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### 007 does Vegas: the diamond standard and the experience economy

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**007 Does Vegas:  
The Diamond Standard and Experience Economies**

**Joyce Goggin**

In the movie version of his tragic career, Bugsy Siegel pitches his megalomaniacal plan to build a gaming resort in Las Vegas, by making the somewhat obtuse argument that people “dream about sex and money” (*Bugsy*). Siegel’s resort, still known as the Flamingo casino and hotel, was erected as a fantasy get-away to a “place where gambling is allowed [...] a palace, an oasis, a city” – and all lit up by the Hoover Dam, located just 35 miles south of the neon capital (*Bugsy*). So when his associates ask how a desert gambling resort, “the Hoover Dam and fucking are connected,” Siegel unhesitatingly replies “air-conditioning!” thereby forcefully bringing together all of the economic and environmental factors that have made Sin City what it is today (*Bugsy*).

While Siegel’s argument might be surprising, it connects the classic Las Vegas total – “a hotel room, food, gambling, lounge acts, and ‘commercial sex’” – with the New Deal hydro-electrical project that would become a major feature of the US economy and life-style (Gottdiener et al. 78). Through such fortuitous combinations of economic, geographic, and political mechanisms operating over several decades, Las Vegas has grown up with an idiosyncratic profile, built around its role as an entertainment centre in what seems like the most unlikely place in the world for such an undertaking. The result is a city that feels more like a business than a location, composed from a fiscally expedient collection of deracinated elements slapped together in the middle of nowhere. No longer famous only for gambling, Las Vegas now also evokes images of gigantic fountains, hourly gushing water in an otherwise parched environment; the Coney Island Rollercoaster outlined against the Excalibur’s faux medieval castle; or, importantly, the themed family entertainment centre and casino that served as a set for Britain’s sexiest spy in *Diamonds Are Forever* (1971).<sup>1</sup>

In what follows here, I will investigate the industrial and economic role that Hollywood has played in the matrix of history, politics and entertainment that I have just described, through the specific example of *Diamonds Are Forever*. This outing of the Bond canon, filmed partially in Las Vegas, will also serve to highlight various features of the entertainment industries of Hollywood and Las Vegas, and the economic

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<sup>1</sup> On the many false “[l]akes, lagoons, bays, falls, canals” that constitute the “conceptual wet dream” behind Las Vegas’ remarkable if appalling relationship with water, see Dow Schull, particularly 124–7. On the jarring views on offer in Vegas, and how “juxtaposition creates a new, curious, and stimulating urban mix” in Las Vegas, see Hess 100–13. See also Anderton and Chase 16–25; and Schwartz 1–13.

interdependence that has grown up between these two cities over the greater part of the twentieth century. As a result of this relationship, the gambling Mecca has been host to a constant parade of Hollywood stars, and both cities have made profitable use of Las Vegas' versatility as a location for popular cinema. Further positive externalities of this feedback loop include the influence exercised by the film industry in normalizing gambling as a middle-class holiday activity, and the major Hollywood-assisted make-over of Vegas in the 70s, when the city had slid into ignominy as the world centre for kitsch and static cling.

More importantly, by drawing on what is perhaps the oddest film in the Bond canon, I will extend my argument to the generalized shift to postmodern production and finance that was occurring just as *Diamonds Are Forever* was being shot in Las Vegas with Hollywood backing.<sup>2</sup> The goal of this essay is then to read the 1971 film adaptation of Fleming's *Diamonds Are Forever* (1956) as a subtle but powerful indicator of a paradigmatic shift in Western economic thinking and culture that impacted heavily on Las Vegas, and one that continues to shape our lives in important ways.

**"It was a stinking town, but all gambling towns are"<sup>3</sup>**

In 'Hot Ice,' the third chapter of *Diamonds Are Forever*, Bond is debriefed by M's Chief of Staff on his assignment in America: "a civilized country. More or less" (Fleming, *DAF* 22). During the meeting, the Chief of Staff attempts to disabuse Bond of his notion that American gangsters are small time ("it's not as if this was Iron Curtain business") by telling him about "Bugsy Siegel [who] got the back of his head blown off because he wanted too much of the take from the Las Vegas operation" (23). While the point of this conversation is to acquaint Bond with the nature of overseas vice and "gambling, the biggest single industry in America" (24), it is also an informed introduction to the history of Las Vegas and the specialized entertainment market it was driving, with the help of the movies, when Fleming wrote the novel.

But amidst all the glamour and lore surrounding Vegas – to which Fleming also contributed with *Diamonds Are Forever* – one wonders what kind of undeveloped, historical landscape Siegel encountered when he "came over to Vegas from the coast [...] and took a look around" (Fleming, *DAF* 166). What voices spoke to the Brooklyn gangster out on that bleak stretch of the Los Angeles highway when he stopped to

2 The Bond films are, of course, not Hollywood productions in the strict sense of the term. However, throughout the series the British film industry has worked in cooperation with the US because "Pinewood Studios in England [...] were characterized by constant financial crisis [...] and the lack of a large enough home market" to support the lavish Bond films (Woollacott 100). United Artists funded the series for many decades and by the 1980s, only the special effects were being produced at Pinewood.

3 Fleming, *DAF* 107.

relieve himself and saw, as in a vision, the Flamingo rising from the desert?<sup>4</sup> Siegel's dream was projected against a tacit history of which one still catches glimpses and odd clues along the Strip, such as the giant images of wholesome Mormon entertainers Donny and Marie that covered the Flamingo in 2009. Their enormous popularity in Vegas is a subtle reminder of the city's past, and the members of the Osmond's religious sect who settled the outpost back in the nineteenth century.

Las Vegas' 'official' past began when the city was founded in 1905, setting off cycles of major and accelerating growth over the rest of the century. A chain of expedient coincidences supported this growth that developers, the mob, and later casino operators, and large entertainment corporations fully exploited. The first productive windfall to hit the city was the Hoover Dam project (1931–1936), which drew workers from all over the US. As developers were keenly aware, these workers would leave the project every weekend, looking for entertainment with government pay checks in hand. To entice this new labour force to gamble and carouse in 'Lost Wages,' the state of Nevada loosened prostitution and gambling laws in 1931, and further enhanced state attractions by reducing the residency requirement for divorce to just six weeks.



Banner on the Flamingo hotel and casino advertising Donny and Marie Osmond.  
Photograph, James Cosgrave.

In 1939, famous Hollywood wife Ria Langham gambled and rode horse back in Vegas during the six weeks in which she awaited her divorce from film star Clark Gable. Since then, countless celebrities have associated themselves with Las Vegas, some

4 This bit of Vegas folklore is attributed to Siegel in *Bugsy* and, in 'reality,' to Thomas Everett Hull who reportedly stopped on Highway 91 to change a flat tire and counted passing cars while doing so (Schwartz 33). The number of passing cars led Hull to expand his El Rancho motel chain, based in California, by adding a motel-casino to the franchise out on the Strip. In either case, David Schwartz suggests that this tale, like so many others about Las Vegas, is probably apocryphal. See *Suburban Xanadu* 221, fn. 1.

becoming virtually synonymous with the city like Elvis Presley and Frank Sinatra, while others have gone there to wed or divorce.<sup>5</sup> Casino owners also formed more purposeful synergies with the film industry in the 1930s in the form, for example, of Helderado, a mock village and rodeo themed around the recently developed Hollywood Wild West concept. A later movie version of *Helderado* (1946), set and shot in Las Vegas and starring Roy Rogers and Dale Evans, further cashed in on the cities' expanding opportunities for co-production, a trend that has produced any number of films set in around Vegas. So, as James Bond's driver tells him, by the time Siegel arrived on the scene with "a lot of hot money looking for investment Vegas was goin' great guns. Town wide open. Gambling. Legalized cat-shops" – and the movies (Fleming, *DAF* 166).

By 1956, when Ian Fleming set his fourth novel in Vegas, "the desert on either side of the road, which had been empty except for occasional hoardings advertising the hotels, was beginning to sprout gas stations and motels" (*DAF* 165).<sup>6</sup> This novelistic account of the Strip's emergence is not, however, entirely encouraging, and Fleming clearly senses the sanitization and disneyfication of Vegas looming ahead, almost forty years on up the road. Although the most intense period of normalization would occur in the 1990s, Fleming wrote of the progressive corporatization of gambling and the small-town penny-ante rooms that were beginning to serve as "trade schools for the industry" (*DAF* 105). More poetically, he explains that the "clerks of the underworld [...] had] settled down" in Las Vegas, where "their old bosses [had] taken charge with licenses hanging on the walls" (*DAF* 105).

By the time Sean Connery got to Las Vegas to star in *Diamonds Are Forever* in 1971 however, the city had already made considerable advances toward going straight and courting wider middle-class recognition. This process had been assisted by Hollywood productions such as Howard Hughes' *The Las Vegas Story* (1952), in which the city was popularised as a get-away location, albeit a slightly criminal one.<sup>7</sup> But Hughes did

5 The list of stars who have actively sought to affiliate themselves with Vegas includes Jane Russell, Frank Sinatra and the Rat Pack, Elvis Presley, Wayne Newton, Debbie Reynolds, Nicolas Cage, George Clooney, James Caan, Cher, Bette Middler and David Cassidy. Elvis and Priscilla Presley were married May 1, 1967 at the Aladdin Hotel in Las Vegas, and Paul Newman and Joanne Woodward were married on January 29, 1958 at the El Rancho Hotel. According to the Reno Real Estate Logic Blog (<http://renorealestatellogic.com/?p=199>), movie stars who have given "a big boost to the divorce trade in Southern Nevada," include Frank Sinatra who divorced his first wife in Las Vegas in 1951.

6 According to David Schwartz, "by about 1952, the designation of Highway 91 as 'the Strip' had become popularly accepted" (10). In other words, Fleming wants to draw our attention to the Strip because, in 1956, it represented the newest, fastest and most exciting entertainment destination in the United States. Hence, when Bond arrives in Las Vegas, he remarks that he and his driver "were just entering the famous 'Strip,'" and later this same driver alerts him when they have arrived at the Strip, to make sure 007 takes note: "Coming into the Strip now [...] otherwise known as the 'Rue de la Pay'. Spelt p.a.y. Joke. See?" (Fleming, *DAF* 165).

7 Any form of consumer recognition, even if it involved criminality, was a key factor in the early decades of the city's entertainment branding campaign. This is particularly evident in the song

more than just produce movies in Las Vegas and in 1966 he took up residence there and bought the Desert Inn, followed by the Sands, the Landmark, Castaways, the Silver Slipper, and the Frontier, all along the rapidly developing Strip (Rothman 20). More importantly, Hughes used his political influence to push through the Corporate Gaming Act in 1967, making the gambling industry a legitimate public offering that could attract corporate investment and the kind of financing not previously available through "mob" channels (Schwartz 133). Ultimately the Gambling Act would contribute to the repackaging of "gaming" as an increasingly government endorsed, normalized product, and this accounts for why Leiter can confidently explain to Bond that, "the hoodlums don't run liquor [anymore]. They run governments. State governments like Nevada" (Fleming, *DAF* 159).<sup>8</sup>

### "I hear the Tropicana is very comfortable"<sup>9</sup>

There were six buildings containing the bedrooms of The Tiara and they were named after jewels. Bond was on the ground floor of 'The Turquoise.' Its motif was egg-shell blue with furnishing materials of dark blue and white. His room was extremely comfortable and equipped with expensive and well-designed modern furniture of a silvery wood that might have been birch. There was a radio beside his bed and a television set with a seventeen-inch screen beside the broad window [...] it was very quiet and there was no sound from the thermostat-controlled air-conditioning. (Fleming, *DAF* 169)

This passage is a good indication that, when Fleming was in Las Vegas, casino hotels on the Strip were rapidly adopting Siegel's concept and Hughes' after him: classy rooms, with air-conditioning, updated with the latest entertainment technology – a far cry from the first bungalow motels on the Strip in the 1940s. But the era of progressive legitimization and expansion that followed Hughes' interventions in the 1960s that supported the kind of mega hotel-casino complexes described by Fleming, would also bring with it a period dominated by faceless corporate operations and out of state management that tended to focus too heavily on functionality and gambling as the city's core business, to the detriment of other industries that stood to profit if new markets could be attracted.<sup>10</sup>

that accompanies the credits for *Meet Me in Las Vegas* (1956) – made four years after the Hughes film – which pointedly explains that "it's in Nevada, Nevada USA!" The song then goes on to assure viewers that they can get there by "car or plane, by bus or train" as images of these vehicles are flashed on the screen. Clearly, in 1956, the producers still feared that the public might not know where Las Vegas is or how to get there.

8 Note that Fleming provides statistics on "legitimate gambling," such as "[t]wo hundred and fifty million a year is the take at Las Vegas," or "two hundred dollars [is] an average sucker's capital, and you can work out for yourself how much stays in Vegas over a year's play" (Fleming, *DAF* 23, 155).

9 James Bond, in: Hamilton, *DAF* 0:32:40.

10 Hughes, who left Las Vegas in 1976, is referenced and lampooned in *Diamonds are Forever* (1971), in the character of "Willard Whyte, a reclusive Las Vegas-based American billionaire, modelled on Howard Hughes" (Black 127). This is repeated in the current series of *Ocean's*

Here again, Fleming seems to have penetrated directly to the core of the issue, surmising that Vegas' tacit purpose would increasingly be to fulfil "the public dream of 'something for nothing'" (DAF 153). As Fleming was writing, Las Vegas was learning to frame gambling as an acceptable, middle-class, leisure activity, presented in a more diversified package that included family activities for the American "public." While in the novel, catering to middle America is lamented (Bond sarcastically notes a pool sign that reads "LIFESAVER: BOBBY BILBO – POOL SCoured DAILY BY HYDRO JET" [DAF 169]), Hollywood backers worked together with Vegas developers on the 1971 film adaptation of Fleming's novel to showcase Circus Circus, the first casino-hotel on the Strip to feature a family theme.<sup>11</sup> Having opened unsuccessfully as a casino-only establishment in 1968, developer Jay Sarno of Caesars Palace fame had begun adding a hotel tower and family facilities to Circus Circus just as *Diamonds Are Forever* was being made. At that time, the new gambling complex was announced as a "gigantic themed entertainment experience, with elephants, clowns, acrobats, and high-wire artists performing in and around the casino, [as] a 'circus for adults'" (Schwartz 134).

The Circus Circus sequence in *Diamonds Are Forever* also does much to highlight "a new school of functional architecture," "invented in Las Vegas," which Fleming called "The Gilded Mousetrap School"

whose main purpose was to channel the customer-mouse into the central gambling trap whether he wanted the cheese or not [...] once you had come in through either [entrance], whether you wanted to buy a paper or cigarettes at the news stand, have a drink or a meal in one of two restaurants, get your hair cut or have a massage in the 'Health Club,' or just visit the lavatories, there was no way of reaching your objective without passing between the banks of slot machines and gambling tables. (Fleming, DAF 171)

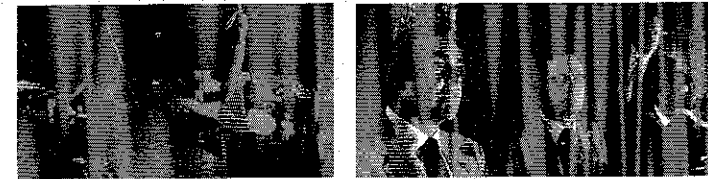
It is important to note here that, although Fleming is highly critical of the new Vegas mega-casino, hotel and entertainment complexes and "the ghastly glitter of the Strip," he is also clearly impressed with the services on offer, including two restaurants from which Bond, that champion of fine dining, may choose (DAF 167). But restaurants aside, the novel has Tiffany Case dealing Blackjack at The Tiara in an "exciting Western uniform," at the centre of an "obvious and vulgar" room, noted for its "horrible mechanical ugliness" and banks of one-armed bandits operated by "mostly women," who "reminded Bond of Dr. Pavlov's dogs, the saliva drooling down from their jaws" (181, 171, 172).

As Jeremy Black has remarked, in the movie version of *Diamonds Are Forever*, "the plot of the novel was largely abandoned, although the theme of diamond smuggling and the spectacular setting of Las Vegas were both retained and used to effect" (126).

movies where Andy Garcia spoofs Steve Wynn who, like Hughes in the past, is probably the most influential voice and casino owner in Las Vegas today, and one of the brains behind the city's newer, cleaner family image.

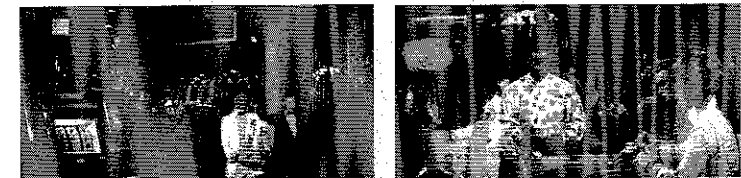
11 For more on the concept and marketing of Circus Circus, see Gottdiener et al. 35-7; Hannigan 156-7; and Rothman 44-8.

The effect of this scene in the film is quite unabashedly to promote Circus Circus, rather than to reproduce Fleming's dismal casino of the fictional Tiara. Shot precisely to highlight every aspect of this "gilded mousetrap" on offer to family guests when it opened, the film is more like an adaptation of Circus Circus' own advertisements in the 1970s, which announced the "[w]orld's largest gaming and entertainment center," with "Girls! Girls! Elephants, 14 bars and restaurants, shows, clowns, prizes galore [...] Food, entertainment, and fun for the entire family! SPECIAL NURSERY CENTER FOR YOUR CHILDREN" (Schwartz 135). The producers of the film were careful to pause on all of the attractions and family features that Circus Circus was advertising – including elephants and a high-wire act – in a scene that begins with extended crotch-shots, indicating that there's something on offer even for 007.



James Bond watching the high wire act at Circus Circus

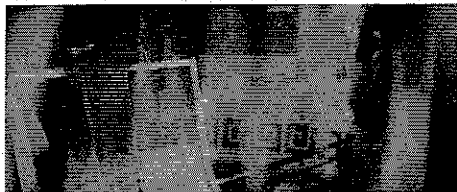
The camera finds Tiffany Case (Jill St. John), clad in a groovy pantsuit appropriate to the period, and follows her as she pauses to join a group of children at a shooting gallery, and then picks her way through more throngs of children to sit down in front of a dealer wearing a very loud clown-themed uniform.



Elephants, slot machines and poker at Circus Circus

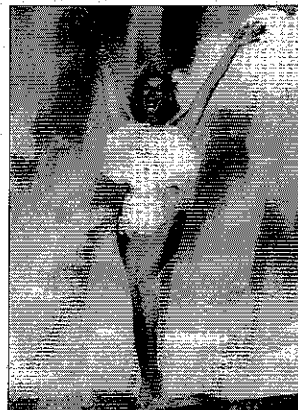
It is also worthy of note that Bond (Connery) himself spouts promotional lines about the comfortable rooms available on the Strip, while perusing publicity for acts playing in Vegas, from a bathtub embellished with the Caesars Palace logo. The film, therefore, not only spends a good deal of time lingering over the comfort features of 007's hotel room, it also promotes entertainment and nightlife. Not surprisingly, the performer featured in the advertising flyer that Bond picks up is Sammy Davis Jr. who

did a credited voice-over number as early as 1956 in *Meet Me in Las Vegas*, and then went on to star in *Ocean's Eleven* while performing on the Strip.<sup>12</sup>



Bond in the bathtub with Sammy Davis, Jr. and Jimmy Durante

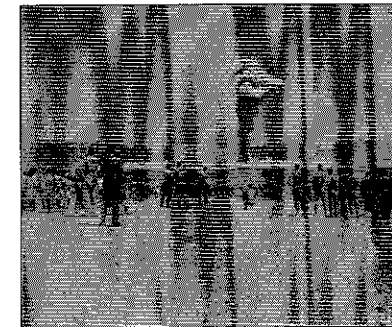
There is one, perhaps more subtle, aspect of Vegas that arises in both novel and film, suggesting one more reason to visit the Sin City. From the 1950s to the 1980s, Las Vegas held out the opportunity to witness an atomic explosion in the desert from air-conditioned comfort, and developers pulled the remarkable stunt of making a tourist attraction of the intense testing that took place just outside the city limits. By building casinos, bars and restaurants with “atomic themes” like the Stardust, and creating products such as the “ATOMBURGER” that makes an appearance in *Diamonds Are Forever*, while organizing events like the Miss Atomic Bomb beauty contest, “the government A-bombs bouncing [became] the greatest tourist lure since the invention of the nickel slot machines” (Fleming, *DAF* 163; McCracken 48).



Popular postcard and Miss Atomic Bomb, Lee Merlin 1957

<sup>12</sup> The closing production number of ‘Frankie and Johnny’ with Cyd Charisse is announced as being “narrated by the voice of Sammy Davis Jr.,” because white audiences would not have accepted a black performer dancing a romantic number with a white female lead at the time the film was made. On segregation in Las Vegas see Schwartz 126–30. Davis also made a cameo appearance in *Diamonds are Forever*, but the scene was cut.

Whereas tourists had once justified a visit to Vegas with an educational tour of the Hoover Dam, those with a scientific bent could now witness “the flash of light from the blast, and the mushroom cloud that followed,” by keeping up with the testing schedule on the local radio (McCracken 48). In fact, by the early 1950s, Las Vegas newspapers were “complain[ing] that a recent round of open-air atomic explosions had been too small: ‘Bigger bombs, that’s what we’re waiting for. Americans have to have their kicks’” (Nye 284).



Tourists enjoying an atomic blast just outside the Las Vegas city limits, 1960.  
[http://www.nv.doe.gov/library/factsheets/DOENV\\_1024.pdf](http://www.nv.doe.gov/library/factsheets/DOENV_1024.pdf)

Although Hollywood had already begun advertising the “atomic fun” that Vegas had on offer with *Viva Las Vegas* (1964), *Diamonds Are Forever* also did much in 1971 to hype the atomic theme through an extended chase scene that takes place out in the desert as Bond and his pursuers speed by bunkers that housed testing equipment.



A still from *Diamonds Are Forever* showing a sign advertising “Recreation Unlimited” near the atomic testing grounds.

**“Anyone can see you’re a Limey even before you start talking.”<sup>13</sup>**

But surely, given recent scholarship on Bond, there must be something bigger going on in *Diamonds Are Forever* than a lot of free publicity for this bizarre American entertainment centre and the industries it supports. That said however, Simon Winder,

<sup>13</sup> Fleming, *DAF* 164.

author of *The Man who Saved Britain*, a study of all things Bond, concluded that Fleming's works can be categorized "in terms of worse and better phases," with *Diamonds Are Forever* falling under the heading of "definitely worse" (74). Winder's opinion is based partially on the fact that, on the surface, the novel appears to have little else going on but the diamond smuggling pipeline which, for no apparent reason, "finally gush[es] out to soft bosoms, five thousand miles away" in Las Vegas (Fleming, *DAF* 11). Moreover, the novel is often criticised as being "routine" and "absurd in uninteresting ways" or, "the villainy is banal and the set pieces uninvolved" with the exception of Las Vegas (Winder 74).

The small-scale level of the proceedings in *Diamonds Are Forever* seems even more remarkable when seen in light of the global political events occurring when Fleming was writing. As Christoph Lindner has pointed out in 'Why Size Matters,' the "criminal vision" behind most of the 007 plots is generally of a "titanic scale," directed toward entire nations and "humanity itself," and indeed, the whole world turns out to be "not enough" (227). Similarly, Winder sees Bond as coming to the rescue of an "imploding world" and providing "an all-pervasive wistful alternative [...] for compromised, difficult reality" (47, 60). Moreover, the general consensus among those working on Bondian topics is that the major cultural work that 007 has supposedly accomplished, helped Britain over the 1956 Suez fiasco and marked a decisive moment in Britain's post-war history, at which "the end of Britain's international clout" was publically signalled while "Britain lost out to its more influential wartime ally, the US" (Lindner, 'Criminal Vision' 86). At the end of WWII, Britain was "rapidly losing its remaining spheres of influence to what was diplomatically termed 'decolonisation'" and this too played into the kinds of national anxieties that were so eloquently assuaged by Bond (86). So, while Britain was learning to live with its second-rate-power status, "post-war inferiority complex and Cold-War insecurity," the Bond movies helped to ease the pain.<sup>14</sup> This was accomplished according to Chapman, through 007 as "an image of Britishness carefully packaged for the international market" (97).

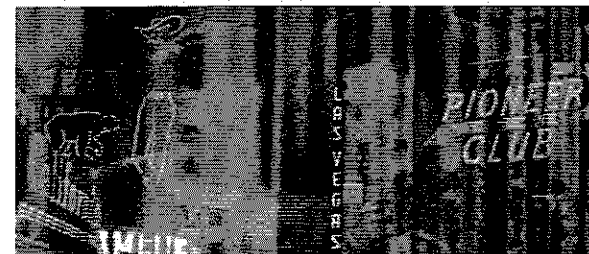
As it has often been pointed out, with the exception of *Diamonds Are Forever*, "the villain in all the novels Fleming wrote in the 1950s is either directly in the service of the Soviet Union [...] or indirectly in its employ" (Bennett and Woollacott 18).<sup>15</sup> Again, where the size of evil plans is concerned this novel and film don't have the Soviet Union and what is more, according to Winder, Fleming was being "pulled financially into America's orbit" so that the earlier books (*CR*; *LLD*; *DAF*) "were written with many American details, often rather fawning, in the hope of cracking the American readership" (109). In the case of *Diamonds Are Forever*, however, Winder's

14 See also Allen 24–5; Marsh 12–13; and Karl 177–82. According to Michael Denning, "the spy novel [in general] is a cover story of an era of decolonization and, particularly after the debacle at Suez in 1956, the definitive loss of Britain's role as a world power" (173).

15 Cf. Eco 43: "Only the evil characters of *Diamonds are Forever* have no connections with Russia."

critique hardly seems justified given that the novel offers a fairly steady barrage of condescension concerning all things American, right down to the games people play in the USA. Hence, when Bond learns that he will be playing Blackjack in Las Vegas, he is immediately reminded of the "old 21 of his childhood days [...] and now he was going to play the nursery game again [...] in the famous gambling town" (Fleming, *DAF* 150).

Perhaps a less obvious example is Fleming's description of the Strip itself, for which films like *Meet Me in Las Vegas* had already developed a standard shot sequence and iconography to show off the neon at night, and to provide maximum branding and product placement for casinos.



Vegas panorama from *Meet Me in Las Vegas* (1956)

This standard sequence, included even in the *mise-en-scène* of the perennially depressing *Leaving Las Vegas* (1995), takes in the casinos along Fremont Street and then pauses on famous locations down the Strip, such as the former Stardust. When Fleming covers the same ground however, the picture he paints is hardly the standard Hollywood version of undiluted glamour and bright lights:

[H]ere's The Sands. Plenty of hot money behind that one [...] here's The Desert Inn [...] the money came from the old Cleveland-Cincinnati combination. And that dump with the flat iron sign is The Sahara. Latest thing. Listed owners are a bunch of small-time gamblers from Oregon [...] then 'ya get the Last Frontier [...] And over there's the Thunderbird. (Fleming, *DAF* 167)

Interestingly enough, all of the glitz of the standard Hollywood sequence is restored to film version of *Diamonds Are Forever* in the form of a chase scene that highlights many of Las Vegas' choice locations, while giving viewers the moment they have come to expect from any movie shot there.

### A Rich Capital Asset of the British Commonwealth<sup>16</sup>

Yet while the conflict at the heart of *Diamonds Are Forever* may not appear to have the global import of battling with Russian spies, or thwarting a threat to irradiate the

16 Fleming, *DAF* 3.

gold reserves at Fort Knox and cause a collapse of the global market economy, the implications of the diamond pipeline that gushes forth in Vegas are somewhat more cataclysmic than many authors have suggested. In arguing that *Diamonds Are Forever* has more going on than the critics cited above might have noticed, I would like to turn to the arguments put forward by Nicky Marsh and Alissa Karl on the stakes in *Goldfinger* (1964), which turn out to be more consequential than “Auric Goldfinger’s plan to discharge a nuclear device in the gold depository at Fort Knox [...] that would render the US gold supply radioactive” for fifty-seven years (Karl 182). Rendering the gold untouchable would indeed have constituted a major threat to British economic stability as well as “the political and economic dominance of the US” and its role in “stabilizing international free trade” (Marsh 15). This is because the Bretton-Woods accord, established in 1944, essentially “transformed global calculus” by requiring that “the central banks of participating countries peg the value of their currencies to the US dollar, which itself was convertible to gold” thereby “installing a gold standard which was ultimately pegged to the American dollar” (Karl 179, 180). While participating in the Bretton-Woods meant greater economic stability for Britain, it also meant a trade off against US economic dominance and a definite shift in the world economy to the other side of the Atlantic. That is, while the gold standard ensured the UK’s economic permanence, it affirmed “US supremacy in global capitalism” (182).

*Diamonds Are Forever*, a novel of purportedly little significance in terms of plot, style and global politics, does however suggest something like a diamond standard that is as intimately tied to relations between the US and Britain as the gold standard ever was. The diamond trade was one of Britain’s many foreign investments as a colonial power, which they “got hold of at the beginning of the century and [...] managed to hang on to” – and this with “at least two million pounds of diamonds [...] smuggled out of Africa every year,” leaking into the market and threatening to devalue the stones (Fleming, *DAF* 18). So while in *Goldfinger*, Colonel Smithers of the Bank of England is “concerned about unauthorized leakages of gold” beyond Britain’s borders, here M is troubled about leakages of unauthorized gems and tells Bond that “when something goes wrong with [the diamond trade] the Government gets worried” (Karl 179; Fleming, *DAF* 18). Not only are “ninety per cent of all diamond sales carried out in London” to the tune of “fifty million pounds a year,” it’s also the UK’s “biggest dollar-earner,” and therefore, a key factor in the global money market (Fleming, *DAF* 18).<sup>17</sup> With America buying “£5,000,000 worth of” industrial diamonds per year, and a

17 It is also hinted that the House of Diamonds, under investigation in the novel for circulating smuggled diamonds, might be involved in “affecting the negotiability of sterling cheques and the limitation on the importation of sterling banknotes into the United Kingdom” (Fleming, *DAF* 254). This issue is related to the larger economic and political UK construct of the Sterling Area established in the 1930s which was a “bloc of current and former colonies and countries under strong British influence, in which participating countries pegged the value of their currency to the pound and used sterling for international transactions” (Karl 180). After 1944, the Sterling Area operated from within the Bretton-Woods agreement whereby currency value was ultimately pegged to the US dollar. As a remnant of the UK imperial economy that the failing world power

pipeline that ends in the US where ostensibly the greater part of the illegal trade is conducted, it is of no small importance that the trade is “not doing any harm to the United States [...] It’s only England that’s the loser” (19–20).

While the author of *Bond* did a good deal of research for *Goldfinger* at the Bank of England, he was subsequently commissioned to write “a series on diamond smuggling, which was later published as one of [his] few non-fictional works” (Marsh 20). Although *The Diamond Smugglers* (1957) has been dismissed as “just old journalism of an unreadable kind,” the fact remains that Fleming knew a great deal about the trade in these highly symbolic stones, which he incorporated into his novel (Winder 76). Yet in spite of Fleming’s hard-boiled knowledge of the trade, he writes a moment of epiphany into the opening of the text where Bond identifies every bit as sentimentally as women were meant to with the gems that M has given him study:

Now he could understand the passion that diamonds had aroused over the centuries, the almost sexual love they aroused among those who handled them and cut them and traded them [...]. Bond understood the myth of diamonds, and he knew that he would never forget when he had suddenly seen inside the heart of the stone. (Fleming, *DAF* 13)

If this reads like an advertisement for engagement rings, it is because Fleming was well aware of the De Beers family who almost single-handedly created the aura of love that surrounds diamonds, and who also coined the slogan “A Diamond Is Forever” in 1949, which then became the company’s official motto.<sup>18</sup> Hence, when Fleming writes that diamonds “last forever” it reveals his knowledge of “the constant publicity to show that only the diamond is everywhere accepted and recognized as the symbol of betrothal” (*DAF* 15).<sup>19</sup> The association with eternity, that also informs Fleming’s title, has prevented people from flooding the market with second-hand stones even after divorce, which would undercut the myth of their scarcity-based value. This legendary scarcity was first constructed in the nineteenth century by marketing agents eager to prevent the complete devaluation of their product when South African stones began flooding the Europe and North American markets – and this is precisely the situation that Bond is called in to remedy almost a hundred years later.

But interestingly enough, size matters here as well, given that an influx of smaller stones from the Soviet Union was beginning to pose yet another threat to the trade. As M explains, “most of what they call ‘gem’ stones are mined on British territory,” and Bond later stops to admire two shop windows in London: “in the centre of each was

was just “managing to hang on to,” now subsumed within the US financial order, sterling was also a highly sensitive economic, cultural and political issue for Britain. Still a “rich capital asset” and a point of pride, the value of sterling was guarded against the influx of smuggled sterling and false notes, just as the diamond industry was more than a “commercial operation” and preventing the stones from being devalued by smugglers was, wrote Fleming, a “patriotic duty” (*Smugglers* 29). For more on this topic in relation to Bond, see also Marsh 17–19.

18 See chapter 1, ‘The Million-Carat Network’ *The Diamond Smugglers* 19–35.

19 See also Epstein, Edward J. ‘Have You Ever Tried to Sell a Diamond?’



just one [...] ear-ring consisting of a big pear-shaped diamond" (Fleming, *DAF* 15, 76). In other words, these are large, legitimate gem stones harvested and sold on British soil, and part of the colonial trade that the UK was still hanging on to. They are rare because the market is protected and not flooded with small inferior stones from the Soviet Union and, as a mark of their quality, "below each ear-ring there was a thin plate of yellow gold [...] with] the words *Diamonds Are Forever*" (76). So for Bond, as for Fleming, this is not about "just the millions of money involved, or the value of the diamonds as a hedge against inflation, or the sentimental fashions in diamonds for engagement rings and so forth" (14). It's bigger than that, because gem diamonds were mined in British territories, at a time when Britain was increasingly called upon to relinquish those territories and with them, that country's role as the world's leading colonial power (18).

### Conclusion

In this article, I have set out to analyse one of Fleming's lesser novels, and the "campy" and "rather vicious" film adaptation that was made of it almost twenty years later (Winder 183). If one may argue that "the appearance of the screen version of James Bond created a circular market," wherein the "books sold film tickets while the films sold books," I would like to broaden the circle to include locations (Lindner, 'Size' 226). My reading of both film and novel therefore has consistently returned to Las Vegas and its history in both 1956 and 1971, the dates of the novel and film respectively. In this instalment of the Bond franchise then, the public image of both Vegas and Britain was helped by this "modern, virile, classless character who combines the suave sophistication of the traditional British gentleman-hero with the toughness and sexual magnetism of the Hollywood leading man" (Chapman 97).

What I hope to have shown is how this traditionally English series worked together with Las Vegas and Hollywood – two cities already enjoying a well-established economic feedback loop – at two pivotal moments in those cities' shared economic history. Although the two cities participated in a mutual promotional campaign from their founding as specialized entertainment centres, this Bond film was particularly instrumental in showcasing Hollywood's technological range and American movie stars, while publicizing Vegas' move into diversification and family entertainment by showcasing Circus Circus.

At the same time, I have argued that this particular novel and film did much to support the experience economy that was taking shape in both Hollywood and Las Vegas which now drives a significant portion of the global market and the entertainment industry it spawned. This economy, sometimes referred to the "consumer's sublime," has become the driver of an increasingly dematerialised economy fuelled by entertainment and a market in experiences (Nye 281). One can only wonder if, by centering his narrative on what is essentially a semi-precious gem stone, hyped as an

invaluable symbol of wealth and sentiments that last "forever," and then setting his story in Vegas, Fleming was not again entirely prescient in seeing the shape of the political economy to come.

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## Britishness and Popularity: Narrative, Formula and Verisimilitude in the James Bond Films and *Doctor Who*

Georgia Christinidis

To anyone familiar with James Bond films as well as with the science-fiction series *Doctor Who*, a comparison of the two franchises will not seem particularly implausible. Audiences outside the UK, however, are much less likely to be acquainted with *Doctor Who* than with James Bond and may therefore be surprised to learn that the two franchises not only share the status of pop cultural icon, but also certain structural similarities – both have protagonists who are placed, in different ways, outside society, accompanied only by a series of sidekicks, and they are constantly called upon to save the world from certain destruction. Jeremy Black notes that

A parallel can be drawn with Britain's most successful cult television series, Dr. Who [sic]. This first appeared in November 1963, a month after the premiere of *From Russia With Love*, and continued until 1989. The villains in this science fiction series were morally inferior, and this frequently led to their failure. The ability of Time Lords to regenerate themselves permitted eight actors to play the doctor. (Black 210)

He does not, however, pursue the comparison any further.

Within the UK, *Doctor Who* is as well-known and well-loved as James Bond; both are part of British everyday life and popular consciousness rather than merely fictional characters. It is estimated that more than half of the world's population have seen at least one James Bond film (McKay viii). While *Doctor Who* cannot compete on a global scale, in Britain, it is considered essential family viewing and reaches viewing figures of 9.8 million, or 47 per cent of the total television audience, for a single episode (Hastings and Williams). In *Doctor Who: The Legend*, Justin Richards argues that the series

has changed our cultural vocabulary in ways that nobody could even begin to suspect 40 years ago. We now live in a society where a place that seems deceptively large is TARDIS-like; where pure evil is equated with the Daleks; where time travel is more likely to be associated with 'the Doctor' than with H.G. Wells; where hiding behind the sofa is shorthand for that thrill one gets from the ambivalence of wanting and yet not wanting to see what happens next... (Richards 9)

Both James Bond and *Doctor Who* have inspired entire ranges of both merchandise – it is, for instance, possible to purchase a Moonraker spacesuit or the perennially popular toy Daleks – and spin-off media, including the television series *Torchwood* and *The Sarah Jane Adventures*, set in the fictional universe of *Doctor Who*, as well as numerous computer games based on the James Bond films.<sup>1</sup>

1 For *Doctor Who* merchandise, including Dalek toys, see, for instance, the 'Doctor Who' section of the BBC Shop website, *BBC Shop*, <http://www.bbcshop.com/Doctor-Who/icat/drwho>. For information on *Torchwood* and *The Sarah Jane Adventures*, see the BBC Website, *Official*