

Chapter

“Pay attention, 007”: The evolution of Q in the Bond film franchise

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The Q character has long played an important role in the long-running and popular James Bond films as the resident gadget master at the British spy agency MI6, and the head of the fictional Q branch. As part of the hugely successful Bond formula, Q has so far featured in twenty-two of the twenty-five official franchise films from the 1960s through to the current Daniel Craig era. Beginning with *From Russia with Love* (Terence Young 1963), Desmond Llewellyn played the same character for over thirty-five years, during which time Q stays a stereotypical boffin, whilst growing visibly older alongside five different Bonds. However, in the latest Bond films *Skyfall* (Sam Mendes 2012), *Spectre* (Sam Mendes 2015) and the upcoming *No Time to Die* (Cary Joji Fukunaga 2021), Q is re-envisioned for the era by casting Ben Wishaw as a much younger geek or nerd, compared to Craig’s aging agent 007. Yet no matter how old or young Q is, throughout his appearances in the films, he is an enduring ally to Bond. Up until very recently Q had attracted less focused attention from Bond scholars than the other MI6 supporting characters like the Secret Service boss M and assistant Money Penny, possibly because the emphasis has rather been placed on the technology and gadgetry (see Willis 2009; Omry 2009). The aim of this chapter is instead to “pay attention” to the evolution of representations of Q, which also has a strong element of continuity in relationship to other components of the Bond film formula, especially James Bond as a hero. The chapter will argue that as a type of scientist-inventor Q has played a continued but shifting role in the Bond films. This argument will draw on and extend

my previous discussions to understand the Q character in particular (Hines 2018 and 2019). The later focus of the chapter is to explore how Q has recently undergone some significant transformations that shed light on both the approach taken in the Craig era Bond films, and the portrayal of the fictional scientist in popular culture. In order to do so the chapter must first outline the role of Q in the context of the Bond film and previous Bond eras.

It should be noted that although Q stands for Quartermaster, the character is not only in the Bond films to supply MI6 with equipment, even if he did start out this way. In the first two films the character is referred to as Major Boothroyd, and he appears in the mission briefing scenes with Bond in M's office. This character name was first used by Bond author Ian Fleming in *Dr No* (1958) for the Secret Service armourer, after he received a letter from the real-life firearms specialist advising him that the literary Bond's gun needed to be upgraded to something more appropriately manly (Macintyre 2008, 113). In the first Bond film *Dr No* (Terence Young 1962) Peter Burton plays Boothroyd in a scene that closely follows the novel, in which he swaps Bond's Beretta gun for the signature Walther PPK weapon. In *From Russia with Love*, Llewellyn replaced Burton in the role of Boothroyd, and this time the character introduces Bond to his Secret Service issue briefcase created by Q branch, complete with a number of concealed gadgets. By the third Bond film not only is Llewellyn actually credited as Q at the end of *Goldfinger* (Guy Hamilton 1964), but he is also introduced outside of the office setting in MI6 headquarters, and given a longer briefing scene of his own with Bond. This period of the first three films did much to establish Bond on screen, and *Goldfinger* is especially recognized for its foregrounding of technology (Chapman 2007, 49 and 81). From *Goldfinger* onwards, a typical Bond film usually contained at least once scene between Q and the latest incarnation of Bond, displaying the gadgets that Q branch invents under his leadership. In reference to Llewellyn's

definitive Q and the role the character plays in the Bond films, the Official James Bond 007.com (2007) website recognizes that “Q is so much more than the Quartermaster his initial stands for.” Rather, the website calls Q “An endlessly inventive scientific genius, he runs a department within British Intelligence that stands at the forefront of technological innovation and often lifesaving ingenuity.” This chapter uses this official description of Q as the basis for approaching the character primarily as a type of scientist-inventor.

It is also noteworthy that Q is an especially prominent example of the scientist figure featuring as a defining part of a major media franchise. The Bond franchise has consistently relied upon science and technology to provide topicality and extravagant spectacle, and each of these has a vital role to play in the formula. However the Bond films are described, according to genre, as spy films, action adventures, or whether the Bond films constitute a specific genre in their own right, there is a strong focus on the distinct formulaic strengths developed by the franchise (Chapman 2007, 16–19). The key generic component of the Bond film is obviously the character of Bond himself, but other characters like Q, the Bond villain, and the Bond girl are expected within the formula. With this in mind, it is worth acknowledging upfront that, besides the Q character, more examples of the scientist figure can be seen in the Bond films over the years, most often within the confines of these other two well recognized character types of the Bond villain and Bond girl. The mad scientist Bond villain and the Bond girl scientist have appeared a number of times in the Bond films and fit scientist stereotypes found in other popular genres, including portrayals common in horror and science fiction respectively (Hines 2019). It is beyond the scope of this chapter to review these portrayals, although they can also be analyzed in order to further consider how the Bond films might reflect and shape our past and present understanding of the scientist. In contrast with the portrayal of the mad scientist Bond villain and

the Bond girl scientist, which usually changes with every film, Q is the only regularly recurring scientist character in the franchise and merits some further discussion.

Boffin scientist Q

The phrase “pay attention” has become iconically associated with Q as portrayed by Desmond Llewellyn, and contributes to the stereotyping of Q as a boffin character.¹ This phrase is first spoken by Q in the film version of *Goldfinger* during the briefing scene when he introduces Sean Connery’s Bond to his new car in Q branch. This scene contrasts with the scene that directly precedes it, where Bond is able to show-off his knowledge and sophistication through his connoisseurship of brandy during a formal dinner meeting in the traditional surroundings of the Bank of England. Instead, in the Q branch scene, Q’s superior know-how and expertise in technology is emphasized in a different kind of setting, as Bond is sent to visit the workshop in MI6 headquarters. In their initial exchange Bond asks Q where his vintage Bentley is, only to be told unsentimentally that “it’s had its day unfortunately.” In replacement, Q informs Bond that he will now be using the new Aston Martin DB5, a change which clearly signals the need to modernize. The many gadgets and modifications which are later put to spectacular use by Bond in an action chase sequence, including the bullet-proof shield, concealed machine guns and the ejector seat, are explained to him by Q during the extended briefing. It is particularly important that this scene takes place in the workshop and testing areas of Q branch, but it also creates a template for the future relationship between Q and Bond, and the interpretation of the Q character as a boffin-type scientist-inventor.

There have been connections made between Llewellyn as Q in the Bond films and the boffin stereotype. In particular, Robin Jones (1997) writes about the emergence of the boffin scientist character in post-war British films from 1945 to 1970. In his research Jones (1997, 31) tracks this fictional stereotype back to the public image of scientists in films about World War II, when the prestige of government scientists and scientific research was at a high. According to Jones, the stereotypical boffin is defined primarily through his occupation and his difference from those he works with, meaning that although he is a government insider, he is also something of an outsider. This means that the boffin can at times be portrayed as a somewhat ambivalent figure, characterized by his “obsession with work, a taste for lecturing” and a degree of “separateness” from others. Most commonly however the boffin scientist is a heroic character when positioned on the side of Britain (Jones 1997, 40). The archetypal boffin discussed by Jones is Barnes Wallis, as portrayed in the British World War II film *The Dam Busters* (Anderson 1955). Jones (1997, 41) further discusses how, as a Cold War creation, Q conforms to this stereotype, since he shares the characteristics of the boffin, displaying the same kind of excitement over the ingenuity of inventions that differentiates him, especially from the Bond character. When surveying the scientist in popular culture, cultural historian Christopher Frayling (2005, 194) similarly classifies Q as a “good” boffin scientist who plays by the rules in a way that also separates him from the bad, mad scientists such as Dr No who, by contrast, illustrate the consequences of what happens when science and technology fall into the wrong hands.

In *Goldfinger*, the scene between Q and Bond in the workshop visually separates Q from other settings that make up the MI6 building, like the elegant office of M, where the character had previously appeared in *Dr No* and *From Russia with Love*. The introduction of this

workshop location in *Goldfinger* is significant because Q branch is clearly part of but also set apart from the rest of the Secret Service. The *mise en scène* of his workshop – as functional rather than elegant, separate if not outside the agency, and inhabited by a team of white-coated technicians and experts engaged in all kinds of experiments – contributes to the portrayal of Q as head boffin. This first workshop-based scene (re)presents Q as a behind-the-scenes hero who Bond is required to meet with. The previous dinner scene in the Bank of England ends with M's instruction that Bond should obtain his equipment from Q branch in preparation for his mission to find out how Auric Goldfinger smuggles gold across borders, and this is followed by a transition to find Bond already in situ watching a custom-built gadget being tested. When Q and Bond walk through the department towards the Aston Martin car, passing technicians calmly trying out various other dangerous but entertaining weapons and gadgets, the scene reveals Q branch to be a comparatively utilitarian environment. The workshop is gray-walled, and appears windowless and isolated, presumably hidden from the outer world in order to conceal its function. Within Britain's intelligence service, Q branch is represented as a research and development facility that is a version of the scientists' secret laboratory. In particular, the secret basement laboratory is recognized to be a characteristic feature of the mad scientist film, representative of the dangers of the mad scientist operating outside of the scientific community (Weingart 2003, 284). However, the crucial difference to note between the mad scientist and a boffin scientist like Q in the Bond films is that the secrecy of Q branch is sanctioned by the British government and Q is commissioned to carry out his experiments for MI6, making a vital contribution to the missions that field agents undertake to defeat megalomaniac villains (Hines 2019, 117).

When Q repeats the same phrase “pay attention” in subsequent gadget briefings during the Roger Moore, Timothy Dalton and Pierce Brosnan eras, this has the effect of paying homage to the past, and providing continuity with earlier Bond films. The *Octopussy* (John Glen 1983) Q scene, for example, takes place inside the Indian headquarters of the British Secret Service. This time Q is thoroughly irritated by Moore’s Bond, given that he has unexpectedly been summoned to India to provide equipment out in the field. The scene repeats the conventions established by *Goldfinger*, where technicians experiment with some amusing prototypes, and Q introduces Bond to his latest gadgets. These include a pen that Q tells Bond to give his full attention, since not only is it filled by an “ink” mixture (of nitric and hydrochloric acid) capable of dissolving metal, but it also contains a receiver and ear piece that will allow him to listen in to conversations. When Moore’s rather light-hearted approach to Bond was replaced by Dalton’s more brooding interpretation in *The Living Daylights* (John Glen 1987), the Q scene was an important element of the film that was reassuringly familiar. By extension at this time, the inclusion of the scene and the continuity of the Q character speaks to the continued though ever-shifting relevance of the scientist in popular culture. During the customary scene in the workshop, Q refers to Bond by his professional code number, and sternly reminds him to take notice of a tutorial on the new key ring that has been modified to respond when he whistles. Q branch has specially programmed the key ring to respond to a wolf whistle from Bond in acknowledgement of his reputation as a playboy, which before has tended to provoke Q’s exasperation and the delivery of this type of admonishment.

However, this sense of continuity and the persistence of the boffin stereotype does not mean that the part played by Llewellyn is totally unchanged for some thirty-six years in Bond film after Bond film. Over time, there is inevitably some change to the appearance of Q,

underscored by the growing emphasis on comedy. To some extent this has its origins in *Goldfinger* in the humorous glimpse into Q's workshop and the verbal exchange where Q's seriousness about his inventions is in contrast to Bond's joking behavior, but the humor becomes more and more evident in the Q scenes afterwards. In the Moore era Bond films it is notable that Q is increasingly used in the straight man role to provide comic relief, turning the workshop scenes into a double act. At times he also delivers some cringe-worthy one liners inspired by Bond's sexual exploits – the remark “I think he's attempting re-entry, sir” at the end of *Moonraker* (Lewis Gilbert 1979) when Bond and Holly Goodhead are caught together is a rather crude innuendo from Q. In fact, there is a general correlation between Q as a source of humor and Llewellyn aging in the role as the series progresses. During the Connery and Moore years, Q is still a peer to Bond, even if his often earnest manner and tweedy dress emphasize his stereotypical boffin traits in contrast to Bond's much cooler field agent. In the Dalton era, the difference between Q and Bond is more marked, as the age gap between them has become significant. Llewellyn's Q is clearly a lot older than Dalton's Bond in *The Living Daylights* and *Licence to Kill* (John Glen 1989), bringing a paternal quality to the relationship and providing some light relief in what is otherwise a much darker era of Bond films. This association is developed in Llewellyn's final three Bond films alongside Brosnan to express a particular affection for Q. In *The World is Not Enough* (Michael Apted 1999) Brosnan's Bond looks worried when Q mentions that he might be about to retire from his job as the head of Q branch. This happens to be an especially poignant scene since Llewellyn died shortly after the film premiered. This scene in the film is largely played for comedy however, including sight gag gadgets like weaponized bagpipes, and introducing John Cleese in the role of Q's sarcastic and slapstick assistant, jokingly referred to by Bond as R.

It should be briefly mentioned that Cleese officially became the next Q in *Die Another Day* (Lee Tamahori 2002), the last Bond film in the Brosnan era. His promotion from the role of assistant in *The World is Not Enough* to replace Llewellyn as Q in *Die Another Day* although short-lived, temporarily had the effect of heightening the comedy further (Willis 2009, 173). Like his predecessor, Cleese's Q is rather arrogant and self-assured in his attitude towards his inventions, and he is annoyed by Bond's joking comments. The scene between Q and Bond in *Die Another Day* also depends on some visual humor based around gadgets from past Bond films, which are collected in Q branch with others, including a newly customized Aston Martin. The distinctive comic persona of Cleese is very much in keeping with familiar aspects of the Q character and scenes, relying heavily on the continuation of the boffin stereotype. As it turns out, the next transition from the Brosnan era into the Craig era has far greater implications for the evolution of representations of Q in the Bond films. The remainder of this chapter focuses on the new Q of the Craig era films, and further examines to what extent the character negotiates change and continuity.

New scientist Q

It was another ten years after *Die Another Day* before Q next appeared in the Bond films, when in 2012 *Skyfall* shifted the scientist-inventor character toward technology genius and a new take on fieldwork. Along with other formulaic elements, Q was conspicuously absent when the franchise was rebooted with Craig as Bond. The long absence of the Q character was unprecedented, though he was not in Moore's first Bond film *Live and Let Die* (Guy Hamilton

1973). The absence of Q is most likely connected with the “back to basics” reintroduction of Bond and the relative downplaying of the role of technology in favor of physical action, especially at the beginning of the Craig era (Chapman 2007, 241, 250). Weapons are still in evidence in *Casino Royale* (Martin Campbell 2006) and *Quantum of Solace* (Marc Forster 2008), but there are no Q scenes in either of these films to introduce gadgetry. However, after the two film gap, Q’s return was highly publicized and reported on during the advance promotion for *Skyfall*, when the franchise also celebrated its fiftieth anniversary. This was part of a wider strategy whereby familiar elements of the Bond iconography were (once again) re-imagined in order to freshen up the franchise. In 2012, a promotional still from the forthcoming film was released showing Ben Wishaw as Q. Wishaw is seen standing in front of a huge monitor with Craig posed some way behind him. The image re-establishes the Q character as a tech wizard, and shows him using technology with Bond looking on. At first glance, what is also evident from the still image is that for the first time Q looks a lot younger than the Bond character. The production still for Q gave other important information about what could be expected from the new take on the character. This Q is decidedly geeky looking in a brown jumper, shirt and tie under a V-necked cardigan and wearing black, thick-framed glasses. The image suggests a Q who is computer-savvy and surprisingly stylish, dressed differently from Bond in his tailored suit. The still pictures the new Q looking more like a young and modern nerd or geek than an old-school boffin type.

This reimagining of Q as a geek or nerd in the Bond franchise reflects a larger cultural trend related to the fictional scientist hero in twenty first century film and television, in response to the real-world of technology (Ball 2012). The IT boom since the 1980s and the dawn of the Internet in the 1990s began a new cyber-culture which gave greater value to technological

knowledge in the digital world. As a reaction to this, scholars and media commentators note the accompanying reappropriation of the labels geek and nerd, shifting from an insult referring to poor social skills to become a sign of cultural capital accepted by the mainstream (Bell 2013). It is argued that words like nerd and geek have increasingly been used and to some extent reclaimed to reflect more positive associations than they did in the past, and the nerd or geek can now hold hero status in popular culture. Over the same period, Roslynn D. Haynes observes a shift in how popular media portrays scientists. According to Haynes (2017), in the last two decades “a new kind of hero” has emerged (333); “the new scientists of twenty-first-century literature and film” (339) as she characterizes them. Surveying this and other studies of the popular image of scientists, David A. Kirby (2017, 293) similarly comments that “the prevalence and nature of scientist stereotypes have changed over time”, and “the portrayal of scientists in popular culture has shifted from odd and evil to predominantly positive.” Additionally, he contends that “the past twenty-five years have given rise to the hero and the nerd as the dominant stereotypes” (293).

The rise of the nerd or geek stereotype and the shift from negative to positive associations is noticeable in the Bond films. During the Brosnan era, the geek made a less than favorable appearance in *GoldenEye* (Martin Campbell 1995) in the form of Russian computer programmer Boris Grishenko, played by Alan Cummings. Grishenko has computer skills and is a talented hacker involved in villain Alec Trevelyan’s plan to hijack the Goldeneye satellite. Typical of the villains’ henchmen in Bond films, Grishenko is an exaggerated and amoral character. He reinforces negative aspects of a toxic male geek stereotype by looking untidy in appearance and demonstrating antisocial behaviour. He is shown to be egocentric, self-confident and also is arrogantly mocking of his fellow programmers (especially Natalya Simonova, who uses the term

“geek” in a derogatory manner in response to his lewd jokes at her expense). In the film, Grishenko is described as a technician rather than a scientist, but nearly twenty years later *Skyfall* draws on the new, more positive interpretation of the stereotype of the geek to re-establish the character of Q. Like Grishenko, the new Q of *Skyfall* is a talented hacker who brags about his computer skills both during his initial meeting with Bond, and later on when he boasts that he invented the fail-safe protocols that the villain Raoul Silva is using. “I’ll hazard I can do more damage on my laptop sitting in my pyjamas before my first cup of Earl Grey than you can do in a year in the field” Q confidently states to Bond in assertion that technology has taken over the world. Yet, unlike Grishenko the new Q is fashionably nerdy rather than untidy, and he is far from being presented as an amoral hacker-for-hire. In *Skyfall* Q’s technical expertise and the technological assistance from Q branch become especially valuable given the challenges of cyber-espionage that now face the Secret Service.

Given the expectation that was built around the return of Q in *Skyfall* it is significant that the scene in which he and Bond meet up for the first time is themed around the old and the new. The meeting scene introduces Q as a fresh young newcomer in contrast to Craig’s Bond as an experienced, but now possibly outdated, 00 field agent. They first meet publicly in London’s National Gallery rather than in the MI6 headquarters. Bond is surprised when the young man he is sat next to in the art gallery introduces himself as his new Quartermaster. The verbal exchange between them that follows this directly references Q’s youthful appearance: “you still have spots” exclaims Bond. According to Bond “youth is no guarantee of innovation.” However, Q has already remarked that “Age is no guarantee of efficiency.” This public meeting between Q and Bond occurs in front of Turner’s 1838 painting of ‘The Fighting Temeraire’. Sitting side by side, looking at the old warship being tugged away by a small but powerful new steam boat, Q

voices the obvious connection that can be made between the painting and the vulnerability of Bond's position by making the brag that he is more effective with his computer than the traditional field agent. During this exchange, the quick wit of the new Q makes him a verbal match for Bond, and the initial meeting quickly (re)establishes the essential elements of antagonism, playful humour, mutual respect, trust and affection that may be expected based on the earlier Q scenes. Later on in this scene, Q assigns Bond his palm-activated gun and a miniature homing device. These are relatively simple gadgets because, as Q unapologetically scoffs when Bond looks unimpressed by them: "Were you expecting an exploding pen? We don't really go in for that anymore." This is a reference to a device given to earlier Bonds in *GoldenEye* and the unofficial *Never Say Never Again* (Irvin Kershner 1983), classic Q inventions from previous missions. When Q stands up and leaves, wishing Bond luck and reminding him to return the equipment, Bond mutters to himself "Brave new world." This might well be interpreted as an indirect aside to the audience about what this updated Q could represent for the Bond character, and by extension, the film franchise (Hines 2018, 47).

The theme of new versus old is further illustrated by the reintroduction of Q branch. In *Skyfall*, Q is mostly seen operating from the secret bunker that provides the makeshift MI6 headquarters after Silva destroys part of the agency building at Vauxhall Cross. This is in many ways a fitting temporary home for the government department's head boffin; when talking to Bond, Bill Tanner describes the underground location as Churchill's bunker, evoking World War II associations. Yet the Q branch of *Skyfall* is populated with dozens of monitors and a team of technicians focused on cyber security, led by the young Q confidently standing in front of the largest screen, as shown in the publicity still. This relationship between new and old is a bigger theme of *Skyfall*, which in particular explores the threats of aging and physical vulnerability to

Bond's heroism, but in the end emphasizes his resilience and also the relevance of MI6 no matter what the challenges or difficulties (Dodds 2014). In *Spectre*, another challenge is made to Bond's agency when a new British intelligence organization is created by merging MI5 and MI6 to make the Joint Security Service. This organization is headed by Max Denbigh, also known as C, and operates out of the Centre for National Security building. The new building is a shiny glass tower, located on the River Thames opposite the former MI6 headquarters, which is left in (clearly symbolic) ruins after the explosion in *Skyfall*. Under these circumstances as M Mallory has returned his MI6 office to the familiar territory of Whitehall, but Q opts to stay underground, somewhere by the river. According to Tanner as he escorts Bond to the new working environment: "Q wasn't exactly feeling at home in Whitehall given the current merger, so he set up shop here, away from prying eyes." Part of the Q branch depicted in *Spectre* closely resembles the workshop of old Bond films, including vehicles and weaponry in different stages of construction. There is also a lab with piles of books and papers and several desks where Q has been working on all kinds of high-tech gadgetry, which showcases his interest in invention. However, this is complemented by long lines of workstations and monitors to display the operating systems that realize Q's new digital world.

There are other changes as well as continuities in how Q assists Bond on missions in *Skyfall* and *Spectre*. Firstly, it can be argued that the old distinction between the home base and the field agent, which previously was central to both the Bond formula and the heroic identity of Bond, is adjusted in the Craig era (Leach 2015, 35). According to Klaus Dodds (2015, 218), "Fieldwork is essential to Bond's identity, and his craft depends on his ability to negotiate a diversity of places and contexts in which his physical and social skills will be tested." In previous Bond eras this ability to negotiate context and place is generally not shared by the

supporting characters like Moneypenny, Q and even M, who are not field agents. Writing about why fieldwork matters to Bond, Dodds adds that “The fieldwork undertaken is often improvised, and one where he is largely trusted to complete his mission independently” (218). In the past there are some occasions when, rather than staying at the home base of Q branch, Q goes to join Bond out in the field in the Bond films. This first occurs in *Thunderball* (Terence Young 1965) when Q travels to the Bahamas to supply Bond with his equipment. There are similar appearances in other Bond films over the years, but this assistance with fieldwork goes furthest in *Licence to Kill*, when Q arrives in the fictional Isthmus City to help Dalton’s Bond who has become a rogue agent. The new Q plays much the same broad role in *Spectre*, demonstrating his loyalty to Craig’s Bond by helping him to undertake a rogue mission. However, there are also some differences in the nature of this supporting role. In *Spectre* Q is more actively involved in the mission than ever before, having disregarded orders in order to assist Bond in achieving his own objectives. Q meets Bond in Austria, where he avoids being captured by the enemy and decodes a ring, revealing the existence of the criminal organization SPECTRE. In the tense chase sequence in Austria Q is put to the test in the field and displays skill by outwitting the SPECTRE operatives pursuing him.

Previously in the Bond films, the fieldwork setting is somewhere that the boffin Q is literally made to look out of place in comparison to the Bond character as the supremely confident secret agent. In contrast to Bond’s ability to dress and act the part in any situation, a defining characteristic of the boffin scientist is the quality of not quite belonging and the separateness from others, mentioned earlier (Jones 1997, 41). This is often emphasized by the clothing and appearance of Q during missions. In the Connery era, for example, when Q makes a trip out in *Thunderball* to deliver Bond his field equipment in hot climates it is notable that

compared to Bond, Q is dressed much less stylishly, having abandoned the suit that is otherwise his work wear. Bond's casual outfit is a well-fitted shirt and trouser combination, whereas Q stands out more like a tourist in shorts and a shirt. Yet in *Skyfall* and *Spectre*, there are some scenes where the new Q is shown to be no less fashionable or culturally competent than Bond. In the *Skyfall* art gallery meeting scene when Q challenges Bond's relevance and claims the importance of technology, his youthful self-confidence is matched by his casual but fashionable geek chic attire of an oversized fishtail parka, jacket and glasses. In *Spectre*, when Q meets Bond at the Hoffer Klinik in Austria, he fits in the environment in ways that Bond does not. The Hoffer Klinik is a trendy Alpine medical clinic, where Bond is made to look unusually out of place when his regular drinks order – a vodka Martini – is rejected by a bartender, who informs him that alcohol isn't served there. It is at this moment that Q appears at his side and casually steps in to change the order to a healthy “prolytic digestive enzyme shake” without any sign of hesitation.

The second point is also related to fieldwork, and the association between heroic masculinity and the use of technology in the Bond films. The signification of Bond's relationship to technology has been well discussed by scholars, especially in terms of mastery and fetishization. One of Bond's skills is the hands-on use of Q's inventions and gadgetry, as demonstrated in earlier eras by his instinctive ability to operate modified cars (like the Aston Martin BD5 in *Goldfinger*, or the BMW in *Tomorrow Never Dies* [Roger Spottiswoode 1997]) in particular. The emphasis of Q's traditional boffin role in these films is typically on invention and creation, whereas Bond's role is connected to his expertise and knowledge of using techno/cyber culture in the field, meaning “the application of Q's inventions should be left to the expert, Bond” (Willis 2009, 173). Moreover, there is an implied connection between the mastery of the

new technology and male sexual (im)potency (Jones 2015, 210-11; Funnell and Dodds 2015, 128). Yet these past connections between technology and masculinity shift somewhat in the Craig era. Craig's Bond is widely identified as extremely physical rather than technologically-orientated, mostly relying more on his hyper-masculine body and less on spectacular gadgets. Given Bond's prior technological expertise in the field, there is an interesting scene in *Spectre* where Bond is shown to struggle to use the gadgets in the prototype Aston Martin DB10 that he has stolen from Q branch. Bond has taken the car from Q's workshop to travel to Rome, despite being told that although it was originally intended for his use the vehicle has since been reassigned to 009, following Bond's rogue mission to Mexico. For a time during the film's main car chase scene in the streets of Rome, it is Bond's lack of easy mastery of Q's gadgets that is a source of some humor. The humor of this sequence, and the failed attempts to instantly operate the technology, quite obviously play with audience expectations, and compared to past occasions Bond has briefly become inexpert in the application of Q's inventions because they have not been made ready for him. However, it is also true that this role reversal is overturned by the end of the sequence when Bond's selection and application of the right gadgets serves to return both his potency and the old formula.

There is another more sustained shift evident from the signification of Q's more direct relationship with technology, which becomes invaluable in a way that it had not previously been in the Bond films. This is because in his new geek or nerd guise, Q is not only there to keep Bond equipped with the right gadgets, he is far more involved with the use of digital technology. This is software rather than Bond's hardware admittedly, but in both films there are sequences during which Q is shown engaging with the enemy in a virtual arena in order to provide vital technological support for the mission. In *Skyfall* when Q begins to decrypt Silva's laptop, he

observes that it was he who invented the fail-safes that he must get past in order to access the information. He also guides Bond through the London tube network using his computer to access security cameras and digital maps, and later on by request he leaves an electronic trail for Silva to follow as Bond takes M to his childhood home in Scotland. In *Spectre* Q's expert assistance again proves to be important. When Bond asks Q to make him disappear in order to go rogue Q improvises a technical glitch with his nanotechnology tracker. In Austria, he analyzes the SPECTRE ring using his techno-scientific skills, and he plays an essential part in the film's London-set finale, preventing the online launch of the Nine Eyes surveillance programme while Bond is captured and must escape from SPECTRE operatives. There are some limitations to Q's effectiveness and agency in *Skyfall* and *Spectre*, however. In *Skyfall* he makes the mistake of plugging Silva's laptop into the MI6 network, allowing the villain to hack the system and escape captivity. In *Spectre*, after Q has stepped in and ordered a drink for Bond after his own request has been rejected, Bond simply reasserts himself as dominant by dismissively telling the bartender to throw it away rather than consuming it. I have elsewhere discussed in some detail what Q can tell us about Bond's representation of masculinity in the Craig era (Hines 2018); the technological mastery of the new Q is tied to a "techno-masculinity" associated with the geek or nerd stereotype, this shift can either confirm or question the hegemonic heroic masculinity of the Bond character.

Conclusion

For decades Q has been one of most enduring characters in the Bond franchise. As shown in this chapter, there are some continuities and some changes in the evolution of Q in the Bond films, especially in recent years. The chapter also recognizes that the transformation of Q from the classic boffin type to resemble the contemporary and popular image of the nerd or geek hero is reflective of wider shifts in the portrayal of scientists in popular culture. *Skyfall* and *Spectre* reintroduce Q as a scientist-inventor for the old and new Bond of the Craig era. In both films Q uses some of the technology he has invented, and in so doing plays an extended role in Bond's missions. This active involvement by Q can provoke discussion about what it could now mean to talk about fieldwork in the digital age of spying. After all, Q has his own skills that go beyond invention to include expertise that Bond depends on, and the scenes in which he is shown using his technological skills demonstrate that a laptop computer is also a powerful weapon in the modern-day intelligence service. Yet the fact remains that other aspects of this version of the Q character do little to challenge the Bond formula and the dominance of James Bond as popular hero. Craig's Bond is very much a stereotypical action hero in an action-orientated franchise, and as such the scenes that show Q using technology are inevitably cross-cut with sequences of spectacular physical action that demonstrate Bond's (violent, aggressive) hyper-masculinity. In *Skyfall* and *Spectre*, Q's association with the use of computer software rather than the gadgetry and hardware that Q branch provides to Bond might at least raise some interesting questions, but the effect on the established Bond film formula is necessarily limited. It should also be said that, given both films have been heavily criticized for regressive gender politics and representations (see for example Funnell 2015), Q is still portrayed as a white male character. It seems that *No Time to Die* is Craig's last time as Bond, and the film may also mark Wishaw's final appearance in the Q role. Looking forward to what might come next in the franchise, when Bond returns for the

twenty-sixth time it will surely be worth paying some further attention to Q in the new Bond film.

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¹ A further example of the boffin character might be incarnations of the Doctor in the *Dr Who* (1963–) BBC TV series.