

Genre and narrative are the main influences on representation. Discuss this in relation to Skyfall and TDKR

It could be argued for the Bond franchise has long been a part of British culture and society, so much so that both its genre and narrative are both closely intertwined. The Bond books were written to deal with the falling of the British empire in the 1950's, with the locations that Bond visits all being former colonies (most of which had gained independence at the time of the book being written) and meeting other British people as a way to ignore the real-world splitting of the empire. With this as the basis of Bond as a character we see how he has always been used as commentary on Britain and current problems that are present at the time of each film, Skyfall being no exception to this.

Bond is represented in the film as a picture-perfect British man; strong and gentlemanly with a sarcastic sense of humour and a sharp fashion sense. This representation of Bond is nothing new as these features are some of the only consistent things between the many actors' portrayals of Bond across the characters filmography. Being represented in this way is mainly influenced by the narrative of the Bond stories and character, with him being a staple of British culture, only the best side of Britain will want to be portrayed in the film. The consequence of this is that a lot of Britain and British culture isn't represented by the Bond character and narrative which instead shows a very censored and unrealistic view of Britain. This is shown in Skyfall, outside of the characters, with the locations that are used throughout the film. All the scenes shot in Britain consist of upper-class areas of London or mansions in the Scottish

Highlands, continuing to show an idealised version of Britain that isn't representative of the vastly different cultures and people that live elsewhere. The narrative of the film itself also dictates the representation of Scotland itself as the final act of the film being set there could be seen as a way to incorporate it into the Bond story as it is said to be where Daniel Craig's interpretation of the character to be from which could be seen as the trying to get Scotland to remain as part of Britain as in 2012 when the film came out, there was a referendum in Scotland to leave Britain and become an independent country. Therefore, making Scotland so pivotal to a character who is so quintessentially British as James Bond is almost reaffirming that it belongs as part of Britain than to have its own separate identity. Bond himself also represents an ideal form of traditional British masculinity through the film, being able to take vast amounts of punishment but managing to "keep calm and carry-on". While this is an aspect of Bond as a character, it is also stereotypically how a hero is represented in the action movie genre; yet the reliance on fight scenes to deal with the antagonist or the issues the character faces throughout the film means that there is a lot less emphasis on the intelligence of Bond or character development between him and the villain outside of their first interaction.

The villain is an action movie convention meant to be an obstacle or foil to the protagonist. In Skyfall the villain is Raul Silva, an ex-MI5 agent who also worked under M. Silva, is quite a bit different to the other villains in the series however, his main target is not Bond himself, instead using him to get to M. This small change breaks the conventions of not just the action/spy genre but also the conventions put in place by the other villains throughout the 50 years of Bond's appearance on the screen. However, there are several things about Silva that are in line

with other traditional Bond villains; the first that sticks out from the first time we meet Silva is the way he looks, Silva is seen wearing a white suit and a floral shirt with bleached blonde hair, again unconventional for what is meant to be the villain of the film, yet it is used in a way to make Silva come across as foreign and very different which is further shown with his accent and manner of speaking. With these combined aspects of the character, we see how Silva is meant to be the foil to Bond, who is wearing a dark suit and has a traditional upper class British accent, with the idea behind this that Bond represents Britain and Silva represents any sort of threat to it. To illustrate this point further, there is speculation regarding Silva's sexuality due to some of his actions in the film, there is no definitive answer to this within Skyfall, instead showing little details such as his flirtation with Bond, the way he touches his chest and neck in the closeups of Bond tied to the chair. Through both of these factors, we can see how the representation of the antagonist is affected by the action genre and a typical Bond narrative, a flamboyant foreigner who poses a threat to traditional British values and masculinity itself.

The way women are represented in Bond films has always been critiqued for its misogynistic characterization and Bond chauvinistic tendencies. A common trope of the Bond franchise is the "Bond Girl" – a damsel in distress love interest for Bond to save, in Skyfall this character is Sévérine. In her first scene, we are given background information on her character, a victim of human trafficking and abuse but was tricked into falling in love with Silva who continues to abuse and manipulate her. It is uncommon for a traditional Bond Girl to be given any sort of backstory/characterisation outside of falling in love with Bond, meaning there is more of a deeper connection between the viewer and the character. However, this is very short lived

because of the narrative of Bond films and the traditions set in place by them, Bond must engage physically with her, this is displayed by Bond sneaking into the shower with Sévérine (a victim of trafficking from a young age who is visibly startled by his presence) and having sex with her. This scene exposes the problems with the portrayal of women in the Bond series as even when on the rare occasions they are given some depth of character, they are merely used as objects to continue the plot and sleep with Bond before being disposed of in the next scene. The death of Sévérine is played for shock value and has no real impact on the plot itself, even Bond who was previously shown being at the very least attracted to her reacts in an unenthusiastic way only mourning the “waste of good scotch”. The uncaring chauvinism of Bond and the complete disregard for the characters background proves that the film itself hasn't broken the cyclical structure of the lack of respect for the 'Bond girl', whose death is disposable, in turn leaving the convention of a particular bond narrative ticked off: not differentiating from the long running tradition in the bond franchise, further exposes the lack of care and respect that is shown to how women are represented throughout the 50 years of Bond and action movies as a whole. An alternative representation of women is demonstrated through the characters of M and Moneypenny. Although both are in positions of power, (M being head of MI5 and Moneypenny being an agent who is sent with Bond) both of their individual stories in Skyfall's narrative are about them being incompetent at their respective jobs. In the opening scene of the film, M orders Moneypenny to take a precarious shot that ends up severely injuring Bond, making everyone think that he is dead. This is the basis for the narrative of the film during which M's mistakes catch up to her: Silva, losing the hard drive with the undercover agents' identities, the explosion of MI5, being forced into early retirement. Moneypenny is also

traumatised from accidentally shooting Bond which leads to her taking a desk job as a receptionist for M's successor, a stereotypical job for a woman to do for a man in a higher position than her.

The Dark Knight Rises is similar to Skyfall in many ways, one of which is being another large-scale entry in a series of films about a classic character released in 2012 to critical acclaim yet manages to represent entirely different aspects of society than Skyfall.

One of the main characters in TDKR is Selena Kyle, a femme fatale anti-hero who aids Batman on and off throughout the film. Kyle is presented as an extremely capable character, managing to handle herself against much more powerful adversaries, using physical and charming assets, both of which are shown in the bar scene with Stryver. In this scene both sides to the character are exhibited in her escape from the shootout with Stryver's men, entering the dimly lit, dirty bar in a sleek black dress bringing her beauty and femininity to the forefront of the scene whilst lowering the defenses of the men in the room. She plays on this to trick Stryver into revealing their location to the police causing a shootout in the bar during which she falls to the ground screaming using her femininity this time with the police, not before taking out a few of Stryver's men herself. This is a contrast to the way that women are usually represented in superhero or action films, stereotypically they are shown to be damsels in distress who need saving by the protagonist. However, the strength of her character is also undermined by the skintight suit she wears and the various low angled shots of her walking or bending over in certain scenes. This is

an unfortunate tendency of movies that are mainly made for teenage or young adult males,
with the female characters being objectified by other characters or the camera itself.