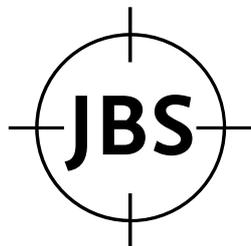


# ***The Many Facets of Diamonds Are Forever: James Bond on Page and Screen*, edited by Oliver Buckton**

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Oliver Buckton's new anthology, *The Many Facets of Diamonds Are Forever: James Bond on Page and Screen*, is acutely aware of its subject's reputation. As Tom Cull writes in his foreword, "For *Diamonds Are Forever* to be sandwiched between *Moonraker* and *From Russia With Love* makes it [...] one of the most overlooked novels in Fleming's writing career" (vii), while Guy Hamilton's 1971 film adaptation is similarly lost between the singular entries *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* (1969) and *Live and Let Die* (1973). Though many of the essays in Buckton's collection find a basis in the same set of essential early works of Bond criticism (principally Umberto Eco's "Narrative Structures in Fleming" and Bennett and Woollacott's *Bond and Beyond*), they serve to extend the field of James Bond Studies into new disciplines and futures. The authors whose work is collected within – including familiar names such as James Chapman and Matthew B. Sherman, alongside several newer contributors to the field – deploy affect theory, sound design, historiography, queer theory, feminism, postmodernism, and even food



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studies to prove that the academic potential of James Bond research is unlimited, even among Bond's "minor" adventures.

As a volume, it continues the vital work of book-length explorations of individual Bond works, following Charles Helfenstein's behind-the-scenes histories and Andrew McNess's *A Close Look at A View to a Kill* (2015). However, the diversity of backgrounds and fields represented results in a direct engagement with the confounding aspects of *Diamonds Are Forever*, rather than an attempt to bring forth a unified Bond narrative. The result is a collection that, while revisiting the same subjects, transcends the dangers of repetition or redundancy and ultimately repositions the two versions of *Diamonds Are Forever* as, in Buckton's words, "unique landmarks of the James Bond Series" that "offer intriguing challenges for readers and critics in the twenty-first century" (11).

To structure its diverse array of contributors and theories, Buckton organises *The Many Facets of Diamonds Are Forever* into three sections, each presenting a set of interrelated frameworks. The first looks at intertextuality in its many forms. Elyn Achtymichuk-Hardy's "The Scorpion as Emblem of Affect in *Diamonds Are Forever*" finds the entire affective world of the novel within its opening scene: to grapple with the complexities of *Diamonds* and the Bond franchise, Achtymichuk-Hardy proposes a move beyond reading for metaphor and instead centering the active processes by which "the real capability of emotion to shape bodies, ideas, and objects" (14) recurs and circulates within the text. She provides both a thorough analysis of the strands of emotion that run through the novel, as well as a compelling introduction to the tenets of affect theory. Similarly, Jesc Bunyard's "The Sounds of *Diamonds Are Forever*" maps the film's motifs of doubling and presence through an analysis of how voices – seen and unseen – strengthen or undermine a character's mythic status. James Chapman expands on the nuanced analysis of *Diamonds Are Forever* from his essential *License to Thrill* (1999/2007) with "Transforming Bond: *Diamonds Are Forever* in its Contexts". With a wealth of historical details, Chapman explores the economic and cultural contexts that created *Diamonds*, noting that "[f]or the cultural historian [...] it does not suffice merely to critique films – or any products of popular culture – for their cultural or ideological shortcomings. It is also incumbent upon us to attempt to explain how and why a film turned out the way it did" (54). Concluding this section is Buckton's "James Bond, Meet John Blaize: Identity Theft and Intertextuality in Ian Fleming's *Diamonds Are Forever* and *The Diamond Smugglers*," which provides evidence that Fleming intended John Blaize, a character from his nonfiction report on contemporary diamond smuggling, to be a literary replacement for his more famous J.B.

The second section addresses matters of gender and sexuality in *Diamonds*. Though all forms of Bond media have inspired ongoing discussions around their representations of women and queerness, *Diamonds Are Forever* is notable for featuring one of Fleming's most fully-realized heroines, Tiffany Case, alongside the sadistic homosexual killers Wint and Kidd. Grant C. Hester's "My Adversary, Myself" seeks to reconcile Fleming's choice to depict homosexuality at a time when it was still outlawed in the United Kingdom with the subtextual queerness of his protagonist, arguing that it "provides a unique parallel and vantage point for an examination of Bond himself" (88). Jennifer L. Martinsen's "The Devolution of Tiffany Case" and Ihan Amanatullah's "The Eyes of Tiffany Case" each shine light upon an atypical "Bond Girl" whose transition to film fell victim to cinematic objectification. As with Achtymichuk-Hardy's analysis of the scorpion, Amanatullah refracts the politics of the entire novel through Fleming's characterization of Tiffany, while Martinsen draws upon feminist film theory and a richly-detailed close reading to illustrate how cinema can disempower female subjects. Alongside Boel Ulfsdotter's "The Bond Girl Who Isn't There: The Tiffany Case" in *For His Eyes Only: The Women of James Bond* (2015), it is apparent that Tiffany and *Diamonds Are Forever* are central to understanding the gender politics of Fleming and James Bond.

The final section gathers essays with an eye to consumption. Matthew B. Sherman's "Attitudes Are Forever: America Disdained" situates *Diamonds* within the Bond series' negotiation of America and Britain's "special relationship" during the latter's diminishing empire. Sherman provides extensive evidence from the novel, its film adaptation, and even Fleming's travelogue *Thrilling Cities* to thoroughly examine the mixture of fascination and derision with which Fleming and EON Productions have depicted the United States. Similarly, Mark David Kaufman's "The Desert of the Real: *Diamonds Are Forever* as a Hollywood Novel" addresses the novel's vision of American "violence to the real" (156) through the lineages of novels about Hollywood myth-making and Baudrillardian simulacra. To close, Edward Biddulph's "A Happy Selection: The Representation of Food and Drink in the Book and Film of *Diamonds Are Forever*" elucidates the cultural, historical, and symbolic importance of dining within the notoriously detailed Bond franchise.

Over the course of *The Many Facets of Diamonds Are Forever*, the novel and film versions of *Diamonds* emerge as being full of distinct traits that, in their best moments, highlight the contradictions that make Bond and Fleming such interesting sites of academic discourse. Its subjects are a pulp novel written by an

author experiencing what Buckton calls “growing discontent with his literary hero” (71) and a reputation for sprawling description that is nonetheless revealed as meticulously researched and structured, and its film adaptation that, according to Chapman, “set the tone and style that would steer the series through the next decade” (55) while presenting, in Martinsen’s words, a female lead who is “anything but modern, updated, or progressive” (113). The lack of a unified perspective among the collection's contributors will only serve to strengthen the reputation of *Diamonds Are Forever* as a worthwhile, rich text and to bolster its recognition within the ongoing project of James Bond Studies.

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