

From Blofeld to Moneypenny: Gender in James Bond

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From Blofeld to Moneypenny: Gender in James Bond

**AN EDITED COLLECTION BY
STEVEN GERRARD**



United Kingdom – North America – Japan – India – Malaysia – China

Emerald Publishing Limited
Howard House, Wagon Lane, Bingley BD16 1WA, UK

First edition 2020

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-83867-163-1 (Print)
ISBN: 978-1-83867-165-5 (Online)
ISBN: 978-1-83867-166-2 (Epub)



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Certificate Number 1985
ISO 14001



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

One day, many years ago, my sadly missed colleague Liz came bounding into my office beaming with happiness. In her shaking hands she held two pieces of paper. The first was a handwritten letter from Mary Goodnight, herself, Ms Britt Ekland, and told of her days working on *The Man with the Golden Gun*. The second letter was from Ms Barbara Broccoli, the head of the James Bond family. In it, she wrote of her father Cubby's love of Bond, how the women were portrayed in Eon Productions Bond films, and what they had coming up for the future. When I read these two beautifully crafted letters, my heart leapt. Liz cried, and so did I. Her thesis about the portrayal of women in Bond films was a corker.

The first film I saw in the pictures was *Live and Let Die* when I was three years old. I was taken by my Uncle Perry on its first release at The Scala Cinema, Merthyr Tydfil in 1973. I consider this an excellent introduction to watching films on 'the big telly', and which has violence, sex, mayhem and drug running at its core. And that was just the cinema we were in! My maternal gran loved James Bond movies, and I will never forget the sight of her laughing so much that she fell off the couch at the moment when the roof of Bond's London double decker bus in *Live and Let Die* gets sliced off and crashes onto a chasing police car which then careers into a pond. No wonder I love this particular movie so much. My mum, a real-life M, keeps us all on the straight and narrow. And then there is Q ... my dad, who always goes to see the new Bond films with me on their day of release.

Sean, George, Roger, Timothy, Pierce and Daniel ... you are my heroes.

Bondians. Every one of them.

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About the Contributors

Charlotte Allen's major topics of study and research include: television, film, food writing, celebrity studies and fan studies. She has published and presented work on a wide range of topics including Food writing and gender politics, Jamie Oliver's attempts at inspiring changes to food culture, Idris Elba as a Renaissance man for the twenty-first century, the Imperfectly Perfect Feminism of *Parks and Recreation*, and Matriarchal food cultures. Her PhD: 'Cooks and Chefs: Gender in Modern British Food Writing' looked at gendered writing, celebrity and food cultures in the UK and is currently being redrafted for publication as a book. She currently works at The University of Wollongong teaching Media and Communications.

Octavio Aragão is a Cultural Historian and holds a PhD in Visual Arts Fine Arts, along with an MA in History of Art, both of which were awarded from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. After being Adjunct Professor at Federal University of Espirito Santo, he is now Adjunct Professor at the Communication School at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. He is the author of three science fiction novels: *A Mão Que Cria* (2006), *Reis de Todos os Mundos Possíveis* (2013) and *A Mão Que Pune – 1890* (2018), plus two graphic novels, *Para Tudo se Acabar na Quarta-Feira* (2011) and *Psicopompo* (scheduled for January 2020).

Helena Bassil-Morozow is a Cultural Philosopher, Media and Film Scholar, and Academic Writer whose many publications include *Tim Burton: The Monster and the Crowd* (Routledge, 2010), *The Trickster in Contemporary Film* (Routledge, 2011), *The Trickster and the System: Identity and Agency in Contemporary Society* (Routledge, 2014), *Jungian Film Studies: The Essential Guide* (Routledge, 2016; co-authored with Luke Hockley) and *Jungian Theory for Storytellers* (Routledge, 2018).

Dean Bowman is studying a PhD at the University of East Anglia exploring the extent to which industry structures constrain the types of stories that can be told. He also teaches games studies and cultural studies at Norwich University of the Arts. He has a forthcoming book chapter in the edited collection *Rerolling Board Games* by McFarland Press and on the gamer persona of Jason Statham for Manchester University Press.

James Chapman is a Professor of Film Studies at the University of Leicester and Editor of the *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*. He is a cultural historian specialising in British cinema and television and his most recent books are *Contemporary British Television Drama* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2020), *Hitchcock and the Spy Film: Authorship, Genre and National Cinema* (I. B. Tauris, 2018), *A New History of British Documentary* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015) and *Swash-bucklers: The Costume Adventure Series* (Manchester University Press, 2015). He has been a James Bond fan(atic) since seeing *The Spy Who Loved Me* in 1977. His book *Licence to Thrill: A Cultural History of the James Bond Films* (I. B. Tauris, 1999) was described by *SFX* magazine as ‘intelligent, ludicrous, [and] a bit snob-bish. Bit like Bond, really’.

Llewella Chapman is an Associate Tutor at the University of East Anglia. She has recently passed her PhD titled ‘Representing Henry’s Royal Palace: The Relationship between Film, Television and Hampton Court Palace’, and is under contract with Bloomsbury to write a monograph titled *Fashioning James Bond: Costume, Gender and Identity in the World of 007*.

Wickham Clayton is a Lecturer in Film History and Theory at the University for the Creative Arts in Farnham, UK. He is an Editor of *The Bible Onscreen in the New Millennium: New Heart and New Spirit* (2020), and *Style and Form in the Hollywood Slasher Film* (2015) and Co-editor of *Screening Twilight: Critical Approaches to a Cinematic Phenomenon* (2014). His work focusses on film form and aesthetics, film genre (with some specialisation in horror), cognition and the Biblical epic.

Steven Gerrard is a Reader in Film at Northern Film School, Leeds Beckett University. He has written extensively for *We Belong Dead* Publications and *Hemlock’s Dark Side Magazine* on all-things horror. He has written two monographs: *The Carry On Films*, which looks at the films through an academic eye; and, *The Modern British Horror Film*, that systematically analyses how post-millennium texts such as *F* and *Mum & Dad* reflect a fractured British society. He is an Instigator and Co-editor of *Crank It Up: Jason Statham – Star!* and also Co-editor of Emerald Publishing’s *Gender in Contemporary Horror* series. In his spare time, he longs to be either Status Quo’s rhythm guitarist or the new Doctor Who. He’ll have a long wait.

Claire Hines is a Senior Lecturer in Film and Television at Solent University, UK. Her research and publications focus on sexuality, gender, fantasy and James Bond in the contexts of American and British cultures. She is the Author of *The Playboy and James Bond* (Manchester University Press, 2018), the Editor of *Fan Phenomena: James Bond* (Intellect, 2015), and she has contributed to a number of collections about Bond.

Stephanie Jones is a Lecturer in Film, Television and Media at Aberystwyth University, UK and Editorial Assistant for the journal *Media History*. She

is the Author of several chapters and articles on gender and the James Bond phenomenon.

Natalie Le Clue is a PhD candidate and Lecturer currently teaching in the Department of Media and Communication at Nelson Mandela University in Port Elizabeth, South Africa. Her research focusses on television studies with a particular emphasis on fan studies, fairy tale mythology and elements new media. She is an Avid Researcher and Media Practitioner and is currently in the process of formulating several pieces for academic publication. She currently holds a Master's of Arts in Media Studies (Research).

Jennie Lewis-Vidler teaches at the University of Portsmouth and was previously a Karten Doctoral Outreach Fellow for the Parkes Institute in the University of Southampton. The Parkes Institute is one of the world's leading centres for the study of Jewish and non-Jewish relations. She is interested in British racial, ethnic and national identity, the representation of masculinity in sports such as boxing, and British fascism, primarily the British Union of Fascists. Her PhD thesis titled 'Traveller, Boxer and Fascist: The Identities of Joe Beckett'. It is a case study on the former 1920s heavyweight champion and how his career in boxing and later fascism represented masculinity and identity in Britain in the twentieth century.

Renee Middlemost is a Lecturer in Communication and Media at the University of Wollongong, Australia. Her research focusses on fan/audience participatory practices and how these intersect with celebrity and popular culture. Her recent work has been published in *Celebrity Studies*; *M/C Journal*, the *Australasian Journal of Popular Culture*. She is the Co-founder of FSN Australasia and a Co-editor of *Participations*.

Shelley O'Brien is a Senior Lecturer in Film Studies at Sheffield Hallam University. She gained an MPhil in 2000, entitled *Body-Horror Movies: Their Emergence and Evolution*. She lectures on horror cinema; film music and sound; cult and exploitation cinema; and supervises MA by Research and PhD students. She has published work on killer priests in film; Herschell Gordon Lewis and Tobe Hooper; the music of Goblin in Argento's *Profondo Rosso*; Brian De Palma's *Blow Out*; and a chapter on music function in the *Crank* films starring Jason Statham. Conference paper topics include torture porn, cult cinema, soundscaping in horror, the film music of Riz Ortolani and rape/revenge movies.

Robert Shail is a Professor of Film at the Northern Film School and Director of Research in the School of Film, Music and Performing Arts at Leeds Beckett University. He has written widely on post-war British cinema, often focussing on male stars and representations of masculinity. His more recent work on children's media has included essays on the origins of comic books in the UK and on gender in comic book characters such as Beryl the Peril.

Janelle Vermaak is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Media and Communication at the Nelson Mandela University in South Africa, and teaches in a

varied range of disciplines including, but not limited to, Scriptwriting, Film Studies, Communication Studies and Written Communication. Her primary research interests include fan studies, film studies and television studies. The topic of her PhD was understanding fans of the *Alien* film franchise, and is currently writing a number of works for publication.

Melanie Williams is a Reader in Film and Television Studies at the University of East Anglia. She is the Co-author of *Transformation and Tradition in 1960s British Cinema* (EUP, 2019), and Author of *Female Stars of British Cinema: The Women in Question* (EUP, 2017) and *David Lean* (MUP, 2014), as well as Author of numerous articles on British cinema. She has also Co-edited *Sixties British Cinema Reconsidered* (EUP, forthcoming), *Shane Meadows: Critical Essays* (EUP, 2013), *Ealing Revisited* (BFI, 2012), *Mamma Mia! The Movie: Exploring a Cultural Phenomenon* (I B Tauris, 2012) and *British Women's Cinema* (Routledge, 2009).

Acknowledgements

This book would not have been at all possible without the encouragement, help and patience of Helen Beddow and Charlotte ‘Charlie’ Wilson at Emerald Publishing. My eternal thanks go to them for their unswerving support for this project. They have been the M and Money penny to this project. The writers of this tome also get my eternal thanks for working beyond the call of duty in seeing this collection come to fruition – now we are all a part of the crazy world of James Bond.

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Introduction

Steven Gerrard

Abstract

In 2020, the latest James Bond film will hit cinema screens. The film has been produced by Eon Productions, is based on Ian Fleming's suave, sophisticated super spy and stars Daniel Craig in the title role. With a troubled production shoot well-documented in the media, Daniel Craig often seeming and contradictorily at odds of being both enamoured and loathing with the role, a director leaving through 'creative differences' and numerous screenwriters being drafted in as last-minute replacements or additions, it will be interesting to see how the latest Bond adventure fares both critically and financially.

At their heart, the Bond adventures – originally in Ian Fleming's novels and short stories, and then in their film incarnations before spilling out into newer platforms – offer pure escapism for the reader, viewer, listener and gamer. Set against the backdrop of exoticism in a post-war climate, the stories centre around MI6 Agent, James Bond, stopping enemies of the British Empire in their attempts at world domination. They gave the reader a sense of both an attempt by Fleming/Bond to recapture Britain as an important power on the world stage. Whilst Bond may have sipped martinis as he coolly dispatched the latest despotic tyrant, they also offered up ideas about time, place, culture, the social climate of the period and gender.

This book will focus on numerous aspects of the Bond-catalogue, but in particular paying particular attention to how the portrayal of gender, both in the stories and behind the scenes, has helped shape one of the most significant, important and successful British franchises.

Keywords: James Bond; gender; Ian Fleming; 007; film; literature

Introduction

The world of Ian Fleming's James Bond is one of intrigue, violence, mayhem, sex and derring-do. Written in the post-war period, with rationing and conscription still hanging over a Britain reeling from the devastation of the Second World War,

From Blofeld to Moneypenny: Gender in James Bond, 1–8

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doi:[10.1108/978-1-83867-165-520201001](https://doi.org/10.1108/978-1-83867-165-520201001)

they offered through their exoticism and danger a sense of pure escapism for their readers. With locations such as Monaco, the Caribbean, Switzerland, America, Eastern Europe and the Bahamas as their backdrops, and certainly far away from the grey skies of Britain during the post-war malaise, they gave readers both a travelogue of the ever-shrinking world with its new Pan-Am jetliners crossing the globe, and a reflection of Britain's political position on the world stage.

Britain had been smashed during the war years and was only just rallying itself into focussing on regeneration and reconstruction. In a rapidly changing world, the country was facing a challenge: on the one hand it still saw itself as an Empire, but that empire was struggling to hold onto its borders; also, it was struggling to both define and redefine itself on the world stage amidst the new superpowers of America, China and the USSR, against the backdrop of the Cold War.

During, and after the Second World War, Britain's home policy of better social care seemed to signal a desire for reform and change across the country's changing cultural landscape. Certainly, the Beveridge Report of 1942, the Education Act of 1944, the Labour Party's landslide victory at 1945's general election, and the introduction of the wonderful National Health Service seemed to reflect this reform. However, despite the forward strides made by the Labour Party, the 1950s saw the Conservative Party dominate British politics. When Churchill gave way to Anthony Eden in 1953 and was then succeeded by Harold MacMillan in 1957, the phrase that the British public had 'never had it so good' seemed to reflect a growing re-emergence of a sense of nationalistic pride in the country, befitting right-wing politics. Better, more affordable housing, higher rates of employment, cheaper goods, improved manufacturing conditions, and a return to a rise in the 'normality' of living standards seemed to echo this statement. The late-1950s saw the first 'package holidays', where families did not have to travel to their local seaside resort but could daringly venture to farther flung fields like Europe.

When MacMillan stated that the 1960s would herald a decade of 'the winds of change', where colonial rule was coming to an end, Britain's Empire began to fragment. The Suez Crisis of 1956–1957 clearly indicated that the country's belief that it was still a power on the world stage was severely called into question. The word 'Commonwealth' began to be used, suggesting, stressing and indeed exacerbating the fact that the British Empire had all-but collapsed. However, as the decades moved forwards, so the move from the colonial approach of Us and Them (at least in terms of Empire) was now altering to incorporate a feeling of Us and Us, whereby Commonwealth citizens were actively encouraged to come to reside and work in Britain. This multicultural approach was not without its problems. Resistance was met from some quarters, with racial tensions running high on numerous occasions. There was another form of social resistance found within the country itself: the rise of the teenager in the 1950s and 1960s, a process that was very much encouraged by the advent of popular music and affordable fashions up and down Britain's high streets, certainly began to reflect the idea that Britain was constantly changing, moving forwards positively to an arguably more-enlightened period than before. The rise of this youth culture, most noticeable in the fashion statements of mods, rockers and Teddy Boys, clearly showed

that the youth of the period wanted to distance themselves further and further away from their parents' generation.

It was amongst this rapidly changing, social background that Ian Fleming, an English author, journalist and naval intelligence officer wrote of the adventures of the British Secret Intelligence Service Agent, James Bond (codenamed 007, and with a licence to kill). Fleming wrote the first Bond novel, *Casino Royale* in 1952, which was published in 1953. Following an initial successful print run, Fleming followed up the adventure – in which the spy is assigned by the British government to play baccarat against, and bankrupt, the SMERSH paymaster, Le Chiffre – with 11 Bond novels and two collections of short stories, between 1953 and 1966. Whilst Bond's adventures played out across the globe, Fleming saw the spy as being of what he considered a quintessential British spirit: where Empire, Government and the ruling elite held sway over their minions, and as such Bond was both an employee and reflection of their outlook.

Fleming drew his inspiration for Bond from numerous and varied sources. He named his creation after the author of *Birds of the West Indies*. Fleming felt that Bond's name did not underpin the character's traits: rather, it reflected his coldness and ability to work under extreme pressure without any form of hindrance. He told *The New Yorker* (1962) that:

When I wrote the first one in 1953, I wanted Bond to be an extremely dully, uninteresting man to whom things happened; I wanted him to be a blunt instrument ... when I was casting around for a name for my protagonist I thought by God [James Bond] is the dulllest name I ever heard.

However, despite this 'uninteresting' approach to the character, it was clearly modelled on Fleming's attitudes and actions during World War Two, in which he worked for Naval Intelligence Division, and which formed portions of the Bond narratives and situations.

Bond was described by Vesper Lynd in *Casino Royale* as looking like the singer, actor and composer Hoagy Carmichael but that 'there is something cold and ruthless' about him. In *Moonraker* (1955), this is again mentioned by Gala Brand, who says he is 'certainly good looking ... The black hair falling down over the right eyebrow. Much the same bones. But there was something a bit cruel in the mouth, and the eyes were cold'. Physically, Bond has remained fairly consistent. He is Caucasian, in his late-30s, slim, has a three-inch scar on his right cheek, black hair, six feet tall and weighing 168 lb. He is a chain smoker, drinks heavily, takes pills to calm his nerves and is a womaniser. Unlike the films, in which he is almost always portrayed as having incredible physical stamina, Fleming saw him as much more grounded in reality, with him being both mentally and physically drained on numerous occasions.

Bond's background is given through an obituary in *You Only Live Twice* (1964), where M (his departmental head) writes that Bond was born of a Scottish father (Andrew Bond) and a Swiss mother (Monique Delacroix). Bond had been orphaned at the age of 11 after his parents were killed in a mountain climbing

accident. After his parent's death, Bond was sent to live with his aunt, Charmain. He was sent to Eton but was expelled for his relationship with a maid. After a period of unrest, Bond joined the Royal Navy, eventually being promoted to the rank of Commander. He was recruited by the British Secret Intelligence Service and earned his '00' moniker after killing two enemy agents.

Fleming's Bond canon, in order of publication, is: *Casino Royale* (1953), *Live and Let Die* (1954), *Moonraker* (1955), *Diamonds are Forever* (1956), *From Russia with Love* (1957), *Dr No* (1958), *Goldfinger* (1959), *Thunderball* (1961), *The Spy Who Loved Me* (1962), *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* (1963), *You Only Live Twice* (1964) and *The Man with the Golden Gun* (1965). The collections are *For Your Eyes Only* (1960) and *Octopussy and The Living Daylights* (1966). Following Fleming's death in 1964, other writers have contributed to the Bond canon. Kingsley Amis, writing as Robert Markham, wrote *Colonel Sun* (1968), John Gardner's series stretched from *Licence Renewed* (1981) to *Cold* (1996) which also incorporated the novelisations of both *Licence to Kill* (1989) and *GoldenEye* (1995). Likewise, Raymond Benson's input included a variety of novels and short stories that were published from 1996 to 2002, and Sebastian Faulks and Jeffery Deaver have also furthered Bond's adventures. There have been numerous 'spin off' approaches, too. These include a series of Young Bond novels, started by Charlie Higson's *Silverfin* (2005) which was later turned into a graphic novel of the same name. Fleming's (and others) stories were also serialised in daily/weekly cartoons for *The Daily Express* (see Shail's chapter in this collection), whilst M's erstwhile secretary, Miss Moneypenny had a series of standalone, though canonical, adventures in *The Moneypenny Diaries* by Samantha Weinberg, writing under the pseudonym of Kate Westbrook, which ran from 2005 to 2008. Graphic novels by the Dark Horse and Dynamite Entertainment publishing houses gave spins to the Bond oeuvre, including the adventures of CIA agent, and Bond friend, Felix Leiter, Miss Moneypenny and M. With the advent of gaming platforms, games such as *James Bond 007* (Parker Brothers, various platforms, 1983), *GoldenEye 007* (Rare, Nintendo 64, 1997), and *From Russia with Love* (Electronic Arts, various platforms, 2005) amongst others, clearly showed that, like Bond's extraordinary gadgets from Q-Branch, the spy could move seamlessly from one arena into another.

In 1962, Eon Productions launched their film franchise based (often very loosely) on Fleming's work. It is with these films that James Bond will forever be indelibly linked. They are: *Dr No* (Terence Young, 1962), *From Russia with Love* (Terence Young, 1963), *Goldfinger* (Guy Hamilton, 1964), *Thunderball* (Terence Young, 1965), *You Only Live Twice* (Lewis Gilbert, 1967), *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* (Peter R. Hunt), *Diamonds are Forever* (Guy Hamilton, 1971), *Live and Let Die* (Guy Hamilton, 1973), *The Man with the Golden Gun* (Guy Hamilton, 1975), *The Spy who Loved Me* (Lewis Gilbert, 1977), *Moonraker* (Lewis Gilbert, 1979), *For Your Eyes Only* (John Glen, 1981), *Octopussy* (John Glen, 1983), *A View to a Kill* (John Glen, 1984), *The Living Daylights* (John Glen, 1987), *Licence to Kill* (John Glen, 1989), *GoldenEye* (Martin Campbell, 1995), *Tomorrow Never Dies* (Roger Spottiswoode, 1997), *The World is Not Enough* (Michael Apted, 1999), *Die Another Day* (Lee Tamahori, 2002), *Casino Royale* (Martin Campbell, 2006),

Quantum of Solace (Marc Foster, 2008), *Skyfall* (Sam Mendes, 2012), *Spectre* (Sam Mendes, 2015), *No Time to Die* (Cary Joji Fukunaga, 2020). There were two unofficial Bond movies: *Casino Royale* (Ken Hughes, John Huston, Joseph McGrath, Robert Parrish, Val Guest and Richard Talmadge, 1967) which was a kaleidoscopic mess at best; and, *Never Say Never Again* (Irvin Kershner, 1983) which was a remake of *Thunderball*, which had been co-written with Fleming by Kevin McClory who still held rights to certain elements from that story. For Eon, Bond has been played by Sean Connery, George Lazenby, Roger Moore, Timothy Dalton, Pierce Brosnan and Daniel Craig, whilst Connery played him in *Never Say Never Again*, and David Niven portrayed Bond in the calamitous original *Casino Royale*.

Of course, with the films being such huge box office successes, so other filmmakers jumped on the Bond-bandwagon. The films *Our Man Flint* (Daniel Mann, 1966) and its sequel, *In Like Flint* (Gordon Douglas, 1967) saw toothy James Coburn play the titular character as a Zen-Buddhist studying super stud who worked for Zonal Organisation for World Intelligence and Espionage. Seen as homage to Bond, Donald Hamilton's *Matt Helm* adventures, in which Dean Martin plays the title role, spun out over four increasingly dire outings. British filmmakers got in on the act, with the parodic *Hot Enough for June* (Ralph Thomas, 1964), the affectionate *Carry On Spying* (Gerald Thomas, 1964), *Modesty Blaise* (Joseph Losey, 1966) and *Zeta One* (Michael Cort, 1969), whilst much more serious approaches were found in *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* (Martin Ritt, 1965) and *The Ipcress File* (Sidney J. Furie, 1966). Bond-spoofs ran riot on the Continent, with the Italians churning out such calamities as *008: Operation Exterminate* (Umberto Lenzi, 1965), Mario Bava's two *Dr Goldfoot* movies, and even *OK Connery* (Alberto di Martino, 1967) which starred Sean Connery's brother Neil as Bond's younger brother, and earlier Bond actors such as Lois Maxwell, Bernard Lee, Anthony Dawson and Adolfo Celi. France saw Jean Marais play Fantomas in a trilogy of 007 inspired outings (1964, 1965 and 1967), and Jean Dujardin was Agent OSS 117 in *Cairo, Nest of Spies* and *Lost in Rio* (both Michel Hazanavicius, 2007/2009). Arguably the most successful movie parodies remain Mike Myers' trilogy of *Austin Powers* films (1997, 1999 and 2002) which mercilessly deconstruct whole set pieces from Eon's productions.

Television also followed the Bond formula. Incredibly successful series such as *The Man from U.N.C.L.E* (1964–1968) had its own *The Girl from U.N.C.L.E* spinoff (1966–1967); *Mission Impossible* (1966–1973) spawned their seemingly never-ending film franchise, headlined by Tom Cruise; and on British television there was mix of out-and-out fantasy with *The Avengers* (1961–1969) and *The New Avengers* (1976–1977) playing alongside much more serious fare with *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* (1979) and *The Little Drummer Girl* (2018), which are a small portion of work in the genre by the author John le Carre.

Much has been written about James Bond and his creator. A quick desktop scan and a look at each chapter's references will reveal a variety of tomes dedicated to the franchise. Arguably three of the most important pieces of work that are dedicated to Bond are Del Buono and Umberto Eco's *Il Caso Bond/The Bond Affair* (1966), which is focussed primarily on ideas about narrative and character

construction; Tony Bennett and Janet Woollacott's cultural, textual and contextual analysis, *Bond and Beyond: The Political Career of a Popular Hero* (1987), which surveys the scope of Fleming's hero as both a political and ideological construction through which messages of empire, Cold War politics and détente, and feminism are channelled; and James Chapman's *Licence to Thrill: A Cultural History of James Bond* (1999/2007) that documents how Bond came about, whilst focussing on an engaging, in-depth study of the novels and the films. Chapman charts how both changed in responses to both the cultural climate and the film industry at the time of their construction. For a collection of essays, the reader is directed towards Christoph Lindner's *The James Bond Phenomenon: A Critical Reader* (2009). In this, his contributors examine Bond as both literary and filmic texts, and include such ideas as studying empire, consumption, racial sovereignty, body politics, video gaming and sexualising Bond. From a fan-perspective, and certainly focussing on the ongoing developments in the field of current research about James Bond, [Hines' *James Bond* \(2015\)](#) offers a new and exciting glimpse into how fandom studies can take a subject like Bond and discuss ideas about cultdom, phenomenology and queering Bond through contextual arguments and analysis.

This edited collection, through an in-depth examination and analysis of various case studies taken from numerous perspectives, engages with challenging debates and arguments about the changing roles of gender both within the Bond canon and in the wider society. For example, Allen's chapter focusses on the role of M, Bond's Head of Department, but from an historical perspective, where Judi Dench's portrayal is linked to Queen Elizabeth II's reign of power. The collection will also offer new perspectives on the way that Bond has been fashioned by the modern era of downloading and streaming across multiplatforms, whilst simultaneously deconstructing them through gender-based investigations that reflect back to the audience alternate/new/radical interpretations of themselves.

As far as this edited collection is concerned, the main overarching theme is that of gender. Whilst much has been written about gender studies, and here one is directed to such work as the more-traditional Lacanian theories of scopophilia where (men and) women are objectified and exploited through a combination of both patriarchal order and pleasure of looking, and Laura [Mulvey's 'Male Gaze' \(1975\)](#), the chapters in this collection take ideas from these and others arguments into their own, and either reflect or expand upon them. The role of women in the Bond films, for example, has often been the focus of (often derogatory) discussions in the area. Likewise, the masculinity of Bond has been covered elsewhere by such writers as [Arnett \(2009\)](#). But whilst sterling work has been done in these areas that open up debates about the way that gender has been promoted in the Bond canon, it was felt that a refocussing of energies and approaches was needed, rather than revisiting older work for the sake of it. Therefore, the 'usual suspects' one might associate with a collection that examines ideas about gender in James Bond might be noticeably absent from this collection, and as such, apologies are offered in advance of you working your way through this anthology. For ease of use, the book has been divided into three distinct sections.

The first section of the collection looks at James Bond himself. James Chapman posits the idea that Bond is a reflection of the British Empire. This is then

followed up by Lewis-Vidler's arguments that Bond not only reflects empire and post-colonial ideas, but that through the eyes of 'White' Patriotism in diametric opposition to the status of 'Other' and Bond locations, he is indelibly linked to them. Shail's examination and overview of Bond's adaptations into both newspaper comic strip and then graphic novel opens up the canon to both a reflection and variation on Fleming's original creation, which considers male heroism as a response to changing societal pressures. Clayton examines the role of Bond in the shambolic folly that is 1967's *Casino Royale*, which contrasts numerous varieties of masculinity against limited representations of femininity. Clayton deconstructs the four 'James Bond' characters in the film, offering up ideas about how they are portrayed against the backdrop tapestry of the females in the film. The final chapter of the section is written by Llewella Chapman in which she clearly defines Bond as a sharp-dressed man in relation to his sharp suits.

The second section examines the role of women both in front of and behind the camera. Bassil-Morozow's approach to Soviet woman offers a fascinating insight into characters such as Xenia Onnatopp at a time when the Cold War was still thawing. O'Brien has taken the music, songs and title sequences of Bond and through a detailed analysis shown that, whilst there is ample evidence to suggest that these sequences are objectifying women, nobody does it better. The collection then switches to behind the camera and Williams' chapter takes an in-depth look at how Johanna Harwood, a forgotten writer in the Bond filmic canon, shaped and created much of the spy's overall attitudes. Allen has taken the role of M and given it a twist: with Judi Dench's portrayal now fixed firmly across both the 'old' James Bond and the Daniel Craig-era reboot, she contemplates the notion that M is, in fact, a reflection of Queen Elizabeth II. Aragão's chapter focusses on the role of Moneypenny in the franchise, and focusses on how she remains calm, cool and collected under pressure.

The final section of the collection is titled Nobody Does It Better, and with good reason. The novels transformed into films, the films into cartoon strips and graphic novels, and then onto newer platforms such as Playstations and Xboxes. But Bond is more than that. Therefore, this section looks at areas around Bond. Hines and Jones offer up ideas of how the Brosnan era of Bond was reflected in Lads Mags. Gerrard examines the role of the villain across the range of films, focussing on Blofeld as his main case study. Bowman's deconstruction of Bond as an avatar in the game *GoldenEye* offers the reader the tantalising glimpse into the way that 'we' become 'Bond' as a role-player in the platform game. Vermaak and Le Clue's chapter offers a fascinating glimpse into the relationship between Bond and Miss Moneypenny as seen through the eyes of online fandom. The final chapter, by Middlemost, posits the idea that over the last few years, with Daniel Craig both loving and loathing his time as Bond in seemingly equal measures, media hype surrounding Idris Elba becoming Bond has almost destroyed his chances.

As this collection was being finalised, media stories surrounding the troubled production and production shoot of *No Time to Die* – with working titles such as *Shatterhand* being bandied about in the popular press – had become commonplace. Headlines like 'James Bond 25: Title and TRAILER release date revealed?

Here's the latest rumour' (Kitchener, *Express*), 'Prince Charles reportedly invited for James Bond cameo in Bond 25 film' (Hills, *Standard*), and 'Bond's number is up: black female actor "is the new 007"' (Harmon, *The Guardian*) simultaneously ramped up the rumour mill and focussed on ideas about gender, sexuality and race in the new film. Only time will tell if Bond really will go beyond, or as has been the case with both *Skyfall* and *Spectre*, looked back to the past and Bond's heritage for their narratives, characters and adventures. In many ways, Bond has always, despite pressure to adapt to contextual pressures remained steadfastly resolute: Bond is *always* Bond, and despite attempts to update the formula, or address gender imbalances with stronger roles given to women, and with the current climate opening up discussions and ideas about transgendering, it will likely remain at least at its core, conservatively the same.

So, to conclude this introduction, it remains my pleasure, as editor of this collection, to welcome you into the complex, compelling world of the portrayal of some aspects of gender in James Bond. You may be both shaken and stirred by what you read, but above all else, this collection has been created for you to enjoy.

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