THE BOND GIRL PHENOMENON
DEFINING THE FEMALE PROTAGONISTS
OF THE JAMES BOND FILMS

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Abstract

As one of the most popular and well recognized staple characters of the James Bond film, the Bond Girl is both a cultural icon and phenomenon. The Bond film series was created in the 1960s and is based on the 1950s British Imperialist spy novels written by Ian Fleming. The filmic character James Bond was strongly influenced by Fleming’s written works and consequently appears distinctly different from the Hollywood hard-bodied action heroes who were created and gained prominence during the 1980s and 1990s. Moreover, the Bond Girl as a female protagonist has also been constructed outside the expected and accepted masculine-oriented parameters of the Hollywood-styled action-adventure genre. Through his description of the Bond Girl in the novels, Fleming distinguishes the Bond Girl from the 1950s pin-up by actively placing her within the plot instead of describing her simply as a sexy window-dressing. Through a quantitative content analysis of all 20 James Bond films, the characteristics of the Bond Girl, including physical construction, sexuality, power, agency in role and degree of heroism, have been coded, analyzed and mapped. Furthermore, over the 20 film 40 year period, her constructive potential as a female action-adventure protagonist can be more clearly understood and defined.