenced by the kiss Gawain presents to her husband, Lady Bertilak returns to Gawain's bedside when hunting resumes the next morning and seats herself next to him. 'Pinning Gawain to his bed, the lady's game takes on much more serious overtones' (Turville-Petre, 2007:184). Fully aware of his reputation and irritated by his resistance to her wooing, she adopts a new strategy and calls his identity into question - '"Sir, ȝif ȝe be Wawen, wonder me þynkkeȝ"' (1481) ["Sir, if you really are Gawain, it seems strange to me"] (Barron, 2001:111) - before reminding him about her lesson in kissing.

“ȝet I kende yow of kyssyng,” quoþ þe clere þenne,

“Quere-so countenaunce is couþe quikly to clayme;

Þat bicumes vche a kynyȝt þat cortaysy vses.” (ll.1489-1491)

[“And yet I taught you about kissing,” replied the fair lady, “where a lady’s favour is manifest to claim it at once; it befits every knight who practices chivalry so to do."] (Barron, 2001:111).

Lady Bertilak here states that if a lady claims a favour, any chivalrous knight should immediately bestow it upon her. Gawain says he is wary of making an advance in case he is rebuffed, at which point she suggests that he is strong enough to compel her by force – ‘ȝe ar stif innoghe to constrayne wyth strenkþe, ȝif yow lykeȝ’ (1496) [“you are strong enough to compel by force, if you choose.”] (Barron, 2001:111). He dismisses the idea as not in-keeping with his moral code. Catherine Batt considers that Gawain’s reticence is frustrating to Lady Bertilak, especially as the reasons for it are unclear given the number of explanations he offers (1992:130). Gawain does however place himself at her disposal, but by restricting contact with her to ‘courteous forms’, he maintains his personal *clannes* and his *felaȝschyp* to her husband. ‘I am at your comaundement, to kysse quen yow lykeȝ; / ȝe may lach quen yow ylst, leue quen yow þynkkeȝ’ (ll.1501-1502) [I am at your disposal, to kiss when you desire; you may begin when you wish, and leave off as soon as you think fit] (Barron, 2001:111). The lady immediately leans down and kisses him; his resolution hardening, he passively receives the kiss, with David Mills noting that ‘responsibility for the situation is immediately laid upon the helpless and unwilling Gawain, seen here as a sleeping sentry’ (1968:613).

Romanova begins to question Connery’s Bond’s authority when they pose as man and wife while traveling on the Orient Express to Paris. As they have the decoder in their possession, Romanova wants them to eat in their carriage, but Bond decides that would not be appropriate.

Bond: “[…] I’ve arranged to meet Kerim in the restaurant car.”

Romanova: “You go alone. I will stay here.”

Bond: *sits up*. "My dear Mrs. Somerset", *he goes to stand and open the blind*, "we're supposed to be a respectable English couple. They would certainly have tea in the restaurant." *Romanova stands and faces Bond, he puts hands on her shoulders*. "Now, listen … Just do as I say will you?"

Romanova: "Yes, James." *He slaps her bottom*.

(*From Russia with Love* (1963) Directed by Terence Young [DVD]. United Artists).

At the time this film was made, the expected behaviour of a respectable English couple would be one of male dominance. Christine Berberich observes that '[…] [Bond's] behaviour is that of a condescending uncle talking down to a small child' (2012:20). During this scene, Bond makes physical contact with Romanova's shoulders and bottom. While he does not hurt her, it demonstrates his power in the interaction. Romanova achieves agency here not by initially challenging Bond's decision, but by immediately deferring to his superior position. In being submissive in order to achieve her objectives, she succeeds in keeping Bond interested and unthreatened. However, when Kerim, Bond's friend, is murdered on the train, Bond begins to suspect that Romanova is lying to him about not being connected to the killing and becomes violent.

Bond: "Liar." *He slaps her*.

Romanova: "Even if you kill me, I can say nothing. I did not know anything like Kerim's death would happen. But, when we get to England, I tell you."

Bond: "Go on. *Romanova puts her head on the bed in despair*. Tania maybe they didn't let you in on all of it, *he pulls her up*, but whatever you do know, tell me."

Romanova: "I know I love you, James. I love you."

Bond: "Just tell me."

Romanova: "I love you, I love you, it's true."

Bond: “Sure.”

Romanova is not an intentional *femme fatale*, therefore most of her power is defused (Barrett, in Funnell, ed. 2015:45). Unable to maintain the seductress role in this situation, Romanova instead adopts a damsel-in-distress persona; this appeals to Bond’s chivalry and his anger is dissipated. It is possible that she is aware of Bond’s emotional vulnerability following Kerim’s death and tries to exploit this by appearing desperate and dependent herself. Romanova’s increasingly helpless and submissive presentation makes Bond realise that further interrogation is pointless. Bond’s reply to Romanova saying she loves him for the third and fourth time is laced with resignation; her new-found agency as damsel-in-distress has closed the conversation down. Romanova does not inhabit the seductress mantle from this point on in the film, but her switch of allegiance is evidenced when she saves Bond’s life. When a disguised Klebb enters their hotel room, Romanova recognises her and is warned not to alert Bond, who is taking a telephone call, to Klebb’s presence. She chooses not to obey her orders to leave with the Lektor while Bond is eliminated. Instead, she knocks the gun from Klebb’s hand and watches as Bond tussles with Klebb, attempting to avoid the blade attached to Klebb’s shoe. Romanova picks up the gun, but seems hesitant to kill Klebb in spite of the fact Bond is in danger. After a moment’s deliberation, she finds the courage to shoot Klebb, but is visibly shaking while doing so. This is one of the very few occasions where a Bond villain is killed by a woman, which should make Romanova seem powerful. However, her initial apprehension, combined with the manner in which she takes the shot, shows weakness. Romanova has effectively been ‘redeemed’, putting Bond’s safety ahead of her patriotic duty and training. Redemption describes a woman’s change of allegiance, from East to West or simply from bad to good, following a sexual liaison with Bond (see p.6 above). Romanova’s agency is completely negated in the film’s final scene, when she and Bond are shown in a gondola on a Venetian canal surrounded by onlookers. She removes the wedding ring used for their deception and hands it back to Bond.

Romanova: “Here you are. In case you ever need it again.”

Bond: *pockets the ring*. “Oh, yes. All government property has to be accounted for. But as I said before, we won’t always work on company’s time, will we?” *He snuggles with her*.

Romanova: “No. James, behave yourself. We are being filmed.”

Bond: “Oh, not again.” *He produces a roll of film from his pocket*.

Romanova: “What is it?”

Bond: “I’ll show you.”

They move below the camera, Bond throws the roll of film into the river.
(*From Russia with love* (1963) Directed by Terence Young [DVD]. United Artists).

This final scene happens after Romanova has defected and Thomas Barrett explains that as Bond’s conquest, she is safe for the West (in Brittany, ed. 2014:83). The context of her liaison with Bond here serves a specific purpose; Romanova is ‘repositioned’ by Bond ‘putting her back into place beneath him (both literally and metaphorically)’ (Bennett & Woollacott, 1987:116). Romanova is realigned both sexually and in terms of her political ideology.

Frost, the blonde agent who has been assigned by MI6 to examine the activities of Graves, is in reality a double agent working for Graves, and Brosnan’s Bond is appointed to join her investigation when progress slows unacceptably. Frost is vehemently against the idea, allegedly because she believes Bond’s womanising reputation precedes him and that his volatility could blow her cover.

M: “[…] tell me what you know of James Bond.”

Frost: “He’s a double-0. *She sits at M’s desk*. And a wild one, as I discovered today. He’ll light fuses on any explosive situation and be a danger to himself and others. Kill first, ask questions later. He’s a blunt instrument whose primary method is to provoke and confront. A man nobody can get close to. A womaniser.”

M: “Well, you’re going to be seeing a lot more of him in Iceland.”

(*Die Another Day* (2002) Directed by Lee Tamahori [DVD]. 20th Century Fox).

Wary of maintaining her allegiance to Graves, Frost is apprehensive about being assigned on a mission with Bond because she knows his reputation. 'Bond often sleeps with women who are his enemies as well as allies; either way, his lovers often end up dead, leaving him free to pursue further sexual encounters' (Rushton, in Hopkins & Rushton, ed. 2007:27). While Frost is presented as the traditional Bond girl in terms of her physical depiction, her damning indictment of him suggests that she might be more immune than most to his advances.

Frost: "With great respect, a man like him could blow my cover."

M: "Miss Frost, you volunteered for this, but in three months you've turned up next to nothing."

Frost: "Graves seems to be clean."

M: "Well, Bond seems to think differently, so I'm going to let him do what you so ably described – mix things up a little with Mr. Graves. And with you there, things won't be able to get out of hand. In your three years in Cryptology, you've kept business and pleasure separate. You haven't fraternised with any of your fellow agents despite several advances."

Frost: "I think it would be foolish to get involved with someone within the community. Especially James Bond."

While it is unclear to audiences at this stage of the film, Frost is trying to remove Bond from the mission because he will expose the fact that she is working with Graves. Her comments about Bond's reckless behaviour are intended to justify her intentions. M is more focused on Frost's lack of progress and insists she has to co-operate with Bond, highlighting her lack of fraternisation with colleagues as a useful trait in establishing an entirely professional relationship with Bond in Iceland. Although Frost has little agency in influencing M's decision, what M is unaware of is that Frost is highly likely to seduce Bond, or allow herself to be seduced if it furthers Graves' ambitions. Frost, like Romanova, is working to derail Bond, but opts to prolong the agency that the seductress role provides and when they meet for the first time, in a departure from the approach of either Lady Bertilak or Romanova, her response to him is underwhelming.

Bond: “Can I expect the pleasure of you in Iceland?”

Frost: “I’m afraid you’ll never have that pleasure, Mr. Bond.”

She walks away, he looks confused.

(*Die Another Day* (2002) Directed by Lee Tamahori [DVD]. 20th Century Fox).

Bond appears bewildered by Frost’s blunt rejection of him, using wording that has strong sexual overtones. ‘Pleasure’ could be interpreted two ways: either it is a pleasantry or it reflects his expectation of having sexual relations with her. Frost’s rebuttal of Bond’s *double entendre* is likely to be seen as a challenge to his sexual reputation rather than a frank refusal and is likely to increase her agency. Frost wants to pique his interest to ensure that she is able to achieve her objectives before succumbing to his advances, and Bond inevitably rises to her challenge.

In *Casino Royale*, Daniel Craig’s Bond, praised by critics as rougher and sexier than his predecessors (Tremonte & Racioppi, in Lindner, ed. 2009:185), meets a challenging seductress in Lynd, an extremely attractive dark-haired treasurer working for the United Kingdom government. She is assigned to accompany Bond with the funds for a high-stakes poker game, run by Le Chiffre, a criminal moneyman. Though she does not reveal this to Bond, Lynd wants him to win the game so she can use her position to steal the winnings and pay a ransom to free her boyfriend, who has been kidnapped by Le Chiffre’s organisation. ‘The characterisation of Vesper Lynd […] is more rounded than in the book: here she becomes a Treasury agent (“I’m the money”) and is assigned a more significant role in terms of narrative agency than Fleming’s rather two-dimensional character’ (Chapman, 2007:247). Lynd has high levels of agency throughout the film and indeed her initial reaction to Bond is largely dismissive of his reputation and attempts at seduction. Given her ulterior motives, this appears to be a calculated strategy to heighten his interest; her sexual allure lies as much in her intelligence and independence as it does in her physical appearance. When they first meet, Bond and Lynd have dinner aboard a train heading into Montenegro for the poker game. Bond jokes and partakes in small talk, but Lynd appears unwilling to engage in conversation, unless mission related.

Bond is passed a menu, and thanks the waiter; Lynd arrives.

Lynd: *smiling*. “I’m the money.”

Bond: “Every penny of it.”

Lynd: “The Treasury has agreed to stake you in the game.” *She slides over her business card*.

Bond: “Vesper. Well I do hope you gave your parents hell for that.”

Lynd: “Your boss must be well-connected. *She Looks at menu*. I’ve never seen so much go out the door so quickly.”

Bond: *smiles*. “Or quite so stylishly. *He Sips his drink, she smiles*. May I ask you where it is?”

Lynd: *employing a professional tone*. “Ten million was wired to your account in Montenegro, *looking at him*, with a contingency for 5 more if I deem it a prudent investment. I suppose you’ve given some thought to the notion that if you lose … our government will have directly financed terrorism? *He looks back at menu*. What looks good?”

(*Casino Royale* (2006) Directed by Martin Campbell [DVD]. MGM).

In this initial interaction there is a distinct lack of innuendo between Bond and Lynd. Bond’s tone is friendly and flattering, whereas Lynd’s is strictly professional. Her comments are purely factual, focusing on the mission rather than on any personal interest in him. She even deflects a humorous observation by him regarding her name. At this stage, Lynd appears to have more agency than Bond and he is only able to ascertain information from her, rather than create the more personal connection he seeks. Lynd’s physical appearance enables her to fulfil the role of Bond girl, even as she remains immune to Bond’s seductive charm. Her attractiveness is in part due to the fact that she remains focused on her long-term goal, and prolongs their ‘courtship’ by way of fulfilling these long-term objectives. Although over six hundred years apart, Lynd’s ability to exploit ‘courting etiquette’ mirrors that of Lady Bertilak’s, and both women are able to hold the upper hand in their seductive encounters. Appearing at Gawain’s bedside early in the morning after her husband has left to hunt, Lady Bertilak disconcerts the knight and he attempts to defuse the situation with humour (ll.1208-1217). He says he would be more comfortable talking with her if he was dressed; aware that she holds

all the cards in the exchange, she simply tells him that she has a better plan for him. 'I schal happe yow here þat oþer half als, / And syþen karp wyth my knyȝt þat I kaȝt haue' (ll.1224-1225) [I shall tuck you in here on the other side as well, and then converse with my knight who I have caught] (Barron, 2001:97). Lady Bertilak and Lynd both challenge the reputations of their prey, but from opposite perspectives; the former trying to appeal to a womaniser's reputation and the latter desperate to avoid it. In *Casino Royale*, Bond continues probing for any vulnerability in Lynd's defences:

> Bond: "[…] Well, your beauty's your problem. You worry you won't be taken seriously."
>
> Lynd: "Which one can say of any attractive woman with half a brain."
>
> (*Casino Royale* (2006) Directed by Martin Campbell [DVD]. MGM).

Lynd retains the agency in their initial interaction and her ability to remain in control becomes something of an enigma to Bond. No matter how short or long the pursuit, the relationship between Bond and his Bond girl must be consummated and he resorts to basic psychoanalysis to try and breach her defences.

> Bond: "True, but this one overcompensates … by wearing slightly masculine clothing … being more aggressive than her female colleagues … which gives her a somewhat prickly demeanour … and ironically enough, makes it less likely for her to be accepted … and promoted by her male superiors […]"
>
> Lynd: *smiles*. "All right. By the cut of your suit, you went to Oxford or wherever … and actually think human beings dress like that. But you wear it with such disdain … my guess is you didn't come from money … and your school friends never let you forget it. Which means you were at that school by the grace … of someone else's charity, hence the chip on your shoulder. And since your first thought about me ran to orphan … that's what I'd say you are. *She leans forward*. Oh, you are. *She laughs*. I like this poker thing."

Lynd's instantaneous counter analysis of Bond's psyche highlights her intelligence, and her repartee undermines Bond's usual debonair style by making him

seem to be something of a caricature. She seems to relish the agency the exchange gives her and, as James Chapman notes, 'In line with the strategy of the Brosnan films to address Bond's sexism through the agency of female authority figures, a Fleming line ("women were for recreation") here becomes a point made by Vesper herself to Bond' (2009:247-248).

> Lynd: "[…] Now, having just met you … I wouldn't go as far as calling you a cold-hearted bastard."
>
> Bond: "No, of course not."
>
> Lynd: "But it wouldn't be a stretch to imagine. You think of women as disposable pleasure … rather than meaningful pursuits. So as charming as you are Mr. Bond … I will be keeping my eye on our government's money … and off your perfectly formed arse."
>
> Bond: "You noticed?"
>
> Lynd: "Even accountants have imagination. How was your lamb?"
>
> Bond: "Skewered. One sympathises."
>
> Lynd: "Good evening, Mr. Bond."
>
> Bond: "Good evening, Miss. Lynd." *She leaves*.
>
> (*Casino Royale* (2006) Directed by Martin Campbell [DVD]. MGM).

Lynd's remark about Bond's bottom is significant because it hints to him that in spite of her coolness, she finds him physically attractive. Tony Garland notes that Lynd has '[…] a combination of sexual interest in and active resistance to Bond' (2009:186). In their final exchange of the evening, Bond compares his fate at her hands to that of the lamb, both of which are skewered, the lamb literally and Bond metaphorically. The audience, however, remains oblivious to Lynd's true intentions until after her death towards the end of the film; a sentence or two of explanation from M to Bond in a telephone call is the only reference to Lynd's personal mission. The 'throw away' treatment of the most important aspect of her persona seems dismissive of her instrumental involvement in the plot. This apparently deliberate undermining of female

agency reflects that of enchantress Morgan le Fay, whose orchestration of the plot against Gawain, the product of her traditional enmity towards Arthur's court, is only revealed by Lord Bertilak in the closing lines of *Sir Gawain*.

On the second day of the hunting game in *Sir Gawain*, Lady Bertilak extends her range of hunting techniques and her efforts parallel those of her husband in pursuit of a boar that is proving to be an equally formidable adversary. Firstly, she praises Gawain's qualities and expertise: '"I woled wyt at yow, wyȝe,"' (1508) ["I have wanted to learn from you, sir,"] (Barron, 2001:113), then goes on to suggest that he considers her unworthy of his attention: '"Why! ar ȝe lewed, þat alle þe los weldeȝ, / Oþer elles ȝe demen me to dille your dalyaunce to herken?"' (1528-1529) [What! are you, who enjoy such a reputation, so ignorant, or is that you consider me too stupid to appreciate your courtly conversation?] (Barron, 2001:113), and finally asks him: '"Dos techeȝ me of your wytte, / Whil my lorde is fro hame"' (1533-1534) [Do teach me some of your love-lore, while my husband is away from home] (Barron, 2001:113). Gawain skilfully deflects her advances and she eventually kisses him again and takes her leave. 'Þay laȝed and layked longe; / At þe last scho con hym kysse,' (1554-1555) [They laughed and amused themselves for a long time; in the end she kissed him] (Barron, 2001:113). Gawain is presented with the boar's head at dinner for which he gives two kisses to the lord, before employing sensitivity and courtesy to defend himself from Lady Bertilak's incessant courting throughout the meal.

In *Die Another Day*, Bond, Frost, and Jinx adopt disparate seductive strategies; they are sent to an ice palace where Graves is demonstrating his new laser, and Frost accompanies Bond to a restricted area at the palace to investigate Graves' nefarious plans. In an alleged attempt to stop the guards from becoming suspicious of their behaviour, Frost grabs Bond and kisses him unexpectedly.

> Bond: *looking at suspicious guards in the distance*. "They don't look too convinced. Come on. Put your back into it, eh?" *They kiss*.
>
> Frost: "I know all about you, 007. Sex for dinner, death for breakfast. It won't work with me. *He looks at her inquisitively*. No." *They kiss*.
>
> Bond: "You're getting good at this."

Frost: “Oh, stop it. Are we still being watched?”

Bond: “Oh, they left ages ago.”

Frost: “Oh, God, you’re impossible.” *She shrugs him off*.

(*Die Another Day* (2002) Directed by Lee Tamahori [DVD]. 20th Century Fox).

It is significant that Bond is caught by surprise when Frost kisses him, as he is usually the instigator. This subversion of expectations is not the only one seen in this film; Jeremy Black observes that Frost is unusual given that she is a villainous but also blonde woman (2017:169). In the Bond franchise, blonde women tend to be allied with Bond, and Frost’s appearance could deceive viewers into believing that she is on Bond’s side. Bond also experiences problems with Frost as her behaviour is so dramatically different to those of the archetypal Bond girl. She seems to become increasingly irritated by him rather than warming to him; this may be a precursor to Frost’s betrayal of him later in the film.

Lynd is equally annoyed by Bond’s misogynistic attempt at humour in *Casino Royale* when he suggests her undercover alias as Miss. Stephanie Broadchest. This name is undoubtedly a reference to the sexual innuendo in previous Bond girls’ names, for example Pussy Galore (*Goldfinger*, 1964), and Dr. Holly Goodhead (*Moonraker*, 1979), and Lynd greets it with displeasure, before making it clear that she will define the nature of their relationship, undercover or otherwise.

Bond: “We’ve been involved for quite a while … hence the shared suite.”

Lynd: “But my family is strict Roman Catholic … so for appearances’ sake, it’ll be a two-bedroom suite.”

Bond: “I do hate it when religion comes between us.”

Lynd: “Religion and a securely looked door. Am I going to have a problem with you, Bond?

Bond: “No, *turning away from her*, don’t worry. You’re not my type.”

Lynd: “Smart?”

Bond: “Single.”

(*Casino Royale* (2006) Directed by Martin Campbell [DVD]. MGM).

Bond tries to suggest that to carry out the deception they would need to share a bed, but Lynd improvises better than he does and is able to redefine the limits of their relationship without actually challenging audience expectations. Bond explicitly states that he usually pursues attached women, which would certainly fit with the transient nature of his relationships. Ironically, Lynd is not actually single, with a hidden agenda focused on freeing her captive boyfriend. In spite of Bond’s best efforts, her agency remains high, even as Bond, when arriving at the hotel, gives his real name to the receptionist as well as Lynd’s role within the Treasury. She remains silent but her anger is obvious and emphasised when she throws a pen at the desk. Bond walks away from the reception desk and towards a lift, where Lynd is waiting.

They are facing each other.

Lynd: “Very funny.”

Bond: “Look, if Le Chiffre is that well-connected … he knows who I am and where the money’s from. Which means he’s decided to play me anyway. So he’s either desperate or he’s overly confident … but either way, that tells me something about him. And all he gets in return is a name he already has.”

Lynd: “And now he knows something about you. *The lift arrives*. He knows you’re reckless. Take the next one. There isn’t enough room for me and your ego.” *She goes up in the lift; he smiles*.

Lynd’s anger at Bond’s failure to consult her before making mission-critical decisions is perfectly justifiable, given that it undermines her agency as a fellow professional. This is not only disrespectful towards her but seems reckless from Lynd’s point of view and she chooses to remove herself from the situation. Bond’s smile suggests that he has achieved his objective in eliciting an emotional reaction from her. *Casino Royale* also highlights Lynd’s agency when she exchanges gifts with Bond in their hotel suite. Lynd is in her bathroom getting ready to attend the poker game when Bond knocks on her door.

Lynd: “Yes?”

Bond: *holding a dress*. “For you.” *He hangs it on the back of the door and leaves*.

Lynd: “Something you expect me to wear?”

Bond: *comes back in*. “I need you looking fabulous. So when you walk up behind me and kiss me on the neck … the players will be thinking about your neckline … and not about their cards. Do you think you can do that for me?”

Lynd: “I’ll do my best.”

Bond: “Thank you.”

Bond has chosen Lynd’s outfit to ensure her best attributes are on show and although his rationale is perfectly valid, in that the players will be distracted by her beauty, Lynd does not want to be objectified. Shortly after this he finds a suit carrier on his bed and returns to Lynd’s bathroom to ask about it.

Bond: *slightly annoyed, and holding up the suit*. “I have a dinner jacket.”

Lynd: “There are dinner jackets and there are dinner jackets. This is the latter. And I need you looking like a man who belongs at that table.”

Bond: “How? … It’s tailored.”

Lynd: “I sized you up the moment we met.”

Interestingly, Bond seems to feel justified in deciding what Lynd wears, but when the roles are reversed he seems unnerved. It is also significant that she mirrors his logic for picking an appropriate outfit. The last sentence spoken by Lynd could be interpreted in two ways. It could suggest that she has correctly guessed physical measurements for Bond, which would have required close scrutiny. Or, more likely, she is commenting figuratively on her ability to judge Bond’s character. Bond goes down to the casino and arrives in the special room for the poker game. The poker players meet and the rules are discussed; Lynd appears a little later and kisses Bond on the cheek.

Bond: *whispering to her*. "Weren't you supposed to enter so the others could see you?"

Lynd: *whispers*. "Was I? Forgive me, *spoken loudly*, Good luck, darling."

Lynd walks towards MI6 agent, Mathis who is at the bar, far away from the table.

Lynd: *to Mathis*. "Hello."

Mathis: "I suppose I don't have to tell you how beautiful you look. Half the people at that table are still watching you. *To bartender*. Champagne."

Even when Bond is able to gain a semblance of control over Lynd, she derails him by deliberately misunderstanding his instructions. In spite of this, she is still able to achieve the desired aim, with many of the players and Mathis appreciative of her beauty. Bond attempts to deploy Lynd in a way that will attract the male gaze; she achieves this objective effortlessly and independently of his control. The relationship between Bond and Lynd is complicated by her secret agenda; she must display enough agency to ensure she remains at a distance from him, but without alienating him. Following an early defeat in the poker game, Bond joins Lynd and Mathis at the bar.

Bond: *kisses Lynd*. "You taste nice."

Lynd: "I thought we dispensed with covers."

Bond: "No. We dispensed with one that was of no use and created another that is. *To Mathis* Is he, *Le Chiffre*, watching?"

Mathis: "Yes, he is."

Bond tries to kiss Lynd again but she pulls away.

Lynd: "This is me in character pissed off because you're losing so fast … we won't be here past midnight. Oddly, my character's feelings mirror my own."

(*Casino Royale* (2006) Directed by Martin Campbell [DVD]. MGM).

Comparisons can be made between this kiss and that between Bond and Frost in *Die Another Day*. Lynd and Frost find agency by adopting a 'hard to get' approach, but

using different methods and for different reasons. Lynd wants to avoid intimacy with Bond while securing the funds to free her boyfriend, while Frost wants to seduce Bond to aid Graves but without revealing her status as a double agent. Unlike Frost, Lynd is not a spy and has a personal investment in the mission. Lynd pulls away when Bond tries to kiss her at a point where they are no longer undercover as a couple, unmoved by Bond's assertion that there is a new plan in place. Comparable to Lady Bertilak in her initial exchanges with Gawain, Lynd finds her agency challenged by male unpredictability. Where Gawain behaves with unexpected and unwanted courtesy, Bond acts with reckless unprofessionalism. Although their situations are obviously very different, both women need to find a strategy that allows them to regain control. Lady Bertilak channels her irritation into questioning Gawain's identity, whereas Lynd makes it clear that she will not co-operate with Bond unless he treats her as an equal.

Collecting his gun from the reception desk after losing the first poker game, Bond escorts Lynd back to their suite. When they arrive on their floor, a commotion is occurring in Le Chiffre's room and Bond tells Lynd to go to their suite while he deals with the situation. However, the men spot Bond and hand-to-hand combat ensues; Lynd remains a bystander until the final moments when she follows Bond's instructions in order to disarm the man fighting with him. Aware that this is a life or death situation, Lynd allows Bond to take control, and achieves significant agency in saving his life. Bond then returns to the poker table and finishes the session before going back to Lynd's room. She appears traumatised by earlier events and is sitting fully-clothed in the shower while it is running; Bond sits beside her as she cries and she grips his arm.

Lynd: "It's like there's blood on my hands, *speaking quickly*, It's not coming off." *Bond reaches for her hand*.

Bond: "Here, let me see. *He sucks her fingers*. That's better. You cold?" *She timidly nods*.

Lynd: "Yeah."

Bond: "Here." *He puts his arm around her, and turns the temperature up*.

(*Casino Royale* (2006) Directed by Martin Campbell [DVD]. MGM).

Having encountered a situation outside her experience, Lynd is obviously distressed and adopts a damsel-in-distress persona, allowing Bond to provide emotional support. This strategy increases her agency because it enables her immediate needs to be met without compromising her overall objectives. Becoming a 'damsel' enables Lynd to temporarily give Bond the opportunity to be chivalrous and protective while she regains her composure. Bond then returns to the poker table and loses heavily; he tells Lynd he wishes to use the remaining funds from the Treasury for another buy in, but she is unwilling to sanction this.

Bond: "Well, I'm gonna need the other 5 million to buy back in."

Lynd: "I can't do that, James."

Bond: "Look, I made a mistake. I was impatient, maybe I was arrogant, but I can beat him."

Lynd: "I'm sorry."

Bond: "Sorry, *grabbing her arm*, Sorry? Why don't you try putting that in a sentence? Like maybe Sorry Le Chiffre's gonna win … continue funding terror and killing. That kind of sorry?"

Lynd: "You lost because of your ego, and that same ego can't take it. That's what this is about. All you're going to do now is lose more."

Bond: *mumbles*. "Then you're an idiot."

Lynd: "I'm sorry?"

Bond: "I said, you're a bloody idiot. *Calmer tone*, look in my eyes. I can beat this man you know that."

Lynd: "Get your hand off my arm." *He lets go; she walks back inside*.

'Bond's arrogance may be seen as his reaction to the emasculation of his authority and the questioning of his expertise, especially when Vesper refuses to release further funds […] which prompts his only angry outburst in the film' (Chapman, 2007:248). Lynd is no longer a 'damsel' and is happy to challenge Bond; when she rejects

his request, he becomes increasingly aggressive, even grabbing her arm. Interestingly, when she tells him to let go of her arm, he consents immediately. This can be contrasted with the aggression Bond uses with Romanova in *From Russia with love* (1963) when he thinks she has orchestrated Bey's murder. In spite of Bond's insistence that he can win the game, Lynd remains defiant and shows considerable agency in not changing her decision. After threatening to shoot Le Chiffre, Bond acquires the funds from CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) agent Felix Leiter, but, retaking his seat at the table, is given a poisoned drink by Le Chiffre's girlfriend. Having run out to his car and contacted MI6, Bond is given instructions on how to use the defibrillator in the vehicle. However, a loose connection means that it fails to work and only Lynd's quick action in reconnecting it saves Bond's life.

Bond: "You okay?"

Lynd: "Me?"

Bond: "Thank you."

Doctor, *on intercom*: "You're welcome. Now get yourself off to a hospital."

Bond: "I will do. As soon as I've won this game."

Lynd: "You're not seriously going back there."

Bond: "I wouldn't dream of it." *He walks back into the casino room*.

(*Casino Royale* (2006) Directed by Martin Campbell [DVD]. MGM).

The women we've explored all challenge the expectations of both audiences or readers, and the male protagonists, achieving agency through this.

Agency through deception

The third type of agency seductresses achieve in Bond and medieval romance, is by employing deception alongside sexual allure, to not only distract the hero from his mission, but also from their underlying objectives. Following the conferring of two kisses onto Lord Bertilak, in a private after dinner meeting with Gawain, his host tells him that he has proven trustworthy in each of their exchanges under the terms of their

agreement. The lord then declares that “þrid tyme þrowe best” (l.1680) [“third time pays for all”] (Barron, 2001:121), which foreshadows the fact that Gawain will face one final temptation at the hands of Lady Bertilak. Her sexually aggressive approach has borne dividends and, confident that his wife’s attentions are wearing down Gawain’s resistance, Lord Bertilak dissuades him from leaving a day early and heads out on another hunt. Gawain is sleeping when Lady Bertilak returns to his room that morning; she is clearly described as being committed to her cause. ‘Bot þe lady, for luf, let not to sleþe, / Ne þe purpose to payre þat pyȝt in hir hert’ (ll.1733-1734) [But the lady, for love’s sake, did not allow herself to sleep, nor the purpose that was rooted in her heart to weaken] (Barron, 2001:123;125). Keen to maintain her agency, she determines not to let her purpose weaken and wears far more revealing clothing than she had worn on their previous two encounters: ‘Hir þryuen face and hir þrote þrowen al naked, / Hir brest bare bifore, and bihinde eke’ (ll.1740-1741) [Her fair face and throat were laid quite bare, her breast and back as well were both exposed] (Barron, 2001:125).

With her face and throat laid bare and her breast and back exposed, Gawain awakens from a deep and troubled sleep to be greeted by a very alluring woman. Lady Bertilak kisses him and then engages him in flirtatious conversation to the point where he almost succumbs to her advances.

> For þat prynces of pris depresed hym so þikke,
>
> Nurned hym so neȝe þe þred, þat nede hym bihoued
>
> Oþer lach þer hir luf, oþer lodly refuse. (ll.1770-1772).
>
> [For that noble princess pressed him so hard, urged him so near the limit, that he must needs either accept her love there and then, or refuse offensively.] (Barron, 2001:127)

Finally conceding that Gawain will not be seduced, Lady Bertilak kisses him again and moves to leave, only to pause and request a gift from him that she can keep as a memento. As Gawain has no servants or belongings with him, he is unable to oblige, and so the lady changes tack and offers him several of her possessions. Weakened and vulnerable following several days of unwanted attention, Gawain eventually accepts her green girdle when she claims that its magical properties would protect him in a fight

with any man. An important condition attached to this gift is a promise not to reveal it to Lord Bertilak.

> And ho bere on hym þe belt and bede hit hym swyþe -
>
> And he granted, and hym gafe with a goud wylle -
>
> And bisoȝt hym, for hir sake, disceuer hit neuer,
>
> Bot to lelly layne fro hir lorde […]. (ll.1860-1863).
>
> [And she pressed the belt upon him and offered it to him urgently – and he consented and surrendered very willingly – and she begged him, for her sake, never to reveal it, but loyally to keep it from her husband.] (Barron, 2001:131).

Elspeth Kennedy notes that a crucial aspect of Arthurian romance is the ability to complete a quest (1991:16). Many of these required almost superhuman abilities and Gawain's desire to act heroically in his duel with the Green Knight was a weakness that Lady Bertilak could exploit more easily than his womanising reputation. Gawain significantly chooses not to exchange the girdle, along with his three kisses, for the Lord's hunting gains that evening; by not declaring the gift, Gawain unwittingly aids Morgan le Fay's plan to belittle the renown of King Arthur's court. At this point, Lady Bertilak has succeeded in her mission, her agency has persuaded Gawain to adopt unchivalrous behaviour that would have been unthinkable when he first arrived at their castle. He has placed *cortaysye* to the lady above *felaȝschyp* to the lord, and although he claims to have been made clean of all sin by making confession before facing the Green Knight (ll.1876-1884), he cannot in reality receive absolution as he is unable to make restitution by returning the girdle. By hiding it, he compromises his *trawþe* by breaching both *fraunchyse* – the girdle is Lord Bertilak's by virtue of the game – and *pité*, by having made a false confession. Interestingly, at the same time as the girdle is being hidden, the fox, after avoiding capture all day, sees Lord Bertilak on the path in front of it and steps back into the jaws of the hounds.

On the final morning, when Gawain is re-armoured, he ties the green girdle around his surcoat, significantly obscuring the pentangle and the moral code it embodies, and sets out for the Green Chapel. The guide tasked with showing Gawain the way to the Chapel tries to frighten him with tales of the Green Knight and offers to conceal his

escape if he so wishes. Back in familiar territory, Gawain vehemently refuses and seeks out his opponent. Having resisted temptation from Lady Bertilak on the first two days, the first two blows from the Green Knight's axe are feints and do not touch Gawain; the third, however, makes a small nick on his neck. 'Recognizing the similarity between the Green Knight's strokes and the knighting accolade […] enables us to make the correct judgment on Gawain's flawed excellence at the end of the poem.' (Weiss, 1978:183). The Green Knight is then revealed to be Lord Bertilak:

> "For hit is my wede þat þou wereȝ, þat ilke wouen girdel;
>
> Myn own wyf hit þe weued, I wot wel for soþe.
>
> Now know I wel þy cosses and þy costes als,
>
> And þe wowyng of my wyf; I wroȝt hit myseluen." (ll.2358-2361).
>
> ["For it is my garment you are wearing, that woven girdle there; I know for certain my own wife gave it to you. Moreover, I know all about your kisses and your conduct too, and my wife's wooing of you; I myself brought it about."] (Barron, 2001:157).

Gawain's minor injury happened because he withheld the girdle and he throws it back at Lord Bertilak. Being a courtly knight, he should have refused it, but Lady Bertilak's incessant courting left him not only susceptible to deception but also to injury. Gawain confesses his wrongdoing again to Lord Bertilak, who absolves him and, impressed by Gawain's courage, gives him the girdle as a souvenir, for which he is lauded on his return to Camelot. Catherine Cox notes that the girdle given to Gawain serves as a 'material manifestation of Gawain's desire' (2001:384). Therefore, although the green girdle is adopted by the court as a sign of honour, Gawain is mortified that his weakness in accepting and concealing the gift sullies his achievement in defeating the Green Knight. Gawain has clearly been controlled by his emotional urges rather than his rational thought. Comparisons can be drawn between Lady Bertilak's girdle and the roll of film that is thrown from the gondola in *From Russia with Love* (1963); both are manifestations of ungentlemanly behaviour. While Lady Bertilak is not present at the green chapel, she is still able to exhibit agency through her manipulation of him. However, in spite of this and of her centrality to the plot, the agency of Lady Bertilak

remains conditional and her role secondary to that of the male characters. In medieval romance, 'women often figure significantly not so much for their own sakes, but in order to become involved in the construction (and at times, the destruction) of men's chivalric identities.' (Fisher, in Kreuger, ed. 2000:151-152).

Like Lady Bertilak with Gawain, Frost exploits an inherent fear of failure in Brosnan's Bond by reminding him of an incident in North Korea where his patriotism and loyalty were called into question. In this way, she is able to distract him from her true agenda and lull him into a false sense of security. After believing that he has seduced her, Bond lowers his defences, which allows the double agent to strike when he is most vulnerable. Frost retains more agency than Romanova by resisting Bond's advances for longer and only succumbs in order to meet her own objectives. In this scene, Frost and Bond are walking towards the bed in Bond's room:

> Bond: "You better stay here tonight. Keep up the charade of being lovers."
>
> Frost: "All right. […] *They take off their clothes*. The way you're going, you'll get us both killed. *She gets into bed*. James, tell me what really happened in North Korea."
>
> Bond: *unloads his gun*. "I was betrayed. That was all. *He puts the gun under his pillow and gets into bed*. Occupational hazard." *He puts his left hand gently on the right side of her face and they kiss*.
>
> (*Die Another Day* (2002) Directed by Lee Tamahori [DVD]. 20th Century Fox).

Although Frost has remained somewhat dispassionate in earlier scenes, she is more willing than Lynd to adhere to the undercover identity Bond creates for her in this film as it suits her best interests. She feigns interest in what happened to Bond in North Korea and accepts his refusal to talk about it with ease, as in reality she knows who was responsible. Frost then pretends to show concern and affection when Bond is about to depart to investigate the area they saw earlier in the day.

> Frost: "James. *She reaches for Bond's gun*. Be careful." *She passes the gun to Bond*.

Bond: *tucks the gun into the back of his trousers*. "Go back to your own room. I'll come back for you."

In this scene, there is nothing in Frost's behaviour that would make Bond suspicious; women frequently adopt a vulnerable manner when they are with him. Bond perceives Frost's actions to be genuine, but in reality she is manipulating him. Her performance is credible enough to make him believe that she is weak and dependent. In this scene, Frost plays a similar role to that of Lady Bertilak in claiming to be concerned with the hero's welfare. Confronting Graves, Bond is joined by Frost who points her gun at the villain, before turning it on Bond. Not only has she removed the bullets from his gun, she also reveals that she was the one who betrayed him in North Korea. Frost has been operating as a double agent ever since this initial betrayal, and her agency reaches its peak at this point.

Graves: "You see, I have a gift. An instinct for sensing people's weaknesses. *Zao arrives*. Yours is women. Hers and mine is winning whatever the cost. […] I won myself my very own MI6 agent, using everything at my disposal – her brains, her talent, even her sex."

Bond: "The coldest weapon of all."

Linda Racioppi and Colleen Tremonte refer to Frost as Graves' '[…] cold-blooded sidekick' (2014:22) and their view of Frost is certainly accurate, with her name potentially symbolising her 'frosty' demeanour towards Bond. While Racioppi and Tremonte here write with reference to Fleming's novel, the same motifs are depicted in the films; 'The contrast between Jinx (warm, friendly, sexually available) and Miranda (cool, reserved, initially resistant) can also be seen as an under-developed "fire and ice" motif within the film […]' (Chapman, 2007:239). Before Frost can shoot Bond, he activates a device in his ring which shatters the glass floor and he escapes. Frost and Zao corner Jinx, who kicks Zao in the face, but then negates any agency she has gained through this action by taking part in a petty squabble with Frost about whom Bond prefers. Interestingly, Zao remains silent throughout this conservation which reduces the power and credibility of both women.

Frost: "Oh, nice moves. Just like Bond's. He was pretty vigorous last night as well."

Jinx: *laughs*. "He did you? I didn't know he was that desperate."

Frost: "Well, he won't be coming back for you. He just died, running, trying to save his own skin. *Frost tries to touch Jinx; she is pushed away*. That's pretty good tailoring. *Talking about Jinx's outfit*. I hope it doesn't shrink when it gets wet." *Jinx is locked in the room*.

Bond rescues Jinx from the room which has filled with freezing water and they confront Graves and Frost as they attempt to flee on his plane. In parallel scenes, Bond fights with and kills Graves, as Jinx simultaneously kills Frost. In maintaining her allegiance to the villain, Frost signs her own death warrant; she does not fulfil any of the conditions required for a Bond girl and seductress to survive. Jinx experiences a very different fate:

The outside of a hut is in shot.

Jinx: "Wait. Don't pull it out. I'm not finished with it yet."

Camera switches to the interior.

Bond: "See? It's a perfect fit."

Jinx: "Leave it in."

Bond: "Well, it's gotta come out sooner or later."

Jinx: "No, leave it in, please. A few more minutes."

It is revealed that they are talking about a diamond in Jinx's navel.

Bond: "We really must give these back," *referring to the diamonds*.

Jinx: "Still the good guys, huh?"

Bond: "I'm still not quite sure … how good you are." *They kiss*.

Jinx: "I am so good."

Bond: "Especially when you're bad." *They make love, she laughs*.

(*Die Another Day* (2002) Directed by Lee Tamahori [DVD]. 20th Century Fox).

Jinx needs no 'redemption' (see p.6 above) as she is an ally, allowing her to have a consensual relationship with Bond at the end of the film. Her persona facilitates the simultaneous maintenance of her agency and his reputation.

In *Casino Royale*, Lynd has reached a critical point in her mission; having saved Craig's Bond's life and witnessed him winning the poker game against Le Chiffre, she joins him for a celebratory meal in the hotel restaurant.

Bond: "You know what I think I'll call that (his drink) a Vesper."

Lynd: "Because of my bitter aftertaste?"

Bond: "No. Because once you've tasted it, that's all you want to drink. *She laughs*. I thought it was quite a good line."

Lynd: "It was a very good line."

Bond: "But you're laughing at it."

Lynd: *smiling*. "Not so much it as you."

(*Casino Royale* (2006) Directed by Martin Campbell [DVD]. MGM).

Lynd needs to stay close to Bond to gain access to his winnings. As with Lady Bertilak and Gawain, she does not actually need to consummate their relationship; she just has to ensure that he trusts her enough to reveal the password for transferring the funds. Lynd and Bond are shown to be a lot more relaxed in this scene; however, his exuberance is dampened a little when he notices a pendant on Lynd's necklace, suggesting that she has a lover.

Bond: "I've figured out what that is. It's an Algerian love knot."

Lynd: "Really? I thought it was just something pretty."

Bond: "No, you didn't. Someone gave that to you. He's a very lucky man."

Lynd: “You can switch off so easily, can’t you? It doesn’t bother you killing those people?”

Bond: “Well, I wouldn’t be very good at my job if it did.”

Lynd: “I don’t believe you. You’ve got a choice, you know? Just because you’ve done something … doesn’t mean you have to keep doing it.”

Bond: “Why is it people who can’t take advice always insist on giving it?”

Lynd: *leans back*. “You think I can’t take my own advice?”

Bond: “I think that something is driving you. And I think I’ll never find out what that is.”

Through the emotional connection they have formed, Bond is able to detect Lynd’s lie about not knowing the true significance of the necklace very quickly. She deflects by questioning his ability to kill people dispassionately. The last two lines of the exchange are interesting, with Bond apparently realising that there is an ulterior motive behind Lynd’s behaviour. Shortly after this conversation, she excuses herself and leaves before answering the question that was heavily implied by Bond’s statement. Lynd is then kidnapped by Le Chiffre and in attempting her rescue, Bond is captured and tortured in a vain attempt to ascertain the account password. Lynd and Bond escape when Mr. White, a higher ranked member of the criminal organisation, kills Le Chiffre, and both are taken to a medical facility to recover. Lynd is shown waking Bond with a kiss in an interaction that clearly reveals their deepening relationship.

Bond: *laughs*. “Hello.”

Lynd: “Hello.”

Bond: “You all right?”

Lynd: “I can’t resist waking you. Every time I do, you look at me as if you haven’t seen me in years. It makes me feel reborn.”

Bond: “If you’d just been born … wouldn’t you be naked?”

Although Lynd rousing Bond is comparable to the scene where Lady Bertilak returns to Gawain's bedside on the day of the next hunt, the scenario is actually very different. Gawain feels conflicted loyalties to his host and is therefore unable to return Lady Bertilak's advances, simply agreeing to be at her commandment to kiss when she wishes (ll.1501-1502). His *cortaysye* limits her advances and 'Þe lady louteȝ adoun / And comlyly kysses his face' (ll.1504-1505) [Bending down, the lady kissed his cheek with propriety] (Barron, 2001:111). Bond, whose 'code' necessitates sexual 'conquest', feels no such compunction and reciprocates Lynd's advances. Lynd here has adopted the persona of 'ideal woman' and appears to be in love with Bond; he embraces the adulation and quickly changes the tone of the conversation to a sexual one.

Lynd: "You have me there. *Whispering*, you can have me anywhere."

Bond: *rubs her arm*. "I can?"

Lynd: "Yeah. Here, there, anywhere you like."

Bond: "Does this mean you're warming to me?"

Lynd: "Yeah. That's how I would describe it."

Bond: "It's just that not so long ago … I would have described your feelings towards me as … I'm trying to think of a better word than loathing."

Lynd: "I'm afraid I'm a complicated woman."

Bond: "That is something to be afraid of."

(*Casino Royale* (2006) Directed by Martin Campbell [DVD]. MGM).

Lynd's linguistic choices reflect the radical change in her role; she dispenses with the unattainable, professional approach and becomes the epitome of a besotted lover. Lynd apparently succumbs to Bond's charms, but in reality she is deceiving him. Her agency is so high at this point that even though Bond's comments about her being 'a complicated woman' show that he is wary of her transformation, he embraces it without further question. Mendel, a banker, then arrives at the clinic so that the £120 million winnings from the poker game can be transferred to the Treasury's account.

Mendel: “If you would type in the account number. *Lynd types the account number into the pad*. And now the password.”

Bond, *to Lynd*: “You can do that.”

Lynd: “I would if I knew what it was.”

Bond: “V-E-S-P-E-R.” *Lynd sits in the chair next to Bond*.

Mendel: “The funds have been transferred. Sorry for disturbing you.”

Lynd holds all the cards in this scene, not only has Bond used her name as the password, we also later learn that she has not even transferred the funds to the Treasury account. Once all the technicalities are completed, Bond and Lynd talk about how much they mean to each other.

Lynd: *looking solemn*. “You know, James. I just want you to know that if all that was left of you … was your smile and your little finger … you’d still be more of a man than anyone I’d ever met.” *She sobs*.

Bond: *leans towards Lynd and whispers*. “That’s because you know what I can do with my little finger.”

Lynd: *smiles*. “I have no idea.”

Bond: “But you’re aching to find out.”

Lynd: “You’re not going to let me in there, are you? You’ve got your armour back on. That’s that.”

Bond: *adopts a serious tone*. “I have no armour left. You’ve stripped it from me. Whatever is left of me … *she touches his face*. Whatever is left of me … whatever I am … I’m yours.” *She cries and they kiss*.

At this point in the film, Lynd no longer resists Bond’s seductive charm, and he appears to trust her implicitly. Her flattering words about him lead him to reveal that she has broken through his ‘defences’ and he surrenders himself to her. When commenting on Bond’s assertion that his armour has been removed, Jonathan Murray

notes that it is a '[…] submissive sentiment uttered by [a] defenceless open book […]' (2016:7). After this, Bond and Lynd go to his hospital room to make love and then to the beach where Bond reveals his disappointment that Mathis betrayed him. Lynd maintains her ideal woman role, being supportive of him and serving as a confidante for his worries. In reality, she is keeping his trust to enable her to retrieve the money from the bank, but he, and indeed the audience, is oblivious to this.

Lynd: "Does everyone have a tell?"

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

Lynd: *smiling*. "You love me?"

Bond: "Enough to quit and float around the world with you … until one of us has to find an honest job. But I think that's gonna have to be you. I've no idea what an honest job is."

Lynd: "You're serious."

Bond: "Like you said … you do what I do for too long … and there won't be any soul left to salvage. I'm leaving with what little I have left. Is that enough for you?" *They kiss*.

Bond decides to commit his future to Lynd in spite knowing that she has a lover, and she is surprised by how seriously Bond is committed to the idea of a life together away from international espionage. Lynd's agency reaches its pinnacle here; she, in fact, 'redeems' him (see p.6 above), encouraging him to put love before duty and 'patriotism', mirroring his influence on the perspective of other Bond girls in previous films. Robert Arnett explains that '[…] Bond begins an emotionless assassin and recovers a sense of self with Lynd […]' (2009:8). Bond tenders his resignation to MI6 and prepares for a month-long trip to Venice with Lynd. While they are on a Venetian canal boat ride, Lynd realises she is being watched, but does not tell Bond, and shortly after they are seen in a hotel room bed.

Lynd: "No. No, stop it. Stop. I have to get to the bank. What's the time? *She gets out of bed*. How much do we need to float for a month?"

Bond: *gets out of bed*. "I've got plenty."

Lynd: *getting dressed*. No, I want to pay for my half of our aimless wanderings." *He snuggles behind her*.

Bond: "You stopped wearing the necklace."

Lynd: "Yeah. It was time."

Bond: "Time enough to get over someone?"

Lynd: *kisses him*. "To realise sometimes you can forget the past. *Her phone pings; she goes to get it*. Though apparently not your employer. *Speaking to phone as she types reply*, back in one month. *To Bond*, Come on. *She grabs a pillow from the end of the bed*. I'll get the money … you get supplies."

(*Casino Royale* (2006) Directed by Martin Campbell [DVD]. MGM).

Lynd is anxious to reach the bank at a particular time, but Bond is more interested in the fact that she has removed her necklace. Lynd then claims to have been messaged by her employer; in reality she is being told when and where to deliver a payment. She offered Mr. White a cash incentive to spare Bond's life when Le Chiffre was eliminated. After they have kiss in the hotel foyer, Lynd leaves with Bond, who is completely unaware of what is really happening. Lynd's agency in this scene is comparable to that of Lady Bertilak when she offers Gawain the green girdle, but for very different reasons. Neither man realises he is being deceived; Bond is distracted by love, and Gawain by fear. Bond follows Lynd to the pay-off point in an empty building and becomes involved in a gunfight with the villains. The building's water tanks are ruptured and it starts to flood, trapping Lynd in a lift. When Bond tries to free her, she cries, tells him she is sorry and throws away the key. Eventually freeing her, he swims up to the roof to resuscitate her, but finds that it is too late. Lynd's demise is soul-destroying for Bond who has committed himself to a woman for the first time since the death of his wife in *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*. Unfortunately for Bond, if he fails in re-establishing patriarchal order, in this instance by 'redeeming' Lynd, then the only

solution is to see 'equilibrium finally restored, by means of her death' (Bennett & Woollacott, 1987:116).

M then reveals Lynd's true motives and the deal she made that spared his life; she explains that Lynd was in love with a French-Algerian who she believed was kidnapped by Le Chiffre's organisation. Blackmailed into manipulating Bond to save her boyfriend's life, Berberich states that 'Vesper's betrayal of Bond is ultimately a betrayal of her country' (2012:23). The film ends when Bond shoots Mr. White, the man responsible for Lynd's death. Her agency endures, shown when Bond visits her grave in *No Time to Die* (2021) and seeks vengeance for what happened to her. In a similar vein, the adoption of the green girdle by Arthur's court as a sign of gallantry, seen in 'the decision by the "lordes and ladis" of the Round Table to wear a green baldric in honor of Gawain' (Battles, 2010:340), prolongs Gawain's discomfort and ensures that Lady Bertilak's agency continues. Seductresses exploit men's vulnerability to sexual allure and inability to resist rising to a challenge, however, much of their agency is achieved through deception.

Conclusion

Before drawing any conclusions about the nature of the seductress persona and the agency she exhibits, it is important to establish that the Bond films follow medieval romance convention. There are clear commonalities between these materials; all the elements of the Bond formula are identifiable in medieval romance narrative. Bond, the hero, finds a counterpart in the knights of Arthur's court, while his Bond girl is represented by the alluring Lady Bertilak or an unnamed beautiful damsel. Their 'fantasy worlds' are also comparable; Bond's jet-setting to glamorous locations is replicated in the knights' fantastical journeys, and both narratives are interspersed with dramatic action sequences. The hero is set an arduous task; for example, the knight must locate a sacred holy relic, while Bond must secure a vital decoding device. They must overcome evil, embodied by the 'villain' and his nefarious plans: for Bond, this means defeating the likes of Graves and Le Chiffre; for Gawain, it means facing a challenge with the Green Knight. The pentangle on Gawain's shield, which symbolises the pentad of virtues to which he aspires: *fraunchyse*, *felaȝschyp*, *cortaysye*, *pité*, and *clannes,* is equally applicable to the modern day hero (see p.19 above). Bond's pentad comprises: compassion, loyalty, consideration for others, devotion to duty, and 'sexual reputation'.

The only crucial difference between medieval romance and Bond conventions is that all knights must observe *clannes* (freedom from lust), while a major facet of Bond's *modus operandi* is his sexual prowess.

The seductress persona is as clearly identifiable in the medieval texts as it is in the Bond films, and the strategies by which seductresses achieve agency are comparable. Medieval seductresses are usually described as being the most beautiful women ever seen, and by not including specific physical characteristics in these descriptions, romance texts actually increase the allure of the women they describe. They do not rely on any particular hair or eye colour, body shape, or skin tone; in appealing to the imaginations of their audience, their beauty therefore remains universal and timeless. The Bond girl's physical appearance by comparison changes over time; influenced by the mood of the moment, choices have to be made about which actresses fit the required remit. There are also a number of films which feature two Bond girls, opposites of each other in both personality and appearance. Blonde-haired seductress Frost competes with dark-haired agent Jinx for Bond's affections in *Die Another Day*, and in chapter 2 we will see that a similar situation occurs with dark-haired seductress May Day and blonde damsel-in-distress Stacey Sutton in *A View to a Kill* (1985). As Jinx and Sutton respectively emerge victorious in these scenarios, it is evident that physical appearance is no predictor of seductive intent.

Seductresses possess an extensive arsenal of weaponry employed to target men's *trawþe*, for Bond via his 'sexual reputation' and for medieval knights by threatening their *clannes*, and yet much of their agency serves only to increase the hero's prowess. For Bond, the criterion of success equates to their 'redemption' (see p.6 above) usually through sexual 'conquest', and the associated triumph of good over evil. It simultaneously increases Bond's 'sexual reputation', reinforces his loyalty to the mission and champions patriotic values. For medieval knights like Sir Gawain, societal constraints and expectations dictate that a successful outcome of their encounter with seductresses is restraint, demonstrating that an allegiance to God and the sanctity of the quest is more powerful than sexual love. Many medieval seductresses actually appear as visions and serve to highlight the dangers posed by women to chivalrous men; this is not surprising given the deeply moralistic views of the Church at the time. Both Lady Bertilak and Lynd actually inflict damage to the reputation of the hero, although in

both realms much of the agency of a seductress is channelled via 'repositioning' (see p.6 above) into increasing male standing and reinforcing patriarchal order.

Had Lord Bertilak regaled Gawain at the dinner table with horrific tales of the Green Knight and his unwary victims, this would have been unlikely to derail his mission, strengthening his *pité* rather than weakening it. Deeply committed to chivalric virtues, the only way of undermining Gawain is to pressurise him into inadvertently abandoning or corrupting these principles. As previously mentioned, his Achilles heel is his womanising and so that is what Morgan le Fay, via Lady Bertilak, targets. Gawain, like Bond, is governed by the expectations of his audience, meaning that he has a strict code of conduct to which he must adhere. This is highlighted when Lady Bertilak persistently challenges his *clannes* with her continuous flirtatious interactions, exploiting his weaknesses by pitting the virtue of *cortaysye* against *felaȝschyp*, or loyalty to his host, Lord Bertilak. Gawain is bound by courtly etiquette in his response to Lady Bertilak's ministrations, while always being aware of his allegiance to her husband. In spite of his reputedly vast experience of women, Gawain finds it extremely difficult to rebuff her respectfully. Sexual allure is equally successful when targeted at a naïve character like Perceval in *The Quest*, who values his purity and chastity but lacks the worldly experience to identify deception.

Where sexual allure alone fails to achieve the required agency, then challenge and deception will also be employed to ensure a seductress' success in leading men astray. Frost, in *Die Another Day* (2002), highlights the agency that women can possess when they subvert expectations. In spite of being the 'blonde Bond girl', Frost initially seems unimpressed by Bond's seductive charm and shows no interest in being with him. In *Casino Royale*, Lynd resists Bond's advances in a similar manner, and both remain professional around him; they opt to challenge his reputation as a way to encourage his pursuit of them, as a means to achieve their ulterior motives and loyalties. This significant departure from the tactic used by Romanova, in *From Russia with Love* (1963), affords them far greater agency for far longer. Frost is able to exploit Bond's weakness in assuming all women will desire him to hide the fact she is working for Graves. Bond pursues Frost persistently, and she eventually succumbs in order to meet her own objectives. Like Lady Bertilak, we have seen that Frost targets *felaȝschyp* and 'sexual reputation' in order to threaten Bond's *trawþe*. Lynd's agency persuades Bond to

consider resigning his position at MI6 and commit his future to her; this clearly challenges his patriotism and loyalty and makes it clear that he has lost control of their relationship and thus his 'sexual reputation'.

The Bond seductress rarely actually achieves her initial goal in helping the villain achieve his nefarious plans; Lynd is an exception to this rule when she transfers the poker game winnings from Bond's account to hers. However, her success is temporary as Bond retrieves the money at the end of *Casino Royale*. A number of different fates befall them; some, like Frost, are killed if they refuse to be 'redeemed' and switch allegiance, whereas others become 'acceptable sexual partners' for Bond to end the film with, as with Romanova. Even Lynd, whom Bond attempts to rescue from a watery grave, is unable to accept her betrayal of him and chooses to die. Her noble gesture ensures that her legacy endures; in the next film, *Quantum of Solace* (2008), Bond resolves to get retribution for her death, and he is also shown visiting her grave in *No Time to Die* - an eventful visit, with the grave blowing up and almost killing Bond. The agency of the Bond seductress, irrespective of the decade she inhabits, or the actor playing Bond she encounters, is channelled into extolling the choice of good over evil. Her agency strengthens Bond's *felaȝschyp* and *pité* and improves his 'sexual reputation'. The fate of medieval seductresses are also varied: Lady Bertilak returns to her husband with increased agency; by playing the seductress role, she has fulfilled her role as an obedient wife. Further, in spite of having failed to compromise Gawain's *clannes*, Lady Bertilak's actions do persuade Gawain to accept the green girdle, and this threatens Gawain's *pité*, by lessening his own view of his chivalric standing. While in *The Quest*, the demonic visions vanish in a 'puff of smoke', the moral message behind their challenge and subsequent disappearance is perhaps that they are powerless to act if a knight stays chaste and faithful to God and his quest. In line with the Bond seductresses, therefore, their agency also serves to reinforce chivalric virtues and patriarchal order. Although almost certainly unintended from the seductress' perspective, the consequences of a seductress' agency in the Bond films and medieval romance narratives we have examined in this chapter is to raise the esteem of the male hero she targets.

Overall, this chapter has explored the role of the seductress across media and time periods and has shown how seductresses share objectives and demonstrate a similar *modus operandi* from the Middle Ages to today, despite superficial differences

in their actions, appearance, and in the societal codes and conventions that govern changing attitudes towards sexual decorum across the centuries. The agency of the seductress is often transient and linked to a specific goal; much of it is conditional and conferred on particular women by others in order that they can complete a given task. A small number of women who also appear in the films seem to fit into a subgroup of seductress; these 'fluffers' are seduced by Bond but have no connection to the mission. At the beginning of *From Russia with Love*, Bond is seen seducing Sylvia, a previous conquest. She is shown to be an active and consensual partner but has no connection at all with the film's plot; she is not an obstacle to the mission, nor does she provide any help or information to Bond. The question therefore arises as to what purpose she fulfils in the film, and what agency, if any, she holds. Further on in the film, two young and attractive girls, initially fighting over a man they both claim to love, are seduced by Bond and are then shown ministering to his every need the following morning. Again, these women have no impact on the storyline and appear to be included in the film purely to highlight Bond's irresistibility to women. There does not even have to be consummation of their relationship, as seen with the aborted seduction of Dimitrios' wife Solange (*Casino Royale*). In fact, their interaction can even be solely innuendo, for example with fencing instructor Verity (*Die Another Day*).

These women all have minimal agency and appear to be entirely dispensable, and their presence in the Bond films will be identified in the following two chapters, which explore the agency of the 'formidable' woman and the damsel-in-distress respectively. The agency of women presenting as 'fluffers' will then be explored in detail in chapter 4, following analyses of examples of other female personae encountered across romance and Bond narratives, the 'formidable' woman of chapter 2, and the damsel-in-distress who forms the focus of chapter 3.

Chapter 2

The Agency of the 'Formidable' Woman

'Formidable' is defined as 'likely to be difficult to overcome, resist, or deal with' (OED, 2019), and women who adopt this persona in the Bond movies and medieval romance are egotistical rule-breakers who very much follow their own agenda and employ unruliness and unpredictability to achieve their aims. The 'formidable' woman is an expert performer and moves between personae with ease; her chameleonic nature allows her agency to challenge all of the pentad virtues explored in Chapter 1 (see p.24 above): *fraunchyse* (compassion and magnanimity), *cortaysye* (consideration for others), *felaȝschyp* (loyalty to others), *clannes* (freedom from lust), and *pité* (devotion to God and duty). Unlike seductresses, these women are focused on their own personal goals, accepting the derailment of men's missions as collateral damage rather than targeting the missions *per se*. All 'formidable' women desire autonomy and freedom of choice, while some go even further in seeking sovereignty, which in the medieval period was defined as '[the] supremacy of power or rank; supreme dominion or authority, domination, mastery' (MED, 2019). As in the previous chapter, the fate of each woman across a range of Bond films from the 1960s to the turn of the millennium will be examined and compared with the fate of their medieval female counterparts, here focusing particularly on the character of Alisoun in Chaucer's *The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale*. We will see that for 'formidable' women, their goals and their *modus operandi* make it extremely difficult for them to be 'repositioned' or 'redeemed' (see p.6 above) by Bond or medieval romance heroes.

The argument of this chapter is that the 'formidable' woman is as prevalent as the seductress in medieval literature and Bond; that in both eras and across both types of media, these women perform similar roles and adopt comparable strategies in order to gain agency and meet their objectives. To explore this hypothesis, women in selected medieval texts will be compared with their Bond counterparts in three films which have been chosen because they all feature at least one 'formidable' woman. While there are many Bond films that would suit the criteria, it was important to focus on identifying films from different decades to ensure that the zeitgeist of a specific era did not distort the argument here advanced. Equally, the selected films feature different Bond actors:

On Her Majesty's Secret Service (1969, George Lazenby), *A View to a Kill* (1985, Roger Moore), and *The World is not Enough* (1999, Pierce Brosnan).

While the Bond seductress usually starts out having an intimate and often subservient association with the villain, her 'formidable' counterpart enjoys a far more varied and independent existence. At times, she becomes involved with the villain by virtue of her relationship with Bond and her desire for independence, for example Tracy Di Vincenzo in *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*. On other occasions, she is shown to hold power and status by being a partner-in-crime alongside the villain, for example May Day in *A View to a Kill*. In the most extreme of cases, as with Elektra King in *The World is not Enough*, she herself embodies the film's villain. Not content with the substantial agency she already possesses or with simply dominating Bond, King's goal is world domination irrespective of the cost. Indeed, 'powerful women […] pose a threat to male potency, a threat to patriarchy, and to an authority structure' (Fienberg, in Kolin, ed. 1997:249).

In the medieval realm, Alisoun, the Wife of Bath in Chaucer's *Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale* (*c*.1400), is an equally 'formidable' character and she uses the *Prologue* to her *Tale* to justify to the assembled pilgrims why she has chosen to take five husbands. According to Lesley Coote, 'Alisoun' is synonymous with 'everywoman' (2012:204), which is interesting as her *Tale* explicitly explores female sovereignty, focusing on the misadventures of a young knight, who rapes a virginal maiden. It considers the knight's journey towards redemption after he has been set the challenge to discover what women most desire and eventually finds that what women most desire is sovereignty in their marriages and over their husbands. Through an analysis of *The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale*, this chapter will explore Alisoun's persona, comparing her with other medieval damsels from *The Knight of the Cart* (Chrétien De Troyes, *c*.1180) and Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur* (1485), and the selected Bond girls. Alisoun is the physical embodiment of a 'formidable' woman, a complex character who refuses to conform to societal norms and manipulates any situation to suit her own best interests. Her *Prologue* addresses the controversial opinions she holds regarding marriage and she manipulates *pité* when subverting the expectations of her late medieval audience by quoting the Bible. Alisoun also rails against the fact that literature is a male preserve and delights in challenging conventional, patriarchal wisdom. Ironically, it is this need to challenge traditional teachings that presents her with an

opportunity to achieve sovereignty. Irritated by her fifth husband's obsession with quoting from *The Book of Wykked Wyves*, a fictitious collection of existing texts created by Chaucer (Benson *et al.*, 1988:871), she angers him to the point of striking her and then feigns death. When he panics, she stages a miraculous recovery and exploits his *fraunchyse* to accept sovereignty over him as an apology.

The Wife of Bath's Tale is an example of late medieval romance and examines the trials and tribulations of a young knight of Arthur's court, who behaves in an unchivalrous manner by violating a maiden. The Queen makes an impassioned plea to King Arthur to be allowed to decide the knight's punishment. Having been granted sovereignty in the matter, she gives the knight a year and a day to discover what women desire most; if he fails to complete this task he will be beheaded. 'The year-long task of sorting out the women's various responses gives him the opportunity to broaden his perspective and experience the world through female eyes' (Koepke Brown, 1996:24). As his quest draws to a close and he has failed to find any agreement in the women's responses, he encounters an ugly old hag who states that she knows the answer he seeks, but will only reveal it to him if he pledges to grant her wish. Agreeing, he reports to the Queen that women desire sovereignty and she immediately grants him his freedom. 'Formidable' women are also identified in other medieval texts: Guinevere (*The Wife of Bath's Tale*, *The Knight of the Cart*, *The Quest,* and *Le Morte d'Arthur*); Morgan le Fay (*Sir Gawain*); Dame Brusen (*Le Morte d'Arthur*) and an unnamed damsel who propositions Lancelot in *The Knight of the Cart*. For some medieval 'formidable' women, such as the hag, le Fay, and Dame Brusen, magic plays a significant role in their ability to manipulate and deceive.

As shown in the previous chapter, Bond films have many features that are associated with medieval romances. It is logical, therefore, to examine the characteristics of both the medieval 'formidable' woman and their Bond equivalents to draw into focus the commonalities between them. Not only do the women from the different eras strive for similar outcomes, they also adopt comparable strategies in using status and manipulation. While other critics have made comparisons between Bond and medieval materials, for example Meir Sternberg (1983), who compares the beheading scene in *Sir Gawain* with the outlandish villainous plots in Bond movies, no study to date has drawn the extended comparisons I advance here between 'formidable' Bond

women and their medieval counterparts. Emphasising similarities between Bond films and medieval literature enables parallels to be drawn between the personae of women from the two eras and the influence of medieval romance convention on their presentations. An original aspect of the argument in this chapter is the fact that I again employ the chivalric virtues represented by the pentad on Gawain's shield in *Sir Gawain* to drive my comparative analysis of 'formidable' women's behaviour across the texts and time periods studied here. This approach does not appear to have been considered in other critical analyses and provides an opportunity to examine whether Bond's moral code is actually, in part, shaped by medieval romance.

In what follows, I will therefore pay particular attention to the strategies that 'formidable' Bond women employ and the chivalric virtues they challenge. In *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*, in a rare departure from convention, Di Vincenzo features in the pre-title sequence of the film. 'More than any other Bond film, *OHMSS* centralizes the role of the woman, defining Bond through the main female character of Tracy Di Vincenzo […]' (Santos, in Funnell, ed. 2015:109). Di Vincenzo is a Contessa as a result of an earlier marriage, but any status it might have conferred was tarnished when it ended due to her husband's adultery and subsequent death. Lazenby's Bond prevents her from committing suicide, and then saves her from financial embarrassment at a casino; in a departure from his usual one night stand, Bond develops a fascination for Di Vincenzo which will eventually lead to a marriage proposal.

Her father, Draco, the head of a powerful crime syndicate, is so impressed by Bond that he asks him to marry her. In exchange, he offers Bond information which will lead him to his archenemy, Blofeld. Bond thwarts Blofeld's plans with Di Vincenzo's help and grows attached to her in the process; she is killed by Blofeld's organisation shortly after she and Bond marry. Di Vincenzo is a head-strong young woman seeking to escape her controlling father and achieve autonomy; desperate to establish her independence, she rebuffs any attempt at compassion. This is demonstrated when she dismisses Bond's *fraunchyse*, both in saving her life and sparing her from financial shame. Bond's *felaȝschyp* with her father is also a source of acute irritation to Di Vincenzo and she stubbornly refuses to co-operate with either of them; her behaviour is often challenging but rarely manipulative and her misfortune lies in the fact that she marries Bond and therefore cannot be allowed to survive the film. Although the film does not explore the

potential implications of a married Bond, it would clearly not be compatible with the Fleming formula (Black, 2005:58).

In *A View to a Kill*, May Day ably assists Zorin, the mastermind industrialist, in plotting to set off an explosion to trigger an earthquake on the San Andreas Fault. She contrasts significantly with the other Bond girl in this film, Stacey Sutton, who will be addressed in the damsel-in-distress chapter. May Day aids Zorin, but her initial loyalty to him and the *felaʒschyp* they share is broken when Zorin betrays her by killing her assistants. In a final act of defiance, an overt display of *pité,* she ends up sacrificing herself in order to thwart Zorin's plans, protecting Moore's Bond and innocent civilians. May Day has agency by virtue of her physical capabilities and by being Zorin's right-hand woman; she achieves sovereignty temporarily, in spectacular fashion, and specifically over Zorin.

In *The World is not Enough*, the 'dynamic between Bond and King would take center stage […] King becomes one of the few characters to radically challenge the franchise's varied discourses on patriarchy' (Sergeant, in Funnell, ed. 2015:132). King's formidability is apparent in the fact that she eclipses both the archetypal Bond villain, Renard, and the traditional Bond girl, Dr. Christmas Jones. Discussed in Chapter 3, Dr. Jones is a nuclear scientist who unwittingly works for King and Renard until Bond reveals their true intentions. As Bond's ally, she uses her knowledge and expertise to help him, and unlike King who is killed by Bond, she is 'rewarded' with a consensual sexual liaison with him at the end of the film.

Brosnan's Bond is ordered to protect King, the heiress to an oil empire, after her father is assassinated in an explosion. She was previously kidnapped by notorious villain, Renard, and is dismissive of Bond's help. There are further attempts made on King's life, allegedly by Renard, with her oil pipeline also being targeted. Bond works to save the pipeline and suspects that King has developed Stockholm Syndrome, which '[…] consists of a positive bond between hostage and captor, [with] feelings of distrust or hostility on the part of the victim towards the authorities' (OED, 2022). She deceives M into travelling to Baku to protect her and then kidnaps her. In order to expose King's duplicity, Bond fakes his death. It becomes clear that Renard is being controlled by King and that they plan to blow up other pipelines. Bond then reappears but he is captured and

tortured by King, before being rescued by an old friend, Zukovsky. Bond shoots King before preventing Renard from planting the bomb. King is a wealthy and powerful woman, but initially subservient to her father and resentful towards him due to his failure to rescue her from an alleged kidnapping. Deceiving Bond and M into believing that she is Renard's victim, she displays considerable agency in manipulating them, while using the extensive weaponry in her arsenal to disrupt world order and attempt to achieve sovereignty. King therefore holds sovereignty over Renard, but never manages to master Bond; indeed, no 'formidable' Bond woman permanently gains sovereignty and most of them pay for failure with their lives. In terms of their longevity, they do not appear to fare any better than the women portraying a seductress persona.

In line with the Bond films featuring a seductress, several 'fluffers' have been identified in these selected Bond films, where the main Bond girl is a 'formidable' woman. In *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*, Bond is greeted by many women on his visit to Blofeld's allergy research clinic and he seduces two of them who take a particular interest in him: Ruby Bartlett and Nancy. *A View to a Kill* features a blonde woman who helps Bond escape from the villains in the pre-title sequence of the film and then immediately fulfils his obvious expectations and sleeps with him. She remains unnamed, having very limited agency and no impact on the plot. The 'fluffer' character in *The World is not Enough* takes the form of Dr. Molly Warmflash, MI6's physician, who has to clear Bond for service after he sustains an injury during a mission. In theory she should have more of a bearing on the plot, however, this is diminished by the fact that Bond seduces her in order to persuade her to support his reinstatement to active duty. These women and their agency will be discussed in Chapter 4.

This chapter will be organised into three sections; the first of which focuses on how 'formidable' women attain autonomy by acquiring or exploiting agency due to status. It is seen clearly in examples involving Alisoun, Guinevere and Di Vincenzo, whose actions mainly target *cortaysye* and *felaȝschyp*. Analysis in the second section then explores how 'formidable' women add manipulation as an effective tool to gain mastery over men, exploring how Alisoun, le Fay, May Day and King focus on *fraunchyse* and *clannes*. The final part is an exploration of how 'formidable' women also challenge *pité* and which women actually gain sovereignty, whether they do so permanently or for a

limited period of time, and whether it is universal or confined to a specific person or purpose.

Agency through status

The Wife of Bath, Alisoun, is most certainly 'formidable', challenging Church doctrine and patriarchal order, as detailed in her life strategy set out in her *Prologue*. Alisoun appears to work towards the long term aim of acquiring sovereignty; her occupation as a cloth maker is unlikely to reap enough financial reward or confer enough status and so she turns instead to her real strength: exploiting men.

> Although the General Prologue tells us that Alisoun excels as a cloth maker, the professional expertise which she sets out for us in such detail in her own Prologue lies in the area traditionally associated with women in literature and sermons: love and marriage. (Rigby, 2000:142).

Having been forced into marriage at the age of just twelve and then criticised for taking five husbands, Alisoun rails against patriarchal order and quotes from the Bible to highlight its contradictions and misogynistic undertones.

> That **sith** that Crist ne wente never but **onis** [since; once]
>
> To weddyng, in the Cane of Galilee,
>
> That by the same **ensample** taughte he me [example]
>
> That I ne sholde wedded be but **ones**. (ll.10-13) [once]

Alcuin Blamires notes that Alisoun appeals '[…] directly to the Bible' (1989:226), which is significant because women in medieval texts rarely referenced classical mythology or religious texts; these texts were reserved for male scrutiny, with women usually voices of experience, commenting only about their lives. John Alford states that 'The Wife [of Bath's] argumentative strategies reflect her rhetorical end, which is persuasion rather than knowledge' (1986:124). Alisoun carefully selects texts that prioritise her own agenda; they support her argument in condoning having successive husbands and explain why marriage would be threatened if virginity or chastity are placed in value above it.

For hadde God comanded maydenhede,

Thanne hadde he dampned weddyng with the dede.

And certes, if ther were no seed ysowe,

Virginitee, thanne whereof sholde it growe? (ll.69-72).

Alisoun goes on to describe in explicit detail how she manipulates her relationships with all five of her husbands in order to maintain authority and acquire autonomy in her life. She appreciates that women need to be aware of their value and adept at manipulating *cortaysye* to be able to get what they desire from their relationships with men.

Preesse on us faste, and thanne wol we fle.

With daunger oute we al oure chaffare; [unwillingly]

Greet prees at market maketh deere ware,

And **to greet cheep** is holde at litel prys; [too much available]

This knoweth every woman that is wys. (ll.520-524).

Alisoun does not express any sense of remorse for her actions; she '[…] seems untroubled by any feeling that she might be a moral degenerate' (Laird, 2000:296) and starts by talking about her three husbands who were much older than her.

The thre were goode men, and riche, and olde;

Unnethe myghte they the statut holde [hardly]

In which that they were bounden unto me. (ll.197-199).

Although they were wealthy, these men could not please her sexually and Barbara Gottfried notes that 'The Wife of Bath's first three marriages were essentially mercenary, predicated on her need and desire to gain control of her own life' (1985:216). Knowing she will inherit their wealth and land, Alisoun rewards them by being a true wife until their death and subsequent replacement with the next 'provider'. She declares

that women use whatever means necessary in order to gain a semblance of control over their lives.

A wys womman wol **bisye hire** evere in oon, [be busy]

To gete hire love, ye, ther as she hath noon.

But sith I hadde hem **hoolly** in myn hond, [wholly]

And sith they had me yeven al hir lond,

What sholde I **taken keep** hem for to plese, [bother]

But it were for my profit and myn **ese**? (ll.209-214). [unless; pleasure]

Having attracted older husbands, Alisoun has improved her position in society and seeks to meet a very different set of needs. Acknowledging that her beauty is fading with age, she changes strategy and uses her wealth and status to attract younger husbands who will satisfy her sexual appetite.

Unto this day it dooth myn herte **boote** [good]

That I have had my world as in my tyme.

But age, allas, that al wole **envenyme**, [poison]

Hath me **biraft** my beautee and my **pith.** [taken from; vigour]

Lat go. Farewel! The devel go therwith!

The flour is goon, ther is namoore to telle;

The bren, as best I kan, now **moste** I selle; (ll.472-478). [must]

Unfortunately, these young men more than match her veracity and her fourth husband is a lecher who takes a mistress. Although her fifth husband proves to be loyal, he is also abusive; yet again her spouse displays shortcomings, and clearly fails to live up to Alisoun's depiction of an ideal husband from earlier in her *Prologue*.

Thou sholdest seye, "Wyf, go wher **thee liste;** [you like]

Taak youre disport; **I wol nat leve no talys**. [I will not believe any gossip]

I knowe yow for a trewe wyf, dame Alys".

We love no man that taketh kep or charge

Wher that we goon; we wol ben at oure large. (ll.318-322).

According to Alisoun, husbands should not dictate what their wives do and where they go; nor should they rely on hearsay regarding their wives' alleged illicit actions. Instead, they should have faith in the fact that their wives will be *trewe*; Alisoun explains that women desire autonomy and that men should give them trust and freedom of choice. These sentiments are echoed in *The Wife of Bath's Tale* which tells the story of a lusty young man, a knight from King Arthur's court, who rapes a young maiden. Albert Friedman suggests that given Gawain's womanising reputation, although he is not explicitly named by Chaucer, *The Wife of Bath's Tale* implies '[…] that the "lusty bacheler" of Arthur's court who took the maiden "by verray force" was probably the degenerate Gawain […]' (1960:265). It would be reasonable to assume, therefore, that the queen, although unnamed, is actually Guinevere. It is also not beyond the realms of possibility, given her ability to transform from an old crone into a beautiful young wife, that the hag who helps the 'lusty bacheler' in his quest to find out what women most desire is Morgan le Fay or one of her avatars. Coote supports this theory in her introduction to *The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale* (2012:205). The knight's crime is one for which he should have been beheaded; however, Guinevere pleads for, and is eventually granted, sovereignty by Arthur to determine his fate.

But that the queene and other ladyes mo

So longe preyeden the kyng **of grace** [for mercy]

Til he his lyf hym graunted in the place,

And yaf hym to the queene, al at hir wille,

To chese wheither she wolde hym save or **spille**. [kill]

The queene thanketh the kyng with al hir myght,

And after this thus spak she to the knyght, (ll.894-900).

She sets the knight a challenge to find out what it is that women most desire and gives him a year and a day to find the answer or suffer beheading. 'I grante thee lyf, if thou kanst tellen me / What thyng is it that wommen moost desiren' (ll.904-905). The women's responses cover a range of qualities:

Somme seyde wommen loven best richesse,

Somme seyde honour, and somme seyde jolynesse,

Somme riche **array**, some seyden lust on abedde, [clothing]

And oftetyme to be wydwe and wedde.

Somme seyde that oure hertes been **moost esed** [made happy]

Whan that we been yflatered and yplesed.' (ll.925-930).

And somme seyen that we loven best

For to be free and do right as us **lest**. (ll.935-936). [like]

Their views very much reflect the virtues that Alisoun seeks in a perfect husband, including the idea that women want equality and freedom of choice. Women, however, rarely achieve this level of authority and even Guinevere has very limited agency in real terms; the sovereignty she enjoys over the rapist knight in *The Wife of Bath's Tale* is specific and certainly not seen when Arthur instructs her to retain another of his knights, Sir Kay, in *The Knight of the Cart*. Here, a knight, Meliagaunt, issues a challenge to Arthur's court; in order to release many citizens who have been kidnapped, one of Arthur's knights must escort Guinevere into the forest and do battle. If Arthur's knight wins, Guinevere will return to the court safely and the citizens will be freed. Sir Kay takes up the challenge, but aware that Arthur would not condone his actions, he does not reveal his intentions to the king, opting instead to threaten to leave the court. Oblivious to Kay's real motives Arthur orders Guinevere to retain him:

"Go to him, my dear lady;

Though he deign not stay for my sake,

Pray him that he stay for yours

And fall at his feet if necessary" (ll.122-125).

Kay will not tell Guinevere his reasons for leaving and refuses to respond to her pleas to stay.

Then the queen, in all her majesty,

Fell down at his feet.

Kay begged her to rise,

But she replied that she would not do so:

She would never again rise

Until he had granted her desire. (ll.148-153).

Guinevere appears to have abandoned her royal status and has instead adopted the persona of a damsel-in-distress to appeal to Kay's *fraunchyse*. Kay remains determined to carry out his mission and so Guinevere promises that Arthur will grant his dearest wish if he stays, and they go to speak with the King.

"My lord," said the queen,

"With great effort I have retained Kay;

But I bring him to you with the assurance

That you will do whatever he is about to ask." (ll.164-167).

Kay then states that Arthur must entrust Guinevere to him and the king reluctantly accepts his request. Taking her by the hand, Arthur tells Guinevere "My lady, there is no way / To prevent your going with Kay" (ll.190-191) and allows Kay to lead her away. Although Kay's motive for taking the queen is an honourable one, he has to resort to underhand methods to achieve his aims as a direct request to leave with the queen would have been refused. This scenario is an ideal example of a woman being seen as

an object of exchange and the triumph of *felaȝschyp* and *cortaysye* over female agency. Guinevere is empowered by her damsel-in-distress portrayal, to the extent that she persuades Kay to do what Arthur has ordered, but has no freedom of choice once Kay's objective has been revealed.

Women's desire for autonomy appears to have changed little from their representations in medieval romance to their representations in Bond movies today; when Lazenby's Bond meets Di Vincenzo in the pre-title scene of *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*, she is portrayed as a head-strong woman and Lisa Funnell and Klaus Dodds note that:

> [Di Vincenzo] first appears in [the film] driving a Cougar Eliminator, a popular muscle car of the era, as she speeds past Bond on a coastal road. This piques Bond's interest and initiates his wooing of her. (2015b:130).

When the car pulls over and the woman gets out, he watches her walking on the beach through a telescope. She begins to walk out to sea, so he drives his car to the shoreline and then gets out to chase her. Initially uncooperative when he reaches her, this resistance is short-lived and she allows herself to be picked up by him, but fails to respond after he introduces himself with his trademark "My name's Bond. James Bond" (*On Her Majesty's Secret Service* (1969) Directed by Peter Hunt [DVD]. United Artists). A man immediately points a gun at the back of Bond's head, as another puts a flick knife to Di Vincenzo's throat. She is led away as he is instructed to get into a small boat; he fights back by kicking the gun out of the assailant's hand and a scuffle ensues, during which Di Vincenzo escapes. It is an unusual first encounter between Bond and a Bond girl; Bond girls are usually exceptionally 'grateful' to him, whereas Di Vincenzo does not consider Bond's welfare at all, and Bond is not even able to ascertain her name before she flees the scene. From the audience's point of view, Di Vincenzo's initial depiction portrays her as something of an enigma right from the start. Indeed, at the end of this scene Bond looks directly to camera to bemoan the fact that "This never happened to the other fellow" (*On Her Majesty's Secret Service* (1969) Directed by Peter Hunt [DVD]. United Artists). While the identity of 'the other fellow' is not made clear, it is probable that George Lazenby is referring to Sean Connery. It is worthy of note that Lazenby was given the role due to his appearance and displaying good fighting ability in his screen

test; however, he had limited acting experience or ability and it was viewed that 'The casting of Rigg, the strongest of the Bond "girls," was a necessary response to the weakness of the new Bond' (Black, 2005:124). Di Vincenzo's formidability must therefore be viewed within this context.

Later in the film, after Bond pays Di Vincenzo's casino debts and she sleeps with him in recompense, he is forced into a car and taken to meet her father, Draco. The explanation Draco gives about Di Vincenzo's childhood goes some way towards explaining why she is so embittered; Di Vincenzo is an only child whose mother died when she was twelve, resulting in her being sent away to school in Switzerland. Lacking a stable home, she joined the fast international set and several scandals followed, causing her allowance to be cut off by her father. Without Draco's knowledge, Di Vincenzo married an Italian Count who died along with a mistress in a car crash. In this scene, Bond is curious about why Draco is telling him so much about his daughter.

Draco: "I have been informed of everything you have done for my daughter."

Bond: *looking mildly concerned*. "Everything?"

Draco: "Don't worry, don't worry about that. What you did, the way you behaved, might be the beginning … of some kind of therapy. She needs help, *pointing at him*, your help."

Bond: "I find her fascinating, but she needs a psychiatrist, not me."

Draco: "What she needs is a man to dominate her. To make love to her enough to make her love him. A man like you."

(*On Her Majesty's Secret Service* (1969) Directed by Peter Hunt [DVD]. United Artists)

For a different reason to Guinevere in *The Knight of the Cart*, this conversation nevertheless shows Di Vincenzo as an object of exchange between two men rather than as an autonomous individual. It highlights patriarchal authority and Di Vincenzo's subservient position, particularly given that Bond is a relative stranger. In spite of being offered payment of a million pounds, Bond values his freedom too highly and declines Draco's request. He continues to ignore Draco's protestations until he realises that

Draco might have something more valuable than money to use as payment: information on Blofeld.

Bond: “You have connections not open to me. Where is Ernst Stavro Blofeld?”

Draco: “Blofeld? *Walking away from Bond*. Some of my men have recently defected to him. I don’t know where he is.”

Bond: “Can you find out?”

Draco: “If I could I wouldn’t tell Her Majesty’s Secret Service. But I might tell my future son-in-law.”

Bond: “Go on.”

Draco: *points to a calendar*. “Next week is my birthday. *He goes to the calendar*. For that, Teresa (Di Vincenzo) always comes back to me. *He returns to Bond*. You understand?”

Bond: *smiles*. “Let’s say I’ll sleep on the idea.”

Draco: *smiles*. “You do that.”

While Di Vincenzo is not present in this scene, the threat to her autonomy is clear; both men are more interested in meeting their needs than concerning themselves with her welfare. Di Vincenzo’s rebellious behaviour has probably evolved in response to the controlling nature of her father. While Bond appears to be intrigued by her, even he admits that she would be too difficult for him to ‘tame’. Di Vincenzo’s feelings do not seem to be considered at this point; she is viewed as more of a commodity with her father being willing to ‘sell her’ to Bond, or failing that to trade information with him in exchange for his daughter. In the next scene, Di Vincenzo is shown travelling to her father’s birthday celebration, where she is greeted by Olympe, Draco’s mistress. Her reaction to Olympe is much more positive than the frosty manner in which she interacts with her father. Bond and Di Vincenzo are formally introduced at the party, but she is again unimpressed by him and walks away from all his attempts at flattery. She joins Olympe at a separate table to talk about Draco’s plans for her and Bond.

Di Vincenzo: “I didn’t know Mr. Bond knew Papa.”

Olympe: “I think there are many things about Mr. Bond one does not know. It would be interesting to attend night school perhaps.” *She drinks*.

Di Vincenzo: “Papa is up to something, I’m sure of it.”

Olympe: “Your father loves you very much, Tracy. Whatever he might arrange. *He puts an arm around Di Vincenzo’s shoulder*. I know it’s for your happiness.” *She takes her arm off Di Vincenzo’s shoulder*.

Di Vincenzo: “What **has** Papa arranged?”

Di Vincenzo’s first comment is purely factual and does not serve to indicate any emotional response on her part to Bond’s appearance. Olympe, however, appears to fit the Bond girl remit somewhat better and seems intrigued by Bond’s mysterious persona. She even makes an unsubtle reference to his likely sexual prowess, something to which she alludes in the line about attending ‘night school’. Olympe adopts a maternal role in this interaction with regards to Di Vincenzo, who is able to exploit this in order to persuade Olympe to reveal Draco’s arrangement with Bond. When she returns to her father’s table, her hostility towards both men has increased.

Di Vincenzo: “What are you doing here?”

Bond: “Yes, wasn’t it kind of your father to invite me?”

Draco: “Mr. Bond and I are discussing a business deal.”

Di Vincenzo: “Really?”

Draco: “Mmhm.”

Di Vincenzo: *toasts Bond*. “No woman would waste excellent champagne discussing a business deal. Unless, of course, she happened to be part of the arrangement.”

Draco: “Olympe. What have you said?”

Di Vincenzo continues the analogy to a business transaction by claiming that Bond should revise the terms of the contract, as the liability will be too expensive. She

does not wish to be any part of their agreement and asks Draco to give Bond the information he needs.

Di Vincenzo: “Tell him, Papa, or you’ll never see me again.”

Draco: *pauses and then speaks weakly*. “All right. All right. There may be a connection between that man Blofeld and the lawyer … with offices in Bern, Switzerland. Named, Gumbold.”

Di Vincenzo: *in a calmer tone*, “So, now Mr. Bond need have no further interest in me.”

Standing, she leaves the party venue and is pursued by Bond who joins her at her car.

Bond: “Tracy! *Walking up behind her*, Tracy. I was always taught that mistakes should be remedied. *He rubs her shoulder*. Especially between friends. *She turns around to face him; he wipes her tears away*. Or lovers.” *We have all the time in the world begins to play; they hug*.

Di Vincenzo’s anger seems to be reserved for her father; her tears are more likely to reflect regret that his interference has negatively impacted on any potential relationship with Bond. When he finds her crying, she has adopted the persona of a damsel-in-distress and channels the agency that this gives her into making her own choice to start a relationship with him. A montage then begins in which Bond and Di Vincenzo are shown to be in love and looking at rings in a jeweller’s shop. He then goes to Gumbold’s office to see if he has any information about Blofeld, while Draco and Di Vincenzo are simultaneously seen discussing Bond’s intentions towards her.

Draco: “Such things, *referring to husbands and lovers*, should be left to a girl’s father, who knows what is best for her.”

Di Vincenzo: “But what can be better than being in love?”

Draco: “Mr. Bond, he’s … he’s in love with you?”

Di Vincenzo: “That may come too … someday.”

Draco: “Life’s too short for ‘someday’, Teresa. Tomorrow I will speak to him alone, man to man.”

Di Vincenzo: “No, Papa.”

While it is clear that Draco loves his daughter, his overbearing approach is clearly unwelcome and threatens her new-found agency. She needs to be certain that Bond’s affections are real and not the product of any financial inducement. Following their marriage, Draco continues to give his daughter instructions:

Draco: “Remember, obey you husband in all things. You promise me?”

Di Vincenzo: “But of course I will. As I always obeyed you.” *She kisses Draco and gets into the car*.

Draco: “Well, James, I wish you luck … *hands him an envelope*, for the first and last time, remember?” *Bond slides it back into Draco’s pocket*.

Bond: “An old proverb. Her price is far above rubies, or even your million pounds.” *Bond goes to get in the car*.

(*On Her Majesty’s Secret Service* (1969) Directed by Peter Hunt [DVD]. United Artists).

Di Vincenzo’s response to being asked to obey her husband suggests that her formidability will remain in spite of her married status. In refusing to accept Draco’s money, Bond increases Di Vincenzo’s agency substantially by treating her as an equal.

Another ‘formidable’ character is seen in May Day, right-hand woman to villain, Max Zorin, and James Chapman notes that ‘One aspect of *A View to a Kill* which does offer something new […] is the prominence accorded to its female villainess, Zorin’s sidekick/lover May Day’ (2009:192). Moore’s Bond is sent by MI6 to investigate Zorin under the guise of being an editor for *The Financial Times*. May Day thinks she recognises him from a previous encounter and warns Zorin that he may not be who he claims to be. May Day is tasked to prevent Bond from becoming friendly with geologist, Stacey Sutton, whose father lost his business empire to Zorin. Bond and Sutton have exchanged pleasantries when meeting at Zorin’s mansion before May Day appears:

May Day: *steps in front of Bond*. "Your (Sutton's) helicopter leaves in 20 minutes."

Bond: *steps around the other side of May Day*. "Oh, does that mean you're not staying the night? I was rather hoping we would spend the evening together. Now I shall be all alone."

Sutton: "I doubt that."

Bond: "Well, let me walk you to the chopper."

May Day: "That won't be necessary. *Sutton walks away*. Someone will take care of you."

Bond: "You'll see to that personally, will you?"

(*A View to a Kill* (1985) Directed by John Glen [DVD]. United International Pictures).

In this scene, May Day has more agency than either Bond or Sutton; her final comment and Bond's response are somewhat ambiguous. He could be referencing a fear that May Day has recognised him and that his security is therefore threatened, or he could simply be making a suggestive proposition. A short while later, May Day and Zorin are in a dojo where she is training him in martial arts and is shown to be physically competent. May Day pins Zorin to the floor, but he is able to reverse the move and she struggles to reassert dominance. At this point she starts making a biting motion, he responds by kissing her which makes her less resistant. Zorin is then interrupted by a telephone call about Bond, causing him to send May Day into Bond's room to talk to him.

Bond: "Ah, May Day, I've been waiting for you to take care of me personally. *May Day looks to Zorin, unseen by Bond, who nods and leaves. May Day is now naked*. I see you're a woman of very few words."

May Day gets into bed with Bond.

May Day: "What's there to say?" *She puts herself on top of Bond and they kiss*.

(*A View to a Kill* (1985) Directed by John Glen [DVD]. United International Pictures).

Significantly, May Day spends most of her time on top of Bond, not the other way around as is usual with Bond girls, and her physical domination of him is an exception to the rule regarding what has been labelled as the taming of American women in Bond films (Funnell & Dodds, 2015a:363). *A View to a Kill* was Moore's last film and at the age of fifty-seven he was becoming an increasingly improbable Bond (Black, 2005:145); his reliance on 'style over substance' facilitated the introduction of a character with May Day's wilfulness.

In *The World is not Enough*, the daughter of the oil baron Robert King goes to visit the new oil pipeline after her father's death, arriving by helicopter to be greeted by a mob of angry workers, who have to be restrained by her security personnel. They are annoyed because the proposed route of her pipeline will destroy a sacred cave and Davidov, King's head of security, is concerned for her safety.

> Davidov: "Miss King, I told you to stay …"
>
> King: "I know what you told me."
>
> […]
>
> King, *to her foreman*: "Send the pipeline around."
>
> *The foreman and King start walking*.
>
> Foreman: "That's going to take weeks and cost millions. Your father approved this route."
>
> King: "Then my father was wrong. Do it." *She walks away*.
>
> (*The World is not Enough* (1999) Directed by Michael Apted [DVD]. United International Pictures).

Her dismissal of the head of security's concerns is not only blunt, but also serves to highlight his inferiority to her; the Foreman is also summarily dismissed when he attempts to dissuade her from continuing with her plans to reroute the pipeline. These exchanges emphasise that King is now very definitely in charge. Shortly after this, she finds Brosnan's Bond waiting to speak with her; King references her father's death, discusses the benefits of the pipeline and trivialises his concerns for her welfare.

King: “Tell me. *They stop walking*. Have … have you ever lost a loved one, Mr. Bond?”

Bond: *inhales through his teeth*. “M sent me because we’re afraid your life might be in danger.”

King: *laughs and points towards a cabin while walking towards it*. “Please, I want to show you something. *They go inside the cabin*. I’m trying to build an 800-mile pipeline through, *points to electronic map when she mentions countries*, Turkey … past terrorists in Iraq, Iran and Syria. Up here the Russians have three competing pipelines … and they’ll do anything to stop me. *She walks towards him*. My father was murdered, the villagers are rioting …, *she sits behind her desk*, and you, Mr. Bond, have come all this way to tell me that I **might** be in danger?”

(*The World is not Enough* (1999) Directed by Michael Apted [DVD]. United International Pictures).

It is interesting that when King asks Bond if he has lost a loved one, he immediately changes the subject; perhaps wanting to avoid showing weakness by admitting his trauma over the death of Di Vincenzo, his wife. When Bond states his reasons for being there, King seems very unconcerned about the risk that is posed to her life. She sees it as inevitable that people might wish to kill her, as a lot of influential business owners are not impressed with the proposed pipeline. King’s cavalier attitude appears to frustrate Bond; like Di Vincenzo, she is resistant to accepting his help and determined to follow her own agenda. Their medieval counterparts, Alisoun and Guinevere, are equally stubborn and wilful, refusing to conform to patriarchal order. Further, although ‘formidable’ women can display considerable agency through status, where this fails to reap the desired rewards, they resort to manipulation to attempt to achieve gender equality or to attain independence and autonomy.

Agency through manipulation

Deceit is an essential weapon in a ‘formidable’ woman’s arsenal and in deploying it they pose a significant threat to patriarchal authority in Bond movies and medieval romance,

by 'living down' to the expectations men hold for them. Indeed, Alisoun boasts about women's innate capacity for trickery and highlights its effectiveness over simply nagging.

Deceite, wepyng, **spynnyng**, God hath yive [deceit; spinning (a yarn)]

To wommen **kyndely**, whil that they may lyve; [as part of their nature]

And thus of o thing I **avaunte** me: [boast]

Atte ende I hadde the bettre in ech degree,

By **sleighte**, or force, or by som maner thing [cunning]

As by continueel murmur or **grucchyng**. (ll.401-406). [chiding]

Alisoun states that God has bestowed women with several qualities that can be used to further their causes: dishonesty, weeping and spinning, and as a cloth maker, Alisoun was a very competent spinner of yarns in more ways than one. In striving to gain sovereignty through any means necessary, 'formidable women' are seen as being very different to the emotionally and intellectually inferior romance heroines that Susan Crane describes as usually inhabiting medieval texts (1987:21). 'Formidable' women will use any agency at their disposal to achieve their aims, even adopting the diametrically opposed persona of the damsel-in-distress; in this way, by lowering a man's metaphorical defences, they are able to appeal to chivalric virtues in order to meet their objectives. Alisoun exploits this strategy when her anger and resentment builds due to her fifth husband, Jankyn, taking up all of his free time reading *The Book of Wykked Wyves* and quoting large sections to her that prove the dangers of women. When it becomes clear to her that he will never stop, she rips three pages out of the book and punches him on the cheek in her fury.

And whan I saugh he **wolde** nevere **fyne** [would not; finish]

To reden on this cursed book al nyght,

Al sodeynly thre **leves** have I **plyght** [leaves/pages; pulled]

Out of his book, right as he radde, and eke

I with my fest so took hym on the cheke

That in oure fyr he fil bakward adoun; (ll.788-793).

Immediately springing back to his feet, he punches her on the head and she seizes the opportunity to reclaim her agency by 'playing the damsel' and pretending that he has killed her.

And he **up stirte** as dooth a **wood leoun**, [jumped up; crazed lion]

And with his fest he smoot me on the heed,

That in the floor I lay as I were deed.

And whan he saugh how stille that I lay

He was **agast** and wolde **han** fled his way; (ll.794-798). [astonished; have]

Her trickery in 'playing dead' increases in magnitude when she makes a swift recovery and accuses him of trying to murder her in order to inherit her land and wealth.

Til atte laste out of my swogh I **breyde**. [woke]

"O! hastow slayn me, false **theef**?," I seyde, [thief]

"And for my land thus hastow **mordred** me?" (ll.799-801). [murdered]

Mortified by this affront to his decency and chivalry, Jankyn gives Alisoun sovereignty over him as a form of recompense. Mary Carruthers notes that 'The husband deserves control of the wife because he controls the estate […]' (1979:214). In spite of this, Jankyn is remorseful and chooses to confer sovereignty in order to show his *fraunchyse*.

And seyde, "Deere suster Alisoun,

As help me God, I shal thee never smyte!

That I have doon, it is thyself to **wyte**." (ll.804-806) [blame]

"By **maistrie**, al the soveraynetee, [overcoming]

And that he seyde, “myn owene trewe wyf,

Do as thee lust the terme of al thy lyf;” (ll.818-820)

After Jankyn’s gift, Alisoun goes on to say that they never argued from that point forward. The theme of sovereignty continues in *The Wife of Bath’s Tale*, when the rapist knight ventures across the kingdom but is unable to find a consensus in women’s views regarding what they most desire. As he despondently starts the journey home, he sees a group of ladies dancing in a forest and approaches them in the hope that they might have wisdom to share with him. As he reaches them, they vanish and the only woman remaining is an ugly old hag, quite possibly le Fay or one of her helpers, who rises to greet him.

And seyde, “Sire Knight, heer forth ne lith no wey.

Tel me what ye seken, by youre **fey**! [faith]

Paraventure it may the bettre be; [perhaps]

Thise olde folk **kan muchel** thyng,” quod sche. (ll.1001-1004). [know many]

When he explains his predicament, she asks for his word that he will do whatever she requests of him in return for the answer.

“**Plight me thy trouthe** heere in myn hand,” quod sche, [give me your word]

“The nexte thyng that I requere thee,

Thou shalt it do, if it lye in thy might,

And I wol telle it yow **er** it be nyght.” (ll.1009-1012). [before]

Agreeing to this condition, the knight allows the hag to whisper the answer into his ear and having been reassured that it is the answer the Queen herself would give; he makes his way confidently to the court where the Queen and her assembled maidens stand in silence waiting for his answer.

This kynght ne stood nat stille as doth a best,

But to this questioun anon answerde

With manly voys, that al the court it herde:

"My lige lady, generally," quod he,

"Wommen desiren to have **sovereynetee**, [rule]

As wel over hir housbond as hir **love**, [lover]

And for to been in **maistrie** hym above. [power/authority]

This is youre mooste desir […]." (ll.1034-1041).

For a moment he is still nervous that he might be killed, but then it is clear that he has answered well as every woman says that he is worthy of keeping his life.

In al the court ne was ther wyf, ne mayde,

Ne wydwe that **contraried** that he sayde, [argued against]

But seyden he was worthy han his lyf; (ll.1043-1045)

Although at this point appearing helpful, in reality the hag manipulates the knight into promising 'payment' for her wisdom by playing on his desperation; her actions are comparable to Alisoun's when she deceives Jankyn into believing he has killed her. Both women have ulterior motives, each seeking to evoke a chivalrous response from a man that will meet their hidden agendas. The hag's 'formidability' is not revealed until later, but her use of magic shows clear parallels with Morgan le Fay, who Maureen Fries notes '[…] is the oldest and most persistent Arthurian example of the female counter-hero […]' (1994:3). Le Fay causes mischief in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* when her Green Knight serves as an affront to King Arthur's court, the epitome of chivalry. Appearing unannounced at the beginning of this romance poem, the Green Knight mocks the Round Table knights, challenging their nobility and reputation, before launching a scathing verbal attack on the King.

"What is þis Arþures hous," quoþ þe haþel þenne,

"Þat al þe rous rennes of þurȝ ryalmes so mony?

Where is now your sourquydrye and your conquestes,

Your gryndellayk and your greme and your grete wordes?

Now is þe reuel and þe renoun of þe Round Table

Ouerwalt wyth a worde of on wyȝes speche,

For al dares for drede withoute dynt schewed!" (ll.309-315).

["What! is this Arthur's house," said the man then, "about which all the talk runs through so many realms? Where now are your pride and your triumphs, your ferocity and your anger, and your bragging words? Now the revelry and the renown of the Round Table have been overthrown by a single word from one man's mouth, for all of you cowering with fear without a blow being offered!"] (Barron, 2001:49).

Even though she is not present at the confrontation, le Fay is indirectly responsible for Arthur's initial acceptance of the challenge and then for Gawain volunteering to fight the Green Knight on the court's behalf.

"I am þe wakkest, I wot, and of wyt feblest,

And lest lur of my lyf, quo laytes þe soþe.

Bot for as much as ȝe ar myn em I am only to prayse;

No bounté bot your blod I in my bode knowe" (ll.354-357).

["I am the weakest, I know, and the most deficient in understanding, and my life would be the smallest loss, if the truth be known. I am only to be esteemed in as much as you are my uncle; I acknowledge no virtue in myself except your blood."] (Barron, 2001:51).

Gawain sees himself as eminently expendable and takes up the challenge in order to protect Arthur. While this is a noble act on his part, his womanising reputation unwittingly plays into le Fay's hands, allowing Gawain to be exposed to the sexually alluring Lady Bertilak. In *Le Morte d'Arthur*, 'formidability' is also realised through magic

when another enchantress, Dame Brusen, assists with a seduction that enables King Pellés to fulfil a prophecy that his daughter, Elaine, will bear the child of Lancelot. Aware of the knight's deep love for Guinevere and that Lancelot would refuse any overt sexual advances from Elaine, who very much desires him, the king turns to the Dame to manufacture a deception. Allegedly escorted to Queen Guinevere's bedroom, Lancelot is given 'wine' to drink, which makes Elaine take on Guinevere's appearance and acts, as with Perceval, as an aphrodisiac.

> So when Sir Lancelot was alit, he asked where the queen was; so Dame Brusen said she was in her bed. And then the people were avoided, and Sir Lancelot was led into her chamber. And then Dame Brusen brought Sir Lancelot a cup of wine, and anon as he had drunk that wine he was so besotted and mad that he might make no delay; but without any let he went to bed, and so he weened that maiden Elaine had been Queen Guinevere. And wit you well that Sir Lancelot was glad, and so was that lady Elaine that she got Sir Lancelot in her arms […]. (p.284).

In fulfilling her father's wishes, Elaine also gains what she desires most in claiming Lancelot as a sexual partner. Her agency is short-lived, however, as Lancelot realises his mistake on waking; although he absolves Elaine from blame, he makes it clear that they have no future together. Angry with Dame Brusen, he says that she should face beheading for her witchcrafts. It is later revealed that Elaine has borne Lancelot's child, much to the chagrin of Guinevere.

> And so the noise sprang in King Arthur's court that Sir Lancelot had begotten a child upon Elaine, the daughter of King Pelles; wherefore Queen Guinevere was wroth, and she gave many rebukes to Sir Lancelot, and called him false knight. And then Sir Lancelot told the Queen all, and how he was made to lie by her 'in the likeness of you, my lady the queen'. And so the Queen held Sir Lancelot excused. (p.285).

Like Bond, Lancelot's virility attracts female adulation; unlike Bond, he is constrained by the complexities of the medieval chivalric code, leading to situations where he is placed in almost impossible positions by the desires of 'formidable' women. One such instance occurs in *The Knight of the Cart* (*c.*1180), when undertaking a mission to free Guinevere from imprisonment by Meliagaunt, Lancelot is offered

accommodation at a damsel's house, but at great cost to his personal integrity. This damsel desires sexual relations with him as payment for her hospitality, but his agreement would dishonour his deep love for Guinevere. The damsel welcomes him, but makes her hospitality conditional:

> But you may lodge there
>
> Only if you agree to sleep with me – (ll.943-944).

When Lancelot is reluctant, she tells him angrily that many men would have thanked her profusely for such an offer and that the terms are non-negotiable.

> "By my eyes," said the girl,
>
> "On no other condition will I lodge you."
>
> The knight, when he saw he could not do otherwise,
>
> Granted her what she wished,
>
> Though it distressed his heart to do so. (ll.954-958).

Aware of Lancelot's discomfort, as night falls, the damsel pretends that she is being raped by her own guards in order to appeal to his *fraunchyse*:

> The girl, who thought surely
>
> That he would help her,
>
> Screamed out: "Help! Help!
>
> Sir knight – you who are my guest –
>
> If you do not pull this other knight from off me" (ll.1068-1072)
>
> "He will shame me before your eyes!
>
> You are the one to share my bed,
>
> As you have sworn to me!" (ll.1073-1075).

Lancelot rushes to her rescue and challenges several knights, some of whom are guarding the door to her bed chamber, while another has her pinned naked to the bed. When Lancelot has fought valiantly with them, the damsel suddenly dismisses them and they leave without question.

"You have defended me well, sir,

Against my entire household.

Now come along with me." (ll.1189-1191).

The damsel leads him to a fine bed covered with silk cloth and lies down on it; he removes most of his clothing and joins her but refuses to look at her. It is clear that he is only fulfilling an obligation; Guinevere exerts sovereignty over him even in her absence. There is no suggestion that this damsel is a seductress, her objectives are in no way connected to derailing his quest to free Guinevere; nor does she rely on simply using her sexual allure. Her underlying motives are entirely personal and she attempts to achieve them by exerting mastery over him, by virtue of the promise he makes to her. Although Lancelot is prepared to reluctantly do her bidding, this is not enough for her; the damsel wants a reciprocal interaction which would signal an equal relationship between them. Her 'formidability' is designed to inflame his desire for her not to force him into an unwanted exchange.

Said she: "If it does not displease you,

Sir, I will depart from here

And go to bed in my own room

So you might be more at ease. (ll.1248-1251)

For you have kept so faithfully

Your promise that I have no right

To ask even the least thing more of you. (ll.1257-1259).

This is the only 'formidable' woman who is 'repositioned' (see p.6 above) by the hero she targets; in refusing her advances, Lancelot exposes the immoral nature of her desires and makes her rethink her position. Her dealings with him thereafter are entirely courteous. This damsel fails to gain mastery over Lancelot and, in line with medieval convention, his standing is enhanced by not succumbing to temptation. For Bond, audience expectation is very different, the aim for him is always seduction as his reputation depends on sexual conquests. Towards the start of *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*, Lazenby's Bond arrives at a casino and recognises a car outside as belonging to the woman he saved in the film's opening credits – a woman whom the casino owner identifies as Contessa Teresa Di Vincenzo. Joining Bond's high-stakes card game, Di Vincenzo loses and tells a bystander she cannot afford to pay for her loss. Bond then claims that she agreed they would be partners for the evening; Di Vincenzo makes no comment and simply walks away, taking a seat at a table. Bond follows and makes a drinks order for them.

> Di Vincenzo: *with her hand on cheek, looking unimpressed. Whispers*. "Why do you persist in rescuing me, Mr. Bond?"
>
> Bond: *speaking normally*. "It's becoming a habit, isn't it, Contessa Teresa?"
>
> Di Vincenzo: *who is still unimpressed*. "Teresa was a saint. I'm known as Tracy."
>
> Bond: *who is unperturbed*. "Well, Tracy, next time play it safe and stand on five."
>
> Di Vincenzo: *removes her hand from her cheek*. "People who want to stay alive play it safe."
>
> Bond: "Please stay alive, *he pauses*, at least for tonight."
>
> Di Vincenzo: *stands and drops her key on the table.* "Come later. I hope it'll be worth it …"
>
> (*On Her Majesty's Secret Service* (1969) Directed by Peter Hunt [DVD]. United Artists).

Di Vincenzo refuses to acknowledge Bond as her saviour and instead offers sexual favours in repayment of her 'debt' to him. Tony Garland states that 'Tracy is

deliberately antagonistic toward Bond, even after he saves her life and rescues her from disgrace in a casino' (2009:183). Di Vincenzo demonstrates agency, both by offering 'repayment sex' and then by deceiving him into thinking she will keep her part of their agreement. When Bond appears twirling the keys to her suite and enters the room, there is no sign of her; a large man (probably a bodyguard employed by her father) ambushes Bond, leading to a fight. After winning the battle, Bond returns to his room and removes his gun holster and jacket, putting them on a chair. As Bond starts to take off his shirt in front of the mirror, Di Vincenzo stealthily removes his pistol from the holster and aims at him. He slowly turns around and looks at her.

Bond: "You're full of surprises, Contessa."

Di Vincenzo: "So are you, Mr. Bond. *They walk towards each other*. Do you always arm yourself for a rendezvous?"

Bond: "Occasionally, I seem to be accident-prone. I'll take that (the gun) if you don't mind."

Di Vincenzo: "You're very sure of yourself, aren't you? *Slightly aggressive tone*, suppose I were to kill you for a thrill."

Bond: "I can think of something more sociable to do. *He grabs her wrist to disarm her*. Will you stop playing games? Who was that man in your room?"

Bond is expected to be able to seduce any woman at will, but Di Vincenzo's unpredictability becomes a problem, highlighted by his more aggressive attitude towards her.

Di Vincenzo: *is looking away from him*. "You're hurting me."

Bond: *pulls her arm to make her face him*. "I thought that was the idea. Now, who was he?"

Di Vincenzo denies any knowledge of the assailants, unaware that one of them is listening outside the door. She is then shown lying on the hotel bed and Bond tells her that she is 'extraordinary'.

Di Vincenzo: “I’m not interested in your opinion of me, Mr. Bond. I’m here for a business transaction.” *Bond walks towards her*.

Bond: “Really? *He sits beside her and smells her hand*. Isn’t Le Bleu a bit heady for that?”

Di Vincenzo: *is still unimpressed*. “So you know your perfumes. What else do you know?”

Bond: *turns to face her*. “A little about women.”

Di Vincenzo: *using a firm tone*. “Think about me … as a woman you’ve just bought.”

Bond: “Who needs to buy? *Bond tries to kiss Di Vincenzo but she turns away*. Look, you don’t owe me a thing. *He holds her hand*. I think you’re in some sort of trouble. Would you like to talk about it?”

Di Vincenzo: “No, Mr. Bond. The only thing you need know about me is that I pay my debts.”

Bond awakes alone the next morning and is informed by reception that Di Vincenzo has checked out; he finds two 10,000 franc casino chips in a bedside drawer. Di Vincenzo has more agency than many of the women he has seduced; she did not ask for help and sees their inevitable sexual encounter as a means to achieve autonomy, as she also repays him financially. Although Di Vincenzo repeatedly finds herself cast as a damsel-in-distress, her head-strong nature ensures that she resolutely resists adopting this persona. Her ‘formidability’ is shown when she helps Bond escape from Blofeld’s clinic. Bond goes undercover to investigate the legitimacy of Blofeld’s allergy research clinic, where young, female patients are actually being brainwashed. After Bond’s cover is blown he escapes and skis down the mountain, with Blofeld’s female accomplice Bunt in pursuit. Before she can apprehend him, Di Vincenzo appears and drives Bond away in her car. Although Bunt gives chase, Di Vincenzo is able to lose her.

Bond: “No sign of them yet,” *referring to their pursuers*.

Di Vincenzo: “Or of someone saying thank you.”

Bond: “Thank you, Tracy. You’ve got sharp eyes and beautiful … ear lobes. What were you doing so near Piz Gloria?”

Di Vincenzo: “Now I have a new interest in life.”

Bond: “Winter sports? Very wholesome.”

Di Vincenzo: “Just one winter sportsman. And Papa told me where to find him.” *She gazes at him*.

Di Vincenzo veers into oncoming traffic, and is startled by a car horn.

Bond: “Just keep my mind on your driving.”

The humorous tone of this interaction indicates that Di Vincenzo has warmed to Bond. Her quick witted replies serve as a playful enticement rather than outright rejection. Acquiring Bond as a new interest appears at first glance to contradict Di Vincenzo’s desire for independence, however, it could simply be that she has acknowledged that a relationship with him might improve her status while simultaneously preserving her autonomy. Having driven into the countryside, when Bond is unable to contact London for help and the weather worsens, he and Di Vincenzo take shelter in a barn. She asks about Bond’s mission at the clinic, but he declines to provide any details and so she tells him to forget about his job and kisses him. When Bond says that his job demands his full attention, Di Vincenzo assumes he is making it clear she will always take second place. Her formidability appears to wane in the face of her love for him; his doubts about being able to tame her seem unfounded.

Di Vincenzo: “I understand. We’ll just have to go on the way we are.”

Bond: “No. I’ll have to find something else to do.”

Di Vincenzo: “Are you sure, James?”

Bond: “I love you. I know I’ll never find another girl like you. Will you marry me?”

Di Vincenzo: “D’you mean it?”

The idea of Bond settling down with one woman would subvert the conventions of the franchise and would entirely change his *modus operandi*. Claire Hines states that '[…] Bond's love affair and marriage to Tracy Di Vincenzo has the potential to test some of the popular aspects of the Bond fantasy and formula' (2018:152). Funnell and Dodds make an interesting comparison between Bond in this film and Felix Leiter in *License to kill* (1989). They say that '[marriage] divides the agent's loyalty between his job and family, rendering him unable and/or unwilling to do whatever it takes to complete the mission at hand' (2015a:366). This is certainly a valid point given that it would both give him an Achilles' heel that villains would undoubtedly target, and stifle his seductive prowess. This scene seals Di Vincenzo's fate which is not to become a doting wife, but a victim of Bond convention.

Bond and Di Vincenzo then continue their escape on skis, but Blofeld triggers an avalanche and she is captured. When M refuses to help Bond rescue Di Vincenzo, he and Draco take up the challenge and go the research centre. Di Vincenzo and Blofeld are shown in the villain's office.

Blofeld: "I shall be able to offer you, *puts a glass of champagne over her shoulder*, anything your heart could wish for."

Di Vincenzo: *takes the drink and stands*. "Paid for with how many lives?" *She starts walking to another chair*.

Blofeld: "Oh, come now Tracy, don't be so … proud. *He walks towards her*. Your own father's profession is not entirely within the law. *Bond and Draco are shown in a helicopter approaching the base; they do not have clearance to be there*. Now, if you're very, very nice to me, *he holds her hand*, I could make you my countess" *He kisses her hand*.

Di Vincenzo: *removes her hand*. "But I'm already a countess."

Di Vincenzo's agency in this situation is much higher than it would first appear in that he obviously does not want to kill her or return her to Bond; he wants her to choose to be with him. Di Vincenzo does not want anything that Blofeld has to offer; financial gain is not on her agenda; what she desires is autonomy and freedom of choice.

However, she is intelligent enough to realise that distracting Blofeld will allow Bond to rescue her and so she exploits the villain's arrogance.

Di Vincenzo: "I've been thinking … about your proposition." *She sits on the settee, looking up at Blofeld*. Please, tell me more." *Bond and Draco are able to persuade the person on the radio to send away the fighter jets*.

Blofeld: *sits beside her*. "There's a lot more to tell …, *he unzips his jacket and leans in towards her*, but there'll be plenty of time later." *He goes to kiss her; she gently grabs his hands*.

Di Vincenzo: "Take me to the Alpine room."

Blofeld: "Oh? Are you unhappy here?"

Di Vincenzo: "Oh, I want to see the dawn."

Di Vincenzo seizes the initiative by removing Blofeld from the vicinity of the radio room; he sees this as a victory for him because she seems responsive and might become a sexual 'conquest'. In reality, it removes Blofeld from his most useful position and gives Bond and Draco a chance to attack the clinic. In the ensuing battle, Di Vincenzo is able to defeat a couple of Blofeld's henchmen and, having briefly reunited with Bond, is taken to her father's helicopter by some of his men.

Draco, *to Di Vincenzo*: "Where are you going?"

Di Vincenzo: "Papa, where's James." *Draco grabs Di Vincenzo*.

Draco: "Don't worry he'll join us soon." *He drags her towards the helicopter*.

[…]

Di Vincenzo: "I will not go without him."

Draco: "You'll have to. *He knocks her unconscious, one of his men stops her falling; both put her into the helicopter*. Spare the rod and spoil the child, eh?" *Draco and Di Vincenzo leave*.

Draco seems to defend his violent approach as essential to ensure his daughter's safety. As with the scene involving Bond and his gun earlier, where he slaps her, it is unsettling that Draco's behaviour also seems to be deemed as the most valid method to make Di Vincenzo conform to patriarchal authority.

Bond is removing flowers from their car after their marriage, when Blofeld drives past and Bunt opens fire on them from his car. As Bond climbs back into the car, the camera reveals that Di Vincenzo has been fatally shot in the head. A policeman arrives as Bond is seen kissing Di Vincenzo's neck.

> Bond: "It's all right. It's quite all right, really. She's having a rest. We'll be going on soon. *He shows the policeman her wedding ring*. There's no hurry, you see. We have all the time in the world." *Bond kisses the ring and then sobs*.
>
> (*On Her Majesty's Secret Service* (1969) Directed by Peter Hunt [DVD]. United Artists).

This scene begins with the notion that Bond could have a family; however, this dream is devastatingly taken away from him by Di Vincenzo's killing. The film then concludes with a scene which shows a motif uncommon in the franchise; 'the death of Tracy immediately after her marriage to Bond establishes an emotional vulnerability […]' (Garland, 2009:183). Bond's refusal to believe that she has died shows him in a completely different light to the usual masculine bravado he exhibits. Unfortunately, the film's ending was not well received at the box office (Black, 2005:126); Bond always has to triumph and Blofeld is portrayed as the clear winner here.

Where Di Vincenzo has every reason to adopt a damsel-in-distress persona but staunchly refuses, King, in *The World is Not Enough*, repeatedly casts herself in the role of victim. The fluidity of the 'formidable' persona allows her to exploit the agency of the damsel-in-distress to deceive Bond and M, and conceal her sinister agenda. Her capacity for deceit is first highlighted when Brosnan's Bond shows her the device used to trigger the explosion which killed her father.

> Bond: "We suspect there might be an insider."
>
> King: *takes the pin*. "My father's pin."

Bond: “No. A duplicate. With a transmitter inside which set off the bomb.”

King: “My family has relied on MI6 twice, Mr. Bond. I won’t make that mistake a third time. I’m going to finish building this pipeline and I don’t need your help. Now, *they shake hands*, if you’ll excuse me, I have to check the survey lines.”

(*The World is not Enough* (1999) Directed by Michael Apted [DVD]. United International Pictures).

Still casting herself in the role of victim in spite of having orchestrated her father’s death, King appeals to Bond’s *fraunchyse* in order to make him feel guilty about the failings of MI6 with regard to her family. Blinded by her pretence, Bond fails to detect any sign of her involvement in the explosion that killed her father, or her alleged kidnapping that precipitated it. Determined to protect her, Bond insists on accompanying her for the survey and they are taken by helicopter to the pipeline. The pilot tells them that it is too windy to land, so King and Bond jump out of the aircraft and land on the mountainside, wearing skis. Chased by a number of heavily armed men, Bond and King have successfully fought off several assailants when two vehicles collide and the resulting explosion triggers an avalanche. As a result, the ground on which they are standing collapses and they are engulfed by snow. Bond pulls a cord on his jacket activating a device which inflates a protective bubble, giving him and King a safe place to plan a way out.

King: “Oh, my God, we’re buried alive!”

Bond: “It’s all right! It’s all right!” *He uses a knife to pierce their protective covering*.

[…]

King: “I can’t breathe!”

Bond: “Elektra!”

King: “I can’t breathe!”

Bond: *shakes her*. "Elektra, look at me! Look at my eyes! *He holds her head*. Look at my eyes! Look at my eyes! You're okay. Everything's all right. Trust me, *whispering*, okay. Trust me." *They leave through the hole Bond punched*.

Having already cast herself as a resentful victim, King then chooses to perform the role of a damsel-in-distress; showcasing the chameleonic nature of a 'formidable' woman's agency. Returning to her home in Baku, she is examined by her doctor who tells Bond afterwards that King wants to see him. When he goes up to King's bedroom, she is sitting on the bed waiting for him and continues to inhabit the damsel-in-distress persona with consummate ease.

Bond: "Are you all right?"

King: "I need to ask you something. And I want you to tell me the truth. Who is it? Who is trying to kill me?"

Bond: "I told you, I don't know. But I'm gonna find him."

King: "Not good enough. After the kidnapping I was afraid. I was afraid to go outside, afraid to be alone, afraid to be in a crowd. I was afraid to do anything at all. Until I realised … I can't hide in the shadows. I can't let fear run my life."

Bond: "[…] After I find him … you won't have to."

King: *looks into his eyes*. "Don't go. Stay with me. Please."

Bond: *leans towards her*. "I can't do that."

King: "I thought that it was your job to protect me."

King has clearly invoked Bond's *fraunchyse*, but becomes petulant when he will not acquiesce to her demands. Her formidability is far more obvious than that of many Bond girls, who either start out as or become subservient to Bond, obeying him without question. Bond later goes to a casino which is owned by an underworld contact, Zukovsky, and having been told to stay home, King unexpectedly arrives shortly afterwards.

Bond, *to King*: “What are you doing here?”

King: “The same thing you are. Looking for the people who tried to kill me.”

Bond: *sounding annoyed*. “Let me take you home, now.”

King: “No. I want them to see I’m not frightened.”

Bond is visibly annoyed that King has disobeyed him, while she stays calm and focused on manipulating him; her alleged assassins are part of her plan. Portraying herself as an unwilling damsel-in-distress allows her to keep him close and yet simultaneously remain in control. At this point, Zukovsky arrives to greet King and states that her father’s seat is available at the poker table and that she can play with his funds. King and Zukovsky play a high-stakes game of cards, in which she places a bet of $1 million.

Bond: “Wait. Bury the top three cards.”

Zukovsky nods agreement for the dealer to do this.

King: *looks at Bond*. “You’re determined to protect me.”

Bond: “Perhaps from yourself. You don’t have to do this.”

King: “There’s no point in living if you can’t feel alive.”

Zukovsky beats her in the card game and she loses the money.

Bond finds King’s unpredictability difficult to manage; having painted herself as a ‘damsel’, she immediately switches role and extends an obvious sexual invitation to him, that given his reputation, would be difficult to turn down.

King, *to Bond*: “Shall we?”

Bond: “Elektra … this is a game I can’t afford to play.”

King: “I know.”

Bond: “What happened to Davidov?”

King: “I gave him the night off.”

Bond and King are shown in her bed and King takes an ice cube to rub on Bond’s injured shoulder.

King: “Aw, your shoulder. It looks painful.”

Bond: “Mm-hm. *He strokes her hair*. It needs constant attention.” *They kiss*.

King: “I knew. I knew when I first saw you. *They kiss*. I knew it would be like this.” *King passes an ice cube into Bond’s mouth from hers*.

King is not dissimilar to Chaucer’s Alisoun in this scenario; both women need the status that their partner, whether husband or lover gives them, but desire greater sexual fulfilment. Alisoun is constrained by her marriage vows whereas King’s obvious appreciation of Bond gives the first glimpse that she is not in thrall to Renard. Bond uses the intimacy of the moment to ask about her kidnapping.

Bond: “How did you survive?”

King turns away from him and so he draws closer to her.

King: “I seduced the guards. Used my body. It gave me control. And the rest, I got a gun and started shooting. And what about you? *She turns towards him*. What do you do to survive?”

Bond: *looks at her*. “I take pleasure … in great beauty.”

It is noteworthy that this is a love scene in which Bond has a visible injury; perhaps there is a metaphorical reasoning behind this, suggesting he has become susceptible to King’s charms. By ministering to his needs, she is able to lie about her escape from captivity ensuring his *fraunchyse* without making him suspicious. Unlike with many of the women Bond beds, he never seems in control of the situation with King. Her ability to exploit his ‘sexual reputation’ alongside manipulating his *cortaysye* and appealing to his *fraunchyse*, compromise his ability to see her real motives. When King goes to sleep, Bond sneaks away so that he can secretly investigate Renard. A couple of days later, King again assumes her ‘damsel’ guise and contacts M via video call to notify her that Bond has gone missing.

King: “I’m sorry. I would never call you, except … James has disappeared. He left my villa in the middle of the night and … my head of security has been found … near a local airstrip – murdered.”

M: “I’ll send someone out.”

King: “M … could you come? I can’t help thinking … I’m next.”

M: “Get me out there.”

Tanner (M’s assistant): “No. Listen …”

M: “Just get me out there.”

King’s alleged vulnerability deliberately plays on the guilt that M (Judi Dench) feels about incorrectly advising Robert King during the kidnapping, and is designed to target M’s motherly nature. Phoebe Pua notes that King’s manipulation is achieved by ‘drawing on [M’s] feelings of maternal protection’ (2018:99) and King also exploits a kind of female *felaʒschyp* between them in order to entice her to Baku. Having failed to protect Robert King, M panics that his daughter could be next, and despite Tanner’s best efforts, M cannot be dissuaded from travelling. Moments after the call between King and M ends, Bond returns to King’s home, having fought with Renard who targeted his injured shoulder and, angry, makes a dramatic appearance.

King: “What’s wrong with you? Are you crazy?”

Bond: “Maybe. Or maybe I should ask you. After all there’s no point in, *angry tone*, living if you can’t feel alive. Isn’t that right, Elektra? Isn’t that your motto?”

King: “What?”

Bond: “Or did you steal it from your old friend Renard?”

King: “What?”

Bond: “We had a little chat. Knew all about us, my shoulder, exactly where to hurt me.”

King: “Are you saying that Renard is the man who is trying to kill me?”

Bond: “Drop the act. Hm? It’s over.”

Bond realises that Renard and King have communicated, but reaches the wrong conclusion about why; still unable to cast King as a villain, he incorrectly assumes that she has become emotionally attached to Renard, her alleged kidnapper.

King: “I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

Bond: “Oh, I think you do. It’s called Stockholm Syndrome. Common in kidnappings. Young, impressionable victim. Sheltered … sexually inexperienced … a powerful kidnapper, skilled in torture, manipulation. *He clicks his fingers in front of her face*. Something snaps in the victim’s mind. The captive falls in love with her captor.”

King: “How dare you!” *She slaps him*. “How dare you! That animal? That monster? He disgusts me. **You** disgust me. So he knew where to hurt you, is that it? You had a sling on your arm at the funeral. I didn’t have to sleep with you to find that out.”

Bond: “He used your exact words.”

King: “So you knew all the time that he was out there? That he was coming for me? And you lied? You used me. You used me as bait. You made love to me. To pass the time as you waited for him to strike?

(*The World is not Enough* (1999) Directed by Michael Apted [DVD]. United International Pictures).

King retains agency in their exchange by remaining one step ahead of Bond at every turn; he still refuses to believe that she has orchestrated events and sees Renard as the mastermind.

> […] the beguiling Elektra King toyed with this Bond’s emotions, sexually using and discarding him to get to M in *The World Is Not Enough*. […] This plot element ably put some male viewers in the uncomfortable position shared by most ‘Bond women’ in earlier movies. (Arp & Decker, in South & Held, ed. 2006:212).

Like King, other 'formidable' women are equally adept at gaining agency through status, whether by marriage, social standing, or expertise, and where status alone fails to reap the desired rewards they become expert manipulators of men in order to acquire autonomy. For some 'formidable' women, this is sufficient; in marrying Bond, Di Vincenzo breaks free from her father and gains a husband who views her as an equal. However, there are 'formidable' women, like Chaucer's Alisoun, who desire something more than equality and strive instead for sovereignty over their husbands and marriages.

Agency achieving sovereignty

By the time she is contemplating a fifth husband, Alisoun has employed both status and manipulation to great effect to consolidate her wealth and improve her social standing. No longer concerned with increasing her material worth, she turns her attention to her innermost desires.

> We wommen han, if that I shal nat lye,
>
> In this matere a queynte fantasye:
>
> **Wayte what** thyng we may nat lightly have, [whatever]
>
> Therafter wol we crie al day and crave.
>
> Forbede us thyng, and that desiren we; (ll.515-519).

Alisoun makes it clear that women yearn for 'forbidden fruit', epitomised in her initial description of the much younger man, the clerk, Jankyn, who will become her fifth husband.

> […] me thoughte he hadde a paire
>
> Of legges and of feet so clene and faire
>
> That al myn **herte I yaf** unto his hoold. [heart; gave]
>
> He was, I trowe, twenty wynter oold,
>
> And I was fourty, if I shal seye **sooth**; (ll.597-601). [truth]

Having feigned desolation at the death of her lecherous fourth husband, her depiction of Jankyn shows her, for probably the first time in her life, to be madly in love.

I folwed **ay** myn **inclinacioun** [always; feelings]

By vertu of my constellacioun,

That made me I koude noght withdrawe. (ll.615-617).

Alisoun exercises freedom in ignoring convention and following her heart; she then bitterly regrets her impetuosity in bequeathing her land and wealth to Jankyn when it becomes clear that he has no respect for her independent spirit.

And to hym yaf I al the lond and **fee** [rents]

That evere was me yeven therbifoore.

But afterward repented me ful soore;

He nolde suffre nothyng of **my list**. (ll.630-633). [my will]

Alisoun loves Jankyn in spite of his shortcomings and needs to find a way to hold on to him without compromising her hard-won autonomy. In a not dissimilar manner to Gawain's moralising speech at the end of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (*c*.1375) (see pp.189-190 below), Jankyn regularly quotes from *The Book of Wykked Wyves*, reinforcing the impact of bad women on good men, citing Adam and Sampson as exemplars. Indeed, Delilah in the Sampson story as recounted here is herself an example of a 'formidable' woman.

Of Eva first, that for hir wikkednesse

Was al mankynde broght to wrecchednesse, (ll.715-716)

Tho redde he me how Sampson loste his **heres:** [hair]

Slepynge, his **lemman** kitte it with hir **sheres**, [lover; scissors]

Thurgh which treson loste he bothe his **yen**. (ll.721-723) [eyes]

Alisoun laments the fact that women do not have the authority to write such texts and challenges the reputation of women as depicted in writings by male authors.

To reden on this book of wikked wyves.

He knew of hem mo legendes and lyves

Than been of goode wyves in the Bible.

For trusteth wel, it is an **impossible** [impossibility]

That any clerk wol speke good of wyves, (ll.685-689).

Men laud heroes and saints.

But if it be of hooly seintes lyves,

Ne of noon oother womman never the mo. (ll.690-691).

And women's perspectives are not considered.

Who peyntede the **leon**, tel me who? [lion]

By God, if wommen hadde writen stories,

As clerkes han withinne hire **oratories**, [cells]

They wolde han writen of men moore wikkednesse

Than al the mark of Adam may redresse. (ll.692-696).

Ironically, Alisoun achieves sovereignty by utilising the very book with which Jankyn regularly regaled her; by feigning death when he strikes her with the book, she appeals to his *fraunchyse*. Mortified by his actions, Jankyn apologises and grants Alisoun sovereignty over him. In that instant, she has achieved her greatest desires; she has wealth, land, status, and the greatest prize of all: mastery over her husband. However, there is a suggestion in the *Prologue* that Jankyn is already dead (ll.793-797) and this may explain an earlier comment she makes to the pilgrims about seeking a sixth husband (ll.45-46). Her sovereignty will have died with him as it is highly unlikely that her next

husband will grant her such power, unless of course she returns to her scheming and 'formidable' ways.

In Alisoun's *Tale*, the knight's relief at keeping his life is short-lived when the old hag reappears and reminds him of their agreement; she gave him the answer in return for doing her bidding and she wishes to be his wife.

"Bifore the court thanne preye I thee, Sir Knyght,"

Quod sche, "that thou me take unto thy wif,

For wel thou **woost** that I have **kept** thy lif. [know; saved]

If I seye fals, sey nay, **upon thy fey**!" (ll.1054-1057). [upon your faith]

Devasted, he tries to persuade her to ask for something else, but when she insists he marries her secretly, hiding himself away for the rest of the day. On their wedding night, he is reluctant to touch her, and when she asks why, he says it is because she is ugly. The old hag then offers him a choice: either she is ugly and honest or pretty and wanton.

"**Chese** now", quod sche, "oon of thise thinges **tweye**: [choose; two]

To han me foul and old til that I deye,

And be to yow a trewe humble wyf,

And nevere yow displease in al my lyf,

Or elles ye wold han me yong and fair." (ll.1219-1223).

Douglas Wurtele explains that '[The young knight] has to take it on trust that the transformation will occur and, more important, has to make an unpleasant moral decision.' (1987:55).

"My lady and my love, and wyf so deere,

I put me in youre wise governance;

Cheseth youreself which may be moost pleasance

And moost honour to yow and me also.

I do no fors the wheither of the tuo, [I do not care]

For as yow liketh, **it suffiseth me**." (ll.1230-1235). [it is good enough for me]

The knight seems to have learned from experience that women most desire sovereignty in marriage when he responds by giving his wife the freedom to choose, and the hag's response is almost instantaneous; her decision is that the knight will have a beautiful and true wife. This transformation obviously points to a magical element in the tale, a not uncommon feature of medieval romance narrative and another indicator that le Fay may be involved. The term 'fair' is interesting, it seems to suggest that she will be attractive, but it would be equally valid as a means of describing her loyalty to him; one of the definitions given for 'fair' by the Middle English Dictionary is 'a good or virtuous person' (MED, 2023). In the end, the Knight's delight is thinly-veiled when he kisses his wife a thousand times (ll.1226). Kathryn McKinley observes that 'The knight's acts of power at the opening and close of the *Tale* are diametrically opposed: at the opening, the physical act of rape; at the close, the self-sacrifice he offers through a speech act' (1996:376). It is perhaps as significant that the woman's role in these exchanges has also transformed; a defenceless victim has been replaced by a masterful woman, and Susan Carter notes:

> The Wife sees that maidens are grist for the mill in the chivalric scheme – objects with the limited option of being either rescued or raped – and her response is to rewrite the script, allowing the hag to oppress and reeducate the errant knight. (2003:334).

Although the women of Arthur's court rejoiced at the knight's proclamation, it is unlikely that finding out that women desire sovereignty is what Arthur and the men of his court would want to hear. It brings into question Guinevere's motives in using the sovereignty Arthur bestowed on her in such a contentious manner. Although enjoying considerable status, Guinevere's autonomy is limited by Arthur's magnanimity; the only circumstance in which she seems to possess sovereignty is over Lancelot. However, Lancelot's love for Guinevere is incompatible with his knightly status and he explains to a hermit that he has been given expensive, material goods by Guinevere even though

she is a married woman. He highlights his *fraunchyse* when explaining that some of the gifts were given to poor knights. Perhaps this is an attempt to salvage his reputation, and make amends in the eyes of God.

> "And all my great deeds of arms that I have done, for the most part was for the queen's sake, and for her sake would I do battle were it right or wrong; and never did I battle all only for God's sake, but for to win worship and to cause me the better to be beloved, and little or nought I thanked never God of it". (p.332).

Lancelot then repents his sins and promises never to relapse; he chooses God and the quest over Guinevere, which temporarily suspends her mastery over him (p.333).

> […] Sir Lancelot applied him daily to do for the pleasure of Our Lord Jesu Christ. And ever as much as he might he withdrew him from the company of Queen Guinevere for to eschew the slander and noise, wherefore the Queen waxed wroth with Sir Lancelot (p.403).

Lancelot acknowledges the error of his ways, but Guinevere is angry and feels that he has betrayed her. Lancelot's redemption and Guinevere's apparent loss of sovereignty over him is due to societal constraints, both spiritual and moralistic, borne out of the Church's power at this time. However, Lancelot remains devoted to Guinevere and resorts back to her when she is kidnapped by Meliagaunt, who attacks her with a superior force while she is in the forest with her ten 'Queen's knights' who are very young and inexperienced. When they are all badly wounded, she surrenders to Meliagaunt's will in order to save the lives of her men.

> "Sir Meliagaunt, slay not my noble knights, and I will go with thee upon this covenant, that thou save them and suffer them no more to be hurt; with this, that they be led with me wheresoever thou leadest me. For I will rather slay myself than I will go with thee, unless that these noble knights may be in my presence. (p.447).

Guinevere's noble actions are befitting of her station; she is able to maintain some degree of authority by remaining adamant that she will not co-operate if her men are harmed. Janet Jesmok says that Guinevere is one of the female characters in the text

who provides models for judgement and wisdom (2009:36). Once at Meliagaunt's castle, Guinevere manages to get a message to Lancelot, but Lancelot is ambushed as he dashes to rescue her. As his horse is shot with arrows and his armour is heavy, he rides in a cart to the castle. Men were usually taken to be executed in a cart and it is shameful for a knight to be seen in one; another indication of the depth of his love for Guinevere. Lancelot's appearance thwarts Meliagaunt's plans and the errant knight asks Guinevere for mercy, giving her sovereignty to decide his fate. Before returning to Arthur's court, Guinevere keeps all her wounded knights close to her bed, so that she can tend to them if necessary. Lancelot enters her bedroom by breaking the bars on the window and injures his hand; they consummate their relationship and he leaves the bed chamber. When Meliagaunt finds blood on Guinevere's bedding the next morning, he accuses her of treason with one or more of her knights. The knights protest her innocence and to decide the matter Lancelot later accepts Meliagaunt's challenge to a duel. Defeated in the contest, Meliagaunt begs for mercy 'as a knight' to both Lancelot and Arthur, appealing to their *felaȝschyp* and *fraunchyse*, but Lancelot is more interested in Guinevere's judgement.

> So Sir Lancelot looked upon the Queen, if he might espy by any sign or countenance what she would have done. And anon the Queen wagged her head upon Sir Lancelot, as who saith, "Slay him." And full well knew Sir Lancelot by her signs that she would have him dead. (p.459).

Guinevere's approval is clearly more important to Lancelot than Arthur's and while Lancelot exerts physical power in wielding the weapon, it is Guinevere who decides Meliagaunt's fate. Guinevere again holds sovereignty over Lancelot due to his passionate and consummated love for her. Juliette Wood states that Guinevere is the sole reason that Lancelot's quest for the Holy Grail is derailed (2012:31).

Unlike Guinevere, in many medieval texts, damsels who attempt to achieve mastery over knights either remain anonymous or are frequently not real and morph from beautiful maidens into demonic creatures when their ministrations fail. As described in Chapter 1, Perceval encounters such a damsel, a seductress, in *The Quest* (*c*.1210), who tries to tempt him into a sexual liaison with her only to transform into a demon when he rejects her advances. In a similar vein, in *The Quest*, his comrade Bors

meets a 'formidable' woman, the lady of a castle, who uses her status to appeal to his *cortaysye* to achieve sovereignty over him. Having chosen to go to the aid of an abducted damsel, Bors has to leave his brother, Lyonel, at the mercy of murderous knights. Once the damsel has been returned to her family, a religious man shows him Lyonel's body and helps him to transport it to a church. He also explains before departing the meaning of a dream Bors had; he must not refuse the love of a *trewe* woman or his actions will lead to Lancelot's death. Entering a tower close by, Bors is well received by its inhabitants and introduced to its mistress by one of her knights, who describes her as the fairest and richest of ladies and explains that she has waited for Bors at the expense of any other lover. Bors happily spends much time in conversation with the lady, but having no wish to violate his chastity, declines to answer when she asks him to be her lover. When pressed for a response, Bors reminds her of his distress at his brother's recent death, but she simply replies:

> "give no heed to that! You must do what I ask of you. Be sure that, if I did not love you more than woman ever loved a man, I should not make this request of you: for it is not the custom or practice that the woman should woo the man, however much she may be in love with him. But the great desire that I have always felt for you brings my heart to this point and compels me to speak out what I have hitherto concealed. Therefore, fair sweet friend, I beseech you to comply with my request, which is to lie with me to-night!" (p.164).

Bors again flatly refuses her and she appears grief-stricken, but even her excessive weeping does not change his mind. Her mood then changes completely and she leads him to the door of the tower, stating that in refusing her he must now witness her death. When he refuses to see such a thing, her knights hold him in place while she and twelve of her damsels go up to the battlements. One of them then calls out:

> "Ah! Bors, have mercy upon us all, and grant my lady's desire. If you do not consent, we shall all cast ourselves from this tower before our mistress does, for we could not bear to see her die. If you allow us to die for so slight a cause, surely never did a knight act so disloyally." (p.165).

Even though he pitied them, he valued his soul above theirs and left the decision to live or die in their hands. In having given them self-governance, he is astounded that they throw themselves to the floor and crosses himself. In giving the damsels freedom of choice, he effectively negates any mastery their lady may have taken over him and, as with Perceval, making the sign of the cross reveals their true identities and they vanish. The combined agency the lady and her damsels possess is not enough to dissuade Bors from continuing his quest, '[…] even the most aggressive challenges to patriarchal norms do not necessarily weaken, much less bring an end to, gender hierarchy' (Howell, in Moran & Pipkin, ed. 2019:30).

Such sentiments seem as relevant to the 'formidable' Bond girl as they do to the 'formidable' medieval damsel. May Day, in *A View to a Kill*, is portrayed as a fiercely independent and physically capable woman who realises that Zorin sees her as dispensable when he leaves her to die along with Moore's Bond in a flooded mine.

> May Day: "And I thought that creep loved me."
>
> *The lifeless body of May Day's friend drifts past*.
>
> Bond: "You're not the only one he double-crossed."
>
> (*A View to a Kill* (1985) Directed by John Glen [DVD]. United International Pictures).

Zorin is shown escaping in an airship, as Bond and May Day are shown swimming through the flooded mine. May Day is distraught at her friend's death and works with Bond to remove Zorin's bomb. They manage to put the bomb on a cart and try to push it out of the mine, but the handbrake keeps slipping on and May Day climbs on to the cart to hold it off. As she reaches the mine entrance, Bond calls out for her to jump, but she ignores him. From his airship, Zorin sees May Day on the cart with the bomb as it leaves the mine and realises her intentions. May Day remains on the cart and stares up at him defiantly as the bomb explodes. She sacrifices her life and agency to ensure that Zorin's plan does not work and in doing so achieves mastery over him, albeit temporarily. 'So while May Day may have changed sides, it is not due to the force of Bond's sexual charisma, […] but rather due to her own feelings of betrayal and desire for vengeance

against Zorin.' (Chapman, 2007:193). Yet again, a woman's hard-won sovereignty is only transient, patriarchal order is maintained in that female agency is expended to ensure the survival of the hero. Funnell and Dodds note that May Day's 'sexual and physical dominance over Bond is "managed" by her eventual self-sacrifice to save him […]' (2015a:363).

Arriving in Baku, in *The World is not Enough*, M refuses to accept Bond's insistence that there is evidence that King, manipulated by Renard, is behind the attacks on the pipeline. Bond and Dr. Jones are sent to investigate a potential bomb in the pipeline and, following a subsequent explosion, King assumes that Bond is dead. King presents M with her father's pin, revealing that Bond's suspicions about King were correct. Bond's alleged demise triggers a passionate response from M who strikes King before being taken to her waiting helicopter. Flown to a secret location, Renard is waiting for King, to exchange M for a box containing plutonium that he has acquired from a Russian submarine.

> King, *talking to Renard*: "Your present. Courtesy of the late Mr. Bond."
>
> Renard: *looks at M*. "My executioner."
>
> M, *in a cell*: "Overpraise, I'm afraid. But my people will still finish the job."
>
> King: "**Your** people. Your people will leave you here to rot. Just like you left me. You and my father."
>
> M: "Your father wasn't …"
>
> King: "My father was nothing! His kingdom he stole from my mother. The kingdom I will rightly take back."
>
> (*The World is not Enough* (1999) Directed by Michael Apted [DVD]. United International Pictures).

King and Renard are then seen in bed and the mood should be celebratory, but is soured when she teases him about his loss of sensation.

> Renard: "So beautiful. *He is stroking her naked body, her front is covered with a quilt*. So smooth. So warm."

King: “How would you know?”

Renard: *sits up and is upset*. “Why are you like this? Because Bond is dead? It’s what you wanted.”

King: “Of course it’s what I wanted.”

Renard: *walks to the window*. “He was … He was a good lover?”

King: “What do you think? I wouldn’t feel anything.”

King clearly has mastery over Renard which casts doubt on the assumption that he recruited her to his cause. When she deliberately taunts him, comparing him unfavourably to Bond as a lover, Renard snaps and punches a table in an attempt to assert his authority. Afraid of having gone too far, King regains his trust by feigning concern and devotion. Chapman states that King:

> […] uses her sexuality to exercise power over men. The theme of sexual control is a recurring motif: “I seduced the guards, used my body, gave me control”; “I’ve always had a power over men.” (2009:230).

King bids farewell to Renard at the submarine where he will plant the bomb; when it explodes, he will obviously die with it. The bullet from an MI6 agent that is lodged in his brain will kill him eventually, but he dedicates his death to King and intends his final act to give her sovereignty.

Renard: “The reactor is secured. Everything is complete as planned. Is your helicopter ready?”

King: “It’s going to pick me up in half an hour.”

They stand behind a pillar, looking lovingly at each other.

Renard: “Then this is the end.”

King: “No. This is the beginning. *She laughs*. The world will never be the same.” *They kiss*.

Renard: “The future is yours. Have fun with it.”

King then discovers that Bond is not dead and that he and Dr. Jones have been captured by her men. She tries to kiss him, but he turns away and she expresses regret that he values honour and integrity above power and monetary gain, as she imagined a future for them. King asks the guard holding Dr. Jones to take her to Renard, describing her as a 'pretty little thing'. She then tells Bond:

King: "I could have given you the world."

Bond: "The world is not enough."

King: "Foolish sentiment."

Bond: *smiles*. "Family motto."

Although it is not unusual for the title of a Bond film to appear in the dialogue, this instance seems to be particularly significant. Not only is her 'gift of the world' not enough for Bond, it reinforces that as a woman King's agency would never be enough for her to achieve sovereignty. Bond's attention then turns to M's safety and King reveals that she will die in the explosion, before unveiling a torture chair which makes her intentions towards Bond clear. Not only has he tried to thwart her plans, he has committed the ultimate sin in her eyes in that he has not fallen for her. With Bond secured to the chair, King turns a wheel which pushes a rod into the back of his neck.

King: "Five more turns and your neck will break. I've always had a power over men. When I realised my father wouldn't rescue me from the kidnappers … I knew I had to form another alliance." *She turns the wheel again*.

Bond: *struggles to speak*. "You … turned Renard."

As with all the Bond villains, King then explains her motive and *modus operandi*. Sternberg explains that Bond has to make all of the villains he faces reveal their master plans (1983:146). King's narcissistic oration stalls her and gives time for rescuers to arrive.

King: "Just like you. Only you were even easier. I told him he had to hurt me. He had to make it look real. When he refused … *she reaches up to her right*

*ea*r, I told him … I would do it myself." *Exposes missing earlobe by removing earring*.

Bond: "So … you killed your father?"

King: *sighs exasperatedly*. "He killed me. He killed me the day he refused to pay my ransom."

Bond: "Was this all about the oil?"

King: *turns the wheel again*. "It is **my** oil. Mine! And my family's. *She walks towards the window and away from the chair*. It runs in my veins – thicker than blood. I'm going to redraw the map. And when I'm through, the whole world will know my name. My grandfather's name. The glory of my people!"

When King reveals that she masterminded the whole operation and that Renard has been under her control, Bond's initial reaction is one of shock. She delights in the fact that turning Bond was easier than Renard; his trust in her made him more susceptible to her manipulation. Bond then questions her plan and doubts that people will believe the meltdown was an accident, but King dismisses him.

King: "Ha, they will believe. They will all believe. Do you understand? Nobody can resist me. You know what happens, *she mounts the chair facing Bond*, when a man is strangled?"

Bond: "Elektra … it's not too late. Eight million people do not need to die."

King: "You should have killed me when you had the chance. But you couldn't. Not me. Not a woman you loved."

Bond: "You meant nothing … to me. *She turns the wheel again; Bond is gasping for air*. One … last … screw."

King: "Oh, James."

King is physically in control in this scene and yet Bond holds the agency; she is desperate to hear him plead for his life, or plead his love for her, or both. Bond, however,

refuses to give her sovereignty over him, even using an innuendo 'One … last … screw' in what could be his last words. Employing a convoluted and drawn out method of execution for Bond, King follows in the footsteps of many of the franchise's criminal masterminds. Claus-Ulrich Viol states that 'the majority of Bond villains are characterised by their sexual […] and moral deviance as well as their failure to keep the right distance from technology' (2019:7). King could shoot Bond, but hopes to gain more agency by creating an elaborate torture sequence for him, which is predictably unsuccessful. Gunfire is heard outside as Zukovsky arrives with his men and rescues Bond and M. The tables are then turned with Bond pointing a gun at King while holding out a walkie-talkie:

> "Call him (Renard) off. *She takes it from him and holds it at her side*. I won't ask again. Call him off. *She smirks*. Call him off!" *She startles*.

In spite of the dire situation King is in, she still believes she has mastery over Bond and that he will not be capable of killing her in cold blood.

> King: *holds the walkie-talkie to her mouth*. "Renard? *She moves the walkie-talkie away and talks to Bond*. You wouldn't kill me. You'd miss me." *She smiles*.
>
> Renard, *over his walkie-talkie*: "Yes?"
>
> King, *over walkie-talkie to Renard*: "Dive […]". *Bond shoots her.*
>
> (*The World is not Enough* (1999) Directed by Michael Apted [DVD]. United International Pictures).

King misjudges Bond's level of sentimentality, Anthony Synnott says that he 'is not just "a pretty face." He is also brutal, cold and cruel, capable of decision, authority and ruthlessness' (1990:409). M arrives just as Bond shoots King, killing her instantaneously and she falls back onto her bed. Her final act of dissention serves as a reminder that she is unwilling to become subservient to Bond and is incapable of being 'repositioned' (see p.6 above). Funnell and Dodds explain that King has to die in the film because she has not adhered to the stereotypical '[…] gender roles and representational politics that have long structured the series' (2015b:127). Bond leans over King's body and strokes her head before leaving; this apparently affectionate act could also

underline to M that he will always do the job regardless of his feelings. Garland notes the significance of where she has landed, '[…] assassinating Elektra on her bed embodies her inability to separate sex and death, makes clear the consequences of the combination, and reinforces Bond's ability to triumph' (2009:185). King proved to be something of an enigma to Bond; her formidability, manifested in her unpredictability, deviousness and entirely self-serving objectives, blinded him to her true motives. And yet, in spite of her best efforts, patriarchal order persists, she becomes just another woman who Martha Howell describes as being able to advance their interests by playing the system, '[…] suggesting that agency was achieved by circumventing rather than confronting or altering conventional norms' (in Moran & Pipkin, ed. 2019:24).

'Formidable' women from both eras inhabit a variety of personae and employ a range of strategies in an attempt to achieve their aim of self-governance. Although many enjoy temporary success, most are ultimately thwarted in their plans, notable exceptions perhaps being Alisoun and the hag in her tale. Robert Arp and Kevin Decker, when discussing King, and Xenia Onatopp (*GoldenEye*, 1995), suggest that we all have a duty not to objectify ourselves or others, but that we must also '[…] allow a person to exercise control over her own life, even if that entails making herself a sex object' (in South & Held, ed. 2006:208). Alisoun is undoubtedly an expert in doing this and King mirrors many of her techniques. Apart from the unnamed medieval damsels, whose agency is again employed to reinforce the knights' chivalric virtues, all of the 'formidable' women considered here achieve sovereignty to some degree. In the majority of cases, however, it is either specific to one man or one event or is transitory due to circumstances beyond their control.

Conclusion

The persona of the 'formidable' woman is as clearly identifiable in the medieval texts as she is in the Bond films; examples of self-serving, unruly and unpredictable women pervade both media. Unlike the seductress of the previous chapter whose main aim was the derailment of men's quests, the 'formidable' woman is more concerned with her own destiny. She employs the fluidity of her chameleonic persona to challenge every pentad virtue, her numerous transformations ensuring that she maintains and often increases her agency. A 'formidable' woman utilises whatever means are at her disposal to channel her agency into achieving autonomy, equality, and, on occasion, sovereignty.

All the 'formidable' women discussed in this chapter seek self-governance; they wish to have freedom of choice in their lives and Alisoun's approach in *The Wife of Bath's Prologue* epitomises this. Having been forced into marriage at the age of twelve, she challenges societal preconceptions about the role of women, defending her decision to take five husbands and justifying her actions by quoting from the Bible. Initially a cloth maker, she covets riches, but having acquired wealth and the status that accompanies it, Alisoun becomes acutely aware that she is ageing and realises that a change of strategy is called for. Seeking sexual fulfilment, she further disrupts the *status quo* when she considers the traits of an ideal husband and uses her agency due to her financial position to acquire younger and more sexually-satisfying partners. Younger men meet her carnal needs, but present unexpected challenges to her independent spirit and so she aims for sovereignty. Alisoun employs manipulation in order to transform the abusive Jankyn into the perfect spouse. Pretending that his punch has killed her deceives him into granting her sovereignty in their relationship. Alisoun's victory appears to be short-lived, however, as she tells the pilgrims that she is seeking a sixth husband; given her formidability, it would be interesting to know what type of man would fit her next remit.

Unlike Alisoun, Guinevere, the 'formidable' queen at the heart of Alisoun's *Tale*, already has status due to her royal position but ironically lacks as much control over her own life because of her regal obligations. Occasionally, sovereignty is conferred on her by Arthur to carry out a specific task. Having pleaded with Arthur to decide the rapist knight's punishment in *The Wife of Bath's Tale*, Guinevere sets him an incredibly difficult challenge; Gottfried states that the knight is asked an 'unanswerable question' (1985:221). His proclamation that 'women desire sovereignty' is greeted with delight by the female members of the court, but it is difficult to see how this would be popular with Arthur or his knights; it is also unlikely to have any lasting impact on patriarchal order. In general in medieval romance, Guinevere's sovereignty is transient and specific other than in her dealings with Lancelot, due to his deep devotion to her. She is able to overcome the influence of both *fraunchyse* and *felaȝschyp* when she instructs Lancelot to kill Meliagaunt on her behalf in *The Knight of the Cart*. However, even this limited sovereignty is temporarily lost when Lancelot renounces his love for her and reaffirms his devotion to God.

In *The Wife of Bath's Tale*, the hag tells the knight that the answer she whispers to him is the answer Guinevere would give. Although his revelation of it to the court is certainly well received, it is worthy of note that the unnamed hag is the only woman who explicitly mentions sovereignty. Her ability to transform her appearance shows that she has a propensity for magic and suggests that she might possibly be Morgan le Fay or one of her avatars, as Coote has argued (2012:205). The hag's ability to manipulate the knight gives her mastery over him and influence over the women of the court and yet her agency is constrained by her anonymity. It is worthy of note that the context of the telling of the Knight's Tale by Alisoun makes clear that this is a 'fairy tale'; the happy ever after ending is only possible due to the hag's use of magic. 'Sovereignty' of the kind the hag exercises over the knight requires a suspension of disbelief, and would not be possible in the 'real world' of Chaucer's pilgrims. Le Fay certainly finds her agency stifled, and her sovereignty undermined, by the fact that in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight,* her key role in masterminding Gawain's temptations by Lord and Lady Bertilak are not actually revealed until the end of this tale. Fiercely independent and having status by virtue of her magical ability, she is certainly a character capable of challenging patriarchal authority. She temporarily gains sovereignty over Arthur when she uses her Green Knight to taunt him into accepting the beheading challenge in the opening fitt of *Sir Gawain*, and over Gawain by virtue of the temptation le Fay masterminds by Lady Bertilak. Le Fay undermines Gawain's *felaȝschyp* with Lord Bertilak when the former fails to disclose the gift of the girdle; she also compromises Gawain's *pité*, something for which he cannot forgive himself in spite of the adulation he receives from Arthur's court.

'Formidable' women are as adept as their seductress counterparts at exploiting chivalric values; their manipulation poses a serious threat to men in the medieval literature we have explored in this chapter. As with the seductress tempting Perceval, the damsel who targets *cortaysye* to persuade Bors into a sexual relationship is then shown to be a demonic vision. These female manifestations are seen in both *The Quest* and *Le Morte d'Arthur* and highlight the dangers women can pose to male values and chivalric virtues, while laying the blame with the devil rather than with womankind. A magical element is also evident when an enchantress, Dame Brusen, provides the potion to enable Elaine's deception of Lancelot in *Le Morte d'Arthur*. Seen as culpable for his predicament, Lancelot proposes Dame Brusen's beheading. While Elaine herself is

exonerated from blame by him, she does not achieve her desire to be his partner and in reality sacrifices her self-governance to fulfil her father's wishes in bearing Lancelot's son.

Another woman whose independence is threatened by a controlling father is Di Vincenzo in *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*, but unlike Elaine, she opts to remain unruly. Di Vincenzo already has status, but a diminished view of herself due to her unfaithful ex-husband. Her desire for freedom of choice is, as we have seen, not dissimilar to the opinions of the 'other women' who respond to the knight's question, What do women most desire?, in *The Wife of Bath's Tale*. Di Vincenzo is initially apprehensive about committing to a relationship with Bond, particularly one orchestrated by her overbearing father. However, her interactions with Bond lead her to appreciate that marriage to him will not only improve her status but safeguard her autonomy. Unfortunately for Di Vincenzo, her death is inevitable, as having a wife is not in keeping with the expectations of Bond's audience, and not compatible with his *modus operandi* as a British agent. Her agency in marrying him is substantial, but extremely short-lived. The same could be said for another Bond girl, May Day, who has agency by virtue of her status as Zorin's right-hand-woman. She temporarily achieves sovereignty over him by thwarting his plans when she moves the bomb, but pays for the grand gesture with her life.

The closest Bond girl equivalent to Chaucer's Alisoun in terms of her 'formidability' is King; she has status due to her father's wealth and position and although she conceals it initially, she also exercises mastery over Renard. While torturing Bond near the end of the film, King boasts that she was the orchestrator of the plan and delights in the power she holds over men; King's boasting mirrors that of Alisoun and the control she exerted over her husbands. Not content with autonomy and power, King craves sovereignty at all costs, and is prepared to kill her father, Bond, M and many innocent civilians in order to achieve it. In spite of being completely ruthless, King adopts the role of damsel-in-distress with ease, she shows no fear of being targeted by assassins and yet panics when buried under the snow. King exploits an Achilles' heel in Bond and medieval romance heroes, their compulsion to help a woman in need. While King invokes Bond and M's *fraunchyse*, Alisoun opts to exploit similar emotional weakness in Jankyn by feigning injury and provoking a compassionate response. She also targets the

felaȝschyp between M and her late father to appeal to M's maternal and protective instincts. King's agency is the product of her ability to transform her persona at will, in order to maximise her chances of success in any given situation. King also brings into focus the idea of women exploiting men's weaknesses; Bond has an injured shoulder from the opening sequence of this film, which King 'tends' to, but then divulges to Renard, who uses it against Bond when they fight. Bond's vulnerability, emotionally on this occasion, is also shown at the end of *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* in his dramatic response to Di Vincenzo's death, mirroring his despair in *Casino Royale*, when he holds Lynd's body after her drowning. In each of these instances, he is shown as human rather than superhuman – an unusual motif in the Bond series. The 'formidable' woman is completely in control of the persona she chooses to inhabit. The motives behind this choice are entirely selfish and these characteristics set her apart from someone like Lynd whose overall objective is honourable.

Magic as a means to achieve sovereignty is a common feature in the medieval texts examined in this chapter. The hag's agency in *The Wife of Bath's Tale* is shown when she uses her magical powers to effortlessly transform between an ugly hag and a beautiful woman. Like the hag, Le Fay also gains power when she employs witchcraft to turn Lord Bertilak into the Green Knight; this gives her special status because it creates additional opportunities to manipulate her enemies. The demonic damsels in *The Quest* and *Le Morte d'Arthur* require a 'suspension of belief' and an acceptance that the magical can happen; they do not possess the same agency as le Fay or Dame Brusen because, like the hag, they remain anonymous. The superlative is also seen in the fantastical plots and villains of Bond, with the nature of romance convention allowing the audience to accept, for example, that May Day can stay on a bomb and that a protective bubble ensures survival in an avalanche.

This chapter has demonstrated that the objectives of the 'formidable' Bond women discussed here – their desire for autonomy and freedom of choice – are paralleled in the aims of their medieval counterparts. Equally, irrespective of the era in which they live, the consequences of their formidability both for them and the men they target are extremely similar. Although they are expert at gaining agency, whether they settle for independence or strive for sovereignty, they are no more capable of holding onto it than their seductress counterparts. Alisoun is the only woman considered here

who truly gains sovereignty, and yet with Jankyn's death she will lose it; it is unlikely that her next husband will grant her such power. Apart from women appearing as medieval visions, who disappear as soon as a knight reaffirms his devotion to God, in terms of longevity, 'formidable' medieval women survive, whereas 'formidable' Bond women do not. It is also evident that most 'formidable' women refuse to be 'redeemed'; indeed, there is only one example - Lancelot and the immodest damsel in *The Knight of the Cart* - where this is successfully achieved by the male hero. Some 'formidable' women are 'repositioned' by the narrative; Alisoun will need to gain sovereignty over her next husband, while Guinevere remains subservient to Arthur. For the Bond women, Di Vincenzo would keep her autonomy, even as a married woman, but is killed by Bunt, and King is summarily killed by Bond. That is not to say that 'formidable' women never find 'redemption', but that those who do, like May Day (*A View to a Kill*), often pay for their 'redemption' with their lives. Mastery over men by 'formidable' women therefore appears to be exceptionally rare and always temporary.

'Formidable' women and those adopting the seductress persona have been shown to acquire significant – albeit, often temporary – agency. King appears to hold equivalent power to Lynd, in *Casino Royale*, as seen in their ability to manipulate Bond, and both women match the substantial agency held by Alisoun, in *The Wife of Bath's Prologue*, and Lady Bertilak, in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. In spite of this, all of these women choose to adopt a damsel-in-distress persona at some point in their respective narratives, and this raises questions over the nature of the 'damsel' role and its efficacy in meeting women's objectives. Traditionally, a damsel-in-distress trope conjures up images of a weak and dependent woman, forced into a difficult position by circumstance and who genuinely needs a hero's help. This presentation is certainly at odds with 'formidability' and suggests that the 'damsel' persona must be far more complex than it appears at first glance. The success of the strategy might lie in the pentad virtue that it mainly targets: *fraunchyse*. It might also be due to the potential for exploitation that a 'damsel' persona affords. The agency of the damsel-in-distress and the strategies that women adopting this persona utilise will be explored in the next chapter.

Chapter 3

The Agency of the Damsel-in-distress

The previous two chapters have documented the agency demonstrated by women adopting the seductress and 'formidable' personae and how that agency is used, both to derail quests and to further the interests of the female characters involved. However, many of these women have also been shown in the previous chapters to take on the role of a damsel-in-distress; this perdurable persona is often seen in fairy tales and is 'conventional in chivalric romance' (Hume, 1974:135). Damsels-in-distress are traditionally portrayed as vulnerable women desperately seeking assistance from a heroic 'knight in shining armour'. For Helen Cooper, the term 'medieval romance' conjures up the idea of 'a knight-errant riding on horseback through a forest, perhaps with a dragon lurking in the background, and perhaps, as in the legend of St George, a damsel in distress' (2008:46). This chapter will analyse a selection of Bond films which feature a damsel-in-distress as a major character and make comparisons with medieval women adopting similar personae, thereby linking the medieval and Bond material together and offering new ways of reading both by tracing the progress of a medieval motif into the Bond films. Analysis will focus on Chaucer's *The Franklin's Tale* (*c*.1400), comparing Aurelius' chivalric care for the 'damsel' Dorigen with Bond's behaviour towards Kara Milovy (*The Living Daylights*, 1987) and Stacey Sutton (*A View to a Kill*, 1985). The chapter will show that it is only when such women cease to inhabit the 'damsel' persona that they emerge as potential 'conquests' for medieval romance heroes and Bond. As with earlier chapters, the agency of women adopting the 'damsel' persona will be examined with respect to the pentad virtues they challenge. These are: *fraunchyse* (compassion and magnanimity), *cortaysye* (consideration for others), *felaȝschyp* (loyalty to others), *clannes* (freedom from lust), and *pité* (devotion to God and duty).

Richard Barber states that 'The idea of the lady as the source of inspiration behind knightly deeds is present throughout chivalric history from the early twelfth century onwards' (1974:71). The type of woman who adopts the 'traditional damsel' persona is conventionally loyal and deferential, accepting of social constraints and respectful of patriarchal order. Vesper Lynd is a prime example of this type when she

retreats to the shower after assisting Daniel Craig's Bond in the fight scene at the hotel in *Casino Royale* (2006) (see p.57 above). A fellow seductress Tatiana Romanova in *From Russia with Love* plays a similar role when questioned by Sean Connery's Bond about the circumstances of Kerim Bey's death (see p.44 above). At first glance, these 'traditional damsels' would appear to have little agency, but these are guises employed to persuade a hero that she both needs, and is worthy of, rescuing. This persona is usually transient and often triggered by an 'initiating event' which threatens the *status quo* and places a woman in jeopardy; the woman then appeals to the inherent chivalric behaviour of men, targeting their *fraunchyse* and *cortaysye*. In general, such women appear to act in a selfless manner for the betterment of their lovers, or even to advance the narrative; in such actions, C. Stephen Jaeger sees '[…] the resolution of woman as vessel of evil into woman the vessel of virtue' (1999:105). This chivalric ethos persisted into the 1700s by which time, as Catherine Phillips states, chivalry had evolved to become '[…] a behaviour code adhered to by upper-class men, who wanted to support those in need and challenge injustice wherever it should arise' (2002:242); this philosophy certainly mirrors Bond's behaviour code and so remains relevant. Unfortunately many of these women end up as, '[…] at least in a literary sense, […] the "property" of men and [are] often used as objects of exchange to improve male status' (Mann, 2002:153). Damsels-in-distress then, at first glance, appear to have more limited agency than their 'formidable' and seductress counterparts.

However, the damsel role is more complex than it first appears; some women find themselves cast in the role of 'traditional damsel' but are more resourceful and have sufficient agency to take action themselves. Far from being vulnerable, these women are very spirited and capable; as Cooper notes with Spenser's St George, he 'has to be rescued from distress rather more often than his damsel, and she often helps in the rescue' (2008:46). An analysis of the agency of various 'damsels-in-distress' will help us better understand medieval and Bond women as 'performers' and 3-dimensional, complex characters. An example is Tracy Di Vincenzo (*On Her Majesty's Secret Service*) who staunchly resists George Lazenby's Bond's help; she refuses to express any gratitude to him for saving her from drowning (see p.89 above), and views his intervention when saving her from financial embarrassment at the casino as simply a debt to be repaid (see p.108 above). in spite of the dire situations she finds herself in,

she opts to maintain a modicum of control over her situation. Other women, even in the direst of circumstances, also refuse to be cast as a damsel-in-distress; they are 'rational damsels', using their status, knowledge, or expertise rather than seeking a hero's assistance. Guinevere (*Le Morte d'Arthur*, 1485) draws strength from her noble bearing to ensure the safety of her knights when she is abducted by Meliagaunt (see p.124 above). Surprisingly, a damsel-in-distress presentation can also mask a calculated attempt to exploit the *fraunchyse* the role engenders. Some women masquerade as 'damsels' for their own, usually nefarious, gains; in reality they are 'damsels-*sans*-distress'. Elektra King feigns panic during the avalanche in *The World is Not Enough* (1999) to introduce an element of helplessness into her otherwise 'formidable' character (see pp.113-114 above), and adds to this pretence when she becomes distressed during the Stockholm Syndrome discussions (see p.118 above) with Brosnan's Bond. Miranda Frost, in *Die Another Day* (2002), also has ulterior motives when allegedly fearing for Bond's safety during their seduction scene, when in reality plotting his demise (see pp.63-64 above). It is difficult for a hero to distinguish a genuine 'damsel' from an exploitative 'damsel' as the presentation is similar; only the underlying motives are different.

This chapter will seek to explore these three manifestations of the 'damsel' persona – the 'traditional damsel', the 'resourceful damsel', and the 'rational damsel' – in medieval texts and then in Bond films. Focusing on the female protagonist of *The Franklin's Tale*, it will analyse the actions of 'traditional damsel' Dorigen – when the sanctity of her marriage is threatened by the unwanted attentions of a young squire, Aurelius. The Franklin introduces the tale as a Breton lay, which Lesley Coote notes '[…] were popular in English translations from at least the early fourteenth century' (Coote, 2012:393). Elizabeth Archibald suggests that in introducing his story as a Lay, Chaucer would create expectations of a woman seeking adultery, when in fact the very reverse is true (in Weiss *et al.*, 2000:68). Dorigen is the epitome of an 'ideal' wife; she is, in the opinion of Anne Thompson Lee, '[…] that rare thing in Chaucer's poetry, a genuinely good, loving, and loveable woman' (1984:169). She agrees to wed Arveragus, a man of lower renown, in a private ceremony to reduce his embarrassment about marrying above his station. In return, Arveragus agrees not to impose his will upon Dorigen in the private arena, allowing her a degree of autonomy. Although unusual by today's

standards, in Chaucer's time no distinction was made between unenforceable vows sworn in private and those made in public (Jacobs, 2001:6); 'trewthe' is a pervasive theme of Breton lays, and the main focus of this tale is the keeping of one's word (Coote, 2012:393).

The Franklin expresses Dorigen and Arveragus' wish for equality in their marriage, noting that 'Love wol nat been constreyned by maistrye' (l.764). But in reality, '[…] this doctrine created difficulties, on the one hand because the courtly lover was supposed to be his mistress's servant, and on the other because the husband was supposed to be his wife's master' (Burrow in Boitani & Mann, ed. 2004:152-153). However, the arrangement appears to have worked well until Arveragus' extended absence overseas leaves Dorigen vulnerable to the attentions of Aurelius. Bound by the conventions of courtly love, Dorigen is placed in a difficult situation when she is wooed by this new suitor. Jerome Mandel notes that courtly love motifs are commonplace in *The Canterbury Tales* (1985:279), and in *The Franklin's Tale* the story centres around courtly love etiquette and the complications that ensue because of it. Bound by the conventions of courtly love, Dorigen is unable to refuse Aurelius and cannot ask for her husband Arveragus' help, as he is away fighting overseas. The agency afforded to her by playing the role of 'traditional damsel' is insufficient to resolve the situation, and so Dorigen escalates her actions and adopts the persona of a 'resourceful damsel'. In order to appease Aurelius, she sets him what she believes to be an impossible challenge, to remove the rocks from the Brittany coast, but is left in an extremely difficult position when he allegedly completes it. Dorigen faces a stark choice; she either breaks her wedding vows in order to fulfil her promise, or reneges on her pledge in order to maintain the sanctity of her marriage. 'Commonly in medieval romance one character finds himself or herself subjected to the will of another by virtue of a vow or promise, and stands to suffer in consequence.' (Burrow in Boitani & Mann, ed. 2004:153).

Upon Arveragus' return, Dorigen reveals her predicament and he dictates that she should go to Aurelius because it is the noble course of action and *trawþe* is all important. Faced with Dorigen's reticence and despair, and noting the chivalrous actions of her husband, Aurelius releases her from their bond. Despite the apparently noble actions of both men, many critics see Dorigen as an object of exchange between them and a means of demonstrating their *gentilesse*. Defined as 'courtesy, graciousness, or

refinement, [especially] as considered to be qualities associated with people of gentle birth or rank' (OED, 2022), *gentilesse* comprises behaviours towards women that reinforce homosocial bonds between men. In simple terms, it highlights chivalric actions with regard to women, but with the underlying motive often being to better the status of the men doing the action, not the position of the women acted upon.

Not unexpectedly, Dorigen's role as a 'traditional damsel' is replicated by a number of other medieval women. For example, in *Le Morte d'Arthur*, a disinherited damsel beseeches Bors to fight a renowned knight in order to restore her rightful status, and another damsel appeals to his *fraunchyse* to rescue her from the clutches of an evil abductor. The transition to a 'resourceful damsel' is also noted in the actions of Chaucer's Alisoun (see pp.99-100 above), when in the *Wife of Bath's Prologue* she transforms from a 'formidable' woman into a 'damsel' during her argument with Jankyn. Feigning vulnerability and injury allows her to exploit his *fraunchyse* and restores her agency. Other medieval women, such as Guinevere, are seen to adopt the persona of 'rational damsel'; in *Le Morte d'Arthur*, following her abduction by Meliagaunt, Guinevere refuses to show her distress, choosing instead to insist on safe passage for her wounded knights. In a more sinister manifestation, a damsel offering accommodation to Lancelot in Chrétien de Troyes' *The Knight of the Cart* (*Le Chevalier de la Charrete*, *c*.1180) fabricates her own rape in order to invoke his chivalric instincts and win his affections (see p.104 above).

Critics have clearly identified the 'damsel' persona in both the Bond books and films. Meir Sternberg describes Bond in the novel *Goldfinger* as '[…] the mythological hero or the knight of later romance, coming to the rescue of the archetypal "damsel-in-distress"' (1983:174). Earlier chapters have shown that many Bond girls do not start out as a damsel-in-distress; however, this chapter will highlight that the majority of them adopt this persona at some point in their film. Claire Hines suggests that in a Bond film, a woman can be 'repositioned from a top-level enemy agent […] to yet another damsel in distress for him to save, and a willing bedmate unable to resist his charms' (2018:172). This chapter aims to add to this view by recognising that Bond women can be 'repositioned' in films, but will also consider the fluidity of women's roles in Bond; previous chapters have demonstrated that the multiple personae performed by Bond's women are not just cliche but rather rooted in medieval romance convention. Earlier

chapters have featured five of the six actors who have portrayed Bond and all have shared screen time with a damsel-in-distress, this chapter will focus on the importance of the damsel-Bond dynamic within *The Living Daylights* (1987), featuring Timothy Dalton as Bond. The chapter will examine the role of the Bond girl, renowned cellist Milovy. A 'traditional damsel', her vulnerability is explicit from the outset when Bond refrains from killing her even though she has allegedly attempted to assassinate a KGB officer during his defection (Burgess, 2015:239). It then transpires that this officer, Koskov, is her boyfriend and that his defection has been staged with Milovy's anticipated death as 'collateral damage'. Tasked to work out Koskov's true allegiance, Bond befriends Milovy and pretends to help her reunite with him. Initially, Milovy is shown to have very little agency and is reliant on Bond's chivalry; however, when they have to flee Vienna, she is faced with losing her prized cello and becomes a 'resourceful damsel' to retrieve it. Her resourcefulness, albeit misguided, continues when she drugs Bond, having been persuaded by Koskov that he is an enemy. Realising her mistake when Koskov takes her prisoner alongside Bond, she is instrumental in securing their escape and then assists with Bond's mission to destroy Koskov's drugs and illegal arms.

In spite of possessing mission-critical geological knowledge, Sutton, the antithesis of the 'formidable' May Day in *A View to a Kill* (1985), presents as a 'traditional damsel' for the majority of the film. Even in her moments of resourcefulness, however, she rarely succeeds in being entirely helpful and, unlike Milovy, she always appears to be more of a hindrance. Two other Bond girls who possess agency due to knowledge and expertise are Dr. Holly Goodhead, the sole Bond girl in the film (*Moonraker*, 1979), and Dr. Christmas Jones, the counterpart to King in *The World is not Enough* (1999). Given the altruistic nature of both women and the fact that they ally themselves with Bond, neither of them could be considered as 'formidable', and yet neither do they fulfil the remit of a 'traditional damsel'. Although both are undoubtedly 'resourceful', they operate almost entirely 'rationally'; Dr. Goodhead pilots the Moonraker shuttle and overpowers the villain Drax's guards, disables a radar-jamming device and assists Bond to destroy poison-filled glass globes bound for Earth. Faced with a nuclear bomb in an oil-supply pipeline, Dr. Jones remains composed when instructing Bond how to deal with it, and later in the film assists him in thwarting the villain Renard's plans while aboard a nuclear submarine. Adopting a 'rational damsel' role enables women like Goodhead and

Jones to manipulate the situation to increase their agency, utilising courtly love techniques, the chivalric code, and *gentilesse*. Having explored the roles of the 'traditional', 'resourceful', and 'rational' damsel, the chapter's final section will examine the 'damsel-*sans*-distress', focusing on women like King who abuse the 'damsel' persona by exaggerating situations of actual danger to elicit a requisite response, or creating peril where none actually exists.

Agency of the 'traditional damsel'

Where some medieval spouses, like the Wife of Bath in her earlier marriages, act more like business partners, others, like Dorigen and Arveragus, are more focused on specific spousal obligations such as companionship (Jacobs, 2001:15). That Dorigen is of higher status than Arveragus is made clear in the opening lines of *The Franklin's Tale* where Chaucer states that she '[…] comen of so heigh kynrede' (l.735), and yet in spite of this and the equal nature of their partnership, she is still rendered subservient by her gender. Susan Crane notes that

> The dominance of womanhood over birth in defining her status accords with models of social division that rank men according to estate and degree, but that omit women or classify them according to their relations to men. (1990:238).

Interestingly, Chaucer married the daughter of a Flemish knight in order to gain higher status and in Craig Davis' view, '[…] the *Franklin's Tale* constructs a romance analogue of Chaucer's own marital situation as one ideally suited to the achievement of true happiness and nobility in love' (2002:133). Following marriage, medieval women usually surrendered their agency along with their land and wealth to their husbands. Despite her desire for a partner who respected her autonomy, even the Wife of Bath followed this tradition when marrying the clerk, Jankyn. Arveragus, however, appears happy to accept an equal position in his private relationship with Dorigen and in doing so becomes very much the 'ideal husband' that the Wife of Bath craved. In *The Franklin's Tale* Arveragus makes several promises to Dorigen:

> Of his free wyl he swoor hire as a knight
>
> That nevere in al his lyf he, day ne nyght,
>
> Ne sholde upon hym take no **maistrie** [superiority/sovereignty]

Agayn hir wyl […] (ll.745-748).

Arveragus swears that he will never do anything against Dorigen's will and Nina Manasan Greenberg notes that 'At first glance, Arveragus seems to be putting himself in an unusually weak position, given the late medieval understanding of a husband's right to power in marriage' (1999:331). He does however retain 'soveraynetee' in order to maintain his status in the public arena (ll.751-752) and David Raybin considers that Arveragus

> has in fact done little more than verbalize the condition that already exists as an inherent part of the medieval marriage relationship: the flamboyant male struts in the world's eye, but the subdued female determines whether he be the cock of his imagination or simply an unknowing cuckold. (1992:67).

Dorigen's response highlights her appreciation for the equality he has bestowed on her:

> She thanked hym, and with ful greet humblesse
>
> She seyde, "Sire, sith of youre gentillesse
>
> Ye profre me to have so **large a reyne**," (ll.753-755). [freedom from restraint]
>
> Sire, I wol be be youre humble trewe wyf –
>
> Have heer my **trouthe** – til that myn herte breste' (ll.758-759). [word]

Crane notes that Dorigen adheres to the principles of womanhood when she agrees to be a modest and faithful wife (1990:238). This arrangement also gives Dorigen agency in that she is able to contribute to their marriage as an active partner, for which she is extremely grateful.

> […] there is a competing narrative through which Dorigen, voicing traditional ideas about wives, tries to create a position from which she can conceive of her own agency, that is, her ability to act within the confines of social institutions. (McGregor, 1997:367).

At this point, their relationship is the epitome of medieval marital bliss, each having made sacrifices in order to ensure that their marriage can thrive. Their atypical union is celebrated by the Franklin:

> Love is a thyng as any spirit free.
>
> Wommen, **of kynde**, desiren libertee, [by nature]
>
> And nat to been constreyned as a **thral**; [servant]
>
> And so doon men, if I **sooth** seyen shal. (ll.767-770). [truth]

Timothy Flake qualifies that the Franklin is making '[…] a simple assertion that men and women should not exercise mastery over one another in love, but should serve one another in mutual obedience, conditions paradoxical but not impossible' (1996:215).

The ideals of equality and freedom of choice are central to Dorigen's ethos; in essence she is expounding the virtues of being given agency. 'That this liberal proclamation introduces, rather than concludes the tale suggests that we should read the story with its edicts as a thematic guide' (McGregor, 1997:365). This theme pervades *The Canterbury Tales* and Dorigen's narrative reinforces the message of *The Wife of Bath's Tale* in highlighting the fact that women desire sovereignty. However, even in such a liberal marriage Dorigen is still subject to restriction and expresses gratitude for being given '[…] so large a reyne' (l.755). 'Reyne' could be interpreted as 'reign' or 'rein', and Arveragus would determine the length of either; Francine McGregor considers that Dorigen's choice of 'reyne' '[…] indicates that her conception of what it is to be a wife does not, finally, include liberty' (1997:371-372). Flake, however, argues that Arveragus gives Dorigen a large rein '[…] because he does not believe *maistre* is appropriate either to love or to marriage' (1996:214) and indeed the Franklin does not make any comment on any implied restriction before stating that women desire liberty (l.768).

Dorigen's transition from contented wife to damsel-in-distress starts with Arveragus' two-year campaign overseas to raise his knightly standing, which leaves Dorigen fearful for his welfare and inconsolable in his absence. Such adventures were common in medieval society, particularly among merchants (Jacobs, 2001:25-26), but Dorigen's grief is shown to be excessive and Thompson Lee notes that '[…] she has no

desire for mastery, or even freedom. What she wants is to have her husband at her side, and without him she is lost' (1984:170). Eventually giving in to her friends' pleadings to engage in social activities to end her emotional isolation, she unfortunately becomes vulnerable to unwanted male attention (ll.807-846). Jennifer Ward (1997) explains that married women '[…] would be expected to keep friendship networks going for the practical advantages they could provide' (in Hume, 2008:292). Still pining for Arveragus, Dorigen is blind to the deep love which another man, the squire Aurelius, has developed for her. She has no desire to be with him, but her position is compromised by his overly-dramatic use of courtly love techniques.

For wel I woot my servyce is in vayn;

My **gerdon** is but **brestyng** of myn herte. [reward; bursting]

Madame, **reweth** upon my peynes **smerte**; [have pity; intense]

For with a word ye may me **sleen** or save. (ll.972-975). [kill]

Aurelius focuses on how Dorigen's rejection would cause irreparable damage to him and Manasan Greenberg notes that the 'slay or save me' line initially appears to be '[…] merely the rhetorical exaggeration of an overwrought courtly lover anxious for attention' (1999:335). Being bound by social etiquette, Dorigen is obliged to engage with Aurelius and resorts to using the minimal agency she holds in this situation to target the *felaȝschyp* between him and Arveragus which Aurelius is threatening by his pursuit. In order to do this, she abandons her ideal of equality and makes Aurelius aware that she 'belongs to' Arveragus.

Ne shal I nevere been untrewe wyf
In word ne werk, as fer as I have wit;
I wol been his to whom that I am knyt. (ll.984-986).

Lat swiche folies out of youre herte slyde.
What deyntee sholde a man han in his lyf
For to go love another mannes wyf,
That hath hir body whan so that hym liketh? (ll.1002-1005).

Elaine Tuttle Hansen (1992) points to the significance of the fact that rather than simply rejecting Aurelius, Dorigen describes herself as belonging to someone else (in McGregor, 1997:374). Ironically, she regains agency in this encounter by sacrificing her hard-won autonomy and this provides the first example of her awareness of the societal rules within which she operates and her ability to manipulate them.

Another damsel who understands the potential benefits of eliciting a chivalric response in men encounters Bors in *Le Morte d'Arthur*. One evening he comes upon a tower and is welcomed by a disinherited lady, who is beautiful but poorly clad as her sister has seized much of her land and many of her servants. In Bors' presence, she is told that unless she finds a knight to fight Pridam le Noir, her sister's 'formidable' champion, she will be left with nothing. When Bors learns that the lady's sister has taken control against their dead father's wishes and the will of the people, he volunteers to fight Pridam le Noir on her behalf.

> 'Now tell me,' said Sir Bors, 'what is that Pridam le Noir?'
>
> Damsel: 'Sir, he is the most doubted man of this land.'
>
> Bors: 'Then ye may send her word that ye have found a knight that shall fight with that Pridam le Noir in God's quarrel and yours.'
>
> So that lady was then glad, and sent her word that she was provided. And so that night Sir Bors had passing good cheer. (p.359).

After a lengthy and bloody contest, Bors emerges victorious but spares Pridam's life on the understanding that he will never threaten the lady again and that she will be granted the inheritance and status decreed by her father, the king. Having displayed *fraunchyse* towards the lady and her plight, this virtue is then transferred to Bors' fellow knight and in an act of *felaȝschyp* Bors accepts Pridam's word and allows him to live. Bors leaves to continue on his quest; his 'reward', unlike Bond's, is spiritual satisfaction rather than sexual gratification.

In *Le Morte d'Arthur*, Galahad also dashes to the aid of damsels-in-distress after hearing God's voice in a deserted chapel telling him to go to the Castle of the Maidens and while there 'do thou away the wicked customs' (p.324). En route, a wise man tells

him that the castle is cursed and advises him to turn away, but continuing, he meets seven damsels and then a squire who leads him into the castle where seven knights greet him and warn him to leave or face death. After a lengthy fight in which Galahad slays some of these knights, he chases the remainder of them from the castle. A gentlewoman tells him that these brothers killed the lord of the castle and his son, taking its maiden and all its treasure hostage; the maiden has died but Galahad frees her sister. It was prophesised that one knight would defeat the brothers, but the maidens are nervous that the knights will return even if they promise to do otherwise. Other knights arrive from the surrounding area to protect the castle, including Gawain, Gareth and Uwain who, unlike Galahad, have slain the brothers to ensure the maidens' continued safety (pp.324-326).

Having rested to recover from defeating Pridam le Noir, Bors' status as knight is again challenged in *Le Morte d'Arthur* when an abducted damsel pleads for his help as he is traveling through a forest. Discovering his brother, Lionel, being beaten and tortured by two knights, he is about to speed to his assistance, when he sees an armed knight trying to carry a fair damsel into the forest and she in her terror calls out to the Virgin Mary "Saint Mary, succour your maid" (p.361). Seeing Bors and deeming him to be a knight of the Round Table, she appeals to his *fraunchyse* and *cortaysye*, to help her 'not to be shamed of this knight.' Bors' loyalty is torn between preserving the damsel's chastity and saving the life of his brother; after tortured deliberation, he opts to rescue the damsel and asks God to protect Lionel (pp.361-362). Malory, like Chaucer, often focuses on *felaʒschyp*:

> […] bonds among men are both affirmed and threatened (and sometimes both at once) by women. As a result, their shared uneasiness about masculinity becomes an uneasiness about women, and especially about women's potential to be *hominis confusio*. (Fisher, in Kreuger, ed. 2000:151-152).

Bors defeats the abductor and frees the damsel, saying to her:

"How seemeth it you? Of this knight ye be delivered at this time."
"Now Sir," said she, "I pray you lead me there as this knight had me."

> "So shall I do gladly;" and took the horse of the wounded knight and set the gentlewoman upon him, and so brought her as she desired (p.362).

The damsel explains that the abductor was her cousin whom she had previously trusted, and by preventing her violation by him Bors has saved the lives of many men in the bloodshed that would have followed. They are approached by twelve knights who have been seeking her and she explains how Bors has delivered her from danger. Up to this point, Bors has allowed his *fraunchyse* for the damsel's predicament to outweigh his *felaȝschyp* towards Lionel, his brother. However, aware that the damsel is now safe, he declines to be taken to the damsel's father to receive his thanks, allowing *felaȝschyp* to now triumph over *cortaysye*.

> "Truly," said Sir Bors, "that may not be at this time, for I have great adventure to do in this country." So he commended them to God and departed. (pp.362-363).

The damsel displays considerable agency in persuading Bors to choose her over Lionel, and this increases further when he agrees to return her to the place from which she was abducted. Her agency dissipates as soon as she reaches safety and no longer fulfils the 'damsel' remit, allowing Bors to turn to Lionel's plight. The 'traditional damsel' appeals to *fraunchyse* and, for as long as a damsel inhabits this persona, this pentad virtue becomes of paramount importance.

The iconic Bond girl is most often seen as a seductress, even Saul Cooper (Bond franchise director of publicity, 1977), defined her as 'a woman of fantastic sexual allure and promise' (Woollacott, in Lindner, ed. 2009:131). In spite of this many of these women adopt a 'traditional damsel' role, with an excellent example of this seen in Milovy alongside Dalton's Bond in *The Living Daylights*; her persona dictates both Bond's interactions with her and the general mood of the film.

> […] Bond feels sympathy when Czechoslovakian cellist Kara Milovy is manipulated by her defecting lover, Soviet General [Georgi] Koskov, and develops a close relationship with her. (Arp & Decker in South & Held, 2006:212).

Milovy is first seen in the film being shot at by Bond when she poses as a sniper in order to aid Koskov's defection. 'Suspecting that she is not a professional killer, Bond exercises uncharacteristic restraint and shoots the rifle out of her hands instead of killing her' (Burgess, 2015:239). Milovy's obvious nervousness persuades Bond to disobey his orders; her 'traditional damsel' presentation appeals to his *fraunchyse*. After watching her perform in a concert, Bond tracks her down only to see the KGB arresting her, and using the address on her cello case, he arrives at her flat to find it ransacked.

Bond: "I dropped the gun in the river. The KGB made quite a mess."

Milovy: "You're English. Who are you?"

Bond: "I saw what happened on the tram. Where did they take you? KGB headquarters?"

Milovy: "They released me this morning."

Bond: "Take a look across the street. *She walks to the window*. They let you go so they could follow you."

(*The Living Daylights* (1987) Directed by John Glen [DVD]. United International Pictures).

Unaware of potential dangers and unable to comprehend how international espionage works, Milovy's vulnerability cements her role as a 'traditional damsel'. This, coupled with Bond's patriotic need to understand Koskov's agenda, means that Milovy is conferred with considerable agency and she questions Bond's reasons for helping her.

Milovy: "I don't understand. *Aggressively*, why are you trying to help me?"

Bond: *calmly*, "what did Pushkin want? Did he ask you about Georgi Koskov?

Milovy: "He wanted to know where he was."

Bond: "Did you tell him?"

Milovy: "No."

Bond: “That was clever of Georgi, using blanks. Made the British believe his defection was real.”

Milovy becomes more receptive to Bond because he is able to give information she believes only Koskov could divulge. In reality, Bond’s position as a spy enables him to establish what has happened and can tell her what she wants to hear.

Milovy: “How do you know that?”

Bond: “He told me.”

Milovy: “You saw him?

Bond: “Two days ago. He’s safe and sound.”

Milovy: *smiles*. “You’re a friend of his?”

Bond: “We’ve been through quite a lot together.”

Milovy: “Dear Georgi! He kept his promise to send for me. Where are we going? To London?”

Bond: “No, not yet. The British think he will be safer if he keeps moving around. We might catch up with him in Vienna.”

Milovy: *using an excited tone*. “Vienna?”

Milovy becomes more excitable as this passage progresses and her naivety is highlighted in that she trusts a complete stranger, who has no physical evidence of his association with Koskov. She is delighted when she thinks that Koskov has not forgotten about her, but in reality it is Bond who is protecting her. Milovy believes that there is *felaʒschyp* between Bond and Koskov, but this is not the case. Realising that Milovy could be in major danger, Bond tells her that they must leave immediately and she does not question it. Bond leaves the apartment block and Milovy follows, leaving the cello case in a phone booth while pretending to make a call. While this fools their KGB followers, Milovy insists on retrieving the cello before they make their escape and her transition here into a ‘resourceful damsel’ is discussed in the next section of the chapter.

Having sledged into Austria on the cello case, Bond and Milovy hide in the back of a civilian truck to get to Vienna and then summon a horse-drawn carriage in order to get to the hotel where they are staying.

Milovy: “Vienna’s beautiful, just like Georgi said.”

Bond: “You care for him a great deal, don’t you?”

Milovy: “I owe him everything. My scholarship at the conservatoire, my Strad.”

Bond: “Your cello’s a Stradivarius?”

Milovy: “A famous one. The Lady Rose. Georgi got it in New York.”

Bond: “Quite the present.”

Milovy: “Maybe someday I’ll play there. At Carnegie Hall? Georgi believes I can do it.”

Bond: “I’m sure he is right.”

Milovy: “We go to him now?”

Bond: “Yeah, unless he had to move on. *He touches her arm*. If he did, I’m sure he left a message.”

Milovy’s devotion to Koskov becomes abundantly clear in this passage; his reciprocation of her feelings is less clear. Although he has paid for her scholarship and given her a very expensive cello, he risked her life by using her as a sniper. Her naïve loyalty to him, while admirable, creates issues for her that can be likened to Lynd’s commitment to her kidnapped boyfriend in *Casino Royale* (2006). As Bond is unaware of Lynd’s lover, he views her as a target for seduction and some of her agency is employed to rebuff him while avoiding adopting a ‘damsel’ persona. Milovy’s agency relies on her neediness; she is protected from Bond’s ‘sexual reputation’ due to her ‘damsel’ status and his alleged *felaʒschyp* with Koskov. Greeted by a familiar hotel receptionist, Bond asks for a second bedroom when he is offered his usual suite. He arranges tickets for the opera that night and joins Milovy in a room filled with ornate ball gowns and dresses.

Bond: *gestures towards one of the dresses*. "Do you like?"

Milovy: *using a slightly aggressive tone*. "For princess or wife of commissar?"

Bond: *smiles*. "Let's buy it."

Milovy: *adopting a sad tone*. "Don't joke! Who will pay?"

Bond: "Georgi, of course."

This interaction feels very personal and unconnected to the mission; James Chapman notes that '*The Living Daylights* is unique among the Bond films in that there is only one love interest for the hero' (2009:203). Milovy's agency is significant here because in spite of the fact that Bond is sexually attracted to her, her naivety and vulnerability appeal to his *cortaysye* and *fraunchyse*.

At the opera, Bond meets briefly with MI6 agent, Saunders, who is still under the impression that Milovy is a KGB sniper. Bond asserts that this is not the case; she is Koskov's girlfriend and the General's defection was not genuine.

Bond: "She shot blanks to make his defection look real to us."

Saunders: "Koskov's defection phoney? The KGB snatched him back."

Bond: "That's what we were supposed to think."

Saunders: "These are serious accusations, Bond. What are you up to?"

Bond: "I'm posing as Koskov's friend to see what leads I can get from her."

Milovy's agency in this conversation should be minimal and yet her obvious impact on Bond leads to him defending her actions even in her absence. Saunders sees her as an enemy agent and, while Bond assumes this to be incorrect, he seems besotted with her and is in danger of allowing her naivety to compromise his ability to execute his mission. Bond's absolute trust in Milovy potentially threatens the *felaȝschyp* between him and Saunders. Later that evening, having arranged to meet Saunders at the Ferris wheel, Milovy and Bond are seen at a fair. The relationship between them is becoming warmer; they hug on a rollercoaster and he wins her a toy at a fairground attraction.

When Saunders arrives and sees Bond and Milovy on the Ferris wheel, he is frustrated to see that Bond has become distracted. Saunders is approached by an assassin disguised as a balloon seller just as Milovy and Bond engage in their first romantic moment in the film. Bond turns the light out in their Ferris wheel compartment, claiming that it will allow them to see the lights at the fair better.

> Milovy: "Is it real or just a dream?"
>
> *Saunders is seen walking into a nearby café*, *and the Ferris wheel stops*.
>
> Milovy: "What's wrong? Why do we stop?"
>
> Bond: "I arranged it. We could be here all night." *Bond puts his hands on her shoulders; she gently resists*.
>
> Milovy: "Don't. It's impossible. Knowing you only two days and all I can think of is how we would be together."
>
> Bond: *moves his hands to her face*. "Don't think. Just let it happen." *They kiss before getting off the Ferris wheel*.
>
> (*The Living Daylights* (1987) Directed by John Glen [DVD]. United International Pictures).

At this stage, Milovy's dedication to Koskov appears to be waning and, in-keeping with audience expectation, she is falling for Bond's charms. However, she maintains her 'damsel' persona rather than acting as a seductress and seems conflicted about how she feels. Leaving her briefly to meet with Saunders at the café, Bond is visibly shaken when the agent is killed by an assassin. 'While still violent, Bond is less cold-hearted than he was in earlier films' (Burgess, 2015:239). Finding a message 'smiert spionom' which translates as 'death to spies', he attributes the killing to Russian General, Pushkin. Milovy is shown to be falling for Bond's charms and asks to spend a few more days with him in Vienna, but then exhibits the posture of a 'traditional damsel' once he makes the decision to leave immediately.

Sutton the blonde-haired geologist who assists Moore's Bond in *A View to a Kill* also adopts the persona of a 'traditional damsel'; harbouring a grudge against the villain,

Zorin, for ruining her father's business, she fulfils a very different role to Zorin's 'formidable' assistant May Day. Bond meets Sutton at one of Zorin's social events when he is assigned to investigate him. Supportive of Bond's mission, she is sometimes able to show agency by using her expertise in order to derail Zorin's plot but frequently ends up as a 'traditional damsel' and inadvertently becomes a hindrance. After May Day interrupts their conversation at their first meeting, Bond follows Sutton to her house and enters the property, believing her to be in the shower. She then steps out of the wardrobe behind him with a shotgun.

> Sutton: "Come out real slow. Just another Zorin stooge, Mr … whatever your name was."
>
> Bond: "Actually, it's James Stock. London Financial Times."
>
> Sutton: *backs towards her phone*. "You can tell the police which."
>
> Bond: "And you can tell them about the $5 million payoff you received from Zorin. *She picks up the phone*. I saw the cheque." *She gets no reception*.
>
> Sutton: "You cut the line." *A shadowy-figure moves with a gun behind the curtains*.
>
> (*A View to a Kill* (1985) Directed by John Glen [DVD]. United International Pictures).

Bond and Sutton are then faced with three of Zorin's men who attempt to overpower them; Bond does most of the fighting as Sutton's involvement verges on comical and she fails to tell Bond that her gun is loaded with rock salt until it is too late. Although she manages to disable the final guard by smashing a vase on his head, the contrast between May Day's physical prowess and Sutton's ineptitude in combat is clearly depicted. After Bond has fought off Zorin's henchmen, he and Sutton have dinner together.

> Sutton: *twirls her hair*. "That was delicious. And the way you handled those men."
>
> Bond: "Well, those … baboons could come back."
>
> Sutton: "I hope not."

Bond: “Well, then, I’ll check the windows and doors, and … uh, reconnect the telephone.”

Sutton: “The box is outside my bedroom window.”

Bond: “I think that I should be able to find that.”

Bond reconnects the phone line, before entering the bedroom. Sutton is asleep with her feet on top of the duvet. Bond lifts them and pulls the duvet over her, before switching off the light. In spite of having used two aliases with Sutton, his defence of her seems to reassure her that his intentions are honourable. While this would seem the ideal opportunity for Bond to seduce her, he refrains and adopts a very protective role. Sutton does not yet fulfil the criteria of a ‘conquest’ in Bond’s eyes; she is still displaying the ‘damsel’ persona and her vulnerability appeals more to his *fraunchyse* than his ‘sexual reputation’ at this point. By abstaining, Bond improves the chances of maintaining a productive relationship with her in order to achieve both of their objectives. She does not have an aptitude for combat, but her knowledge of geology proves invaluable and Sutton demonstrates agency when she explains to Bond what Zorin plans to do. They go to Zorin’s lair and find a map which shows the targets he intends to destroy.

Sutton: “He’ll kill millions. *She points*. These green lights – they’re Zorin’s oil wells. The ones he’s been using to pump sea water into the Hayward fault.”

Bond: “What are these tunnels for under these lakes?”

Sutton: “These lead straight into this section of the San Andreas fault. *She looks at him*. You know, Zorin just has to blast through the bottom of these lakes to flood the fault.”

Bond: *using a questioning tone*. “And create a … double earthquake?”

Sutton: “Yes. Except …, *mildly panicked voice*, except right beneath us is the key geological lock that keeps the faults from moving at once.”

The film then cuts to show Zorin supervising the placing of a bomb deep in a mine shaft, before returning to Bond and Sutton.

Bond: “All those explosives. Would they be enough to break the lock?”

Sutton: “Of course. If they go off, *makes the motion with her hands*, both faults move at once.”

Bond: “Silicon Valley and everything in it submerged forever.”

Sutton: “If it happened at the peak of spring tide for maximum effect …” *Bond goes over to check when peak tide is*.

Bond: “That’s today at 9:41, in less than an hour.”

Sutton: “We have to go and warn people.”

(*A View to a Kill* (1985) Directed by John Glen [DVD]. United International Pictures).

While Sutton shows agency in this situation by virtue of her geological knowledge, she is also very naive and when she rushes to get out of the hut Bond grabs her arm, knowing that Zorin and May Day are outside. Sutton is only powerful when she provides crucial information and for the remainder of her screen time she demonstrates varying degrees of vulnerability. Her passivity in this film reduces her agency significantly and can be likened to Romanova, in *From Russia with Love* (1963), who experiences powerlessness when Connery’s Bond believes her to be culpable for his friend Kerim Bey’s death; in this film, Bond becomes aggressive and Romanova feels the need to reiterate that killing her would be a fruitless endeavour for him. She uses what little agency she has to delay him by saying that all will be revealed when they reach England. He does not accept this and wants to find out more, but she opts instead to tell him that she loves him again and again which makes Bond stop the interrogation (see pp.44-45 above). Lynd, in *Casino Royale* (2006), also suffers from reduced agency when she is caught up in an attack on Craig’s Bond during a break in the poker game at the hotel. Her lack of experience in combat tells when she is of little help to Bond during the battle. Seen afterwards fully clothed, sitting under a shower, and clearly upset, she appears incredibly vulnerable. Although she is deceiving Bond in other ways, her distress here seems genuine (see p.57 above). Both of these sequences show a woman adopting the role of a ‘traditional damsel’ and consequently appealing to Bond’s *fraunchyse* and

cortaysye in order to make him behave compassionately and appropriately towards her. As has been previously noted with Milovy and Dorigen, when a woman adopts the 'traditional damsel' posture, she provokes compassion from male heroes but arrests their sexual desire.

Agency of the 'resourceful damsel'

'Resourceful damsels' are not dissimilar to 'traditional damsels'; an 'initiating event' still creates a 'damsel' persona but the resourceful woman has sufficient agency to rectify the problem herself rather than calling on a hero for help. In *The Franklin's Tale* (*c*.1400), when Aurelius persists in trying to woo Dorigen in spite of her obvious reticence, she changes strategy and sets him a somewhat ridiculous challenge in order to rebuff his advances without explicitly rejecting him. In becoming a 'resourceful damsel', Dorigen is able to formulate a potential solution to her problem.

> Looke what day that **endelong** Britayne [the length and breadth of]
> Ye remoeve alle the rokkes, stoon by stoon,
> That they ne **lette** ship ne boot to goon – [hinder]
> I seye, whan ye han maad the coost so clene
> Of rokkes that ther nys no stoon **ysene**, [to be seen]
> Thanne wol I love yow best of any man; (ll.992-997).

Having reinforced the fact that she 'belongs to' Arveragus (l.986), such a sudden change in mood '[…] and her "rash promise" to Aurelius have contributed to critics reading her as weak minded and foolish' (McGregor, 1997:374). An alternative view of this is that Dorigen deliberately makes her pledge to Aurelius contingent on his completion of a task - to remove all of the rocks from the coast of Brittany – which is clearly impossible and which should therefore signal an end to Aurelius' wooing. She would surely have expected him to have understood the motives behind the challenge and end his pursuit; indeed, Carol Pulham suggests that Dorigen's promise serves as a courteous rebuttal of her suitor's advances (1996:83). The choice of task also underlines Dorigen's position as a 'trewe wyf', as it plainly stems from a desire to keep Arveragus safe on his return via the Brittany coastline; Dorigen's love and concern for her husband is clear even in his absence. 'If she were a man, Dorigen might board a ship, learn to navigate the dangerous cliffs herself, and go in search of Arveragus' (Thompson Lee,

1984:172). However, constrained by her gender, she '[…] expresses her own desire, complete devotion to Arveragus, in the most stable medium she can find […] the rocks off the coast of Brittany' (McGregor, 1997:375).

Fully aware that the task is not achievable, Aurelius' initial reaction to the challenge is one of petulance.

> "Madame," quod he, "this were an **impossible**! [impossibility]
> Thanne moot I dye of sodeyn deth horrible."
> And with that word he turned hym **anon**. (ll.1009-1011). [straight away]

At this stage, it appears that Dorigen's plan has worked perfectly, with Aurelius being rejected respectfully and her marriage to Arveragus remaining inviolate. Davis states that the bargain she strikes with Aurelius shows that there is '[…] a certain immaturity in the heroine' (2002:137). While this is a valid view, it is hard to suggest what else Dorigen could have done to counter the courtly love techniques Aurelius uses. Unfortunately, Aurelius still has the option to accept the undertaking, and desperate to be her lover, he looks to find a way of making her believe the rocks have vanished. He finds a clerk who is exceptionally knowledgeable regarding the tides around the Brittany coast and who is willing, for a large fee, to create an illusion for him. 'Aurelius is only too anxious to strike a bargain, and promises readily that the clerk shall have his thousand pounds, perhaps the only truly rash promise in the tale.' (Lucas, 1983:9). This contrasts with McGregor's view that Dorigen's actions were foolish in setting the challenge, and indeed her rashness is perhaps not apparent so much in the task she sets, as in her naïve trust in Aurelius' decency. He chooses to exploit Dorigen's vulnerability and informs her that he has succeeded.

> **Madame**, I speke it for the honour of yow [my lady]
>
> Moore than to save myn hertes lyf right now –
>
> I have do so as ye comanded me
>
> And if ye vouche sauf, ye may go see. (ll.1331-1334)
>
> He taketh his leve, and she astoned stood;

In al hir face nas a drope of blood. (ll.1339-1340).

After delivering devastating news of his alleged success, Aurelius immediately leaves and '[…] the brief description of Dorigen that the Franklin offers at this point focuses our interest and our sympathy more effectively than anything that has happened' previously (Thompson Lee, 1984:174). Although Carolyn Collette suggests that the tale introduces some ambiguity here about whether the rocks remain but are not visible or have actually vanished (1992:400), Dorigen is distraught, having never considered it to be possible and says that if it has happened, it is against the laws of nature (ll.1342-1345). There is significant disagreement among critics regarding Dorigen's motives for setting Aurelius' challenge; Harry Berger Jr. considers it to be borne out of boredom and a need for amusement (1967:143), whereas Kathryn Jacobs sees the setting of the task as innocently meant, thereby engendering our sympathy for Dorigen's predicament (2001:27). Flake believes that 'Dorigen should never have made such a promise, but her intention was the opposite of the consequence' (1996:217). This final view fits with the fact that Aurelius has been entirely 'courtly' in their earlier encounters; unfortunately for Dorigen, a combination of love and youthful inexperience appear to make him act in a manner befitting neither his station nor the principle of *cortaysye*. Dorigen then has to make the difficult choice between her reputation and her life.

Oon of thise two **bihoveth me** to **chese**, [I have to; choose]

But natheless, yet have I **levere** to **lese** [rather; lose]

My lif than of my body to have a shame,

Or knowe myselven fals, or **lese my name** (ll.1359-1362). [lose my reputation]

In late medieval times, a person's renown was all important, and this explains Dorigen's statement that she is willing to sacrifice herself in order to remain faithful to her husband. Anticipating potential violation by Aurelius, she acknowledges her obligations towards Arveragus and realises that 'being true, a faithful, genuine, "trewe wyf", means avoiding defilement' (McGregor, 1997:376). Unfortunately, Arveragus does not seem to be too sympathetic when he returns from his quest and finds Dorigen crying.

Hoom cam Arveragus, this worthy knyght,

And asked hire why that she weep so soore;
And she gan wepen **ever lenger the moore** [more and more]
"Allas," quod she, "that ever was I born!
Thus have I seyd," quod she, "thus have I sworn" –
And toold hym al as ye han herd bifore;
It nedeth nat **reherce** it yow namoore, (ll.1460-1466) [recount]

Mary Carruthers says that Arveragus' response to Dorigen's confession is too cavalier (1981:293); the situation is extremely serious and Dorigen is clearly very upset, and yet Arveragus simply asks her if this is the only issue.

This housbonde, with glad **chiere**, in freendly wyse [expression]
Answerde and sayde as I shal yow devyse;
"Is ther oght elles, Dorigen, but this?" (ll.1467-1469).

'[…] The glad cheer risks seeming — if not trivially nonchalant — an insensitive underestimate of the gravity Dorigen herself perceives in her predicament' (Blamires, 2006:149). Dorigen and Arveragus' marriage has been founded on equality, and yet at this point she appears to lose agency as a 'trewe wyf' and an equal by being forced to adopt a damsel-in-distress persona. Her desperation increases when her husband insists that *trawþe* should be respected above all else and that she must fulfil her promise; 'the modern reader must keep in mind the consequences of breaking a promise that would have befallen her *at that time period* and what those consequences meant' (Pulham, 1996:77). Dismissing her concerns and her pleas for help, Arveragus tells her that she must go to Aurelius because this is what she has promised to do:

"Ye wyf," quod he, "**lat slepen that is stille**. ['let sleeping dogs lie']
It may be wel, **paraventure**, yet to day. [perhaps]
Ye shul **youre trouthe holden**, by my fay! [keep your word]
For God so wisly have mercy upon me,
I hadde wel levere **ystiked** for to be [sticked/killed]
For verray love which that I to yow have,
But if ye sholde youre trouthe kepe and save.
Trouthe is the **hyeste** thyng that man may kepe –" (ll.1472-1479). [noblest/best]

At first glance, Arveragus' actions seem inappropriate given the severity of the threat to his wife's fidelity and Raybin says that he '[…] lacks the physical power even of staying his wife's tears – leaves the arena for action, for meaningful choice – entirely to Dorigen' (1992:69). Flake holds a contrary view, that Arveragus is simply ensuring she upholds *trouthe* (1996:218-219). Dorigen has pledged her *trouthe* to Arveragus as part of their wedding vows and his actions are, therefore, understandable when considered in this context. A great deal of emphasis is placed on the value of one's word in this passage, with Arveragus stating that 'trouthe' is the most important quality a person can have. Colin Wilcockson observes that '[…] one's word is one's bond' (2003:308) and the verbal agreement was sacrosanct during the medieval period. As Arveragus does not question Aurelius' honesty in his alleged completion of the task, Dorigen must agree to fulfil her promise to him unless he deems that the oral contract was too harsh and releases her from her bond. Arveragus' power over Dorigen is exhibited when he releases her from her marriage vows (l.1474) and tells her to go to Aurelius. Arveragus also orders Dorigen to keep her promise to Aurelius a secret and insists that she hides her shame, '[…] assuming that, as a good wife, Dorigen will align her will with that of her husband' (Kao, 2012:119).

> But with that word he brast anon to wepe,
> And seyde, "I yow forbede, **up peyne of deeth**, [on pain of death]
> That nevere, whil thee lasteth lyf ne breeth,
> To no **wight** telle thou of this aventure – [person]
> As I may best, I wol my wo endure –
> Ne **make no contenance of hevynesse**," (ll.1480-1485). [do not look troubled]

Dorigen granted Arveragus sovereignty in the public sphere when they married but his instructions here perhaps serve to demonstrate the real balance of power within their marriage. R.S. White views that Arveragus places a promise made in jest above a sacred marital vow (1974:456), and it is certainly valid that Arveragus' actions are more consistent with reinforcing his *felaȝschyp* with Aurelius than with responding to the distress of his wife. 'Trouthe', whatever the circumstances, is one of the most valued virtues of knighthood and in order to allow Dorigen to keep her 'trouthe' she is sent to Aurelius; in real terms, Arveragus risks her purity in order to retain his freedom (Burlin,

1967:68). Dorigen is left with few choices and opts to become even more resourceful and maintain her own freedom by manipulating *gentillesse*. Deciding not to follow her husband's instructions to hide her feelings, Dorigen encounters the young squire on her way to their meeting point in the garden and he asks where she is going.

And she answerde, half as she were mad,

"Unto the gardyn, as myn housbonde bad

My trouthe for to holde – allas, allas!" (ll.1511-1513).

It is clear from the description of Dorigen's demeanour that she is not emotionless; this could simply be because of the enormity of the situation, or it might be that she is using the only avenue of agency open to her and is exploiting the role of 'traditional damsel' in an attempt to appeal to Aurelius' *fraunchyse*, or compassion. Raybin notes that '[…] a person may be sad, may appear half-mad, and may still, like the Dorigen I see here, be in control' (1992:76). Whatever Dorigen's motives, Aurelius is clearly moved by her anguish, making him reconsider the nobility of his actions.

Aurelius gan wondren on the **cas**, [situation]

And in his herte hadde greet compassioun

Of hire and of hire lamentacioun,

And of Arveragus, the worthy knight,

That bad hire holden al that she had **hight**, [promised]

So looth hym was his wyf sholde breke hir **trouthe**; (ll.1514-1519). [word]

Dorigen's vulnerability and Arveragus' *gentillesse* make Aurelius question the validity of the contract he made with her and, releasing her from her promise, he sends her back to her husband. The men never actually meet, instead using Dorigen as a go-between and, as Mary Bowman notes, '[…] Dorigen is reduced to an object of exchange between Arveragus and Aurelius.' (1993:241).

"Madame, seyth to youre lord Arveragus

That sith I se his grete gentillesse
To yow, and **eek** I se wel youre distresse, [also]
That him were levere han shame (and that were **routhe**) [pity/compassion]
Than ye to me sholde breke thus youre trouthe,
I have wel levere evere suffre wo
Than I **departe** the love **betwix** yow two. [break; between]
I yow **relesse**, madame, into youre hond" (ll.1526-1533). [release]

McGregor views that Arveragus and Aurelius are too excessive in their expression of courtly love (1997:366) and Dorigen's predicament certainly turns into a contest of sorts between the men to see who is the most generous. Bowman (1993) is among critics who consider that Dorigen has no agency in this situation, and yet it could be argued that her 'resourceful' display of desperation and dread on meeting Aurelius allows her to exploit the overt *gentillesse* at play between the two men. Although we have seen that the role of damsel fails to move Arveragus, it does have the desired effect on Aurelius. This may be purely because Aurelius realises he has fallen short of expected behaviour by being deceitful about the completion of the task, but nonetheless the damsel role does allow Dorigen an opportunity to regain agency. Raybin notes that she '[…] rises above the vulgarity of her lover and the pettiness of her husband to lift them with her to a higher moral level' (1992:81). In real terms, neither Arveragus nor Aurelius emerges from the tale unscathed; Arveragus is seen as heartless and Aurelius as manipulative with regard to Dorigen's plight. The Clerk who forgoes payment for creating Aurelius' illusion certainly shows exceptional *gentillesse* '"For, sire, I wol nat taken a peny of thee"' (l.1616), and it is perhaps apt that this tale ends with the Franklin's question: 'Which was the mooste **fre** [generous], as thynketh yow?' (l.1622). This query is meant to be addressed by the gathered pilgrims, but is just as relevant to the readers of the text.

An equally important consideration must be how Dorigen is viewed by the end of the tale, addressing whether or not the utilisation of a 'resourceful damsel' persona has empowered her to regain equality in her marriage. A.M. Kearney suggests that Dorigen ends up with less agency as a consequence of her actions, highlighting that Arveragus' 'blisse' on line 802 when describing his marriage has become 'sovereyn blisse' by line 1552 (1969:251). However, lines 1551 and 1552 clearly show that it is 'Arveragus

and Dorigen his wyf / [Who] In sovereyn blisse leden forth hir lyf' [*emphasis* added] and therefore suggest that the parity in their marriage has been re-established. 'Dorigen's appeals to male "gentilesse" have compelled first her husband and then her admirer to free her from the male-imposed structural obligations of obedience and honor […]' (Raybin, 1992:80).

Like Dorigen, other women, irrespective of the persona they habitually inhabit, are equally susceptible to an unexpected change in circumstance casting them in the role of 'damsel'. For seductresses and 'formidable' women, the manifestation of the 'damsel' persona is more often that of a 'resourceful damsel' than a vulnerable 'traditional damsel'. In *The Wife of Bath's Prologue*, Alisoun expresses her love for her fifth husband, the clerk, Jankyn (l.589), and gives him her accumulated wealth and land (ll.604-605). Unfortunately, he then restricts her autonomy and controls her actions by quoting excessively from *The Book of Wykked Wyves* and she bitterly regrets her decision (ll.606-607). After she tears pages from the book and they exchange blows, she seizes an opportunity to regain agency by feigning death and staging a swift recovery (ll.758-790). Alisoun's adoption of the 'damsel' persona is extremely transient and yet exceptionally effective, as she exploits Jankyn's *fraunchyse* to be rewarded with the gift of sovereignty (see pp.99-100 above).

Bond women inhabiting a 'traditional damsel' persona are also capable of becoming resourceful when the need arises. When Dalton's Bond and Milovy leave her apartment in *The Living Daylights* (1987), they place the cello case in a phone booth to fool their KGB followers into believing she is taking a phone call, which gives them time to escape.

Bond: "Looks like we got away with it."

Milovy: *panicking*, "My cello! It's at the conservatoire."

Bond: "I'll get you another in Vienna."

Milovy: "No, we must go back for it."

Bond: "We have ten minutes if we're lucky before they discover what's happened."

Milovy: *using an angry tone*. "I *must* get my cello."

Bond: "No way. *Bond is then shown waiting in the car for Milovy to get her cello; they stuff it in the back of the car*. Come on, get in. *They are both in the car*. Why didn't you learn the violin?"

(*The Living Daylights* (1987) Directed by John Glen [DVD]. United International Pictures).

In this scene, Milovy's resourcefulness comes to the fore for the first time in the film; her petulant insistence plays on Bond's *fraunchyse* and *cortaysye*, making him feel compelled to back down in the argument. While this scene increases Milovy's agency, it also allows the KGB (*Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti*) [Committee for State Security] time to discover the ruse. Bond tunes the radio and picks up police communications; Milovy panics as she realises they are looking for a man and a woman in a foreign car. Bond opts for humour and adds "and a cello" before using an array of gadgets to take out their pursuers' vehicles. Milovy is the epitome of a vulnerable damsel; she is entirely reliant on Bond to get her to safety and appeals repeatedly to his *fraunchyse* to ensure that she does not come to harm. After their car crashes they escape from it and Bond sets it to self-destruct.

Milovy: "We almost made it."

Bond: *retrieves Milovy's cello*. "Come on, quick! Go! *The car explodes*. Glad I insisted you brought that cello. *They use the cello case as an improvised sledge and the cello as a steering mechanism. A bullet hits the cello*. Sorry. *He points to the border*. Not far now. *He passes her his passport*. Here, wave this. *They see a low barrier*. Duck. We've nothing to declare."

Milovy: "Just a cello."

Milovy's use of humour shows her to be more relaxed in Bond's presence, in spite of their ongoing difficulties. It is interesting that Bond tries to claim he was responsible for bringing the cello, when this was clearly not the case. Her agency is enhanced in the scene because her insistence has saved them from a perilous situation;

adopting the 'resourceful damsel' persona increases the agency already associated with her 'traditional damsel' persona.

Later in the film, Milovy is playing one of her pieces on the cello, but stops when Bond arrives in their hotel suite. Having had contact with Koskov, she has been persuaded that Bond is an enemy and shows resourcefulness, albeit misguided, in drugging him without arousing his suspicions.

Milovy: "Where have you been, James? You were gone so long, I was worried."

Bond: "It's always nice to be missed. Still no sign of Georgi. *She walks away from her cello*. No, please. Go on playing."

Milovy: "No. Let's have a drink." *She moves towards the coffee table*.

Bond: "You remembered, *referring to her shaking the vodka martini*. *She hands him the martini*. To us. **Nazdraviye**." *He drinks it*.

Milovy: "Did I get it right?"

Bond: "Perfect. What's the matter. *He tries to stroke her hair, but she moves away*. Kara, it's time I told you the truth. I'm not a friend of Georgi's. I'm a British agent looking for him. He's betrayed us all, Kara. The Russians, the British, even you. He told us a sniper might try to kill him. *He tries to touch her again*. And he set you up as the sniper, Kara. He wants you dead. You knew too much."

Milovy: "Liar! You pretended to love me! I telephoned Whittaker. Georgi was there. He told me the truth. You're a KGB agent, using me to find him and kill him."

Bond: *releases her*. "No, that's not … That's not true. I …, *Bond starts to feel ill*, That's … Chloral hydrate!" *Bond reaches for Milovy*.

Bond has been somewhat economical with the truth about her situation and the limited agency Milovy possesses in this exchange is ineffective because both Bond and Koskov are manipulating her. Struggling to understand what is happening, she

challenges Bond's *cortaysye* when confronting him about his lies. The scene continues with Milovy adopting an increasingly defensive tone.

Milovy: "Keep your hands off me!"

Bond: "Kara, listen to me. *He tears her dressing gown to reveal the gunshot wound he inflicted on her*. You got that when the rifle was shot out of your hands."

Milovy: "How do you know?"

Bond "Because I was the …, *weakened by the poison*, I was the man sent to kill you."

Milovy: "Why didn't you?"

Bond collapses and Koskov arrives.

Koskov: "Kara, my darling, you were absolutely perfect. *He hands her his doctor's bag*. Hurry."

Bond is taken by a fake ambulance to a military plane.

Milovy's 'damsel' persona is exploited by Koskov who wants to ensure that Bond is no longer a threat to his plans. When Bond reveals the truth about sparing her life at the concert hall, she immediately regrets her actions but does not want to show Koskov her remorse. Shortly after this scene, Bond and Milovy are shown strapped to aeroplane seats at separate sides of the plane, with a small passageway between them. Bond awakens from his drug-induced stupor and wants to check the container in which diamonds are being smuggled; as Bond is restrained, Milovy reaches over in order to help him.

Milovy: "I've been such a fool."

Bond: "We both have. *They hold hands and then stop*. Open the lid."

Milovy: *sees a heart*. "Oh, my God."

Bond: "That's not human. It's an animal's heart. Diamonds hidden in the ice." *They seal the lid*.

Milovy: “How can I help you?”

Bond: “I need my key ring. Look out!” *The toilet flushes and Koskov’s assassin appears in the room*.

Milovy again appears more resourceful, perhaps to assuage her guilt, both for drugging Bond and for not believing him. Koskov orders her to make coffee, highlighting that even here where she can exhibit agency, her efforts are still hindered by being expected to perform domestic duties. After this, the plane lands with Bond and Milovy being escorted from it by armed men; Koskov betrays Milovy and sends her with Bond to prison. With Milovy better informed regarding Koskov’s true motives, she appears to realise how naïve she has been. They arrive at the prison where the main officer shows sexual interest in Milovy, and another prisoner shown in a dishevelled state is later revealed to be Kamran Shah, the leader of the *Mujaheddin* who has his own vendetta against Koskov. Bond fights the prison guards and Milovy also incapacitates one by hitting him on the head with a bucket in a similar manner to Sutton’s dispatch of Zorin’s henchman in *A View to a Kill*. After the skirmish, Bond is able to unlock Shah’s cell and they travel with him to his base so they can plan an attack on Koskov’s lair. However, their negotiations reach an impasse and Bond opts to return to his room.

Milovy: “I was worried for you, James. *She rushes into his arms*. What’s going to happen to us?”

Bond: *smiles*. “*Kheista*.”

Milovy: “What does that mean?” *Bond lets go of her*.

Bond: “It means beautiful in Afghan. *He walks towards the window of their room*. We’re with the mujaheddin. We leave with them in the morning on some kind of operation. And you’re going to the Khyber Pass.”

Milovy: *moves quickly towards him*. “You’re not coming with me.”

Bond: “No. I’ll be coming later.”

Milovy: “You’re going back for Georgi, aren’t you? It’s too dangerous. Don’t go.”

Bond: “I have to.”

At this stage, Milovy behaves in a manner more befitting of a 'traditional damsel'; she is concerned for his welfare and wishes for his safe return. Milovy has no obvious agency in this moment because Bond has made his decision and she is unable to persuade him; her position is not unlike Dorigen's when Arveragus is sent to fight.

Milovy: "You have to what? Get killed? I won't wait for you."

Bond: "Fine. Then I'll have Kamran send you direct to London."

Milovy: "You dumb, stubborn, stupid." *She speaks in her own dialect*, *and attacks Bond with a pillow*.

Bond: "What's that supposed to mean?"

Milovy: "Back end of horse."

Bond: *smiles*. "Are you calling me a horse's arse?"

Milovy: *hugs Bond and then puts her hands around the back of his head*. "I might never see you again."

Bond: "You will. I promise." *They kiss*.

Bond and Milovy have become more affectionate towards each other; she is no longer acting out of love for Koskov and seems to be more committed than in earlier interactions. Bond and Shah plan to destroy Koskov's drugs; Bond infiltrates Koskov's drug convoy disguised as a local to plant a bomb on one of the vehicles, but becomes trapped in the vehicle and it drives away. Watching from a safe distance, Milovy calls on Shah to help and takes things into her own hands when he is reluctant to intervene; grabbing Shah's gun, she heads off on horseback alone in pursuit of Bond. In doing so, she provokes the expected chivalrous response when Shah and his men set off after her. By rejecting a 'traditional damsel' persona in spite of being in a 'distressing' situation, Milovy succeeds in invoking Shah's *fraunchyse*, a fact that he acknowledges with a single word retort, 'Women!'. Her agency is maximised at this point because she forces Shah and his men to consider both their *felaȝschyp* with Bond and their responsibility to keep her safe. Arriving at Koskov's airbase, Bond blends in by unloading the opium from the trucks onto Koskov's aeroplane and Milovy uses her allure to distract a guard, so that

Shah and his men can start their attack. However, her new-found agency is threatened when she is then tasked with flying the aeroplane while Bond deals with an assassin. Milovy tries to help Bond by opening the cargo bay doors, but her plan almost backfires when Bond and an assassin are swept out of the plane and caught up in a cargo net. Bond defeats the assassin, finds the bomb he hid within the drugs, and returns to the cockpit where his reappearance distracts Milovy and forces him to take evasive action to avoid a crash. He then allows Milovy to take over piloting the plane again in order to drop the bomb on a bridge to prevent Koskov's men from killing Shah and his men. The plane's fuel warning light and siren sound and the rotor blades on the plane stop; Bond has to think fast in order to prevent their deaths. In spite of their dire situation, Milovy remains resourceful and follows his instructions to get into the jeep which parachutes from the plane before crashing into a cliff.

After Bond tracks down and eliminates Whittaker, he and Pushkin agree to overlook Milovy's status as a defector and she is granted her freedom. This exchange between men regarding a woman's future is similar to the one where Dorigen's fate is decided by Arveragus and Aurelius. Milovy is then seen playing at a concert hall in France; she has been told that Bond is on an assignment abroad, but in reality he is waiting in her dressing room.

> Bond: "You didn't think I'd miss this performance, did you?" *They kiss*.
>
> Milovy: "Oh, James."
>
> (*The Living Daylights* (1987) Directed by John Glen [DVD]. United International Pictures).

Bond's comment could be construed in two ways; either a reference to her musical prowess or to their impending sexual liaison. Apart from a brief encounter in the opening credits, this implied consummation is the only sexual intimacy in the film. Hines reinforces this point when she says that

> […] In *The Living Daylights* in particular Dalton's Bond is also markedly less promiscuous. […] Bond's sexuality was treated rather more seriously, in part connected to the age of AIDS awareness. (2018:182).

However, Chapman offers an alternative argument for Bond's 'monogamy', suggesting that this film is far more in-keeping with Fleming's Bond who was not the Casanova character of popular belief (2009:203). As the Bond franchise is shaped by societal and audience expectations as well as by its source material, it seems likely that a combination of these two factors had a bearing on the decision to restrict Bond's sexual relations. It might also be due to the fact that the main Bond girl here is a damsel-in-distress and Bond waits until Milovy is safe and no longer fulfils the remit of a 'damsel', before seducing her. This is also seen with Sutton in *A View to a Kill* where Moore's Bond simply covers her and leaves her sleeping after the house invasion scene. He waits until the end of the film when the danger has passed to make her a sexual conquest. There seems to be some form of unwritten code, with an emphasis on generosity and compassion, that prevents chivalrous men from making sexual advances towards a 'traditional damsel'. Perhaps this is also at play in Aurelius' inability to take advantage of Dorigen.

In Chapter 2, we explored Di Vincenzo (*On Her Majesty's Secret Service*) as a 'formidable' woman, but also noted that some of her actions could be conceived as those of a 'resourceful' damsel. Di Vincenzo struggles to escape the controlling behaviour of her father, but resolutely refuses help from George Lazenby's Bond; rescued from the sea by him when she attempts suicide, Di Vincenzo then leaves Bond at the mercy of two assailants. Later, when she is unable to pay her casino debt, she is ungrateful when he pays it for her (see p.106 above); opting, instead, to adopt the persona of a 'resourceful damsel', she sleeps with Bond in recompense. Di Vincenzo is not initially portrayed as a 'damsel' and this might explain Bond accepting her sexual favours early in the film. She is dismissive of Bond when they later meet at her father's birthday party. Draco's assistant alerts Di Vincenzo to Bond's discussion with her father regarding an arrangement where Draco will provide mission-critical information about Blofeld in exchange for Bond wooing Di Vincenzo. She confronts the men, toasting Bond sarcastically and saying: "No woman would waste excellent champagne discussing a business deal. Unless, of course, she happened to be part of the arrangement" (*On Her Majesty's Secret Service* (1969) Directed by Peter Hunt [DVD]. United Artists). Di Vincenzo continues the analogy by claiming that Bond should revise the terms of the contract, as the liability will be too expensive. She does not wish to be any part of their

agreement and asks Draco to give Bond the information he needs or he will never see her again. *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* as a film, and Di Vincenzo as a character, provide a unique perspective on Bond's relationships. Rather than mirroring medieval romance, it seems to have more parallels with many fairytales, where the princess marries the handsome prince or dashing knight who saves her.

Having been portrayed as a 'traditional damsel' for much of the film, Sutton in *A View to a Kill* becomes intermittently resourceful; although in reality she is often helping Bond escape from perilous situations that she has helped place them in. Firstly, she attracts his attention unaware that Zorin is behind her and is taken into his airship. Bond goes to rescue her and holds on to the airship's guy rope and Sutton runs to the front of the vehicle to attack Zorin, causing the airship to crash and giving Bond time to secure it to the Golden Gate Bridge. Then, seeing Bond balancing precariously on a narrow bridge support, Sutton runs to hug him, giving Zorin the opportunity to attack Bond while he is distracted. During the ensuing fight scene, Sutton again reverts to type and is a hindrance to Bond rather than a help; she is apparently only capable of being in control when Bond is unavailable and she has no other choice. Sutton's regular transformations from a 'resourceful' to a helpless damsel-in-distress arguably undermine the agency her geological expertise confers, but her vulnerability allows Moore's Bond opportunities to play the action hero. Moore's age and physical limitations might also explain the presence of several 'fluffers' in this film, whose roles will be discussed in chapter 4. Present in both the pre-title sequence and then dotted throughout the film, these 'fluffers', paired with a needy 'damsel' as a main Bond girl, ensured that, as with other portrayals of Bond, he never loses his touch.

Agency of the 'rational damsel'

Some women go beyond 'resourcefulness' and are able to remain calm and in control in the face of adversity; they resolutely resist being cast as a damsel-in-distress. This section will analyse the agency of two disparate groups of 'rational damsels', starting with women who rely on their status, knowledge or expertise to remain calm in hazardous situations. It will then consider 'damsels-*sans*-distress': women who seek to exploit the agency associated with the 'damsel' persona. Bizarrely, the incredible vulnerability of a damsel-in-distress, whether 'traditional', 'resourceful', or 'rational', affords her substantial agency; as a consequence, the 'damsel' persona becomes an

attractive proposition for some women as part of their wider efforts to manipulate the narratives of Bond and medieval romance for their own ends. A protective, chivalrous response is invoked in the hero irrespective of whether or not a 'damsel' is genuinely under threat.

Agency through status

The 'formidable' woman, Guinevere, is placed in peril when she is led into the forest by Kay and attacked by Meliagaunt's men in *Le Morte d'Arthur* (*c*.1485). Her knights, who are youthful and naïve, are overpowered by a superior force and Guinevere surrenders herself to Meliagaunt, only when he accepts her conditions, in order to save her men. In spite of being placed into a situation where she could easily adopt a 'damsel' persona, she chooses instead to retain a degree of sovereignty, and by association, agency. After being rescued, Guinevere presides over a duel between Lancelot and Meliagaunt which Lancelot wins. Despite the fact that a trial should take place in order to decide Meliagaunt's fate, Guinevere simply nods at Lancelot and he executes her abductor. Lancelot's devotion to Guinevere gives her considerable agency and allows her to manipulate him; Meliagaunt's treatment of her has cast her as a 'damsel' in the eyes of others, allowing her to persuade Lancelot to justifiably exact revenge. He is depicted as a chivalrous knight who obeys the wishes of his queen without question, despite Meliagaunt appealing to Arthur and Lancelot's *felaȝschyp* and *fraunchyse*. 'It is treason for [Lancelot and Guinevere] to consummate their feelings for one another physically. In a way, she is Lancelot's Holy Grail. He risks all to save her' (O'Pry-Reynolds, 2013:42-43). Guinevere's decision that he will be executed is final and her agency is significantly enhanced as it is channelled through the vessel of Lancelot's knightly prowess (see p.125 above).

There are instances where 'rational' women opt, when faced with a potentially insurmountable challenge, to sacrifice their lives for 'the greater good'. In *The Quest* (*c*.1210), Perceval's sister is depicted as the epitome of purity and her saintly qualities give her status and associated agency above that normally afforded to women. In-keeping with the tradition of the quest, after Galahad has been reminded by a hermit to avoid female company on his journey, he is woken during the night when Perceval's sister appears at his door. Her objective is to reunite Galahad with Perceval and Bors,

although she does not specify her reasons for requesting his assistance, simply telling him: '"I want you to arm yourself, then mount and follow me. I will promise to reveal to you the highest adventure any knight ever saw"' (p.180). Galahad does not question her motives, and having armed himself and saddled his horse, says: '"Now you can go where you please, for I will follow you anywhere"' (p.180). Underlining his trust in her, they ride together through a forest, a dangerous undertaking in medieval literature (Cooper, 2008:70), and eventually arrive at a castle where Perceval's sister tells the occupants that Galahad is an unrivalled knight. Not long after they have fallen asleep after eating, she wakes him and collecting a fine, rich casket, requests that he rides with her through the night until they reach the sea. Only at this point do her motives become apparent when they see the ship on which Perceval and Bors are waiting (p.181). In spite of having honourable reasons for her mission, Perceval's sister still has to rely on Galahad's *fraunchyse* and the expectations of the chivalric system in order to ensure his compliance. After being welcomed by Bors and her brother, she listens to the men discussing a wondrous sword and the maiden they must find who will provide a holster for it. She opens a casket to reveal a belt beautifully woven from gold, silk and hair, set with precious stones and fastened with two golden buckles. Unlike Lady Bertilak when she gifts the girdle to Gawain, Perceval's sister's motives are pure; this belt has been crafted using her own hair and is destined to provide a holster for the special sword that Galahad rightly claims.

> "Fair lords," said she, "behold the belt which is to be fastened here. You must know that I made it of the most precious thing that belonged to me, that is, of my hair. And if I valued it, it is not strange, for on the day of Pentecost when you were made a knight, sire," said she to Galahad, "I had the finest head of hair any woman in the world. But as soon as I knew that the adventure was assigned to me and that I must execute it I quickly had my head shorn, and I made these tresses as you can see." (pp.204-205).

Perceval's sister places the belt and sword upon him and tells him that she is no longer worried about dying because she has knighted such a worthy man. Evidently, Galahad was not truly a knight until he received the gifts of the wondrous sword and the belt. Offering his gratitude, Galahad promises to be her knight forever more (p.206).

Perceval's sister's agency is channelled into supporting Galahad's cause, even at the cost of sacrificing her most precious attribute. 'Rationally', she sees the loss of her hair not as a subservient gesture but as an active choice to facilitate Galahad's completion of the quest. Arriving at a castle with Perceval, she is told about a high-status woman: 'The fact is that there is here a damsel to whom we and all the people of this country belong, as well as of this and many another castle' (p.214). This important noble woman has fallen ill and, as all previous attempts have failed to heal her, Perceval's sister agrees to save the dying noblewoman by giving her pure blood, even though she knows this action will kill her. Galahad is upset that she has made this decision, but does not prevent her from doing so. Having filled a basin with her blood, Perceval's sister crosses herself and then tells the lady "[…] I have submitted to death that you might be healed. For God's sake, pray for my soul, for I am at death's door." Fainting from loss of blood, the men run to support her, but are unable to reduce the blood flow sufficiently. With her final words, Perceval's sister gives her brother very specific instructions regarding the burying of her body (p.216).

Perceval's sister's selfless act gives her remarkable agency and she mitigates its transitory nature by dictating her final resting place and, hinting at a supernatural element, stating that Galahad and Perceval will be buried beside her. Perceval's sister's actions are noble and show that women's agency, contrary to the documented beliefs of many men, can be used for good. While it is understandable that the 'demonic' women who tempt knights in *The Quest* remain anonymous, Perceval's sister seems particularly discounted; it is surprising that a woman who dies during the selfless act of saving another person should remain unnamed. Perceval's sister has an unlikely counterpart in May Day, in *A View to a Kill* (1985), who we have already discussed in her role as a 'formidable' woman in the previous chapter. May Day sacrifices her life to gain revenge over Zorin after he betrays her, but in doing so saves Moore's Bond and many innocent civilians. Most female Bond villains are 'redeemed' through sexual intercourse with him and lose their agency as a consequence, whereas May Day's dramatic act boosts her agency, albeit temporarily (see p.127 above). Another Bond girl demonstrates transient agency by choosing death over dishonour; Lynd, in *Casino Royale* (2006), opts to commit suicide rather than confront Craig's Bond regarding her deceptive behaviour (see p.71 above). While May Day's death has wider significance,

Lynd's reasons are more personal and concerned with hiding her shame from Bond. In this sense, Lynd is not dissimilar to Dorigen who contemplates suicide rather than admit her shame to Arveragus. The medieval woman has convention on her side as she is trying to preserve her marriage; Lynd has deceived Bond and, given the depth of his feelings for her, cannot be allowed to live.

The status that some Bond women hold which exempts them from manifesting as a damsel-in-distress is rooted in knowledge and expertise; for example Dr. Holly Goodhead is a National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) scientist in *Moonraker*, who assists Moore's Bond in discovering the fate of a UK space shuttle hijacked by the villain, Drax. Working for the CIA, she helps Bond to prevent Drax destroying human life on Earth. Her first meeting with Bond highlights his chauvinism:

Bond: "Good afternoon."

Dr. Goodhead: "Can I help you?"

Bond: "Yes, my name is Bond. James Bond. I'm looking for Dr. Goodhead."

Dr. Goodhead: "You just found her."

Bond: "A woman?"

Dr. Goodhead: *sounding sarcastic*. "Your powers of observation do you credit Mr. Bond."

Bond: "James. To my friends."

(*Moonraker* (1979) Directed by Lewis Gilbert [DVD]. United Artists).

Misogyny is a common motif in the Bond films and often seen when women are shown in senior positions or offer him mission critical advice. Dr. Goodhead's name reinforces this assertion given its unsubtle sexual connotation in line with other Bond girls such as Pussy Galore (*Goldfinger*, 1964) and Stephanie Broadchest (*Casino Royale*, 2006). Dr. Goodhead responds sarcastically, but within seconds Bond appears to have gone from seeing her as subservient to viewing her as a potential conquest. Shaking Bond's hand, Dr. Goodhead's irritation at his dismissiveness becomes increasingly apparent and after suggesting that he does not want 'to lose time as well as a space shuttle', she accompanies him to the centrifuge trainer and invites him to try it.

Bond: "How fast does it go?"

Dr. Goodhead: “It could go up to 20 Gs, but that would be fatal. Three Gs is the equivalent of takeoff pressure. Most people pass out at seven.”

Bond: *looks away from her*. “You’d make a great saleswoman.”

Dr. Goodhead points out the ‘chicken switch’ that brings the device to a stop once the pressure becomes too much, but Bond still seems concerned.

Goodhead: “Come on, Mr. Bond. A 70-year-old can take 3 Gs.”

Bond: “Trouble is, there’s never a 70-year-old around when you need one.”

Dr. Goodhead is at this point told to call Drax and she asks an instructor to supervise the session, during which Drax’s bodyguard, Chang is seen tampering with the machine controls. Having been subjected to dangerously high centrifugal forces, Bond is looking very unwell and declines Dr. Goodhead’s offer of help on her return. Later in the film, Bond is in Venice investigating the manufacture of a poison at one of Drax’s laboratories when he next encounters Dr. Goodhead and is told she is addressing a seminar at the European Space Commission.

Bond: “[…] I keep forgetting that you are more than just a very beautiful woman.”

Dr. Goodhead: “If you’re trying to be ingratiating, don’t bother. I have more important things on my mind.”

Bond: “That’s what I’d like to talk about. Dinner this evening?”

Dr. Goodhead: “This evening I’m giving my address.”

Bond: “Then can you think of a reason for not having a drink afterwards?”

Dr. Goodhead: *smiles*. “Not immediately. But I’m sure I shall.” *She walks away; he smiles*.

Dr. Goodhead adopts a similar approach to Lynd in *Casino Royale*; by dismissing Bond’s compliments, she remains professional and appears immune to his seductive charm. Both women ensure that their intelligence, academically and emotionally, make his pursuit of them more challenging. Having survived an attack by Chang, Bond sneaks

into Dr. Goodhead's hotel room as she is getting ready for bed and she offers him a drink. He lifts her diary which fires a dart, and finding other gadgets in the room including an antenna in her clutch bag, these confirm Bond's suspicions that she is a CIA agent. As they are both investigating Drax, Dr. Goodhead suggests it might be beneficial for them to pool resources.

> Bond: "It could have its compensations. *They kiss, Bond uses the opportunity to subtly open a draw with plane tickets inside*. Where are you planning on going from here?"
>
> Dr. Goodhead: "I'm not planning on going anywhere." *The camera shows suitcases*.

Dr. Goodhead is an acceptable target for consensual sex with Bond; being a CIA agent, she does not need to be 'repositioned' (see p.6 above), and her actions in concealing her plans ensure that she retains agency and autonomy. She pretends to be asleep while Bond leaves, before asking the night porter to come up to collect her bags. Working undercover as a CIA agent clearly has its risks, Bond has been targeted by Chang twice, and yet Dr. Goodhead obviously prefers to continue her mission alone. Her 'rationality' affords her more agency than a 'traditional damsel' like Sutton, who is shown as naïve and submissive. When Bond meets Dr. Goodhead again on a Rio mountain top, as she watches Drax's planes taking off, her demeanour is once again cool and professional. Bond switches to a similar tone; he seems to realise that his advances would be rebuffed and that an appreciation of her intelligence would be far more effective. They agree to work together and discuss Drax's plans; although Dr. Goodhead is not entirely receptive to him, there is still an inevitability that Bond will eventually overcome her professionalism and be rewarded with a more satisfying sexual conquest. Chapman notes, 'One of the features that most obviously distinguished the Bond stories from previous generations of British thrillers was the greater visibility of women in narrative terms and as sexualized objects' (in Funnell 2015:12).

Dr. Goodhead and Bond are descending the Rio mountain on a cable car which stops abruptly and he suggests they move onto its roof. Jaws is then shown at the cable car station biting through the metal chain suspending their car and Bond falls from it but manages to cling on:

Dr. Goodhead: “Hang on, James.”

Bond: “The thought had occurred to me.”

Bond’s sarcastic response to her saying “hang on” and her use of his Christian name suggest a deeper rapport than earlier in the film. While Bond is being pulled back on to the car by Dr. Goodhead, another one moves parallel to theirs and when Jaws lands on its roof, Bond recognises him immediately.

Bond: “I might have guessed.”

Dr. Goodhead: “Do you know him.”

Bond: “Not socially. His name’s Jaws. He kills people.”

As Jaws jumps across, Dr. Goodhead opens the roof hatch and when Bond hits him, Jaws falls into the car. Locking the hatch, Bond and Dr. Goodhead escape down the suspension wires using a piece of chain, closely followed by their cable car and are forced to drop to the floor from a great height, sustaining minor injuries. The car crashes into the station at the bottom of the mountain, where Jaws is helped to escape from the rubble by Dolly and the two share a smile which marks the beginning of an unlikely relationship. Recovering from their injuries, Dr. Goodhead and Bond have a light-hearted conversation about their situation.

Dr. Goodhead: “Have you broken something?”

Bond: “Only my tailor’s heart. *She kisses him*. What was that for?”

Dr. Goodhead: “For saving my life.”

Bond: “Remind me to do it more often.”

(*Moonraker* (1979) Directed by Lewis Gilbert [DVD]. United Artists).

This interaction contrasts sharply with earlier scenes where she resents his condescending attitude and chauvinistic behaviour. They are then treated by Drax’s men disguised as paramedics, but Bond is able to escape from the ambulance when Dr.

Goodhead distracts their captors. She is taken to Drax's base and Bond survives a number of challenges in the Amazon rainforest, including killing a large python with Dr. Goodhead's poison pen, before being apprehended by Jaws. Bond is reunited with Dr. Goodhead in Drax's conference room situated below one of the shuttle's launchpads. They then escape from Drax's trap by using an air vent and, climbing to safety before boarding one of the shuttles posing as pilots, Dr. Goodhead then flies them to Drax's space station. Once there, Dr. Goodhead demonstrates agency when knocking out two unarmed guards before disarming the radar-jamming system, allowing them to be visible from Earth. Stephen Nepa states that Dr. Goodhead is able to assist Bond without overshadowing him (in Funnell, ed. 2015:194) and this observation is true in that Bond is still able to complete the majority of the mission, but defers to Dr. Goodhead in specific instances. 'Within the admittedly limited scope of the Bond films, Holly is perhaps the most "progressive" heroine of the series to date' (Chapman, 2007:165).

Bond and Dr. Goodhead are recaptured on the space station and, in line with 'villainous convention', Drax addresses them from a high platform to reveal his nefarious plans. Jaws switches allegiances when he realises that he and Dolly would not be part of the plan because they are not "perfect specimens". With Jaws on Bond's side and aided by the arrival of an American military force, Drax's men cannot prevent Bond and Dr. Goodhead from escaping. Bond chases a fleeing Drax on foot and corners him in a corridor, shooting him with a cyanide dart; the final action scene sees Bond and Dr. Goodhead eliminate Drax's threat by destroying nerve gas globes.

> For the first time in the series, the girl possesses a narratively important skill which Bond does not: she is able to pilot the space shuttle that is necessary for them to reach Drax's space station, and, later, to track and destroy the nerve gas globes. (Chapman, 2007:165).

Predictably, in spite of her unique expertise and consistent 'rationality' throughout the film, Dr. Goodhead finally succumbs to Bond's charms and uses the last line of the film, "Take me around the world one more time", to ensure that Bond regains his dominant position.

Like Dr. Goodhead, Dr. Christmas Jones, a no-nonsense nuclear physicist in *The World is not Enough* (1999), also holds agency due to her status and specialised

knowledge. Unwittingly working for the villains, she meets Brosnan's Bond while he is working undercover as Russian scientist, Arkov, in order to infiltrate Renard's base, and Dr. Jones' superior knowledge leaves her suspicious of Bond's cover story from the start. Her integrity and humanity are in stark contrast to Elektra King's scheming and narcissism in this film, and when King's villainous plan is revealed, Dr. Jones risks her own personal safety and switches allegiance, using her knowledge of nuclear weaponry to become a valuable ally for Bond. At their first meeting at Renard's camp, the field commander tells Bond that Dr. Jones is not interested in men.

> Dr. Jones: *addresses the camp commander*. "Are you here for a reason? Or are you just hoping for a glimmer? *She looks at Bond*. And you are?"
>
> Bond: "Mikhail Arkov, Russian Atomic Energy Department. *He gives her his papers*. Miss …?"
>
> Dr. Jones: *appears affronted*. "Doctor …, *calmer*, Jones. Christmas Jones. And don't make any jokes I've heard them all."
>
> Bond: "I don't know any doctor jokes."
>
> Dr. Jones: *hands him back his papers*. "This is okay. Take the elevator down the hole. Your friend's already down there."
>
> (*The World is not Enough* (1999) Directed by Michael Apted [DVD]. United International Pictures).

Dr. Jones' response to Bond giving her the wrong title suggests that she is used to misogynistic comments and it is interesting that her introduction mimics his usual opening line, in which he gives his surname before revealing his first name. She actively warns Bond to refrain from making any jokes regarding her first name and he defuses the situation by deliberately focusing on her title. The conversation continues with Bond's lack of knowledge regarding plutonium and tritium becoming abundantly clear.

> Bond: *points at the hazmat suits*. "Don't I get some kind of protection?"
>
> Dr. Jones: "No, Dr Arkov. Down there it's all weapons-grade plutonium. It's all perfectly safe. Up here we've got hydrogen bombs your lab built leaking

tritium … which I've spent the last six months trying to clean up. So if you need any protection at all, it's from me.

She fakes a smile as he heads to the elevator and has to remind him to visit the tag wall first and then compliments him.

Dr. Jones: "By the way …, *translated from Russian, speaks in English*, your English is very good for a Russian."

Bond: *walks back to elevator and turns to look at Dr. Jones*. "I studied at Oxford."

Dr. Jones' loyalties at this point are to Renard and her actions are therefore in keeping with her position; she blames Arkov for many of the difficulties she has encountered over the previous months. In spite of this and her suspicions regarding Arkov's fluency in English, Bond's charm seems to persuade her not to question his credentials. Later, after his true identity is revealed, a bomb is discovered in King's pipeline and he takes Dr. Jones with him to defuse it. In spite of the clear danger associated with this endeavour, both Bond and Dr. Jones remain entirely rational and professional, as they get into a cart and enter the pipeline:

Bond: "Do you know how to drive one of these things?"

Dr. Jones: "Doesn't exactly take a degree in nuclear physics."

At this stage, Bond and Dr. Jones' relationship is a little warmer and she feels comfortable enough to take his comment as humorous rather than as a criticism. They locate the bomb and Dr. Jones discovers that it has had some of its plutonium removed, making it less devastating than initially feared.

Bond: "So what are you saying? It couldn't go nuclear?"

Dr. Jones: "There's still enough explosive to kill both of us if the trigger charge goes off." *She goes to cut the wire; Bond stops her*.

Bond: "Let it blow."

Dr. Jones: "But I can stop it."

Bond: “Let it blow. *Bond uses the wire cutters as brakes for the rig*. Trust me, leave it. Move down! Move down! *She slides towards the front of the rig*. Jump! Jump, go!”

This is another instance, as with Dr. Goodhead, where Bond allows a woman to have agency in order to give him specific information. Dr. Jones’ knowledge is crucial, but having demonstrated her expertise Bond immediately takes control of the situation and she returns to a more subservient role, in spite of having grave fears about the consequences. There is an explosion that Bond and Dr. Jones survive unbeknownst to M and King. They then escape from the pipeline:

Bond: “Come on give me your hand. *She holds onto his hands*. Jump. Jump.” *She allows him to lower her down*.

Dr. Jones: “Do you want to explain why you did that? I could’ve stopped that bomb. You almost killed us.”

Bond: *speaking calmly,* “I did kill us. She thinks we’re dead and she thinks she got away with it.”

Dr. Jones: “Do you want to put that in English for those of us who don’t speak spy? Who’s she?”

The incident has threatened her professionalism and potentially endangered their lives, but her tone towards him is a petulant one rather than the panicky response of a 'traditional damsel'. Even when revealing his motives, Bond uses obtuse language which leads to further confusion and annoyance. Dr. Jones is then surprised when Bond tells her that the pipeline explosion was King’s idea, and that it would be used to paint King as the victim.

Bond: “Elektra King.”

Dr. Jones: “Why would she blow up her own pipeline?”

Bond: “It makes her look innocent. The explosion covers up the theft of the plutonium … and they make it look like a terrorist attack.”

Dr. Jones: *goes into her bag to show the half of plutonium left*. "But why leave this half?"

Bond: "So there's enough to spread around to cover up for the part that they did take."

Dr. Jones: "But what are they gonna do with the other half? It's not enough to make a nuclear bomb."

Bond: "You're the scientist. You tell me."

Dr. Jones: "I don't know. But the world's greatest terrorist running around with six kilos … of weapons-grade plutonium can't be good. I have to get it back or somebody's gonna have my ass."

Having achieved his objective regarding the bomb, Bond is now comfortable restoring Dr. Jones' agency, as he needs her technical expertise for the next stage of the mission. In the first indication that she is interested in Bond, Dr. Jones asks about his relationship with King.

Dr. Jones: "By the way, before we go any further … I just wanna know, what's the story with you and Elektra?"

Bond: "We're strictly plutonic. What's your story? What are you doing here in Kazakhstan?"

Dr. Jones: "Avoiding those kinds of questions. Just like you."

Dr. Jones' answer to Bond's play on the word 'plutonic' clearly shows that she has regained agency and status, and is fully aware of his attempted deflection. She remains 'rational' both with respect to the mission and his obvious relationship with King; at least until the final scene of the film, when, like Dr. Goodhead, she hands control to Bond. He ends the film with a joke about her name during their sexual liaison, commenting "I thought Christmas only comes once a year." (*The World is not Enough* (1999) Directed by Michael Apted [DVD]. United International Pictures).

Agency of the 'damsel-*sans*-distress'

This section explores examples of women who are more appropriately placed in chapters 1 and 2, but who adopt the 'damsel-*sans*-distress' persona at moments in the films or texts to further their wider aims. This group of 'rational damsels' are not actually in distress; they feign vulnerability to exploit the chivalrous response a 'damsel' invokes in a hero and the agency this bestows. The 'damsel-*sans*-distress' persona is often a weapon of choice for 'formidable' women; Lancelot encounters such a woman in *The Knight of the Cart* (*c.*1180), who feigns rape in order to appeal to his *cortaysye* and *fraunchyse* after he seems reluctant to provide sexual favours in exchange for accommodation (see p.104 above). Realising that her endeavour is going to fail as Lancelot is incapable of being disloyal to his beloved Guinevere, the woman renounces her 'damsel' persona and gains his gratitude by allowing him to sleep in his own bed without charge. This damsel has agency initially by virtue of having a commodity that Lancelot needs, and she maintains it by provoking a chivalrous response from him. She then further increases her agency by releasing him from their agreement by showing *gentillesse*, a trait evidently not exclusive to knights.

Seductresses are equally adept at taking on a '*sans*-distress' persona and in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (*c.*1375), when Lady Bertilak is unsuccessful in her seduction of Gawain, she has to adopt another approach. She asks to receive something from him to keep as a memento, but he has nothing to give her and his *cortaysye* is threatened; unperturbed, she decides that she will give him an allegedly magical girdle. There is an important caveat attached to this gift, which challenges his *felaȝschyp* with Lord Bertilak, Gawain must conceal the belt from his host in spite of their agreement to exchange their spoils each day (see p.61 above). Lady Bertilak is able to overcome Gawain's reluctance by targeting his *fraunchyse* by appearing distressed and despondent due to his rejection of her. Lady Bertilak exhibits clear agency even in her absence, when her manipulation of him is revealed during the battle with the Green Knight, a magically transformed Lord Bertilak.

In *The World is not Enough*, King also exploits the virtue, *felaȝschyp*, that is usually reserved for the bonds between men. By playing the traditional damsel-*sans*-distress, she manipulates M by exploiting the *felaȝschyp* between them and persuades her to join her in Baku. She knows that M feels guilty about how MI6 handled her

kidnapping, so King appeals to M's maternal instincts and *fraunchyse* using devious means rather than a direct request. Another example of King's use of the 'damsel-*sans*-distress' is spontaneous, when she uses her and Bond's predicament trapped under snow after the avalanche to engender *cortaysye* and *fraunchyse* in Brosnan's Bond (see pp.113-114 above). He already feels compelled to protect King, so when she behaves like a 'damsel' he accepts it at face value and offers his help. Equally, the deployment of this persona reduces the likelihood that Bond will suspect she is actually the villain, and King's manipulativeness is highlighted when she exploits Bond's *cortaysye* and *fraunchyse* again by playing on his assumption that she has Stockholm Syndrome (see p.118 above). This helps her to explain away some anomalies and convince Bond she is in genuine peril, despite gathering evidence that she and Renard are working together.

> At first, we are led to believe that Renard is the main villain of the film and Elektra is the distressed damsel – a "Bond girl" in the classic (or infamous) sense of the term. This simply isn't so. (Kowalski, 2006:224).

Although she predominantly adopts the role of seductress, Frost (*Die Another Day*, 2002) also masquerades as a vulnerable 'damsel' in order to seduce Brosnan's Bond and blind him to the fact that she is still on Graves' side. Despite gaining agency through seduction by targeting Bond's 'sexual reputation', Frost still opts to use the 'damsel-*sans*-distress' persona to exploit his *fraunchyse* (see pp.63-64 above). Responding to the needs of a 'damsel' places the male protagonist into a perilous position, because even if the damsel's motives are not genuine, they are bound by chivalry and audience expectations to help. In *Sir Gawain*, the eponymous hero cites many examples of times when men's plans have been thwarted by women.

> "And comaundeȝ me to þat cortays, your comlych fere,
> Boþe þat on þe oþer myn honoured ladyeȝ,
> Þhat þus hor knyȝt wyth hor kest han koyntly bigyled
> Bot hit is no ferly þaȝ a fole madde
> And þurȝ wyles of wymmen be wonen to sorȝe,
> For so watȝ Adam in erde with one bygyled,
> And Salamon with fele sere, and Samson eftsoneȝ" (ll.2411-2417).

> ["And commend me to that gracious lady, your lovely wife, both to her and to the other also, those ladies whom I honour, who have so cleverly deceived their knight with their trickery. But it is no wonder if a fool behaves foolishly and is brought to grief through the wiles of women, for Adam while on earth was thus beguiled by one, and Solomon by many different women, and also Samson."] (Barron, 2001:161).

It is abundantly clear, at least to Gawain, that 'damsels-*sans*-distress' have exploited men's chivalry throughout the ages.

Conclusion

This chapter adds a unique perspective to our understanding of the agency afforded to Bond women throughout the first six decades of the franchise, by tracing the roots of this agency to the damsels of medieval romance convention. A damsel-in-distress presentation may be transient but its agency is substantial, invoking a hero's *fraunchyse* to achieve a specific aim. In both medieval romance and modern-day Bond films, adopting a 'damsel' persona ensures an honourable response from the hero, improving his chivalric standing without exploiting the vulnerability associated with the role. Perhaps the secret of the damsel's success lies in the heroic pentad virtues a 'damsel' challenges; targeting *fraunchyse* and occasionally *cortaysye* over *clannes*, *pité*, and *felaȝschyp* is far more likely to invoke the desired response.

Milovy is thrust into the role of 'traditional damsel' from very early in *The Living Daylights*, when she is drawn into a plot to stage her boyfriend Koskov's defection. Unconvincingly cast as a sniper, Bond immediately recognises her vulnerability, evidenced when he makes a comment about 'scaring the living daylights out of her'. In-keeping with her 'traditional' persona, she holds agency by virtue of accepting Bond's protection, but at the price of sacrificing her autonomy. Sutton also portrays a 'traditional damsel' for the majority of *A View to a Kill*; the polar opposite of 'formidable' May Day; Sutton only becomes 'resourceful' when Bond is incapacitated, and even then, she displays limited agency and is more often a hindrance to Bond than a help. The 'traditional damsel' persona is also adopted by Bond girls who mainly operate as 'seductresses'; a transient portrayal as the damsel in distress can be effective post-seduction when agency wanes. Romanova opts for this approach in *From Russia with*

Love to counter Bond's aggressive interrogation following Kerim Bey's death; a hero cannot be violent with a 'traditional damsel' just as he cannot be sexually exploitative. For other women, like Lynd, the 'damsel' presentation gives an opportunity to recover from a traumatic experience; following the fight scene in the casino, she retreats to the shower and clearly invokes Bond's *fraunchyse*.

The 'resourceful damsel' is a necessary extension of the 'traditional' persona and often utilised when a situation escalates; here, women use their agency to find their own solution to the problem. As the 'resourceful' presentation is indistinguishable from its 'traditional' counterpart, many men fail to see that a 'damsel' is not only in distress, she is also in control. In *The Franklin's Tale*, Dorigen, starts out as a 'traditional damsel' when pursued by Aurelius in Arveragus' absence, highlighting her vulnerability when she describes herself as belonging to someone else. However, when Arveragus sends her to Aurelius to keep her word, she makes the transition into a 'resourceful damsel'. It might appear that Arveragus is dictating events '[…] but in fact Dorigen orchestrates the tale's delicate movement, both determining her own behavior and encouraging the generous responses of the two men' (Raybin, 1992:66). In spite of appearing helpless, Dorigen gains considerable agency by choosing a public place for her meeting with Aurelius, fully aware that both men are terrified of their reputations being tarnished. In refusing to remain silent, she negates Arveragus' power over her and in presenting as a distressed 'damsel' challenges Aurelius' chivalry and *cortaysye*, by exposing his 'cherlyssh wrecchednesse / agayns franchise and alle gentillesse' (ll.1523-1524). Although many critics see Aurelius' change of heart as a consequence of Arveragus' generosity, it is clear from the text that he is at least in part moved by Dorigen's tears (ll.1515-1516). In manipulating *gentilesse*, a virtue employed by Arveragus to woo her in the first place (Peck, 1967:260), Dorigen ensures that equality in their marriage continues.

Milovy also resorts to being a 'resourceful damsel' shortly after first meeting Bond and insisting that her cello is retrieved before they flee, despite the close attention of the KGB. Later in the film, she reprises her 'resourceful' role, with unfortunate consequences for Bond; persuaded by Koskov that he is an enemy, Milovy displays competence and composure when adding a sedative to Bond's drink. Discovering her mistake when Koskov takes them prisoner, she very much reverts back to a 'traditional'

persona. Milovy redeems herself and gains considerable agency in her 'resourcefulness' when she later snatches Shah's gun and heads off across the desert in pursuit of Bond; her actions provoking a chivalrous response in Shah and his men. Sutton displays only glimpses of 'resourcefulness'; notably when she uses her geological expertise to aid Bond's mission and when she comes to his aid during the fight on Zorin's airship. Interestingly, neither Sutton nor Milovy become a sexual conquest for Bond until very late in the films and this might be due to the fact that they inhabit a 'damsel' persona for much of the time. Once their perilous situations have resolved, they each engage in a sexual liaison with Bond.

Although 'formidable' women have not been seen to take on the role of a 'traditional damsel', there are examples of them adopting a 'resourceful' persona. In *The Wife of Bath's Prologue*, having bestowed her land and wealth onto an ungrateful husband, Alisoun uses a 'damsel' presentation to stop Jankyn's attack and persuade him that he has hurt her; her alleged vulnerability appeals to his *fraunchyse* and leads to him granting her sovereignty in their relationship. In this scenario, a 'damsel' persona is shown to confer far more agency than a 'formidable' one. In *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*, Di Vincenzo, given her situation would be expected to present as a 'traditional damsel', but refuses to play this role due to her fiercely independent personality. However, she does occasionally utilise a 'resourceful damsel' persona, using the agency it affords to encourage Bond to rescue her.

The 'rational damsel' persona covers a disparate group of women, including those who staunchly refuse to take on a 'damsel' role. Guinevere remains completely in control when abducted by Meliagaunt and uses the agency afforded to her by status to ensure the safety of her men. After Meliagaunt is defeated in a duel, she exploits Lancelot's devotion to her to order Meliagaunt's execution. At no point does Guinevere present as a 'traditional damsel' in spite of facing great adversity. The more 'expert' of Bond's women, Dr. Goodhead (*Moonraker*) and Dr. Jones (*The World is not Enough*) assume a similar position. Unlike geologist Sutton who rarely abandons her 'traditional' persona, Dr. Goodhead is able to pilot a space shuttle, disarm guards, and disable a radar-jamming system. Dr. Jones is shown to be similarly competent, handling radioactive material with ease, providing invaluable advice on potentially nuclear bombs,

and aiding Bond in his fight with Renard aboard a submarine. Predictably, both women then sacrifice their agency by becoming consensual recipients of Bond's sexual advances in the closing scenes of their films.

A small sub-set of 'rational damsels' choose to channel their agency into a grand gesture, often sacrificing their lives rather than appealing to a hero for help. In *The Quest*, Perceval's sister is depicted as a pure and noble woman who holds considerable agency, demonstrated when she leads Galahad through the forest and then bestows a sword on him for which she has made a belt. She willingly gives her life to save that of an important noble woman, believing it to be her destiny; the only 'reward' she seeks is an adherence to her burial arrangements. The 'formidable' Bond woman May Day also sacrifices her life by ensuring Zorin's bomb explodes in an area away from the fault line. Her action saves the lives of millions of innocent people, but is primarily motivated by revenge. The seductress Lynd chooses death rather than facing the shame she feels regarding her deception of Bond. Given the depth of his feelings for her, she could not be allowed to survive the film and this honourable death at least enabled her to keep her agency.

'Damsels' inhabiting the '*sans*-distress' persona are by far the most dangerous to men; these women actively exploit the agency that the 'traditional damsel' role confers. The main difference between these 'damsels-*sans*-distress' and other manifestations of 'damsel' lies not in its presentation but in the motives behind it. Rather than appealing to male *fraunchyse*, these women deliberately seek to exploit it. The damsel offering Lancelot accommodation in *The Knight of the Cart* makes him believe she is being violated to provoke a chivalrous response. From his viewpoint, she is a vulnerable 'traditional damsel' and her plan works to the extent that he rescues her, but then falters when his devotion to Guinevere exceeds his *fraunchyse* towards her. The damsel regains some agency by acknowledging his position and removing the conditions attached to his stay. In a similar manner, having failed to seduce Gawain, Lady Bertilak feigns distress at his rejection of her. Relieved her pursuit of him has ended, her false tears provoke his *fraunchyse* and he makes a grave error of judgement in accepting the girdle; the 'damsel-*sans*-distress' succeeds where Lady Bertilak's 'seductress' persona had previously failed.

The *'sans*-distress' approach also pays dividends for the 'formidable' King, who in reality has been playing a 'damsel-*sans*-distress' from the very beginning of *The World is not Enough*. Pretending to be the victim while in fact being the perpetrator allows her to convince Bond and M that she is suffering from Stockholm Syndrome and appeal to their *fraunchyse*. Being perceived as vulnerable also allows her to exploit opportunities as they arise, for example feigning panic when caught in the avalanche. King's oscillation between 'formidable', 'seductress' and 'damsel' makes her very unpredictable, and Chapman rightly notes, 'Elektra, therefore is another one of the women in the Bond films who is resistant to being repositioned ideologically' (2009:230). In *Die Another Day*, Frost is depicted as the 'ice' to Jinx's 'fire' and is shown to be cool, capable and detached. Her portrayal of a 'damsel' when fearing for Bond's safety during their bedroom scene is therefore somewhat surprising and very powerful; she is able to exploit the agency it affords her, blinding Bond to where her true allegiance lies.

Although all presentations of 'damsel' appear to confer agency, however temporarily; the relative success of each type of 'damsel' is clearer when their ultimate fates are considered. Dorigen never sought mastery; she wanted autonomy and equality and in rebuffing Aurelius, that is what she returns to in her marriage. She forgives Aurelius' attempted assault and pledges her future to her husband; in essence, she keeps her *trawþe* and her freedom and Raybin notes that 'Dorigen's is true generosity, true nobility of spirit' (1992:81). Her adoption of first a 'traditional' and then a 'resourceful damsel' has restored the *status quo*; having been seen by another man as "the treweste and the beste wyf" (l.1539), she returns to her ideal husband who "cherisseth hire as though she were a queene" (l.1554) and lives in "sovereyn blisse" (l.1552) thereafter. Other medieval women portrayed as 'traditional' or 'resourceful damsels' also have positive resolutions to their predicaments; the abducted maiden is rescued by Bors, and the women in the Castle of Maidens are delivered from the evil brothers by Galahad. Bors also fights Pridam for the honour of the disinherited damsel and her status is restored. Alisoun's 'resourcefulness' in Chaucer's *Wife of Bath's Prologue* gives her the sovereignty she has craved.

For a knight, there is never a suggestion that any payment will be made in lieu of a rescue; a knight's reward is the enhancement of his chivalry. Bond operates within a

very different code, and once a 'damsel' is made safe there is a suggestion of an indirect form of payment being made; the woman he rescues immediately becomes a sexual target for him. Rescued from the conniving Koskov and exonerated from any blame in his attempted defection, Milovy is seduced by Bond after she returns to her musical career. After Zorin's demise, Sutton succumbs to Bond's charms and the film ends with their sexual liaison in her shower; Romanova experiences a similar conclusion to her film with a sexual engagement with Bond on a Venetian gondola. The 'resourceful' Di Vincenzo is unfortunate in that Bond's marriage proposal seals her fate; a wife is incompatible with his status and reputation, and her death is inevitable.

By definition, the sacrificial 'rational damsel' cannot survive, although their legacy can, as in the case of Perceval's sister. The results of their agency can also be far-reaching as in May Day's prevention of a seismic disaster and Lynd's preservation of Bond's professional standing and unattached status. Guinevere's status ensures her continued survival, as does the expertise of both Dr. Goodhead and Dr. Jones. However, for the Bond women, once the villain's plans have been thwarted, there is limited agency in perpetuating the 'rational damsel' role and, as we have seen, both Goodhead and Jones become 'conquests' for Bond. Women who spend most of their time operating as a damsel-in-distress never adopt the exploitative manifestation of the persona; this appears to be reserved for women who fulfil the remit of a 'seductress' or 'formidable' woman. The fate of these women seems to depend on the realm they inhabit, Lady Bertilak and the damsel targeting Lancelot fail in their overall objectives; the former shames Gawain but he and his exploits are well regarded by Arthur's court, while the latter aborts her misguided attempt to seduce Lancelot. Both women return to their original personae with their agency intact. Frost and King, however, are far less fortunate; Frost is killed by Jinx using a throwing knife and King is killed by Bond; these women prove themselves to be irredeemable and therefore cannot be allowed to live.

Contrary to popular perception of a 'damsel' as weak and defenceless, it is actually a powerful and ubiquitous persona; its universal ability to elicit a chivalrous response also leaves it open to exploitation by disingenuous women. It is easy to recognise a damsel-in-distress, but almost impossible to identify her motives. Predictably found in all of the medieval material; the 'traditional' abducted maiden, the

‘resourceful’ Dorigen, and the ‘rational’ Guinevere all gain agency by adopting the ‘damsel’ persona. However, perhaps more surprisingly, it is omnipresent in the selected Bond films; as this chapter has sought to make clear, almost every Bond girl adopts a ‘damsel’ role at some point, irrespective of her main persona. Romanova, Sutton, Milovy and Lynd all become ‘traditional damsels’, with Milovy and Sutton joining Di Vincenzo as ‘resourceful damsels’. The doctors Goodhead and Jones use their status as ‘rational damsels’; May Day sacrifices her life for the greater good and King and Frost exploit the persona. Bond women who attempt to exploit the role of ‘damsel’, as seen in ‘seductresses’ and ‘formidable’ women, do not survive their film. Women are far more likely to achieve their objectives if they either use their status to remain as a ‘rational damsel’ or adopt a ‘traditional’ or ‘resourceful’ manifestation of the persona.

Given that only eight Bond films are analysed here, it is not possible to draw any conclusions about whether particular Bond actors are associated with specific Bond girl personae. Nevertheless, it is interesting that both of the films analysed in this thesis that feature Moore also have a main Bond girl presenting as a damsel-in-distress and that these films, *Moonraker* and *A View to a Kill*, also include multiple ‘fluffers’. Chapter 4 will consider the agency of the ‘fluffer’ (see p.17 above), looking at the presence and purpose of these women in each of the films. An exact equivalent of the Bond ‘recipient fluffer’ is not evident in the medieval material, however, ‘initiators’ have been identified in the texts; these women are shown to challenge knights’ trawþe by directly targetting the pentad virtue of *clannes*. Analysis will be made of the agency ‘fluffers’ hold and the way in which it is employed.

Chapter 4

The Agency of the 'Fluffer'

In the preceding chapters, both in the Bond films and the medieval literature, women have acquired agency by performing the roles of seductress, 'formidable' woman, or damsel-in-distress. However, a consequence of the analyses of the Bond films has been the identification of a group of 'dispensable' women who appear in addition to the main Bond girl(s), and whose agency would seem to be significantly compromised by their 'dispensability' to the main action or plot. They appear to exist solely to underline Bond's sexual desirability and to prepare the viewer for the inevitable seduction of the Bond girl(s) later in the film. Charles Burnetts appropriated the term 'fluffers', previously used in the porn industry, to define the role of these women as primarily to '[…] keep the male "agent" aroused until the primary sexual object, the Bond Girl, arrives at which point they disappear off-screen' (in Funnell, ed. 2015:60). This chapter will explore the roles of 'fluffers' and ask how far they exhibit agency in the eight films analysed in the previous three chapters; the Bond material will form the starting point of investigations that will move on to ask whether the 'fluffer' character exists in the medieval romance literature.

A first step will be to establish clear criteria to define 'fluffers'; such women are minor characters in Bond films who are characterised by their disposability. They have limited screen time, often appearing in a single scene and sometimes solely in the pre-title sequence; they frequently remain anonymous, defined by their sexual relationship with Bond and are often the target, rather than instigator of any seduction. Some critics, like Burnetts, argue that May Day qualifies as a 'high-watermark' fluffer (in Funnell, ed. 2015:61), but given her status as Zorin's second-in-command, the screen time she enjoys and her final sacrifice, May Day does not fit the criteria for a 'fluffer' as recognised in this thesis. This chapter identifies that some 'fluffers' actively pursue Bond, asking for forms of sexual 'payment' to help him, while others are submissive and are simply 'rewarded' sexually for services rendered; I have, therefore, classified 'fluffers' in each of the films examined in chapters one to three as active 'initiators' or passive 'recipients'. An examination is also made of the number and placement of 'fluffers' in each film, one that will also take account of how far the actor playing Bond, and the persona of the

main Bond girl, impacts on the fluffers' roles and presentations. The *modus operandi* of 'fluffers' is examined to determine whether it changes with time to reflect societal attitudes or audience expectation, and to take account of the previously acknowledged concept of 'repositioning' (see p.6 above), as defined by Umberto Eco (1981).

The chapter proceeds by analysing which of the pentad virtues each of the film's 'fluffers' target, and will adopt the same definition of agency used in the preceding chapters (see p.2 above), to assess the degree of agency each of the 'fluffers' demonstrates. All 'fluffers' are consenting adults, and Burnetts notes that, in comparison to the Bond girl, they enjoy '[…] a wider spectrum of agency for the limited time they are on screen' (in Funnell, ed. 2015:61-62). Monica Germanà notes that Bond producer Barbara Broccoli, speaking broadly about Bond women in 2008, considers how 'a lot of them were sexual predators who gave as good as they got. They had professional careers and did extraordinary things' (2019:4). Although this comment is likely to reference Bond girls more widely, it is equally relevant to the 'initiator fluffer', who demonstrates agency by providing mission-critical assistance to Bond, while simultaneously instigating sexual relations with him. Christine Bold also notes that 'Bond frequently depends on women to guide him through the enemy territory of his exotic locations' (in Lindner, ed. 2009:207-208). Germanà foregrounds this feminist challenge to Bond's patriarchal superiority, suggesting that 'read "against their grain", the Bond novels and films reveal, rather than a straightforward celebration of masculine heroism, profound anxieties about female authority' (2019:2). This perhaps explains why, although 'initiators' can additionally use their agency to underline their independence and freedom of choice, agency associated with 'recipients' is often subsumed by serving narrative convention and employed to reinforce patriarchal order. Indeed, 'the ongoing appeal of the fantasy world represented in the Bond films relies heavily on attractive female counterparts to the Bond character' (Neuendorf *et al*., 2010:747), and in line with every other weapon in his arsenal, Bond uses sex in a casual yet accomplished manner. The absence of 'recipient fluffers', therefore, noted in the two post-2000 Bond films discussed here, *Die Another Day* (2002) and *Casino Royale* (2006), raises the question of whether these films reflect the occurrence of a cultural shift around the turn of the Millennium. To address this, this chapter also briefly examines the more recent Daniel Craig films – *Quantum of Solace* (2008), *Skyfall* (2012), *Spectre* (2015), and *No*

Time to Die (2021) – to determine what version of the 'fluffer' role, if any, continues to exist in Bond films today.

The title sequences of Bond films, particularly those produced before the 2000s, would seem to appeal to the (putatively male, heterosexual) viewer by foregrounding 'the de-individualization, objectification, and overt sexualization of women' (Planka in Funnell, ed. 2015:142). Equally, a Bond film's pre-title sequence usually features an action scene involving Bond, or the first mention of the villainous plot or mission; the Bond girl rarely appears, and instead there is often a dispensable woman or 'fluffer' who has a sexual liaison with Bond, but who plays no further part in the film. In this way,

> […] the title sequences both anticipate and illustrate the treatment of Secondary Girls within the Bond narrative. These female silhouettes are just as anonymous as the Secondary Girls featured in the films, and similarly reduced to their physical appearance. (Rositzka in Funnell, ed. 2015:151).

Although at first glance the term 'Secondary Girls' appears to be synonymous with the term 'fluffer', upon closer inspection, 'fluffer' is more descriptive of the role that these women perform; Moneypenny, Irma Bunt (*On Her Majesty's Secret Service*, 1969), and Rosa Klebb (*From Russia with Love*, 1963) are unlikely candidates for 'fluffers', but might conceivably be identified as 'Secondary Girls'. 'Fluffers' make cameo appearances throughout the films and their existence raises the question of the purpose these women serve, and the agency they hold in relation to Bond. 'Whatever skills female characters demonstrate, however, their one great prowess […] resides in their bodies' (Bold in Lindner, ed. 2009:208). Bond routinely rewards himself by indulging in sexual liaisons with women both during and at the end of his missions. Whatever agency the 'fluffer' exhibits, therefore, is often exploited to strengthen and support Bond's 'sexual reputation'; their appearance at the beginning of films and often in the pre-title sequences serves to remind the viewer how irresistible Bond is, and therefore by association, that the Bond girl(s) will inevitably fall for him.

Raising a hero's sexual prowess might work for modern-day Bond audiences but would have offended the Christian values of late medieval literature. In the Bond genre, seduction is encouraged and enhances his renown, but in the courtly world of the

thirteenth to fifteenth centuries, it undermines chivalry. The aim for the medieval Grail knight was to resist temptation, and by remaining chaste, to reinforce their commitment to God and their quest.

> While hearing mass – participating in the rituals of Christianity – suffices for most of the Round Table knights, the Grail knights are willing to make the extra effort necessary to enter into a deeper spiritual communion with God. Galahad, Bors, and Perceval make this effort by avoiding sin and resisting temptation during the Grail quest. (Clark, 2015:138).

We will see, however, that medieval 'initiator fluffers' do exist, utilising a similar *modus operandi* to the Bond 'initiator', but provoking different outcomes. By being rebuffed in their attempts at seduction, these 'initiators' raise the medieval hero's moral prowess by reminding the reader of the virtues of *clannes* (freedom from lust), and *pité* (devotion to God and duty). Medieval 'initiators' are often 'demonic' women who masquerade as damsels in order to lead men astray, challenging the pentad virtues of *clannes* and *pité* indirectly, often by exploiting *cortaysye* (consideration for others) and *fraunchyse* (compassion and magnanimity). The societal constraints that medieval women operate under mean that, unlike Bond's 'initiators', their approach cannot be overtly sexual.

There are no 'fluffers' evident in the primary late medieval texts under examination in this thesis (*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (*c*.1375), *The Franklin's Tale* (*c*.1400), and *The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale* (*c*.1400)); the female characters here are more equivalent in their prominence to Bond girls, as we have seen in previous chapters. However, what follows will show that a number of medieval 'initiators' do appear in *The Quest* (*c*.1210) and *Le Morte d'Arthur* (1485), often after knights have been warned about the dangers of temptation. These potential derailers of quests frequently appear at moments of weakness for the knight, and then vanish in a metaphorical puff of smoke when their targets do not succumb to their seduction. Medieval 'initiators' remain anonymous and, due to the moralistic Christian attitudes of the medieval period, their temporary agency is not employed to improve a knight's 'sexual reputation', but rather to enhance their spiritual worth, by challenging their sexual conduct. Rosalyn Rossignol explains that women fulfil one of two roles in *The*

Quest; they are either 'evil temptresses', like Eve, or 'handmaidens to salvation, like the Virgin Mary' (1995:52). Although 'initiators' in the selected medieval literature exhibit behaviour closely aligned to that of the Eve archetype, presenting as 'archetypal and generic' temptresses (Cox, 2001:379), the motivations behind these portrayals might be more complex than expected. Defining these characters as 'initiator fluffers', not just embodiments of Eve, can therefore help us to read the literature differently. Rather than highlighting the 'ubiquitous dichotomy of Eve and Mary' (Cox, 2001:380) and focusing on Eve as the epitome of evil, the approach to 'initiator fluffers' foregrounded here places emphasis instead on the chivalrous responses of the heroic knights. In this sense, I argue, quest narratives can be seen to be rooted in the same traditions as popular Bond culture today.

Agency of the 'initiator'

Although demonstrating less agency than the Bond girl, 'initiator fluffers' nevertheless enjoy a wide spectrum of agency, and often initiate sexual contact with Bond rather than passively accepting his sexual favours as payment for services rendered. However, in spite of possessing professional expertise and providing mission-critical assistance, these women are nonetheless as susceptible to Bond's charms as their 'recipient' counterparts. The first 'initiator' under consideration is Sylvia, a sexual interest of Bond's featured in *Dr. No* (1962), who returns in the opening scenes of *From Russia with Love*. She has no connection to the plot, and simply reminds viewers of Bond's irresistibility and Moneypenny's jealousy. In *From Russia with Love*, Connery's Bond and Sylvia are partially-clad and lying in a small boat by a river. Sylvia runs her finger over a scar on Bond's back and asks if it is a souvenir from another jealous woman. His carphone rings and he crosses to the car to answer the call.

> Bond: *has his shirt in his hand and jacket on the bonnet*. "Come in, Univex, James Bond here. Over."
>
> *Moneypenny is shown on the other end of the phone*.
>
> Moneypenny: "He's (M's) been asking for you all morning. Where in the world are you, James?"

Bond: “Well, I’ve just been reviewing an old case.”

Sylvia: *arrives at the car*. “Oh, so I’m an old case now, am I?”

(*From Russia with love* (1963) Directed by Terence Young [DVD]. United Artists).

Sylvia is affronted when Bond refers to her as ‘an old case’, thereby refusing to acknowledge her presence to Moneypenny. Covering the speaker, he tells Sylvia to be quiet and then lets Moneypenny know he is on his way. At this point, Bond has curtailed Sylvia’s agency and she opts for boldness in interrupting his call to underline her importance.

Sylvia snatches the phone away from Bond.

Sylvia: “He is not on his way.” *Bond snatches it back and covers the speaker*.

Bond: “Sylvia, behave! We’ll do this again some other time soon.”

Bond puts the phone to his ear.

Sylvia: “Do what? Last time you said that you went off to Jamaica. I haven’t seen you for six months.” *She tries to unbutton his shirt, he slaps her hand*.

Bond: “I’ll be there in an hour.”

Moneypenny: “I’ll tell him. *The camera shows Moneypenny*. Hey, your old case sounds interesting, James.”

Bond: “Er, make that an hour and a half. *He ends the call, and walks towards the back of his convertible to put up the sunroof*. Now, about that lunch.” *She laughs*.

(*From Russia with love* (1963) Directed by Terence Young [DVD]. United Artists).

Bond is very much the dominant party in this exchange, and his general tone does not seem to suggest that he is taking the feelings of either woman too seriously. Moneypenny appears to be completely aware of what is really happening, but totally accepting of his womanising behaviour, and although Sylvia exhibits agency by disobeying Bond’s instructions, the whole scene appears to be included just to establish his seductive prowess.

In *Moonraker* (1979), the main Bond girl is Dr. Holly Goodhead, a scientist who has the information Moore's Bond needs to thwart the villain, but who is initially unreceptive to his advances. During his mission, however, he encounters several other women who quickly have sexual relations with him. The first of these is Corinne Defour, a pilot employed by Drax who first meets Bond in his undercover guise as a British government official, when she flies him to visit Drax's estate. Later, at Drax's mansion, Bond sees Defour getting ready for bed in her room and comes to stand behind her as she sits at her dressing table.

Defour: "My mother gave me a list of things not to do on a first date."

Bond: "Maybe you won't need it. That's not what I came for."

Defour: "No? What do you want, then?" *She stands and turns to look at him*.

Bond: *puts his arm around her shoulder*. "Would your feelings be hurt if I were to say 'information'."

Defour: "Why should I tell you anything?"

Bond: "Why indeed?"

He tries to kiss her, but she is resistant.

Defour: "You presume a great deal, Mr. Bond."

He smiles and they share a consenting kiss; she smiles and walks towards her bed.

(*Moonraker* (1979) Directed by Lewis Gilbert [DVD]. United Artists).

Defour has obvious agency in this situation and seems to make it clear that she expects sexual favours in exchange for divulging information. Cory Rushton notes that 'eroticism and the heroic' are intrinsically linked for the modern-day Bond audience (in Hopkins & Rushton, ed. 2007:27). Bond is happy to oblige, enhancing his reputation as a womaniser at the same time as achieving some of his mission objectives. At this stage of their interaction, Bond and Defour are fairly equal partners in the exchange and discuss Drax's laboratories as he sits beside her on the bed.

Defour: “They were working on something very secret, but everything’s been moved.”

Bond: “Where to?”

Defour: “I don’t know.” *She lies down*.

Bond: “What about that list of your mother’s?” *He moves on top of her*.

Defour: “I never learnt to read.”

They kiss.

(*Moonraker* (1979) Directed by Lewis Gilbert [DVD]. United Artists).

Later that night, Bond sneaks away to Drax’s office and Defour joins him and points out the location of the safe, which he cracks using one of his gadgets. He thanks her for her help and kisses her before suggesting that she leaves the room first. There seems to be a clear mutual respect between Bond and Defour and she is able to retain agency in spite of having succumbed to his charms. However, unbeknownst to them they have been seen by a guard and Defour is then killed by Drax’s dogs when he discovers her betrayal. Defour is very close to fitting the remit of a Bond girl but her agency is curtailed by her limited screen time.

Similar ‘reciprocal sexual objectification’ is also seen between Bond and Pola Ivanova in *A View to a Kill*. Robert Arp and Kevin Decker state ‘all parties have freely and autonomously agreed to engage in these behaviors, knowing that they are in some degree being used’ (in South & Held, ed. 2006:205). Bond meets former lover, Ivanova, while investigating Zorin and they are tailed by his men, taking refuge in a hot tub lounge. They are next shown having an innuendo-laden conversation while naked in a hot tub.

Ivanova: ‘That feels wonderful.’

Bond: ‘Feels even better from where I’m sitting. *Starts massaging her back*. Would you like it harder?’

Ivanova: ‘James, you haven’t changed.’

Bond: ‘Well, you have. You’re even lovelier.’

(*A View to a Kill* (1985) Directed by John Glen [DVD]. United International Pictures).

They reminisce about her previous seduction of him which he reveals he was entirely aware of, which was why he sent her three dozen red roses afterwards. Bond then questions their 'coincidental' meeting, but changing the subject, Ivanova takes the opportunity to remove a tape from his belongings while he showers. As she is seen leaving the building, he calls out to tell her he will send her six dozen red roses. Exiting the shower as she climbs into a Russian general's car, Bond is shown to hold the greater agency in their exchange; having anticipated Ivanova's motives for seducing him, Bond has already switched the tape.

At first glance, the agency of the Bond 'initiator', associated as it is with the enhancement of his 'sexual reputation' does not fit with the spiritual heroes of medieval romance convention. However, an initiators' challenge of sexual conduct provides a similar test to Bond and medieval knights, even though success is reflected in different outcomes. Bond must facilitate intimacy with 'fluffers' to enhance his 'sexual reputation'; however, a medieval knight must preserve his *clannes* by resisting temptation. Although the medieval 'initiator' therefore enhances the spiritual rather than 'sexual reputation' of a knight, her tactics are still comparable to Bond 'initiators'. Two such damsels with dubious intentions are evident in *The Quest*; masquerading as a helpful and a disinherited damsel respectively, they aim to lead unwary and naïve Perceval astray. He is warned while spending time at his aunt's house to avoid sexual temptation, as chastity is essential if he wishes to continue on his Grail quest. 'But above all she besought him to keep his body pure as he ought to do, and he promised her he would do so' (p.76). After venturing on, Perceval is set upon by twenty armed knights and his horse is killed; he only escapes with his life because of the intervention of a knight in scarlet armour, who then rides away. Desperate to thank him, he follows on foot until he meets a valet on a nag, leading a fine black steed. Perceval pleads to borrow the steed but the valet must answer to his master if the horse is lost, and refuses. When an armed knight later passes by on the black steed, followed by the distraught valet on the nag, Perceval vows to retrieve the steed. Unfortunately, the knight slays the nag when Perceval catches up with him and rides away. Devastated at his failure either to protect the squire or acknowledge the valour of the scarlet knight, Perceval spends the remainder of the day

berating himself. Eventually falling asleep, he wakes to find a woman standing before him who offers to replace his slain horse if he will do her bidding whenever she summons him. Promising this as a true knight, this helpful damsel (who, it transpires, is actually the devil), presents him with a splendid black horse, before reminding him that he owes her a gift. Although unsettled by the horse's demeanour, Perceval is so focused on his mission that he ignores his apprehension and the horse carries him out of the forest, covering three days' distance in an instant. Approaching a wide river in darkness, and with no sign of a bridge, Perceval becomes fearful and crosses himself, causing the steed to vanish in a show of flames (p.86). This damsel displays agency in taking advantage of Perceval's predicament, but that agency is eventually subsumed by convention when he realises his error and reaffirms his devotion to God.

Perceval then realises that he has been conveyed to an island and having spoken to a religious man, warning him to be wary of dangers, as we saw in Chapter 1 (see pp.34-35 above), he then meets a demon disguised as a beautiful damsel. Initially wary of her, she gains his trust and sympathy by claiming to be a disinherited damsel-in-distress, thereby appealing to his *fraunchyse*.

> "I am a disinherited damsel," she replied, "who would now be the richest lady in the world, had I not been driven from my heritage." "Disinherited damsel," said he, "now tell me who deprived you of your heritage: for I feel much greater pity for you than I did before." (p.99).

The objective for demonic medieval 'initiators' is to challenge *clannes*, targeting the piety and chastity of knights. The damsel offers him food and tells him tales of the 'Good Knight' (Galahad), before tempting him to lie in a silk tent away from the sun's heat. Perceval drinks copious amounts of wine and becomes desperate to make the damsel his:

> he had never seen her equal for beauty. She caused him such pleasure and delight by the elegance he saw in her and by the gentle words she spoke, that he desired ardently to possess her. (p.100).

Having put him off for as long as she could, to kindle his desire even further, she eventually agrees to do his pleasure if he promises to faithfully do whatever she commands. Lying by her side on a bed, he is about to consummate their relationship when he sees the red cross carved in the pommel of his sword and makes the sign of the cross on his forehead. The scene transforms and the damsel angrily leaves in a cloud of smoke and on a sea of flames, showing her true identity as a servant of the devil (pp.99-101). Perceval's overwhelming desire to do good seems to cloud his judgement and his inexperience leaves him exposed to sexual temptation. Even when the disinherited damsel tells him, "you have not desired to possess me so much as I have desired you. For you are one of the knights in the world upon whom I have most cast my eyes" (p.101), he still fails to see her true nature. This demonic 'initiator' exhibits considerable agency in encouraging Perceval to drink and in inflaming his desire. However, her agency is equally significant in terms of narrative convention, the cross on the pommel of his sword reminding him of his responsibilities and ensuring he resists temptation.

Medieval knights are also often the target of 'initiator fluffers' in *Le Morte d'Arthur* (*c.*1485), and as the focus shifts between several of Arthur's knights, each encounters 'damsels' who place temptation in their path. These 'initiators' are introduced in order to challenge the knights' *pité* and *clannes* by testing their chivalry. In Chapter 2 (see pp.125-126 above), having been warned that a woman will threaten his chastity, and weakened by guilt over his abandonment of Lionel, Bors meets a damsel, more beautiful than Guinevere, who is desperate to become his lover. He spends time in conversation with the lady, but having no wish to violate his chastity, declines to answer when she asks him to do her will. When pressed for a response, Bors reminds her of his distress at his brother's recent death, but she remains unmoved and insists that he lies with her that night (pp.364-365). He flatly refuses her again, and even her excessive weeping does not change his mind; then, her mood changes completely and she leads him to the door of the palace, saying that in refusing her he must now witness her death.

> 'Well, Sir Bors,' said she, 'unto this have ye brought me, nigh to mine end.' And therewith she took him by the hand and bade him behold her. 'And ye shall see how I shall die for your love.'

And he said then, 'I shall never it see.' (p.365)

When he refuses to see such a thing, her knights hold him in place while she and twelve of her damsels go up to the battlements. One of the gentlewomen pleads with him to have mercy, "if ye do not we must suffer death with our lady" (p.365). Even though Bors pities them, he values his chastity more and leaves the decision to live or die in their hands. Astounded to see them fall to the floor, he crossed himself and they immediately vanished (p.365). The 'initiator' tries to exploit Bors' *cortaysye* by declaring her devotion to him; when this fails, she and her damsels appeal to his *fraunchyse*, displaying substantial agency through their threats to commit suicide. It is, however, still not enough to dissuade Bors from preserving his chastity and continuing his quest. By expending considerable agency and utilising varying strategies that target a range of virtues, this damsel makes Bors' success all the greater.

In both medieval and modern-day realms, therefore, women conforming to the 'initiator' role reinforce men's commitment to an aspect of convention with regard to sexual conduct: 'sexual reputation' for Bond, and *clannes* for knights. The medieval 'initiators' employ similar tactics to their Bond counterparts; the differences lie in the way men respond to their sexual invitation, and how that response meets audience expectations. In the medieval texts, the narrative trajectory builds towards the triumph of good over evil; knights are frequently reminded to avoid temptations of the flesh by hermits, good men, priests, and even relatives. In *The Quest*, Perceval's aunt begs him to safeguard his purity (p.76), while Bors is forewarned that a damsel will plead for him to be her lover (*Le Morte d'Arthur*, pp.363-364). In sharp contrast, even where 'initiators' do not become 'conquests' for Bond; their obvious appreciation of him still serves to enhance his 'sexual reputation'. There are numerous examples of innuendo-laden conversations between Bond and 'initiators'. In *A View to a Kill*, Moore's Bond meets Jenny Flex, a friend of May Day's, who greets him when he arrives undercover at Zorin's chateau.

Flex: "Let me show you to your room."

Bond: "Thank you. *Bond follows her up the stairs with his 'butler' Tibbett trailing behind with his luggage*. Well, my dear, I take it you spend a lot of the time in the saddle."

Flex: “Yes, I love an early morning ride.”

Bond: “I’m an early riser myself. *He tells Tibbett to stop panting and start unpacking*.

Flex: “The reception is at six.”

Bond: “Thank you, my dear.”

(*A View to a Kill* (1985) Directed by John Glen [DVD]. United International Pictures).

Bond shows his superiority by making his undercover butler carry the suitcases and by a repeated use of the term ‘my dear’, which seems as condescending as his use of ‘good girl’ to the submarine pilot earlier in the film; it also signals a clear end to the interaction. As with many Bond scenes, innuendos are commonplace and in the discussion about the morning ride it is abundantly clear that they are not discussing horses. Another woman who fits this remit is Verity, Frost’s fencing instructor in *Die Another Day* (2002), whom Brosnan’s Bond approaches from behind in this exchange.

Bond: “Verity? *Verity turns around*. James Bond. Your lesson.” *He goes to attack her and she blocks*.

Verity: *smiles, and grabs the end of Bond’s weapon*. ‘I see you handle your weapon well.’ *She pushes it away from her*.

Bond: ‘I have been known to keep my tip up.’

Verity: *smiles*. ‘Do you mind? *She turns away from Bond*. I think I’ve come undone.’

(*Die Another Day* (2002) Directed by Lee Tamahori [DVD]. 20th Century Fox).

Verity also raises Bond’s sexual profile without sleeping with him and is useful to his mission when she introduces him to Graves; she is an interesting character in that she has expertise, but her agency is somewhat reduced by *double entendres* that focus their exchange mainly on sex. Graves challenges Bond to a duel, inviting him and Verity to place bets on the outcome, to which she retorts that she does not like cockfights and

walks away. Flex and Verity both display limited agency, being vessels through which Bond can deliver his innuendos. Their agency serves convention by enabling Bond to engage in the type of interaction the audience expects, while allowing them an exchange on equal terms.

Heralding the start of the 'Daniel Craig era' films, the pre-title and opening sequences of *Casino Royale* (2006) dispense with sexual images of women whether real or silhouetted, with Linda Racioppi & Colleen Tremonte noting that '[…] *Casino Royale* breaks with previous and subsequent films in the series in that sexy women's bodies are entirely absent […]' (2014:22). Bearing this in mind and given Bond's pedestrian pursuit of Lynd later in *Casino Royale*, the earlier introduction of 'initiator' Solange, the wife of lower status villain Dimitrios, provides Bond with an opportunity to meet audience expectation in terms of his irresistibility. Bond meets Solange after he has won Dimitrios' car in a card game and she mistakenly thinks her husband is driving. As she turns to walk away, Bond offers her a lift and after a short exchange she accepts a drink at 'his place', smiling as he does a U-turn and parks at the hotel. Dimitrios is then shown meeting Le Chiffre as Solange is shown kissing Bond on the floor of his hotel suite, in what is obviously an entirely consensual liaison. Solange appears to welcome the opportunity to gain the upper hand over her husband, while Bond intersperses questions about Dimitrios' business activities.

> Solange: "A mystery, I'm afraid. *Unthreatened tone*, I'm also afraid you will sleep with me in order to get to him." *She gently bites his chin*.
>
> Bond: "How afraid?"
>
> Solange: "Not enough to stop." *She kisses him down his bare chest until she is off screen*.
>
> (*Casino Royale* (2006) Directed by Martin Campbell [DVD]. MGM).

Dimitrios phones Solange to say that he is flying to Miami, information which she freely shares with Bond; this knowledge makes her keener to spend the night with him, but changes Bond's perspective on their encounter. Aware of Dimitrios' plans, Bond's intentions change and he calls room service, ordering champagne solely for Solange before leaving. Lisa Funnell notes that their liaison '[…] is anticlimactic (pun intended)

because Bond does not meet the generic expectations of the series by re-engaging sexually with Solange, and thus he rejects the role of lover' (2011:462). There are clear parallels here between Bond's rejection of Solange and Perceval's rebuttal of the 'demonic' damsel in chapter 1; Perceval is reminded of his quest by the sight of the cross on the pommel of his sword, whereas Bond is refocused on his mission by the call from Dimitrios. In spite of eventually being rebuffed, Solange has agency because she is in control of her body and actively decides to engage with Bond (having earlier seen him walking out of the sea in swimming trunks). Arp and Decker reference Wendy McElroy's (1997) view that '[…] a woman's ability to use her sexuality for money, power, or control over her own life is just as much of a legitimate consequence of sexual freedom as are feminism and worries about objectification' (cited in South & Held, ed. 2006:208). Daniel Craig (2008) even commented on women's increased agency in the Bond franchise in an interview that took place after *Casino Royale*. 'Beautiful women are always part of the story. In the past they were more objectified. They were just eye candy. Now they're integral and powerful in their own right' (cited in Germanà, 2019:11). Sadly, Solange pays a high price for exhibiting autonomy, as she is found dead in a hammock shortly thereafter; whatever agency Solange may have had, she is clearly dispensable to all parties.

The *modus operandi* of 'initiator fluffers' is comparable across both realms; the difference lies in how their agency is employed to achieve their desired outcomes. The agency demonstrated by all 'initiators' operates on two different levels; firstly, they clearly impact on narrative convention by enhancing an aspect of sexual conduct. For Bond, 'initiators' showcase his irresistibility and subsequently improve his 'sexual reputation', whereas 'initiators' target medieval knights' *clannes* to illustrate their strict adherence to chastity. However, a secondary consequence of initiators' actions is the autonomy conferred on them by their agency – they make an active and independent choice to be with Bond or a particular knight. The agency held by the 'recipient fluffer' is significantly less than her 'initiator' counterpart, and her role in the narrative dictates that she does not have an equivalent in the medieval material, and so will be exclusively considered in relation to the Bond franchise.

Agency of the 'recipient'

The 'recipient' engages in a consensual sex act with Bond which serves the narrative and strengthens convention by enhancing his 'sexual reputation'; however, unlike 'initiators', who are able to instigate events, 'recipients' have little agency other than the choice to 'submit' to a 'fantastic lover'. In *From Russia with Love* (1963), '[…] one scene in particular foregrounds the female body as erotic spectacle: the catfight between two gypsy girls […]' (Chapman, 2007:77). Sean Connery's Bond and Kerim Bey are hiding out at a gypsy camp and are being entertained by an exotic female dancer, when two girls who have fallen in love with the chief's son prepare to fight to the death in order to 'win' his affections. At this point, the Bulgar attack interrupts them and in the ensuing battle, Bond saves the chief's life. Thanking him, the chief declares him to be his son and, allowed to resolve the disagreement between the two girls, Bond says 'it might take some time'. The next morning, the girls are shown tending to his every need and say goodbye to him when he leaves the camp. These women are not named but initially seem to have agency in fighting for the man they love; however, they are subsequently 'gifted' to Bond, and their attitude towards him the next day is extremely deferential. They seem to exist purely to massage Bond's ego, increasing his sexual prowess to match that of his prowess as action hero, and thereby implying that sexual conquests are as essential to Bond's persona as hero as his fighting ability. Lauren Spungen notes that in *From Russia with Love,* '[…] Bond is painted as a champion of heterosexuality; within a mere two hours of film, he has sexual relations with four different women' (2017:13). The gypsy girls are an example of 'recipients' whose agency is used to highlight Bond's virility while simultaneously reinforcing patriarchal order. However, their demeanour around him the next morning suggests that they have enjoyed their liaisons with him, as Jeanette Winterson (2002) notes, 'women want Bond because he satisfies them sexually […] and any woman in touch with her body will want a lover who does that' (cited in Germanà, 2019:4).

A similar championing of Bond's libido is highlighted in *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* (1969). This film sees George Lazenby's Bond work undercover as a genealogist and he arrives in Switzerland to be greeted by Irma Bunt before traveling to Blofeld's base which is allegedly an allergy research centre. In reality, it is being used as a means

to indoctrinate young and attractive women, which in itself serves 'Bond convention'. A kilted Bond has dinner with the residents and one of them, Ruby Bartlett, takes the opportunity to write her room number on his leg in lipstick. Later in the evening, Bond gains entry to Bartlett's room and sees her naked in bed through a voile curtain. She is obviously expecting him.

> Bartlett: "I want to see the pictures", *referring to the genealogy book Bond has brought*.
>
> Bond: "But you're a picture yourself. And twice as lovely in the firelight."
>
> Bartlett: "You're funny at pretending not to like girls."
>
> Bond: "Well, I don't usually, but you're not usual. That lipstick was an inspiration. So are you."
>
> (*On Her Majesty's Secret Service* (1969) Directed by Peter Hunt [DVD]. United Artists).

Naked women are not uncommon in the early Bond films, but Bartlett's role is very different to that of someone like Tatiana Romanova in *From Russia with Love*, whose participation is essential to the plot. The seduction of Bartlett, apart from highlighting Blofeld's brain-washing techniques, serves mainly to enhance Bond's womanising reputation. Bartlett is willing to engage with Bond's flattery and more than happy to tell him why she was selected for the trial.

> Bond: "How did you get here?"
>
> Bartlett: "Do we have to talk about that now? *They kiss*. *Bond removes his clothing and drops the kilt; she laughs*. It's true!"
>
> *They are now shown naked in bed together with Bartlett explaining her chicken allergy, while kissing Bond*.
>
> Bond: "Go on. *Bartlett continues her sexual advances*. No, about the clinic I mean."

Bartlett: “Oh. Well, the specialist had me meet Fräulein Bunt in London and she said I had a very interesting case.”

Bond: “How right she was.”

An alarm sounds and a personalised message is played to Bartlett, during which she becomes unresponsive to Bond. Aware that their encounter is over he dresses and returns to his own room, to be greeted by another patient, Nancy, from the clinic.

Nancy: “It is me, yes?”

Bond: “Quite undeniably, yes. *He walks towards her*. How did you get out?”

Nancy, *showing a nail file*: “With a fingernail file. It’s so easy.”

Bond: “Mm, I wouldn’t know.”

Nancy: “I come to see the book. The pictures, yes?”

Bond: “Oh, jolly good idea. *Looking for the book*. Now, where did I put it? Mm, I had it a few moments ago.”

Nancy: “Perhaps if we turn on the light.”

Bond: *gently holding her wrist.* “No. You’re a picture yourself. *He has his hands gently on her arms; they both sit on the bed*. And twice as lovely in the firelight.”

Nancy: “But, Sir Hilary.”

Bond: “Hilly.”

Nancy: “But I think you do not like girls, Hilly.”

Bond: “Usually I don’t, but you’re not usual. Coming here like this was an inspiration. And so are you.” *They embrace*.

(*On Her Majesty’s Secret Service* (1969) Directed by Peter Hunt [DVD]. United Artists).

The series of events in this latter exchange, can be closely paralleled with Bartlett's seduction, even down to the repeated dialogue. Bond amends only a few words to make it more subject specific, paralleling the brain-washing techniques Blofeld is using and evidencing his ability to use any situation to his advantage. James Chapman notes that 'the more usual characterisation of Bond girls as passive playthings is also represented by the "patients" at Blofeld's "clinic"; inevitably, Bond seduces two of them during his masquerade as Sir Hilary Bray' (2009:117). The next day, Bond is playing a game of curling with the patients and the two girls from the previous night use this opportunity to secretly speak with him. He agrees to meet Bartlett at eight o'clock in the evening and Nancy an hour later. Bond has unfinished business with Bartlett, with Glenn O'Brien noting that 'James Bond never leaves a woman unsatisfied. […] And that is the secret of his agency' (1999:111). Pursuing further sexual activity inevitably diminishes Bond's prowess as spy, and when he arrives in the room, he is unaware that Bartlett has been replaced by Bunt and is knocked out by a guard. Bunt is afforded more agency than either of the film's 'recipients'; it is perhaps her more masculine appearance and behaviour which makes this acceptable, as she would never be a target for Bond's advances. This theory is supported by similarly 'masculine' female characters such as Rosa Klebb in *From Russia with Love*, who also gains agency by manipulating Bond indirectly through her deployment of Romanova to play on Bond's vulnerabilities to sexual advances.

In *Moonraker* (1979), Roger Moore's Bond encounters 'recipient' Manuela, a bartender in the President's Suite of his hotel who has been tasked to help him, and asks her if she comes with the room.

Manuela: "Depends who's renting it. Vodka martini, shaken not stirred."

Bond: "Why were you following me?"

Manuela: "I was trying to meet you. I'm Manuela. I work for Station VH. We have been asked to assist you."

Bond: "M thinks of everything."

(*Moonraker* (1979) Directed by Lewis Gilbert [DVD]. United Artists).

Manuela gives him information about a warehouse used by a subsidiary of the Drax group.

Bond: “I’d like to pay a discreet visit tonight.”

Manuela: “Tonight? *She chuckles*. I think you may find that a little difficult.”

Bond: “Difficult or not, it’s something we have do. *He sits beside her*. Meanwhile, how do you kill five hours in Rio - *he undoes her ribbon belt* - if you don’t samba?”

Manuela passively accepts Bond’s advances in an implied sexual exchange and from his perspective also provides a useful distraction until he is able to act on her information and break into Drax’s warehouse. Later, Bond investigates the warehouse, and Jaws attacks Manuela as she waits outside for him, but is thwarted by the carnival crowd.

Bond: “Are you alright?”

Manuela: “Yes. But I’d rather dance with you.”

Bond: “I did tell you not to talk to any strange men.”

Manuela: *chuckles.* “Did you find anything in there?” *Motioning back with her head*.

Bond: “Only this.” *Produces crest from his pocket, and passes it to her*.

Manuela: “Drax Airways.”

Bond: “Know which airport they operate from?”

Manuela: “São Pedro. Shall I take you there?”

Bond: *She gives him back the crest, he pockets it*. “No, I think you need some rest. Come on.”

Manuela: “Okay.”

(*Moonraker* (1979) Directed by Lewis Gilbert [DVD]. United Artists).

Although Manuela is following orders to assist Bond and starts with agency via a degree of 'professionalism', she is fairly quickly reduced to a 'recipient' role. Bond just assumes she will be receptive to his advances and her immediate submission to him highlights his on-screen irresistibility. While it may seem that Manuela simply yields to Bond's desires, in continuing to have sexual relations with him, she both reinforces his sexual prowess and her desire for an accomplished lover.

A similar situation is seen in the pre-title sequence of *A View to a Kill* (1985), which features Stacey Sutton playing the 'traditional damsel-in-distress' role; Bond has successfully completed a mission and enters a camouflaged submarine piloted by a blonde woman.

> Woman: "I thought you'd never come back."
>
> Bond: "Well, there was a heck of a crowd on the piste."
>
> Woman: *looking at a screen with soldiers on it.* "So I see. *She looks at Bond who is sitting on a sofa*. Mission accomplished?"
>
> Bond: "Best beluga. Vodka – rather shaken – *he picks up a necklace*, and one microchip."
>
> Woman: "Good. I'll make a signal to M."
>
> Bond: *removing his snow-boots*. "Be a good girl, would you, and put her on automatic. And we could do with a couple of glasses."
>
> Woman: "They're in the overhead rack. *She reaches up to get them, but Bond pulls a lever which unbalances the submarine. As this happens, she loses her balance and falls beside a prone Bond*. Commander Bond."
>
> *Bond starts to unzip her coat*.
>
> Bond: "Call me James. It's five days to Alaska." *He leans in to kiss her. They embrace passionately. The focus changes to the outside of the submarine*.
>
> (*A View to a Kill* (1985) Directed by John Glen [DVD]. United International Pictures).

The blonde woman is credited as Kimberley Jones (IMDb, 2023) but remains unnamed in this scene. She has agency as a pilot, but this is immediately undermined when she is addressed as a 'good girl' and shortly thereafter becomes a willing recipient of Bond's sexual attention; the intelligence, expertise and professionalism of 'recipients' counts for nothing where Bond is concerned. As with Manuela, Jones accepts Bond's advances; her use of the term 'commander' shows deference to him, and her immediate capitulation again reinforces the idea that any women would want Bond as her lover.

Interestingly, a 'recipient' also appears in the pre-title sequence of another film featuring a main Bond girl inhabiting a 'traditional damsel-in-distress' persona. *The Living Daylights* (1987) opens with Timothy Dalton's Bond defeating a double agent after a lengthy fight; activating his parachute, he lands on a yacht immediately after a bikini-clad woman has just expressed her desire for a 'real man'.

> Bond: "I need to use your phone. *Takes phone from woman*. She'll call you back."
>
> Woman: *gentle tone,* "who are you?"
>
> Bond: *lying on a sun lounger*. "Bond. James Bond. *To the phone*, exercise control, 007 here. I'll report in an hour."
>
> Woman: *offering Bond an alcoholic drink*. "Won't you join me?"
>
> Bond: *smiling*. "Better make that two."
>
> (*The Living Daylights* (1987) Directed by John Glen [DVD]. United International Pictures).

The woman has her needs met when Bond appears on her boat, being the 'real man' she desires. This encounter seems to set the tone for the film's somewhat misogynistic portrayals of women. In spite of critics, including Chapman, 2009 and Claire Hines, 2018, correctly observing that Dalton's Bond was less promiscuous, respect for the main Bond girl, Kara Milovy, seems to come at a cost for other female characters in *The Living Daylights*. During his mission to extract the defecting Russian spy, Koskov, Bond meets previous ally, Rosika Miklos, who distracts a man overseeing a section of the Russian gas pipeline. She ensures the man's attention is very definitely elsewhere by burying his head in her ample bosom while Koskov is safely placed in a capsule within

the pipeline and dispatched across the border. This is Miklos' only contribution to the film, she gains agency by exploiting the man's inevitable reaction, but at the expense of objectifying herself. However, at least her actions are consensual, unlike the episode in *The Living Daylights* involving Pushkin's unnamed mistress. Pushkin is the head of the KGB and, like Bond, a target for Koskov's duplicity. Bond has been led to believe that Pushkin is culpable for the death of MI6 agent, Saunders, by virtue of a 'death to spies' message left at the scene of his demise. Koskov's objective is to encourage Bond to kill Pushkin and remove an unwanted obstacle to the nefarious scheme Koskov is running with American arms dealer, Whittaker.

In Tangier, Bond is waiting behind the door in Pushkin's hotel room and when Pushkin enters, he discovers his mistress in a dressing gown looking distressed. Bond holds them both at gun-point and questions Pushkin about Koskov and Whittaker, before realising that Pushkin has hit a silent alarm button. Having hit Pushkin with the butt of the gun, Bond anticipates a guard's entry into the room and pulls Pushkin's mistress' clothes off, leaving her topless and wearing stockings with suspenders. The guard is distracted for long enough for Bond to knock him out and then send her to the bathroom. Pushkin's mistress has no personal agency here; any agency generated by this exchange is used to underline women's subservience and reinforce patriarchal order. Bond and Pushkin then orchestrate a plan to fake Pushkin's assassination to reveal what Koskov is planning; his mistress is not made aware of the plans and is initially distraught at her husband's 'death'. Stereotypical behaviour continues when, after Pushkin's feigned assassination, Bond has to escape from the local police and two attractive, young women in a convertible car ask if he is looking for a party. At a safe distance, he asks them to pull over and offers them money only for one of them to pull a gun on him. They take him to a yacht at the harbour where Felix Leiter is waiting and it becomes obvious that these women are undercover CIA agents. Again, the film exploits female sexuality to further the narrative, although it is worth noting that here, rather than exploiting them, Bond is himself duped by the 'recipients'.

Early in *The World is not Enough* (1999), Pierce Brosnan's Bond has an innuendo-laden conversation with Dr. Molly Warmflash during a medical examination. Walking towards a bare-chested Bond lying on a medical bed, she warns him to take things easy

or he will be out of action for weeks. Calling her Molly, he pulls her towards him by her doctor's coat and asks her to clear him for duty.

Dr. Warmflash: "James. *She smiles placing her hand on his chest*, … that wouldn't really be …" *He unfastens her coat and starts removing it*.

Bond: "Ethical?"

Dr. Warmflash: "Practical … smart."

Bond: "Mm-hm. Well, let's just … *he slides his hands over her*, skirt the issue shall we? *He unzips her skirt, revealing her underwear*.

Dr. Warmflash: "You'd have to promise to call me, *grabs his shoulder, making him groan* … this time."

Bond: "Whatever the doctor orders." *They kiss*.

Dr. Warmflash: *unbuttons her blouse*. "And I suppose if you stayed in close contact …"

Bond: *Dr. Warmflash takes off her blouse*. "Of course."

Dr. Warmflash: *they keep kissing between sentences*. "If you showed sufficient stamina … and cut out all kinds of …"

Bond: "Strenuous activity?"

They duck below the camera.

(*The World is not Enough* (1999) Directed by Michael Apted [DVD]. United International Pictures).

There is obvious history between Bond and Dr. Warmflash, and he has evidently failed to keep in touch following previous encounters. Dr. Warmflash does not seem to believe this time will be any different, but carries on nonetheless. She has agency in that she needs to agree he can resume active duty, and in choosing to exploit his prowess as a lover, but it is very specific and unlikely to outlive their brief encounter.

'Recipients' are often present in the pre-title sequences of films featuring a 'traditional damsel' as the main Bond girl, as seen in *A View to a Kill* and *The Living Daylights*. Equally, 'recipients' also appear alongside 'formidable' Bond women, with clear examples noted in *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* and *The World is not Enough*, potentially reinforcing Bond's power over women and his inevitable 'conquest' of his 'formidable' opponent. All of the films selected for this thesis feature 'initiators', but the two post-2000 films, *Die Another Day* (2002) and *Casino Royale* (2006), do not include 'recipients'. However, the new millennium did not usher in a new version of Bond as the other Craig films, with the exception of *No Time to Die* (2021), although not specifically analysed in this thesis, all include silhouetted women as part of their pre-title sequence, and 'recipient fluffers' within the films themselves.

Bond meets Strawberry Fields, a young and naïve consulate employee, in *Quantum of Solace* (2008), Craig's second film, when she passes a message from MI6 to Bond and Mathis ordering them to stop pursuing the villain, Greene. Before flying back to London the following morning, Fields provides them with a cover story and books them into a motel. Bond immediately rejects his undercover persona and chooses a fancier up-market hotel instead, where he sleeps with Fields in their shared room. Although Fields meets viewers' expectations in regard to her sexual activity with Bond, she regrets her indiscretion and M is angry at his exploitation of the young woman's naivety. Fields' limited agency is also transient as her association with Bond leads her to being killed by one of Greene's men shortly afterwards. *Skyfall* (2012) features an anonymous lover of Bond's who is seen in bed with him near the beginning of the film, but never reappears. Again, a beautiful woman is included solely to enhance his prowess.

Two 'recipients', Estrella and Lucia, are present in *Spectre* (2015); Estrella is seen walking with Bond through crowds celebrating *Día de los Muertos* in the pre-title sequence. She openly flirts with Bond as they make their way to her hotel room and they kiss before she lies on the bed. Bond then completely ignores her, having achieved his real objective of accessing the hotel room balcony. Lucia is the 50-year old widow of an assassin that Bond killed at the request of the former M (Judi Dench) and is set to be killed at her husband's funeral. 'The widow of the assassin Lucia Sciarra (played by Monica Bellucci) is presented as somebody merely to be seduced and saved by Bond […]' (Dodds & Funnell, 2018:6). Bond saves her life and promises her ongoing protection in

exchange for information about her husband's former associates, seducing her in the process.

'Initiators' and 'recipients' have varying amounts of agency, even though they are challenging or enhancing the same pentad virtues. The former have a lot of agency given their active role in participating in sexual liaisons with Bond and challenging knights' *clannes* and *pité*. Bond's 'recipient fluffers', by contrast, primarily use their agency to serve convention by enhancing Bond's 'sexual reputation', and maintaining patriarchal order. Apart from acquiring an expert lover, they do not hold personal agency, and it is not surprising that there are no medieval women evident in the romance texts examined in the thesis who fall into the category of 'recipient'. Given the moralistic influence of the Church at the time, and the fact that Knights have to preserve their *clannes* by resisting temptation, they clearly cannot reward helpful women through bestowing sexual favours.

Conclusion

'Fluffers' are omnipresent in the selected Bond films and are more likely than the Bond girl to be encountered in the pre-title sequences or opening scenes. Burnetts writes that '[…] fluffers are set up as objects of desire regardless of whether they are genuinely attracted to Bond and/or have orders to manipulate him' (in Funnell, ed. 2015:62). In spite of being allocated limited screen time, these women often demonstrate a wide spectrum of agency, although this is channelled almost exclusively into enhancing Bond's 'sexual reputation'. Their medieval equivalents have a similar *modus operandi* and also challenge 'sexual conduct', although their presence is designed to provoke a very different outcome; by resisting temptation, knights preserve their *clannes* and improve their chivalric standing. Medieval damsels adopting the role of 'fluffer' are exclusively 'initiators', presenting as demonic manifestations rather than the real women Bond meets; however, in both realms, 'fluffers' are entirely dispensable, their agency serving to reinforce key aspects of the hero's identity.

In Bond films, a 'fluffer' is a woman who is often unnamed and clearly distinguishable from the Bond girl, and whose usually brief on-screen presence tends to be characterised by a relationship to Bond that is sexual, whether this is expressed through sexual innuendo or through physical (and consensual) sex. Although

some 'fluffers' appear to fit aspects of the seductress persona, there are clear differences in their presentation; unlike seductresses, who usually have ulterior motives connected with the derailment of the mission, the temporary agency of the 'fluffer' is usually positive and rarely poses any threat to Bond. Although some 'fluffers' provide information or assistance, their presence has no major impact on the plot; these women's actions solely massage Bond's ego. Medieval 'initiators' play a similar role; they provide knights with individual tests of chastity and devotion to their cause, thereby challenging a knight's worthiness rather than influencing the actual quest. Their purpose seems to be to ensure that chivalric values are maintained and that the pentad virtues of *clannes* (chastity), and *pité* (devotion to God or duty) are always upheld.

While societal attitudes have undoubtedly impacted on representations of casual sex in the Bond series, the basic formula remains relatively unchanged to present day, and with the single exception of *No Time to Die* (2021), this includes the appearance of 'fluffers'. These women appear in the films irrespective of the actor playing Bond; Connery's Bond seduces a former girlfriend and two gypsy girls in *From Russia with Love*, as well as Romanova. Lazenby has sexual liaisons with several clinic patients in *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*, after sleeping with Di Vincenzo. Moore takes advantage of a pilot, and a female assistant, before moving on to Dr. Goodhead in *Moonraker*, while seducing a submarine pilot and a former girlfriend, in addition to May Day and Sutton in *A View to a Kill*. In spite of being championed as monogamous (Hines, 2018:182), Dalton's Bond opens *The Living Daylights* by accepting a sexual invitation from a stranger on a boat before even meeting Milovy. Brosnan enjoys the benefits of having been previously acquainted with his doctor, before having sexual liaisons with King and Dr. Jones in *The World is not Enough*; he also flirts with Verity before having consensual sexual encounters with Jinx and Frost in *Die Another Day*. Craig is less promiscuous, having only an interrupted dalliance with Solange before meeting Lynd in *Casino Royale*.

One criterion which does appear to have an impact on the number of 'fluffers' present in a film is the persona of the main Bond girl. There are noticeably more 'fluffers', or more developed 'fluffers' – women whose role and screen time is more extensive – in films like *Moonraker* and *A View to a Kill* which feature a 'damsel-in-distress' as the main Bond girl. As we saw in Chapter 3, there seems to be an unwritten 'code' across

the Bond franchise that Bond cannot seduce a 'damsel' while she is still 'in distress'. Although all of the 'damsels' eventually become conquests for Moore's Bond, the 'fluffers' in *Moonraker* and *A View to a Kill* reinforce his virility and irresistibility to ensure the audience accept his conquest of the 'damsels' as an inevitability. Although Dalton's Bond also encounters a damsel-in-distress, Milovy, *The Living Daylights* was released in an era of circumspection due to the AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) epidemic. Raymond Benson (1988) noted that 'the AIDS epidemic was changing everyone's outlook on sex, and motion pictures and television were just beginning to reflect the new attitudes' (cited in Chapman, 2007:203). It is perhaps this that limits the appearance of 'fluffers' directly associated with Dalton's Bond solely to the 'boat woman' in the pre-title sequence. Somewhat incongruously, a number of other women – Miklos, Pushkin's mistress, and the CIA agents – are sexually objectified in the film, even though it is only at the level of suggestiveness and innuendo. In general, where the Bond girl is a 'formidable' woman, for example King (*The World is not Enough*) and Di Vincenzo (*On Her Majesty's Secret Service*), the 'fluffers' in the film are mainly 'recipients'. Dr. Warmflash appears in the former and Bartlett in the latter, both reminding the audience of Bond's sexual superiority and that no woman will control him. For Bond girls adopting a seductress persona, the 'fluffers' are more likely to be 'initiators', for instance Verity (*Die Another Day*) and Solange in *Casino Royale*; these women actively seek his attention and showcase his ability to separate 'business from pleasure'.

The medieval 'initiator' is far more constant in her presentation and is always an active 'initiator' of events; a knight would never bestow sexual favours on a damsel, however much help she had provided. A commitment to a quest automatically precludes frivolous sexual encounters and places a high value on chastity. This might explain why characters like the naïve Perceval and the reformed Bors were more obvious targets for 'initiators' than Gawain or Lancelot, whose sexual exploits were well known. The 'good knight' Galahad appears to be above all temptation; in spite of being virginal, he is not the target of attention from 'initiators' in either *The Quest* or *Le Morte d'Arthur*. Although some knights, especially Perceval, come close to succumbing to temptation, the medieval 'initiator' always fails in her stated task to seduce the knight. However, her implicit underlying objectives, to reinforce the 'sexual conduct' of the romance hero, are

nevertheless met through these failed sexual encounters. Becoming a knight or a '00' agent shows worthiness, but there is a need to continually test to ensure the exacting standards of the knightly code are maintained. By challenging *clannes* and invoking a knight's resistance, an 'initiator' enhances chivalric prowess.

For Bond, regular action sequences reinforce his fighting skills, outwitting the villain to champion patriotism or justice. Just as he overpowers some male enemies by force or skill, so 'fluffers', alongside Bond girls, also show that no woman will ever manipulate him; he tames female agents using his charm and 'redeems' them sexually. His 'touch' can never fail and 'fluffers' help to reinforce his 'sexual reputation', and to show rather than tell of his prowess. If all 'fluffers' are removed, there is a risk that as sexual activity decreases, physical violence will increase, and that the Bond film would become more comparable to action-adventure films such as *Die Hard* (1988). The question then arises of how *No Time to Die*, which lacks 'fluffers', still manages to achieve its objective of showcasing Bond's 'sexual reputation', and therefore of how closely this film follows the established Bond formula. *No Time to Die*'s monogamous Bond, sacrificing his life for the greater good, would appear to be the one who most adheres to medieval romance convention. However, an alternative view is that the 'initiator' is not only an integral part of the Bond formula but also of medieval romance. Rather than removing all 'fluffers', perhaps there should be a focus on the type of 'fluffer' present in Bond films. In both eras, 'initiators' continually challenge chivalric virtues and facilitate the reinforcement of heroic prowess; their perspective might vary, but their underlying objectives are comparable. Bond 'initiators', like Solange, who increase Bond's 'sexual reputation' without the need for sexual consummation are very much in line with medieval 'initiators'; they reinforce the virtues of *clannes* and *pité* for knights and 'sexual reputation' and devotion to duty for Bond. All 'initiators' enhance *trawþe* without casting all medieval temptresses as Eve, or objectifying modern day women. Performing as 'initiators' allows women a degree of agency and autonomy, and so their inclusion adheres to medieval romance convention. Bond would have the choice, either to reject them and refocus on the mission, or enter into an entirely consensual sexual relationship with them. The success of the franchise surely lies in its adherence to tried and tested convention, and this chapter demonstrates that the agency of the 'initiator' is as important to the Bond films as it is to medieval literature.

Conclusion

This thesis provides a full-length comparative analysis of Bond films in relation to medieval romance conventions, building on previous engagement with Bond and chivalric literature (Sternberg, 1983; Taliaferro & Le Gall in South & Held, ed. 2006). The thesis uniquely emphasises the importance of medieval romance narratives as a lens through which to view female agency and narrative conventions in Bond. The iconic Bond girl has been the focus of considerable scholarly interest, but much of this is viewed from a modern perspective and centres on chauvinism, objectification, and female stereotyping. Reading Bond through a medieval lens, this thesis has taken a unique view of female agency in the Bond films, placing Bond girls in their different romance categories and revealing them to be far more complex and nuanced characters than previously assumed. Far from being one-dimensional and generic, we have seen that Bond girls play a range of different roles, often within the same film. Categorising Bond women using the vocabulary of medieval romance, as seductresses, 'formidable' women, and damsels-in-distress, facilitates a better understanding of their complexity. Their behaviour is not purely 'stereotypical' or heavily dependent on the prevailing zeitgeist of the era in which the films were first produced, but mirrors characteristics seen in women in medieval romance narratives of the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries.

Although Bond girls will inevitably reflect women's roles in modern-day society, the influence of the narrative traditions of medieval romance on their agency should not be underestimated. Over time, Bond women have become more independent or professional, and are drawn from diverse ethnic backgrounds, but the personae they inhabit, and the agency they demonstrate, remains unchanged, and clearly defined by medieval romance convention. Moreover, as well as adding to our understanding of Bond and Bond girls, the thesis has highlighted – through its analysis of medieval women adopting these various personae - some innovative approaches to understanding the motivations of medieval women themselves. Often cast as either the Virgin Mary or Eve, medieval women's roles in fact hold the often significant agency afforded to Bond girls; even medieval 'fluffers', the 'demonic' women of visions, fulfil an important role by channelling their agency into reinforcing the chivalric virtues of medieval knights.

By better understanding the persona each woman inhabits, the focus of this thesis has been turned away from 'stereotypical' behaviours and onto the role each damsel or Bond girl performs, along with the agency it confers on the performer. Female agency is, as we have seen, an essential part of the narrative in both medieval romance and Bond; where Bond's sexual exploits are restricted, as in *The Living Daylights* (1987), there is a tendency for a greater focus on Bond's masculinity through scenes of combat, and Jeremy Black notes that this film '[…] was more violent than earlier Bond films' (2005:156). As long as women are portrayed as consensual, active partners, then even as 'fluffers', they are acceptable and essential parts of the Bond formula. Indeed, by emphasising the formulaic nature of the Bond films, the importance of medieval romance convention in shaping female agency within them has been clearly demonstrated in this thesis. Although medieval romance narrative has no direct discernible impact on the Bond series, it has influenced their development by virtue of the narrative motifs that Bond films share with medieval romance. Indeed, successive 'reboots' of the Bond film franchise have failed to subvert convention. The films remain equivalent to traditional tales in a modern setting; although their recipe has been tweaked, their main ingredients never change. Each film tasks Bond to complete a mission, very much in line with the quests faced by medieval knights; a quest is not simply about achieving a single goal, it encompasses a journey, a series of adventures designed to continuously test the mettle of a hero, and a key part of that test involves dealing with the advances of sexually-alluring women. How that temptation is dealt with depends on the era the hero operates in; medieval knights must resist the lure of beautiful women, whereas Bond must prove his prowess as a lover. Not only are medieval romance poems and Bond films both formulaic, they each appeal to a diverse audience, at every level of intelligence. Part of the centuries-long success of the romance genre is its all-encompassing appeal and chameleonic capacity for change; by retaining its core elements, it remains recognisable as romance, and yet is able to accommodate the prevailing zeitgeist across the later Middle Ages, from the emergence of the genre in England in the 12th century through to the romance imitations of Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene* in 1596.

Neither Bond, nor a medieval knight can neglect his duties, but must carry them out with the right degree of deference towards the respective codes of conduct under

which they operate. For the medieval knight, the chivalric code, emphasising loyalty and allegiance, governed their actions; although unwritten, it exercised control over knightly behaviour by general consensus. To facilitate the comparison of the respective agency afforded to medieval women and Bond girls adopting three different personae: the seductress, the 'formidable' woman, and the damsel-in-distress, together with a sub-group of the seductress persona, the 'fluffer', the foregoing chapters employed a specific methodology. The pentangle which graces the outside of Gawain's shield, is described in detail in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (*c*.1375), along with an explanation of how each point of the pentad symbolises a knightly virtue to which he must adhere. Taken together, these virtues make up his *trawþe* (truth), or moral righteousness, his fidelity and personal integrity. These virtues are: *fraunchyse*, or compassion; *felaȝschyp*, or fellowship; *cortaysye,* or courtesy; *pité*, or devotion to God, and *clannes,* or freedom from lust (Barron, 2001:10). With slight alteration, this pentad is equally as applicable to Bond, whose 'pentad' as it is analysed here comprises: compassion, loyalty or fellowship, courtesy, devotion to duty, Queen and country, and 'sexual reputation'. The medieval virtue of *clannes*, which places great importance in the observation of chastity is the only point of the pentad which differs in any real respect. For Bond, his virtue is diametrically opposed to *clannes*; his 'sexual reputation', established through his sexual prowess, forms a vital part of his arsenal.

Failing in any virtue compromises *trawþe,* and so a key aim of this thesis was to analyse how women inhabiting each of the featured personae target selected virtues for Bond and medieval knights, and in so doing, threaten *trawþe.* The thesis has also exposed how, paradoxically, the principles of courtly love etiquette can conflict with the requirements of the chivalric code, as represented by the pentad. Lancelot's devotion to Guinevere leads him to neglect essential knightly duties; on one occasion, in *The Knight of the Cart* (*c*.1180), his horse dies from exhaustion (ll.305-306) and he must endure the shame of riding in a cart (ll.360a-361). Gawain faces a similar conundrum in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*; in attempting to treat Lady Bertilak with *cortaysye,* he is offered, and cannot refuse, the gift of the allegedly magical green girdle. By not declaring the gift to Lord Bertilak (ll.1394-1396), however, he compromises *felaȝschyp*, and by not carrying out restitution after he is granted absolution, Gawain also fails in the virtue of *pité.* Interestingly, the esteem in which both of these knights are held shows

that their failings are forgiven; even as flawed heroes they are celebrated, an acknowledgement perhaps that under their armour they are not 'supermen', but simply 'men'.

While Bond's armour is clearly metaphorical, he has to tread a careful path between chivalrous and unacceptable behaviour, being mindful of women's agency, while enhancing his 'sexual reputation' and succeeding in his mission. This paradox is clearly seen when he interrogates Tatiana Romanova in *From Russia with Love* (1963) following Kerim Bey's death. Bond needs information from her, but her submissive response prevents him from continuing his questioning; obliged to treat her with respect, he allows *cortaysye* to triumph over *pité*, showcasing his underlying humanity. Bond's emotional vulnerability is also highlighted in his response to Tracy Di Vincenzo's death in the final scene of *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* (1969), and Vesper Lynd's demise in *Casino Royale* (2006); these scenarios depict an unusual motif in the Bond films - the idea that he is human, rather than superhuman.

The Bond girl is an essential part of the Bond formula, and, unlike medieval damsels, cannot simply be described as 'the most beautiful', leaving the detail to the imagination of the listener, or reader. Each successive Bond girl must fit the physical ideal of the time her film is produced, and must adhere to the conventions associated not with any 'stereotype', but the persona she inhabits. The term *femme fatale* is often used synonymously with seductress, but for the purposes of the analyses in this thesis, women adopting all of the featured personae are viewed as *femme fatales*. In targeting a hero's virtues and threatening his *trawþe,* they all present as 'deadly women'. Even, the damsel-in-distress fits this category; although many 'damsels' are the vulnerable women they appear to be, the role is ripe for exploitation: the presentation of a 'damsel-*sans*-distress' is identical to its traditional counterpart, the difference lying solely in the motivation for its adoption. Aside from the villain, the Bond girl is probably the main character an audience expects to see in a Bond film. Inevitably, she is stunningly beautiful, but being beautiful in itself does not confer agency; a Bond girl's agency is a product of the persona she chooses to inhabit, and the role she therefore performs. Critical appreciation of her agency is frequently overlooked and undervalued, leading to Bond girls too often becoming defined in terms of their interactions with Bond, or other male characters, and as a consequence ending up as little more than sex objects. Indeed,

the motif of 'redemption' via sexual activity with Bond is common throughout the film series; Bond's 'sexual reputation' is such that a sexual liaison with him seems sufficient to change the allegiance of any woman in the films.

The core elements of the female personae explored here, in spite of a timespan measured in hundreds of years, are just as clearly evident in the selected Bond films as they are in the medieval literature. The seductresses of medieval romance narrative, who use sexual allure to derail knights' quests, find obvious counterparts amongst Bond's women. The physical appearance of a seductress is in no way predictive of seductive intent; for Bond girls, their appearance evolves over time, in line with societal trends, while the beauty of the medieval seductress remains mysterious, a unique creation in the mind of each reader. The strategies these medieval and modern women employ are remarkably similar, their weaponry being deployed to target men's *trawþe*. Sometimes, sexual allure alone is sufficient to tempt a hero away from the correct path; as we saw in Chapter 4, Perceval, a naïve and inexperienced knight in *The Quest* (*c*.1210), almost succumbs to a 'demonic' female vision, in spite of having received several warnings about such threats. This woman masquerades as a disinherited damsel to target his *fraunchyse*, or compassion, before launching a ferocious attack on his *clannes,* or chastity. Perceval's purity survives the encounter only because he catches a glimpse of the cross on the pommel of his sword, and in making the sign of the cross, causes the damsel to vanish. However, he is mortified that he has compromised his *trawþe*, allowing the impact of this damsel's temptation to be long-lasting.

Gawain, in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, is placed in a similar position by the ministrations of the alluring Lady Bertilak; restraint is essential for a medieval knight to demonstrate the triumph of devotion to duty, and *clannes*, over sexual love. By persistence, and by exploiting Gawain's nervousness regarding his impending encounter with the Green Knight, Lady Bertilak not only attacks his *clannes*, she also simultaneously pits the virtue of *cortaysye* against *felaȝschyp*, as discussed in Chapter 1. Faced with this paradox, and bound by courtly etiquette, in spite of his vast experience of women, Gawain finds it increasingly difficult to rebuff her advances and is manipulated into accepting the green girdle. Although he believes his challenge to involve the Green Knight, in reality he has failed the test of his *trawþe* at the hands of Lady Bertilak, before he even enters the Green Chapel. The agency of this seductress certainly endures; as

Arthur's court adopts the green girdle as a sign of chivalry, Gawain will be permanently reminded of his perceived failure. Bond encounters a similarly complex seductress in Lynd (*Casino Royale*); distracted by his love for her, he is deceived into transferring his casino winnings into a false account that she intends to use to free her captive boyfriend. Lynd, as we saw in Chapter 1, uses her allure to challenge Bond's 'sexual reputation' by rebuffing his early attempts at seduction. Like Miranda Frost (*Die Another Day*, 2002), she encourages Bond's pursuit by feigning disinterest; although both women become sexual 'conquests', they also threaten Bond's *pité*, or patriotic devotion to Queen and country. His love for Lynd makes Bond consider resigning his position at MI6, signalling that he has compromised his 'sexual reputation' by losing control of their relationship; Frost's deception leaves Bond at the mercy of her real ally, the villain Gustav Graves. Romanova also shares characteristics with Lady Bertilak; they are both operating under instruction from someone else – Rosa Klebb for Romanova, and Lord Bertilak in the case of his wife. These women clearly demonstrate the nature of the seductress persona as a role to be performed rather than as an innate aspect of their personality, or a stereotype.

As discussed more fully in Chapter 4, a number of women identified as 'fluffers' also behave in a similar manner to seductresses, with the key difference being that they serve not to challenge Bond's 'sexual reputation', but rather to enhance his sexual prowess. Solange (*Casino Royale*), Corinne Defour (*Moonraker*, 1979), and Pola Ivanova (*A View to a Kill*, 1985) all enjoy short-lived sexual liaisons with Bond, with little or no impact on the mission or overall plot in their films, serving purely to emphasise his sexual irresistibility and remind the audience that the Bond girl will inevitably fall for his charms. Seductresses do occasionally inflict reputational damage on the hero, as with Lady Bertilak and Lynd, but across both media, their agency is more often neutralised by their 'repositioning', championing the triumph of good over evil, and ultimately re-establishing patriarchal order.

A persona that most certainly qualifies as a deadly woman, or *femme fatale*, is that of the 'formidable' woman, the subject of Chapter 2; these self-serving, unruly and unpredictable women use their agency to achieve equality, autonomy, and on occasion, sovereignty. The 'formidable' woman often derails a hero's quest, but not as her primary objective, simply as an incidental consequence of her determined focus on her own

destiny. Women like Alisoun (*The Wife of Bath's Prologue*, *c*.1400) showcase the chameleonic nature of this persona, its associated agency having the capacity to challenge every pentad virtue. Alisoun defends her decision to repeatedly re-marry by highlighting the injustice of being forced into marriage at a very young age (l.4), appropriating the usually male preserve of quoting from the Bible to justify her actions (ll.10-13). Alisoun's unconventionality and wilfulness grants her, via an adherence to courtly love etiquette, and an exploitation of *cortaysye*, three marriages to rich, older men. Accumulating wealth, both monetary and in terms of the land she holds; she then uses her status and financial appeal to attract younger, more virile and sexually satisfying husbands. Unfortunately, her fifth husband, Jankyn, although fitting her physical remit, fails to live up to her specifications for an ideal husband; he is an abusive spouse who shows no respect for her autonomy, regularly chastising her behaviour by quoting from the *Book of Wikked Wyves.* Having transferred her land and wealth to him, Alisoun faces losing the independence she has worked so hard to achieve and chooses to channel her agency into manipulation, by behaving as a 'damsel-in-distress', thereby demonstrating the performativity of the personae that this thesis has explored by showing how a single female character can take on a number of different female roles. Appealing to his *fraunchyse* by deceiving him into thinking his punch has killed her, she forces him into granting her 'sovereignty' or absolute control in their relationship. However, it appears to be a short-lived victory; in her *Prologue*, she mentions seeking a sixth husband (ll.45-46).

The closest match to Alisoun for 'formidability' in the Bond series is Elektra King, the Bond girl, and villain, from *The World is not Enough* (1999). As we saw in Chapter 2, King's ability to alternate between personae makes her impossible to 'reposition' ideologically, and perhaps explains her inevitable death at the end of her film. Moreover, her death at Bond's hands is depicted more as a summary execution; incapable of 'redemption' and having deceived Bond throughout the film, she simply cannot be allowed to survive. King invokes the *fraunchyse*, or compassion, of Bond and M at the outset of the film, due not just to her father's death, but her alleged ordeal at the hands of kidnapper, Renard. A feigned adoption of the 'damsel-in-distress' persona during an avalanche ensures that Bond's compassion remains foregrounded. King then targets his 'sexual reputation', and by establishing an intimate connection with him, reinforces her

alleged vulnerability, while obscuring her true motives and compromising his *pité*. King also distracts M, played by Judy Dench in this film, from her focus on the mission, exploiting the *felaȝschyp*, or fellowship, M shared with King's late father and appealing to her protective maternal instincts.

Although unnamed, an immodest damsel whom Lancelot encounters on his way to rescue Guinevere from Meliagaunt in *The Knight of the Cart*, showcases 'formidable' agency in a number of ways. Unlike the 'demonic' visions who appear to tempt knights by simply using their sexual allure (explored more fully in Chapter 4), this damsel employs a wide range of strategies in her attempt to make Lancelot a sexual conquest. At first glance, the 'formidable woman' at the heart of *The Wife of Bath's Tale* (*c*.1400) is Queen Guinevere, who has status due to her royal position. However, closer inspection reveals that in this instance she only holds temporary sovereignty, conferred on her by Arthur, to decide on an appropriate punishment for the rapist knight. A far more 'formidable' character is seen in the hag which the knight in *The Wife of Bath's Tale* encounters at the end of his fruitless endeavour; fully aware of his predicament, the desperate need to complete his task, she offers to give him the answer he seeks, in exchange for his agreement to honour her wishes. The knight's delight in pleasing the court when he delivers his response, that 'women desire sovereignty', is cut short when the hag reminds him of his promise to her. His situation worsens when she asks to be his wife; as a knight, he is bound to keep his word by the virtue of *trawþe*, 'combining that ideal of integrity to self, society and the chivalric code which the hero, haunted by his established reputation, strives to maintain' (Barron, 1987:216).

Acknowledging his obvious revulsion at her appearance, the hag then utilises her agency to offer him a choice; she can be ugly but faithful, or beautiful but untrue. The knight chooses wisely, learning the lesson implicit in the challenge Guinevere set for him, and allows the hag to choose. As Alisoun explains to the pilgrims, the hag's transformation into a beautiful and true wife emphasises the magic at work within the tale. That the hag remains anonymous is also interesting as it reduces her agency; a similar situation occurs in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* when Morgan le Fay is not revealed as the architect of Gawain's downfall until the end of the tale. Le Fay's formidability, as with the hag, is the product of her magical ability, which allows her to gain temporary sovereignty over Arthur, by goading him into accepting the beheading

challenge set by a transformed Lord Bertilak as the Green Knight. Although this is lost when Gawain completes the task on behalf of Arthur's court, the manner in which Gawain achieves it compromises his *felaȝschyp* and *pité*; in spite of receiving praise from Lord Bertilak, and acclaim from Arthur's court, Gawain knows that his *trawþe* has been undermined and he cannot forgive himself.

One context in which Guinevere shows 'formidability' is her sovereignty over Lancelot, due to his deep devotion to her. In *The Knight of the Cart*, after Meliagaunt abducts her, and must duel with Lancelot as a punishment, Guinevere overrides the virtue of *fraunchyse,* and refuses to be merciful when Meliagaunt loses the contest. When Meliagaunt then pleads for his life, appealing to the *felaȝschyp* of Arthur and Lancelot, it is Guinevere who instructs Lancelot to kill him. However, even this specific sovereignty is temporarily lost when Lancelot chooses to undertake the quest for the Holy Grail and renounces his love for Guinevere. Di Vincenzo (*On Her Majesty's Secret Service*, 1969) holds similar sovereignty over Bond; as we also saw in Chapter 2, he is drawn to her agency and unpredictability from the very start of the film. Bond even tries to resign, an abortive attempt thwarted by the intervention of Moneypenny, when M initially refuses to allow him to rescue Di Vincenzo from Ernst Stavro Blofeld's clutches. By virtue of being a countess, Di Vincenzo already has status, but a failed marriage to an unfaithful husband has undermined her agency, and left her at the mercy of her domineering father. Di Vincenzo initially rebuffs Bond's advances, suspecting her father's influence in play, but later realises that marriage to Bond would confer autonomy, and security. Di Vincenzo's desires echo the sentiments of the hag in *The Wife of Bath's Tale* insofar as Di Vincenzo also seeks sovereignty through her marriage. In Bond, she gains a spouse not dissimilar in character to Dorigen's husband, the noble knight Arveragus, in *The Franklin's Tale* (*c*.1400), and on a par with the 'ideal man' so craved by Alisoun, and created by her manipulation of Jankyn in *The Wife of Bath's Prologue*. All three of these women channel their agency into achieving equality in their relationships; sadly, only Dorigen retains that autonomy long-term.

In acquiring Bond as a husband, Di Vincenzo subverts a major convention of the Bond franchise as the role of a married man is deemed incompatible with that of a womanising secret agent. In *No Time to Die* (2021), Bond is also shown as monogamous, but this is at a time when he has retired, and a partner would create less of a conflict of

interest. As it transpires, Di Vincenzo's mastery over Bond ends shortly after their marriage, with her untimely death at the hands of Irma Bunt, Blofeld's accomplice. Where a Bond girl adopts a 'formidable' persona, they are often complemented by a number of 'recipient fluffers'; an unnamed blonde submarine pilot is seduced by Bond in the pre-title sequence of *A View to a Kill* (1985), and Bond seduces two of Blofeld's 'patients' at the allergy research centre, in *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*. The agency of these women, in actively seeking sexual liaisons with him, reminds viewers not just of Bond's sexual irresistibility, but also that he is capable of separating 'business from pleasure'.

The 'damsel-in-distress', the focus of Chapter 3, is a complex and ubiquitous persona, adopted by a range of medieval women, and performed by all of the featured Bond girls at some point in their films. A 'damsel-in-distress' presentation is often transient, but the agency associated with the persona is substantial. Whether in the medieval realm, or in modern-day Bond films, adopting a 'damsel' role ensures an honourable response; the 'damsel' is saved, and the hero's chivalric standing is simultaneously increased. Through invoking the chivalric virtue of *fraunchyse*, a 'damsel' enhances a knight's *trawþe* rather than threatening it. While the 'traditional damsel', a woman under threat appealing to a hero for help, is perhaps the best known, this thesis has shown that the 'damsel-in-distress' role is actually far more complex and Chapter 3 examines three manifestations of this persona - the 'traditional damsel', the 'resourceful damsel', and the 'rational damsel' – and highlights the potential for women to move between these presentations. The 'traditional damsel' persona is clearly evidenced in Dorigen, the female protagonist of *The Franklin's Tale* (*c*.1400); pursued by an unwanted suitor, Aurelius, during her husband Arveragus' absence overseas, Dorigen sets Aurelius an 'impossible' challenge in order to politely rebuff him. When Aurelius claims to have completed the task, Arveragus values *trawþe* above all else and insists Dorigen must keep her word and go to him. Faced with what she sees as defilement, she exploits the fact that both men are desperate to preserve their reputations and transitions into a 'resourceful damsel'. This manifestation of the 'damsel' persona affords a woman far more agency; the 'damsel' is no longer solely in distress, she is also in control. From the male standpoint, however, the presentation is indistinguishable from its 'traditional' counterpart. Dorigen, contrary to her husband's instructions, refuses to keep her tryst

with Aurelius secret, and makes her distress obvious to both men; her agency effectively negates the power that either man holds over her. Dorigen exploits the overt *felaȝschyp* between the men, and their underlying *cortaysye*, to manipulate their *gentilesse* and ensure Aurelius releases her from her promise.

Kara Milovy is thrust into the role of 'traditional damsel' in *The Living Daylights* (1987) when she helps her boyfriend, Koskov, to defect; portrayed as naïve and dependent on Bond's help, Milovy performs this way for much of her screen time. However, on occasion, she clearly adopts a 'resourceful damsel' role; when fleeing Bratislava with Bond, Milovy insists on retrieving her cello, and in spite of the KGB being in close pursuit, she appeals to Bond's *fraunchyse* to ensure this happens. Shortly thereafter, she resumes her 'traditional' persona, and unfortunately for Bond, she again becomes 'resourceful' when persuaded by Koskov that Bond is a KGB agent. Koskov targets the *felaȝschyp* Milovy has shared with him to persuade her to add a sedative to Bond's drink. Realising her mistake once Koskov then takes her and Bond captive, Milovy most certainly reverts back to being a 'traditional damsel'. In the closing scenes, however, with Shah reluctant to help Bond, the 'resourceful' Milovy snatches Shah's gun; by taking control and heading off in pursuit of Bond, Milovy invokes Shah's *fraunchyse* to achieve her objective.

Two years earlier, in *A View to a Kill*, Stacey Sutton, cast opposite the 'formidable woman', May Day, inhabits the 'traditional damsel' persona for the majority of her film, limiting any 'resourcefulness' to brief demonstrations of her geological expertise, and the fairly ineffectual assistance she provides to Bond during the airship fight with Zorin. It is significant that Sutton is not seduced by Bond, even though he is presented with the opportunity to do so, until the end of the film, when they are shown sharing her shower. The timing of Sutton's sexual conquest by Bond mirrors that of Milovy's, who enjoys a romantic interlude with him in the final scene of *The Living Daylights*; this suggests a need for Bond to wait until a 'traditional damsel' is deemed 'safe' before it is acceptable to seduce her. This idea reflects the approach Aurelius takes towards Dorigen in *The Franklin's Tale*, when she arrives at their agreed meeting after being sent by her husband to keep her promise. By completing her challenge, albeit deceptively, Aurelius would be justified in claiming his prize; however, he is presented with a woman, not simply reluctant to accept his sexual favours, but 'resourcefully' performing the role of a

distressed 'traditional damsel'. Dorigen's despair and tears are most certainly real, but also deliberately nursed, to appeal to his *fraunchyse* and *cortaysye*; her presentation encourages him to equal her husband's *gentillesse*, on insisting she kept her *trawþe*, by releasing her from her vow. The idea that a romance hero, modern-day or medieval, is unable to take advantage of a 'traditional' damsel-in-distress, is shown in a slightly different context by Romanova, in *From Russia with Love* (1963). Here, when Romanova is being aggressively interrogated by Bond regarding Kerim Bey's death, she adopts a 'traditional damsel' persona in order to dissipate his anger; Bond cannot be violent towards Romanova, just as Aurelius cannot sexually exploit Dorigen.

For other women, a genuine 'traditional damsel' presentation is employed to engender *fraunchyse* in the hero following a traumatic experience, and seen when the seductress, Lynd, is comforted by Bond in her hotel shower, following the fight with Obanno's men in *Casino Royale* (2006). Many seductresses and 'formidable women' target the 'Achilles' heel' shared by Bond and medieval romance heroes; their compulsion to help a woman in need. These 'damsels-*sans*-distress' exploit the agency afforded to the 'traditional damsel', not because they need rescuing, but for their own nefarious gains; their ability to appear 'in distress' invokes the *fraunchyse* of the hero, who remains unaware of their real motives. In *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, feigning distress at Gawain's rejection of her advances, Lady Bertilak's tears invoke *fraunchyse* and Gawain compromises his *trawþe* by accepting, and then concealing, the green girdle. In spite of Lady Bertilak's persistent wooing, she finds more agency in the 'damsel' persona than was afforded to her by playing the role of seductress. Two Bond girls also find that the '*sans*-distress' approach pays dividends; fooling everyone into believing her anguish, over her father's death, and her alleged kidnapping, the 'formidable' King assumes the role of 'damsel-*sans*-distress' at will throughout *The World is not Enough* (1999). Equally, the cool and capable seductress, Frost, in *Die Another Day* (2002), presents as a false 'traditional damsel' during their bedroom scene; by pretending to be fearful for Bond's safety, Frost distracts him from her true allegiance, to the villain Graves.

Other 'formidable' women can also present as 'damsels-in-distress' when they are genuinely threatened, but wish to retain control of the situation. By adopting a 'resourceful' persona they can guarantee to invoke the hero's *fraunchyse*, but avoid the

vulnerability associated with the 'traditional damsel' role. In *The Wife of Bath's Prologue* (*c*.1400), Alisoun becomes a 'resourceful damsel' to persuade Jankyn not only to cease his attack, but to grant sovereignty in their relationship as recompense. Again we see that in spite of the perceived vulnerability associated with it, the 'damsel' persona is surprisingly powerful. Di Vincenzo, given her unfortunate past, her domineering father, and her continuing difficulties, might be expected to adopt the role of 'traditional damsel'; however, she rejects it, and opts for the occasional portrayal of a 'resourceful damsel' to enlist Bond's help. There are some women who do not adopt the 'damsel-in-distress' presentation even though they are faced with exceptional challenges, or placed into situations where many women would call for help. These 'rational damsels' are more common than expected in the Bond film franchise; often imbued with specialist knowledge or expertise, they are able to stay calm and assist Bond in his mission. Dr. Holly Goodhead, *Moonraker* (1979), remains professional while piloting a space shuttle, disabling a radar-jamming system and helping Bond to destroy virus-filled glass pods that threaten life on Earth. Her actions are commendable, so this thesis does not define her as 'formidable', due to the pure motives behind them; as a 'rational damsel', she overcomes any panic engendered by the dangers she faces, to ensure that good triumphs over evil. A similar character is seen in Dr. Christmas Jones, in *The World is not Enough* (1999), who uses her nuclear expertise to help Bond diffuse bombs, and neutralise the threat posed by villains King and Renard.

The success of the 'damsel' persona in affording agency might lie in the fact that in invoking the virtue of *fraunchyse*, it simultaneously increases the 'damsel's' chances of restoring the *status quo*, and the hero's chivalric standing. This might also explain its popularity amongst women who habitually perform other personae, as a hero will respond to a 'damsel's' distress call without questioning her underlying motives, or, for medieval heroes at least, without any expectation of sexual 'recompense' for her rescue. For Bond's 'damsels', there is the intimation of a form of 'indirect payment'; once a woman is safe, she becomes a legitimate target for seduction. Although only eight Bond films are analysed here, it is interesting that both films featuring Moore as Bond - *Moonraker* and *A View to a Kill* - not only have a main Bond girl presenting as a damsel-in-distress, but also feature a number of 'fluffers'. This might be coincidental, but could be related to the fact that a Bond girl presenting as a 'damsel' cannot be seduced while

she is 'in distress'. These 'fluffers' might therefore be serving an essential role in reminding the audience of Bond's sexual prowess, before the inevitable seduction of the Bond girl performing the 'damsel' role at the end of the film.

Having examined the agency conferred on women adopting each of the personae examined in the foregoing chapters, and the pentad virtues they challenge, we now turn to the fates that befall each of these women. In general, 'traditional' or 'resourceful' damsels have positive resolutions to their predicaments. As we saw in Chapter 3, Dorigen returns to equality in her marriage and is able to keep her *trawþe* and her freedom; while in *Le Morte d'Arthur*, Bors' disinherited damsel, and the maiden he prevents from being abducted, are both rescued and their status restored. Sutton, and Milovy, no longer in distress, conclude their films by enjoying sexual liaisons with Bond. Once the villain's threat has been neutralised, 'rational damsels' are rewarded by becoming a conquest for Bond, as seen with both Dr. Goodhead and Dr. Jones. The exploitative manifestation of the 'damsel' persona, the 'damsel-*sans*-distress', is adopted by women who start out as seductresses or 'formidable' women, and their fates differ, dependent on which personae they predominantly perform.

The seductress, Lady Bertilak, having compromised Gawain's *trawþe*, returns to her husband with increased agency. The 'demonic' women who vanish in a 'puff of smoke', having reinforced the moral message that upholding *clannes*, and *pité* is crucial for a knight, are rendered powerless. The agency of the Bond seductress, across the timespan of the selected films, generally acts to improve his 'sexual reputation', while simultaneously strengthening his *pité*, and his *felaȝschyp*. Where she is 'redeemed' and switches allegiance, as with Romanova in *From Russia with Love* (1963), she ends her film as an 'acceptable sexual partner' for Bond. For Frost, in *Die Another Day* (2002), her refusal to be 'repositioned' leads to her death at the hands of Bond's ally, Jinx. Lynd (*Casino Royale*, 2006), manages to outwit Bond temporarily, transferring his winnings to her account, but having deceived him is viewed as 'irredeemable', and chooses death over dishonour late in the film. The agency of the seductresses, across the realms of medieval romance and Bond films, reinforces chivalric virtues and patriarchal order, while inadvertently raising the hero's esteem.

'Formidable' women are 'repositioned' by the narrative; Alisoun has used her 'formidability' to gain the sovereignty she has craved, but only temporarily, given she tells the pilgrims she is seeking a sixth husband. Guinevere maintains her status by virtue of her royal position, but returns to being subservient to Arthur. The immodest damsel offering accommodation to Lancelot in *The Knight of the Cart* (*c*.1180) relents in her pursuit of him in light of his devotion to Guinevere. Di Vincenzo's agency is as substantial as her death is inevitable; a married Bond would subvert the conventions of the genre too much. May Day pays for the agency she gains in thwarting Zorin's plans, and for temporarily achieving sovereignty over him, with her life. King starts her film with status due to her wealth and position, and, although it is not revealed until much later in *The World is not Enough*, sovereignty over Renard. She never achieves mastery over Bond, and having refused 'redemption', cannot be allowed to survive the film. In short, although 'formidable women' command substantial agency, it proves to be as transient as that held by their seductress counterparts.

Overall, the most successful persona appears to be the ubiquitous 'damsel-in-distress'; all of the women adopting this persona – whether in Bond films or medieval romance – improve their agency and achieve their objectives, albeit temporarily on most occasions. Consideration must also be given to 'fluffers'; evident in both the medieval and modern realms, as they serve a much more important purpose than this thesis originally hypothesised. In medieval texts, 'initiators' test the devotion of individual knights to their quests by challenging their worthiness; by targeting *clannes*, *cortaysye* and *pité*, they ensure chivalric values are not just upheld, but championed. 'Fluffers' are present in all of the selected Bond films, and in spite of having minimal screen time, demonstrate considerable agency, which they use to enhance Bond's 'sexual reputation'. In both the medieval and modern realms, therefore, even acknowledging their dispensability, the agency of 'fluffers' reinforces key aspects of the hero's identity; they are essential in showing, rather than telling of, the hero's prowess.

As *Casino Royale* features only one 'fluffer', Solange, early in the film, and silhouetted women were absent from its pre-title sequence, we posed the question in Chapter 4 of whether the Craig films had ushered in a new era, minimising the involvement of 'fluffers', or possibly dispensing with them altogether. In fact, our initial examination of 'fluffers' in the remaining Craig films in Chapter 4 reveals their presence

in all of the films except *No Time to Die* (2021), and shows them all to be 'recipient fluffers'. Bond seduces a young consulate employee in *Quantum of Solace* (2008), and is indirectly responsible for her death, as a consequence of her association with him. In *Skyfall* (2012), Bond is seen in bed with an unnamed lover at the beginning of the film, and the opening sequence of *Spectre* (2015) shows Bond exploiting a young woman's sexual interest in him to gain access to a hotel balcony. Bond later seduces the widow of an assassin he killed, offering her protection in exchange for information. Not only are 'fluffers' absent from *No Time to Die* (2021), this latest film in the Bond franchise showcases a retired, monogamous Bond, who sacrifices his life, not just for the greater good, but also to save his partner and daughter.

However, this thesis does not postulate that Bond films are exact replicas of medieval romance narratives; Bond is a modern-day hero, and his character demonstrates clear points of difference when compared with a medieval knight. Bond serves Queen and country rather than showing a devotion to God, and his perspective on the medieval virtue of *clannes* is, as we have seen, diametrically opposed to that of a knight. Bond has a 'sexual reputation' to maintain, and the absence of 'fluffers' from *No Time to Die* (2021), denies him that opportunity. *Casino Royale* arguably strikes a much better balance; in this film, Craig's Bond shows in his liaison with Solange that consensual sexual relationships can enhance his reputation, without compromising his fidelity. Bond's women, even humble 'fluffers', are not just 'pretty faces', their agency has an important role to play in the journey Bond takes to successfully complete his mission. Importantly, medieval 'fluffers' are also essential to their narratives, continually challenging chivalric virtues and facilitating the reinforcement of heroic prowess; their perspectives might vary, but their underlying objectives are comparable. Removing 'fluffers' from future films, therefore, could in fact subvert both the Bond formula and romance convention, as well as audience expectation. There is also a risk that if all 'fluffers' are removed, physical violence will increase, as sexual activity decreases, and the Bond film would become more comparable to action-adventure films such as *Die Hard* (1988). If 'fluffers' are acceptable as part of medieval romance convention, then provided that women's roles are consensual, and their agency is respected and channelled effectively, 'initiators' could remain an important ingredient in the Bond films' recipe in future years.

This thesis has argued that Bond girls are seen as multi-dimensional and nuanced characters when their roles are better understood by being placed within romance categories and compared to medieval romance narratives. Viewing Bond's women through a medieval lens, using a variety of romance personae, has allowed for new perspectives to be taken on the Bond girls' roles and motivations. Equally importantly, their medieval predecessors are also showcased as far more complex than a simplistic Virgin Mary/Eve dichotomy when aligned with their modern-day counterparts in the Bond films. A comparative analysis that brings Bond movies to bear on medieval romance therefore offers a novel approach to both genres. Through comparative analysis, it adds significantly to our knowledge and understanding of the characteristics and motivations of women in Bond and medieval romance, and highlights the important roles these women play in upholding the conventions and expectations with which romance readers and Bond audiences are familiar. Bond's narrative can be influenced, or shaped by medieval romance narrative, but not compromised by it; small, but significant, differences exist between Bond's chivalric virtues and those of medieval knights. The success of the Bond franchise surely lies in its adherence to tried and tested conventions, and when these are undermined, as they arguably are through the absence of 'fluffers' in the latest film, *No Time to Die,* then the films can risk disrupting audience expectations. For the next incarnation of Bond, the producers would do well to study the conventions of medieval romance before making the next tweaks to the Bond formula.

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Appendix 1

Medieval texts (in chronological order)

The Knight of the Cart, Chrétien de Troyes (*c*.1180).

The Knight of the Cart was written around 1180 by Chrétien de Troyes at the request of Marie de Champagne. In this tale, Lancelot's knightly honour is often compromised by his love for Guinevere. Unnamed until late in the tale, Lancelot sets out with Gawain to rescue Queen Guinevere, who has been kidnapped and is being kept prisoner by King Bademagu's son, Meliagaunt. Lancelot undertakes many adventures on his journey to free the queen, and finds himself alternately mocked and shamed, or celebrated as the best knight. Lancelot, has to make personal sacrifices in order to reach Guinevere, the first of which reflects the story's title. In his haste to reach the queen, Lancelot neglects his horse and it dies from exhaustion; when a borrowed horse is killed during a fight, he is left with no alternative but to shamefully ride in a cart, an action usually reserved for convicts. He then battles other knights, and also encounters an immodest damsel who offers him hospitality only on condition that he sleeps with her; Lancelot saves her from a feigned rape, but when he still rebuffs her advances, she acknowledges his love for Guinevere and releases him from his promise. Eventually reaching Guinevere, Lancelot defeats Meliagaunt, but agrees to King Bademagu's request to suspend the combat with his son for a year. Guinevere refuses to see Lancelot, citing his hesitation when climbing into the cart as her reason, and they are separated for a year. When they reunite, he enters her bedchamber by forcing apart the window bars and they consummate their relationship. Unaware of Lancelot's actions, Meliagaunt accuses one of Guinevere's knights of adultery, and Lancelot accepts the challenge to fight with Meliagaunt to defend the queen's honour. Combat with Meliagaunt is again put off by Bademagu, and Lancelot has another series of adventures. Having been imprisoned in a tower, and meeting several women who seek to win his affections, he finally defeats Meliagaunt, killing him in spite of his pleas for mercy, at Guinevere's command. In this tale, there is a clear, but unstated incompatibility between Lancelot's renown as a knight, and his adulterous relationship with Guinevere. The question of his treason by virtue of this adultery is not addressed, and the tale's conclusion was not written by De Troyes, but delegated to one of his clerks.

***The Quest of the Holy Grail* (*c*.1210), anon. Translated by W.W. Comfort, 2000.**

The Quest of the Holy Grail, dated about 1210, was written in French *(La Queste del Sainte Graal)* by an unknown author. The version used is an English translation, of a modern French translation of the original. *The Quest* forms part of the Lancelot-Graal series, and covers the adventures of knights from Arthur's court on their quests to find the Holy Grail. Le Morte d'Arthur replicates many of these tales, but *The Quest* adopts a far more spiritual and religious tone. Each knight faces challenges of courage and fighting capability, alongside tests of piety, compassion and chastity. The Quest offers a dual purpose for the Grail, firstly as a sacred object, and secondly as symbolic of the chivalric virtues required to behold it. It has been prophesied that three knights will discover the Holy Grail, and that one of them must be virginal, and the others chaste. Arthur's knight's stories are interwoven, with each taking centre-stage at some point. Often, the meanings of adventures are explained to knights by hermits or 'good men' and shown to be tests of spiritual devotion. Perceval's chastity is threatened by a demonic creature in the form of a beautiful woman, Bors is forced to choose between loyalty to his brother and the pleadings of a damsel-in-distress, and Gawain is unwilling to renounce his sins and change his lifestyle in order to pursue the Grail. Throughout, in spite of his conception being the result of Lancelot's deception, the saintly Galahad is shown as the epitome of knighthood and the likely successor in the quest.

***Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (*c*.1385), anon. Translated by W.R.J. Barron, 2001.**

A monstrous green man, the Green Knight, arrives at court King Arthur's court during the Christmas celebrations and taunts Arthur into partaking in a beheading game. Sir Gawain takes Arthur's place, volunteering to deliver an undefended axe blow to the Green Knight and then allow him to reciprocate one year later at the Green Chapel. Gawain cuts off the Green Knight's head in one blow, but to his amazement, the Knight picks up his severed head and reminds the court of the terms of their agreement before riding away.

The next autumn, Gawain puts on his armour and sets off on a lengthy journey to the Green Chapel. Cold, hungry and lonely, he arrives at a castle on Christmas Day, to be welcomed by Lord Bertilak and his wife. His host proposes a game; he will be hunting each day, and will exchange the spoils of his hunt for whatever Gawain receives at the castle. On the first morning, Gawain sleeps late and is visited by Lady Bertilak who attempts to seduce him. Gawain resists, allowing her to steal one kiss from him, which he exchanges for Lord Bertilak's venison that evening. The following day, the lady again tempts Gawain and the two kisses she gives him are swapped for a boar's head. Having kissed Gawain three times on the third day, while her husband pursues a fox, Lady Bertilak also asks her guest for a love token. When Gawain refuses, she gives him an allegedly magical green silk girdle, which will protect the wearer from death. Gawain passes on the three kisses, but withholds the girdle from Lord Bertilak.

On New Year's Day Gawain puts on the girdle over his armour and sets out for the Green Chapel. His guide offers to stay silent if Gawain wishes to back out of his promise but Gawain refuses. Arriving at the Green Chapel he calls out and when the Green Knight appears, Gawain presents his neck. The Knight feigns two blows, which cause no injury, but on the third he nicks Gawain's neck. The Green Knight then reveals himself to be Lord Bertilak; the third blow only drew blood because Gawain did not exchange the girdle on the third day. The challenge was orchestrated by Morgan le Fay, Arthur's half-sister, who magically transformed Lord Bertilak's appearance. Gawain is considered worthy as he completed the challenge and is celebrated on his return to Arthur's court. Although the girdle is adopted as a symbol of honour, Gawain sees it only as a mark of his failure.

***The Franklin's Tale* (*c*.1400) Geoffrey Chaucer.**

The franklin says that his tale will be a Breton lay. He excuses himself for his 'rude' speech and for his lack of rhetorical devices. Arveragus, a knight, marries Dorigen, a lady of higher status than herself, for love. They agree that their marriage will be an equal partnership, but in public Dorigen will appear to defer to Arveragus (in order to be socially acceptable and agreeable). They are very happy, but after a while, Arveragus goes away on campaign to prove his worth, leaving Dorigen alone and distraught. In her fear and anguish, she imagines accidents which could happen to Arveragus' ship when

he returns, and wishes the rocks on the Breton coast did not exist. Her friends, in order to 'take her mind off' these forebodings, persuade her to go to a dance with them. Here Dorigen's neighbour, the noble knight Aurelius, declares his love for her. She rejects his suit, saying that she could only accept him if he could make the rocks on the coast disappear. Aurelius's brother, seeing Aurelius in despair, takes him to meet a clerk he knows at Orleans, who is expert in all kinds of illusory magic. The clerk offers to make the rocks seem to disappear in return for a thousand pounds, and Aurelius agrees. The clerk does his magic, and the rocks appear to have gone. Dorigen is hysterical, as she must now keep her word, and she considers suicide. When Arveragus returns, he says that Dorigen must keep her word, but must never tell anyone of it. She goes to meet Aurelius, but filled with pity for her, and with admiration of Arveragus's selflessness, he releases her from her bargain. The clerk then releases Aurelius from his payment. The franklin asks, 'Who was the most generous?' (Coote, 2012:393).

***The Wife of Bath's Prologue* (*c*.1400) Geoffrey Chaucer.**

The wife says that she will tell all about her experiences of marriage. She proceeds to talk about her five husbands. She lists the authorities who tell of the woes of married life, and the evil natures of women, then demolishes these arguments with her own, practical, logic. She admits that she is a liar, and describes how she put her first four husbands through purgatory while they were alive. She used her sexuality to gain financial profit, and nagged her husbands ceaselessly, and yet they loved her, because she was such a good companion. Her fourth husband was a lecher, who made her jealous, and yet she committed adultery with her friend's lodger, a 'hende' clerk named Jankin. When her husband died, she married him. Jankin would not allow her to do anything she liked, he beat her and read to her from a book of 'wikked wives', until she, literally, tore a leaf out of his book. He hit her so hard that she fell down as if dead. Thinking he had killed her, Jankin swore to let her have sovereignty ('maistrie') over him. She 'miraculously' recovered, and made him burn his book, but from then on they had an ideal marriage, although the incident left her 'somdeel' deaf. She is now looking for her sixth husband. (Coote, 2012:203).

***The Wife of Bath's Tale* (*c*.1400) Geoffrey Chaucer.**

A young knight at the court of King Arthur meets a young girl on his travels, and rapes her. Although he should die for his crime, the king allows the queen to decide his fate. The queen tells him that he must find out what women most desire within a year and a day, or he will be beheaded. The knight travels for a year, but cannot find the answer. On his way home, he comes upon some fairies dancing in a forest clearing. When he approaches, he finds only an ugly, old hag. She says that she can give him the answer he seeks, but he must grant her the first request that she makes of him. He agrees, and she accompanies him back to the court. He gives the answer – women most desire to have sovereignty over their husbands and lovers – and nobody can argue against it, so his life is granted. The old hag then steps forward and asks the knight to marry her. He begs her to change her mind, to take his goods and let his body alone, but she will not. They are married and go to bed, but the knight is miserable. She gives him a lecture on true nobility. She offers to be either ugly and faithful, or beautiful and possibly untrue. He gives her the authority to make the decision on his behalf. In return for this correct answer, she gives him the reward – that she will be both beautiful and true. They live happily ever after. (Coote, 2012:203).

***Le Morte d'Arthur*, Sir Thomas Malory (1485).**

Thomas Malory wrote Le Morte d'Arthur, his version of the legends of King Arthur and his knights, during 1469 while imprisoned for a series of violent crimes. In a series of twenty-one books, it covers the founding of Arthur's kingdom and the institution of the Round Table, the adventures of individual knights, the quest for the Holy Grail, and finally, the death of Arthur and the fall of his kingdom. For the purposes of this thesis, the focus is on particular books: 'Of Sir Galahad, Sir Lancelot's son, how he was begotten (pp.281-292)', features the deception of Lancelot by King Pelles, and the enchantress Dame Brusen, to trick Lancelot into fathering Galahad by the King's daughter, Elaine; 'Of Sir Lancelot (pp.293-303)', specifically Lancelot's confession to a hermit of his love for Guinevere, and his renunciation of love in order to pursue the grail quest; 'The Tale of Sir Lancelot & Queen Guinevere (pp.403-467), where Lancelot resorts to the queen once again and embarks on a series of adventures, including riding in a cart, to rescue Guinevere from her imprisonment by Meliagaunt. Lancelot's subsequent adultery with Guinevere is then detailed, followed by his combat with Meliagaunt to defend the queen's honour, and his slaying of Meliagaunt at her

command. This book also documents the transition of Lancelot and Guinevere's love affair from the private to the public sphere; and 'The Noble Tale of the Sangrail' (pp.310-402) covering the adventures of other grail knights. Perceval is tempted by a 'demonic' seductress while marooned on an island, and Bors encounters several damsels, including an abducted damsel, a disinherited damsel, and a damsel who desires to be his lover. Unlike Chrétien De Troyes, Malory affirms Lancelot's worth through his adherence to courtly love etiquette, his actions in risking all to save Guinevere are applauded, and he remains the greatest of knights.

Bond films (in chronological order)

***From Russia with Love* (1963) directed by Terence Young, United Artists.**

At the Soviet SMERSH training centre, the strangling of Bond by a blonde-haired man is revealed as a training exercise. Elsewhere, SPECTRE Chief, Ernst Stavro Blofeld orders ex-SMERSH Colonel, now SPECTRE Officer, Rosa Klebb, to trick Bond (Sean Connery) into stealing a Soviet Lektor cryptographic device. Klebb recruits Tatiana Romanova, a Soviet cipher clerk who believes she is working for SMERSH, to lure Bond into the trap by claiming she wants to defect. M interrupts Bond's romantic interlude to say Romanova has contacted them, offering to defect with a coveted Lektor. In spite of both suspecting a trap, M orders Bond to Istanbul to meet with Kerim Bey. Klebb is introduced to 'Red' Grant, the blonde-haired assassin, and orders him to be sent to Istanbul. When Bond arrives there, his car is followed to Bey's offices by Grant, who later ambushes and kills the Bulgar driver. Bond takes the bridal suite after finding his hotel room bugged, and Bey is injured when a bomb explodes at his office in retaliation for the Bulgar driver's death. Hiding out at a gypsy camp for the evening, Bond meets the tribal chief, and two young women who fight for the right to marry the chief's son. They are interrupted when the bomber, Krilencu, and his men attack the camp. Grateful for his help in defeating them, the chief declares Bond to be one of his 'sons', and lets him take all night to decide which young woman is most worthy.

Bond returns to the hotel and finds Romanova naked in his bed. They are sexually intimate whilst discussing how to obtain the Lektor, unaware their encounter is being filmed. Romanova later leaves a map of the Russian Consulate

for Bond, and her description of the Lektor is deemed authentic. Bey sets off a bomb in the consulate to provide a distraction and Bond steals the Lektor, escaping with Romanova. They board the Orient Express, posing as a married couple, aiming to smuggle the Lektor across the Italian border. When Bey and Benz, a Soviet agent tailing them, are killed by Grant, Bond suspects Romanova's involvement. Having roughly interrogated her, he keeps the Lektor away from her and arranges for an MI6 agent to meet him in Zagreb. Grant intercepts the agent and assumes his identity, spiking Romanova's drink and knocking Bond out. Grant intends to kill them both, steal the Lektor, and frame Bond for Romanova's murder using film of their tryst. Bond realises that Grant is working for SPECTRE and cons him into opening a booby-trapped briefcase before garrotting him and driving Romanova away from the train in a flower truck. Blofeld is seen giving Klebb one last chance to secure the Lektor and kill Bond, while Romanova and Bond take Grant's boat to Italy. Bond is ready to leave for England when a disguised Klebb enters their room and holds him at gunpoint. Romanova knocks the gun out of Klebb's hand and after Bond pins Klebb against the wall with a chair, Romanova shoots her. Finally, Bond and Romanova take a canal cruise, where Bond produces the film of their liaison, kissing her passionately before throwing it into the canal.

***On Her Majesty's Secret Service* (1969) directed by Peter Hunt, United Artists.**

George Lazenby's Bond is driving on a coastal road in Portugal, when he's passed by a woman driving a Mercury Cougar. Stopping at a nearby beach, she tries to drown herself in the surf. He is attacked by several men after he saves her, and she drives off, prompting Bond to reference Connery: 'This never happened to the other fellow!' At a casino, the same woman, Contessa Teresa Di Vicenzo, is unable to pay a gambling debt and Bond pays the tab for her. Accepting an invitation of 'repayment', he has to fend off another attack, in her room, before finding her waiting in his room. They spend the night together and after Di Vincenzo leaves the next morning, Bond is forcibly taken to meet her crime-lord father, Draco. Impressed by Bond, Draco offers him a sizable dowry to marry Di Vincenzo; Bond declines but agrees to see her again in return for information on SPECTRE's leader, Ernst Stavro Blofeld. Back in London Bond is ordered to forget Blofeld, and asks

Moneypenny to submit his resignation letter. She asks for two weeks' leave instead, which M grants.

Bond returns to Portugal to attend Draco's birthday party and re-meets Di Vincenzo, who is angry at his deal with her father. Draco gives Bond a lead in Bern, Switzerland and Bond starts a real relationship with Di Vincenzo. In Bern, Bond discovers Blofeld is attempting to claim a noble title and is given permission to go undercover to investigate further. As Sir Hilary Bray, he visits Blofeld's clinic in the Alps, accessible only by cable car or helicopter. Blofeld is masquerading as an allergy research specialist and has ten beautiful, female patients. Having being subjected to hypnosis they will each release a deadly virus in a specified part of the world unless Blofeld's demands are met. Bond seduces two of the women to try to learn more about Blofeld's plans. Bond's cover is blown by Blofeld's assistant, Irma Bunt, and Blofeld imprisons him in the gear room of the compound's cable-car. Bond escapes and skis down the mountain pursued by Blofeld's men, and Di Vincenzo comes to his aid in her car. They spend the night in a secluded barn, where Bond proposes. The following morning, their escape is thwarted when Blofeld causes an avalanche that buries them. Di Vincenzo is taken by Blofeld, who leaves Bond to die.

Surviving, Bond returns to London, but M refuses to launch an assault on the clinic to rescue Di Vincenzo and thwart Blofeld's plans, so Bond enlists Draco's help. At the clinic, Di Vincenzo distracts Blofeld by feigning interest in him, and Bond and her father defeat his men, ruining his plans. Bond chases Blofeld, leaving him for dead. Bond and Di Vincenzo are married, and leave the reception in Bond's Aston-Martin. After a few miles, as Bond stops to remove some remaining wedding flowers, another car opens fire on them. Crouching behind his car, Bond recognises Blofeld and Bunt. He survives, but Di Vincenzo is killed, and as Bond holds her, the credits roll.

***Moonraker* (1979) directed by Lewis Gilbert, United Artists.**

A British Government Moonraker space shuttle is stolen from a cargo plane over Canada. Bond is betrayed by the crew of a private jet as he returns from a mission and pushed out of the plane by Jaws. Bond wrestles the captain's parachute from

him in mid-air and lands safely. M orders Bond to investigate the shuttle's disappearance and he is taken by helicopter to an industrial complex and astronaut training centre owned by Hugo Drax. Bond meets Dr Holly Goodhead for a tour of the facilities; he is almost killed when he tries out the g-force training vehicle, after Drax's bodyguard tampers with the controls. Later that evening, Bond seduces helicopter pilot Defour and searches Drax's private office. Bond finds photographs of a small electronic device and a larger glass pod, both made by a Venetian company. Defour is killed by Drax's dogs for aiding Bond. In Venice, Bond sees glass pods being manufactured, before being chased along various canals by Drax's men. Returning to the factory later, Bond discovers vials of clear fluid and kills Drax's bodyguard when he attacks him. Heading to Goodhead's hotel room, he exposes her as a CIA agent and notices an airline ticket to Rio. They spend the night together; Bond leaves early the next morning to show M Drax's lab, only to find it empty. Bond is officially taken off the case, but shows M a vial he stole and is given leave, which he takes in Rio.

Arriving there, Bond seduces Drax's assistant, Manuela, before finding his storage facility. Taking a cable car to an observation platform overlooking an airfield, Bond encounters Goodhead, who has been watching frequent departures by Drax's planes. Their cable car descent is interrupted by Jaws biting through the heavy cable with his steel teeth and halting their car midway down. They escape when Bond loops a chain around a cable and they slide down, dropping before reaching the cable house. Paramedics coming to their assistance are Drax's men, Bond manages to get free of them, but Goodhead is captured. Q tells Bond that the vial fluid is lethal to humans and Bond sets off to rescue Goodhead, but Jaws captures him and takes him to Drax's control room. Drax reveals he stole the British Moonraker to replace one developing a last-minute malfunction. Bond and Goodhead are left in a room directly below a shuttle launchpad, but escape and replace two Moonraker crew members. After a pre-programmed flight, they arrive at Drax's space station, hidden from detection on Earth by a radar cloaking device. The vial fluid will be released into Earth's atmosphere and exterminate human life, leaving vegetation and animal life behind; selected couples on the space station will produce a new human race. Bond and Goodhead deactivate the

radar jammer and a US Marine strike team heads their way. Bond persuades Jaws that Drax will not let him survive, as he has imperfections. He joins forces with Bond to attack Drax's men, aided by the arrival of the marines. Drax launches the deadly pods before being killed by Bond. The marines destroy the station and Jaws helps Bond and Goodhead access Drax's shuttle to take out the pods. Bond ends the film enjoying a gravity-free romantic tryst with Goodhead.

***A View to a Kill* (1985) directed by John Glen, United International Pictures.**

Bond (Roger Moore) recovers a microchip in Siberia; ambushed by Soviet troops he flees in a submarine, seducing the attractive female pilot. Back in England, the microchip, is found to match a microchip made by Zorin Industries. Bond watches Zorin's horse win at Ascot, and Tibbett, an MI6 agent and horse trainer believes it was drug enhanced. Bond travels to Paris to learn more, but the French detective he meets is killed by Zorin's assistant, May Day. Bond and Tibbett travel to Chantilly, France to attend Zorin's horse sale, with Bond posing as St. John Smythe, and Tibbett as his valet. Bond meets Stacey Sutton, an American geologist, but May Day prevents him from learning more about her. He sees Sutton enter Zorin's office, and later finds a large cheque written in her name. Bond and Tibbett discover a lab below Zorin's stables, and a stash of 'Siberian' microchips. Bond defeats two of Zorin's guards that attack them, and retreats to May Day's room, where he joins her in bed.

Zorin tells Bond he'll select a stud horse for him, and uses facial recognition to discover Bond's true identity. He invites Bond to race with him steeplechase-style, and activates a device causing Bond's horse to go wild. Bond survives, but finds Tibbett has been killed by May Day, and she and Zorin unsuccessfully attempt to drown Bond in a nearby pond. Later, in an airship over San Francisco, Zorin unveils his new criminal scheme to a group of investors. He will destroy Silicon Valley to gain a monopoly in the microchip market. Bond learns that Zorin is a psychopath, the product of Nazi experimentation during World War II. While spying on Zorin's oil rig, Bond catches KGB agent Pola Ivanova trying to blow it up, having recorded Zorin's announcement. Bond and Ivanova enjoy a romantic tryst in a hot tub house, during which Bond acquires the recording. Sutton tells Bond

that Zorin took over her grandfather's oil company, and they team up to steal documents about his plan. Zorin holds them hostage, aiming to frame Bond for the murder of the San Francisco mayor. However, Bond and Sutton escape and infiltrate Zorin's mine near Silicon Valley, discovering his plot to detonate explosives at the fault lines. The resulting flooding will give Zorin a monopoly on microchips. Zorin floods the mine, mercilessly killing some of the mine workers.

Sutton gets to safety, but May Day, realising she has been betrayed by Zorin, helps Bond put the bomb on a handcar and push it out of the mine along a railroad line. May Day stays on the car, sacrificing her own life, as the bomb explodes safely outside. Sutton is captured by Zorin, who is escaping via airship and Bond grabs hold of the front mooring rope as the airship ascends. Zorin tries to kill Bond by flying him into the Golden Gate Bridge, but Bond manages to moor the airship to the bridge framework. Sutton attacks Zorin and flees onto the bridge to join Bond; after a fierce battle, Zorin is sent plummeting to his death. The film ends as Q locates Bond making love to Sutton in her shower.

The Living Daylights **(1987) directed by John Glen, United International Pictures.**

When a fellow agent is killed in a training exercise in Gibraltar, Timothy Dalton's Bond pursues the assassin, before landing on a nearby yacht and seducing the beautiful woman on board. He is then deployed to Bratislava to help with the defection of KGB officer, General Koskov. Bond is convinced the female KGB sniper assigned to prevent Koskov's escape is not a professional killer and spares her life. Koskov is smuggled to Austria via a shuttle inside a Russian gas pipeline, and then flown to England. He informs MI6 that the KGB policy of 'Smiert Spionam' (death to spies) has been revived by KGB head General Pushkin. Shortly thereafter, Necros infiltrates the safehouse and abducts Koskov. Bond is sent to Tangier to assassinate Pushkin to stop further killings. The sniper is revealed to be cellist, Kara Milovy, Koskov's girlfriend, and Bond suspects Koskov's defection was staged. In Bratislava, Bond persuades Milovy to accompany him to Vienna, to reunite with Koskov. After collecting her cello, Bond and Milovy evade capture by sledging into Austria on the cello case. Meanwhile, in Tangier, Pushkin has cancelled an agreement between Koskov and arms dealer Whitaker, and Koskov's defection is

revealed as part of a plan to persuade the British to kill Pushkin. In Vienna, Agent Saunders reveals the Koskov-Whitaker link to Bond, but is then assassinated. Bond and Milovy leave for Tangier, where Bond confronts Pushkin, who denies any knowledge of 'death to spies' and says Koskov is wanted for embezzlement of government funds. Bond fakes Pushkin's assassination, and Felix Leiter explains the CIA is also investigating Whitaker.

Meanwhile, Koskov persuades Milovy that Bond is a KGB agent, and convinces her to drug him. Captured, Bond and Milovy are flown to Afghanistan, along with Koskov's secret diamond stash. They escape from a jail, and free Shah, the leader of the local Mujaheddin tribe who are trading opium for Koskov's diamonds. Persuaded by Milovy, Shah helps Bond smuggle a bomb aboard the cargo plane carrying Koskov's opium. Spotted by Koskov's men, Bond barricades himself in the plane and as Shah's men attack the airbase, Milovy drives a jeep into the cargo hold and Necros also leaps aboard just before it takes off. After a struggle in the plane, Bond throws Necros to his death and deactivates the bomb. From above, Bond sees Shah and his troops pursued by the Soviet army and gets Milovy to fly the plane over a bridge that the Mujaheddin have crossed; dropping the activated bomb, he destroys the bridge and halts the pursuit. Low on fuel over Pakistan, Bond uses the jeep to escape from the plane with Milovy just before it crashes. Returning to Tangier, Bond enters Whitaker's home and after a battle, Whitaker is crushed by a falling statue. Pushkin enters, prevents a guard from killing Bond, and arrests Koskov. Milovy performs solo at a concert in London and is given a special passport allowing her to leave the Eastern Bloc at will. Bond is allegedly absent, but Milovy finds him waiting in her hotel room and they share a romantic kiss.

The World is not Enough **(1999) directed by Michael Apted, United International Pictures.**

Bond (Pierce Brosnan) recovers a large sum of money for oil magnate Robert King, which explodes at MI6 headquarters, killing King. Bond fruitlessly chases a female suspect down the Thames, injuring his shoulder in the process. Bond seduces physician Dr. Molly Warmflash and she passes him fit to continue his mission. MI6

suspect Renard, a renowned terrorist, carried out the attack on King. Previously shot by an MI6 agent, he has a bullet lodged in his brain. Renard also previously kidnapped King's daughter Elektra, and as she escaped, the ransom was never paid. M believes Renard will seek revenge by killing King. Bond travels to Baku, Azerbaijan, where King is overseeing pipeline construction; he skis with her to inspect the line and they are attacked by men in paragliders. The fighting causes a small avalanche, burying Bond and King and he deploys an inflating sphere to protect them. Later, Bond goes to a casino owned by his old enemy, Zukovsky, to learn more about Renard; Zukovsky is a former KGB agent and may be working for Russian oil barons who want King's pipeline destroyed. King joins them at the casino, to show she isn't afraid of Renard, and seduces Bond at her home.

Renard kills nuclear scientist, Arkov, ordering King's security chief to pose as him. Bond kills the security chief and takes Arkov's identity and is flown to an underground nuclear missile bunker in Kazakhstan where Dr. Christmas Jones is removing radioactive material from warheads. Undercover, Bond finds Renard and his men stealing an active warhead. He briefly captures Renard, but Jones summons guards, and Renard targets Bond's injured collarbone before escaping. Jones agrees to work with Bond, and returning to Baku, Bond confronts King about Renard's knowledge of his injury, concluding she is under the villain's control. M arrives, at King's request, just as a bomb is discovered in the pipeline; Bond and Jones enter the pipeline to defuse it. Bond tells Jones to let it blow, to create the illusion they were killed. King then admits to a visibly upset M, that she killed her father, out of revenge for not paying the ransom money; M is taken prisoner. At Zukovsky's factory, he and Bond fight off Renard's men and work out Renard's plan. A nuclear explosion on a stolen submarine will stop all shipping out of the Black Sea, rendering the Russian oil pipelines useless. King's line will have a monopoly. Zukovsky's assistant then betrays him, and Bond and Jones are captured by Renard's men. Bond is delivered to King, while Renard takes Jones to the submarine. King tortures Bond, revealing she is the mastermind, not Renard. Zukovsky and his men free Bond, who demands King calls off Renard and when she refuses, Bond executes her. Bond and Jones battle with Renard on the

submarine, killing him, and minimising the impact of the explosion. Picked up by a passing boat, Bond and Jones end the film in bed together.

***Die Another Day* (2002) directed by Lee Tamahori, 20th Century Fox.**

Bond (Pierce Brosnan) poses as a weapons dealer in North Korea to investigate Colonel Moon and his assistant Zao, who are exchanging weapons for illicit African diamonds. Bond's cover is blown and he is captured by North Korean troops. Fourteen months later, Bond is released in exchange for British prisoner, Zao, and M suspends his '00' status, worried he might have leaked information. Believing he has been set up by a double agent within MI6, Bond flees to Hong Kong, meeting Chang, an old colleague and Hong Kong Intelligence agent. Chang tells Bond Zao is in Cuba and Bond tracks him down to a Havana clinic, where Zao's facial appearance has been altered. NSA (National Security Agency) agent Jinx helps Bond to locate Zao's room, and after a fight, Zao flees, leaving behind a cache of diamonds bearing the company crest of British billionaire Gustav Graves. Bond flies to London and locates Graves at a fencing club. M restores Bond's 00 status and he learns that Graves' fencing partner, Miranda Frost, an MI6 agent, has failed to uncover Graves' connection to Zao.

Bond takes an invitation to visit Graves' ice palace in Iceland and re-meets Jinx. Graves demonstrates his new satellite, 'Icarus', which is able to concentrate solar energy and Jinx infiltrates the palace's command centre, but is captured by Zao. Bond realises that Graves is a genetically modified Colonel Moon, and Frost is exposed as the double agent who betrayed Bond. After a fight, Bond kills Zao and rescues Jinx from Graves' rapidly-melting ice palace. Bond and Jinx infiltrate North Korea and find Graves, with Frost, on his airplane. Graves reveals the true purpose of Icarus is to cut a swathe through the minefield in the Korean Demilitarized Zone, giving North Korea a clear path to invade. Icarus would also destabilize western nations by destroying any nuclear warheads fired on North Korea. Jinx sets the plane's autopilot on a course with Icarus and kills Frost in a knife fight. Bond pulls the ripcord of Graves' parachute, and as it opens the slipstream pulls Graves out of the plane and into one of its turbines. Icarus instantly shuts down; retrieving Graves' diamonds, Bond and Jinx escape from the

plane in a helicopter it was carrying; they share a romantic interlude in a remote cottage.

***Casino Royale* (2006) directed by Martin Campbell, MGM.**

Bond (Daniel Craig) tracks down and kills a disloyal MI6 agent. In Uganda, Obanno's freedom fighters entrust their money to banker Le Chiffre, via broker Mr White. Bond's first '00' mission in Madagascar sees him chase terrorist, Mollaka, into an embassy. Ignoring international law, Bond captures Mollaka, killing him in the embassy grounds. Finding a phone in Mollaka's backpack displaying the message 'ELLIPSIS', Bond breaks into M's home, and laptop, discovering the call originated in the Bahamas. Reprimanded by M and put on leave, Bond goes to the Bahamas.

Encountering Dimitrios, Le Chiffre's henchman, Bond beats him at poker and wins his car; he cuts short his seduction of Dimitrios' wife, Solange, to follow him to Miami. ELLIPSIS is the access code to the airport secure area, and Bond foils Le Chiffre's plan to destroy a prototype jetliner, losing the villain $100 million. Solange is killed and Bond discovers Le Chiffre has set up a high stakes' poker game to recoup his losses. Bond is funded to attend the Casino Royale game and meets beautiful treasury agent Vesper Lynd on the train to Montenegro. She remains professional when they are posing as a couple; when Bond buys a backless dress for Lynd, she reciprocates with a tailored dinner jacket for him. Lynd controls the account for any winnings, but Bond sets the password. Lynd is unimpressed when Bond deliberately makes a misjudged call to expose Le Chiffre's 'tell'. Returning to their suite, they hear Le Chiffre's girlfriend being attacked and Bond kills Obanno and his men, comforting a distressed Lynd afterwards. When Bond misreads a bluff and loses, Lynd refuses to give him more money; CIA agent Leiter backs him and Bond starts winning, causing Le Chiffre to poison Bond's martini. Suffering severe tachycardia, Bond's life is saved when Lynd fixes the defibrillator kit in his car. In the final hand, Bond wins over $120 million with a straight flush.

He has dinner with Lynd, who believes Le Chiffre to be in custody. She is kidnapped by Le Chiffre after leaving the restaurant; Bond is also captured, and

tortured by Le Chiffre to reveal the account password. Bond is saved by Mr. White, who shoots Le Chiffre. Mathis is captured, and Lynd professes her love for Bond when he wakes in hospital. The winnings are transferred and Bond resigns, to be with Lynd. M asks for the government money to be returned, exposing Lynd's tipping deceit. Bond follows Lynd to a meeting where she hands the money over, killing the men she meets, but the building floods. Lynd refuses Bond's help to escape, and drowns. As Bond takes her body to the roof, Mr. White is seen leaving with the money. M tells Bond that Lynd's boyfriend was being held by Le Chiffre's organization and the money was to secure his release. Bond finds Mr White's number on Lynd's phone. In Italy, Mr White exits his car at a villa and receives a call. A sniper shoots him in the leg and as he crawls up the front stairs, the Bond theme plays and Bond appears carrying a silenced rifle, saying 'The name's Bond. James Bond'.