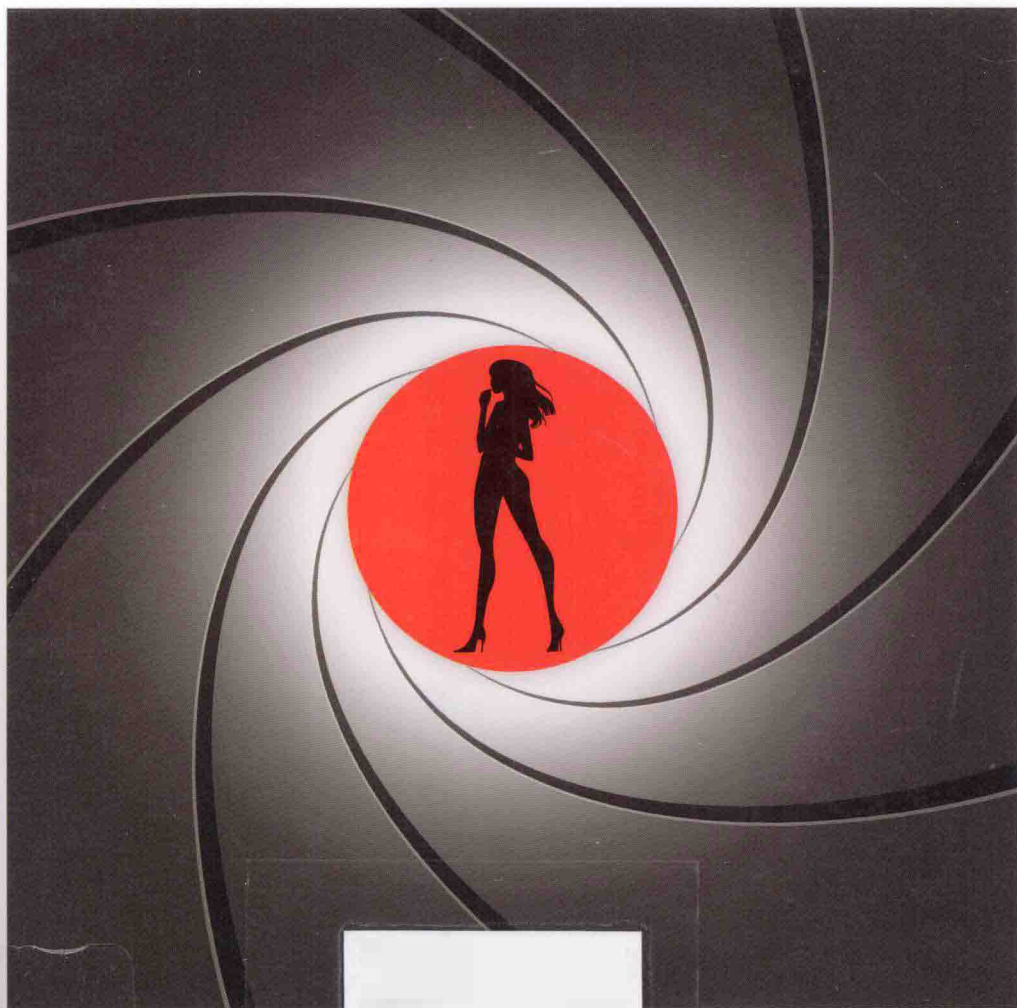


SHAKEN & STIRRED

THE FEMINISM OF



JAMES BOND

ROBERT A. CAPLEN

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Robert A. Caplen

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Library of Congress Control Number:	2010911633	
ISBN:	Hardcover	978-1-4535-1282-1
	Softcover	978-1-4535-1281-4
	Ebook	978-1-4535-1283-8

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In loving memory of Eleanor and Harry

Preface

It's estimated that half the world's population has seen at least one James Bond movie.

—Playboy¹

I still don't understand the appeal of the Bond films, though I respond to them as faithfully as millions of other people.

—Vincent Canby²

For nearly half a century, James Bond has maintained a place at the “forefront of popular culture, continuously . . . reflect[ing]—and often anticipat[ing]—changing social attitudes, major developments in world politics, and shifting trends in popular fiction and cinema culture.”³ The cultural saturation is nothing short of a phenomenon⁴ of “a rather peculiar kind.”⁵ Numerous books catalogue the Bond films, both the “official” EON Productions films as well as two “unofficial” installments: *Casino Royale* in 1967 and *Never Say Never Again* in 1983. Former members of the Bond cinematic community have penned tributes, behind-the-scenes reflections, and other works celebrating both the Bond phenomenon and their unique insights into the world’s most identifiable secret agent.

A new wave of scholarly critiques of the original Ian Fleming novels has also emerged, and these works share bookshelves with pictorial celebrations of the Bond Girls, encyclopedias chronicling every imaginable gadget from Q Branch, role playing guidebooks, and new editions of Fleming’s works. In the realm of multimedia, digital trivia dossiers, numerous video games supported by different platforms, and interactive DVD board games supplement special—and now ultimate—edition DVD movies, which are enhanced with extras and bonus features. Such a wide selection from which the serious Double-O-Seven aficionado can choose begs the question: why another book about Bond?

One answer is simply that there can never be enough of a good thing. The Bond franchise continues to generate interest and intrigue by keeping story lines fresh even after the collapse of the iron curtain, shifts in the global balance of power, and the waxing and waning of social movements. Taken together, the twenty-two “official” and two “unofficial” Bond films represent the second highest-grossing franchise in cinematic history, eclipsed only by the *Star Wars* trilogy and its recently released prequels.⁶ Thus, Bond is not, as M rebukes in *GoldenEye*, a so-called “relic of the Cold War.”⁷ Instead, he continues to stir interest. Or does he?

While the Double-O-Seven aficionado world appears to grow by leaps and bounds, commentators announced in 2005 that there was “a crisis surrounding the world’s biggest movie franchise. No one wants to take on the role of James Bond.”⁸ In fact, the decision by producers not to pursue a fifth film with actor Pierce Brosnan, thereby rendering the 2002 release of *Die Another Day* his last mission, generated little interest for the role within the acting community.⁹ After hanging up his tuxedo, Brosnan remarked that the Bond franchise was “on [its] last legs,” an observation that some believed would thrust the series back into same predicaments it encountered following Timothy Dalton’s *Licence to Kill* and which precipitated a six-year production hiatus¹⁰ during which “Bond had a near-death experience.”¹¹ In fact, after Daniel Craig signed on to portray Bond for four films in October 2005,¹² *Entertainment Weekly* offered its own recommendations “to freshen the 43-year-old series before it dies another day.”¹³ Despite well-publicized outrage from Bond fans over the selection of Craig, *Casino Royale*, the twenty-first film in the series that was released in late 2006, employed a backward- and forward-looking story line that invoked the spirit of the original Fleming novel and confirmed that “007 doesn’t die, he just regenerates.”¹⁴

A second answer is that little scholarship has been written about the cinematic and literary worlds of Bond. Analyzing the Bond phenomenon beyond the surface may seem somewhat unconventional, or even trite. In fact, James Chapman began his study of the Bond franchise by asking, “Why should we take James Bond seriously?”¹⁵ Other scholars, such as Christoph Lindner, advanced the position that “we can no longer afford *not* to take James Bond seriously.”¹⁶ Notwithstanding Lindner’s statement, I personally encountered numerous expressions of incredulity when I embarked upon this endeavor in 2000: to contribute and perhaps help establish, together with a few other works I discovered along the way, a serious field of Bond intellectualism. Despite my and other scholars’ efforts, we cannot escape taking a defensive stance to justify why Bond should be accorded appropriate attention. This work is no different, as will be seen, in its efforts to argue why critical studies of Double-O-Seven are necessary, particularly since I