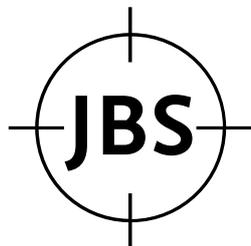


The Playboy and James Bond: 007, Ian Fleming and Playboy Magazine, by Claire Hines

(Manchester University Press, 2018, pp. 209)

KEVIN MCCARRON

Toward the end of her book, Claire Hines quotes from *Playboy* magazine upon the release of *Skyfall* in 2012: “Fifty years of Bond films forever changed the definition of the modern man, and *Playboy* has been with 007 every step of the way – publishing Ian Fleming, photographing the Bond girls and celebrating the lavish lifestyle” (193-194). Hines does an impressive, very meticulous job of tracing these steps: from 1953 to 2017. Like other commentators on Bond she notes that *Casino Royale* was published in 1953, the same year that Hugh Hefner launched *Playboy*. Hines is more interested in the films than in the novels, but she writes well on generic precedent in Fleming’s novels and suggests Bond is a less clubbable and far less amiable character than those of Dornford Yates and “Sapper”, in particular. She also notes that *Playboy* had its roots in *Esquire* magazine but took advantage of (and, indeed, helped to create) a more complicit *zeitgeist* in order to emphasise female sexuality far more than its predecessor had been able, or willing, to do. *Playboy* also benefited from an America affluent as never before



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and in need of sophisticated guidance in how to spend that money. Hines writes detailed and illuminating chapters on such issues as “the literary Bond”, “the consumer Bond”, and “Bond women” and is always tightly focused on the relationship between the Bond novels and films and the ideology and the marketing strategies of *Playboy*. She is, on the whole, more interested in economics than in politics, but then so are Bond and *Playboy*.

The magazine devoted a lot of time to Bond, in all his manifestations, and was the first American publication to print one of Fleming’s stories, “The Hildebrand Rarity”, in March 1960. The book is full of interesting insights into just how the Bond phenomenon and *Playboy* are connected; although it was only really ever on the surface and almost entirely in terms of male consumerism. Although *Playboy* was never quite as superficial and shallow as its numerous detractors have claimed over the decades (Hines notes the numerous, celebrated literary figures who published work and submitted to interviews in the magazine), *Playboy* did use Bond to *sell*: luggage, vodka, watches, gadgets, male grooming, especially razors and after shave, clothes, even leisure and holidays; although Bond himself in the novels or in the films is rarely described as being on holiday or even enjoying a weekend break, and never an uninterrupted one. *Playboy* was particularly interested in using Bond to promote the luxury car market. The value of Bond is summed up very well in a comment made by an Aston Martin executive in 1965, following the release of *Goldfinger*: “the publicity value of the Bond DB5 has been greater than the amassed value of all the racing the company has done from the beginning” (90). *Playboy* sold to men who could afford expensive cars and watches and clothes (or certainly aspired to) because they had no domestic responsibilities. *Playboy* was, overall, hostile to marriage and Bond’s bachelor status was inseparable from his appeal for such readers; he satisfied the perennial male desire to enjoy sexual pleasure without any emotional entanglement. The inseparable commodification of women suited the ethos of the magazine and there is an interesting intertextual photograph of George Lazenby holding up the February 1969 *Playboy* centrefold from the film *On Her Majesty’s Secret Service* (1969). There is considerable irony in the image as in this film, of course, the committed bachelor does actually marry, albeit only for a few idyllic hours.

Hines quotes effectively throughout from established Bond scholars such as James Chapman and Jeremy Black, Bond screenwriter Richard Maibaum, and from a range of cultural commentators such as Barbara Ehrenreich and Umberto Eco, as well as from *Playboy* historian Bill Osgerby. There are, of course, differences between Bond and the implied reader of *Playboy*. Although cartoons were a very important part of the magazine’s appeal Hines has little to say about

them; sensibly, as Bond is virtually devoid of humour. *Playboy* actively encouraged men to cook, if only on the grounds that it made seducing women easier, but Bond has very little interest in actually cooking; he is almost entirely a consumer of excellent food and wine. Hines notes that while *Playboy* was initially sympathetic to the hippie movement of the late 1960s, endorsing its rejection of bourgeois morality, it eventually joined Bond in its dismissal, even contempt, for long-haired radicals. The perceived dirtiness of the hippies and, just as importantly, their aversion to work rendered them unacceptable to the dedicated, well-groomed, always-showering Bond, as well as to the clean, solvent, hard-working *Playboy* reader.

What Hines cannot reconcile (and nobody could) is the unbridgeable distance between the pleasure-loving, aspirational readers of *Playboy* and Bond's ruthlessness and occasional cruelty. The "lavish lifestyle" that *Playboy* admires so much in Bond's life, and sells to its readers, is predicated on an ideological position unimaginable to the readers of the magazine. Bond's occasional hedonism is that of a man who can expect to be killed any day in the service of his country. *Carpe diem* is an acceptable motto for Bond; less so for aspirational consumers in the most affluent nation on earth. Not only is Bond a killer, but he always works tirelessly, skillfully, and resourcefully for something far greater than himself. His relationship with M and with England is impressively uncomplicated; Bond is a patriot and a puritan. Ultimately, though, both Bond and *Playboy's* readers do share a respect for hard work and, crucially, for enjoying the fruits of that labour. In this sense, Bond has a great deal more in common with Americans than he does with the British, and his enormous appeal there has as much to do with this mutual work ethic as it does with the girls, the gadgets, and the guns.