

# All in - and More! Gambling in the James Bond Films

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## **Abstract**

Scholarly analysis of gambling in the James Bond films is rare, despite the multitude of topics in Bondology and the fictional agent's global fame. The odd commentary in gambling scholarship criticizes the franchise from the perspective of harm prevention. This article counters both groups of scholars with a qualitative interpretation of Bond's gambling habits and the role of gambling and risk taking in the film series. A basic toolkit of visual methodologies is applied to the 24 EON-produced Bond films released in 1962–2015. The examination shows the critical importance of gambling to character identity, power hierarchies and communication, atmosphere, and sense of risk and danger. The study shows that not only gamblers and gambling, but also individual games and settings have narrative agency in the films. The results expand understanding about gambling in cinema and ways of studying it, and the existing readings in Bondology of the 2006 prequel *Casino Royale*. The findings encourage open-minded inquiries into diverse audiences and their responses. The findings call for, and exemplify the value of, deeper interdisciplinary understanding of popular culture in gambling research.

*Keywords:* gambling; risk taking; culture; film; identity; qualitative research; visual methodologies; agency; space; James Bond

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A life-sized Daniel Craig, made of cardboard, greeted customers at a gas station in the middle of northern nowhere in early 2013. Holding a gun and wearing a black tie, the British actor's figure advertised the forthcoming release of his James Bond movie *Skyfall* (2012) on DVD and encouraged people to buy it from this retailer. Nothing in the advertisement explicitly referred to gambling, but the first association in my party was James Bond the casino gambler. Where did that come from? Why does gambling so strongly define this fictional man of action and his world of international espionage?

For a James Bond fan and gambling scholar, the encounter was an excuse to revisit the films to examine Bond's gambling habits. What does Bond play, with whom, where, and when? How does he do it – and why? A review of the first Bond film by EON Productions, *Dr. No* (1962), starring Sean Connery, pointed to an intimate relationship between gambling, identity, and character development in a general context of risk taking. Curiosity about how this related to the entire series justified a few more viewings of all EON-produced Bond films, which now number 24 (the latest, *Spectre*, was released in 2015).

It became evident that gambling scenes have a critical role in the narrative and can shed further light on understanding both Bond and representation of gambling in popular culture. This is the case even if the films include fewer gambling scenes than the association led to expect, and some films do not have them at all. High stakes and risk taking are nevertheless constantly present in many forms, reaching beyond money games toward broader references to gambling, risk, and risk taking. So, more precisely, what does gambling *do* in the James Bond films (Whatmore, 2002; Netz, 2004) – and how, and why?

The rich scholarly literature about Bond provides surprisingly few answers, considering that “Bondology” has grown from literary and film criticism in the 1960s to an interdisciplinary endeavor in social sciences and cultural studies (e.g., Eco, 1984/1992; Bennett & Woollacott, 1987; Chapman, 1999/2007; Lindner, 2009; Karl, 2008; Dodds & Funnell, 2016). New “Bondmania” and better acceptance of popular-cultural, everyday, and “lowbrow” topics in academia (Dittmer, 2005, p. 627) expanded research in the new millennium. Scholarly work – and popular fan publications – about Bond's qualities and meanings burgeoned further in anticipation of the film series' fiftieth anniversary in 2012 (Lindner, 2009; Nitins, 2011; Weiner et al., 2011). Journalists and fans have recently applauded Daniel Craig's decision to “play James Bond in at least one more film,” which will be in theaters in November, 2019 (NYT 2017).

Scholars now take the films seriously, instead of favoring Bond's creator Ian Fleming's (1908–1964) novels or discussing them interchangeably with the films, most of which are not based on Fleming's original stories. The outlook makes sense, because many present-day fans first encounter the films rather than the books. In the eyes of these fans and in this article, “the cinematic Bond exists in his own right and on his own terms” (Chapman, 1999/2007, pp. 8–10) and his adventures are both an individual experience and a collective experience shared with others. The dominance of motion pictures over prose is difficult to ignore in the contemporary context of global visual culture, where “at least a quarter of the world's population has seen at least one Bond film” (Dodds, 2005, p. 270) and each new Bond picture is a massive hit at the box office. Together the 24 films have yielded over \$7 billion worldwide. It is fair to say that without cinema fewer editions of Fleming's books would exist.

The analytical disregard of gambling by Bondologists is surprising also because Bond gambles heavily in Fleming's books and because the range of topics in Bondology is very wide. The exceptions address Bond's masculinity and choice of games (McGowan, 2011), symbolism of the poker game in the 2006 Daniel Craig debut *Casino Royale* (Goggin & Glas, 2009; Howard, 2010), and the connections

between Las Vegas and Hollywood as evidenced in *Diamonds Are Forever* (1971), where Sean Connery returns to play Bond in a narrative designed to promote Las Vegas (Goggin, 2007a). Umberto Eco's (1984/1992) much-cited analysis of Fleming's narrative structure as a game is also relevant here. But, typically, Bondologists either ignore gambling and its settings altogether or treat them descriptively as a background for something more important. Influential books about the cultures and changing contexts of Bond action contain few, or no, references to any form of gambling in their otherwise comprehensive indexes. On the one hand, this is surprising, when viewed against the global growth and proliferation of the gambling industry and increased media and popular-cultural visibility of its products and side effects in the new millennium. On the other hand, this is understandable, if examined against persistent topical margins and attitudes within Western mainstream academia and the specialized interest and knowledge needed in the analysis.

Experts on psychology, mental health, and responsible gambling have examined individual films or genres (Griffiths, 2004; Ohtsuka & Chan, 2009; Chan & Ohtsuka, 2011) and can be quite adamant about what is "responsible" or "irresponsible" artistic (re)presentation of gambling (Dement, 1999). The rare mentions of Bond by gambling scholars outside the above-mentioned media studies repeat one another and worry about "glorification," "false stereotypes and erroneous images of gambling" (Turner et al., 2007, p. 133), and the film industry's general failure "to provide the audience with portrayals of responsible gambling" (Monaghan & Derevensky, 2008, p. 541). The "purposive sampling" (Turner et al., 2007, p. 119) and analytical scope and depth in these studies look limited from the perspective of visual methodologies, qualitative social sciences, and cultural media studies, even if the importance of culture is acknowledged in these contributions.

The relationship between Bond and gambling deserves a closer look also because both are so prominent in contemporary entertainment culture and everyday life. The movie theater is known to be "a significant site for the production, circulation and contestation" of worldviews (Dodds, 2006, p. 119), values, and the image or meaning of particular activities, including gambling. Fans of both Bond and gambling "purchase and promote" what they find to be entertaining and of interest (Dodds, 2006, p. 120), and thus generate visibility and massive revenue at a global scale – and concern among those who see the depictions and behavior as problematic. Bond and gambling both have experienced major changes in style and outlook in the twenty-first century and attract worldwide media attention. Both split opinions, and support subcultures and international networks of similarly minded consumers. Bond – and gambling – reflect socio-political change by adapting to changes in global politics and Western culture (Black, 2001; Dodds, 2003; 2005; Funnell & Dodds, 2015a), and convey controversial, iconic images of outlook and lifestyle.

The discussion proceeds as follows: after a review of data and methods, I explain how gambling defines Bond and his adversaries. I then examine Bond's qualities, skills, and motives as a gambler. It becomes clear why Bond wins and villains lose, how risk escalates and is (not) managed, and how particular games and settings make meaning in the narratives. The conclusions address the value of understanding gambling and risk taking in the Bond franchise beyond James Bond and money games.

### **Data and Methods**

The data of this study consists of the 24 James Bond films by EON Productions (1962–2015). The set is systematic and complete, as it includes all "official" parts of a particular film series and thus stands apart from analyses of single films or convenience samples. I watched the films in three overlapping positions: as a shameless fan of Bond and action films, specialist on qualitative visual data, methodologies, and ethnography in political, cultural, and leisure studies, and gambling scholar interested in casino

spaces, media (re)presentations, and skill games. The endeavor relied on a basic interdisciplinary toolkit of content and discourse analyses (Rose, 2001), which are staples in social-scientific and humanistic visual studies (see Lutz & Collins, 1993; Fürsich, 2002) and which I have successfully tested with various types of visual and written data (Raento, 2009; Raento & Meuronen, 2011; Matilainen & Raento, 2014). Also useful were ethnographic approaches commonly employed in anthropology and sociology in the observation of, and participation in, gambling behavior and social relations at card tables, race tracks, betting shops, and private homes (Hayano, 1982; Rosecrance 1985; Neal, 1998; Marksbury, 2010; Binde, 2011; Crentsil & Jouhki, 2014). Instead of going “where the action is” (Goffman, 1969), I observed it from DVD. This enabled convenient repetition of particular scenes in order to “take some time to be sure of about what the [films] are showing,” to tease out “latent messages,” and interpret their meaning (Rose, 2001, pp. 39, 138), in dialogue with what the characters are saying (Bhattacharyya, 1997).

Assessment of the role of gambling in the narratives and its relationship with Bond’s other risk-taking activities started by identifying and loosely theming *what* was being played, by – and with – *whom*, and *how*. I also addressed motives of gambling (*why*) and their influence on how the participants play. Particular attention focused on the characters’ qualities, behavior, and interaction with one another. This was deemed important, because “physique and touch communicate powerful messages about identity and power in the franchise” (Funnell & Dodds, 2015b, p. 123) and the characters have metaphorical qualities as embodiments of states or other world-political players and their ideologies. But details at the scale of a person or a game become meaningful only as constituents of a bigger picture, produced by interdependent discursive exchanges between multiple meaningful contexts. The details of each scene must, therefore, be triangulated against broader geopolitical, social, and cultural processes, events, and concerns (Cresswell & Miller, 2000; Raento & Meuronen, 2011, p. 116; Matilainen & Raento, 2014; Funnell & Dodds, 2015a–b; Dodds & Funnell, 2016).

Space (*where*) and time (*when*) matter, because they root us in reality and have an impact on us. An “atmosphere and local culture,” for example, “can please or intimidate, and evoke strong images and memories” (Raento, 2011, p. 164). Ethno-cultural and world-political stereotypes, in turn, help make a place a constituent of a story so that what happens in that particular place could not happen in the same way or mean the same thing in any other place (Hausladen, 2000; Dodds, 2003; Raento, 2011; see Bhattacharyya, 1997; Fürsich, 2002). In this way, space (and time) obtain narrative qualities and meaning is produced metaphorically in “connection to what the audience already knows” (Raento & Meuronen, 2011, p. 109).

Particular locations play a pivotal part, even if “[i]n the films, far less consideration is given to Bond’s reflexive moments on particular people and places” than in Fleming’s novels (Dodds, 2003, p. 135). Following the example of a leading Bondologist, geographer Klaus Dodds (2003; 2005), I therefore examined the places of gambling in the 24 films, observing how contemporary geopolitical events and cultural-historical stereotypes of certain places are weaved into the story in manners that advance the plot, explain behavior and action, and foster a particular atmosphere. However, I zoomed in from cities and countries to casinos, card rooms, and tables in order to expand the discussion on “intimate and confined places” depicted in the James Bond films (Dodds, 2005, p. 268, see p. 282).

Interpretations of selected themes and scenes will now concretize the data-driven approach.

### Bond. James Bond.

The first cinematic encounter with Commander Bond takes place at *Le Cercle Les Ambassadeurs*, a private upscale card room in London. In the beginning of *Dr. No*, a man walks in “looking for Mr. James Bond.” A desk clerk stops him in front of a painting of a thoroughbred racehorse, at the door to a lavish hall with high ceilings, chandeliers, ornamental wallpapers, and marble floors with heavy carpets. The clerk proceeds to take the visitor’s card to a chemin de fer (French baccarat) table, where a beautiful female dressed in red asks for another card from the shoe. The language at the table is French. The lady keeps losing and reaches for her checkbook for “another thousand.” An admiration of her “courage” and introductions follow. Sylvia Trench tells her name and compliments her opponent’s “luck.” The man lights a cigarette one has just seen him take out of a silver case: “Bond. James Bond.”

Bond accepts Miss Trench’s request “to raise the limits,” which centers attention on the flirtatious duel. Bond, handling the shoe, gets yet another “nine to the bank” and then excuses himself, for the visitor’s card has arrived and duty calls. Bond tips the dealer casually and generously, addressing him with his first name. Bond asks the server to have his sizeable stack of token plates changed and sets a date with Miss Trench for the following day for a game of golf and, “perhaps,” a dinner. He walks out, slipping a thick stack of cash in the inside pocket of his black dinner jacket. By the time Bond reaches M’s office at MI6 headquarters (Universal Exports), the viewer learns it is three o’clock in the morning but Bond “never” sleeps “on company time.”

Within the first ten minutes into the film, one has learned everything one needs to know about this man: who he is, what games he plays, where and how he operates, and what his constraints and tastes are (or are not). He clearly feels at home playing heads up for high stakes at an exclusive upscale club in one of the centers of world power, where he knows the employees by their first name. It is obvious that he has wealth and, most importantly, access, which is a key asset in the world of espionage. He is a masculine, straight, and physically fit man whose manner and taste are impeccable. He is well educated, skilled, and self-confident, as demonstrated by his stylish play, conduct, and dress (later in the film he reveals that his tailor is on Savile Row, a street in central London known for bespoke tailoring). He is – in Miss Money Penny’s words (*The World is Not Enough*, 1999) – “a cunning linguist” who communicates in at least two global languages, but, despite his natural cosmopolitanism, is pure, original, and close to Queen and Country like a pedigreed English thoroughbred.

Bond is in a position of power and a leader also because he holds the shoe at the table, thus controlling the game by setting its pace. His ability to attract and hold attention – from an upscale crowd, a beautiful woman, and us viewers – underscores his winning powers, evident in his magical, probability-defying luck in a game of (mostly) chance. He enjoys risk taking and has no fear, as he smokes, keeps odd hours, kills time by playing for high stakes, and has a killing time picking up similarly tuned women who choose to wear the most powerful warning color. She, too, belongs to the wealthy and worldly leisure class. Both individuals appear to be free from conventional constraints of time and family life, find money to be of little significance, and play golf and money games for entertainment, “amongst other things” (including casual sex with strangers). The arrangement is clean, smooth, and seductive, like Bond himself. But despite the seeming equality, his male reason and self-constraint are superior without question, for it is Miss Trench who loses and raises the limits when chasing her losses. When duty calls Bond’s priorities are clear, as gambling, skirt chasing, and other leisurely power plays give immediate way to his country’s needs in the game of world politics.

This identity-defining, tone-setting, and by now iconic scene goes a long way explaining why the association between Bond and gambling is so strong and how important high-stakes games are in these films, even if their role is timewise small. First visual encounters, even if brief, leave lasting impressions, and adaptations of this formative scene are repeated multiple times in the following 23 films.

### Defining His Adversaries

What one plays and how defines Bond's adversaries, too, not just him and his playmates. Throughout the franchise, the card table is a key site in the narrative rather than a meaningless backdrop (Hausladen 2000). This is where the main players are identified, ranked, and characterized. This is where the viewer learns who is who in the story, what kind of players the villains are, and what can be expected from them outside this microcosm.

The scene can be seemingly casual, as in *Goldfinger* (1964), where one meets Mr. Goldfinger and Mr. Simmons playing gin rummy in the pool area of an upscale hotel, some ten minutes into the film. The men have doubled up the stakes to \$5 per point. Bond enters Auric Goldfinger's hotel room, where Goldfinger's assistant Jill Masterson reads the opponent's cards for her employer with the help of binoculars and a radio. The following exchange between Bond and Masterson reveals Goldfinger's immature, even childlike personality and weakness. It also defines Masterson as a henchwoman:

JB: Why does he do it?

JM: He likes to win.

JB: Why do you do it?

JM: He pays me.

Bond proceeds to introduce himself to Goldfinger, a gold smuggler, stock market gambler, and jewelry dealer. Now Bond controls the game by forcing Goldfinger to lose money by threatening to expose his wrong-doing and suggesting that authorities might be interested in his conduct. Bond thus sends a message and establishes the nature of their relationship. The stakes soon go up in a round of golf, where they move from a leisurely bet of "a shilling a hole" suggested by Bond to a Nazi gold bullion "worth £5,000" and to bending the rules after first declaring "strict" adherence to them. By the end of the escalating exchange one knows that Goldfinger will resort to any means necessary to get his way and "all of his cheating is aimed at procuring gold" (Karl, 2008, p. 184). Golf, like card games, betting, and sex, is a game which serves as an introductory testing ground between the main adversaries and a story-building foreplay before the physical confrontation later on.

In some films, such as *Octopussy* (1983), the main antagonist is defined through a comparison with other players. When Bond walks down the stairs to the casino at a luxury hotel in urban and still very colonial India, wearing white jacket and black tie, Kamal Khan, "an exiled Afghan prince and sportsman" shakes dice at a backgammon table which has attracted the attendees' attention. Khan's opponent, an elderly British major, is "no novice" at the table but has now lost a considerable sum of money and is chasing his losses, even if his perspiration and hesitation advice against it. After beating the major once more, Khan suggests another raise of stakes, but the losing player finally declines. Bond uses the opportunity to sit down at the table, accept the proposal, and introduce himself to the man he has already challenged and studied by bidding against him at an auction in London.

Bond routinely enters bigger games than most people want to play, which clears the defining scene for the heads-up foreplay between Bond and the main antagonist and puts Bond above the masses. In *Octopussy* Bond outsmarts Khan with his knowledge of the rules: by resorting to "player's privilege" he gets to throw Khan's "lucky dice" and

reveals that Khan's unbeatable luck is more about cheating by loading rather than "in the wrist." As Bond wins 200,000 rupees, Khan stops smiling and threatens Bond with his body language and advice to "spend the money quickly." By now one knows that Khan is an arrogant, overconfident cheat who reads his adversaries poorly and does not hesitate to resort to violence (and, as one learns later, fails to do his homework, which seriously damages his chances to win and ranks him below professional players). The hierarchy reminds one of the changing (but persistently British-led) world order and is clear beyond socio-political rank: a powerful but landless Asian cheat (an exiled prince) can easily beat an honest but naïve English relic (an elderly major of the colonial army), but is no match to a globally mobile, discreet modern weapon such as 007 (a secret service agent – a rare professional – licensed to kill). A dishonorable and very literal chase of losses follows, as Khan's thugs chase Bond and his local assistant Vijay in the crowded streets.

### **Bond's Edge and Motives to Play**

One thing that gives Bond a superior edge in the games he plays is indifference toward money. Money is everything to Bond's adversaries, and even the wealthiest of them wish to have more of it, although they are driven mostly by megalomaniac ideas of power and world order. In contrast, money to Bond is a means to an end and a survival tool among the gadgets, as exemplified in *From Russia with Love* (1963), where Q equips Bond with fifty gold sovereigns. Bond rarely talks about money in the films but the villains bring it up frequently, fantasize about it, and "will welcome any enterprise which will increase [their] stock." Bond is depicted as being not only emotionally, but also physically detached from money: he is seldom seen handling money in everyday situations, happily gives stacks of it away, or handles tokens rather than cash. He is immune to financial greed and cannot be bought or provoked, even if his adversaries mock his meagerly rewarded loyalty to Queen and Country.

The initiative to raise the stakes comes from an opponent, not from Bond, who only gets carelessly proactive in this way in *Casino Royale* (2006). In this prequel, which opens with Bond's messy initiation as a 00 agent, he loses a cut-throat poker game against terrorist banker Le Chiffre because his ego gets in the way of reason and he is arrogant, emotion-driven, and too sure of himself. Only after "learn[ing] his lesson" the hardest possible way, he turns from "any thug [who] can kill" to a detached, controlled, and magically lucky *agent*. This kind of absolute, impeccably superior agency in world politics or any other game is not possible without luck, which highlights Bond's uniqueness and the sense of fantasy and humor in the franchise. This luck also makes it look like the gods are on his (and our side). Luck is central, for example, in the chase in *Octopussy*, where Bond appears very different from the man he is in the 2006 origin story. It is now the blade-stopping money in Bond's pocket (rather than his love Vesper Lynd's insight and sacrifice) that saves his life. Money is meaningless to him, so he takes the stack out and throws it in the air, landing it in a beggar's basket. The chase ends when Bond spreads in the air the rupees he has given to Vijay. The crowd goes wild and blocks the street when trying to collect the banknotes.

This outspoken “easy comes, easy goes” attitude toward money places Bond above any emotional excitement and discomfort, which in real life may influence high-risk win-or-lose games even among the best players (Hayano, 1982; Rosecrance, 1985; Raento, 2016). Bond does not tilt. Instead, the viewer can admire his unselfishness and trust him to play calmly. His motives to gamble vary per situation, but consistently exclude money and the dream of getting rich. Cool calculation gives an edge against adversaries who embody “a number of destabilizing dangers” (Karl, 2008, p. 183; Funnell & Dodds, 2015b, p. 132). Bond plays for pastime and personal entertainment, and the table serves his image consciousness and as a convenient place to pick up women for casual sex. But more often – and more importantly – he goes to the table to work: to measure up his adversaries, to demonstrate superiority of the values he represents, and, eventually, to save the (Free) World.

One instrumental motive for Bond to gamble is communication. In *Diamonds Are Forever* and *License to Kill* (1989), Bond goes to a casino pretending to be someone else and, consistent with this false identity, plays in an unusual way in order to catch the attention of his adversaries monitoring the surveillance cameras. In Las Vegas he shoots craps, whereas in Isthmus City he plays blackjack “like a real jerk-off” (and for the first time in the franchise), but in both places Bond gets what he wants by establishing an exceptional credit line and adjusting his game according to his goals.

At Royal Ascot in *A View to a Kill* (1985), Bond bets on industrialist Max Zorin’s victorious racehorse to test his own assumptions about foul play by “a lot of vitamins.” He also shows off his strategic superiority and situation-specific insight to Money Penny (who played the more probable, fair option with a superior bloodline – and lost) and to the viewer. This “competitive capitalist individualism” (Bennett & Woollacott, 1987, p. 236) separates creative professionals from unimaginative amateurs and allow them “to seize opportunities as they arise” (Karl, 2008, p. 186). The brief scene communicates to the viewer that Bond understands what he is up against, making him “a model for sovereign, individual action” (Karl, 2008, p. 185) and adding to his social and technical capital in the viewer’s eyes.

### **Establishing Skill and Competence**

Bond’s skill, (st)ability, and technical competence rank the hero above the villains, help the viewer choose sides, and anticipate the desired outcome. By way of example, Bond is a frequent, well-known, and liked customer in some of the world’s most famous gambling environments. The viewer knows this, because Bond is on friendly first-name terms with the valet at the casino in Monaco, who greets him back in a French-language exchange (*GoldenEye*, 1995). In addition to knowing where to go, how to behave, and how to dress in any gambling establishment, Bond adapts to broader cultural constraints. Accordingly, his dinner jacket may be white in gambling spaces located in tropical climes and southwestern USA, but is always black in more formal Britain. Bond’s manner of play indicates technical superiority and professionalism (see Funnell & Dodds, 2015b, p. 128), irrespective of the degree of chance involved in the game. He is consistently calm and relaxed, masters the rules, and handles tokens, cards, and dice in a clean, professional, and understated manner. He adapts to changing situations and leaves the table without hesitation. He understands odds and probabilities, and is a good judge of character, which he applies when measuring up and challenging his opponents at the table.



The villains, in turn, lose because they are bad players and “addicted to global domination” (Dodds, 2005, p. 284). The way in which they play suggests devastation in the end. Immensely wealthy men, like Auric Goldfinger, “only love gold” and want to win at any cost and by any means necessary. Sometimes the clue is in the details. One learns, for example, that the space technology investor Drax (*Moonraker*, 1979) cheats in bridge, because the British Minister of Defense jokingly warns Bond about Drax’s preference for unfair play. These men are defined as immature, stubborn, and immoral, because they bend any rule to get what they want without remorse, even if they often underline adherence to rules in the beginning of the game.

Money and violence get results, making the crooks feel overconfident in a way that kills reason. When things go wrong they get emotional, change their plans hastily, and risk more than they should. All this is known to lead to trouble in money games and is exactly what immature Bond does in *Casino Royale*. Unlike fully matured 007, he, like the crooks, lets others intervene in his decisions. Because the crooks want money or chaos they are inferior to immature Bond, too, because his values lie higher with Queen and Country – with preservation of social order (and, perhaps, social justice), Western lifestyle, and world peace. Personal gain drives the villains chase their losses, which leads to a spiral of further loss. Arrogance, greed, stubbornness, and fear make them vulnerable.

Once the villains lose, they lose their dignity, turn to violence, and want the opponent dead. This is also Bond’s initial reaction toward Le Chiffre after losing in *Casino Royale*. Anger blocks the view of risks and alternative solutions, and leads to obsession with revenge until it is too late. The villains might recognize their own weaknesses such as “winning, whatever the cost” (Gustav Graves in *Die Another Day*), but are unable to control them or do not care. Had they stuck to their plans, or had they withdrawn, they would have been able to kill Bond and handle the situation. Instead, they lose everything. Those who make better situation analyses and wish to minimize their losses by walking out are eliminated ruthlessly, which works to underscore the main villain’s insanity. In *Goldfinger*, this elimination happens to pointedly named gangster Mr. Solo, who is taken for a ride, shot, and then crushed into a metal cube together with the car (also see *A View to a Kill*). In the end, it all gets out of hand. Bond avoids full devastation in *Casino Royale* with the help of his friends who save his life more than once and make him look at things – and himself – in a new light. The terrorists lose, but the price to pay is Vesper’s death. Only in the end of this formative story 007 introduces himself, as he finally knows who he is, to whom he owes, what he must do, and how: “The name’s Bond. James Bond.” From now on, he cannot, and will not, make the same mistake again.

Bond’s main adversaries are not only bad players, greedy, and megalomaniac, but obsess like pathological gamblers and often have something wrong with their body or behavior, beyond their unstable mental state. In media mogul Eliot Carver’s words (*Tomorrow Never Dies*, 1997), “[t]he distance between insanity and genius is measured only by success” – and by the end of the film Carver has confirmed his own insanity by failing. “[R]acial depictions of evil” are frequent, and especially in the early films “the adversaries are never described as ‘white’ and or ‘Anglo-Saxon’” (Dodds, 2005, p. 282; see Baron, 2009). Furthermore, the (dis)ability and (in)sufficiency of one’s body is used to question or confirm agency and underscore weakness, vulnerability, past failure, and deviance in contrast to West-embodying Bond’s perfection (Funnell & Dodds, 2015a, pp. 124–128; see Funnell & Dodds, 2015b).

The examples are numerous: the first arch villain, Dr. No, lacks fingers and is a bastard of mixed racial background. Head of the criminal organization SPECTRE, Ernst Stavro Blofeld, who appears in several Bond films, is of Polish and Greek origin and has a scar on his face. His second in command, Emilio Largo (*Thunderball*, 1965), has only one eye. Hitman Francisco Scaramanga, *The Man with the Golden Gun* (1974),

has three nipples. Industrialist Max Zorin, in *A View to a Kill*, is a psychotic result of a Nazi genetic experiment and KGB training, whereas international terrorist Renard has lost all his senses because of an unremovable bullet in his head but which will make him stronger before killing him (*The World Is Not Enough*). Genetic manipulation has made diamond magnate Gustav Graves/North Korean Colonel Moon an insomniac (*Die Another Day*, 2002). Terrorist banker Le Chiffre, from Albania, weeps blood (*Casino Royale*) and Bond's colleague-turned-cyber-terrorist Raoul Silva speaks English with a heavy accent, has lost bones off his face, and might be gay (*Skyfall*).

The villains's gophers are frequently short, tall, fat, or mute, and have metal parts such as hooks for a hand or iron or golden teeth. These give them human-made, machine-like features, suggesting the gophers are mechanic and controllable like robots. They may be sexually suspicious or deviant, like SPECTRE assassin Vargas (*Thunderball*), who "does not make love" (nor smoke or drink), the gay couple Kidd and Wint in *Diamonds Are Forever*, and aggressive former Soviet fighter pilot Xenia Onatopp, who wants both vodka martinis and sex "straight up, with a twist" (*GoldenEye*). Heterosexual, virile Bond, in contrast, is "a figure of superhuman talents and attainments" and demonstrates "a capacity for extreme suffering and unfailing virility" (Dodds, 2003, p. 132). With the exception of the Daniel Craig films, he is consistently able-bodied, mentally stable, and very good with his hands, irrespective of whether he fingers cards, women, his Walther PPK, or a trigger of a nuclear weapon.

But even Bond himself, like many top-level skilled players, has a weakness which affects his odds (Hayano 1982; Rosecrance, 1985; Raento, 2016). Bond's peers and enemies alike recognize that women confuse his judgment, can make things personal, and his behavior reckless. Tiger Tanaka, head of the Japanese security agency, summarizes the concern and related risk (confirming Bond's exceptionality) when they meet in Tokyo in *You Only Live Twice* (1967):

I am a trifle disappointed at the ease with which I could pull you in. The one thing my honorable mother taught me long ago was never to get into car with a strange girl. But you, I'm afraid, will get into anything with any girl.

The vulnerability becomes most concrete in *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* (1969), where Bond falls in love, marries, and then loses his wife Countess Teresa (Tracy di Vincenzo) in a drive-by shooting right after the wedding. They have first met in the beginning of the film when Bond has saved her from drowning herself (this is what Vesper Lynd does in *Casino Royale*) and meet again at a high-stakes chemin de fer table in an upscale resort. Again, Bond enters a game which most people find "too rich for [their] blood." Bond knows what he is doing, whereas Tracy takes another card, even if it is clearly an unwise move to make. After losing she exhibits further recklessness and indifference by declaring she does not have the money she just lost. Bond the gentleman bails her out. In their exchange on the way out Bond suggests that she should "play it safe and stand on five," to which Tracy responds: "People who want to stay alive play it safe." After being attacked in her room Tracy ends in Bond's room where she makes a move for sex. By the morning she is gone, leaving two blue tokens in Bond's bedside drawer as a payment of her debt and his gun—and showing she is quite capable of getting what she wants.

The defining gambling scene is different in this film, for it is all about her. Bond's part in the money game is not even shown. The way she gambles confirms her state of mind, unfolding self-destructive feelings of numbness, meaninglessness, and emptiness of life. She is wealthy and entitled but, like Elektra King in *The World Is Not Enough*, she resorts to reckless gambling and other risk behaviors to feel alive. In this scene, she is dressed in white, color of innocence, purity, and unknown territory, indicating that she is not guilty of her action and, perhaps, that Bond is up against a

novel challenge. For Bond, because of his past experience with Vesper Lynd, she is the quintessential damsel in distress he needs to protect from harm, herself, and the evil world. But she is also impressively competent and fearless like Bond (Funnell & Dodds, 2015b, p. 130), who is drawn to her, even if he resists by citing his financial independence, “bachelor’s taste for freedom,” and line of work when her guardian tries to offer him “a million pounds” for seeing her “some more.” Bond’s attention and affections are not for sale, but the desire to save Tracy from her risk-behaving self takes over, making Bond emotional and irrational, and endangering his mission and world order. Whether this is “responsible” or “irresponsible” (Dement, 1999) or “positive” or “negative” is not clear-cut but, rather, marked by “ambivalence” (Turner et al., 2007, p. 133; Monaghan & Derevensky, 2008, p. 541) and leaves space for the viewers to decide for themselves. The examples, however, counter the view in harm-oriented cinematic gambling studies that gambling in the Bond franchise merely promotes “a glamorous and exciting lifestyle” (Turner et al., 2007, p. 131; Monaghan & Derevensky, 2008, p. 541).

### **Metaphor and Meaning**

In Western mainstream media and academia alike, gambling is persistently seen as arbitrary, wasteful, destructive, and irrational (Casey, 2008), and it has a long history of being “associated with several religiously or morally reprehensible aspects” such as gambling on other people’s property or “neglect of duties” (Korpiola & Sallila, 2014, p. 50). Not surprisingly then, criticism and parodies of politics in the media include metaphorical mocking of politics as gambling, whereas academics have dismissed gambling as morally suspicious “lowbrow entertainment” (Dittmer, 2005, p. 627; Raento & Meuronen, 2011, p. 116). This may begin to explain the analytical disregard of gambling in Bondology and that of Bond in gambling studies, but also obscures from view the rich communicative powers of gambling in the James Bond films.

The symbolic-representative and metaphorical qualities of gambling in cinema go well beyond observations about “gambling as a symbolic backdrop to the story in the film” (Turner et al., 2007, pp. 129–130) and the above-discussed definition of characters, prediction of their actions, outcomes of these, and place-promotional product placement (Goggin, 2007a). Gambling in the Bond franchise is loaded ideologically and morally and, in many ways, analogous to world politics (which is referred to as a “game” in the films). Gambling is characteristically an individualistic, intriguing, and a risky Free World activity, where players (be they individuals, organizations, or nation-states) are responsible for their own choices (with the exception of women in Bond’s care). In games of skill (like poker, espionage, or diplomacy), success requires reason, self-control, improvisation, understanding of rules, and strategic competence (Hayano, 1982; Rosecrance, 1985; Raento 2016). Chance, however, is always present, and cheating is a possibility that can change outcomes and threaten order.

“Luck” is crucial in games of pure chance and largely separate from, rather than confused with, skill in the examined films (cf. Turner et al. 2007, p. 134; Monaghan & Derevensky, 2008, p. 541). Bond, himself an embodiment of the Free World, individualism, risk taking, and romance, meets all the above-listed requirements after graduating in *Casino Royale*. Bond’s superiority is not only amusing, but, as suggested earlier, also necessary if he is to beat his adversaries and save the world in the winner-takes-it-all games he plays. Without the magic of impeccable, probability-defying luck, Bond would be subject to common negative perceptions about gambling and one could not trust him to win. This trust allows “us” fans be winners with him and enjoy the excitement, without fear of defeat. Frequent references to luck and “common sense,” however, remind the viewer that “danger is never far removed” and “Western civilization remains vulnerable” in global politics (Dodds, 2005, p. 284).

Particular cards and games convey particular meanings, including power hierarchies, superstition, hazard, and danger, often in dialogue with cultural stereotypes. In *Live and Let Die* (1973), spades, “[b]lack queen on a red king,” and Solitaire’s tarot readings predict fate and future in a story placed in the context of Caribbean religious syncretism (stereotyped vodoú) and its cultural-commercial and demographic satellites such as New York. Some cards, like The Fool, The High Priestess, Lovers, and Death, are treated as self-explanatory, but the Queen of Cups “in an upside-down position” is clarified by Bond to mean “a deceitful, perverse woman” who is “a liar [and] a cheat.” What is *not* depicted matters, too (Raento & Meuronen, 2011, pp. 116–118): it is hardly an accident that the opening title of *Casino Royale*, a formative love story, features jacks and queens of hearts. The king, however, is absent, for Bond does not yet rule but, rather, is “a blunt instrument” and less than a fully functional 00 agent.

Nor is it an accident that the game in *Casino Royale* is Texas Hold’em poker, where the winner takes it all. The game has a tough, yet sophisticated, and very masculine image in popular media representations in the new millennium and, more generally, “card games are the most akin to war” (Goggin & Glas, 2009; p. 78, citing Prussian military theorist Carl von Clausewitz). The table can thus be seen “as an allegorical battlefield [and] an arena for the spectacle of masculinity” (Funnell, 2011, p. 467, cited in Funnell & Dodds, 2015b, p. 132; see Howard, 2010; McGowan, 2011). Furthermore, the game is certainly more legible to contemporary audiences and metaphorically powerful than chemin de fer would be in the context of the millennial poker boom and capitalism (Goggin & Glas, 2009, p. 71; Howard 2010). But, most importantly, poker is also the *only possible game* for this story: only in heads-up poker can Bond fail, learn, make up for his errors, control his emotions, regain confidence, and grow to become a champion like he does in the film. Bond must also be somehow flawed (like Daniel Craig’s character is) to sustain the tension and make him credible and interesting as a poker player. When Bond gets thrown in a game bigger than he is ready for, the viewers fear for him and the entire world order, knowing that the outcome is uncertain because Bond is not yet the man in *Dr. No*.

The roulette, in turn, indicates arbitrariness in the films. Bond never plays it, but the viewer sees it played, or hears the spin, in the background. This happens when Bond moves toward the unknown – for example, leaves the recreational chemin de fer table at *Les Ambassadeurs* to receive a new assignment in M’s office (*Dr. No*) or leaves a blackjack table to enter drug lord and casino proprietor Franz Sanchez’s office which he has just contacted through the eye in the sky (*License to Kill*). In the latter film, just like in a similar communication scene in *Diamonds Are Forever*, Bond disguises his identity and plays against the house (craps, blackjack) rather than as himself against other players (chemin de fer, poker). The roulette in these scenes is always in motion, indicating processual incompleteness, equal chances over multiple options, uncertain outcomes, and, more generically, movement, action, excitement, and, perhaps, glamor and exclusivity (Matilainen, 2011, pp. 89–90).

As golf with *Goldfinger* and *Solitaire*'s tarot deck suggest, other than money games, too, have metaphorical power. By way of example, *From Russia with Love*, a film without an explicit gambling game scene, opens with an international chess tournament placed in Venice. East and West are taking on each other via their two grandmasters, Kronsteen of Czechoslovakia and Adams of Canada. Their game is "a classical description of the Cold War, given the emphasis placed upon careful strategy and the pre-determined nature of moves" (Dodds, 2003, p. 140). But in addition to setting the geopolitical stage and defining the operative scale as global, the game defines the players as being of top-level caliber, even if from secondary, yet sensitive countries. The attention is on Kronsteen, director of planning and third in rank in *SPECTRE*. He is a mastermind who values intellectual superiority, personal reputation, and satisfaction. From Kronsteen's perspective, global crime and espionage are games that allow him to confirm his intellectual and strategic superiority. But it soon becomes evident that Kronsteen will lose this battle, because he makes the mistake of arrogantly underestimating his opponent: "Who is Bond compared to Kronsteen?"

### Upping the Stakes

Extending the view beyond leisurely and money games deepens understanding of risk taking and scope of gambling in the 24 films. Heads-up wagering for high stakes is involved in auctions, duels, and stock market speculation, which appear frequently in the franchise and are in many ways comparable with, and complementary to, playing of money games. Their outcome is uncertain, even if they may be reasonable investments in particular circumstances (Casey, 2008; Raento, 2016), and therefore regulation by authorities or particular codes of conduct are needed. Like money games, auctions, duels, and stock markets all have impartial arbitrators – dealers, brokers, auctioneers, or judges – and control behavior by rules, honor, ritual, and social hierarchies.

Gambling, auctions, duels, and stock market speculation also have a history of being regulated together because of uncertainty. Auctions, for example, were comparable to betting, insurances, and futures trading in the regulation of aleatory contracts in eighteenth-century Sweden (Korpiola & Sallila, 2014, p. 67). Sometimes they have been united by direct causality. Duels, for example, are highly ritualized enactments of war (from Latin *duellum*, cognate with *bellum*, war) which have been commonly related to gambling debt and other debts of honor in the history of Europe. "Satisfaction" has been sought and honor has been re-established by demonstrating one's willingness to risk one's life for it (Spierenburg, 2008).

Auctions and duels facilitate an escalation of confrontation between Bond and his main adversaries. The duels involving Bond have three types of stakes. Money, power, and intellectual or strategic superiority at stake in gambling or other games and auctions escalate to physical harm, honor, and "satisfaction." The sword fight between Bond and Gustav Graves at a fencing club in London in *Die Another Day* starts as a mutually agreed "cockfight" for £1,000 and determination of the winner by "[b]est on three hits." After Graves leads 2–0 he challenges Bond's willingness to continue. Bond takes this as an opportunity to expose a conflict diamond he found in Cuba, seemingly communicating that the near-defeat has been a tactical maneuver. The two men's body language and manner of speech now indicate concrete, direct physical threat, and when Bond makes Graves bleed the villain gets angry and proceeds to up the weapons. The men now fight "the old-fashioned way" with knights' swords and for the "[f]irst blood drawn from the torso." The duel ends in an armistice of sorts: in the financial settling of damage caused to the historical interior but in anticipation of another, final, and very physical confrontation in Iceland.

The highest stake in these battles is life – or death, as in Iceland, or in the pistol duel between Bond and Scaramanga in *The Man with the Golden Gun*. In *Octopussy*, the conflict between Khan and Bond escalates from a bidding contest over

a Fabergé egg in an auction in London to a backgammon table in an Indian casino and a chase through the streets of Delhi. After Khan's exposure, he and his tiger killers go after Bond in a savage manhunt. When this blood sport fails, another attempt at Bond's life follows (also see *Moonraker*).

### Space, Time, and Narration

The spaces where Bond gambles serve many narrative purposes. They are places of identity, leisure, and business, but also places of communication that serve message sending and making of appearances or statements. They are also places of leisure and work, where Bond seduces women, sets the stakes for a bigger game of world politics, and measures and confronts his adversaries. They are also waiting halls in a sense that this is where Bond kills time while waiting for an assignment. The films have a particular sense of place, which emerges from seemingly trivial but constant references to gambling and risk taking in the dialogue. This figurative speech about odds, betting, edge, luck, fate, jackpots, dealing, and the like enhance the impact of high-risk action and game-like narrative structure (Eco, 1984/1992).

The story often rests on particular settings and scenes of gambling, which become active constituents of the plot rather than serving as mere backdrops. It is well established that that the location of (geo)political events plays a central role in the stories (Black, 2001; Dodds, 2003; 2005), relying on "a plethora of stereotypes" and "a particular location's reputation" (Dodds, 2003, pp. 135, 138) in evoking a certain sense of place and an atmosphere on the screen. The casinos in orderly, established Western places like Monaco imply safety, fair play, quality, and trustworthiness, whereas casinos in Latin America, Asia, and other former colonial, other-than-white, and geopolitically unstable locations are seedy places of "danger and exoticism" (Dodds, 2003, p. 138). Contrasts between honesty and dishonesty are built by juxtaposing domestic and familiar locations against alien and strange locations.

Prime examples of riding on "contemporary geopolitical anxieties," "[l]ong-standing assumptions about these places," and Orientalism in the creation of a particular "geography of evil and terror" (Dodds, 2003, pp. 126–127, 138) are the casinos in Isthmus City (*License to Kill*), Baku, capital of Azerbaijan (*The World Is Not Enough*), and Macao (*Skyfall*). These casinos are located in ambivalent, secretive backyards and borderlands of the West where "there is no evidence of local governance" (Dodds, 2003, p. 147, also 136) so that the villains are left to enforce their own laws.

For example in *License to Kill*, Latino drug lord Franz Sanchez operates a major drug business and launders money through his casino and bank within a brief air ride from the USA. He is depicted as a ruthless, deviant man through characterization of his own law ("plomo o plata," lead or silver), employees (whose violence was too much for the Nicaraguan contras), his roughness with women and traitors, and affection for his pet lizard (who wears a diamond collar). Isthmus City is fictional, but together the physical-geographical and national associations in the toponym, depicted landscapes, and the film's year of release (1989) point to what went down in Panama. That year saw the end of General Manuel Noriega's dictatorship, soon after the US Drug Enforcement Administration had accused him of laundering Latin American drug money. In the context of intensifying war on drugs, Noriega went on to get decades of prison sentences in the USA, France, and Panama.

Ten years later, it is about the global control of oil and international terrorism in geopolitically sensitive Central Asia, again in reflection of contemporary geopolitical unrest and concerns in the West. An important place for manipulating odds in this power contest is the appropriately named, upscale L'Or Noir (Black Gold) Casino operated by Bond's ex-KGB-contact-turned-shady-businessman Valentin Zukovsky, a caviar producer and self-declared "slave to the free-market economy." The casino

in Baku (like its counterparts in Isthmus City and Macao) thus stands for cut-throat capitalism, exploitation of natural resources, and criminal free-market opportunism, evoking a claustrophobic microcosm of liminality, indifference, and danger. This sense of danger, created by contemporary geopolitical unease, general lawlessness in the region, and its cultural distance from the West, is highlighted by negative stereotypes and moral anxieties about gambling, which notch up sense of excitement and tension. These casinos are discrete places of shady payoffs (for smuggling, murder, and illegal drugs), economic and sexual dependencies, suspicion, and violence. As such, they “help define ideological boundaries between good and evil” and “provide opportunities for Bond to demonstrate his resources and wits” (Dodds, 2005, p. 283). Roulette appears in each of these casino scenes, highlighting arbitrariness and uncertainty.

Casinos also evoke broader histories and geographies through particular material-cultural symbolisms, which add to the imagery of luxury, privilege, and originality. For example, places like Venice and Lake Como in Italy imply not only wealth, power, and tradition, but also interdependent histories of gambling, risk taking, and upscale leisure even when there is no gambling in the films. In addition of being “a civilized and friendly European space” (Dodds, 2005, p. 282), Venice is site of the first modern casino in the eighteenth century—and has had its share of Italian corruption, political power games, and crime. One can also toy with “purposeful synergies” and cross-references between this history, Las Vegas, Hollywood, and the Mob (Goggin, 2007a, p. 68; see Gragg, 2011). For example, Lake Como (where Bond recovers from Le Chiffre’s torture in *Casino Royale* and returns to meet Mr. White) is the theme of The Bellagio casino resort in Las Vegas. A view to The Bellagio closes the Hollywood blockbuster remake of *Ocean’s Eleven* (2001), where George Clooney (a former villa owner at Lake Como), robs three casinos (including The Bellagio) as Danny Ocean, suggesting that contemporary Las Vegas casinos are “a better and more secure bet than a bank” (Goggin, 2007b, p. 257).

The peak of this union is *Diamonds Are Forever*, a film infested with product placement and place promotion. Advertisement of the fantastic liminality of Las Vegas starts right at the state border, where a sign saying “Nevada: recreation unlimited” greets Bond as he drives in through the transcendental Mojave desert from Los Angeles, CA (Raento, 2011). The film was part of Southern Nevada entrepreneurs’ plot to sell their corporatizing, legitimizing city and business to mainstream middle classes (Goggin, 2007a; Gragg, 2011). The willingness of the Nevada industry to pay for visibility on the big screen confirms “[t]he power of film,” which lies “not only in its apparent ubiquity but also in the way in which it helps to create (often dramatically) understandings of particular events, national identities and relationships to others” (Dodds, 2008, p. 1621).

Time, too, contributes to the story, together with particular games and spaces of playing them. Action in the 24 films is about here and now, but the storylines move flexibly in time, for example by evoking “a sense of imperial continuity” (Dodds, 2005, p. 280) and imagining Britain’s past and future glory (also Karl, 2008) – or cross-referencing the past and present of such ancient and universally recognizable activities as gambling and risk taking. Gambling is, indeed, one way to make James Bond contemporary and timeless at the same time. Here, the franchise reflects change in society and keeps itself up to date by adapting to evolving Western gambling culture, employing what is familiar to the viewers, and responding to popular preferences. The games in the films evolve accordingly, from chemin de fer and gin rummy in the 1960s to blackjack in the 1980s, and Texas Hold’em poker in the new millennium (although poker is first mentioned in 1997 in *Tomorrow Never Dies* by the chief villain Eliot Carver, in a character-defining self-introduction). This transition from one game to another makes the role of gambling in the plots more legible to the viewer, but may also sustain audience interest by changing viewer experience over time. The shifting

also likely reflects the interconnectedness of sectors of the entertainment business in promoting their products in the context of globalizing consumer and media cultures.

Time of day conveys a message about the risk involved, alerting or calming the viewer with obscurity or transparency. Casino gambling typically takes place after dark, evoking mystique, excitement, intrigue, and danger. Leisurely table and card games, in contrast, occur in daylight and therefore look more innocent, harmless, and transparent. Seasonality, too, matters through associations with extreme cold (snow indicates remoteness and isolation, highlighting Bond being on his own in the lawless frontier) or mind-melting heat in tropical latitudes. Furthermore, time spent on gambling in upscale spaces communicates wealth, for gambling needs free time – and helps killing it.

### Conclusions

It has become clear that gambling *does* a lot in the James Bond films through its multiple roles in the stories. Gambling has rich communicative powers and metaphorical meaning, it sets the stage and atmosphere, escalates confrontations, and carries the story forward by upping the stakes from money and honor to life, death, and fate of the Free World. Gambling, or other raising of stakes, is an active, agential, and relational ingredient in the narrative and key to James Bond's identity as a risk taker, 007 agent, and superior defender of Western values. The ways in which his adversaries play define their characters and position them in relation to Bond.

Not only people and gambling but also individual games have agency in these films in a sense that they co-produce particular outcomes in a jointly evolving, hybrid manner, together with the players and surrounding settings (Whatmore, 2002; Netz, 2004). Most clearly, the high-risk poker game in *Casino Royale* is critical in making James Bond the man he is. At an international high-profile Texas Hold'em table in Montenegro (and life-threatening encounters around this metaphorical microcosm), Bond learns the lessons vital for success in the cut-throat game of world politics and international espionage. Bond matures together with the game as the night proceeds, and he must make human mistakes to be credible, interesting, and capable of learning and growth. He graduates as a fully competent 00 agent and saves the world by beating his main opponent Le Chiffre, after an initial failure and a near-death experience. The price to pay breaks Bond's heart but leaves him emotionally better controlled in the future, even if women are still his weakness. The observation that any other game would make little sense in this plot and context underscores poker's relational agency.

The franchise, indeed, conveys powerful images of gambling and lifestyle, but scarce evidence exists about their impact on people's thinking and behavior. On the one hand, not even academics interested in Bond, or in connections between visual popular culture and consumer behavior, have reacted to gambling in these films, as shown by the relative disregard of this activity in Bondology. On the other hand, in light of this visual-methodological examination, those gambling scholars who see that Bond films "glamorize professional gamblers and make skilled play look like a sure thing" (Turner et al. 2007, p. 123) or caution against "distorted images" (Monaghan & Derevensky, 2008, p. 541) offer simplistic, partial, and overtly literal reading of gambling in the Bond franchise. They also judge without concrete evidence of impact and may belittle a viewer's competence.

I have challenged both groups by showing that gambling in the James Bond films has richer and deeper meanings than Bondologists presently think and various, simultaneous, and overlapping shades of grey exist between "responsible" and "irresponsible" or "positive" and "negative" representations. The shades can be entertaining, intellectually provoking, cool, and disturbing without being "ambivalent" or dichotomized. Instead of being mostly misleading, Bond's magical luck can be narratively necessary, funny, fantastic, and relieving, for it separates cinema from real



life, builds trust by predicting outcomes, and reassures the viewer that the Free World will stay safe. This challenge thus makes clear that “not only are films capable of being understood in radically different ways but also that different audiences exist in the first place” (Dodds, 2006, p. 120).

Inquiries into this diversity of audiences and their concrete, verified responses to popular-cultural images of gambling therefore seem worthwhile. New analytically convincing examinations of gambling in cinema might therefore offer fresh insight to gambling research and strengthen its intellectual and methodological scope and credibility. Individual and collective experiences of, and responses to, visual arts are inherently subjective, which points to the need of studying them properly with qualitative methods designed for this purpose. One helpful way to learn about impact and influence could be engagement with interdisciplinary media studies work on audience response and fandom (see Dodds, 2006; Dittmer & Dodds, 2008). Bond’s endurance and global popularity challenge us gambling scholars to expand our understanding of gambling-related visual and popular cultures for a more diverse and neutral picture of complex socio-cultural phenomena and people’s relationship with these. Bond offers one example of bridging qualitative gambling research with other interdisciplinary endeavors in social sciences and the humanities. A general research-philosophical and methodological lesson from gambling in the James Bond films is to put it all in for intellectual cross-pollination.

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