

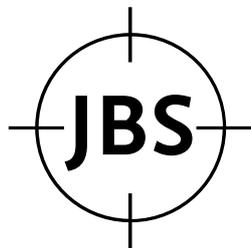
The World Is Not Enough: A Biography of Ian Fleming,

by Oliver Buckton

(Rowman & Littlefield, 2021, pp. 375)

LUCAS TOWNSEND

Oliver Buckton's new book aims to find a place among the other Ian Fleming biographies, those by John Pearson and Andrew Lycett that are well-researched, and the much wider range of whimsical and sensationalist cultural critiques by others (Edward Abel Smith's *Ian Fleming's Inspiration: The Truth Behind the Books* (2020) is perhaps the most representative of these). However, in differing from his forebears, Buckton sets out to construct a new biographical critical study of Fleming (a methodology which has fallen out of vogue in the wider academic community) and demonstrate the crossovers between the real-life Ian Fleming and the influence his childhood, employments, friendships, and romances have had upon the literary creation of James Bond. While Buckton's biography often uses literary analysis from which to explicate the "character" (xi) of Ian Fleming, he also provides a great deal of important historical and literary context, incorporating new and insightful archival material from the papers of Maud Russell and Phyllis Bottome, as well as the Jonathan Cape Archives and several others. Buckton's *The World Is Not Enough* thus presents a fresh perspective on the personal life of a man who has begun to "merge" (287) with the identity of his own fictional creation.



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One of the important points Buckton introduces early in the biography is the influence of Phyllis Bottome (a writer) and Ernan Forbes Dennis (a former intelligence agent) on the young Ian Fleming. Having attended their language school in Kitzbühel, Austria, Ian found parental figures in these two teachers, who filled the void left by Fleming's own cold mother and dead father. Bottome especially encouraged Fleming to start writing for himself. Buckton's best literary analysis in these early chapters comes from his interpretation of Fleming's short story "Octopussy", which incorporates Fleming's memories of Kitzbühel in a "rather bitter self-portrait" (51) that features Bond as "executioner of [Fleming's] own surrogate" (53), Major Dexter Smythe. Buckton points out that Bottome and Dennis were disciples of psychologist Alfred Adler, whose school of thought argues that children form a "life plan" (33) at an early age that they pursue throughout their lives; Fleming's plan, according to Buckton, "was based on a fantasy of success and superiority that would raise him to a position of dominance" (34). This "life plan" would bring him into conflict with what Adler terms a "*gegenspieler*" (41) or family rival, which Fleming found in the form of his more attractive and more successful brother, Peter. Buckton demonstrates the impact Peter had on Fleming's choices throughout his life, and how Fleming's perceived failings in life in relation to his brother were, in some way, made up for by his literary creation, the "fictional, idealized 'superman' version of himself in James Bond" (49). Buckton expands: "Only this alter ego could provide proof of his superiority, his capacity as a spy, virility as a hero, and importance to his nation's security" (ibid.).

Buckton does, however, make a questionable move via his inclusion of what he calls "speculative dialogue" (xi) in three places within the biography. These "speculative dialogues" are, in essence, fictional accounts of how Buckton imagines some of the conversations in Fleming's life may have proceeded; Buckton hopes to "make this dialogue consistent with [his] understanding of Ian Fleming's character, history, and relationships" (ibid.). How successful these screen-written snippets of Fleming with Admiral John Godfrey, his brother Peter, and his wife Ann are is matter of personal taste. In some places the fictional narration can feel jarringly unnatural, but I commend Buckton for his boldness in introducing the biography with these imaginative scenes, and I believe they do a good job of showing the crossovers between the real-life Fleming and the fictional Bond that may otherwise be missed by the reader of a more traditional biography – such as Fleming referring to his mother Eve as "M" and requesting a vodka martini ordered *à la* Bond. However, given the prominent insertion of such speculations, I am surprised that there are not actually more of them (no

wartime scene of Fleming in the midst of Room 39's action? No ruminations on the recovery process of Fleming's heart attack?); nonetheless, I think what has been included is not overwhelming and remains tasteful in service of Buckton's intended purpose.

The most notable contribution to Fleming scholarship are Buckton's inclusions of previously unseen photographs and archival snippets that offer greater insight into Fleming's relationship with women. For example, Buckton's use of the war diaries of his lover Maud Russell (*A Constant Heart* (2017)) and the papers of the Maud Russell Estate offer an insight previously unseen in other Fleming biographies to date. The photograph of Fleming in naval uniform from Russell's private papers is particularly evocative (95), and according to Buckton, the importance of Russell to Fleming cannot be understated, as Russell gifted Fleming the £5000 with which to purchase the land for and construct his house Goldeneye in Jamaica (139). Buckton demonstrates through such inclusions that the influence of other women in Fleming's life – his mother Eve, wife Ann, teacher Phyllis Bottome, and lovers Muriel Wright, Blanche Blackwell, and Monique Panchaud de Bottomes – is reflected in the complex intellectual and emotional natures of his fictional "Bond Girls".

The other important archival addition is Buckton's in-depth discussion of Fleming's unpublished Kuwait travelogue, *State of Excitement*. Although this piece was struck down by the Kuwaiti government for being too romantically exotic and insensitive to the modernising country – and, as such, scholars are forbidden from photographing or quoting directly from the resultant typescript – Buckton's summary and analysis of the content leaves little to be desired, and gives a profound image of the contents of *State of Excitement* without the reader having to actually travel to the Lilly Library in Indiana to view it. This analysis, along with perceptive commentary on Fleming's other (often overlooked) travel writings, *The Diamond Smugglers* and *Thrilling Cities*, helps to highlight Fleming's well-developed journalistic skills, making this chapter the best of Buckton's biography.

One could complain that some of the individual chapters themselves are, in some places, repetitive (the repeated emphasis laid up those connections between Fleming, his interpersonal relationships, and Bond, for instance), but I would argue that this is actually beneficial to the Fleming newcomer. Indeed, it may be best to read Buckton's biography as a series of biographical essays on Fleming, with the reader "dipping into" the individual chapters as needed and by interest. In other words, the very readable *The World Is Not Enough* is quick to pe-

ruse, and as such, currently stands as the most approachable biography to Fleming. Buckton's achievement is thus in composing a biography that is far less intimidating to the average reader and filmgoer, who from here, can easily springboard into the denser world of academic criticism during our current renaissance of Ian Fleming Studies.