

PULP LITERATURE

A RE-EVALUTATION

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This thesis is presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

Signed: _____

ABSTRACT

PULP LITERATURE: A RE-EVALUATION

The purpose of this dissertation is to redress the literary academy's view of Pulp Literature as an inconsequential form, which does not merit serious contemplation, or artistic recognition. Although it is true that recent literary criticism has attempted to elevate the importance of Pulp by positing it as the natural postmodern "other" to 'high' literature, the thesis demonstrates how this dichotomy has proven to be counter-productive to its aim. That is, although this theoretical approach does invite legitimate investigation of the form, many academics simply use this technique to reinforce their claims for the superiority of so-called 'canonic' texts. Therefore, rather than continuing along this downward path, this thesis focuses more on the subversive machinations of Pulp Literature as a social, economic, political, and theoretical force with its own strategies and agendas, opening with an investigation of the history of Pulp Literature as a cultural form. I argue that, from its very conception with the invention of the printing press in the fifteenth century, Pulp has always offered a radical alternative to the mainstream by providing a voice for the marginalised and the oppressed in the societies of the world. The thesis traces this political role as the aesthetic evolves into the new forms and technologies of a contemporary culture, where many academics still refuse to acknowledge Pulp as an important agent for the transmission of ideological views, and an impetus to instigate social change.

The concluding arguments move away from the quantitative, to the more theoretically evaluative section of the thesis. This consists of a discussion of the conceptual boundaries surrounding the aesthetic of Pulp, broaching such subjects as literary evaluation, canonicity, and canon formation. This debate ultimately revolves around the question, 'if literary theorists cannot 'objectively' determine what literary 'quality' is, then how can we hope to define Pulp?'

In an attempt to answer this question, the thesis juxtaposes the criteria of a number of literary theorists from this field of inquiry, namely, Thomas R. Whissen, Clive Bloom, Thomas J. Roberts, Harold Bloom, Andrew Calcutt and Richard Shephard, to formulate an aesthetic that is not only markedly different to their's, but more significantly, one which situates Pulp Literature at the head of the literary academic table.

PULP LITERATURE: A RE-EVALUATION

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INTRODUCTION

What is Pulp Literature? & Why Do They Say Such Terrible Things About it?

PULP (pulp) n.

1. A soft, moist shapeless, mass of matter.
2. A magazine or book containing lurid subject matter and being characteristically printed on rough, unfinished paper

*American Heritage Dictionary: New College Edition*¹.

What is Pulp Literature?

What exactly *is* Pulp Literature? And why does it *need* to be re-evaluated? These two questions are the central tenet of this thesis. Paradoxically, in response to these questions, it argues that anyone who has a clear appreciation of the historical and theoretical parameters of the first question, would automatically know the answer to the second. That is, once we have arrived at a satisfying definition of this exceedingly diverse contemporary megatext, the reader will come to understand that although this aesthetic has largely been demeaned and derided by the literary academy. In actuality, it creates the conditions for the possibility of the tradition of literature, to continue to avert its downward spiral into cultural obsolescence.

The main aim of this thesis then, is to propose a ‘new’ definition for Pulp Literature. More specifically, it wishes to provide a definition for this misunderstood aesthetic that does not smell of societal hysteria, political sanction, academic snobbishness, and the theoretical hypocrisy which has been so prevalent in many of these misconceptions. In general, these are representations where Pulp’s enormous impact upon the collective unconscious of the inhabitants of this planet has been written-off as little more than the ineffectual bastardisation of ‘high’ literature by unscrupulous publishers intent on manipulating the mass-market consumer with a taste for the depraved. And yet, as we shall discover, it is exactly this kind of scandalous misrepresentation of the medium which conveniently allows it to continue to be evaluated as a ‘low-brow’ binary opposite to the ‘high’ literary canon, even when the theoretical criteria for determining these forms of aesthetic judgments have presumably been eradicated from any acceptable method of literary assessment. This is why Pulp Literature *needs* to be re-evaluated. And why it deserves to have a description which recognises the true value of

its social, cultural and political platform as an alternative vehicle for the voices of the oppressed in society during the last five hundred years.

To achieve this goal, it will be necessary to examine the evolution of the form from its conception with the printing press in the fifteenth century, to the multi-media melange of the digital present. This analysis of the constantly changing techniques and technologies which vie within the aesthetic of Pulp will not only reveal the difficulties facing the theorist attempting to determine an *accurate* evaluation of the status of this rapidly mutating megatext, it will also provide an opportunity to challenge many of the comfortable assumptions that underpinned the attitudes which were held by the social, critical, and political commentators of the day towards this controversial medium. Of course, this is not a task which anyone could ever hope to achieve alone, and therefore I am indebted to a number of academics whose work has either directly focused on the issues concerning the aesthetic of Pulp, or supplied background information that might have indirectly shed light on the historic period in which it exists. From whatever perspective, even when some of their facts seemed to have achieved the ephemeral quality of fiction, these authors ensured that researching the outer margins surrounding Pulp was always a pleasure. Therefore, I would like to show my appreciation to a number of cultural historians who have contributed to my understanding of a wide variety of topics which belong to other disciplines such as religion, philosophy, politics, social anthropology, media studies, and psychology. To this list, I would like to thank; Alvin Toffler, Marshall McLuhan, Colin Wilson, J. M. Roberts, Robert Hughes, Camille Paglia, Robert M. Pirsig, Hunter S. Thompson, Steve Turner, Richard Maltby, Barry Miles, Dan Epstein, Colin Shindler, Anthony Smith, Sean Jennett, and Dr. Philip C. McGraw.

Equally, as we begin to refine the focus of this historical overview of Pulp from its gestation period as a new literary phenomenon, to beyond where cultural commentators

were finally beginning to recognise it as a social, political, and economic force in its own right, the thesis becomes indebted to a different group of literary theorists and cultural historians. These are academics whose work deals more specifically with issues that impact directly on the aesthetic of Pulp. Although I will concede that I might not agree with all of the views that have been proposed within this diverse forum of opinion, it is this group of academics who have contributed the most to my comprehension of the intricate machinations of the aesthetic conventions of Pulp. It is hoped in return, that this thesis will make a significant contribution to this vast body of knowledge, by providing a single arena in which these critics can debate the issues under contention. And as we shall see, for these critics, *everything* is under contention. From the artistic merits of the cover illustrations, the accuracy of its representation of the *zeitgeist* of a particular time and place in the unfolding history of the world, to its exclusion from the Western Canon. Or even its potential as a dynamic postmodern ‘other’ to a static modernism. And yet, it is for this reason, I would like to thank these theorists, not only for their contribution to my understanding of the contradictory nature of this form and its ramifications on literature as a whole, but because they are among the first academics to treat this *oeuvre* with the seriousness and respect it deserves, whether they have done so in a direct, or an indirect manner. In this spirit, my appreciation goes to; Lee Server, Tony Goodstone, Peter Haining, Woody Haut, Kenneth C. Davis, Michael Ashley, Robert Kenneth Jones, John Springhall, Sally R. Munt, Henry Louis Gates Jr., Piet Schreuders, Geoffrey O’Brien, John Sutherland, John Feather, Alan J. Lee, Bill Pronzini, Jack Adrian, Kate Grenville, Elise Valmorbidia, Richard Flanagan, Lisa Philips, Charles Bukowski, David Glover, Christopher Pawling, Darko Suvin, Jan Gorak, Ihab Hassan, Scott Lash, Barbara Herrnstein Smith, Hal Dresner, Tom Hiney, Diane Johnson, Frank MacShane, Lawrence Sutin, Richard

Layman, George Greenfield, James Campbell, William Marling, and J. M. Parrish and R. D. Coole.

Finally, having scrutinised this historical perspective of the aesthetic of Pulp from its birth in broadsheets and pamphlets, to its multi-media manifestations in the immediate present, we shall discover that many of the attitudes held by the literary academy have hardly altered in five hundred years. In order to address this imbalance, it becomes apparent that the thesis must shift from its quantitative inquiry, to a more theoretically evaluative argument. This is why its concluding debate will focus far more intently on the conceptual parameters that not only provide Pulp with its definition of itself, but from which we might construct a ‘new’ definition for this aesthetic. To achieve this, we will begin by juxtaposing our ideal for Pulp against the criteria established by theorists for similar categories within the field, such as Junk Fiction, Cult Fiction, and one particular poststructuralist’s claim for an exclusively postmodern Pulp. Once we have ascertained that our ideal definition does not comply with any of these other categorisations, and we are convinced that it is the best definition of the form available at this moment, the thesis then uses this ‘new’ ideal as a ‘standard’ to test the validity of the evaluative assessments which continue to be proposed by the ‘ivory tower’ traditionalists in the literary academy. It is here that Pulp investigates all of the methods of ‘subjective’ evaluation which have, historically, been used against it. It is at this stage, that it challenges the elevation of certain texts over others, the flawed nature of any form of canon formation, and thereby the very primacy of the Western Canon. As we shall see, not only is it impossible to separate Pulp from what many academics ascertain to be ‘high’ Literature, but this attempt to distinguish between the two renders both parties an enormous disservice. However, as a result of the examination of this process, it is hoped that the aesthetic of Pulp Literature will be redeemed, and its demeaned status within the literary academy will be redressed, re-situated, and re-

evaluated. And yet, I must point out, that this debate would not have been possible without the clear explication of these often complicated concepts and issues by those authors whom I have come to consider as the primary theoreticians for this thesis. And it is these theorists, who have enhanced my comprehension of the erroneous theoretical prerogatives which have entangled this subject, that I would like to thank now. They are; Thomas R. Whissen, Andrew Calcutt and Richard Shephard, Clive Bloom, Thomas J. Roberts, and Harold Bloom.

And Why Does Pulp Need to be Re-evaluated?

Those readers who may still remain unconvinced that Pulp Literature deserves re-evaluation, and that its status within the literary academy be re-situated, I would ask to consider these questions. Do they really believe that Pulp is simply nothing more than a “magazine or book containing lurid subject matter” which is “characteristically printed on rough, unfinished paper” as quoted on the opening page? Thereby, do they feel that this dictionary definition, which appears as an epigraph in Quentin Tarantino’s cinematic homage to the genre in his film *Pulp Fiction* (1996), is an *accurate* representation of the aesthetic of Pulp?

Quite clearly, it is. And, it is not. Although this ‘definition’ may have suited Tarantino’s purposes, it is far from an accurate representation of what the *oeuvre* of ‘Pulp’ consisted at any point in time. However, his ideal belongs to the recreation of a specific style of ‘Pulp’ that was produced in a narrow historical period, say from the beginning of the hard-boiled genre in the 1930s to its hey-day in the 1950s. But as the thesis shall demonstrate, it does not come anywhere close to what this enormous megatext has become today. In fact, if anything, this limited definition is the kind of

‘restrictive’ generalisation that responsible ‘high-brow’ literary academics latch on to in order to keep the texts of Pulp Literature at arms length, and far away from the hierarchy of respect they afford their purported ‘classics’ of literature’s subjectively instituted past. Any reader with a cursory knowledge of popular culture (which means all of us), should find it ludicrous that any recent dictionary definition for contemporary Pulp Literature would assert that it consists wholly of texts which are deemed to be “lurid of subject matter”. This is a misrepresentation, which is the cultural equivalent of suggesting, that *all* Fords are still ‘black’. As the thesis demonstrates, since its earliest manifestations, Pulp’s technologies always provided alternative narratives to its more popular lewd materials, including jokes, fables, children’s narratives, and myriad kinds of adventure stories. And even later, when these forms eventually evolved into specialised genres with their own target audiences, such as children’s literature, westerns, romances, science fiction, fantasy, sea stories, sports stories, and many others, most of these did not contain any “lurid” subject matter at all. Of course, this is not to deny that there were, and still are “lurid” versions of these genres. They existed, and they still do. However, the point is, although “lurid” subject matter was, and still is an important ingredient in the history of Pulp, it is far from universal. It is not a *mandatory* requirement, as this definition would seem to suggest. Nor is “lurid subject matter” the exclusive domain of Pulp Literature. The plays of William Shakespeare alone, would more than attest to this.

Another obvious point of contention concerning Quentin Tarantino’s choice of definition, is it restricts the aesthetic of Pulp solely to “magazines and books”, an error which is further exacerbated by its insistence that these forms are also to be limited to the kind which are “characteristically printed on rough, unfinished paper”. Once again, this is the kind of misconceived cultural representation which would have us restrain the evolution of man to the Neanderthal. Although these factors are historically correct,

they are not an accurate reflection of the contemporary form of this aesthetic. In fact, as we shall discover within the thesis, the form of Pulp to which it is referring, died out almost half a century ago. Yet this is a factor, which in itself, demonstrates that this medium had already evolved beyond the criteria outlined in this definition. In truth, Pulp had slipped the shackles of its humble beginnings on “rough paper” long before this form had expired, and in doing so had escaped the restrictions which confined it to “paper” altogether. By freeing itself from the manacles of “paper” Pulp also emancipated itself from its enslavement to “magazines and books,” which allowed it to move to newer technologies, such as radio, television, and motion pictures. Indeed, Quentin Tarantino’s cinematic opus, which also includes *Reservoir Dogs*, *True Romance*, *Natural Born Killers*, *Dusk Till Dawn*, and *Jackie Brown*, is ample evidence of Pulp’s technological evolution into contemporary popular cultureⁱⁱ. Rather than being a nostalgic pastiche of an obsolete set of cliché-ridden formulas, stylistics, and mannerisms from the “lurid” side of Pulp’s glorious past, Tarantino’s texts are in themselves a continuation of the motivations, as well the conventions of this aesthetic. By this I mean, Tarantino’s re-engagement with the history of Pulp is not simply an empty parody of a dead form. Rather it is a demonstration of how successfully this aesthetic can be utilised to reflect and comment on the contemporary mores and values of the society of the world we live in. Therefore, I would argue that Tarantino’s films are not only evidence that the evolution of the aesthetic of Pulp did not die with the demise of a dead form, but they are also a re-evaluation of Pulp’s role as an agent for social change.

Water, Water, Everywhere – But Not a Drop to Drink! (a Disclaimer)

During the editing of this thesis, it was brought to my attention that there may be some concern regarding its occasional lapses into a subjective tone. A thesis on “water”, it was argued, “need not necessarily be wet”. And although this observation may be perfectly true, essentially, my experience as the author of this thesis differs somewhat from this opinion. In fact, my research discovered that certain critics, such as Clive Bloom in his book *Cult Fiction: Popular Reading and Pulp Theory*ⁱⁱⁱ, consider particular forms of contemporary literary criticism to be the “new pulp”^{iv}. This fact is more than evident, whether he considers himself to be a poststructuralist theorist or not, when Henry Louis Gates Jr. utilises the hardboiled language of Pulp in “Canon Confidential”^v to create a new form for literary criticism.

However, this is not to suggest the thesis necessarily accepts Bloom’s theoretical position, or attempts to promote Gate’s literary device. It does not. And yet, at the same time, this does not mean it is completely dry either. It most certainly is not. After all, the reader should remember, one of the themes for the thesis is to examine how Pulp invades the unconscious via its techniques and technologies, to form not only who we think we are, but the world we live in. In order to demonstrate the veracity of this perspective, I should point out that I have used myself as a sort of laboratory rat. Indeed, it was the adoption of this strategy, which led to occasional variances in style and tone as I shifted from an objective reportage, to more subjective revelations. Some readers, my supervisor has advised me, may consider this method to be a performative paradox. That is, employing a modernistic structure, while arguing in a postmodernistic style. Some readers might view it this way. On the other hand, if the thesis is attempting to be an accurate reflection of what Pulp is, and what it achieves so successfully (as we shall witness in the final two chapters), there can be no paradox in it embracing both the modern and postmodern.

Moreover, I wish to emphasise that the utilisation of such a method was never intended to trivialise the subject matter of this form of literature; nor was it designed to offend the intelligence of readers of this thesis. To the contrary, it was an attempt to find the most appropriate style to effectively reinforce the aims and arguments presented by the thesis, as well as reflecting the inescapable impact of the stylistics of Pulp on this author. This also explains why I have chosen *not* to employ a conventional method of referencing. Although I appreciate that some readers are far more comfortable with footnotes inserted within the body of the text, I consider that this style of citation tends to slow down the flow of the prose, and distracts from the clarity of the debate. What I am suggesting, is that, although all of the information in the endnotes supports or reinforces my argument in some way, it is secondary to the content of the thesis. Therefore, I would prefer that these digressions were left until last.

Of course, I realise that whether this approach works or not, is very much up to the reader. And yet, in my own defence, I would assert that I find it extremely difficult to conceive that I could have written this thesis in any other manner. So, I ask the reader to relax any expectation of a completely dry, objective, and well-wrought dissertation on the subject of Pulp Literature and to allow us both, at the very least, to get a little damp.

REFERENCES

ⁱ *American Heritage Dictionary: New College Edition* cited by Quentin Tarantino in *Pulp Fiction*. London:Faber and Faber,1996:3.

ⁱⁱ Quentin Tarantino: On Why Books are Superior to Film:

Interestingly, Quentin Tarantino asserts in his introduction to *Reservoir Dogs: the Complete Screenplay* (London:Faber and Faber, 1996), that literature is a superior form to cinema. Tarantino says:

“I guess what I’m always trying to do is use the structures I see in novels and apply them to cinema. A novelist thinks nothing of starting in the middle of a story. I thought that if you could figure out a cinematic way to do that, it would be very exciting. Generally, when they translate novels to movies, that’s the first stuff that goes out. I don’t do this to be a wise guy or to show how clever I am. If the story would be more dramatically engaging if you told it from beginning, or the end, then I’d tell it that way. But the *glory* is pulling it off my way” (xiii).
“Writing for somebody else and writing a movie for yourself to do are completely different. I’m not bagging on screenwriters, but if I was a full-on writer, I’d write novels” (xi).

ⁱⁱⁱ Clive Bloom. *Cult Fiction: Popular Reading and Pulp Theory*. London:MacMillan, 1996.

^{iv}Ibid., p236.

Refer to the subsection “Criticism of Clive Bloom’s Poststructuralist Agenda for Pulp”, in the final chapter of the thesis.

^v Henry Louis Gates Jr., *Loose Canons: Notes on the Culture Wars*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.

Refer to the subsection “Pulp versus the Western Canon” in Chapter Seven of the thesis.

CHAPTER 1.

Dear Sir, or Madam Will You Read My Book?: The History of the Thesis

Dear Sir, or Madam will you read my book?
It took years to write, will you take a look?
It's the dirty story of a dirty man,
And his clinging wife doesn't understand.
If you must return it you can send it here
But I need a break and I want to be a paperback writer.

Paperback Writer (Lennon/McCartney)¹

What is in a Title?: The Problematics of Researching Pulp

To begin at the beginning, *Pulp Literature: a Re-evaluation* was not the original direction intended for this thesis. The original intention had been to enlarge the parameters of the research topic I had broached during my honours thesis, where I had applied a set of theoretical prerogatives to determine whether the literary stylistics of one author – William S. Burroughs, were postmodernist or not. As this methodology had proven to be successful, I had intended to increase its scope to discover if it would work in the same way if it were applied to other like-minded marginalised souls, such as J. G. Ballard, Paul Bowles, and Charles Bukowski. However, soon this concept became more and more ambitious, until eventually it included the whole genre of Pulp Literature. Quite clearly, I convinced myself, I had uncovered that this form was indeed the postmodern opposite to a modernist Western Canon. Moreover, I considered that this research, which I had tentatively referred to as *Postmodern Pulp*, would ultimately convert the traditional perception held by the literary establishment of Pulp Literature as a low-brow literary aesthetic, to one which would finally realise Pulp's true role as the postmodern medium *par excellence*. However, after twelve months of deliberation, it became more than evident, that although these writers shared in their marginalised status, and seemed to sympathise with each others ideas, their texts were far too diverse to conform uniformly to the structure that I had devised to argue for Burroughs as a postmodernist. The problem, as I came to understand it was in the process of writing my honours thesis, was that I had refined my conception of modernism and postmodernism to such a degree that I could no longer distinguish between the two. However, although this meant I could not write my thesis on the merits of *Postmodern*

Pulp, as we shall see in the closing arguments to this thesis, it did not indicate the end of this particular debate.

In the search for a new theoretical approach, I encountered an invaluable piece of advice. The suggestion recommended one possible remedy for discovering a new area of study was to attempt to make a list of the books that you had read over your lifetime. What the list laid bare was that it displayed how I had always been interested in certain areas of writing, and that I had remained totally committed to those authors and their genres over my whole reading history. What is more, it also illustrated that largely these writers, and their kinds of writing were not those which would be eagerly claimed to satisfy some academic notion of the Western Canon. On the contrary, the vast majority of these writers resided outside the conventions set for 'high' literature, inhabiting the lowlands of literary taste; pot-boilers, popular fiction, genre-writing, trash, cult, junk, and pulp. It became more than obvious that my literary taste lay with Chandler, not Chaucer. In Philip Marlowe, not Christopher. Even five years of studying literature at University had not altered this inclination whatsoever. The big question which loomed large, then, was why? Why did I prefer to read these texts over those valorised by the literary academy? Why did I feel this low form of disposable fiction was more illuminating than those so-called 'canonic' texts? At first, I tried to pretend it was because these texts were inherently postmodern. And yet, as I dismissed this notion, I finally arrived at the realisation that defining whether Pulp was postmodern or not, was *not* what was important about these texts. In fact, the important thing was to try to identify exactly what it *was* that had made Pulp Literature such an attractive proposition in the first place, long before the concept of postmodernism had raised its contentious head. What were the mechanisms underpinning this aesthetic, which determined that I received far more satisfaction from reading Kerouac than Kafka? Or Bukowski rather than Beckett? Why was it, that although I had acquired the

skills to read James Joyce successfully, I certainly did not wish to do so? Not now – not ever again. And yet, when it comes to Pulp Literature, it is a different story altogether. Not just for myself, but for millions of readers around the globe.

Fortunately, my supervisor had anticipated this shift from postmodern pulp to a re-assessment of the relationship between the aesthetic of Pulp Literature, and the role assigned for it by the literary establishment. Indeed, he asserted, that the research I had recently abandoned, had not only demonstrated the contradictory and paradoxical manner in which Pulp operates, but how it continues to confound and subvert our expectations. Therefore, the theoretical thrust of this thesis, which is entitled *Pulp Literature: a Re-evaluation*, will primarily be concerned with exploring how this subversive aesthetic is not simply just the down-trodden poor-white-trash postmodern literary “other” to ‘high’ literature, but rather an important social, economic, political, and theoretical force with its own strategies and agendas.

Having decided to focus on this new perspective, one of the first questions that confounds the researcher of this exceedingly popular subject, is why is it that very few literary theorists seem to be writing about Pulp Literature? Where are all the theoretical texts? A thousand hits on any Library data base exploring the subject-heading of ‘Pulp’ will uncover a deluge of information on root canals, soil sampling methods, endless debates about wood-chipping, and yet almost none concerning this popular form of literature. A search on ‘Pulp Fiction’, will deliver some very interesting essays from cultural theorists on the merits of Quentin Tarantino’s film of the same name, although precious little on this enormous literary genre. Similarly, a search on the topic of ‘Cult’ will offer anthropological studies on fetishes, quasi-religions, and a multitude of articles by cultural theorists on the history of cult television shows and cinema. While searches into ‘Junk’, ‘Trash’, or ‘Subversion’ will lead respectively to engineering design standards for Chinese ship-building, American Civil Codes for the Disposal of Garbage, and finally, to some sexual deviations not applicable to this project.

Of course, to some degree, this is an exaggeration. And yet, in truth, compared to other areas of popular culture, such as film, television, and contemporary music, Pulp Literature as a genre finds itself remarkably under-represented by literary theorists, considering the enormity of its field. However, although the quantity of these texts, by comparison, is small, in general, their quality was of an exceedingly high standard, and they have been extremely valuable in establishing the framework for the debate presented in this thesis. As I have alluded in the Introduction, in addition to those theoretical texts that deal directly with Pulp, there are those texts which have proven themselves to be essential in providing an indirect account of the issues and conditions which surrounded Pulp in all of its incarnations. For the purpose of this short survey of the texts which informed this thesis, I propose we should mirror its structure by

beginning with the general, and then move to the specific subject areas of the primary theorists.

General Cultural Theorists and Historians

There have been a number of cultural theorists and historians whose work has been essential in not only providing the background information which generally supported the world views of the primary theorists on this subject matter, but they also added atmosphere, and occasional dissent. These disagreements could be something as simple as the translation or definition of a particular word, or the correct spelling of a name, to an open attack on a nation's adoption of a poststructuralist aesthetic. What I am trying to suggest is that although these perspectives might be considered as secondary to the primary texts, this does not reduce the value of their contribution to shaping the views which have been expressed throughout this project. To the contrary, many of these texts have offered invaluable insights, not just into the subject of Pulp Literature, but on a wide variety of issues which reside outside its concern. For this reason I would like to extend my appreciation to some of those authors whose texts have had a substantial influence on this thesis.

J. M. Roberts's 1000 page tome *The Pelican History of the World*² was an essential reference to the social, political, and economic machinations that would eventually give birth to Pulp, and help to shape its future trajectory. Besides a reservoir of statistical information, it offered a context from where we could witness the ramifications that literacy and printing would have on the dissemination of unpalatable ideas throughout the history of the world. This is a theme which would be picked up and elaborated on by a great many of the authors within the thesis, but one of my favourite texts on this

subject is Colin Wilson's curious book *A Criminal History of Mankind*³. I have been a devoted fan of Wilson's extensive opus which is composed of almost forty books of non-fiction and fiction, from his first book *The Outsider* in 1956, to his later explorations in *Order of Assassins*⁴ and *The Misfits: a Study of Sexual Outsiders*⁵. Not only is Colin Wilson's extended body of work an excellent resource in itself, but it also continues to offer impressive insights into his obsession with the interconnected nature of literature, philosophy, and criminal psychology. My only regret is in not being able to situate more of his insights into the thesis proper. I would highly recommend his work to anybody who is interested in this area of research.

The same could be attributed to many of the other books I read, hoping that I would be able to utilise their insights in a much more fuller exposition within the thesis, only to discover that this was to be denied due to the limitations of space. This has left a gnawing feeling of guilt, in that I have under-represented many of these authors. For instance, many of the texts I encountered during my research into the cultural upheavals that had occurred in the fifties and sixties, were captivating in their detail of these periods. Unfortunately, in a lot of cases, I hardly managed to get this information into the thesis at all. Therefore my apologies would go to such texts as Barry Miles's trilogy on the Beat writers; *Jack Kerouac: King of the Beats, a Portrait*⁶, *Ginsberg: a Biography*⁷, and *William Burroughs: El Hombre Invisible*⁸. In the same category, I should include, Steve Turner's well researched biography of Jack Kerouac, *Angelheaded Hipster*⁹, Lisa Philips, *Beat Culture And The New America: 1950-1965*¹⁰, Hunter S. Thompson's *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas: a Savage Journey to the Heart of the American Dream*¹¹, Robert M. Pirsig's *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*¹², and *The Sixties: the decade remembered now by the people who lived it then*. Edited by Lynda Rosen Obst and designed by Robert Kingsbury¹³. All of these were well written and informative books that reflected the *zeitgeist* of this explosive

period in human history. And, although these texts might have been under-utilised in this particular project, perhaps this is indicative of an area of interest for future research.

Certainly my re-acquaintance with the ‘futurological’ theories of Alvin Toffler, during the research for this thesis, has rekindled another area that I would be keen to approach in some formal comparative study. I am aware that Toffler’s work may be considered unfashionable, or out-of-date, and hopelessly pessimistic, or optimistic, depending which book you read. However, I believe that there is a wealth of material, and seemingly a number of significant changes in his perspective towards man’s interaction with technology within his three main texts *Future Shock*¹⁴, *The Third Wave*¹⁵, and *Powershift: Knowledge, Wealth, and Violence at the edge of the 21st Century*¹⁶ that would seem to almost guarantee an interesting outcome. Similarly, another area that was touched upon in the thesis, but which could become a promising subject for a comparative study in its own right, would be to compare the arguments outlined by Camille Paglia in her book *Sex, Art, and American Culture: Essays*¹⁷, and the similar views expressed by Robert Hughes in his *Culture of Complaint: the Fraying of America*¹⁸, concerning the decline in the standards of university education in America, to those of Australian scholars who contributed their own complaints in *Why Universities Matter*¹⁹, which was banned for its efforts, and Dr Graham Good’s *Humanism Betrayed – Theory, Ideology and Culture in the Contemporary University*²⁰. According to Rod Moran’s review of these two books “Angst in academia”²¹, these authors all have one thing in common. And that is, they are convinced of the “erosion of the methods and ideals assumed to underwrite the humanities in particular”, and would wish to rescue it from becoming “an increasingly authoritarian domain patrolled by Thought Police”²². This is a theme, which although it may not appear to be overtly expressed by this thesis, is nevertheless more than obviously implied throughout Pulp’s

debate with the literary establishment. That is, as we shall see, the implication that it is not Pulp Literature which *needs* to be re-evaluated at all, rather it is the double-standards inherent within the evaluative methods of the literary academy which *need* to be re-assessed.

Primary Cultural Theorists and Historians

These are some of the primary cultural theorists and historians on Pulp, whose texts I uncovered during my database search, and which I consider to be of an exceedingly high standard. I have chosen to begin with Peter Haining's *A Pictorial History of Horror Stories*²³ as it carries the special significance of being the first book that I read when I began to research this topic. Although I would like to recommend Haining's text as an essential reference guide into the history of Pulp Literature, the truth is this role has been usurped by others. However, what is more important than the information this book contains, which is incisive in its own right, is the spirit of respect that Haining's confers on this lurid genre within the Pulp form. It is this attitude, that I have attempted to appropriate for this thesis. Later, as my research expanded, I soon encountered some of those authors whose texts not only shared in Haining's spirit, but in their effusive prose style, and the content of their argument, quite often surpassed him. Tony Goodstone, the editor of *The Pulps: Fifty Years of American Pop Culture*²⁴, is an excellent example of the use of Pulp narrative stylistics to relate a concise overview in the history of the form. And yet, this literary device was utilised with even greater success by Lee Server, the author of *Danger is my Business: an Illustrated History of the Fabulous Pulp Magazines: 1896-1953*²⁵, and *Over My Dead Body: the Sensational Age of the American Paperback: 1945-55*²⁶. Server's hard-boiled prose

stylings and his infectious enthusiasm for Pulp in all its tawdry forms, guarantee that these two informative books should be read by anyone with an interest in this subject. Or even without it.

Another fine writer who has chosen to deliver his criticism in this *noir*-esque manner is Geoffrey O'Brien in his book *Hardboiled America: Lurid Paperbacks and the Masters of Noir (Expanded Edition)*²⁷. Although, I should point out that O'Brien is not as successful as Lee Server in the delivery of his content, nor the consistency of its form. The problem, in this instance, is very likely to be due to the fact that O'Brien's enthusiasm for his subject, as opposed to Server's, seems to be undermined by more than a tinge of cynicism. Of course this is not always a bad thing. However, as with all writers who get caught tongue-in-cheek too often, it becomes difficult to believe in the sincerity of their stated cause, no matter how well they present their case. And yet, although a tad of cynicism manages to creep into the final paragraphs of Andrew Calcutt and Richard Shephard's introduction to their impressive book *Cult Fiction: a Reader's Guide*²⁸, in their case, it does not sink the boat. This might be because many of their jaded observations tend to possess an element of truth about them, such as "What was the counterculture is now over-the-counter culture, the deviant behaviour at the core of cult fiction has reached the middle of the market place, and there is nothing anyone can do about it"²⁹. After all, as cynical as this may be, popular culture *has* always been driven by the dollar. Certainly, this is a view which would be supported whole-heartedly by the Marxist critique proposed by Woody Haut in his insightful book *Pulp Culture: Hardboiled Fiction and the Cold War*³⁰. Indeed, the most interesting aspects of Haut's critique is his elevation of the technologies of Pulp to it becoming a subversive voice for a nation oppressed by its own appointed politicians. His own debate appertains more specifically to detective fiction, although this is easily transferable to the whole of the medium. Due to the ignominy in which this form found

itself to be held by the establishment, its role as an important agent for the transmission of ideological views was virtually ignored.

In a sense, the final three books I wish to discuss, which were among the best texts that I had discovered in my search for primary theoretical sources, also all tend to ignore the important questions surrounding the status that popular fiction holds within the halls of the literary academy whether this may be categorised as Junk, or Cult, or Pulp. Although they theorise their categories for this medium in an informed and insightful manner, these authors all tend to readily accept the place their subject matter has been allotted in the hierarchy of the literary establishment as a given. And interestingly, this is regardless of whether this is a modern or a postmodern world. Unfortunately, in Thomas J. Roberts's well-researched modernist defence of the popular genres in *An Aesthetics of Junk Fiction*³¹, he fails to defend anything other than the literary status quo. However, it is clear from his broad use of examples from a wide variety of genres within the literature that Roberts has an obvious affection for his subject matter. And yet in his somewhat misguided categorisation for his aesthetic of Junk Fiction, he does not even attempt to re-situate its relationship to the canonic. His *defence*, therefore, asserts that Junk Fiction deserves to remain where it is, at the bottom of the food chain. Equally, in his well-informed poststructuralist assessment, Clive Bloom maintains in *Cult Fiction: Popular Reading and Pulp Theory*³² that Pulp has a postmodern agenda which sees it pitted as the binary opposite to a static modern canon. This is the line of argument, that I had already abandoned in my earlier approach, for a large number of reasons. One of which is, as with Roberts's traditionalist claim, that it achieves nothing in re-evaluating the status of Pulp. Albeit, my favourite book of the three, Thomas R. Whissen's *Classic Cult Fiction: a Companion to Popular Cult Literature*³³, offers another position. In his categorisation for his aesthetic for Cult Fiction, Whissen proposes a definition for Cult which allows it to straddle both the

canonic and popular literatures, to compose its megatext. And yet, once again, this is a formulation which also conveniently side-steps the issue of evaluation. To be fair to Whissen, although he offers us a third perspective, these issues were clearly never part of his agenda. Therefore, it is up to this thesis to take up the challenge, to re-evaluate Pulp.

A List for Life: What I Have Read. And What I Must Leave Out

Returning to the list of a lifetime's reading – of course this list was never meant to be fully comprehensive, simply representative. I doubt it would be possible for anyone, even for a such a devoted reader as myself, to totally recall every book they have ever read. Not at least without the assistance of regression therapy, hypnosis, or a DNA-scanning cybernetic mnemonic implant³⁴.

None of which I happen to have access to at the moment. The most important factor about the list is that it clarified for myself exactly what types of literature I had chosen

to read in the past. What kinds I had been forced to read. And identified which genres and texts I have no interest in at all. This information is essential in determining, from the outset of the thesis, what the field of engagement is to be comprised of. For instance, Thomas J. Roberts in his study on the aesthetics of Junk Fiction, identifies four main classes of reader; the first, who read exclusively from the sacred books and the Canon; the second, who read mainly from the Canon but relax with non-Canonic texts, the third, who read exclusively from one genre within non-Canonic texts; and fourthly, those like myself, who read across the board in their choice of non-Canonic and occasional Canonic texts³⁵. Roberts does propose a greater variety of readers than those I have outlined here, but this is not the time to discuss his system of classification. However, for now, Robert's system allows me to claim my place as a *literary fence-sitter*.

Having said this, I am not claiming that I am an expert on every facet of Pulp. As Roberts's system implies, this could never be. Because by nature, and his criteria, if anything, I am an eccentric reader. In fact, my tastes are so eclectic, I am not even loyal to Pulp Literature. Indeed, I happen to read across the borders of classification and genre. Reading from the tradition of the so-called Western Canon, as well as Pulp. Therefore, as such, I cannot claim to have an intimate knowledge of every class and genre. I am a dabbler in most, but not all. There are some genres, sub-genres, and sordid texts that any amount of carping and cajoling for altruistic or holistic consistency of the project that I will not be badgered to take on board. James Joyce is one, Mills and Boon is another. Yet, at least I can claim to have read one of each of them. Unfortunately, I have never read a western³⁶. However, I have long been a fan of western movies, and I could probably assert to a reasonable understanding of the strictures for the genre, if need be, by proxy. On the other hand, I have read an historical romance, although only because I was forced to through commitments to

course curricula. I shall be trying to avoid them in the future. I enjoy science fiction, but I am not by any means a devotee. The range of science fiction that I have read is very narrow compared to the great corpus the genre elicits – and I am sure that if someone such as Damien Broderick³⁷ knew precisely how thin my range of reading actually was, they might assert, quite reasonably I would agree, that my knowledge of the genre was so flimsy as to be virtually non-existent. Likewise with the fantasy genre. I managed to plough through J. R. R. Tolkien’s epic saga *Lord of the Rings*, but that all but exhausted any enthusiasm I had previously held for this sub-genre. Finally, although I read a lot as a child (and still hold many children’s authors in high regard), and certainly consider children’s literature and adolescent literature to fall under the banner of Pulp, I will not be addressing these genres in any specific detail in this thesis.

Some of you might be thinking “there cannot be much Pulp left after that little dissection”? Or “should I be even proposing to representing Pulp at all”? In fact, one of my closest friends, a fellow postgraduate, has argued consistently since I began research on the thesis, that I should not be reviewing Pulp at all. That my actual literary interests conform more towards theoretical definitions that describe a Cult readership. And as far as I understand things, he is absolutely correct. Nevertheless, this all depends upon how we perceive the *oeuvre* of Pulp. And of course, that of Cult, and Junk. However, although I realise this is not the time to dwell on such distinctions, in order to illustrate a point, I would like briefly to discuss Thomas R. Whissen’s disclaimer in the opening to his guide to Cult literature. According to him, Cult books “share certain stock ingredients which must be present before readers will take the books to heart and are prepared to swear by them”³⁸. So for Whissen, Cult texts and their readerships, share in some form of a hallowed crusade. And as I mentioned earlier, I can vouch for this sort of response to literature. I too have been a pilgrim. Indeed I still am. But these are specialised texts; as Whissen correctly surmises, they have particular “literary

qualities”³⁹. And it is these qualities that he later takes into account when separating Cult Fiction from many of the Pulp genres that I actually do read: detective fiction, spy novels, historical fiction, mysteries, thrillers, horror, and I will throw in erotica and pornography (although these were only conspicuous due to their complete omission from Whissen’s list)⁴⁰.

I would like to make it as clear as possible, that unlike Thomas R. Whissen, I will not be applying a set of theoretical propositions to separate Pulp from areas of itself. The only reason that I have attempted to discriminate, between these genres, and others, is in the hope that the thesis will reflect a personal journey through literature. My own. However, there was another factor that my list indicated, and I would like to take the time to apologise for this now. Due to the restrictions imposed by a lack of space within the thesis, once we begin examining the cultural, political, and theoretical ramifications of the history of Pulp Literature, unfortunately there is very little space left for even some of my most revered authors and their texts to figure in the thesis as a whole. For instance, such as how its genres have been co-opted by other technologies, including radio, television, cinema, music, the Internet, and interactive games. However, it is hoped, that the spirit of these texts will filter through the thesis as guides, which have influenced, positively, the decisions on how at least one person has lived his life. This thesis has been written in appreciation of these paperback writers, out of gratitude for their welcomed wisdom and tuition.

Plan 9 from Outer Space: The Structure of the Thesis

Hopefully the readers of this thesis will come to realise that it is structured like the lair of a funnel-web spider. That is, it has been designed to lure you in from the far perimeters of Pulp's ignoble publishing conception, past its involvement in the movements of popular culture's more recent history, until eventually you are drawn face to face with the poisonous contortions of contemporary evaluative theory, where seemingly, no *thing* can be defined. And yet, once ensnared, death strikes as you are locked in by a million strands of slimy conjecture.

Our descent into the web will begin with . . .

Chapter Two, 'Pulp from the Cave to the Industrial Revolution', which is mainly concerned with grounding Pulp Literature within an historical perspective. What is

Pulp? Where did it come from? In order to answer these questions, this chapter traces the Pulp aesthetic back to its conception with the invention of the printing press in the middle of the fifteenth century. It demonstrates how Pulp was born into a spirit of intellectual rebelliousness that offered a radical alternative to mainstream culture and religious repression, by providing a vehicle for the voices of the marginalised and the oppressed in the societies of the world. It illustrates this by showing how Pulp's subversive streak can be seen to evolve from the pamphlets of protest against the Roman Catholic Church, posted by Martin Luther, through the Reformation's spread of literacy to the poor, which later in turn helped to transmit the ideals of the Enlightenment. We also assess the ideas of dissension, and their methods of dissemination by such writers as Christopher Marlowe, Daniel Defoe, and their influence on the orchestrators of the French Revolution, and the American War of Independence. The chapter concludes, suitably, at the dawn of the twentieth century, with the mutations of the lifestyles of the newly literate working classes of the Industrial Revolution paralleling the transformations in the new literary forms available to this increasingly literate audience: forms such as those published on rough wood pulp paper, which would not only revolutionise the popularity of this kind of literature, but inspire its name, Pulp.

Chapter Three, 'The Death of Pulp', jumps forward to 1959, to contemplate the accusations that the Pulp aesthetic, in its ideal form, had already died. However, our investigations prove the problem was simply one of misapprehension. That is, many critics, publishers, writers, and their fans, had all come to believe Pulp's aesthetic should remain loyal to their own fixed idealisations. In order to illustrate that this was not possible, the chapter demonstrates how the Pulp aesthetic constantly had to evolve into new techniques and technologies simply to survive economically. We return to 1901, to trace its transformation through the forms and mediums into which it was

forced to evolve throughout the economies of history, up to 1959. By doing this, we witness Pulp's trajectory through two World Wars, the Great Depression, and the challenge from other technologies, such as radio, television, and cinema – as well as what many saw as the threat from within, via the invention of the paperback.

Chapter Four, 'A Post-Mortem for Pulp', explores the effects of the popularity of the Pulp paperback. It also refines our investigation into the allegations that the aesthetic of Pulp had died in America at the end of the 1950s, demonstrating, contrary to these assertions, how the aesthetic of Pulp had actually managed to create opportunities from the face of adversity. That is, stripped of its lurid covers with their sensationalist artwork to entice unwary readers, the Pulp aesthetic shifted its focus to a rebelliousness in content, which would prove to be far more dangerous than anything it had presented in its disreputable past. Ironically, it was the moral majority that forced these Pulp paperbacks into opening their doors to a new generation of writers who wished to express their disenchantment with the repressive conformity which they felt was being forced upon them by the conservative social values of the period. However, many thought there was a downside to this new direction due to the quality of these voices being of such a 'high standard' that they inadvertently elevated this low form of literature to a level of respectability, which ultimately destroyed its Pulp illicitness forever.

Chapter Five, 'Death was (not) THE END: The Ideology of Pulp' looks at the ideological influence of the Pulp aesthetic in America from the end of the repression of the 1950s, through to the traumatic upheaval of the 1960s, and concludes with a brief overview of the three decades from 1970-2001.

It argues, although some of Pulp definitive literary styles and mediums had died at the end of the 1950s, that this did not mean the Pulp aesthetic had ceased to exist. To the contrary, it demonstrates how it still continued to provide a voice for the marginalised

in society. That is, even though its technologies may have evolved from the chapbook to the cinema, new voices still managed to utilise Pulp as a vehicle in their attempt to instigate cultural, social, and political change throughout the world.

We also discover, ironically, that all the time these events were occurring, mainstream literary academics still refused to acknowledge Pulp as an aesthetic which was an important agent for the transmission of ideological views. However, this anomaly is explained as probably due to the fact the Pulp aesthetic does not present a single, unified, or dominant ideological viewpoint. Rather, it provides a platform for every denomination, and political persuasion.

Chapter Six, 'Questions of Questionable Quality: The Problems of Evaluation' broaches the subject of literary evaluation. Posing the question, that "if literary theorists cannot determine what literary 'quality' is, then how can we possibly define Pulp?"

In order to find an answer to this question, our investigation determines that due to the impasse between an un-dead New Criticism and the cultural relativity of Poststructuralism, many theorists may harbour a deep desire for some form of 'objective' evaluative judgment. All they have at their disposal at this moment in time is 'subjective' aesthetic taste. However, this chapter demonstrates, that just because aesthetic taste is 'subjective', this should not automatically determine that it has no validity when it comes to evaluating an aesthetic object. Simply because these 'subjective' judgments cannot be verified through 'objective' evidence, this should not render them worthless, or valueless. On the other hand, the chapter also warns the reader of the methods that some literary theorists and critics use in their attempt to assert the superiority of their own 'subjective' evaluative taste. And as we shall see, it is via this pretence of 'objective' authority, that these critics proceed to devalue the status of Pulp.

Chapter Seven, 'Pulp versus the Western Canon: The Implications of Pulp' refines the aesthetic definition for Pulp Literature, by comparing it to the definitions other theorists have suggested for Junk, Cult, and Pulp Literature, and juxtaposing these to those proposed for the establishment of the Western Canon. In its assessment of Thomas J. Roberts's *An Aesthetics of Junk Fiction*⁴¹ the chapter argues that his criteria for the categorisation of Junk is founded on a number unreliable presuppositions, one of which is Roberts's obvious enthusiasm for the notion of the superiority of the traditional Western Canon. Therefore, once we have distinguished Pulp's aesthetic from that proposed by Roberts, our investigation will shift to examine the grounds surrounding the status of his claims for the Western Canon. Ultimately, this debate concludes with the question, that "if the Western Canon no longer existed then where would these discarded canonical texts go?"

One possible answer is that perhaps they would fall under the auspices of Cult Fiction, as outlined by Clive Bloom, Thomas R. Whissen, Andrew Calcutt and Richard Shephard. However, in comparing these texts, we not only discover that this is highly unlikely, but more importantly, that any form of canon formation should be treated with enlightened suspicion. Ironically, we conclude this chapter, by assessing Clive Bloom's poststructuralist agenda for Cult Fiction. As it turns out, his premise is the return of my repressed original approach for this thesis *Postmodern Pulp*. Fortunately, this research now proves to be useful in arguing against this theoretical dead-end.

What is left after all this? What will always remain: Pulp Literature.

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- ² London: Pelican, 1983.
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- ¹² London: Corgi, 1981.
- ¹³ New York: a Random House/Rolling Stone Press Book, 1977.
- ¹⁴ London: Pan, 1973.
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- ¹⁶ London: Bantam, 1991.
- ¹⁷ London: Viking, 1992.
- ¹⁸ London: Harvill, 1994.
- ¹⁹ Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2000.
- ²⁰ McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002.
- ²¹ *The West Australian* Big Weekend Saturday March 23, 2002.
- ²² From Rod Moran's Review "Angst in academia"

Moran says: "Eighteen months ago I reported on the suppression of a book, *Why Universities Matter*, by the Melbourne University Press. It was to be part of the publisher's Ethics and Public Life series, approved by the publications committee of MUP.

It was banned because the contributing scholars were critical of the philosophy of tertiary education underpinning the modern academy. The subsequent scandal raised many questions, not least about the very idea of the university, as well as the erosion of the methods and ideals assumed to underwrite the humanities in particular (history, literature, philosophy, and so on).

Why Universities Matter went on to be an unlikely bestseller of its kind for publishers Allen and Unwin – it's still in print, at \$27.95 – a clear indication there is unease about the state of the university well beyond its cloisters.

All of this is not just an academic matter. Billions of taxpayers' dollars go into tertiary education. And for the broader community much rides on the type of mind and moral capacities that are refined in future graduates by the education they receive.

The publication of Dr Graham Good's *Humanism Betrayed – Theory, Ideology and Culture in the Contemporary University* (McGill-Queen University Press, \$27.95) is the latest opinion on the state of tertiary humanities.

In a lucid and cogent 110 pages, Dr Good sets out a devastating critique of the political ideologies and literary theories that he argues have corrupted the moral and intellectual basis of the contemporary academy. Increasingly, it seems, sections of the humanities are an authoritarian domain patrolled by Thought Police.

He claims there is an essential battle to be fought: "It is over what the basic character and purpose of the university is to be: a place of respect for the individual, of striving for excellence, and of freedom of inquiry, or an arena for race-gender division, behavioural policing, 'sensitivity' training, self-censorship, and ideological conformity."

Humanism Betrayed is essential reading for anyone interested in the state of one of our vital educational institutions and the consequences of its decline. The book contains disturbing examples of what the French thinker Julien Benda, nearly 80 years ago in a different context, so vividly described as the "treason of the intellectuals" against their calling." *The West Australian* Big Weekend Saturday March 23, 2002.

²³ London: Treasure Press, 1985.

²⁴ New York :Bonanza Books, 1970.

²⁵ San Francisco:Chronicle Books, 1993.

²⁶ San Francisco:Chronicle Books, 1994.

²⁷ New York: De Capo Press, 1997.

²⁸ London: Prion Books, 1998.

²⁹ Ibid., pxvi.

³⁰ London: Serpent's Tail, 1995.

³¹ Athens:University of Georgia Press, 1990.

³² London:MacMillan, 1996.

³³ New York/Westport, Connecticut/London:Greenwood Press, 1992.

³⁴ Although this is sadly the case, I have provided a brief bibliography (see the Appendix, p299) of some of the texts that have stubbornly refused to be shaken from my psyche up to this point, these thereby could be said to present a backdrop that illustrates the kinds of writing which have informed this thesis.

³⁵ 1990:71-86.

³⁶ That is, of course, unless more pedantic observers might be prepared to accept Richard Brautigan's genre-mangling parody *The Hawkline Monster: a Gothic Western* (1974), but somehow I doubt that very much.

³⁷ Author of the excellent overview of the genres: *Reading By Starlight: Postmodern Science Fiction*. London: Routledge, 1995.

³⁸ Ibid., pxiii

³⁹ Ibid., pxiii.

⁴⁰ Whissen's Disclaimer:

In the Preface to his book *Classic Cult Fiction: a Companion to Popular Cult Literature*, Thomas R. Whissen outlines the following disclaimer:

This book would not fulfil its purpose if it did not inspire controversy. While some readers will groan at the inclusion of some title or another, other readers are bound to decry the omission of other titles that they feel have been inexcusably omitted. Much to my regret, I had to draw the line somewhere or never finish the book. This means I had to make choices; if there is enough hue and cry, there can always be a sequel. Isaac Asimov, Stephen Donaldson, Thomas Disch, and many other excellent science fiction writers have been omitted partly because they have been so admirably discussed in works devoted exclusively to that genre, a genre that honestly deserves the special attention it has been receiving of late.

Another category that has been virtually neglected is that of mystery fiction. Devotees of Tony Hillerman, P. D. James, Ruth Rendell, and their like must look for them in works

devoted to that impressive genre. The same must be said about spy novels and thrillers by people like Robert Ludlum, Jack Higgins, Ken Follett, and Richard Forsythe. They have their loyal readers, and there are titles these readers might sincerely designate as cult books. But the truth is that while most of these authors have books that have achieved astonishing commercial success, few of the titles can actually be said to speak both to and for their readers. This is also true of historical fiction or romance fiction or western fiction. Louis L'Amour has an enormous following, but I know of no single title that has become a reader's virtual bible (xiv).

⁴¹Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990.

CHAPTER 2.

Pulp from the Cave to the Industrial Revolution

Even the pulp-makers . . . will find difficulty in marketing their pulp
in the immediate future

D. A. Wells, *Practical Economist*. 1885¹.

A Pulp Perspective of the Past

In 1935, two English academics, J. M. Parrish and R. D. Coole, proclaimed that “literature – indeed all art – is splendidly rebellious”. They support their claim, by assessing that this is due to the fact that literature “will never lie meekly in the compartments the critic makes for it”. That is, it is “not poetry, plus drama, plus novel, plus essay”. On the contrary, its “compartments are not water-tight”. To illustrate this very important point, they explain that “a play may be at the same time the very finest poetry – Shakespeare’s best work fused both together; a novel that had no poetry in it would be drab stuff, for the novelist reflects life, and poetry is inextricably interwoven with life”. Therefore, they proclaim, that “literature is not the sum total of its different mediums; it will not be confined; it overflows our classifications, and, bearing onwards, falls into its own forms” while the “critic labours after, marking its course as best he can”².

How then do we locate a moment, in the immensity of history, and decide, this is the first instance of Pulp? Especially, as J. M. Parrish and R. D. Coole identify as early as 1935, that literature is not a stable form. That it resists classification. By nature its “compartments are not water-tight”. It leaks. Dripping into other genres, other forms, formats, techniques, and technologies, until it is difficult for the observer to discern, categorically, which came first: the chicken/medium or the egg/message? Or indeed, whether or not Pulp should be considered to be both the medium and the message? After all, as we shall see, Pulp is a kind of paper, but it is also a definitive literary genre with its own aesthetic criteria. A criteria, that for the large part, rests upon the notion of

attitude. Pulp primarily although not homogeneously, has a snarling Marlon Brando in *The Wild One* attitude to life. When asked what he is rebelling against? M. B. leans over his motorcycle handle-bars in his black leather jacket, and in a rare moment of method-acting minimalism, he chews a matchstick, flicks his chin, hoods his eye-lids, and then loutishly replies: “Whaddaya got?”³ This is why any definition of Pulp must appear with the qualifier ‘not homogeneously’, because if Pulp cannot find something to rebel against, it will feed upon itself like sharks in a frenzy. Or, paradoxically, in order to avoid becoming predictable, it will deliberately contradict itself, and play it safe. However rebelling against its own stereotype, many might argue, is still acting stereotypically. And of course it is, but that is what Pulp does, and that is also what makes it, to use Parrish and Coole’s term, so “splendidly rebellious”⁴. But where did this attitude come from? To answer this question will be, in essence, the quest of this chapter.

The Invention of the Printing Press: Pulp Attitude, Broadsheets & Pamphlets

Alvin Toffler once commented that “if you divided the last 50,000 years of man’s existence into lifetimes of approximately sixty-two years each, you would have 800 lifetimes. Of these 800 lifetimes, he reports, “man would have spent 650 of them in the cave”. Only in the last seventy lifetimes, claims Toffler, would it “have been possible to communicate effectively from one lifetime to another – as writing made it possible to do”. And importantly, it would only be “in the last six of these lifetimes that masses of men would have ever seen the printed word”⁵. Of course, this should not be read as an attempt to dismiss the value of the myths, legends and sagas of the oral tradition which were the obvious gestation places for the Pulp aesthetic⁶, but rather simply as an indication of just how vital Toffler considers the conception of print to have been for human evolution. Indeed, by implication, we can derive a sense of the three quantum leaps that were integral to leading humanity from the cave, to the crusades, and out into CyberSpace. Or put more simply, it would appear that Toffler would be happy to concede the invention of the printing press, and its revolutionary impact on culture, to have created the world as we know it.

Thomas J. Roberts in his *Aesthetics of Junk Fiction*, appears to concur with Toffler. He points out that “living in the age of print, we are swept each day by tidal waves of information interchange. However, in the oral cultures of the past, information exchanges on this order were possible only in cities, where diverse populations interacted”⁷. Fortunately, according to Colin Wilson, in one of those cities in the 1430s, the German town of Mainz, “a silversmith named Johann Gansfleisch – (which translates as John Gooseflesh), but better known by his mother’s family name of

Gutenberg – might have been listening to such information interchanges”⁸. From the Arabs he may have discovered that a Chinese blacksmith and alchemist called Pi Sheng had developed block printing in the 11th Century, but had abandoned the process due to the unmanageability of 50,000 Chinese characters⁹. Also, he may have discovered from these traders the availability of cheap paper. Wilson reports that during the Middle Ages, the monks had “always had to copy out their manuscripts by hand onto parchment or vellum, which were made from the hides of animals”. However, the Arabs had not only stolen the technique for making paper from China, they had also managed to invent a horizontal loom, which could produce linen, by merely pressing a foot to the pedal. Wilson points out that, as “people began to wear this new linen instead of wool, the old linen was used to create a cheap form of paper”. And what is more, he believes it would have been the availability of such plentiful supplies of paper which would have been essential for Gutenberg’s scheme for manufacturing cheap bibles. He says, “although the monks of the Middle Ages knew how to carve letters out of wood or soft metal and use them for printing initial letters on manuscripts, Gutenberg had developed a technique for casting letters in a brass mould”. This mould came in three parts, held together by a spring, which allowed the letters to be released undamaged¹⁰. However, it was the fact that the alphabet consisted of only twenty-six letters which, according to Sean Jennett, afforded Gutenberg the crucial cultural advantage over his Chinese predecessor Pi Sheng¹¹. Eventually, by the 1440s, these advantages would help Gutenberg to use his movable type to print the Bible. And yet, as Wilson points out, no matter how altruistic, or materialistic his motives were in this regard, his invention would prove to be, “not only the beginning of his own personal decline, but also that of the Roman Catholic Church”¹².

Printing the Bible should have made Gutenberg a rich man, but it did not. He was sued by his business partner Johann Fust for ownership of the press. Fust won, and two

years later, he printed the first book in Europe¹³. Gutenberg, who was financially ruined, died blind and forgotten in 1468. But the printing press was the invention that Europe had been looking for, and within twenty years had spread to over a hundred towns¹⁴. In this short time, these presses had printed 9,000,000 books, and all the Greek and Roman classics were available in cheap translations. At first the Catholic Church seemed to welcome the idea of the widespread dissemination of its texts, and Bibles (preferably in Latin), missals, breviaries, and general ecclesiastical literature poured from the early presses to all over Europe¹⁵. However, Colin Wilson reports that in 1517, “a young, manic-depressive German monk who still experienced sexual desires, nailed his ninety-five theses to the church door at Wittenberg”. Wilson argues, that if this act, “had been performed a little over twenty years earlier, it would probably have been ignored, and few people in the world would have learnt about the spirited rebellion of Martin Luther”. In fact, in the beginning, the Church did try to ignore him. Even the Pope, Wilson observes, is reputed to have said that “Luther is just a drunken German, and he will feel different when he is sober”. And yet, it was already too late. Luther’s friends and allies had sent his theses of Mainz to be printed into the form of a broadsheet (a large sheet of paper printed on one side) or pamphlet¹⁶ (an unbound booklet containing no more than 45 pages) which was then distributed throughout Germany, and the rest of Europe¹⁷. Wilson asserts, that “Luther’s attack, and similar attacks by other heretics employing the printing press, caused the Church to review its attitude to the new medium”. And as such, “it chose to try to discourage the reading of the Bible, on the grounds that people were closer to salvation when they were ignorant”. Unfortunately, he points out, “they were unaware that the battle had already been lost”¹⁸.

On the other hand, J. M. Roberts asserts that Luther and his Protestant Reformation, were a force for literacy. Contrary to the Catholic Church’s view that ignorance led to

salvation, Roberts reports that “almost universally, the reformers themselves stressed the importance of teaching believers how to read”. What is more, he points to the fact that Germany and Scandinavia had “both reached higher levels of literacy than many Catholic countries by the ninetieth century” as evidence to support this view. Another important factor which Roberts claims supports the Reformation’s influence on the spread of literacy, is that the Bible “had rapidly become available in print in the vernaculars which were thus strengthened and disciplined by the diffusion and standardization which print brought with it”. Therefore, Bibliolatry, he maintains, “for all its more obviously unfortunate manifestations, was a great force for enlightenment”¹⁹. One of these “unfortunate manifestations”, was due to the Church’s growing awareness of the potential dangers of literacy and the subversiveness of easily accessible journalism. To which they responded with the savagery of a blood-thirsty Inquisition and the censorship of its *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* (Index of Forbidden Books). Already a number of Dutch printers had been put to the stake for publishing Protestant books²⁰. However, from these circumstances, Roberts deducts that, “in retrospect it may well seem that the greater opportunity which literacy and printing gave for criticism and the questioning of authority in general was a more important effect than their subversion of religion”²¹. In fact, some publishers were so impartial, or perhaps, opportunistic is the word, that in 1480, they published a book by two Dominican inquisitors that became a bestseller.

The book was written by Heinrich Kramer and Jacob Sprenger, and was called *Malleus Maleficarum* (the Hammer of Witches). According to Colin Wilson, The Parlement of Paris had declared that “witchcraft was a delusion”. This view so incensed the ire of Sprenger and Kramer, who had until recently been in the employment of the Church against such an evil, that they published their book. Said to prove that “witchcraft is performed with the aid of demons,” it was too become

enormously popular, and one of the “most widely read books of its time”. However, Wilson suggests its unprecedented popularity was undoubtedly due to its “description of the ‘foul venereal acts’ committed by the demons on witches.” He describes it as a “piquant combination of sex and demonology” that went into many editions in many languages²². By 1485, Wilson reports another book had arrived which would “challenge not only the popularity of *Malleus Maleficarum*, but also that of the Bible”. He says it was a “compilation of old tales of chivalry called *Morte d’Arthur*”. Interestingly, Wilson points out, that at the time virtually nothing was known about the author of this popular text until almost five hundred years after his death. He reports, it was not until the mid-1920s, that an American academic discovered more about Sir Thomas Malory, than was already known that he was born in Warwickshire in 1400, and had possibly been a member of parliament. While browsing through an old bundle of papers in the public record office, the American stumbled upon some “startling information” which indicated Malory had been “a one-man crime wave,” who had “spent the latter part of his life in prison – where he had written the famous book”. These records outlined, in meticulous detail, how in 1451, Malory had been the leader of a gang which had robbed an abbey in Coombe, extorted money, rustled cattle, and stole horses. What is worse, they also explained how Malory had broken into the house of his friend Hugh Smyth, and raped his wife. Worse still, after Malory had escaped custody two months later, he returned to rape her again. It was for these crimes that Malory was sentenced to life at Newgate Prison. And it was during his incarceration that he wrote his manuscript²³.

It was not until fourteen years after Malory’s death, Colin Wilson points out, that the “manuscript fell into the hands of the English printer William Caxton”. He launched it upon the world, and it instantly became almost as “popular as the Bible”. Ironically, with its publication, argues Wilson, not only did “the rapist and cattle rustler” achieve a

belated immortality, but “his *Morte d’ Arthur* carried the ideals of knightly chivalry to the far corners of Europe”²⁴. Not quite so ironically, jumping ahead a little to the New World, in a different form, Clive Bloom relates that when Raymond Chandler began writing it was to this “inheritance that he returned, putting it into an American context”. His famous detective Philip Marlowe, he points out, was originally named Mallory after an author who had had “a quintessential influence on the image of the gentleman in the Victorian age (think of Tennyson or Morris) is an Arthurian knight (looking for Mrs *Grayle* and the *Lady in the Lake*) who smokes a pipe, wears pyjamas, acts graciously towards women, believes in honour, plays chess and looks nostalgically backward to a golden age”²⁵. Of course, while he was writing his first story in 1932, Chandler would not have been aware of the Malory that we have come to know via Colin Wilson. Or perhaps he did? In ‘Blackmailers Don’t Shoot’ Tom Hiney points out that he describes his hero detective as – “tall, with wide-set grey eyes, a thin nose, a jaw of stone” and his “clothes fitted him as though they had a soul of their own, *not just a doubtful past* (my italics). His name happened to be Mallory”²⁶. Also, according to Hiney, “when Chandler began *The Big Sleep* in 1938, he changed his hero’s name to Marlowe in reference to Marlowe House, Dulwich College London, where he had studied English history”²⁷. The college was founded by Edward Alleyn, a great Elizabethan actor, who was much admired by Ben Jonson and Thomas Nashe for his interpretations of the plays of Christopher Marlowe²⁸ However, I am not claiming that Chandler renamed Philip Marlowe after Christopher Marlowe, or that he had any interest in him at all. In fact Frank MacShane implies the name suggests a “possible transposition of Conrad’s narrator Marlow from the dark heart of the Congo to the noir heat of Los Angeles”²⁹. What interests us here is that Christopher Marlowe also possessed “a doubtful past”. Like Martin Luther and Sir Thomas Malory before him, Christopher Marlowe is a good example of not only the continuing rebellion against the

Church, but also against the mores of society. As Colin Wilson attests “this liberation of the human imagination would eventually prove more dangerous than any number of heretics and infidels”³⁰. And I consider, it is from this pool of subversion and liberated human imagination, that Pulp was spawned.

For example: why did Christopher Marlowe die at six in the evening on 30th of May 1593?

Colin Wilson relates that on the morning of the 30th “a notorious swindler, a robber, a government spy and a great dramatist” sat down to a meal at a tavern overlooking the river Thames at Deptford, owned by Mistress Eleanor Bull. The dramatist was twenty-nine year old Christopher Marlowe, who had achieved fame with his *Tamburlaine the Great* at the age of twenty three. His *Jew of Malta* and *Doctor Faustus* had been “equally successful”. On this particular day, Wilson imagines Marlowe would have been “somewhat nervous”. Just two weeks earlier his close friend Thomas Kyd had been tortured on the rack, eventually confessing that the “vile heretical conceits” found in his papers when his accusers had searched his rooms, had belonged to Christopher Marlowe. To some, according to Wilson, Marlowe had “seemed to be immune to the law”. This accusation, he explains, was largely based on the belief that he was “acting as a government spy in the employ of Sir Francis Walsingham, Queen Elizabeth’s spymaster general”. Further evidence to support this conception of Marlowe, Wilson postulates, was that “four years earlier he had been involved in a fight which had ended in the murder of a man called Bradley, and he had escaped the charge”. Similarly, in the previous year he had been “arrested on the charge of coining”. This was a crime, which Wilson asserts was “tantamount to petty treason – and if he had been found guilty, he would have been hanged, drawn and quartered”. Just a week after eluding this charge, an informer named William Baines compiled a list of “damnable opinions”

held by Marlowe. Baines, he says, had accused Marlowe of “being quite vocal in his views that ‘Moses was a conjuror, that Jesus deserved to be crucified’”, and that “all Protestants were hypocritical”. What is more, he also testified that “in every company he cometh”, Marlowe “persuades men and women to Atheism, willing them not to be afear’d of bugbears and hobgoblins and utterly scorning both God and his ministers”. Unfortunately for Marlowe, these opinions demonstrated that he was far too enlightened for his own good. That is why, Wilson says at “six o’clock on evening of the 30th of May 1593, after a heavy day of drinking in a room at the tavern, a man named Ingram Frizer stabbed his knife two inches into Marlowe’s skull, just over the right eye”. The court accepted Frizer’s case of self-defence concerning a dispute over the bill, during which Marlowe had attacked him with the knife, especially as his evidence was corroborated by the other two drinkers at the party. Although, as it turned out these men, claims Wilson, were “also employed as spies by Walsingham”. And some scholars now believe Marlowe’s wound to be consistent with that of “a man who was attacked as he lay on his back with his eyes closed”³¹.

Christopher Marlowe was dead, but fortunately for Pulp, his ideas did not die with him.

In fact, in his discussion of the Enlightenment, J. M. Roberts explains that “the essence of the civilization Europe was exporting to the rest of the globe lay in ideas. The limits they imposed and the possibilities they offered shaped the way in which that civilization operated”. What is more, he points out that, “although the twentieth century has done great damage to them, the leading ideas adumbrated by Europeans between 1500 and 1800 still provide most of the guide-posts by which we make our way”. In fact, according to Roberts, once European culture was given a “secular foundation, and began to take hold a progressive notion of historical development”, it finally became confident enough to believe that “scientific knowledge” could be used in accordance

with “utilitarian criteria” to possibly achieve limitless progress. So crucial was this stage to human development, Roberts proclaims, that “the civilization of the Middle Ages then came to an end in the minds of thinking men”³². Colin Wilson concurs with Roberts. He says, “this is why, when we read the Elizabethans, we feel that their minds are akin to our own. Dante, Chaucer, Petrarch, even Malory, seem to be strangers, inhabitants of another universe. They accepted that there was some great scheme of things, of which they were a tiny part”. The Elizabethans, Wilson claims, “were the first generation to grow up in a new climate of religious scepticism”. To illustrate this point, he argues, that “the English had never really been interested in religion”, referring to a quote by Conyers Read, where he remarks that “in thirty years they accepted five distinct changes in their religion without any great fuss about the matter”³³. From this, Wilson concludes that a “people who could accept these swings from Protestantism to Catholicism and back again as a matter of course were not likely to feel that either had a monopoly of religious truth”³⁴. That is not to say the Church had given up the fight. According to Roberts, in the seventeenth century, “there opened that split between organised religion and science which has haunted European intellectual history ever since, whatever efforts have from time to time been made to patch it up”. The crisis to which he is referring, concerns not that of a rebellious scientist, but rather a former Dominican monk called Neapolitan Bruno. Roberts reports that Bruno had broken with his order, and was wandering about Europe publishing “controversial works”, while dabbling in a “magical ‘secret science’ supposedly derived from ancient Egypt”. The end result of these practises, was that he was held by the Inquisition for eight years, “until in its hands he was burned at Rome for heresy”. Bruno’s execution was to become “one of the foundations of the later historical mythology of the development of ‘free thought’, of the struggle between progress and religion as it was to come to be seen”³⁵.

Newspapers

This leads us to another ‘free thinker’ with a ‘doubtful past’, in Daniel Defoe. According to J. M. Roberts even in the eighteenth century, “the most striking example to modern eyes would be the primacy still enjoyed almost everywhere by organized religion. In every country, Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox alike, even ecclesiastical reformers took it for granted that religion should be upheld and protected by the law and the coercive apparatus of the state”. What is more, he says, “only a very few advanced thinkers questioned this”. This was largely due to the fact, Roberts asserts, that for much of Europe there “was still no toleration for views other than those of the established Church.” Indeed in many Catholic countries, he points out, censorship was used even though it was often far from effective, to “prevent the dissemination of writings inimical to Christian belief and the authority of the Church”. What should be remembered, says Roberts, is at this time “although the Counter-Reformation spirit had ebbed and the Jesuits were dissolved, the Index and the Inquisition were maintained. The universities everywhere were in clerical hands; even in England, Oxford and Cambridge were closed to nonconformist dissenters and Roman Catholics”³⁶. One of the “most nonconformist dissenters”, was Daniel Defoe, Colin Wilson reports. Unlike Martin Luther, he describes Defoe as a pamphleteer, who “by the age of twenty-three had published pamphlets against, not only Catholicism and Protestantism, but also against his fellow dissenters, whom he considered a sorry lot”. The dissenters, Wilson explains, were allowed to hold public office, only if they were “prepared to pay lip-service to Anglicanism”. Despite this fact, Defoe himself was employed by King William and Queen Mary to write pamphlets “espousing their political points of view.”

While at the same time, he still managed to publish pamphlets, signed or unsigned, that “presented his own particular views”. One such unsigned pamphlet, was entitled *The Shortest Way With Dissenters*. In it, he suggested all ‘high-fliers’ – dissenters who worked for the government – “should be either banished or hanged”. Wilson asserts that “many in the clergy praised the pamphlet, and begged Queen Anne accept its recommendations”. And many of the dissenters were terrified, until it was “leaked that the pamphlet had been written by Defoe as a joke”. The Parliament, he says, did not see the humour of Defoe’s actions, and issued a warrant for his arrest “on the charge of libel against the high fliers”. When he stepped out of hiding, and attempted to apologise, it was to “no avail”. In July 1703, “he was sentenced to stand three days in the pillory and to be detained during the queen’s pleasure”³⁷. For Defoe, according to Wilson, “three days in the pillory would hardly have been considered a light sentence, many offenders were often stoned to death”³⁸, and he certainly would have been in fear for his life. However, as luck would have it, “overnight he had become a popular hero, and instead of stones, the crowd that gathered, threw bunches of flowers”³⁹.

Defoe was to spend twelve months in Newgate Prison, where Sir Thomas Malory had died in 1471. However, Wilson claims he put his time to good use, “writing pamphlets, interviewing pickpockets, murderers, and thieves for his foray into a new medium, the newspaper”⁴⁰. Defoe, he says, had become “so popular that no government could silence him. He had become a power with his pen. His newspaper was called *The Review* and was full of political comment, and gossip about the current scandals”⁴¹. And yet, although the newspaper was considered a new medium in Britain it did not have its first daily until 1702, J. M. Roberts maintains, “its format had been perfected in seventeenth century Germany, having evolved from broadsheets and occasional printed newsletters to journals of regular publication”. What is more, he claims that this periodical press, was “an important promoter and concomitant of increased literacy”⁴².

In a sense, Daniel Defoe was a rebel with a cause. Although he had many other 'doubtful', read criminal, elements to his past, he was a perfect example of the freeing up, or democratisation of information, and its accessibility to a newly literate population. As Clive Bloom points out, "social progress and democratic reading habits (for entertainment and instruction) went hand in hand as structural co-requisites of technological progress". The importance of which, he argues, was that this "profusion of printed material denied ascendancy to any one ideology or platform". Therefore, "as all viewpoints were provided for and none more or less applauded in terms of their mere existence as print", Bloom asserts, this meant that "no one viewpoint could dominate the necessary circulation needed to maintain continuous consumption and growth"⁴³. According to Roberts, this widespread dissemination of information was one of the main reasons why universities lost their importance, with them no longer monopolising the intellectual life of Europe in these centuries. That is, he says, because "they were dominated by the Church, who largely determined the content of their teachings and the definition of the studies they pursued, people began to use Academies, Societies, and Clubs to discuss and debate new ideas". However, Roberts claims that, "the increased circulation of ideas and information did not, of course, rest primarily on such meetings, but on the diffusion of print – on, at first, books, then broadsheets, pamphlets, gazettes, and finally newspapers and intellectual journals". It was due to all of these mediums, he argues, which led to "one of the most crucial transformations of Europe". That is, "as it became more literate" changing from a culture "focused on the image to one focused on the word. With reading and writing (and especially the former), although not universally diffused, nevertheless widespread". It was then that these skills became no longer "the privileged and arcane knowledge of a small elite, nor were they any longer mysterious in being intimately and specially connected with religious rites"⁴⁴.

Interestingly America, then still an English colony, attempted to establish a daily press before Britain. Although it was doomed from the start, *The Publick Occurrences Both Forreign and Domestick* which was published in Boston in September 1690, was suppressed by the colonial governor after only one issue. However, the *Boston News-Letter* was more fortunate, it became a weekly publication in 1704, to be followed by *The Boston Gazette* in 1719, which was owned by James Franklin, the brother of Benjamin. In fact, it was James Franklin, who was to become the publisher of the first independent newspaper in the English colonies, in 1721, with his *New-England Courant*. Significantly, the issue of freedom of the press was highlighted in 1735, when John Peter Zenger, a New York City newspaper publisher, was acquitted of libel on the defence that his political criticism was purportedly accurate⁴⁵. Of course, this is not to suggest that the rise of the newspaper spelt the end of pamphlets and broadsheets as a vehicle of voice political and philosophical dissent. These forms, had been afforded the status of literature not only by Defoe, but also by Blaise Pascal, and Jonathan Swift in his denunciations during the Restoration and the Revolution of 1688. A tradition which would be continued throughout Europe, in the eighteenth century, by writers such Kant and Mendelssohn in Germany, along with Voltaire and Rousseau in France. Although these pamphlets were normally “reasoned discourses”, with the arrival of the French Revolution, they once became “powerful polemical weapons”. The value of such weapons, did not escape the attention of the pre-Revolutionary political agitators in North America. Extensive pamphleteering was not only employed before the War of Independence, such as Thomas Paine’s “Common Sense” which appeared in January 1776, but also afterwards when the United States was founded, and a new constitution in was proposed in 1787. It was mainly due to the contributions made by such revolutionary pamphleteers as Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, and James Madison that a new government was formed. However, not long after

this historic occasion, the era of political pamphlet came to an end, as “political dialogue shifted to newspapers, periodicals, and bound books”⁴⁶.

What does all this have to do with Pulp the reader may ask? And that would be a fair question.

What I have tried to demonstrate is not so much that these rebels, philosophers, or criminals are Pulp writers necessarily. Nor am I claiming the political format of the pamphlet or broadsheet is determinedly a technique, or technology exclusively pertaining to Pulp. What I am saying is the attitude of rebellion born with the invention of the printing press, widespread literacy, and a burgeoning sense of freedom of thought and speech are all essential components for what might be determined as an aesthetics of Pulp. Also I hope to have illustrated there is a cross-pollination between these forms and their content, that radical philosophical notions of rebellion, or freedom, are not restricted to one technology. Ideals expressed in books bleed into those expounded in pamphlets, broadsheets, newspapers, journals, and into another format I consider to be more closely linked to the evolution of Pulp, which we have not yet discussed: the chapbook.

The First Pulplications: Chapbooks

Chapbooks were small paper-covered books or pamphlets, usually measuring some three and a half inches by six inches, containing 4, 8, 12, 16, or 24 pages, and almost always enlivened by the inclusion of crude woodcut illustrations. These latter were not always even appropriate to the subject matter⁴⁷, but according to Victor Neuburg, “they undoubtedly added a degree of visual charm”⁴⁸. Clive Bloom, on the other hand, claims that these tracts were not always quite so charming. He points out that “many

chapbooks contained a mixture of topics, fillers and woodcuts. Stories were recycled, 'true' tales invented, true confessions made up; the emphasis almost always was to make stories *contemporary*; history, as the rural past, was never popular, the popular subjects being up-to-date sex, crime and murder". However, Bloom asserts the downside to this, was the creation of "a thriving popular publishing industry in which there was no discernible difference either philosophically or commercially between fact and fiction". Certainly, such flagrant inauthenticity, did not appear to have a detrimental effect on sales. To the contrary, he reports, that "such publications flourished on both sides of the Atlantic and if tales of Robin Hood were mutually enjoyed by Americans, so tales of Indians, scalplings and abduction also enjoyed popularity with the British working population. Fiction fed fact and both fed profits"⁴⁹. Likewise, profits were also fed by piracy. Peter Haining points out that "many American publishers shamelessly pirated the works of English publishers (as, in turn, did the English American stories) such as Buffalo Bill"⁵⁰. And yet, the profits of these unscrupulous publishers would increase beyond their wildest imaginings, with the help of two important inventions. Firstly, in 1799, in France, an ingenious workman of the name Louis Robert had devised a machine which converted pulp fibres into a continuous roll of paper. The machine was subsequently improved in England, where it was patented by Henry and Sealy Fourdrinier, hence it became known as the Fourdrinier machine. Secondly, the availability of these continuous rolls of paper allowed German inventor Friedrich Koenig, to reach the speeds necessary to feed his development of the rotary steam press⁵¹. This view is supported by Peter Haining who observed that "aided by this high-speed machinery, and the availability of equipment capable of making huge quantities of rough paper, publishers were able to rapidly increase the tide of cheap publications into a flood"⁵². But who was the audience for this flood?

In a sense, it could be said, the processes of industrialisation that produced these forms of entertainment for this captive audience, had actually, at the same time, created this audience. The mechanisation of the Industrial Revolution had caused an enormous shift in populations which previously had been agriculturally centred communities, to those that were largely urban. For instance, J. M. Roberts points out that in 1800, “the population of London, Paris and Berlin was about 900 000, 600 000, and 170 000, respectively. Only a hundred years later these populations had grown to 4.7 million, 3.6 million, and 2.7 million”⁵³. Roberts also observes that by 1800, “Europe and its dependencies probably contained most of the literate people in the world and therefore had a higher proportion of literates than other cultures”. Significantly, he claims that “an outstanding place in the overall trend to literacy must surely be given to the spread of printing”. What is more, Roberts argues that “printing had given a new point to being literate,” because “technical knowledge could now be made available in print very quickly and this meant that it was in the interest of the specialist to read in order to maintain his skill in his craft”⁵⁴. Clive Bloom supports Robert’s view. He says “by the end of the nineteenth century almost all of Britain’s workforce could read and by the 1840s Britain was already a ‘print-dependent society’”⁵⁵. Similarly, Bloom observes within thirty-five years that publishing houses had grown “in size and sloughed off their old printing associations and incorporated new business attitudes”. He reports that “marketing and distribution became possible with the appearance of trains, railway bookshops, library purchase and the ubiquitous bagmen; passengers could now read in the train compartment whereas before coach was simply too shaky”. In a different direction, Bloom adds, that the “the power of authorship had grown, allowing some to grow rich in the trade because of the vast increase in the consumption of fiction and newsprint encouraged by and part of the new mass literacy”. On the other hand, he also points out that as these “markets grew they split and created specialist genres both in

fiction and in the appearance of hobby or sport journals”. Equally, for the first time, according to Bloom, “authorship became a professional business about to be protected by an author’s union: the Society of Authors”. At its worst, he maintains, this brave new world of enterprise was “a free-for-all.” And yet, at its best, Bloom proclaims that “this protean growth meant that the English-speaking world, both sides of the Atlantic and beyond was one that read and discussed the central issues of industrial democracy. As such the trade in information in books (including piracies) was truly international”⁵⁶. It is within this ‘protean growth’, I suggest, that the Pulp readership gestated.

Blue Books, Shilling Shockers, Penny Dreads, the Short Story, & the Novel

Clive Bloom highlights one particular issue which contributed directly to the birth of the penny press. He reports that “in 1815 a stamp or tax duty of four pence was applied to newspapers which meant working people could not afford to buy them”. He argues this action was politically motivated, because it “effectively removed the chance of such people, the working middle classes, also joining in any real political debate”.

However, from the 1830s onwards, Bloom explains that this situation was abated to some degree by the appearance of a “new wave of illegally printed and distributed unstamped newspapers selling for one penny”. Within six short years, he reports that “such papers had far exceeded sales of the legitimate press, were read right across the country in both town and countryside”. This illegitimate ‘penny’ press, according to Bloom, was largely “driven by a dissident movement of printers, booksellers (and authors” who operated from “illegal distribution centres”. Although, “many hundreds of people were fined and imprisoned or both”, their tactics were successful, because “the ‘tax on knowledge’ was repealed and reduced to one penny”. And yet, Bloom

announces, this “highly popular form of subversive publishing, the radical penny press, did not simply vanish, but rather it went underground”, where it was to be “absorbed into the very sensibility of British reading habits”. It was here, he concludes that the “cheap radical publisher’s subversive nature” modified Pulp “into the illicit pleasures of gaudy literature”. Although, perhaps not “educational or morally elevating”, proclaims Bloom, “but effectively democratic for all that”⁵⁷. Peter Haining concurs with Bloom, remarking that “if the earlier publishers of chapbooks had been unscrupulous men, the ‘Penny Blood’ merchants were still more so, for they not only pirated material, but often put it out under a name so close to the original author’s as to be virtually indistinguishable”⁵⁸. Darles Chickens, perhaps?⁵⁹

These publishers, reports Peter Haining, were eager to capitalise on the popularity of the Gothic novel, which at the turn of the nineteenth century had “burst on the reading public like an explosion”. It all began, he outlines, in 1764 with the publication – “appropriately on Christmas Eve” – of Horace Walpole’s novel, *The Castle of Ontranto*. This was quickly followed by other texts, including William Beckford’s oriental mystery, *Vathek* (1786), *The Mysteries of Udolfo* (1794) by Ann Radcliffe, *The Monk* by Matthew Lewis (1796), and the Reverend Charles Maturin’s *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820). And yet, according to Haining, it was the widespread success of *The Monk*, which he reports one critic to have declared “to be ‘a mass of murder, outrage, diablerie and indecency’, which destined them all to be mercilessly pirated to feed the appetites of the newly-educated readers”. These readers, he maintains, “could not cope with the long, two or three volume originals, but delighted in the inexpensive chapbook versions”⁶⁰. Haining describes these early Gothic texts as “blue books”, or “Shilling Shockers”, which varied in size from 36 to 72 pages, that sold for sixpence, or a shilling. More importantly, he claims that they “were printed on the rough paper of the kind which clearly shows them to have been the first ‘pulp’ publications”⁶¹. What had

happened, according to Colin Wilson, was that “two distinct forms of ‘alienation’” were taking place simultaneously. That is, “alienation by the new world of industry, with its dreariness and impersonality, and alienation by the novel, which had now become a kind of fairy story with only the most tenuous links with reality, had created an audience hungry for these new forms of entertainment”. It was for these reasons, he claims, that by 1840, these texts “had become so popular that publishers issued them in eight page weekly parts, and tales such as Rymer’s ‘Varney the Vampire’ petrified readers from Land’s End to John o’ Groats for the price of a penny”⁶². According to Peter Haining the “era of these publications was certainly a remarkable one in Britain, Europe and America for, as the printer Charles Knight noted: ‘the penny magazine produced a revolution in popular art throughout the world’”⁶³. In fact, he asserts that George W. M. Reynolds, who died in 1879, “is said to have been more widely-read in his lifetime than either of his contemporaries Thackeray or Dickens”⁶⁴. By the middle of the nineteenth century, Haining reports, that “the ‘Penny Blood’ was being aimed more at the juvenile market (Dick Turpin, Robin Hood, etc), as the overall standard of literacy improved”. However, they were soon replaced by the ‘Penny Dreadful’⁶⁵ which were, according to John James Wilson in *Penny Dreadfuls and Penny Bloods*, “thought at the time to be the origin of all youthful crimes and parents not only banned them, but, when discovered, burned them without mercy”⁶⁶.

Edith Birkhead observes in *The Tale of Terror* (1921), that “these ingenious authors realised that it was possible to compress into five pages of a short story, as much sensation as was contained in the five volumes of a Gothic romance”⁶⁷. Clive Bloom agrees with Birkhead. He relates that “as the publication of fiction changed across the century it allowed new forms to appear, the short story being the most notable, and as it was suited to new consumer demands, subgenres were created which embraced spy thrillers, westerns, women’s romance, imperial adventures and, of course detective

stories”⁶⁸. In his overview of the short story, J. M. Halford agrees with Birkhead and Bloom. He insists that “the short story – as opposed to the story which is short, is as old as speech itself, however as a form of expression with its own aims, existing in its own right, it is to all intents and purposes an invention of the nineteenth century”. What is more, Halford, also considers “the form to have an immediacy of effect unmatched by any other literary medium which is primarily concerned with the relationship of human beings to each other and to the vaster, impersonal forces of the world as a whole”⁶⁹. And yet, Clive Bloom maintains there were other considerations which helped to shape the form of the short story, and they rest in the construction of language itself. By 1860, he says, “the average English sentence was half as short as the Elizabethan sentence, and the penny press would shorten that even further”. In fact, it was only six years later, Bloom observes that “the adoption of the ‘new’ concept of the paragraph was a substitution inherently ‘modern,’ combining a belief in technological integrity, organic fluidity and the psychosomatic correspondence of thought and gesture”⁷⁰. These factors of course, would impact upon many other forms of writing, including the novel, and there is a sense of this spirit in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*, which was published in 1897. At the beginning of the novel, Jonathan Harker sits alone in Count Dracula’s darkened castle, and writes to his fiancée Mina:

Here I am, sitting at a little oak table where in old times possibly some fair lady sat to pen, with much thought and many blushes, her ill-spelt love-letter, and writing in my diary in short-hand all that has happened since I closed it last. It is nineteenth century up-to-date with a vengeance. And yet, unless my senses deceive me, the old centuries had, and have powers of their own which mere ‘modernity’ cannot kill⁷¹.

Certainly when it comes to the power of the old centuries which for Harker “‘modernity’ cannot kill”, he could be referring to any number of things pertaining particularly to the novel. However, for Colin Wilson, it would probably suggest our old friend Daniel Defoe. For Wilson, Defoe’s writing of his novel *Robinson Crusoe* in 1719, was, in the history of European culture, “perhaps the most important single event since Thespis invented the Greek drama in the sixth century B. C”. Although, he notes, that *Robinson Crusoe* is obviously not the first novel – he gives that honour to Malory’s *Morte d’Arthur* – he argues that “*Crusoe* is the first evidence of a sustained flight of imagination, rather than being a sophisticated fairy story, relying on almost wholly fantastic plots to hold the reader’s attention”⁷². In his essay ‘The Novel: A Mirror to Life’ B. E. Sears makes the observation that in *Crusoe*, “Defoe tells the story of a strange adventure, but uses every device to make the strange events read like a real history”. He says, “from the moment Crusoe sails from London, breathless experiences are related in a purposely flat style designed to keep the reader from doubting the actual truth of the tale”⁷³. Of course many authors, including Bram Stoker, have utilised Defoe’s techniques to create realism. In *Dracula*, Stoker achieves the same effect by having no central narrator, but rather having the tale reported second-hand from a variety of sources; letters, journals, telegrams, diaries, newspapers, log books, and transcriptions from phonograph recordings. Therefore, it would seem Colin Wilson may be justified in his praise of Defoe’s influence upon the modern novel. However, this should hardly come as a surprise. Clive Bloom points out that John Feather in his *A History of British Publishing*⁷⁴ (had recognised, that “not only was the novel⁷⁵ the only literary genre to have been invented since the invention of printing, but to the continuing and lucrative trade in reprints of non-copyright work made older literature itself into an infinite resource for new literature of all kinds, and thus the content of such literature was a cheap and conveniently renewable resource both in its own right

and as a prompt to new fiction using it as a 'basis'⁷⁶. One other new form of fiction to use literature as a cheap and renewable resource was the magazine.

The Slicks, Dime Novels & Magazines

According to J. M. Roberts, "magazines⁷⁷ and weekly journals began to appear in the first half of the eighteenth century in England and the most important of them, the *Spectator*, set a model for journalism by its conscious effort to shape taste and behaviour". Only in the United Provinces, he explains, did journalism have "such success as in England", probably due to the fact that all the "other European countries enjoyed censorship of varying degrees of efficacy as well as differing levels of literacy". Roberts maintains although "learned and literary journals appeared in increasing numbers", on the other hand "political reporting and comment were rarely available". For example, he claims that even in eighteenth-century France, "it was normal for the authors of works embodying advanced ideas to circulate them only in manuscript; in this stronghold of critical thought there was still a censorship, though one irregular and, as the century wore on, less effective in its operation"⁷⁸. However, in England, according to Peter Haining, the last years of the century "also saw the rise of the 'slick' magazine – monthly publications printed on art paper containing the work of excellent writers". The first such magazine, he reports, was the English *Tit-Bits*⁷⁹ (still running today) "which continued the principle of some of the 'Penny Dreadfuls' by including a variety of stories, extracts, bizarre crimes and thrilling episodes, all dramatically illustrated". It was launched in October 1881, and its success, asserts Haining "led to George Newnes to create *The Strand Magazine* which appeared in 1891

and later first gave the world Sherlock Holmes". *The Strand*, he says, was an "instant success", and imitations soon appeared in the form of *The Windsor Magazine*, *Pall Mall Magazine* (which published the stories of Rudyard Kipling), *Pearson's Magazine* (which claimed H. G. Wells), and *Chapman's Magazine* (which focused on horror stories). As the popularity of this form expanded, says Haining, these publishers began to run American editions. Soon afterwards, the Americans replied in kind, by exporting their 'slicks' to Britain. Among the most distinguished products from the United States, he says "were *Harper's Monthly*, *The Century* and *Scribner's Magazine*, which contained stories and articles of the highest quality and excellent illustrations – sometimes in full colour"⁸⁰. Although, it is extremely unlikely these magazines, even with their full colour illustrations, would have impressed their own greatest creation: Sherlock Holmes. In his earlier days, explains Colin Wilson, Holmes was "much given to relieving his boredom with morphine or cocaine"⁸¹. When Dr Watson, in 'The Sign of Four' published in 1890, visits his old friend, he reports witnessing this scene:

Sherlock Holmes took his bottle from the corner of the mantelpiece, and his hypodermic syringe from its neat morocco case. With his long, white, nervous fingers he adjusted the delicate needle and rolled back his shirtcuff. For some little time his eyes rested thoughtfully upon the sinewy forearm and wrist, all dotted and scarred with innumerable puncture-marks.

Finally, he thrust the sharp needle point home, pressed down the tiny piston, and sank back into the velvet-lined armchair with a long sigh of satisfaction.

"Which is it to-day," I asked, "morphine or cocaine?"

"It is cocaine," he said "a seven-per-cent solution. Would you care to try it?"

Watson declines, and asks whether there is any work for them. Holmes replies:

“None. Hence the cocaine. I cannot live without brainwork. What else is there to live for? Stand at the window here. Was there ever such a dreary, dismal, unprofitable world? See how the yellow fog swirls down the street and drifts across the dun-coloured houses. What could be more hopelessly prosaic and material? What is the use of having powers, doctor, when one has no field upon which to exert them?”⁸².

However, Holmes was not alone in his lack of interest in colourful illustrations, another man, named Frank A. Munsey, used his powers of deduction to prophesize the dawn of the pulp magazine.

The cusp of the twentieth century witnessed the end of both the Penny Bloods and the Penny Dreadfuls. Peter Haining explains that “although British publishers had held on to the penny price tag as long as they could, while their American counterparts promoted the ‘dime novel’⁸³ – (which he says was a misnomer, because more often than not they were “comprised of several short stories”, and “they sold for a nickel”). What had happened, he asserts, was “due the increase in education many of these publications evolved into newspapers or weekly journals, improving the standard of their editorial content beyond recognition while clinging to the tried and tested maxim that it was the dramatic illustrations which pulled in the readers”. However, in 1896, this was all about to change. Haining relates how a “former telegraph operator from Maine, looked at the profusion of expensive magazines literally stacked on the bookstalls of America and was suddenly struck by a thought”. It was a simple economic epiphany, and yet it would ultimately afford Frank A. Munsey a sizeable

competitive advantage over his rivals. What the ‘slicks’ had forgotten, Munsey rationalised was that “the story, is more important than the paper it is printed on”. It was “one of those so-obvious truths”, Haining proclaims to be “worthy of Sherlock Holmes”. And yet, he says, “Munsey not only put it into words, he put it into effect”, in doing so thereby gave “birth to the ‘pulp’ magazine revolution”. What Munsey had correctly assessed, was there would be millions of readers who “cared nothing for fine art paper in their magazines”, and like himself, “they would be just as happy to accept their entertainment on rough paper”. Of course by doing this, Haining points out, that the “publisher could keep his cover prices down to a minimum and cater to the public demand that was always there – though restricted in its buying power by low wages and depression”.

When they arrived, says Haining, Munsey’s magazines were “printed on rough wood pulp paper, measuring seven inches by ten, and about half an inch thick”, and they embraced “literally every topic of interest”. For a little more than a dime, he says, Munsey’s “readers got either serials of short stories on their favourite subject”. What is more, just as had happened in its previous Pulp incarnations, Haining says, the writing was open to “the work of the accomplished and the not-so-accomplished,⁸⁴ not forgetting those who were to serve their apprenticeship in this medium and go on to greater things:” Raymond Chandler, Edgar Rice Burroughs, and many more. Similarly, he says, Munsey’s magazines were also open to “contributions from overseas writers”, which meant they provided new revenues for British and European authors, without them actually having to do any extra work. And yet whether these writers wished to write new stories for these magazines, or publish old ones, the rapid expansion of Munsey’s empire meant there were plenty to choose from, including *All-Story*, *Amazing Stories*, *Fantastic Adventures*, *Famous Fantastic Mysteries*, *Fantastic Novels*, *Strange Tales*, *Terror Tales*, *Horror Stories*, and *Weird Tales*. However, concerning these

titles, Haining also comments, somewhat ironically, “the fact that these writers could write about “chained women and an evil monks”, indicated that “little had changed since the days of M. G. Lewis’s pioneer Gothic novel, *The Monk*”. Indeed, he says, “these magazines were, in a way, only a variation on the idea of those original Gothic chapbook publishers”. And yet, as we shall see, “following the appearance of Munsey’s pioneer ‘pulp’ *Argosy* in 1896”, Haining maintains, “the idea was to be given unprecedented acceptance to the tune of over three hundred titles in the next half a century”⁸⁵. For now – as they say – that is another story. We will pick-up the next half of the next century in the next chapter.

Conclusion

The Philistines have captured the Ark of the Covenant (the printing press),
and have learnt to work their own miracles through its power

Historian: G. M. Trevelyan, 1901⁸⁶.

I had intended to end this chapter with the year 1900, however I will stretch this by one year, because this comment seems to capture most succinctly the contradictory, or paradoxical attitude of the establishment to the history of Pulp. The religious overtones of the 'Philistines capturing the Ark of the Covenant' reflect directly back to Gutenberg's conflicting impulses for inventing the printing press: fame and profit in the guise of altruism. No wonder he died, forgotten, penniless and blind. God moves in mysterious ways. Why else, on the other hand, would he have rewarded a subversive pamphleteer, such as Martin Luther, by granting him his deepest desire. Luther married a nun who had escaped from a convent, and had six children⁸⁷. Even the rapist Sir Thomas Malory, and such rogues as Christopher Marlowe and Daniel Defoe, worked 'miracles' through the power of the press, and came out smelling of roses. In fact, in its battle with the Philistines, only the Catholic Church would appear to have fared slightly better than Gutenberg.

Trevelyan's statement is also indicative of the subversive nature of Pulp. Although his reference to the 'Philistines' is loaded with the bias of a system of class distinction which would not be untypical even in the twentieth century, Trevelyan can see further

than the end his nose. What he had recognised, is what Clive Bloom refers to as Pulp's "refusal of bourgeois consciousness"⁸⁸. By this, he explains that "the reading matter and reasons for reading adopted by the 'lower' classes had penetrated middle-class and upper-class reading by the twentieth century and a sharp differentiation between groups (something visible up to the 1850s) had disappeared". Therefore, he maintains, although "middle-class readers may have, and will still read other more 'literary' work, but it is also likely that they will share a taste for tabloid newspapers and escapist literature with economic and cultural groups they would not wish to mix with socially"⁸⁹. However, even though these socio-economic groups may not have mixed socially, according to J. M. Roberts they both shared "in the advances gained from the emancipation served by Gutenberg's invention". These are, he proposes, "shorter workdays, adequate lighting in the evenings, reading glasses, public libraries, and inexpensive books in the form of the dime novel and the penny dreadful", which are "the ancestors of the contemporary pulp fiction and non-fiction" that "began pouring off the presses and into the lives of our ancestors". In point of fact, Roberts observes, that "it was not until then that people had the time, the conditions, the equipment, and the skills that make reading in bulk possible"⁹⁰.

Finally, by my calculations, we have now covered 798.5 of Alvin Toffler's estimated 800 lifetimes. This only leaves us one and a half lifetimes in the history of Pulp to examine in the next three chapters.

Hardly anything.

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¹Wells, D. A. *Practical Economist*. 1885.

²*The Modern Home University: The English Language Its Beauty and Use*. 1935:5.

I have no idea who J. M. Parrish and R. D. Coole are, other than both academics from Oxon, who wrote a brief introduction to the book they edited. However, in two pages they seem to me, to have pre-empted a large part of the literary theory of the present. At this stage, for instance, I would suggest they are indicating the opposite to the theories which would take hold in the New Criticism. In fact, they seem to have side-stepped these theories and jumped straight to the Poststructuralist position outlined by Jacques Derrida almost 45 years later, in his essay "The Law of Genre" (in *Glyph 7*: 202-232, 1980). In the evaluative section of the thesis I use a different quote, which seems to pre-empt the notions of Reader-Response Theory, and the 'subjective' relativism of Poststructuralism. Perhaps, this may indicate a new area for research? Certainly, they appear to be well ahead of the game.

³ Local girl to Marlon Brando, *The Wild One*: "Hey Johnny, what are you rebelling against?" Brando: "Whaddaya got?" (*Too Cool*. Edited by Gene Sculatti. New York:St. Martin's Press, 1993:72).

⁴ *Ibid.*, p5.

⁵ *Future Shock*, London:Pan, 1973:22.

⁶ Although the thesis has chosen to demonstrate how Pulp Literature has struggled to define itself from the conception of the printing press, it should be made clear that this is not the point of origin for the Pulp aesthetic. Rather, I believe this began much earlier, evolving from the tall-tales told around camp-fires in dark caves, accompanied by coloured illustrations of the Woolly Mammoth, or Sabre-Tooth Tiger that got away.

⁷ Athens:University of Georgia Press,1990:227.

⁸ *A Criminal History of Mankind*. London:Grafton, 1987:338.

⁹ "Hang on lads, I've got an idea." *The Economist*, Dec. 31, 1999: 1-3.

¹⁰ Wilson, pp337-8

¹¹ *The Making of Books*. London:Faber and Faber. 1973:23-24.

¹² Wilson, pp337-8.

¹³ Jennett:28

¹⁴ Wilson:338.

¹⁵ Britannica.com and Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc. "Publishing, history of"1999-2000:12-17. Sean Jennett Claims Gutenberg did not Invent the Printing Press:

Jennett maintains that although "Johann Gutenberg of Mainz is usually credited with the invention of printing, and great honour has been accorded him on that account; but it is a rare thing for an invention to be the work of a single man, and in spite of the history books rendering and the service rendered by Gutenberg, printing is no exception to the rule : Gutenberg did not invent it" (*The Making of Books*:23).

¹⁶ Victor E. Neuburg's Definition of the Pamphlet:

Pamphlets were "easier for vendors to handle and transport than a pile of ballad sheets, and probably offering better value for money in that, unlike broadsides, were printed on both sides of the paper.

Pamphlets were, of course, not unknown to seventeenth-century readers, who were deluged at one time or another with religious and political controversy in this form. Orthodox believer, antinomian, parliamentarian, royalist, all thundered at each other in pamphlets, each convinced of the justice of his cause. Polemic of this kind apart, any sensational or scurrilous affair which might catch the public fancy could be written up as a pamphlet and produced for sale very speedily. In the case of a particularly nasty murder or a case of witchcraft, both pamphlet and broadside could be exploited to bring the story to sensation-hungry readers Thus a mixture of fact, hearsay, rumour, legend and half-truth could be concocted into a narrative which would certainly find readers who would believe a good deal of what they found in the pamphlet ... An enjoyment of sensation is probably very natural, and persists - in, for example, the popular press - to this day ; but credulity has become tempered with scepticism" (78). (*Popular Literature: a History and Guide from the beginning of printing to the year 1897*. London: The Woburn Press, 1977).

Interestingly Neuburg states, in the introduction to this book, that: "The study of popular literature in England today is scarcely accepted as an academic activity" (13).

¹⁷ Ibid., p364.

¹⁸ Ibid., p338.

¹⁹ *The Pelican History of the World*. London: Pelican, 1983:641.

²⁰ Britannica.com and Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc. "Publishing, history of". 1999-2000:17.

²¹ Ibid., p642.

²² Ibid., p387.

²³ Ibid., pp337-8.

²⁴ Ibid., pp337-8.

²⁵ *Cult Fiction: Popular Reading and Pulp Theory*. London: MacMillan, 1996:48.

²⁶ *Raymond Chandler: a Biography*. London: Vintage, 1998:81.

²⁷ Ibid., p99.

²⁸ Britannica.com and Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc. 1999-2000.

²⁹ *The Life of Raymond Chandler*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1976:69.

³⁰ Ibid., pp338-9.

³¹ Ibid., pp379-81.

³² Ibid., p637.

³³ Conyers Read *The Tudors* p.138., cited by Colin Wilson:381.

³⁴ Ibid., p381.

³⁵ Ibid., p648.

³⁶ Ibid., p638,

³⁷ Ibid., pp 415-7.

³⁸ Ibid., p165.

³⁹ Ibid., p417.

⁴⁰ Anthony Smith on the Newspaper

Anthony Smith points out that "the term 'newspaper' is of much more recent vintage than the actual phenomenon. In England, news was published in book form for nearly a hundred years before it came to be thought of as not a special part of history but as 'throw-away' material. In German the modern word *Zeitung* did not become the universal word for newspaper until about 1850" (*The Newspaper: An Historical History*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1979).

⁴¹ Ibid., p417.

⁴² Ibid., p641.

⁴³ Ibid., p82.

⁴⁴ Ibid., pp638-9.

⁴⁵ Anthony Smith, *The Newspaper: An Historical History*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1979:70-2.

⁴⁶ Britannica.com and Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc. "Pamphlet", 1999-2000:2.

⁴⁷ More from Victor E. Neuburg's Definition of Chapbooks:

In content chapbooks did not differ to any marked extent from the non-topical ballad sheets which had preceded them, offering stories, riddles, jokes - in fact, all kinds of traditional material - together with manuals of prophecy and fortune telling. Collections of ballads in chapbooks form were known as garlands ... Chapbooks were offered for sale by peddlers, hawkers and other itinerant merchants, who were known collectively as chapmen (103). It was, of course, the Industrial Revolution - however we define it - which had changed beyond recognition the public which for so long had been content with chapbook tales and simple ballads. In the crowded, rapidly growing towns of the industrial north there existed an entirely new public, different indeed from the rustic villagers who had awaited the arrival of the chapman or pedlar with his gossip, his wares and his bundle of books priced at more than a penny each. Moreover, since industrialism was gathering momentum and spreading over large regions, many village communities were no longer so isolated. Perhaps the most radical effect of this change in the structure and feeling of society is that to which I have referred as - the creation of the working class. Inevitably social unrest accompanied the changes, and the failure of crops which led to a food crisis and the mass unemployment caused by the cessation of the French wars aggravated the transition. Small wonder, then, that the factory operative who could read might turn more eagerly to a paper-covered copy of Thomas Paine's *Right's of Man* than to a tract which counselled acceptance of an existence which was all too often bleak and defined

by poverty and deprivation (*Popular Literature: a History and Guide from the beginning of printing to the year 1897*. London: The Woburn Press, 1977:122).

⁴⁸ Ibid., p103.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p54.

⁵⁰ *A Pictorial History of Horror Stories*, London: Treasure Press, 1985:27.

⁵¹ Anthony Smith:108.

⁵² Ibid., p19.

⁵³ Ibid., p671.

⁵⁴ Ibid., pp639-40.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p59.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 51.

⁵⁷ Ibid., pp7-9.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p19.

⁵⁹ This reference has been stolen from Monty Python's Flying Circus "Bookshop" sketch on their *Contractual Obligation Album*, and should be returned to its rightful owners as soon as possible.

⁶⁰ Ibid., pp12-13.

⁶¹ Ibid., p15.

⁶² Ibid., p465.

⁶³ Ibid., p19.

⁶⁴ Ibid., pp24-25.

⁶⁵ John Springhall's Definition of the 'Penny Dreadful':

Springall tends to agree with Wilson. He says: "The generic term 'penny dreadful', was applied so indiscriminately to a whole range of English popular fiction, no longer has much exact currency as a descriptive historical term. It was originally used as a blanket term of condemnation by magistrates, journalists, clergymen and school-teachers, to designate penny-part serials and cheap weekly periodicals, devoted mainly to tales of historical adventure or contemporary mystery, illustrated with vivid woodcuts, which held a particular appeal for working-class youth" (*Youth, Popular Culture and Moral Panics: Penny Gaffs to Gangsta-Rap, 1830-1996*. Houndsmills: MacMillan, 1998:41).

⁶⁶ Cited Haining:19.

⁶⁷ Cited Haining:13.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p64.

⁶⁹ *The Modern Home University : The English Language Its Beauty and Use*. Edited by J. M. Parrish and R. D. Coole. London: Odhams Press, 1935:73.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p66.

⁷¹ London: Penguin, (1897) 1993:51.

⁷² Ibid., pp420-1.

⁷³ *The Modern Home University : The English Language Its Beauty and Use*, 1935:42.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 1988:137.

⁷⁵ More by John Feather on the Novel:

He states: "The novel was the dominant literary form of the nineteenth century, and it was therefore the genre of the utmost importance to the publishing industry. Indeed, because the novel was the product of the age of printed publication, the relationship between the form and text, and between the author and publisher, was unusually close.

The Victorians were serious-minded men and women, who believed profoundly in the improving value of the printed word. It was in the attempt to impose a middle-class printed culture on the working class that we can see best the publishing industry of Victorian England at work.

The Victorian novel was not merely a form of entertainment; it often also had the high moral purpose exemplified in the work of George Eliot, or the political and social function perhaps best seen in Dickens (*A History of British Publishing*. London: Routledge, 1988:150-160).

⁷⁶ Ibid., p58.

⁷⁷ Michael Ashley: On the Birth of Magazines:

He outlines that: “The birth of the first general magazine in Britain came about in 1731 with *Gentlemen’s Magazine*, founded by Edward Cave 1691-1754), and it was from the popularity of this periodical that the word magazine passed generally into the English language with that particular meaning. It was followed shortly after by *London Magazine* (1732), *Scots Magazine* (1739) and *Royal Magazine* (1759). But all these publications had one thing in common - they were magazines of comment, and criticism. It was not until Scottish bookseller William Blackwood (1776-1834) founded *Blackwood’s Magazine* in 1817 that fiction began to be featured as a regular part of a periodical. It also contained poems, and went to the extent of serializing novels, its most famous contributor being Marian Evans (1819-1880) better known as George Eliot, whose first work, “The Sad Fortunes of the Rev. Amos Barton” was published in *Blackwood’s* in 1857.

By January 1865 there were 544 magazines being regularly published in Great Britain and Ireland.

... But the sweeping reform in education, which reached a peak in 1815 with the start of infants schools, and reached a peak with the 1870 Education Act, meant that more people could read. The expansion of the railways also meant that people spent more time on trains, and a popular way to pass the time was by reading. In 1849 William Henry Smith (1825-1891) secured the privilege of selling books and newspapers at railway stations. Obviously the magazine field had to expand to cater for the greater variety of readers *The History of the Science Fiction Magazine Part One, 1926-1935*. Edited by Michael Ashley. London:New English Library, 1974:11-12).

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p641.

⁷⁹ Victor E. Neuburg on the Rise of the Magazine:

He maintains that in 1897, “as the result of a prize competition run in its pages, the circulation of *Pearson’s Weekly* reached one and a quarter million people. Such a readership, approached also by similar journals like *Answers* and *Tit-bits*, meant that by the closing years of the nineteenth century the age of mass-produced literature was under way. The year 1897, then, symbolizes both a beginning and an end.

The period ending was one which had very largely been dominated by the cultural patterns of a rural society, one in which most people earned their daily bread in one way or another from some connection with the land. In saying this I am not, of course, denying that by 1887 the Industrial Revolution had already changed irrevocably, and often brutally, not merely the face of England but also the way of life of most of its working men and women. What I am arguing is that cultural change lags behind economic change, and that many of the industrial working men in Victorian times were quite often only one generation away from their rural past. Thus their capacity either to absorb or create a new culture was limited both by the sense of psychic shock following upon fundamental changes in a way of life and by the unspoken wish to hold on to older values and ideas as something secure in a rapidly changing world ... (15-6).

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p35.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p145.

⁸² Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, London:Magpie,1993:89-93.

⁸³ John Springhall’s Definition of the ‘Dime Novel’:

Springhall supports Haining. He says, “The equivalent to the ‘penny bloods’ in an urbanizing America were ‘dime novels’ published in a series or ‘libraries’, usually Western or detective stories complete in each monthly or fortnightly part and sold for a dime (10 cents). ‘Half-dimes’ or ‘nickel weeklies’, addressed to a more juvenile market from the 1880s onwards, were closer to the English ‘penny dreadful’. Fifty years earlier a number of American firms had started publishing cheap ‘yellow-back’ or ‘yellow-covered’ novels, known from the colour of their wrappers. These derived almost entirely from contemporary British popular or middlebrow fiction, such as revamped Gothic novels and imitations of Walter Scott, Charles Dickens, ‘Captain’ Marryat and William Harrison Ainsworth” (41).

Furthermore, he reports: “Dime and half-dime novels came to be almost universally condemned by parents, clergy and teachers, but nothing could keep them out of the hands of young Americans, and of many older readers too *Youth, Popular Culture and Moral Panics*, 172).

Piet Schreuders on the American ‘Dime Novel’:

Schreuders explains that: “In the 1860s, during the Civil War, the first dime novels appeared - on battlefields, in hospitals, in military barracks and private homes. They were published by Erastus F. Beadle, whose *Dime Song Books* had made him rich, Beadle’s brother Irwin, and Robert Adams. Similar series, also offering complete novels for 10 cents, were begun by Robert M. DeWitt & Company in New York (DeWitt’s TEN CENT ROMANCES) and by Elliot, Thomas & Talbot in Boston (TEN CENT NOVELETTES).

Ten years later, the introduction of the rotary press made it possible to produce paperbacks at an even lower cost. The *New York Tribune* used its own presses to print the TRIBUNE NOVELS; the LAKESIDE LIBRARY in Chicago began issuing a new title every 14 days in 1875, later upping production to a new book a week; the FIRESIDE LIBRARY (from Beadle & Adams), the PEOPLE’S LIBRARY and the HOME LIBRARY quickly appeared to keep their LAKESIDE colleagues company; and the SEASIDE LIBRARY was the busiest of them all, with a new novel added to their list every day! In 1877 there were 14 of these paperback series, by 1887 there were 20. Again the market flooded and, when an international copyright law took effect in 1891, it delivered a death blow to most of the smaller firms” (*The Book of Paperbacks: a Visual History of the Paperback*. Translated from the Dutch by Josh Pachter. London:Virgin, 1981:13).

⁸⁴ Lee Server on Pulp Writers as a Breed:

Server proclaims that: “Pulp writers were a disparate group - ex-newspapermen, lawyers, retired soldiers of fortune, con men, convicts, poets, ranch hands, and hermits. Dashiell Hammett, who wrote detective stories, had been a detective. Bruno Fischer, who specialized in sadistic *Weird Menace* stories, had been the editor of the Socialist party newspaper. Walter Gibson, author of hundreds of *Shadow* novels, was a magician. Tough-guy writer Roger Torrey was a lumberjack in Klamath Falls, Oregon. Chase - real name Frank Fowler - a star contributor to *Argosy* and *Adventure*, was a chauffeur for Frankie Yale, the well-known bootlegger and king of the protection rackets, when some friends of Al Capone shot Yale 110 times, Chase started looking for another line of work” (*Danger is my Business: an Illustrated History of the Fabulous Pulp Magazines: 1896-1953*. San Francisco:Chronicle Books, 1993:13).

⁸⁵ Ibid., pp46-59.

⁸⁶ This appears in Clive Bloom’s discussion (p62-3) of Alan J. Lee’s *The Origins of the Popular Press in England 1855-1914*. London:Croom Helm, 1976:15.

⁸⁷ Wilson:367.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p14.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p93.

⁹⁰ Ibid., pp 227-8.

CHAPTER 3.

The Death of Pulp

Each month the pulp magazines offer to millions of readers their quota of true confessions, film fun, spicy detective stories, hot mysteries

Aldous Huxley (1937)¹.

Henry Steeger (President of Popular Publications Inc.,) on the Death of the Pulp

Before it was over, we had become the largest in the business. Such was the bonanza of the Pulps. They traveled a golden rail from very bad to very excellent and they appealed to all strata and all vintages of people. The names of Harry Truman, president of the United States, and Al Capone, lowest figure in the underworld, graced our subscription lists at the same time . . . Pulps were the principal entertainment vehicle for millions of Americans. They were an unflickering, uncolored T. V. screen upon which the reader could spread the most glorious imagination he possessed. The athletes were stronger, the heroes were nobler, the girls more beautiful and the palaces were more luxurious than any in existence and they were always there at any time of the day or night on

dull, no-gloss paper that was kind to the eyes.

But now the pocket book and the finite, often times unimaginative picture on the T. V. screen have taken over. The worst is no better than the worst of the Pulps and the best depends for comparison on the extent of your imagination.

The Pulps are dead but the heroes live on and, who can tell, perhaps they may return in subtler guise²

Just the Facts, Ma'am: a Birth & a Death in 1959

I was born December the 5th 1959, in Bootle Hospital, Liverpool, England – into a world of Pulp. Although, for Henry Steeger, of course, the world I had entered, would not have corresponded to the halcyon era of Pulp which he so enticingly described. By the end of 1959 – that world, for all intents and purposes – was dead. It was still dead in 1970 when he made his remarks, and now, with the dawn of a new millennium – it has not returned. Nor shall it ever. However, hopefully, without seeing to be unfair to Henry Steeger's legacy to the history of Pulp publication, or to his vision of its Golden Years, I think it might be fair to assess Steeger's view as that of a purist. Unfortunately for Mr Steeger, aesthetically, Pulp is not the kind of form that would ever confine itself exclusively to paper, nor would it ever appear to aspire to any condition considered close to being *pure*. The history of Pulp, as we have seen, is one that plunders and pillages from other forms, technologies, and techniques like some polymorphic Godzilla which has slipped its leash, and is loyal to no master – least of all its publishers. Yet once again, to be fair, I must admit to never having had any first-hand experience of the world Henry Steeger is describing – the world of Pulp magazines. My own inception into the world of Pulp was much more akin to that experienced by the many millions of others who encountered it through Steeger's "pocket book" (the paperback), and the "often times unimaginative picture on the T. V. screen". Therefore, even with the added advantage of hindsight, it is impossible to compare the extent of our respective imaginations. Although (without necessarily stretching the boundaries of my own "glorious imagination") I can quite easily accommodate Steeger's vision for a hey-day of Pulp – only my conception would also include the era of the "pocket book", along with some newer technologies inhabiting perhaps a less

than subtle guise. After all how could Henry Steeger even contemplate such a thing as subtle Pulp? If anyone, he would have been among the first to have recognised, that Pulp is about as subtle as the brass-knuckles on the meaty fist of Moose Malloy³.

The fifties, were not subtle either. It was the era of the Cold War, the atomic bomb, brinkmanship, Sputniks, 3D, UFOs, Marilyn Monroe, and Martin Luther King. It was T.V. and Rock 'n' Roll, and rock'n'roll on T.V. There was Elvis dancing to "Jailhouse Rock", and Dick Clark's *American Bandstand*. And lurking in the dark periphery of my unformed collective unconscious there rushed a flood of Pulp which gushed in to pollute my fresh synapses via the ears, eyes, nose, and nerves. In it came, pouring: *I Love Lucy*, *The Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, *The Creature From the Black Lagoon*, *Bonanza*, a dead James Dean, *On the Waterfront*, *My Three Sons*, *Dragnet*, *Gunsmoke*, *Hopalong Cassidy*, *Leave It to Beaver*, *The Lone Ranger*, *Naked City*, *Ozzie and Harriet*, *Playboy* magazine, Jackson Pollack, *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, Bill Haley and the Comets, *Route 66*, Little Richard, *Wagon Train*, Natalie Wood, *Cheyenne*, Richard Burton, Philip K. Dick, Montgomery Clift, Truman Capote, Horace McCoy, Jim Thompson, David Goodis, Lenny Bruce, Miles Davis, Charlie Parker, Elia Kazan, J. D. Salinger, Gene Vincent, Sandra Dee, Frank Sinatra, Charlton Heston, John Wayne, Burt Lancaster, Henry Fonda, Robert Mitchum, Hubert Selby Jr., and many many more, including Britain's 'angry young men'; Kingsley Amis, John Osborne, Colin Wilson, Grahame Greene, Alan Sillitoe, Bill Naughton, Colin MacInnes, Albert Finney, Richard Harris, Oliver Reed, Tom Courtney . . . and especially the writings of America's Beat Generation.

What filtered through from this deluge of information was that from within the fissures of such endemic entertainment conformity Pulp was continually chipping away and exposing the widening, paranoiac cracks in the societal facade. Demonstrating in livid primary colours that there was a sub-dermal riot going on: that the transplant was

rejecting the parent host, and beginning to think for itself. Of course, as we have already witnessed, these romantic ideals for independence and freedom are not new by any means, however many of the methodologies might be. For instance, if rock'n'roll was rebellion, then the new media: radio, television, and the cinema was now its broadsheet calling for dissent throughout the world with a “Awop-Bop-a-Loo-Mop Alop-Bam-Boom”⁴. Whatever this cryptic message from Little Richard might have meant: the young, as well as the old guard, recognised it as a call to arms.

In fact, in his biography of Jack Kerouac entitled *Angelheaded Hipster*⁵, Steve Turner reports that in 1957, the “King of the Beats (even his friend and compatriot William S. Burroughs was drawn to pronounce wryly that Kerouac was so popular he had single-handedly ‘opened a million coffee bars and sold a million Levis’⁶), arrived in London just as rock'n'roll had landed”⁷. According to Turner, Kerouac was “fascinated by the ‘Teddy Boys’ in their thick-soled shoes called ‘brothel creepers’, tight ‘drainpipe’ trousers and long jackets with velvet collars’, as they paraded around Soho”⁸. However, had he travelled further north, on the 6th of July, to a Church fete at Woolton in Liverpool (not far from Bootle Hospital), Kerouac might have noticed the first meeting of two would-be teddy boy pop stars. The neat and tidy one would have been demonstrating to the scruffy one “how to play ‘Be-Bop-a-Lula’ correctly”⁹. The scruffy one, John Lennon, would have more than likely recognised Kerouac, as he had read *On the Road* at art college and was an avid fan. So much so, he would have convinced the neat and tidy one, Paul McCartney, when they later formed a band together, of the merits of changing the spelling of their stage-name to The BEATles, instead of simply The Beetles¹⁰. But once again, that is another story, and we shall return to it further down the track. Particularly, as at the time however, Kerouac would have been more concerned with the fate of fellow Beat writer Allen Ginsberg, who had a court case pending in July. Earlier in the year, Ginsberg had had 500 copies of his poem *Howl*,

which was being shipped to City Lights Publishers in San Francisco from printers in London, seized by US Customs for being obscene¹¹. This event was to auger the beginning of the Beat's battle against censorship, in both Britain and America.

Two years later, in 1959, Ginsberg would still be howling in court, but this time he was also defending the banning of the publication in America of Burroughs's novel *The Naked Lunch*, which had been published in Paris by the disreputable Olympia Press. Meanwhile in St Paul, Minneapolis, an eighteen year old Robert Zimmerman, who was to become a great friend to Ginsberg only a few short years afterwards, was busily learning American folksongs on his acoustic guitar. Zimmerman, who became Bob Dylan of course, was also a big fan of the Beats, said "I read *On the Road* in maybe 1959. It changed my life like it changed everyone else's"¹². However, Steve Turner maintains, "it would have been difficult to convince Kerouac as he sang along with Frank Sinatra on the radio, that the next revolution in popular music would draw its rhythms from Ginsberg's 'negro streets' and a large part of its lyrical inspiration from the poetry and prose of the Beats"¹³. This fusion of literature and rock'n'roll is a perfect example of Pulp spreading its wings, freeing itself generically from forever being bound to paper. Critically, in the fifties, Pulp Literature seemed also to be coming into its own. A quick scan through Anthony Burgess's personal choice of the best novels of the era in his *Ninety-Nine Novels: the Best in English since 1939*¹⁴ reveals, amongst others, Raymond Chandler's *The Long Goodbye*, Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim*, Colin MacInnes's *The London Novels*, and more specifically for the year 1959, Ian Fleming's *Goldfinger*. Of which he remarks that, "although the Guardians of the good name of the novel (some of them, anyway) may be shocked at this inclusion, Fleming had raised the standard of the popular story of espionage through good writing, and it is unwise to disparage the well-made popular". Adding that there was a time, he says, when Conan Doyle "was ignored by the literary annalists, even though Sherlock

Holmes was evidently one of the great characters of fiction". It is for this reason Burgess warns us, that we should always "beware of snobbishness"¹⁵.

It was this same spirit which prompted Raymond Thornton Chandler to point out, in 1957, that "to accept a mediocre form and make something like literature of it was in itself rather an accomplishment"¹⁶. Particularly, as he maintains, that the detective story, even in its most conventional form, is "difficult to write well. With good specimens of the art being rarer than good serious novels. While rather second-rate items outlast most of high velocity fiction, and a great many that should never have been born simply refuse to die at all"¹⁷. Unfortunately, on March 26th 1959, Chandler – one of the greatest contributors to the mythology of my world of Pulp¹⁸ – died of pneumonia, aged seventy¹⁹. It would be unfair to suggest that in Chandler's death, he had somehow taken Pulp with him. However, ironically, according to Clive Bloom²⁰ and Piet Schreuders²¹, the end of the fifties, or more particularly 1959, also spelt the deathknell for various types of Pulp publishing. Particularly, Munsey's format for the Pulp magazine, and of a certain species of its successor: the pocket book (or paperback), which contained overtly lurid cover illustrations depicting invitations to illicit sex and violence. And yet just as the deaths of Buddy Holly, Richie Valens, and The Big Bopper in a plane crash in 1959 which had inspired Don McLean to declare in his anthem "American Pie" that this event represented "the day the music died"²², had not hindered the career of popular music for any longer than it might take to put the needle on a record, press PLAY on a CD player, or tune-in a station on a car-radio, neither was the death of a particular style in magazine and paperback, about to symbolise the end of Pulp.

The Pulps

Now let us return to our inspection, of the next one and a half Tofflerian lifetimes of Pulp – the twentieth century. Which, due to the digression of G. M. Trevelan’s quote, we shall begin from 1901 and follow to 2001. First, to recap. The first half of the twentieth century, according to Peter Haining, was the period which witnessed the popularity of the Pulp magazines. Therefore, he maintains, this was the era which “saw the rise to fame of some of the most important names in modern fantasy fiction”. In fact, Haining notes, that many of the writers, who began their careers in the pages of the cheap publications, subsequently moved into “the more rarefied atmosphere of literary journals, books, televisions and films”. Some of whom, would eventually become household names, such as Ray Bradbury, H. P. Lovecraft, H. G. Wells, H. Rider Haggard, and Robert E. Howard (whose Conan the Barbarian, Haining’s asserts “virtually launched the fantasy sub-genre of ‘Sword and Sorcery’”) ²³. However, most, if not all of these writers owe their fame to one man: Frank A. Munsey. As we discussed briefly towards the end of the last chapter, Munsey was what Bill Pronizi and Jack Adrian characterise as “a tight-fisted magazine publisher of adventure stories for young adults, who decided in 1895 to revamp one of his publications, *Argosy*, in two distinct ways”. Firstly, he set out to turn it into “an all-fiction magazine aimed at adult readers”. Then secondly, he decided to print this new version of the *Argosy* on “rough wood-pulp paper, which was much less expensive than the smooth paper stock that was the standard for periodicals of the time”. Ultimately, it was this conversion to wood pulp which allowed Munsey “to print and circulate a greater number of copies of *Argosy* and his other magazines. The move was rewarded by a substantial increase in sales. By the end of the century, *Argosy*’s circulation topped 80,000 copies a month”²⁴. This figure was to continue to grow substantially into the new century. By 1907, Tony Goodstone, who also credits Munsey as “having created the first ‘Pulp’”, reports that

Munsey had “pumped the *Argosy* up to 192 pages, with each edition reeling out 135,000 words with 60 pages of ads, capturing a circulation of 500,000 readers”²⁵. However, although these figures are impressive, Michael Ashley points out, that “the adventure pulp magazine in general, would ultimately achieve the height of its success before World War I”²⁶.

Munsey’s Rivals

These healthy circulation figures demonstrated how Munsey’s formula was primarily just a variation on the older Pulp publishing strategies created out of the expansion of the Industrial Revolution from the previous century. Or as Tony Goodstone described it, Pulp “thrived on deprivation in the midst of economic and industrial expansion”. Pulp at the time, he explained, “was most widely used by those wishing to escape the misery of the reality of their poor economic conditions”. In 1900, Goodstone reports that half a million immigrants steamed into New York, while by 1905 this number had doubled. However, he asserts, the “living conditions and prejudice were so bad”, in 1908 alone, 395,000 of them returned home. Those who were left behind, he says, “risked disease and pestilence, with diphtheria, typhoid and malaria being leading causes of death in the slums”²⁷.

The family magazines, Goodstone explains, and the Pulp “offered escape to better worlds as well as social commentary in the form of the finest fiction ever published in the popular magazines”. For example, he points out that “science fiction of the finest quality appeared, either as critical comment of the inequality between the classes or as a predictive comment on the outcome of rapid technological progress, the response was enthusiastic”. What is more, other publishers “hurried to cash in on the Munsey rag-

paper to pulp-riches formula”, and from 1905 on, periodicals of size and quality were available everywhere. However because the Pulps, according to Goodstone, had taken “advantage of cheap production methods” to maintain their ten cent price, they had to “rely on circulation alone to make money, and they remained either family or male-oriented adventure magazines, appealing to the middle and educated lower classes”²⁸. And yet, before they were killed off in 1953, the Pulps had divided, cell-like, into “unknown hundreds of titles, and furnished inexpensive reading, escape from social oppression and hope for the future for tens of millions of Americans”²⁹.

Munsey’s chief rival was the publisher Street & Smith³⁰. As the nineteenth century was coming to a close, John Springhall explains, increased competition from Munsey, and Street & Smith had forced two of the major publishers of dime novels in America (Beadle & Adams Books, and the Monroe brothers) to close. Erastus Beadle and his partner, Robert Adams, had been the “predominant supplier of dime novels since 1860 with popular titles such as *Buffalo Bill* (1869), *Nick Carter* (1886) and *Frank Merriwell, the All-American Boy* (1896), exceeding sales of five million copies”. However, when Street & Smith introduced “‘color cover’ knickel weeklies, which were luridly illustrated stories that replaced the old ‘black and white’ novels, Beadle and Adams quickly lost their hold on the market, along with the Monroe brothers”. Although their tactic had been successful, Springhall reports that “rising costs soon made these ‘half-dime novels’ far too costly to produce, so Street & Smith decided to bring out seven-by-ten-inch pulp-paper magazines of their own”³¹. Their first pulp was *Popular Magazine* (1903), followed by *Detective Story*, *Love Story*, *Sea Story* and *Sport Story*³². Although, Mark Ashley maintains that Munsey’s magazines, in turn, were “formidable rivals to the other Pulp publishers, in particular Street & Smith” *Popular Magazine*, he insists, is “not remembered with the same affection and nostalgia as the Munsey titles”³³. This view is supported by Tony Goodstone. He states, “of all the new Pulps”³⁴,

it was Munsey's *All-Story Magazine* that had the most electric effect not only on its readers, but also on the other magazines which were to emulate it"³⁵.

By 1915, according to John Springhall, Street & Smith "had turned all their 'knickel weeklies' into mass-circulation, 10-cent sports and adventure magazines, printed on cheap wood-pulp paper and known as 'pulp magazines.'" Although, Pronzini and Adrian suggest, that as early as 1910 many more Pulps were "introduced which were at first mostly general fiction publications, and only later increased to specialize in categories such as Western stories and, beginning in 1915, detective stories (in fact, the first detective pulp was a conversion of Street & Smith's thriller, *Nick Carter*)". Pronzini and Adrian also point out that with the exception of love-story magazines, the Pulps "were aimed primarily at a male readership". They say, it was for this reason, especially from the 1920s on, these magazines "were given vividly colored enameled covers whose artwork usually depicted scenes of high melodrama". This tactic was so successful, with "mass-market readers over-whelmingly" preferring this "new form of cheap fiction", that "dime novels and their cousins, flimsy story-weeklies, were virtually extinct by the end of the 1920s"³⁶. However, from 1915 onwards, there were far more imposing factors which impacted heavily upon the economic viability of these magazines to contend with than just cover art, and these would effect the whole of Pulp publication. One of which, was the 1914-18 World War.

For the Pulps, maintains Tony Goodstone, the paper quotas enforced during World War I, "were a major shock from which they never recovered". However the effect of these strictures were to be compounded by possibly the most important of all factors affecting the magazines, the problems of labor reform created by rapid industrialization. In the first six months of 1916 alone, there were 2000 strikes and lockouts. Added to this, the cessation of the war was followed by a recession. He explains, that although the industry was already "hard hit by rising prices caused by paper shortages and strikes

within the industry, as well as changing social attitudes and competing entertainment forms”, it did what it could to rally. Munsey merged his magazines, and gradually reduced their content from 224 pages to 144 in a single year – 1920. The turn-of-the-century optimism was gone, says Goodstone, “the Golden Age of magazines was over. All that would survive was at this point in time a scattering of slick magazines catering to women’s purchasing habits, general adventure Pulps³⁷, and specialized Pulps whose existence was to depend on reader’s idiosyncrasies”³⁸. America was not alone here, of course, on the other side of the Atlantic the British publishing industry was beset with the same economic problems. As John Feather explains, “the whole trade found itself in difficulties. Sales fell, profits fell even more heavily in the face of wartime inflation. For an industry whose state in 1914 had been less healthy than many had assumed, the post-war world would not be easy”³⁹.

For the first time, maintains John Feather, “the printed word was no longer the only means of mass communication or mass entertainment”. Radio broadcasting which in Britain began in 1922, proved to be so popular by 1926, that 2.1 million licences were issued⁴⁰. The popularity of radio, and its rapid expansion had already been witnessed in America. After the first commercial radio station KDKA in Pittsburgh went on air in the evening of November 2 1920, the response to this new medium was so successful that within two years there were 570 stations across the country⁴¹. This avid enthusiasm was also to be applied to a technological innovation in another medium, that of cinema. Although Thomas Alva Edison had built his first film studio in 1893, and its acceptance was so great by 1910 it was estimated that some 10 million people were attending the movies weekly⁴², cinema still required one facet to achieve its true potential. With the advent of sound in 1926, according to Colin Shindler, “weekly attendance’s at the movies in America up until 1930, rose by 45 per cent to ninety million paid admissions”⁴³. This was also the case in Britain. John Feather claims the

cinema's "real popularity was a phenomenon of the 1920s, it was not until the introduction of sound in 1927 that cinema attendances went up rapidly"⁴⁴.

With the rise of prosperity, the automobile, radio, photojournalism, and the movies during the 20's, observes Tony Goodstone, "the middle and lower classes abandoned the Family Pulp for more active forms of entertainment. The new mobility and new media generated a greater sense of immediacy and personal contact with people and events which, coupled with the release from the war tensions, gave rise to faddism and hero-worship". This led directly to the creation of "pseudo-racy, under-the-counter titles like *Pep* and *Ginger*" which proliferated, he says in "perverse proportion to the shrinking of bathing suits". Similarly, as Prohibition and gangsterism began to kick-in, new Pulp like "*Gangster Stories* and *Racketeer Stories* hit the street with the frequency of Chicago "ride" victims"⁴⁵. Faced with these changing social attitudes and competing entertainment forms, Munsey published *Weird Tales*, which according to Michael Ashley, was to become "not so much a magazine as an institution"⁴⁶. Ashley maintains that "although its first issue, dated March 1923, which sold for 25 cents, was in no way stupendous, (with its 192 pages carrying twenty-four stories which were mostly a pot-pourri of weird and straight ghost), *Weird Tales* was the first magazine to be devoted entirely to fantasy fiction". And yet, he points out, that ironically, "considering how legendary it was to become, at first, it did not sell"⁴⁷. Peter Haining concurs with Ashley. He explains, that "even though by the end of the first year of publication it was so far in debt⁴⁸ its future seemed unlikely" eventually this "extraordinary magazine" he says, would become "supported by a barely viable, yet fiercely loyal coterie of readers, who ensured that its lifetime would eventually span almost the entire era of the American Pulp"⁴⁹. Other survivors were H. L. Mencken and George Jean Nathan's enormously influential detective magazine, *The Black Mask* (which later promoted the hard-boiled prose style of Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler)⁵⁰, and Hugo

Gernsback's popular science fiction magazine *Amazing Stories*, which managed to enjoy circulation figures exceeding 100,000⁵¹. All this proved, that although it was wobbling on its feet like a punch-drunk prize-fighter, Pulp was not about to throw in the towel.

On the 3rd of September 1929, reports Colin Shindler, the "prosperity from the Dow Jones average of stock market prices reached its peak, and seven weeks later the market crashed"⁵². In Britain, John Feather explains, the "economic crisis took its toll on the publishing industry as much as it did elsewhere. Between 1930 and 1937 the number of new titles fell consistently, while the number of reprints rose dramatically"⁵³. This containment policy of publishing reprints over new titles seemed to be the opposite to that of the magazine publishers in America. According to Tony Goodstone, during the Depression "there was practically no margin between red and black ink. The net profit on one issue could run anywhere from \$50 to \$1000". He claims, it was the practice of the many of the "shrewder publishers to wait and see how the first number of a new title sold before preparing a second, and when a magazine lost popularity they dropped it and tested a new title". While, on the other hand, the less ruthless "simply added additional titles in an effort to support ailing publications and lower the profit margins". However, Goodstone, reports that "one enterprising publisher", namely George T. Delacorte Jr., the founder of Dell Publishing Company, "managed to get his magazines on the stands for little more than the production expenses by buying two or three years worth of stories from London's literary flea-market, and having them rewritten by American writers"⁵⁴. Those, who were less enterprising, hit the wall. John Springhall outlines that the "Depression spelt the death of Street & Smith's dime and half-dime novels, some of which at one time had gained circulation figures up to a million copies weekly"⁵⁵. Others, such as Henry Steeger's Popular Publications⁵⁶, Robert Kenneth Jones asserts, "were just about to enter the market"⁵⁷.

For the writers during the Depression, Tony Goodstone explains, the Pulps “were a bonanza”. He says “although fable has it that the pay was a cent a word” in actuality many “were paying as high as a nickel”. Therefore, he maintains, “even during the leanest years, prolific writers like Max Brand could match incomes with Hollywood stars”. Furthermore, with hundreds of specialized titles on the stands, the Pulps “provided new writers with the opportunity to publish for the first time, as well as the means to develop their craft. Many writers either sold stories to the film companies or advanced (or degenerated) to writing for the movies”⁵⁸. Hollywood had been quick to recognise literature as a valuable resource for material to adapt to film. According to George Greenfield, Samuel Goldwyn, the president of M.G.M., had already declared the author to be the indispensable requirement for a good picture. He said, “a great picture has to start with a great story. Just as water can’t rise higher than its source, so a picture can’t rise higher than its story”⁵⁹. Of course Goldwyn was not alone in this sentiment, nor were these sentiments restricted to what might be arguably perceived as great literature. In 1912, Tony Goodstone points to a novel which had appeared in Frank A. Munsey’s *All-Story Magazine* by an unknown writer. This novel, he says, ran into “sequel after sequel”, becoming a long-running “adventure cartoon strip, a radio program, and eventually a top money-making film series”. The novel’s “improbable hero” concerned a boy who was raised in the jungle by apes, and its author was Edgar Rice Burroughs. The story to which Goodstone is referring, of course, is *Tarzan of the Apes*⁶⁰. Many authors, most of whom had written for the Pulps, made the transition to write screenplays under the studio roof. Greenfield refers to Raymond Chandler, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Christopher Isherwood, Aldous Huxley, and William Faulkner as “just a few of the authors who were tempted and who succumbed”⁶¹.

The stories these writers provided Hollywood, Tony Goodstone maintains, “were generally in keeping with the emotional climate of the time, that is, they were fast,

innocent, and violent”⁶². Tom Hiney agrees with Goodstone. In his biography of Raymond Chandler, he explains that Chandler realised his job was to “reflect the realities of the period, and polite murder stories did not have much relevance any longer to a public which had become fascinated by the fast, ruthless growth of Italian and Irish mobs”⁶³. According to Hiney, “lawlessness in the 1930s was a fact. Guns were ubiquitous and following the repeal of the Prohibition laws, organized rackets were moving further into drugs, gambling and prostitution”. What is more, “the Depression had pushed thousands of men on to the streets without any form of welfare payment from the state, many of them prepared to do occasional work for the criminal organizations”. However, Hiney asserts “the level of this lawlessness was liable to be exaggerated. Hollywood, the press and pulp writers were so fascinated by what was happening that they could not help but over-dramatize it”⁶⁴. The American film public of the Depression, says Chandler, “did not want stories that were lithe and clever”, they wanted them “dark and full of blood”⁶⁵. According to William Marling, this morbid attitude led to the growth of the tough gangster genre⁶⁶, in such films as *Little Caesar* (1930), *The Public Enemy* (1931), and *Scarface* (1932), whose Film Noir stylings would eventually influence the directors of such films as *The Maltese Falcon* (1931 & 1941), *Double Indemity* (1944), and *The Big Sleep* (1946)⁶⁷.

In truth, Hollywood was in crisis. It had not escaped the economic maelstrom of the Depression, and it was relying on these Pulp authors to provide them with a saleable product which would attract dwindling audiences. Tino Balio reports, in 1929, “although the studios had slashed their admission prices by half, audiences still continued to shrink – with average weekly attendances dropping from an estimated eighty million to sixty million by 1932-33”. Moreover, he claims, “production costs had doubled because of the expense of sound, while foreign markets had disappeared due to the lack of cinemas available to screen these movies”⁶⁸. What had happened, according

to William Marling, was “during the prosperity of the Twenties Hollywood had borrowed enormous sums of money for expansion, and to fund the transition to sound”. However, by 1931 and 1932, he asserts “all five of the major studios posted losses. One year later, Paramount went into bankruptcy, RKO went into receivership, and Fox was reorganized. Only Warner and Loew’s made a profit”⁶⁹. So it is little wonder, as Colin Shindler observes, that the movies of 1931-32 “should reflect this time of bitterness and unrest both in theme and tone”. However, ironically, these stories about “the fringes of crime in the big cities were considerably aided by sound”, which Shindler maintains, “lent them a credible noise, pace and realism”⁷⁰. It was the development of sound which made the sensation of realism complete. It allowed cinema, as Jeffrey Richards explains, to “combine all the other art forms – painting, sculpture, music, the word, the dance – and added a new dimension – and illusion to life”⁷¹. And yet, it was via this illusion to reality Shindler argues, that “a bewildered and hurt nation found some relief in the depiction of cynical charlatans, vicious gangsters, and untrustworthy authority figures”. Audiences, he said, “could understand more easily the simplistic plots of the Hollywood action film than they ever would the intricate workings of the economic system by which they lived”⁷². Hollywood was down, but it was certainly, was not out.

According to George Greenfield already by 1935, “Hollywood had become the second most powerful industry – after oil – in California, employing over 9,000 people in its thirty-nine studios, with assets of close to \$100 million”. He also points out, that at that time, “the population of Great Britain included ‘going to the pictures’, largely to see American films, among its most popular pastimes”⁷³. John Feather confirms this view. He claims, there were nearly 4,500 cinemas in Britain, selling 907 million tickets. And yet, “although to some extent the ‘film of the book’ could stimulate sales of the book itself”, Feather maintains “the cinema was nevertheless a challenge to the book industry”. That is it made demands on “time and the money available for leisure”,

in the same way as “other social changes” tended to make a “greater variety of leisure activities” available to more people, such as the motor car. However, he asserts, among these competing diversions, there was “one threat within the home which the publishers could not ignore”. By 1935, Feather reports, “98 per cent of the population had access to a radio set”. The effect of this factor was so great, “even newspapers suffered from the incursions of the radio” as news broadcasts of a very high standard had been a feature of the BBC from its earliest years. And yet, the period did have some positive elements which contributed to the market for the books. Feather, details the fact, that there was a “higher standard of lighting in most homes as electricity replaced gas, which made reading easier for those who wanted to read” while educational standards had risen to “almost total adult literacy”. And public library provision “had improved, bringing more people into contact with books and creating more libraries which had to buy them”⁷⁴. Although these considerations were obviously of little consolation for the ailing publishing industry whose main problem was trying to find out how to attract this potential reading public away from the radio and cinema.

In America, Henry Steeger had been striving to prove that as with Hollywood, the Pulp, although some of their best writers had defected to resurge the motion picture industry, were also only down, but not out. Steeger’s newly launched Popular Publications were also doing everything possible to attract the reader away from radio and the cinema at the height of the Depression. Including, some think, by putting an over-emphasis on sex. Michael Ashley explains, “the competition really began with *Dime Mystery Magazine*, put out from the newly established Popular Publications of Chicago”. Henry Steeger was the President of the Company, and from its first issue in December 1932, it “proved very popular”. It attracted a great deal of *Weird Tales’* authors, such as Arthur Burks, Paul Ernst and Hugh Cave, and “it was certainly not aimed at a juvenile audience, there was a definite slant towards more sexy and sadistic

fiction". Soon after Popular Publications began to expand in this field, with *Terror Tales* (September 1934) and *Horror Stories* (January 1935), and before long many imitations sprang up: *Spicy Mystery Stories* (July 1934), and *Mystery Adventure Magazine* (January 1935) amongst them⁷⁵.

These magazines, says Tony Goodstone, were the "first with openly erotic material to burst from the under-the-counter scene". He says, "they were eagerly searched for 'hot parts' by their readers, since the heroes were permitted to expose (and even indulge) their sexual desires for the first time, while the villains generally had rape on their minds, or in some cases, sadism was a frequent motive". Finally, Goodstone asserts, "even the heroines, who were normally unmarried, could instigate sexual desire for the hero, but more often than not, they were dished up in terms of qualities of flesh"⁷⁶. On the other hand, Robert Kenneth Jones remarks that "there was little social significance to the stories", because they were "churned out by writers needing a quick sale, marketed by companies seeking a quick profit, and bought by readers demanding a quick escape during the Depression years"⁷⁷. Whatever the motivation, these magazines were certainly in demand. Jones reports that throughout the thirties, Popular led the other Pulp publishers, including Dell, Fiction House, Warner Publications, and even Munsey. In fact, the company reached a high in audited circulation in 1937, with more than 1,866,000 for sixteen titles. What all these figures added up to, he says, was "a \$25 million dollar business, involving some thirteen hundred writers and 130 or so pulp titles, read by some 30 million people per month"⁷⁸. Later, Henry Steeger explained what it was that he considered to be the main reason for his phenomenal success. He said: "we had the time of our lives putting out pulp books . . . we put so much loving care and attention into publishing every issue of every magazine. The smoothest slick couldn't have had more work applied to it"⁷⁹. Steeger's success was in a sense also the last hurrah for the Pulp magazines. As Robert Kenneth Jones assesses,

“the thirties was the period when the pulp business reached its peak. With the forties, the decline was setting in”⁸⁰.

The Pocket Books, or Paperbacks

In 1938, the Pulp magazines were to receive one their heaviest blows. Unfortunately for the Pulp magazines, in 1938, Robert F. DeGraff had an idea for a publishing house that would print cheap paperbound books. According to Piet Schreuders, “the economics of the idea were based on DeGraff’s opinion that if a first-class book, editorially and physically could be made, the turnover would be sufficiently rapid that the wholesaler and retailer would not require the usual large margin”. At that time Schreuders says, normal margin for bookstores was 30-35%. However, DeGraff’s Pocket Books would only offer them 20%. Distributors, who usually received 46% of a books cover price, would only receive 36%. While authors, on the other hand, would see their royalties dropped from 10% to 4% (they had to share with the publisher of the original hardcover edition). The result of this cost-cutting, “allowed Pocket Books to hit the stand priced at 25 cents, making them, as advertised, ‘the best books for the largest number of people at the lowest possible prices’”⁸¹ (20). To test his theory, Schreuders explains, DeGraff printed 2000 copies of *The Good Earth*, for which Pearl S. Buck was to receive that year’s Nobel Prize for literature. And on the first day, with

only two outlets of distribution in New York, the department store Macy's and a small cigar store near the Pocket Book's office, he had managed to sell 805 of his copies. In June, the following year, he followed this by publishing the first 10 official titles, which included James Hilton's *Lost Horizon* and Agatha Christie's *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*⁸².

Schreuders claims that DeGraff picked the name Pocket Books, for what would become America's first paperback publishing house, "because he felt it should be made clear that this was a book that could be carried in a man's pocket or a lady's purse"⁸³. However, historically, this is not a particularly new idea. In Venice, as early as 1500, three Venetian printers had already exercised a decisive influence on the form of the book. Nicolas Jenson, who Sean Jennett describes as a "typographer of great skill", managed to cut a new and finer roman typeface in 1470. Inspired by Jenson, Jennett explains that Francesco Griffi later refined this technique to develop a new kind of letter known as chancery italic. Moreover, he says, as Griffi's italics took up less space than the standard roman letters, this allowed Aldous Manutius, who had began printing and publishing in 1490, the opportunity to produce small, compact editions of the classics for a low price⁸⁴. These inexpensive "pocket editions" became famous as the Aldine editions. Beginning in 1501 and continuing with six titles a year for the next five years, he issued a series of Latin texts that were models of scholarship and elegance. To keep down the cost, Manutius printed editions of 1,000, instead of the more usual 250. The Aldine editions were widely copied. In France, for example, a brilliant group of scholarly printers, including Josse Bade, Geoffroy Tory, and the Estienne (Stephanus) family, who published with out a break for five generations (1502-1674), carried France into the lead in European book production and consolidated the Aldine type of book-compact, inexpensive, and printed in roman and italic types⁸⁵. Schreuders also refers to a printer-publisher called Karl Christoph Traugott Tauchnitz "who made a name for

himself in 1809, by issuing an inexpensive series of Greek and Roman classics, bound in paper covers". In 1837, in Leipzig, he reports that "Christian Bernard Tauchnitz, Karl Christoph's nephew, began to release his own series of paper-bound books, called the TAUCHNITZ EDITIONS". The series, consisting mainly of reprints of English and, later American works, soon became popular in Europe. Schreuders says they were very popular with "Frenchmen and Germans who wanted to learn English, and especially by British travelers stocking up on reading material in Paris before boarding the Orient Express, preparing themselves for 48 hours in a cramped sleeping car on their way to Eastern Europe". What is more, he says, "they even found a market in South America and the Middle East". And that interestingly, Schreuders also points out that although the Tauchnitz Editions were not distributed in English-speaking countries, "this agreement had no legal standing, as the current international copyright conventions did not yet exist"⁸⁶.

And yet, there may have been a more contemporaneous place where DeGraff stumbled upon his idea. And it is one which, in a sense, is indirectly influenced by the Tauchnitz Editions. According to John Feather because Tauchnitz chose to honour this agreement not to sell their paperbacks within Britain, it provided the opportunity for a British publisher to create, what he refers to as "perhaps the greatest single innovation in twentieth-century publishing". This publisher was Allen Lane. In 1925, Lane had inherited a publishing house after his uncle John Lane died. Feather maintains, that the house, The Bodley Head, had gained its "reputation as the vanguard of literary taste after publishing the notorious *Yellow Book*, which contained contributions by Oscar Wilde and Aubrey Beardsley". However, Lane soon realised that he had inherited a house with "a great tradition, but apparently little economic future". In order to reinvigorate the declining fortunes of The Bodley Head, Allen Lane looked at the "tradition of cheap reprints and decided to go even further than his predecessors by

adopting a new physical format and looking for unconventional channels of sales". Lane's plan, Feather explains, was to "issue a series of cheap reprints of good books under The Bodely Head imprint, but he would use a different format". He claims "there can be little doubt that this decision was influenced by the form of the Albatross series, issued in Germany in 1932". Albatross, Feather asserts, was the "brainchild of John Holroyd-Reece, an Englishman who had worked in publishing on the continent. Holroyd-Reece had set out to compete with Tauchnitz, which was now nearly a century old, and beginning to look distinctly old-fashioned". To overcome this problem, he says, Holroyd-Reece "designed a new format for the books, slightly taller and less broad than Tauchnitz, and essentially the same shape and size as the familiar mass-market paperback of today". More importantly, for this comparison to Lane, Feather points out that "these books had brightly coloured covers which were made of paper slightly thicker than that used by Tauchnitz, and using a different colour for different subjects and genres". These features, he argues, "were more than likely the source of Lane's physical conception of Penguins, and perhaps even the inspiration for the title of the series"⁸⁷. However, according to John Feather, Lane's true originality "lay in his confidence that good books could be sold in large numbers, and in his willingness, at least at first, to use his unconventional channels of distribution in order to achieve this". As with DeGraff, Lane's plan was to publish ten titles, and sell them through chain stores (Woolworth's) and any other outlet which would accept them. Feather asserts that the "book trade was sceptical, not least because to hold the price down to 6d, Lane had to produce print runs of as least 20,000 copies, which presented a serious problem of distribution and sales". Other publishers, such as Jonathan Cape, and Stanley Unwin, he says, "recognised the danger paperbacks might present to conventional publishing, and both were reluctant to sell him the rights to their books". And yet, this did not stop Lane from establishing "an important pattern in modern paperback

publishing”. Feather explains, that “although some houses are linked to a parent company, most of the great mass-market imprints buy the rights from the original publisher or direct from the author or through his agent. Lane of course had the example of both Tauchnitz and Albatross for this approach, but he was the first publisher to work with such a system in Britain”. Therefore, ironically, by stepping back and waiting for Lane to fail, these other publishers actually provided room for his success. Once they realised how popular Penguin would become, it was too late. Lane was well established to “reap the great, and sometimes vast, rewards of successful paperback publication”. Although, on the other side of the Atlantic, one publisher was not so slow off the mark. In fact, before Allen Lane could open a branch in New York, in 1939, he found he already had a competitor: Pocket Books. Its founder, Robert De Graaf (*sic*), maintains Feather, “had partly been influenced by what he had seen of the success of Penguin during a visit to England”. And yet, Feather also concedes it was on the American side of the Atlantic, that “most of the later developments in paperback publishing would originate”⁸⁸. Before we turn our attention to these events, we must first address what would prove to be far more pending matters.

When World War II began in 1939, reports Kenneth C. Davis, Allen Lane found war carried with it some “extremely mixed blessings”. He says that, “along with paper rationing, currency controls, shipments destroyed by bombings, warehouses requisitioned by the military, and exports sent to the bottom of the ocean, simultaneously there were opportunities created that the paperback book was uniquely suited to fill”. These opportunities, according to Davis, arose from a “crushing demand” on two fronts that Penguin were ideally placed to fulfil. The first, was caused by the armed service’s requirement for “inexpensive portable books of all kinds for educational and entertainment purposes.” Apparently, Lane’s books, were found to fit perfectly “into the pockets in the soldier’s uniforms.” And the second, was due to “an

increase in demand for books by those on the home front whose outlets for entertainment had been curtailed by blackouts and bombings”. This led to an enormous public relations coup for the paperback. As Davis asserts, “during these years of conflict, Lane built an army of readers who depended upon Penguins to help them cope with the deprivations of the war”⁸⁹. Two years later, after Pearl Harbour, when America joined the war, the American publishing industry found these priorities to be the same. In sales terms, reports Piet Schreuders, “the war was a boon to the young paperback industry”. He maintains “print runs were larger than ever as thousands upon thousands of books were shipped off to American soldiers overseas, and there were few returns”. Moreover, he says “The Army, the Marines and the Red Cross bought a total of 25 million Pocket Books during the war years; some editions were even prepared with the over-print “Armed Services Edition” or “Special Edition for Free Distribution by the Red Cross”. Added to this, Schreuders points out that “the reading public in the States was encouraged by Pocket Books to send used paperbacks on to family and friends in the services or to donate them to public libraries”⁹⁰. And yet, on the other hand, according to Tony Goodstone “the war was to have a devastating effect on Pulp magazines”. He claims, that once paper was put on a quota system, “even though anything as barely literate as a Love Pulp was prime reading matter, many Pulp magazines failed, for lack of paper⁹¹, to provide adequate circulation”⁹². Therefore, ironically, although the paperback had made enormous inroads into the publishing world due to a war, soon after, it discovered that it would have to be prepared to fight to retain its market-share, and to guarantee its own survival.

According to Kenneth C. Davis, “it was not until after the war was over that the battle for the paperback market truly began”. The unfettered success of Pocket Books, he says, “was to draw in new money and fresh competition like flies to honey”. Moreover, Davis maintains the post-war prosperity took the paperback “from the

novelty that few thought would last, to a position of dominance in America's publishing industry. Even those publishers who had looked upon the paperback as a bastard child unworthy of their attention would follow the pack that was now moving to-wards 'two-bit' books"⁹³. Lee Server agrees with Davis's assessment. He claims that the American paperback went through a "brief but gloriously subversive era during the 40's and 50's"⁹⁴ when dozens of competing imprints entered the field, "many with ties to the rowdy pulp magazine business, but few with any experience or interest in the more genteel traditions of the hardcover book trade"⁹⁵.

These paperbacks, Server explains, began to show a "marked increase in hard-sell sensationalism". He argues that these books often sported lurid covers, which depicted "square-jawed men and scantily clad women in perilous situations" which helped to sell these "sensation-packed tales of hard-boiled private eyes, deadly dames, sex fiends, beatniks, and juvenile delinquents"⁹⁶). Such packaging, he asserts, "displayed no distinction between marginal mystery writers and the titans of literature". Whether it was Emile Zola or Sax Rohmer, D. H. Lawrence or Brett Halliday, "they all received the same frenzied blurbs and risqué illustrations". After all, these softcover publications were not trying to appeal to literary academics. On the contrary, Server says, "the real audience for these twenty-five cent editions (one-tenth the price of a hardcover book at the time) was a working to middle-class male readership, consisting mostly of a mass of ex-G.I.s who had picked up a taste for this sort of fiction during the war". This explains, he says, why the vast majority of these books catered to a preference "for sexy, violent stories, plainly written and not too long". Moreover, Server says, the "grim, sordid tone of so many post-war paperbacks could also be ascribed to the veterans' tastes." That is, readers who had been trained to kill, he observes, "were understandably inclined to have a darker than average viewpoint". Although, in the beginning, Server explains that "nearly all paperbacks were reprints,

which had been culled from a wide variety of sources". And yet, these publishers soon began to realise that they could "just as easily, and cheaply, commission new works directly" from the surplus of established and potential writers, who were rapidly discovering themselves to have been abandoned by the declining magazine market. This new form of softcover novel, became known as the paperback 'original'. "Lured by the dollar, and the aim to satisfy the explicit taste of their predominantly male audience", Server points out that "distinctive new styles of commercial fiction full of gritty realism" emerged. Many of these, he says, were "frankly erotic, lacking in sentiment or conventional morality, and with an iconoclastic eagerness to explore the controversial and taboo". However, due to their popularity and the vast number of titles, Server reports, that eventually "whole genres would amass around such shocking themes as drug addiction, racism, homosexuality, and juvenile delinquency. Sociopathic heroes, unpunished crimes, and depressive endings were not only allowed in these paperbacks, they were encouraged"⁹⁷. This period, he proclaims, "spawned dozens of great writers, from Mickey Spillane, Jim Thompson, David Goodis to Philip K. Dick, Jack Kerouac, William Burroughs; and many of the titles became instant classics: *Kiss Me Deadly*, *Lolita Lovers*, *Shoot the Piano Player*, *Naked Lunch*, and *On the Road*"⁹⁸. And yet, quite clearly these books Server justifiably asserts were "a long way from the easygoing escapist reading found in the cheap fiction of the past"⁹⁹.

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¹ Aldous Huxley, *Ends & Means*. 1937: xii.

² Cited by Tony Goodstone in *The Pulp: Fifty Years of American Pop Culture*. New York: Bonanza Books, 1970: v.

³ Moose Malloy is a heavy who appears in Raymond Chandler's novel *Farewell, My Lovely* (1939).

⁴ Spelling taken from Charles White's eye-opening expose: *The Life and Times of Little Richard*. London: Pan, 1985: 7.

⁵ London: Bloomsbury, 1997.

⁶ Andrew Calcutt and Richard Shephard and the Cult of Levis:

They point out in their book *Cult Fiction: a Reader's Guide*. (London: Prion, 1998), that Levi's did actually use excerpts that mentioned their brand name from the novels of Jack Kerouac, Raymond Chandler, and Hunter S. Thompson, in as a series of magazine advertisements in Britain (xv).

Diana Bagnall in her Discussion on Marketing to "Generation Y" Argues This Approach No Longer Works

Bagnall claims: "their informed nonchalance is enormously frustrating for marketers like Jacqueline Allen, Levi Strauss's corporate communications manager in Sydney. "They're difficult to reach," she says. "They never tell you what they like – they'll only tell you what they don't like. They're very cynical of marketing. You have to know and understand them". In February, Levi Strauss & Co closed half of its remaining factories and cut 30% of its workforce after a 13% drop in sales last year. Bob Hass, the chief executive officer whose great uncle patented the use of metal rivets to hold denim pants together, said: "Younger customers in particular are very fickle; they are less likely to wear the uniforms we may have worn when we were younger (*Bulletin*, March 16, 1999).

⁷ *Ibid.*, p17.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p169.

⁹ Goldman, *The Lives of John Lennon*. London: Bantam, 1989: 71-2.

¹⁰ Steve Turner on the Naming of the Beatles:

"It is well known that Dylan in turn affected the songwriting of John Lennon and Paul McCartney, but Lennon was certainly already aware of the Beat writers from his days at Liverpool Art Collage. His fellow student Bill Harry specifically remembers Lennon reading *On the Road* and the short story *The Time of the Geek*, which was published in an anthology called *Protest* in 1960. 'He loved the idea of open roads and travelling,' says Harry. 'We were always talking about this Beat Generation thing,' In June 1960 the Beatles had played behind London poet Royston Ellis in a poetry music set. Ellis claims it was at his suggestion that the group, then known as the Beetles, changed the spelling of its name. 'I wanted to bring them to London to play for me on some TV programmes,' says Ellis. 'I asked them how they spelled their name and they said "B E E T L E S". At that time I was known as Britain's Beat poet, and so I said, "Why don't you spell it B E A T L E S?" And so they did!' Thus, in a roundabout way, the greatest rock group of the sixties adapted the name of Beat and took to the world" (20-1).

Steve Turner on the Influence of The Beats:

"One of his major contributions as a writer was in combining hip-talk, surrealism, street visions and playfulness with the language of religion. It is hard to imagine John Lennon singing *Instant Karma* or Bob Dylan singing *The Gates of Eden* without the influence of Kerouac and Ginsberg" (214).

And later: "Many other innovative rock musician have paid tribute to Jack's work. Van Morrison mentions *The Dharma Bums* and *On the Road* in his song *Cleaning Windows*; David Bowie credits *On the Road* with showing him as a teenager that 'I didn't have to spend my life in Bromley' (the South London suburb he grew up in); and while writing his classic songs for the Doors Jim Morrison read every Beat volume he could get his hands on. Bruce Springsteen, who shared with Jack a working-class East Coast Catholic upbringing, also shared his love of fast cars and the open American landscape. It hard to imagine Springsteen existing without

Jack. Even his stage clothing of a check shirt and blue jeans – once unthinkable attire for a performer – are straight out of *On the Road* (21).

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp167-9.

¹² *Ibid.*, pviii.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p20.

¹⁴ London:Allison & Busby, 1984.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p74.

¹⁶ *Raymond Chandler Speaking*. Edited by Dorothy Gardiner and Katherine Sorley Walker. London:Penguin, 1988:94.

¹⁷ "The Simple Art of Murder" from *The Second Chandler Omnibus*. London:Hamish Hamilton, 1979:4.

¹⁸ Lee Server on Chandler's Literary Accomplishments:

Server supports my assessment of Chandler's success in his endeavour. He says,"Chandler brought a deliberately poetic style and rueful romanticism to the tough detective story . . . His distinctive, simile-laden prose, and his concept of the private eye as a knight errant in a corrupt world, would influence uncountable numbers of followers in print and on film. Style cannot be copyrighted, or Chandler would have made his fortune in lawsuits. In any case, a zillion plagiarists, idolators, and satirists later, Chandler's best work remains unsurpassed" (*Danger is my Business: an Illustrated History of the Fabulous Pulp Magazines:1896-1953*. San Francisco:Chronicle Books, 1993:70-3).

¹⁹ Hiney, *Raymond Chandler: A Biography*. London:Vintage, 1998:275.

²⁰ *Cult Fiction: Popular Reading and Pulp Theory*. London:MacMillan, 1996:2.

²¹ *The Book of Paperbacks: a Visual History of the Paperback*. Translated from the Dutch by Josh Pachter. London:Virgin, 1981:3

²² Intersong, United Artists Records, 1971.

²³ *A Pictorial History of Horror Stories*. London:Treasure Press, 1985:120.

²⁴ *Hard-Boiled: an Anthology of American Crime Stories*. Edited by Bill Pronzini and Jack Adrian. Oxford:Oxford University Press, 1995:6-7.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pxii.

²⁶ *The History of the Science Fiction Magazine, Part One: 1926-35*. London:New English Library, 1974:16.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, ppix-xii.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pxii.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, ppxiii-ix.

³⁰ Lee Server on Street & Smith:

Server reports that: "Other publishers copied Munsey's formula, and refined it. Street & Smith started their own bulky, rough-paper collection of light fiction, *The Popular Magazine*, and used illustrated covers, soft-focused paintings by notable commercial artists such as N. C. Wyeth and Henry Reuterdahl. Street & Smith had been a leading purveyor of weeklies and dime novels since the 1860s and would become the archetypal pulp house of the golden age" (*Danger is my Business: an Illustrated History of the Fabulous Pulp Magazines:1896-1953*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1993: 20-2).

³¹ *Youth, Popular Culture and Moral Panics: Penny Gaffs to Gangsta-Rap, 1830-1996*. Houndsmills:MacMillan, 1998: 169-72.

³² *Ibid.*, p15.

³³ *Ibid.*, p16.

³⁴ Lee Server on the Creation of New Forms Within the Pulp Magazines:

Server maintains that, "Up to around 1912, most of the fiction published in the pulps had been genteel and inconsequential. Now there began to appear more unusual fare – stories that had imagination and impact had created a lingering commotion among readers and a demand for more of the same. Editors with lively minds and discerning eyes had come to be in charge of several titles and the multi-talented Robert H. Davis, Munsey's executive and head man at *All-Story*; Arthur S. Hoffman at *Adventure*, Robert Simpson, a colorful Scot and former trader on the African Gold Coast, now editor of *Argosy*. These men and a handful of writers established the parameters for what would become the definitive pulp story – larger than life, lucidly

written, plot driven, with strong characters and lots of action, preferably violent” (*Danger is my Business*, 22).

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pxiii.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 7.

³⁷ Lee Server on the End or the Golden Age for Pulp Magazines:

Server relates that, “The two pioneering pulp houses, Munsey’s and Street & Smith, continued to dominate the field in the 1920s but the competition was arriving in droves, everything from established publishing empires like Macfadden to hole-in-the-wall operations whose assets were a registered title and an armful of manuscripts” (*Danger is my Business*, 29).

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp xiii-xiv.

³⁹ *A History of British Publishing*. London:Routledge, 1988:196.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p197.

⁴¹ Dominick, Joseph, R. Sherman, Barry L. Copeland, Gary A. *Broadcasting/Cable and Beyond: An Introduction to Modern Electronic Media*, Third Edition. New York:McGraw-Hill, 1996:26.

⁴² Goodstone:xiii-xiv.

⁴³ *Hollywood in Crises: Cinema and American Society 1929-1939*. London:Routledge,1996:4.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p197.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pxiv.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p20.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p20.

⁴⁸ Lee Server on *Weird Tales*:

Server agrees with Ashley and Haining. He says, “Weird Tales was not a financially reliable market for writers. The “payment on publication” policy often became “payment whenever” (*Danger is my Business*, 45).

⁴⁹ 1985:83.

⁵⁰ Pronzini and Adrian:7.

⁵¹ Ashley:24.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p1.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p200.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, ppxiv-xv.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p172.

⁵⁶ Henry Steeger on the Depression:

Lee Server discusses Henry Steeger’s motivation for entering into the market place during the Great Depression.

“We just tried to entertain people” . . . “to make them forget their troubles for awhile . . . to get lost in a good story or two. That was all we were trying to do . . . But, you know, in those days, the Depression, terrible conditions, a lot of people were down, and to give people some good stories to read was not such a bad thing. . . .” (*Danger is my Business*, 137).

⁵⁷ *The Shudder Pulp: a History of the Weird Menace Magazines of the 1930’s*. Fax Collectors Editions, 1975:3.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp xiv-xv.

⁵⁹ *Scribblers for Bread: Aspects of the English Novel Since 1945*. London:Hodder and Stoughton, 1989:201.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pxiii,

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p202.

⁶² *Ibid.*, ppxiiv-xv.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p87.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p90.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p87.

Marc Vernet Counters Chandler’s View:

He says the opposite: “during the 1930s the public was too affected by the Depression to be able to bear seeing the harsh realities of existence recalled too strongly, and that it was necessary to wait for the post-war economic recovery in order to be finally able to make sinister films”

(“*Film Noir on the Edge of Doom*” found in *Shades of Noir: a Reader*. Edited by Joan Copjec. London/New York:Verso, 1995:14).

However, Chandler’s perspective is later supported by Colin Shindler (1996:28).

⁶⁶ John Springhall on Censorship and the Gangster Film:

He reports: “The film industry’s love affair with members of the criminal gang was only natural, they were colourful, violent and charismatic men and women, whose law-breaking activities were followed by millions of law-abiding Americans. Yet, when brought to the screen, gangster films more than any other Hollywood genre created problems, not only for the usual censorship lobbies but judges, lawyers, teachers, policemen, mayors, newspapers and local councillors. The American urban gangster can be traced in the cinema from Griffith’s *The Musketeers of Pig Alley* (1912), a one-reeler with Lillian Gish, through Tod Browning’s gangster film collaborations with Lon Chaney and on Josef von Sternberg’s crime trilogy with George Bancroft – *Underworld* (1927), *The Drag Net* (1928) and *Thunderbolt* (1929) – until reaching a high point in the Warner Brothers gangster cycle of the early 1930s and not leaving the screens thereafter. Many respectable citizens believed that films such as these, based on the lives and activities of Prohibition-era criminals, led to an increase in juvenile delinquency and accused Hollywood of delivering impressionable youth into a career of crime. The harmful effects of fast-moving and exciting gangster films on young cinema patrons thus became a prominent concern of those eager to control and censor this persuasive new mass medium (100).

⁶⁷ *The American Roman Noir: Hammett, Cain, and Chandler*. Athens/London:The University of Georgia Press, 1995:251-69.

⁶⁸ *The American Film Industry*. Edited by Tino Balio. Madison:University of Wisconsin Press, 1976:215-6.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p249.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p28.

⁷¹ Cited by Colin Shindler:viii.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p28.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p201.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p197.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p36.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p141.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pxiv.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p120.

⁷⁹ *The Pulp Era* (May-June, 1967) cited by Jones:3.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pxv.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p20.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p21.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p20.

⁸⁴ *The Making of Books*. London:Faber and Faber, 1973:222-6.

⁸⁵ “Publishing, history of”, Britannica.com and Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc. 1999-2000:13-4.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p5.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, pp206-11.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp206-11.

⁸⁹ *Two-Bit Culture: the Paperbacking of America*. Boston:Houghton Mifflin Company, 1984: 56-7.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p22.

⁹¹ Henry Steeger Recalls the Effect of World War II on the Pulp Magazines:

Lee Server reports that, “The war was a mixed blessing for the publishers of pulp magazines. Anxiety on the home front meant an increased demand for escape reading, but market expansion was curtailed by restricted resources. “We sold everything we put out,” Henry Steeger of Popular recalls. “The percentage for most our titles were the highest they had ever been. We could have sold even more but it was impossible because of the war”. The wartime paper restrictions would do more than just put a cap on overall circulation. Pulp publishers responded to the shortage by cancelling all of the marginal magazines so as to give more of their paper allotment to the proven moneymakers. This meant the end for the quirky fringe-appeal titles

that had given the pulps of the 1920s and 1930s so much of their dazzle and crackpot charm. And fewer magazines meant, of course, fewer stories would be bought and fewer writers would be needed to write them. The colorful subspecies known as Pulp Writers was on its way to extinction” (*Danger is my Business*, 136).

⁹² Ibid., p xv.

⁹³ Ibid., p 82.

⁹⁴ From the dust-jacket of *Over My Dead Body: the Sensational Age of the American Paperback: 1945-55*. 1994.

⁹⁵ Ibid., pp 10-15.

⁹⁶ From the dust-jacket.

⁹⁷ Ibid., pp 10-15.

⁹⁸ From the dust-jacket.

⁹⁹ Ibid., pp 10-15.

CHAPTER 4.

A Post-Mortem for Pulp

Why aren't you interested in the private lives of the strippers and pulp artists
who upholster our desert landscape?

Marshall McLuhan, (1951)¹

Paperback “Originals”

Mickey Spillane: Architect of the Death of Pulp

It could be claimed that to a large extent, Tony Goodstone corroborates Lee Server's views from the end of the last chapter. Certainly, he reports, “with the end of the paper quotas in 1950, that the new slick male magazines and paperbacks boomed”. Albeit, by this stage, with authors such as Mickey Spillane offering the same type of fiction the Pulp magazines had supplied, only in the form of novels “costing as little as a quarter”². However, it probably would be safe to assume that for Server, Goodstone may well have under-estimated the importance of Spillane to the evolution of Pulp Literature. He maintains, at the time in the 1950s, Mickey Spillane was “the most popular novelist on the planet”³. This opinion is confirmed by John Sutherland. He reports that by 1980, Spillane was being read in “fourteen languages every minute of every day, and since *I, the Jury*, which was published in 1947, his books had sold more than 55,000,000 copies throughout the world”. Although Sutherland also adds, that in the 1970s, Spillane claimed to have tripled this figure, “selling 150,000,000 copies of his works”⁴. Lee Server not only concurs with these sales figures, but he also insists that to many people “Mickey Spillane *was* the post-war paperback, in all its lurid, two-bit glory”. Server explains that although all of his books would be initially published in hardcover, Spillane's “enormous breakthrough came in paperback (his first novel sold just 7000 copies in the first edition, while the softcover reprint moved over two million in two years)”. Indeed, Server argues if Spillane had not come on the scene when he did in 1948, bringing to the mass market his “innovative, ultravisceral style and a provocative new direction for the hard-boiled detective story (and if it had not met with such enormous success in softcover), the paperback era of which we speak might have

developed in an entirely different way”. Spillane’s work and the reaction to it, he says, “electrified and inspired” the softcover book industry because it “defined the paperback reader for them”⁵.

And yet, who were these readers? Well as Lee Server has already indicated, the audience for Pulp was predominantly male. The reason for this is outlined by Andrew Calcutt and Richard Shephard in their guide to Cult Fiction, (which for now we will accept as being synonymous to that of Pulp). They report that “when men were men who went to war and brought home the bacon, on their days off they read novels peopled by heroes”. However, they assert, one of the characteristics of Pulp/Cult fiction was that these “heroes were noticeable by their absence. The protagonists tended to be hanging around in the waiting room of history, bored, often dissipated or perhaps trying desperately to maintain their integrity”. Modern man, they argue, “no longer looked to brave horizons, his view had become introspective. And his identity was fractured and uncertain”. Therefore, Calcutt and Shephard insist that the best these anti-heroes could offer was an “assertion of the self, or at worst angst-ridden dismemberment”. For them, Cult Fiction was the “kind of writing young men read at a time when they could no longer harbour great expectations or offer grand actions”⁶. Woody Haut, in his excellent book on Pulp Culture during the Cold War, extrapolates Calcutt and Shephard’s assessment. He points out that although Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler and Jonathon Latimer were published in paperback before 1945, “it would not be until after the Second World War that hardboiled writing became associated with the paperback industry”. Many readers, he says, “demanded more than mere ‘whodunits’” preferring “fiction that portrayed the reality of post-war urban life”⁷. For many Americans, Haut explains, the “post-war period was one of extreme economic distress”. He reports, that “despite a period of industrial unrest, a war-rejuvenated economy juiced productivity to an unprecedented level”, resulting in an “expanded

middle class and an increase in suburban dwellings (between 1950 and 1960 suburbs grew forty times faster than central areas)". And yet Haut says, as was portrayed in many pulp culture novels, there remained "a considerable amount of economic and social disparity (by 1953.1.6 per cent of the US adult population owned more than 80 per cent of the corporate stock and 90 per cent of the corporate bonds, and, by 1958, some 30 per cent of the population were living below the poverty line"⁸. Haut also points out, that ironically, during a period of such obvious economic inequality, the CIA was established, along with the federal loyalty program, the House Committee on Un-American Activities, and a new invasive mass media (particularly television). This he says, "helped to create a narrative context for pulp culture writing", that was "too focused on individual rather than state crimes"⁹.

It was this "atmosphere of paranoia and social inequity", according to Wood Haut, that Mickey Spillane managed to "reflect so well". In his review of Spillane's books, Haut asserts that by "embellishing his work with lashings of sadism, Spillane achieved narratives that were fanciful, perverse, and psychotic". This was indicative, he argues, of "America's pulp culture of paranoia, confusion and fear". And yet, Haut confesses, at the same time, the writing, "if one isn't offended by its pathology, can often be perversely humorous"¹⁰. Lee Server would probably be happy with Haut's assessment of Spillane's works, having described the books himself as "blood-and-sex-drenched mysteries of an unprecedented ferocity, tales more often about vengeance than detection, usually climaxing in the cathartic prose poems of murder and destruction". Server is also quick to express his disdain for the "pointy-headed intellectuals who have branded Spillane as a vulgarian, fascist, illiterate, and the architect of the nation's destruction"¹¹. It would be fair, at this point, to admit that I am not one of the 150 million readers of Spillane's magnum opus. However, we need only to Woody Haut's chosen extracts from *One Lonely Night* published in 1950, to understand the weakness

of Server's position. It is here Spillanes' fictional detective Mike Hammer intones: "I killed more people tonight than I have fingers on my hands. I shot them in cold blood and I enjoyed every minute of it . . . They were Commies . . . red sons of bitches who should have died long ago"¹².

This point is only compounded by my perusal of *Vengeance Is Mine* (1950), where Hammer recounts his own particular plot inversion of the movie, *The Crying Game*. On the first page, he says:

Just in case you really want to know, she's the best looking thing I ever saw. I get steamed up watching her from fifty feet away. Whatever a dame's supposed to have on the ball, she's got it . . . But here's something you can tuck away if it means anything to you. I don't like her and I don't know why I don't .

And yet, by the last paragraph of page 176, Hammer has finally figured it out:

Juno died hearing all that and I laughed again as I dragged myself over to the lifeless lump, past all the foam rubber gadgets that had come off with the gown, the inevitable falsies she kept covered so well along with nice solid muscles by dresses that went to her neck and down to her wrists. It was funny. Very funny.

Funnier

than I ever thought it could be. Maybe you'd laugh, too. I spit on the clay that was

Juno, queen of the gods and goddesses, and I knew why I'd always had a

resentment that was actually a revulsion when I looked at her.

Juno was a queen, all right, a real, live queen. You know the kind.

*Juno was a man!*¹³.

In fact, I think Juno is meant to be a very dead queen, just as the communists were meant to be read as very dead reds. But rather than quibble with the meaning of Spillane's prose, I would suggest, at the risk of being written-off as a "pointy-headed intellectual" by Lee Server, that there certainly would appear to be a case for something supporting those claims of "vulgarity, fascism, sadism, psychoticism, paranoia, and possibly the architect of a nation's destruction (if not America, any communist nation might do), and all of this is evident without my reading any more than two paragraphs of his voluminous texts.

What is interesting about Mickey Spillane, armed even with only the experience of those two paragraphs, is how dramatically he altered the ethos of the established pre-World War II hardboiled detective genre. As Kenneth C. Davis explains, "if Dashiell Hammett had created the hard-boiled private eye, Spillane perverted him". In many ways, he says, "Sam Spade was the model for Hammer. But Hammer, was a Frankenstein, Sam Spade gone haywire"¹⁴. We might better understand Davis's comments if we first look briefly at the history of the intentions of the genre. Bill Pronzini and Jack Adrian explain that the "hardboiled story was a melange of different styles and different genres, and its heroic figures can be traced back a hundred years earlier, to both the myth and the reality of the western frontier". The history of the United States, they say, "abounds with larger-than-life loners whose accomplishments, whose very survival, depended on an uncompromising toughness and a willingness to enter into struggles against seemingly insurmountable odds"¹⁵. So far so good for Spillane. However, by 1926, Joseph T. "Cap" Shaw, who was the editor of the *Black Mask* magazine dictated that the prose style for these stories should be "hard, brittle using a full employment of the function of dialogue, and authenticity in characterisation

and action". Equally, "a fast tempo, and an economy of expression" were two other ingredients. According to Pronzini and Adrian, "neither Dashiell Hammett nor Shaw invented the style, its use of vernacular, and its basic colloquial rhythm were offshoots of the styles employed by Sherwood Anderson and Ring Lardner and polished and simplified by Ernest Hemingway". What Hammett brought to it, they argue was "romantic realism". Or to use Ellery Queen's phrase, they maintain, "he placed his stories against a stark background; peopled them with men and women who seemed truly to sweat, bleed, and ache; *and made the pursuit of justice a noble as well as a necessary goal* (my italics)"¹⁶. Sally R. Munt in her review of feminism and the crime novel agrees with Pronzini and Adrian's stance. She reports that Dashiell Hammett's private eye "worked outside the social order with his own moral purpose". Therefore, he had to be "tough, stoic, honest, loyal to his own values", and willing to fight "a lone battle against urban chaos" as a "contemporary crusader /knight". He would perceive that the "social order was inherently corrupt, 'fallen'", and that only an "outsider" could be the "harbinger of truth and justice amongst hostility". In fact, she maintains, contrary to his image, "the hero was no radical but represented the paranoia of the dominant hegemonic Christian/patriarchal order, the assertion of values very traditional, and our identification with the hero placed him firmly back in the centre, 'our' values elevated and restored to common-sense status". Munt argues, that in the classic whodunit this "re-establishment of the social order is usually even more overt, with the bad apple prised from an otherwise peaceful Eden". This also could be said to be the case with Raymond Chandler's creation of Philip Marlowe. She asserts, that "Chandler refined the hero's image". That is, he was to be, "by Chandler's definition, 'a complete man and a common man and yet an unusual man . . . *a man of honour*' (my italics)". In addition, Sally Munt points out, that although "the Continental Op and Sam Spade had one foot in the streets" Philip Marlowe and Lew Archer had revived the detective's

code to such an extent, they were “stepping six inches above the pavement.” The problem, they said, “was to love people, to serve them, without wanting anything from them”¹⁷. Exit Mike Hammer.

In his correspondence, Raymond Chandler offered the opinion that “the best hardboiled fiction has the elements of tragedy without being tragic, and the elements of heroism without being heroic. It is a dream world which may be entered and left at will, and it leaves no scars”¹⁸. Quite clearly, this is not a world inhabited by his rival in crime writing, Mickey Spillane. In a different letter, he says as much, “the taste of the public is as mysterious as the taste of the critics. Look at the success a fellow called Mickey Spillane is having”. However, further in, Chandler does admit to reading Spillane. He comments, “I did honestly try to read one just to see what made them click, but I couldn’t make it. Pulp writing at its worst was never as bad as this stuff”. Finally, he concludes that Spillane’s efforts are predictable “nothing but a mixture of violence and outright pornography”¹⁹. In a later letter, Chandler complains, that “you can write constant action and that is fine if you really enjoy it. But alas, one grows up, one becomes complicated and unsure, one becomes interested in moral dilemmas, rather than who cracked who on the head”. Towards the close of the letter, Chandler reflects upon his handing over the mantle to the writers of the future. He states caustically, “one should retire and leave the field to younger and more simple men. I don’t necessarily mean writers of comic books like Mickey Spillane”²⁰.

However, all this bad press may be somewhat unfair to Spillane, and his fictional creation Mike Hammer. In her review Sally R. Munt also makes the point that the detective hero exhibits a paradox, in that “he is at once a representative of society and a critique of it”²¹. So in this sense (due to his impressive sales figures alone), it could be argued that Spillane was indeed reflecting and critiquing certain sectors of American post-war society. Kenneth C. Davis refers to the critic, Charles Rolo, who claimed

Mike Hammer was a “parfit gentile knight who allowed us to play, vicariously, the role of different kinds of Saviour”²². Whereas Davis, himself, suggests that Mike Hammer could be interpreted to refer to the “Hammer of God – an angel of death incarnate, wreaking almighty vengeance upon the immoral, corrupt, criminal, and godless”. Or, on the other hand, he maintains, Hammer might be conceived as not only an “archetype, or metaphor for a darkly violent animus within the millions who bought the books, but also as the embodiment of many perverse notions that seemed to represent the male Zeitgeist of the fifties”²³. To support his viewpoint, Davis presents one paradoxical piece of information. He argues, admittedly there were no noble or altruistic motives regarding Spillane’s attitude toward his critics, or his audience. In fact, Davis postulates that if Spillane had a motto as a writer, it might well have been, “You can keep all your awards. All I want is a fat check”. And although the critics were tough, with many declaring that Spillane was not only “a bad writer but a bad habit for Americans” – the “checks” were forthcoming. By 1951, Davis reports Spillane was receiving “\$80,000 per book” . Yet, despite these vast amounts, he points to what he refers to as the one “sublime contradiction”, in Spillane’s character. That is, at the highest point in his career, Mickey Spillane gave up writing in order to become a devout Jehovah’s Witness²⁴

Of course there is another sublime contradiction apparent here which also concerns Sally R. Munt’s proposition for the paradoxical nature of the hardboiled detective. I am referring to money. Once again, to be fair to Spillane (although the reader might ask why?). The answer quite simply, is for all their aesthetic pronouncements, there is ample evidence that both Hammett²⁵ and Chandler²⁶ (although they may not have been as blatant as Spillane) were equally as obsessed with amassing as much money as they could from their authorial enterprises. This paradox is reflected in the role of the private detective. As Sally R. Munt dictates, the private detective is at once a

“representative of capitalism (the agent for hire), while at the same time the agent’s investigation could potentially yield a critique of capitalism”. And this situation would be indicative of all those writers as right-wing in their politics as Mickey Spillane. Mike Hammer, after all, was a critic of the left-wing, or left-of-centre policies of the “pansy” bureaucracies of the American government of the period²⁷. And indeed, according to Woody Haut, the same can be said to apply to the left-wing critiques of capitalism by those writers such as Hammett and Chandler. However, Haut supplies an interesting analysis of the capitalist motivation behind Chandler’s detective, Philip Marlowe, which could well undermine the supposedly overt left-wing motivation of both Hammett and Chandler. Haut argues that, “by centring on local and domestic crime, Philip Marlowe’s conscience does not prevent him from selling his services to those wealthy enough to employ him”. And although, he is “hardened by disillusion” which was caused by “a case of downward mobility acquired even before being fired from the DA’s office.” As a free agent, Marlowe’s work “jettisons him, like his namesake, into capitalism’s heart of darkness”. Once, having descended into this “hotbed of free enterprise”, Haut maintains, Marlowe then “privatises the investigative process” by refining his “means of expression”, and delving “further into a commodity-filled culture”. So “adept”, does Marlowe become in these investigations, Haut asserts, that he is “decoding the culture”, and invariably locating “crimes within crimes and investigations within investigations”. Although, this may lead him to obfuscate “the crime he’s hired to solve”. Haut points out that Marlowe’s process of investigation “results in, and ultimately professionalizes, a deconstruction that permeates future investigations of Los Angeles and the late capitalist culture”. Finally, according to Haut, “Marlowe acknowledges the subjectivity of his investigations and solutions” because, “proof, he says . . . is always a relative thing.” Of course, the same could be

said of the supposedly left-wing motives of Hammett, and Chandler. Perhaps, as Woody Haut accuses Philip Marlowe – they were just “in it for the money”²⁸.

Gold Medal Books

As relative as proof might be, Lee Server observes that Mickey Spillane’s enormous sales figures had provided enough of it for Gold Medal Books to begin publishing their own softcover “originals”. Server reports, that following closely upon Spillane’s first huge success came a “second decisive influence on the immediate future” of the paperback. Fawcett, publishers of the pulps, comic books, and assorted blue collar magazines, “seeing the success other magazine publishers such as Dell were having”, decided to go into the softcover book business. A contract to distribute Signet Books (Spillane’s home) was supposed to prevent that, but a loophole allowed Fawcett to put out their own paperbacks if they contained original material. The company’s Gold Medal Books managed to lure original manuscripts out of a number of “big name” writers, among them W. R. Burnett, Sax Rohmer, Cornell Woolrich, and unestablished writers such as John D. MacDonald, Louis L’ Amour, and Gil Brewer. In fact, Server reports, “a good proportion of Gold Medal’s stable had come over from the dying Pulp magazines business”. He also claims, that whereas Spillane had set a “new tone”, MacDonald and other “Gold Medal Boys” established a “whole new species, the paperback writer”²⁹. However, although Server credits Spillane as the “inspiration” (somewhat indirectly), for the creation of the paperback “original” and its writers, Kenneth C. Davis reveals that his mentorship also contained a down-side. Davis asserts, that because of Spillane’s extraordinary successes and excesses, he had become a “lightening rod for criticism of paperbacks”. In him, he maintains, “all the sins of the

paperback reprints were gathered". And yet, ironically, Davis maintains the adventures of Mike Hammer would prove to be far from the only example of "how low the paperback could sink". Many of the Gold Medal "originals", for instance, would soon draw "the ire of the censors, who found the covers pornographic and the contents immoral. Ace, Avon, and Dell were not far behind, and a score of lesser reprints that came and went stuck to the low road"³⁰.

Lee Server outlines Gold Medal's releases as covering a wide range of masculine-interest categories, from "Westerns to horror to exotic 1950s fiction genres as lesbianism³¹ and juvenile delinquency"³². In fact, Kenneth C. Davis reports that one of the company's biggest and most notorious bestsellers, was written by a woman. *Women's Barracks*, an account of a group of French women soldiers stationed England during the Nazi Occupation of France, had strong lesbian undertones and a cover showing women in a locker room as they stripped down. Davis states, that "even though a congressional committee damned them, censors yanked them from the newstand racks, and critics sniffed lightly and quickly passed them off as trash – Gold Medal Books sold". By November 1951, the firm had produced more than "nine million books, going back to press with most of the titles and reissuing several of them as many as three or four times"³³. Lee Server corroborates the popularity of these paperback "originals". He claims, that for "their first seventy-eight titles, Gold Medal racked up an astounding twenty-nine million sales". He adds, that "far from being shunned as the book industry predicted, original paperback fiction, Fawcett's shot in the dark, was a great and trend-setting success". In due course, most of the established paperback publishers, as well as dozens of small and newly opened houses, were all seeking their own original material, the softcover industry was "suddenly freed from the limiting and expensive need to license everything from sources other than the writers themselves"³⁴.

However, the success of this new medium also caused a corresponding increase in the attention of the critics. Kenneth C. Davis reports that the surging growth in sales, the proliferation of new companies and imprints, the phenomenon of paperback “originals”, and the rising advances and cover prices “all heightened the paperback’s visibility in literary and intellectual circles”. Among writers and critics, Davis asserts the paperback had its “cheerleaders, who believed that inexpensive books were democratising American literature, taking it out of the hands of the select few and putting it before the masses”. On the other hand, he says were critics who said “trash in any guise still smells like trash; and the paperback was trash”. Others, he maintained, worried about the death of the hardcover and wondered what it would mean for writers. While at the other extreme, according to Davis, there were those people who saw paperbacks as nothing “but a pox on the land, a plot to subvert American morality and fit only to be wiped clean from the newstands and drug-store racks”³⁵.

The Joy of Juvenile Delinquency

One of the most infamous offenders (after Spillane) asserts Kenneth C. Davis, was the surge of urban gang novels that emerged in the forties and early fifties³⁶. Geoffrey O’Brien agrees. He maintains that “during the War something changed”. At home, the teenagers of America were not behaving as they were expected. O’Brien reports

“juvenile crime rates had soared, and gang wars boomed”. While magazines were flooded with articles on “youthful wrongdoing”. He says, *Collier’s* magazine was impelled to ask the question, “Are Children Worse in Wartime?”, while the *Christian Century* also investigated the links between “Juvenile Delinquency and the War”. Similarly, *Life* devoted coverage to the “Boy Gangs of New York: 500 Fighting Units”, and even John D. Rockefeller III found time to write an essay on the problem entitled “Salvaging the Young Criminal”³⁷. Eventually, according to Davis, parents and preachers began to link their children’s “unruly behaviour with the rude new music called rock and roll, which was so wild and frenzied compared to the gentler tones of Liberace, Patti Page, Perry Como, and Pat Boone”³⁸.

Geoffrey O’Brien attributes to the genre more subtlety than such a comparison elicits. He maintains that the juvenile delinquency sub-genre was more like a “curious phenomenon that seemed to creep out from under the prevailing genres of the day, creating its own audience as it went along”³⁹. Lee Server agrees. He argues, these books, were an accurate reflection of the world’s many of the reader’s inhabited. They were, he says, set in an “ultra-real urban jungle of rotting poverty and constant brutal violence, a self-contained – in fact, abandoned – world where decay, fear, anger, hopelessness, rape and sudden death were to be accepted as the norm”. In fact, Server insists, that juvenile delinquent fiction was a “devastating indictment of American society, but this seemed to go over the heads of most fans of the stuff, captivated instead by the books’ damned exciting depictions of gang rumbles, sex orgies, dope smoking, hot-rodding, and hubcap stealing”⁴⁰. For Geoffrey O’Brien, Server’s comments would appear to support his own conviction, that “the one great advantage of the juvenile delinquency novel was that it could effortlessly be all things to all people”. They could be read as a “social tract directed against hoodlums”, or a “social tract directed against society”, or a “modern cowboy story”, or a “pornographic novel in

which all the sex could be justified in the name of naturalism”. Or finally, they could be seen as a “subversive hymn of praise to the delinquents themselves, to be enjoyed by the same audience that flocked to see Marlon Brando in *The Wild One* in 1951”⁴¹. However, Lee Server also notes that the “interest in juvenile delinquent stories would begin to fade in the early 1960s”, due to the “result of urban renewal, changing youth culture, and lack of readers”⁴². And yet, in their heyday, he points out that, over the course of a single decade, juvenile delinquent genre was comprised of some three-hundred-plus titles⁴³.

The Heyday of Pulp

Unfortunately for Pulp, 1951 was to be the heyday of the publication for the paperbacks of this era. In a sense it could be inferred that its fate was synonymous with that of juvenile fiction, with supply outstripping demand. Or, we could blame the whole downfall on Mickey Spillane. Once again, to be fair to Mr. Spillane, an explanation may be in order. Simply put, it is my contention that if Lee Server can

attribute Spillane's sales as being the incentive for the creation of the paper "original", then he must therefore be responsible for the flip of that coin. If the critics can agree that Spillane could quite likely be conceived as the architect of the destruction of a nation, then it would hardly be a stretch of the imagination to assume he might equally conspire to be the architect for the decline of Pulp. Put bluntly, Mickey Spillane's motive for writing – greed – would ultimately lead to an over-supply of paperback books in the market. In one of his letters, Raymond Chandler neatly assessed the situation. He remarks, "I think the hardboiled dick is still the reigning hero, but there is getting to be rather too many of him. A decline of the hardboiled story on the basis of Gresham's law [is the trend]. They are too numerous, too violent, and too sexy in a too blatant a way". What is more, he complains, "not one in fifty is written with any sense of style or economy. They are supposed to be what the reader wants". And yet, Chandler argues to the contrary. He maintains that "good writers write what *they* want and make the reader like it". He concludes, by prophesying, that although "the hard-hitting story will not die out completely" . . . "it will have to become more civilised"⁴⁴. Unfortunately – if the publishers of Pulp paperbacks were aware of Chandler's advice, they certainly did not heed it. According to Woody Haut, rather than become more 'civilised', most publishers took the other tack – and turned *up* the heat. Haut maintains, in 1951, production hit a peak, "when 886 titles were published (eight times the number that appeared in 1945)". However, this increase coincided with "a slump in sales" (the influence of television) causing a miscalculation of the market, which "*prompted publishers to opt for more lurid covers*" (my italics)⁴⁵. The logic behind this reaction, according to Lee Server, was that "sex was the not-so-secret weapon that paperbacks could wield over every other medium of mass entertainment in the post-war period". He says, neither radio nor television "could even hint at things erotic", and while movies could address more mature subject matter and

were certainly capable of a visual sensuousness, the Hollywood cinema remained a determinedly “chaste art form”. Therefore the paperback publishers had the “relative freedom that the law granted to literature and none of the restraints of good taste that hampered the hardcover houses”⁴⁶. However, as with Hollywood, these publishers had underestimated the potential popularity of television.

Although Britain had achieved television broadcasting in 1936, with the establishment of the BBC, the first television broadcast in America did not occur until 1939, when President Franklin D. Roosevelt spoke to a gathering at the World’s Fair in New York. He appeared on about a hundred monitors situated on the fairgrounds and in the city, thus demonstrating a major feature of the new medium – “its capacity to be live”⁴⁷. Yet, according to George Greenfield, it became “pervasive” in a very short time. By 1949, he reports, 40 per cent of the American population was able to watch television. The television companies’ revenue in 1951 was double that of 1950 and *seven times* as much as in 1949. Correspondingly, cinema receipts fell by exactly one quarter between 1946 and 1952. In spite of the temporary boosts afforded by the new inventions of Cinerama, 3D and Cinemascope, the decline continued⁴⁸. Greenfield reports, although it was thought by many that “television was going to be the end of Hollywood in the fifties”. It wasn’t. He says, Hollywood saw the danger and “assimilated television”, thus ironically what looked like being the destroyer turned out to be “the saviour of Hollywood”. Of the 20,000 jobs in Hollywood at the time, up to 50 percent of them would involve working for television⁴⁹. Faced with the reality of these forms of competition the paperback publishers were forced to play their one and only – trump card: sex. According to Lee Server, the paperbacks “emphasised sex appeal wherever possible, and most houses released a percentage of books with explicitly sexual themes, but there were also a number of smaller outfits that issued nothing but erotic fiction”. These publishers, reveals Server, gave “even the lowly,

reviled paperback industry something to “look down on”. He says, these fringe houses, such as Venus Books, Quarter Books, Cameo, Croydon, and Ecstasy Novels produced titles of “such delirious sleaziness that even crusty, hard-bitten cigar owners⁵⁰ must have wept with embarrassment at the prospect of selling such monumental trash”⁵¹.

Gotcha Covered

Lee Server explains, that just as the writers for Gold Medal Books had “deserted the sinking ship that was the Pulp magazine business, so too the veteran Pulp illustrators had moved over to the comparatively thriving paperbacks”. This he says, resulted in a trend toward “realism in cover illustration – primarily the voluptuous realism of the Pulp magazines which was to become all but ubiquitous by the end of the decade”. The cosmopolitan graphic designs disappeared, reports Server, to be replaced with “vivid portrayals of sex, violence, action”⁵². The favoured style of cover illustration, he says, were “garish oils on canvas depicting in dream-like exaggerated realism scenes of overheated, pheromone-charged moments from the enclosed narrative”. With their typically “lurid hues and tawdry views of modern urban life”, Server maintains, the covers looked like “freeze frames from some lost Cinecolor B-movie”⁵³. And yet today, according to Geoffrey O’Brien, “the images depicted on the covers of these paperbacks which were originally designed to pulsate with life, have aged enough so that we are no longer likely to mistake them for part of the real world”. O’Brien argues, that the “men and women frozen in such portentous tableaux of fear and anguish and violence and desire are now more likely to evoke hearty laughter than the heavy breathing they solicited so strenuously when, newly created, they bared their passion on

thousands of new-stands across America”⁵⁴. This may be so, but at the time, large sectors of the American public were not laughing. Lee Server asserts, that inevitably in a place and time as “censorious as America in the 1950s, the softcover industry’s emphasis on the sensational and the forbidden was bound to get it into trouble”. He says, that “although millions of U. S. readers were happily being separated from their quarters without complaint, a tiny but strident fragment of the populace was outraged by the common availability of such depraved and dangerous reading matter”⁵⁵.

Woody Haut agrees with Server. He concurs Pulp’s increasingly lurid covers led directly to attacks from anti-pornography campaigners, with one US senator insisting that “alien-minded radicals and moral perverts had infiltrated the pocket-book market”. While in 1952, he reports, the House Select Committee on Current Pornographic Materials was said to have concluded that “some of the most offensive infractions of the moral code were found to be contained in low-cost, paper-bound publications known as ‘pocket-size books’ . . . which . . . have degenerated into media for the dissemination of artful appeals to sensuality, immorality, filth, perversion, and degeneracy.” This assessment, according to Haut, proved since pocket-books “also published the likes of Theodore Dreiser, D.H. Lawrence, Aldous Huxley, and Jean-Paul Sartre, they were being judged not merely by their covers”. These accusations, he argues, especially those voiced by Senator Joseph McCarthy, “could have been prompted by the fact that ordinary people were reading books once thought the province of an educated middle class; or the fear that, with the advent of the paperback original, these same people were about to create their own literary genre”⁵⁶. Be that as it may, Lee Server argues, “once the educators, psychologists, religious leaders, and spoilsports joined together to fight this common enemy – and finally convincing the U.S. Congress to investigate and if necessary destroy the evil scourge known as the paperback book, the end was in sight”. He maintains, “with threats of fines and imprisonment looming,

an abashed industry tamed its excesses". And thus, Server rues, the American paperback "would never be the same"⁵⁷. He reports by the mid 1950s, "the realistic style of the cover painting was being filtered away". It was replaced with a "lighter touch," supposedly more modern than the "old fashioned" and "heavy oil works of Avati or the pure Pulp style of Belarski and his imitators". In addition, Server asserts the governmental investigations into "pornographic materials" by the Gathings Committee in Washington made the paperback industry "largely shy away from its more extreme behaviour, those covers with the leering faces, bosomy babes, and bleeding corpses". He concludes that the cover artists of the post-war period "either changed their styles or faded from the scene". In any case, by the mid 1950s, he maintains, "their variously mesmeric, haunting and outrageous art was fast becoming a thing of the past"⁵⁸.

A Post-Mortem for Pulp Magazines

Another medium that was soon to become a thing of the past was the Pulp magazine. According to Tony Goodstone the Pulp magazines, "having had a tough time of it during the War, never managed to recover the momentum of their pre-War popularity due mainly to a number of factors which were ostensibly outside of their control". Goodstone reports that between 1944 to 1947 alone, "production costs for Pulp magazines soared some 70 per cent". As mentioned earlier, by the time the paper quotas ended in 1950, the sales of the new slick male magazines⁵⁹ and paperbacks were booming. However, although many Pulp magazine titles were still available in 1953, "a major distributor dealt the final blow by imposing editorial requirements on the

publishers and finally refusing to distribute anything but the more profitable slicks and a few digest-size fiction magazines”. And so ironically, asserts Goodstone, having started off in the form of ‘chapbooks’ over a century ago, Pulp magazines were to “end up confined to much the same format”⁶⁰. Peter Haining concurs with Goodstone. He reports much the same view, that by the end of the Second World War there had been a radical change in American society, and the growing sophistication of most sections of the population, plus its mounting affluence, worked “swiftly and disastrously against the Pulps”. The arrival of the paperback which reprinted hard-back novels at the same price, if not cheaper than the Pulp magazines, also “helped sound the death knell”. Those publications which did continue were forced to reduce their pages to “digest-size”. Even though they were dead, Haining says, “some Pulp publishers would not lie down”. Many “switched their interests into paperback publishing”, while others attempted to “keep their lines of detective, western or fantasy magazines alive in re-vamped formats”. However, most of these efforts were in vein. Particularly as, “the better known authors had either died or moved on to other fields”, and a “general falling off of interest in the genre in the fifties and sixties”, left little in the form of “encouragement for the newcomer”⁶¹.

Viva Pulp Content!!

However, just as the Pulp magazines had been squeezed out by the economic imperatives of competing with newer forms, so too, according to Geoffrey O’Brien, were the paperbacks “beginning to feel themselves outclassed by newer technologies”. There was no way, argues O’Brien, that the paperbacks could do more than ‘trot along behind the movies, the music, the television images, trying none too imaginatively to

capture some of the magic for their own profit". He maintains, that the best cover art in the world "could not compete with a few bars of "Jailhouse Rock" or "High School Confidential," and it had long since been demonstrated that a photograph of James Dean was worth a thousand oil paintings"⁶². But perhaps there has been far too much emphasis placed on these illustrations. Although I am well aware of course, that for certain kinds of publishers, the text comes secondary to the cover art. For instance, Hal Dresner's pulp author hero in his novel *The Man Who Wrote Dirty Books* (1967), refers to receiving evidence of this in a letter he receives from his editor in which he requests, "Art has a great idea for a new cover showing two Negresses and this one white fella walking into a bedroom together. Is there any chance of a scene like that being in your book? If so, drop me a line and I'll get Art started on it"⁶³. Having said this, one cannot but be impressed with the quality of the covers on the Pulp books of this period. However, I would argue, that although the form is important, it should not take precedence over the content, the quality of the prose, and the strength of the ideas. Lee Server recognises this. He asserts that "given the constraints of the paperback medium, it managed to provide a forum for both frivolous authors, as well as those with loftier ambitions". Server maintains, this was also true of the Pulp magazines. He says the softcover business "supported a motley and colourful guerrilla army of storytellers, from the extremely gifted to the inept to a few singular, visionary talents". For others, he attests, it was a "proving ground or halfway house on the way to more prestigious hardcover sales or more lucrative work in the movies or television". While, on the other hand, for others it was the "last or near-last stop on a downward spiral from previous literary success or ambitions". In any case, Server correctly insists, that the mass-market paperback would be the medium for which a "number of distinctive and important post-war American writers would create much or all of their greatest work"⁶⁴. At this point Server refers to such luminous paperback writers as Jim Thompson⁶⁵,

Leigh Brackett⁶⁶, Chester Himes, Paul Cain, David Goodis, Charles Willeford⁶⁷, Horace McCoy⁶⁸, and Philip K. Dick⁶⁹. And although these authors have interesting viewpoints on alienation, paranoia, the disintegration of the family, racism, identity, and the slippery nature of reality, as a matter of expediency, I will leave these writers for now, and move directly to one group of writers who I consider to have had the most impact on changing society of the fifties with the contents of their books, without the aid of superficial covers: (not that there is anything wrong with that).

Beating the System

Towards the end of the decade, the times were beginning to change (without Bob Dylan – who as we mentioned earlier was at home in Minnesota learning folk songs on his acoustic guitar). Yet, according to Geoffrey O'Brien the “reverberations of this change were being felt within the paperback community”. He says, there was a “shiver of the new. New forms were springing up on all sides, and making those carefully composed Signet covers, for instance, seem already stuffy, a rapidly fading memory of an era suddenly extinct”. What is more, O'Brien reports, that “strange gods had materialised where least expected”. He says, there were “rumours of outlandish tongues, arcane rites, alien belief systems – alien emotions even – spread naturally in the wake of the sightings”. However, the sightings confirmed that this new breed of people, were “not “teenagers”. Rather, they were “adults of a new variety.” A variety that was “restless,” “jaded,” and “with no aim in life except a new sensation – drugs,

‘way-out’ jazz, perverted sex” and “actual crime”. Well, at least, this is how Geoffrey O’Brien reports the blurb for Albert Zugsmith’s novel *The Beat Generation*, would have it⁷⁰. For O’Brien, the Beats represented an “imminent explosion that was just under the surface, readying itself to shatter the orderly frames, rooms, houses”. It would be through the medium of this literary movement, that “there would be vented an accumulated disgust stored up behind social forms that had atrophied, forms that had not quite been able to come to grips with a world suddenly more dangerous. New spaces were opening, and familiar things, old things, could seem grotesque”⁷¹. Of course, he could be referring to those covers again.

Who were the Beats, or the Beat Generation? And how do they relate to the paperback? Appropriately, Lee Server indicates that the “history of the Beats and the American paperback intersected due to chance encounter in an insane asylum back to the late forties”. Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, and William Burroughs he reports, were the “nucleus of a free-floating group consisting of Columbia University literary aspirants, remittance men, and Times Square petty criminals who would become recognised as the holy trinity of the Beat movement”. In 1949, Ginsberg met Carl Solomon in the State Psychiatric Institute, his uncle was publisher A. A. Wyn, the founder of Ace line of Pulp magazines in the 1930s and just entering the lucrative paperback “racket”. Just as Solomon was given an acquiring editor’s position at Ace, Ginsberg became an amateur literary agent for his friends. After some difficulty, Solomon managed to persuade his uncle to publish Burroughs’s first semi-autobiographical novel, *Junkie*. According to Server, Burroughs’s novel “was a perfect paperback original”. He maintains that unlike his later works, *Junkie* was “relatively conventional, a nihilistic, cryptically funny but lucidly straight-forward hard-boiled tale of criminal low-life”. Published in 1953 as half an Ace Double with Maurice Helbrant’s true expose *Narcotic Agent: a “Gripping True Adventure of a T-Man’s War*

Against the Dope Menace” on one side. The Burroughs side “sported a magnificently lurid cover painting of a man wrestling a packet of heroin from the hand of a sumptuous blonde”. I consider, that because of this excellent cover, this particular edition of *Junkie* is perhaps a perfect validation of my contention for the balance of cover and content. A further validation of this, is Lee Server reports that the original first-edition Ace publication of *Junkie*⁷² is a highly-prized collector’s item⁷³, and it continues to remain in print⁷⁴.

In 1956, Allen Ginsberg was himself published by poet and publisher Lawrence Ferlingetti’s City Lights Books, in their Pocket Poets Series. In this small paperback booklet called *Howl and Other Poems*, Ginsberg dedicated his incendiary poem *Howl* to Carl Solomon. Lee Server reports that around this time Solomon had also bought Jack Kerouac’s manuscript for *On the Road*. However, the process of editing it with Kerouac proved too great for him, and he ended up in Bellevue Hospital⁷⁵. In many ways, Solomon is an excellent example of the pressures that had come to bear on the paperback publishers, during the McCarthyist era of America in the fifties. For example, Server points out how Solomon’s Publisher’s note for *Junkie*, contained constant disclaimers attempting to separate the sentiments of the publisher, from those expressed by the author. Solomon makes such comments as the extremely dubious, “*There has never been a criminal confession better calculated to discourage imitation by thrill-hungry teen-agers.*” Or the ever helpful, “*For the protection of the reader, we have inserted occasional parenthetical notes to indicate where the author clearly departs from accepted medical fact or makes other unsubstantiated statements in an effort to justify his actions*”⁷⁶.

Quite clearly this sort of attitude would have wrangled an author such as Jack Kerouac who espoused Zen Buddhist “first thought, best thought” spontaneity in expression, and who considered any form of editing as dishonest. Solomon, on the

other hand, would have probably argued with Kerouac that publishing in America at that time was indeed everything to do with self-censorship and repression of thought, and that freedom of expression as guaranteed by the Constitution, was in fact a myth. Yet what remains the most ironic factor of this confrontation between Solomon and Kerouac, was that of all the Beats, Jack Kerouac was the most pro-American of all of them. Unfortunately, both of these men would come to be viewed as casualties of the oppression inherent in the culture of America in the fifties, and clearly each could be seen reflected as one of the victims represented in Ginsberg's famous first line for *Howl*, "I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness"⁷⁷. However, before Kerouac was subsumed by his own particular variety of madness – alcoholism – at first he succeeded at writing.

Although Ace eventually passed on *On the Road*, Lee Server reports that it was published in 1957 in respectable hardcover, and to immediate "acclaim and outrage". Kerouac, Server says was proclaimed the "prophet of nonconformity", and an "avatar of the anti-establishment". And shortly "every literary figure in America, no matter how congenitally square, was spouting hep phrases and claims of marijuana abuse, lending credence to the notion that Beats – in reality a tiny circle of unique talents – were indeed a 'movement'". However unlike Mickey Spillane, whose books were also originally published in hardcover, Server argues that Kerouac's success "tangentially legitimised the softcover industry". The Signet paperback of *On the Road* he says, was the "ideal edition for the bohemian bible, cheap, informal, and portable, ready for tossing into the rucksacks of a million want-to-be beatniks". In fact, Server points out that Kerouac followed *On the Road* with several works which were published as paperback 'originals', including, for Avon, *Maggie Cassidy* and *Tristessa*, the tale of a drug-addicted Mexican prostitute. At the time, Server suggests this was an "impressive gesture". He reflects, that having a modish author going direct to softcovers was

“unheard of, and it confounded the publishing trade’s assumption of paperback inferiority and anonymity”⁷⁸.

To a certain extent, this viewpoint is supported by Kenneth C. Davis. He maintains that while Mickey Spillane and teen gangs seemed to be taking control of the paperback racks in the heartland, their domination was not complete. He asserts, “like a wildflower struggling up through the ash heap, better books were pushing through to the marketplace and surviving”. He argues that despite Bernard Devoto’s contention that “good books in paperback were impossible to find, *quality – as subjective a term as any* (my italics) – was finding its way through the cracks”⁷⁹. I have no idea whether Davis considers Kerouac as one of the “wildflowers” struggling to the top of the heap of bad books. Many critics did not. Truman Capote for example, is famous for responding to Kerouac’s prose by saying it was not writing at all – “it’s typing”⁸⁰. And yet, although Davis does comment that Kerouac was one to the first two authors thought to deserve the label of “paperback literati,” with the other being J. D. Salinger⁸¹, he does not make it clear whether he agrees with this assessment. However, even if he did not agree, the fact that critics cannot agree is in itself, ironically, proof of how ‘subjective’ the term *quality* is. If it was quantifiably definable there would be no debate, all the critics would be revering the same objects with equal fervour. And yet, for now, perhaps we should leave this question open, and return to it in a later chapter.

For the time being, let us assume that critics still have a role, that they can quantifiably tell the difference between good and bad books. In this case, Kenneth C. Davis appears to be suggesting that there was an enormous shift of emphasis in the type of paperbacks produced at this time, or even perhaps an attempted legitimisation of the industry. Davis explains the promise of the Paperback Revolution was that “all books would find their audience given the opportunity”, a sentiment which was heralded under a national banner proclaiming “Good Reading for the Millions”. However, he says it

was up to the paperback industry to “lift its aim to supply this”. Davis argues “if the reprinters were guilty of bringing forth the worst that the mass culture in the 1950s was capable of producing, they were also responsible for some of the finer moments”. To illustrate this point, he refers to a comment by David Dempsey, an editor of the *New York Times Book Review*. Dempsey proclaims of the “horrendous Spillane”, that “perhaps he is the price we must pay in a democratic culture, for being able to buy *A Passage to India* for 25 cents. As bargains go, it is not so bad”⁸². However, in his article “The Revolution in Books” published in the *Atlantic Monthly*, January 1953, Dempsey seems to suggest that the paperback industry was already well on its way to being legitimised. He states, “there are today about twenty paperback houses in the field. Seven of these account for approximately 85 per cent of the total business. Their product is a highly competitive melange of serious literature and trash, of self-help and pseudo-science, of sex and inspiration”. Never before, he maintains, “has American publishing put forth such a nicely homogenised product, with the cream of letters so palatably disseminated in the total output”. This, he asserts, explains why “Edith Hamilton’s *The Greek Way* and the novels of Kathleen Winsor can be sold bust by jowl on the drug counters” and why “Faulkner’s *The Wild Palms* has been made available, if not necessarily comprehensible, to a million rank-and-file buyers”. As well as suddenly making the books of “Flaubert, Hawthorne, and D. H. Lawrence contemporary with Steinbeck”. Therefore, Dempsey argues, “if the reprints have done nothing else, they have taken the classics away from the protective custody of the pedants”⁸³.

And yet, however noble his intentions may have been, Dempsey’s ideals, and literary taste manage to come across as stolidly pedantic in themselves. Rather than championing the successful flattening of cultural diversity within the paperback industry, Dempsey merely wishes to impose the values of his high-brow literary taste

on the poor “rank-and-file” masses who would probably find all his literary choices as “necessarily incomprehensible” as the ones he has referred to here. But what exactly does he mean when he proposes that a valid criteria for literary acceptability is that it should “necessarily” be “incomprehensible” to the majority of readers? Methinks perhaps Dempsey is suffering from an overdose of James Joyce? For my money, Ralph Daigh, the editor of Gold Medal Books who defended the publication of their paperback *Women’s Barracks* before the House Select Committee on Current Pornographic Materials in 1952, was closer to the mark. In his response to the committee’s accusation that “was is it not a terrifically weak defence on his part to mention the classics of Shakespeare, or to try to place his publication in any sense of the word in the same comparison with Shakespeare?” Daigh replied, that what he had meant by his answer was that “both were eminently entitled to publication and exposure to the public”. This was a reply the committee quickly rebuffed by reminding him “the book he was defending sold for a quarter”. To which Daigh answered “Yes, sir; and Shakespeare sells for a quarter in some editions too”⁸⁴. Arguably, I think Ralph Daigh’s attitude towards the levelling of literature would have found him many compatriots among the Beat writers, who were also determined to demystify the allure of the classics and to destabilise the pedants who perpetuated such mystification. William S. Burrough’s, for instance, would later develop a technique in which he would level the classics by literally cutting them into strips and sifting them into a word stew. Allen Ginsberg would broaden the perimeters of poetry and its performance for the academy with improvisation, musical accompaniment, and nudity. While, according to Thomas R. Whissen in his introduction to *Classic Cult Fiction: a Companion to Popular Cult Literature*, Jack Kerouac offered a prose style that was “energetically sloppy”. In fact, Whissen says, his “exaltation of energy came to be, for many, his most endearing quality”. Yet within this sloppy prose, he argues Kerouac

does not attempt to deal with any segment of society above the lower class. If “another class exists at all”, he says, “Kerouac simply ignores them and writes as if they do not exist”. This attitude, Whissen asserts, is based “not on the unspoken acceptance of superior social levels but on a status inversion, the unspoken assumption that all those who think they are better than you are really inferior to you”. In the fifties, he adds, “there was a lot of talk about an intellectual class structure, and although the Beats liked to think of themselves as outcasts barely hanging on to the bottom rung of the ladder, as intellectuals they were top of the heap”⁸⁵. Along, of course, with my bet: Ralph Daigh.

What was to result from Thomas R. Whissen’s depiction of Kerouac’s “status inversion” was social change. Steve Turner, in his biography of Kerouac *Angelheaded Hipster*, asserts that although he was not “the most influential author of his generation, and certainly was not the most critically revered, no one else so accurately captured the restless uncertainties of the post-war generation whose struggle to break through the bland modernist conformity of the Eisenhower era sowed the seeds of the social revolution of the 1960s”. In his books, says Turner, Kerouac portrayed young people who were “hungry for experience, not simply in order to satiate themselves, but in the hopes of discovering a new vision”. What is more, these people broke with the traditional conventions, “they meditated, smoked dope, listened to jazz, made love, bummed around and generally ‘dug’ life – hoping to discover for themselves a way of living free from such bourgeois considerations as moderation, respectability, security, and self-control”. Turner also postulates that although James Dean, Elvis Presley and Jack Kerouac never met, “in heeding their instincts, rather than external codes, they were representatives of the same wave of youthful dissent which challenged old certainties about race, sex, family, religion, authority and even the dominance of the rational mind”, with each communicating a “new sense of abandon and independence

which reflected the emerging spirit of their times”⁸⁶. Turner’s view is supported by James Campbell, who argues that the Beat Generation “raised its head as the suppressed demon in ordinary American life, as the urge for total anarchical freedom, without respect for laws or civilising norms”. The form which they gave to this impulse, Campbell reports, was “not only in verse and prose, but in lifestyle”. Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac he argues, “did not just write about ways to be free; they *were* free”. And along with Turner, Campbell also notes that “America’s youth realised, much more quickly than its elders, that the pre-eminent characteristics of the Beat Generation was not beards and uncleanness, but rebellion and eroticism, and the beguiling dance between the two”⁸⁷.

The Death of Pulp (Revisited)

Although I have attempted to paint Mickey Spillane as the single-handed architect of the death of the Pulp paperback industry, there were many other contributing factors, including ironically, the successful manipulation of the medium as a vehicle for social dissent by the Beat Generation. Woody Haut supports this observation. He claims that Pulp culture fiction, “had become a victim of its own success”. Haut argues because Pulp was a “marginal literary pursuit, it was allowed to identify state crimes. But it was this very ability to identify the era’s crimes and conditions”, he maintains, which “contributed to its marginalization and eventual demise as both a political and a literary pursuit”. Furthermore, Haut insists, that for an “increasingly homogenous society, in which television was already undermining a mass readership, class-based critiques and gritty subject matter were rarely appreciated”⁸⁸.

One factor which would directly effect the grittiness of these critiques would be the successful war against censorship contended by the Beats, and therefore by proxy, Pulp itself. The first court case, as I mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, was held in 1957, and it concerned the seizure of Ginsberg's book *Howl and Other Poems* by U.S. Customs for alleged obscenity. The trial, according to Kenneth C. Davis, soon became a "platform for the vigorous defence of the book by academics and critics, and it was eventually cleared"⁸⁹. Similarly, this would be the outcome two years later, reports Lee Server, when the publication of the Olympia Press's paperback edition of William S. Burroughs's *Naked Lunch* in Paris, "caused the demand in the U.S. for the publication of Burroughs's novel and a handful of other works". Server argues, it was this trial that would "eventuate in a revolutionary victory against literary censorship in America from the sixties onwards"⁹⁰. Unfortunately, however, it was largely the success of these trials that would undermine what had been arguably the Pulp paperback's biggest asset: its illicit edge. With the ground-rules concerning sexuality and obscenity dismantled, the practitioners of serious literature would soon make the back-issues of even the wildest Pulp paperback publishing house seem tame. In fact, the ruminations within Allen Ginsberg's poem *Howl* could do this on its own. Seemingly, the only options left for the Pulp paperbacks was either to follow the lead of Mickey Spillane, and get out. Or, otherwise, to heed Raymond Chandler's advice, to "become civilised".

Interestingly, in her review of the Beat Generation, Lisa Philips refers to part of a sermon given in the fifties by Rev. Howard Moody, in which he seems to have had some kind of epiphany, or at the least a recognition of the importance of the role of the Beats. Moody remarked "should we be surprised that in the age of 'the lonely crowd', 'the organisation man', and 'the hidden persuaders' we would get a generation, or at least a segment, that is sickened on the inside and rebellious on the outside at having

seen human existence being squeezed into organised moulds of conformity?" Is it so "incongruous", he ponders, that we have "spawned" a generation "whose primary interests seem to be fast cars, long trips, jive, junk, jazz and all other related kicks"⁹¹. Unfortunately once again, it would appear that the very forces the Rev. Moody had identified as being those the Beats were attempting to escape, 'the organisation man' with his 'hidden persuaders' to enforce 'organised moulds of conformity' had already begun to consume the Pulp paperback industry in order to civilise it. Kenneth C. Davis reports by 1952, after the slump in sales, the big seven companies referred to by David Demsey, had already been reduced to the Big Four. Davis says, "if there was a symbol of the change among the ranks of publishers and the transition from pioneering days to a more modern – if not a thoroughly businesslike – business, it was the retirement in that year of Robert de Graff from Pocket Books"⁹². The effects of these changes were to become apparent by 1959. For the first time, asserts Davis, "dollar sales from paperbacks surpassed those of adult trade hardcover books". He maintains, although they were "well behind textbooks, encyclopaedias, and book clubs in dollar volume, the paperback was far and away the leader in number of books sold and was the fastest-growing segment of the publishing industry". According to Davis, "this vast leap in sales, was a declaration that the paperback business was no longer a second class citizen in the world of publishing"⁹³.

One may well ask how the admission of an enormous growth in the sales of paperbacks equates to the death of Pulp? And of course, in one sense, it does not. Paperback publishers continued to print Pulp books, but they were no longer viewed in the same way. The paperback industry had become respectable. Having lost its illicitness, it had been well and truly tamed. It was a Fat Elvis, licking its fingers, and trying to remember what its hips had looked like. Even when Mickey Spillane returned to the fold after a nine year hiatus, as we are well aware, his books would continue to

sell in excessive amounts. But they no longer attracted the same apocalyptic disdain they had inspired at the beginning of his career. Once again, Spillane's predicament is in many ways symptomatic of that of the Pulp paperback. However, this should hardly come as a surprise, after all, as Kenneth C. Davis argues, Spillane is "ideally a creature of his times"⁹⁴. But those times, the fifties, were now rapidly coming to an end. In point of fact, Davis indicates that "rarely do events divide decades so neatly as those of 1960s delineated the shift from the fifties to the sixties". What is more, he also implies the whole Pulp paperback publishing experience of the fifties might conceivably be considered as nothing more than an unprofessional teething period preparing the industry for the times to come. For example, Davis states "the forces that had been gathering during the fifteen years of post-war American publishing were finally unleashed with the onset of the new decade". Furthermore, he suggests that there were two main reasons for this. Firstly, due to a growing acceptance of the paperback by bookstores. Davis maintains that "bookstore owners who once found the paperback objectionable, now considered them as an economic necessity". The second factor was mainly due to changes in marketing strategies, which included discounts offered to retailers⁹⁵. Or, to put it in Rev. Moody's terms, the 'organisation men' were manipulating the market with their 'hidden persuaders'.

However, Kenneth C. Davis is not alone in his delineation between the Pulp paperback industry of the fifties, and the decades to follow. Piet Schreuders in his history of the paperback industry asserts that the "most interesting period runs from 1939-1959" because, he says, the "unique element which makes the older paperbacks attractive to collect seemed to disappear at the beginning of the 1960s"⁹⁶. Similarly, in Clive Bloom's definition of Pulp, he maintains that this "literature is exemplified by those forms of magazine and paperback publication which flourished between the 1920s and the 1950s in America"⁹⁷. While, on the other hand, Geoffrey O'Brien agrees with

Davis's assessment of the industry. He maintains that the "early paperbacks did demonstrate in a crude form the effects of the nascent advertising/packaging/marketing revolution, yet in such a manner that compared to today's pros, these publishers would be considered as embarrassingly primitive". However, O'Brien also points out, that "despite these limitations these paperbacks somehow managed to convey a democratic mood". This was probably due to the fact, he surmises, that "the industry of their day was a relatively loose and improvisational affair compared with today's gigantic and highly sophisticated structure", and as such, it "allowed its publishers to work under circumstances anarchic enough to permit a few unexpected and remarkable freedoms"⁹⁸. Such as the freedom to publish Mickey Spillane, or to take a chance on the Beat writers, perhaps?

Of course, in a sense, this means that like Spillane, the Beats were also a product of their times. And in fact it could quite easily be argued that the Beats had achieved their most impressive literary works, due to, and during the era of the Pulp paperback. I would argue Allen Ginsberg never managed to surpass the epic proportions encompassed in his poem for Carl Solomon, *Howl*. And while I greatly admire Jack Kerouac's "sloppy" prose improvisations and invocations to alternative lifestyles in *On the Road*, it seemed to lose something in the translation to the Hippiedom of the sixties. Similarly, I would assert even William S. Burroughs's *Naked Lunch*, which arrived in style on the death-knell of 1959, is the masterwork of his long career. However, perhaps the reason I have been so impressed with these texts can be answered, to some extent, by Geoffrey O'Brien. He suggests that writers "somehow plug themselves into the collective mythology, and filter it through their own consciousness". Furthermore, he adds that "although the texts and images that are created may be simple if considered in isolation, they become more complex in the unforeseen interrelations amongst each other, and between the "real" life they purport to show". It is in this way O'Brien

argues, that the paperback industry, “like all the other image machines, is dedicated to the creation of an eternal present”. The past and future, he asserts, “are of no account; what matters is only the one enormous Now of the spectator immersed in this spectacle”⁹⁹. However, on the other hand, Woody Haut claims that the decline of Pulp (although he is referring more specifically to the hardboiled detective genre) was due directly to its “inability to compete with the spectacle”. He argues that because Pulp culture fiction was “more concerned with objects, human foible, moral ambiguity and regionalism than consumerism, its decline coincided with the increasing importance of the “spectacle” in American life”. Suddenly, Haut asserts, Pulp culture fiction “appeared uncultured, barely literate and out of date. Pulp could not compete with, or resist, such a calculated historical movement. Nor, could it surpass the perverse narrative produced by the spectacle”¹⁰⁰. This is why, in his definition of Pulp culture, he maintains that it denotes an “era dominated by the excesses of disposability, and marks the relationship between Pulp fiction and a historical period that begins with the 6 August 1945 bombing of Japan and culminates sometime between 1960 and 1963, with the election and eventual pulping of a president”¹⁰¹.

Perversely, some might suppose, I happen to agree with both of these definitions, even if they might appear to be contrary. Although I appreciate the conciseness of Woody Haut’s division, historically, of the spectacles subliminally parenthesisising Pulp from the paranoia of atom bomb to the motorcade in Dealey Plaza. On the other hand, I believe that Pulp is much more than nostalgia for the obsolescent stylings of a bygone era (although there is nothing wrong with that). This is why I prefer Geoffrey O’Brien’s conception for these texts, because it allows them to be both culturally and historically of their time, while at the same time, allowing them to continue to contribute, atemporally, to an eternally contemporary megatext of the present moment. Tony Goodstone makes a similar observation. He argues that “the Pulps are more than

a 'Rosetta Stone' to the past, they can help to simplify the present". Goodstone explains that "this is because popular entertainment provides an accurate barometric record of the emotional climate which reveals the anxieties of the masses". And he suggests that by "taking current readings on this barometer we can 'read' these anxieties – before they explode"¹⁰². In this sense, Tony Goodstone would appear to agree with Woody Haut's assessment, that "reading Pulp might help us to survive on the mean streets of the twentieth-century"¹⁰³.

(not) The End

(not) The End

Just Remember that Death is

(not) The End

Bob Dylan¹⁰⁴, said that.

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- ⁴ *Bestsellers*. London:Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981:vi.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, pp21-26.
- ⁶ *Cult Fiction: a Reader's Guide*. London:MacMillan, 1998:xiv.
- ⁷ *Pulp Culture: Hardboiled Fiction and the Cold War*. London:MacMillan, 1995:5.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, p8.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, p7.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*,pp95-6.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, p22.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, pp7-8.

¹³ New York:Signet, 1978.

¹⁴ *Two-Bit Culture: the Paperbacking of America*. Boston:Houghton Mifflin Company, 1984:181.

¹⁵ *Hard-Boiled: an Anthology of American Crime Stories*. Edited by Bill Pronzini and Jack Adrian. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995:5.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p9.

¹⁷ *Murder By the Book? Feminism and the crime novel*. London:Routledge, 1994:3.

¹⁸ *Selected Letters of Raymond Chandler* edited by Frank MacShane. London:Jonathon Cape, 1981:47.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp310-1.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp314-5.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p120.

²² Cited Davis:185.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp181-2.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp181-4.

²⁵ Lee Server on Hammett's Wealth:

"Hammett published his last pulp story in *Black Mask* in November 1930. His fifth and final novel was published, *The Thin Man*, was published in 1934. He was 40 years old. Royalties and Hollywood money kept him in booze and hotel suites for another decade, but his career as a writer was essentially ended" (*Danger is my Business: an Illustrated History of the Fabulous Pulp Magazines: 1896-1953*. San Francisco:Chronicle Books, 1993:67).

²⁶ Tom Hiney on Chandler's Wealth:

Hiney reveals that unlike Hammett, Chandler did not die penniless, he left an estate worth \$60,000 (*Raymond Chandler: a Biography*. London:Vintage, 1998:275).

²⁷ Davis,182.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p72.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp26-30.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p186.

³¹ Lee Server on the Lesbian Subgenre:

"The first paperback reputed to have broken the sales records of *God's Little Acre* was one similarly noted for its sexual candor, a Gold Medal original titled *Spring Fire*" (51) It launched the lesbian subgenre.

"While few lesbian novels went the route of *Spring Fire*, with its heroine turning psychotic, most of the books were downbeat, even tragic in their depiction of what the copywriters repeatedly called "a twilight world." Still, for all their undoubted appeal to the "prurient interests of men," many lesbian paperbacks contained sufficient psychological truths or documentary detail of gay life in the 1950s to be found worthy of study and critical applause by feminists rediscovering these books decades later (55).

³² *Ibid.*, p32.

³³ *Ibid.*, p155.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp32-4.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p178.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p186.

³⁷ *Hardboiled America: Lurid Paperbacks and the Masters of Noir (Expanded Edition)*. New York:De Capo Press, 1997:160.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p186.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p160.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp83-4.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p160.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p95.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p83.

⁴⁴ MacShane, 476-7.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p5.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp43-4.

⁴⁷ Preble, Duane and Sarah. *Artforms*, Fourth Edition. New York: HarperCollinsPublishers, 1989:171.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p204.

⁴⁹ *Scribblers for Bread: Aspects of the English Novel Since 1945*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1989:204-6.

⁵⁰ Lee Server on the Under-the-Counter Law:

Server explains that: “America before World War II could be a fanatically puritanical place, the various local and state blue laws regarding sexual literature were strictly enforced in many areas. For purposes of decorum and minimizing risk, the sexy pulps were rarely displayed openly but sold “under-the-counter” and had to be requested, even in the supposedly adult male bastion like the cigar store” (*Danger is My Business*, 85).

Server also reports that ordering these magazines through the post did not help either.

He says, “From the beginning the Spicy’s had enemies in high places. The Post Office and various local governments were continually scheming to put them out of business . . . There were plenty of problems with distribution. In some cities, the Spicy’s were banned or had their front covers removed before sales were permitted (*Danger is My Business*, 89).

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p44.

⁵² Henry Steeger on the Covers:

Lee Server claims “Henry Steeger was the first publisher to apply a kind of scientific principles to the choosing of cover illustrations, determining what were the consistently best-selling color schemes (red, yellow, black for men’s magazines; blue and green for women’s). “Most of our sales were on the newsstand, little subscription,” Steeger explained. “The covers were our entire advertising campaign, our sales pitch. There was a lot of competition out there and you had just a few seconds to catch someone’s eye, so the covers had to do an effective job in a hurry” (*Danger is My Business*, 31).

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp57-64.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp7-8.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p16.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p5.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp16-19.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p68.

⁵⁹ Lee Server’s Eulogy for the Pulp Magazine:

Server states: “The pulps in their time were looked down on as publishing’s poor, ill-bred step-child. One glance at their gaudy covers, ugly paper, and endless gray blocks of type was enough to condemn them in tasteful circles. Without sophisticated design, pretty pictures, and the name-brand authors of the expensive, slick magazines, the pulps had to make do with imagination and the power of the written word. This, as it happened, was their glory. Although it was not understood at the time, the pulps were creating an innovative and lasting form of literature – introducing new styles of writing and genres of popular fiction, discovering writers who would become some of the most widely read in the world” (*Danger is My Business*, 15).

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp xv-xvi.

⁶¹ *A Pictorial History of Horror Stories*. London: Treasure Press, 1985:157.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 165.

⁶³ London: Pan, 40.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p35.

⁶⁵ Lee Server on Jim Thompson:

“Jim Thompson, recipient of much critical attention in recent years, had been trying to keep a writing career off the ground for two decades and had about kissed off his ambitions when he landed an assignment from Lion Books, one of the many houses in the early ‘50s trying to emulate the Gold Medal formula. Thompson’s first softcover original, the *Killer Inside Me*, was a bone-chilling, unforgettable tale told by a bumpkin Sheriff – Lou Ford – who is in fact a sadistic psycho-path and murderer. The chatty, first-person narrative voice gives the book its sickening impact”.... “Thompson followed this tour de force with nearly two dozen more paperback novels, most of them dark, nihilistic nightmares with horrid, insane protagonists. Thompson often seemed to be out to prove what a paperback writer could get away with when

no one was looking, and had a fondness – in books such as *Savage Night*, *Hell of a Woman*, and *The Getaway* – bizarre endings, the plots suddenly turning inside-out and eating themselves alive before the appalled readers eyes. *Savage Night's* narrator – a diminutive hit man – describes his own ghastly death, a Jim Cain – derived gimmick taken to a grotesque extreme. Literally falling to pieces (chopped up by an axe-wielding female) (39-41).

Thomas J. Roberts on Jim Thompson:

“No one would think that paperbacks invariably end happily who knew the twenty-nine thrillers that Jim Thompson wrote, for instance. The world he offered his readers in novels like *The Getaway* and *Pop.1280* has a uniquely bitter flavor – though the characters in that world are unable to imagine a better universe and are not themselves bitter. Sam Peckinpah’s film of *The Getaway* has a happy ending, but Thompson’s novel ends differently. In the book, the bank robber and his wife have escaped to a professionally run hideaway in Mexico, but they are now running out of money. They recognize that they love one another deeply but that it does not matter. One of them, they know, will succeed in murdering the other and will probably end up eating that person’s body. The universe of *Pop.1280* is so bleak, so grim, that the story of the psychopathic sheriff in a small Texas town who kills a half a dozen people is a comedy. The only universe that sheriff knows is emptiness”... “This story does not end happily, either. The sheriff, who is telling us the story, is about to be killed himself” (*An Aesthetics of Junk Fiction*. Athens:University of Georgia Press, 1990:92-3).

Woody Haut on the Representation of Women by Male Pulp Writers, Jim Thompson:

“Bad women. Good women. Dead women. Crazy women. Beautiful women. However they were described, women in pulp culture fiction were objects of male fantasy and obsession, their representation a reflection of their position in society. Moreover, pulp culture women, like Jim Thompson’s fictional psychos, were, for most pulp culture men, unfathomable. Unlike Thompson’s warped protagonists, women portrayed in pulp culture fiction are often one dimensional, depicted as dangerous *femmes fatales* or sugar-coated house-wives; sexually promiscuous or frigid; murderous or boring” (106).

Woody Haut on the Representation of Culture by Pulp Writers, Jim Thompson:

“Though the criminal act is never plotless, pulp culture narratives generate interest in so far as they reflect state crime – consumerism, militarization, economic and social inequality, the centralization of power – which, in turn, demands investigation and alternative narratives. In the end, for commercial and political reasons, most pulp culture crime writers returned to the cliché of the state – that crime does not pay, or does not pay enough, or pays for some criminals but not for others. But a few writers, like Jim Thompson, David Goodis, Chester Himes, did move to the edge and, whether consciously or not, begin to chip away at the dominant narrative. Unfortunately, the likes of Gil Brewer, Lionell White, and William McGivern could never transgress the accepted format to break the laws of fiction. But even though they did not take their narratives to their criminal conclusion, their popularity demonstrates the search for alternative narratives and the need for cultural critiques” (162).

⁶⁶ Woody Haut on the Representation by Women Pulp Writers, Leigh Brackett:

“Consequently any enquiry into how women are represented in the genre should be coupled with an investigation of specific women pulp culture writers. In doing this one glimpses how women represented themselves and whether they were able to subvert the genre’s overt masculinity, if not misogynist, tendencies” (113).

On Leigh Brackett: “What makes Brackett’s portrayal of suburban life different is her willingness, however strained, to empathize with victims of violence, and her explorations of the domestic tensions inherent in suburbia. According to Brackett, those tranquil suburban streets can be, if one is not vigilant, as dangerous as the mean streets one normally associates with pulp culture fiction. For paranoia regarding possible invasion be it by communists, blacks, Jews, the poor, juvenile delinquents or uninvited dinner guests – exist everywhere. Obviously, suburbs can be spooky places. Who knows what dangers – insanity, domestic violence, incest – lurk behind its doors? Stuck at home, women were ideally placed to read the culture, recount the dynamics of suburban life and, given the opportunity, explore its intricacies in domestic pulp fiction” (119).

⁶⁷ Lee Server on the Charles Willeford:

“Charles Willeford was a career soldier, near the end of his hitch when he locked himself in a San Francisco hotel room and pounded out his first, eccentric, novel, *High Priest of California*, a strange and sleazy tale of a blandly psychotic used car salesman. Royal Giant bought it for five-hundred dollar advance, publishing it in 1955 inexplicably bound with a Talbot Mundy high adventure novel. Willeford followed this awkward premiere appearance with a series of brilliant, wildly oddball novels – *Pick-up*, *Honey Gal*, *The Woman Chaser* – all sold to obscure, soft-core sex publishers such as Beacon and Newstand Library. Willeford seems to have intended to write Gold Medal-styled crime stories, but his esoteric, Nabokovian sense of humor and odiously solipsistic, generally insane heroes kept getting in the way of sales to better established paperback houses (35-6). The best – Beacon Books – published Charles Willeford’s *Pick-Up* (“*He holed up with a helpless lush. A story that builds to a shattering climax!*”) (48). Woody Haut on Charles Willeford’s *Pick-Up*:

Willeford’s writing, like that of Chester Himes, can be read as a history of modern marginality and a critique of American culture. While his novel *Pick Up* (1967) is a great example of an exploration of racism and sexuality without mentioning either subject (180-91).

Not until the last two sentences does he reveal, that he is:

“Just a tall, lonely Negro.

Walking in the rain” (*Pick-Up*. New York:First Vintage Crime Black Lizard, 1990:166).

⁶⁸ Andrew Calcutt and Richard Shephard report on Horace McCoy’s novel *They Shoot Horses Don’t They?* (1935):

They say: it was considered by Sartre, and de Beauvoir, to be the first existentialist novel to come out of America. Although, apparently Camus reserved this accolade for James M. Cain’s *The Postman’s Always Rings Twice* (1933) (188). I would suggest that this may have been due to the fact that McCoy’s novel, which was about two participants in a dance marathon. Gloria, who looks forward to death as a release from the hard labour of life, and her partner Robert, who finally grants her wish, and is sentenced to death after a summary trial, bears an uncanny resemblance to Camus’ *The Outsider*, which was not published until 1942. Read it and see. McCoy writing miles ahead of his time.

Here’s Gloria in full tilt:

“It’s about time somebody got women like you told,” Gloria said, moving over and standing with her back to the door, as if to keep them in, ‘and I’m just the baby to do it. You’re the kind of bitches who sneak in the toilet to read dirty books and tell filthy stories and then go out and try to spoil somebody else’s fun –’

‘You move away from that door, young woman, and let us out of here!’ Mrs Higby shrieked. ‘I refuse to listen to you. I’m a respectable woman. I’m a Sunday School teacher –’

‘I don’t move a – inch until I finish,’ Gloria said.

‘Gloria –’

‘Your Morals League and your goddam women’s clubs,’ she said, ignoring me completely, ‘– filled with meddlesome old bitches who haven’t had a – in twenty years. Why don’t you old dames go out and buy a – once in a while? That’s all that’s wrong with you. . . .’ (Harmondsworth:Penguin, 1970:90-1)

⁶⁹ Andrew Calcutt & Richard Shephard on the Worlds Cult Fiction Presents:

“The targeting of a ‘mainstream’ is always a necessary simplification and, in a way, the definition of cult fiction we’ve described could be said to include all fiction – by nature an authorial consciousness is always an outsider. Yet some views of the world are more skewed than others. In some cases the cult view is not from the margins at all but from other worlds altogether. Sci-fi and the fantastic imagine new worlds and spaces that both harbour the reader from our own world and cast a critical glance back” (*Cult Fiction: a Reader’s Guide*. London: Prion Books, 1998:x).

Lee Server on Philip K. Dick:

“Philip K. Dick, now widely considered among the handful of great science fiction writers, spent most of his book-writing career – beginning with *Solar Lottery* published by Ace in 1955 – lost in the s-f paperback “ghetto,” his ambitious, satiric, paranoid masterworks earning him between \$1 - 2000 and having a newstand shelf-life of half-a-year or less” (35).

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p164.

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- ⁷¹ Ibid., pp164-5.
- ⁷² Barry Miles on the UK edition of *Junkie*:
It was pulped shortly after publication, because the publisher realised what the book was about and got nervous (*William Burroughs: El Hombre Invisible*. London:Virgin, 1993.97).
- ⁷³ Ibid., p103.
- ⁷⁴ Ibid., pp71-4.
- ⁷⁵ Ibid., p77.
- ⁷⁶ Ibid., p77.
- ⁷⁷ San Francisco:City Lights Books, 1980:9.
- ⁷⁸ Ibid., pp77-9.
- ⁷⁹ Ibid., pp186-7.
- ⁸⁰ Clarke.New York:Ballantine Books, 1988:315.
- ⁸¹ Ibid., p202.
- ⁸² cited Davis:186-7.
- ⁸³ cited Davis:178.
- ⁸⁴ Davis:220-4.
- ⁸⁵ New York/Westport, Connecticut/London:Greenwood Press, 1992:170-2.
- ⁸⁶ London:Bloomsbury, 1997:15-17.
- ⁸⁷ *Paris Interzone: Richard Wright, Lolita, Boris Vian and others on the Left Bank, 1946-60*. London:Minerva, 1995:246.
- ⁸⁸ Ibid., p170.
- ⁸⁹ Ibid., p269.
- ⁹⁰ Ibid., p80.
- ⁹¹ *Beat Culture And The New America: 1950-1965*. Paris:Flammarion, 1995:29.
- ⁹² Ibid., p248.
- ⁹³ Ibid., p266.
- ⁹⁴ Ibid., p182.
- ⁹⁵ Ibid., pp266-7.
- ⁹⁶ *The Book of Paperbacks: a Visual History of the Paperback*. Translated from the Dutch by Josh Pachter. London:Virgin, 1981:2.
- ⁹⁷ *Cult Fiction: Popular Reading and Pulp Theory*. London:MacMillan, 1996:3.
- ⁹⁸ Ibid., p17.
- ⁹⁹ Ibid., p18.
- ¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p166.
- ¹⁰¹ Ibid., p6.
- ¹⁰² Ibid., pviii.
- ¹⁰³ Ibid., p191.
- ¹⁰⁴ "Death is not the End", (Special Rider Music) CBS460267 2:1987.

CHAPTER 5.

Death was (not) THE END: The Ideology of Pulp

The wretched reader of pulp literature is encouraged to dream of sins and
orgies he is forbidden to enact

New Statesman 6 Sept., 1958.

Pulp as Ideology: The Legacy of the Fifties

Kennedy's been shot.

Are you sure?

I hope it's true.

Let's give a medal to whoever shot him.

Yeah! I hope that nigger-loving son of a bitch is dead.

Gary Dale Babin, a student at Prescott Junior High, Baton Rouge, Louisiana describes the reaction to the news of the assassination of John F. Kennedy on the 22/11/1963¹.

As Bob Dylan wisely predicted death was *not* The End for Pulp.

Although Woody Haut intimated that the role of Pulp had come to an end due to its inability to compete with the spectacle of such events as the explosion of the atom bomb, or the murder of a president. The truth was far from that. The forced obsolescence of the Pulp magazine, and the decline in a popular form of paperback publication did not mean that Pulp had relinquished its function, as Tony Goodstone termed it, as “a Rosetta Stone to the past and present”², or as Thomas R. Whissen prefers to call it, as “the barometer of our cultural history”³. On the contrary, the death of John F. Kennedy fortified, or at the very least crystallised, the necessity for the practitioners of Pulp, in all its various forms, to take a stance in the oncoming cultural revolution for the decade. Either they were for the Gary Dale Babins⁴ of the world, who would most likely grow-up to become a new breed of red-neck McCarthyite in the not too distant political future (this was a position normally taken-up, as we have already witnessed, by right-wing sympathisers such as Mickey Spillane), or they could take arms in a sea of trouble for those who had been marginalised by the legislation of those adult Babins who were, unfortunately, already in the halls of power. I suggest that the role of Pulp ideologically, has always been – from its very inception – to provide a voice for the latter. That is, even when we are reading authors such as Mickey Spillane, Agatha Christie, or Ian Fleming, who I would argue have always tended to defend the status quo of the dominant hierarchy. In doing this, however, whether they intended to or not, these authors have inadvertently presented the methods of normalisation inherent in such monological elites of power up for criticism. And if there is one thing that Pulp is good at, whether it was during the McCarthy witch-hunts of the fifties, at the brink of the counter-cultural turmoil of the sixties, or on the crest of the new millennium, it is criticising the machinations of the reigning structures of power. Therefore, the goal of this chapter will be to trace the ideological subversiveness of the aesthetic of Pulp as a

legacy bequeathed from the fifties to the sixties, and mark its trajectory as it continues to be passed-on to the contemporary society of the new century.

In the introduction to his guide to Cult fiction, Thomas R. Whissen maintains the critic “must first look into the climate of the times in which the book appeared and caught on”. He says, “they must take into account not only the political, sociological, and economic environment, but especially the cultural environment – the aesthetic, emotional, and intellectual milieu – the *Zeitgeist*, in order to figure out what factors contributed to the ease with which so many minds became spontaneously receptive to the particular influences of the book at that particular time”⁵. In addition, Whissen argues, that the strength of these books “lies not so much in the answers they might provide, but in the questions they raise or keep alive”. In fact, he suggests, that the continued existence of such texts “could be viewed as a sign of cultural health, as various forms of this kind of literature could be said to represent the necessary waystations along the road to discovery and enlightenment” (such as *Catcher in the Rye*, or *On the Road*, for example)⁶. Christopher Pawling supports Whissen. He proposes, that in the main, “where sociologists have actually examined the texts of popular culture they have dealt with them as direct bearers of ideology”. Furthermore, he insists, that like all forms of cultural creation, popular fiction “not only reflects social meanings and mores, but more importantly, it *intervenes* in the life of society by organising and interpreting experiences which have previously been subjected only to partial reflection”. Thus, to understand popular fiction, he suggests, is to examine it as “a form of cultural production and a *process of meaning creation* which offers a particular way of thinking and feeling about one’s relationship to oneself, to others, and to society as a whole”⁷.

This explains why Clive Bloom can argue, for instance, that the “*ante* in the age of Spillane (particularly in his early novels with their libido, violence and gangsterism)”, is

that these texts were “both social commentary, and a form of Pulp prophesy”. Bloom points out that when John F. Kennedy was assassinated by unknown gunmen, it seemed to “confirm the existence of a gigantic and hidden conspiracy involving gangsters (The Mafia), the red menace (Lee Harvey Oswald), union corruption (Jimmy Hoffa) and paranoid secret agencies (Hoover)”. What is more, “Kennedy’s death and the subsequent revelations about his libidinous adventures (especially with Marilyn Monroe)”, he insists, “reconstituted the nature of the office of president and in so doing confirmed the growing cult of *celebrity*”⁸. However, all of this, once again leads me to believe that there must be more to Mickey Spillane than meets the eye. Through Bloom, Spillane seems to have shifted from a red-neck mouthpiece, to an accurate – if not prescient – barometer of the culture. Therefore, it is for this reason (my continual misunderstanding of Spillane), that I intend to go back from 1963 and the death of John F. Kennedy, to the fifties, or further back if need be, to trace the roots of Pulp’s ideological imperatives.

Dashiell Hammett & the Creation of Pulp’s Political Conscience

The criminal breaks the monotony and everyday security of bourgeois life. In this

way he keeps it from stagnation, and gives rise to that uneasy tension and agility without which even the spur of competition would get blunted. Thus he gives a stimulus to the productive forces⁹

Karl Marx¹⁰.

The problem with Marx's analogy, of course, is in knowing how to identify who the real criminal actually is. Woody Haut asserts that Dashiell Hammett's first novel *Red Harvest* (1929), which was published on the eve of the Wall Street Crash, was "arguably the original hardboiled novel". The book was written during a period of active left-wing political dissent and remains, according to Haut, as "one of the genre's definitive statements regarding political corruption"¹¹. Yet did the fact that Hammett was a Marxist, also mean he was a criminal with the subversive intent to attempt to undermine the American political system? In her biography of Hammett, Diane Johnson argues, "Hammett's socialist leanings encouraged various critics to identify his and other hardboiled detective stories with Marxism"¹² "(and she agrees that *Red Harvest* could clearly be read as an indictment of capitalist society). However, Johnson maintains that the book did not present a socialist program, or any real idea of social change. All the book does, she offers, is "describe corruption, and then observe the protagonist in his attempts to make little temporary corrections for the sake of the endeavour, without much hope that they will endure, and to do this by the rules he makes up, which are not the rules of society"¹³. Therefore, for Johnson, this form of criticism did not mean that Hammett was a criminal. Although, twenty years after the

fact, according to the Republican Senator Joseph McCarthy, the answer to this question drew a completely different response. The answer, was an emphatic yes.

In 1946, Woody Haut reports that J. Edgar Hoover claimed that the FBI during the Second World War had investigated 19,587 cases of alleged subversion or sabotage, 2,447 of which turned out to be bona fide in his view. Of these, 611 were convicted, their aggregate sentences totalling 1,637 years and their fines totalling \$251,709. Although the official membership to the Communist Party had fallen from 74,000 in 1947 to 54,000 in 1950, Hoover claimed that there remained 486,000 fellow travellers, each of which was a potential spy. And yet at the same time, Haut explains that Hoover was “very cool to the whole idea of going against the national crime syndicate, ordering the FBI files, containing the most important information on organised crime to remain closed”¹⁴. It was into this world of public paranoia and corruption that Senator Joseph McCarthy, on the night of February 9, 1950 in Wheeling, West Virginia, would launch his career. On this night, he would step forward, claiming to hold in his hand a document containing 205 names of known members of the Communist Party who were shaping the policy of the State Department – when in fact, the document he held did not contain the names of any Communists at all. The letter was later proven to be a three-year-old document concerning employees who might be denied tenure on various grounds, including drunkenness. However this did not deter McCarthy, who soon increased his ambitious figures, claiming that America was losing to international Communism at the rate of 100 million people a year. McCarthy’s scare tactics worked, and his paranoiac indictments continued until by the end of his 1700 day reign of terror, he had driven four Senators from Washington who opposed his methods, charged two presidents with treason¹⁵, and increased J. Edgar Hoover’s tally for the number of people investigated for alleged Communist links between March 1947 and December 1952 to 6.6 million¹⁶. Of course, the extremity of this figure is indicative of the over-

zealousness of Joseph McCarthy's madness – especially when we remember, that at its highest point, there were only ever 74,000 official members of the Communist Party in a population of 150 million people. However, as Woody Haut points out, “paranoia as a form of delusion can be extremely effective, as it can be used either to re-order – or to unhinge the world”¹⁷. Certainly, it would appear McCarthy was aware of this, and had an agenda to do one, or the other.

Richard Layman reports that Hammett had already served a six month prison sentence for contempt of court in 1951 (for refusing to answer questions concerning a bail fund he had organised for suspected subversives), when on March 26, 1953, Senator McCarthy called him to testify before his Permanent Subcommittee Investigation of the Senate Subcommittee Investigation of the Senate Committee on Government Operations. McCarthy was investigating books, written by Communists, which had been placed into the State Department libraries overseas. It was reported these libraries held 300 hundred copies of Hammett's books in 73 information centres throughout the world. McCarthy charged that these books should be removed because, he alleged, Hammett was a Communist. However, at this point, this fact had not been proved, as Hammett had been imprisoned¹⁸ for contempt, for *not* devowing his political affiliations to the court. At the hearing Hammett was asked whether he had ever written on social issues. He responded by arguing that it was “impossible to write anything without taking some sort of stand on social issues”. McCarthy countered by asking Hammett, hypothetically, if he “were spending, as we are, over a hundred million dollars a year on an information program allegedly for the purpose of fighting communism, would you allow your shelves to bear the work of some seventy-five communist authors, in effect placing our official stamp of approval upon those books?” Hammett replied that “if I were fighting communism, I don't think I would do it by giving people any books at all”¹⁹.

Thus Hammett, was highlighting the subversiveness of all literature because of its inherent ideological nature, while simultaneously, as Woody Haut suggests, “exposing McCarthy’s fear of a literate population”. However, Hammett’s answer also proves, according to Haut, that he was “un-innocent enough to know that books are, in themselves, investigations, and, if writers seek mass distribution and a mass readership, they must acknowledge the dominant cultural narrative or suffer the consequences”²⁰. And the consequences, Diane Johnson reports, arrived in the form of a confidential directive from the State Department which required that all books written by subversive people were to be withdrawn from U.S. libraries overseas: books by Hammett, Hellmen, Langston Hughes, Theodore H. White and a number of others. According to Johnson, some libraries, such as in Tokyo, “enthusiastically burned the books, while others cautiously put them away for later”. However, the book burning soon caught on in America. In San Antonio “the ‘Minute Woman’ Committee demanded the burning of Albert Einstein’s *Meaning of Relativity* and an edition of *Moby Dick* that had been illustrated by Rockwell Kent”. While Thomas Mann, who was living in California, and who had seen his books burnt in Nazi Germany, now saw them burned again in America. Furthermore, she adds that Senator McCarthy was “enthusiastic about such attacks on traitorous or obscene authors like Hammett”, with him commenting that “just because something is written on a piece of paper doesn’t make it sacred”²¹. This would probably explain why he could so cavalierly wave a fake document proclaiming it contained the names of 205 known subversives. Quite clearly, truth, for McCarthy, was not sacred either.

McCarthy’s victory was a small one, if it was a victory at all. Richard Layman says, that because they were unable to trick Hammett into confessing he was a Communist, or into further charges of contempt, the hearing was more a failure, and an unnecessary failure at that. Hammett was already a “broken man physically, largely unemployable,

and he was financially destitute due to being served a summons by the I.R.S for back taxes of over a hundred thousand dollars”. When he died of lung cancer in 1961, he had been living for the last few years on a Veteran’s pension of \$130 a month²². Yet, luckily for Hammett, at least he lived long enough to witness the demise of his former nemesis. Senator Joe McCarthy, who unlike Hammett, had been tricked into making a political confession, of attempting to blackmail the U.S Army into providing a military career for one of his aides. His mistake, unfortunately for McCarthy, had happened on the relatively new medium of television in front of 20 million viewers. Summarily condemned by a vote, in December 1954, of 67 Senators to 22, McCarthy was successfully ousted. He spent his final years drinking, and watching daytime soap operas. By 1957, his liver gave out, and president Dwight Eisenhower was heard to pronounce: “McCarthyism had now become McCathywasm”²³.

As painful as these events may be, Woody Haut maintains that the meeting between Hammett and McCarthy was crucial to the development of Pulp culture because it “highlighted the political potential of a kind of writing that was still considered low-brow and disposable”. The fact that Hammett was sentenced to prison, Haut insists, “forced many readers to look at Pulp more seriously, as a format for the transmission of ideology”. Although, he adds, that “this did not apply to the mainstream literary academy or literary criticism, which still considered Pulp as marginal, and therefore insignificant”. However, for Haut, this would be indicative of further evidence that there was “a class-based separation between writers who have the status of literary *artists* and those who have been relegated to the status of literary *workers*”²⁴. Hal Dresner’s Pulp-writing paperback hero refers to this separation between the classes in his novel *The Man Who Wrote Dirty Books*. He muses:

But I am not in this just for the cash. Money alone cannot compensate a writer for

doing a nasty job. It is the work itself that is the great mainstay of the hack because

– believe it or not – his love for writing is as great as the artist's. It may even be greater love because the hack usually works more. Then there is the added satisfaction of attaining one's goal. Granted these books are worthless, but I am not above feeling Ma Barker's cackling pride towards even such disreputable offspring. Sometimes I take one of the books in hand, stare at my cunning pseudonym on the cover, narcissistically stroke the cheap binding. It is a book. I have written it. No one else could have done so in precisely the same way. According to those three precepts, I am akin to Dostoevski, Cervantes, all the greats. Often I riffle the pages and stop and read a line at random. I am in awe that words fill every line and lines fill every page. There are no blank spaces. I have glutted 200 pages with my fictions. And here, in binding of virgin blush, are 200 more I have done. And 200 more. Three thousand published pages so far. Almost one million words, not many of them forming the same sentences²⁵.

Dresner's sentiments appear to reinforce those of Woody Haut. Particularly, where Haut argues that "regardless of the subjective notions concerning what constitutes 'good' writing, or the tenuous relationship that exists between popular literature and literary criticism, that Pulp writing has been marginalised precisely because it was a class-based literature". However, he does point out this marginalisation has, in turn, "provided it with a perspective from which to continue its reflection and critique of society"²⁶. Albeit, that is, as an outsider.

Of the cultural critique of this period, Woody Haut makes some interesting observations. He suggests that the "narrative objectivity of many hardboiled writers, might have had more to do with avoiding the wrath of McCarthyism than any lack of

political conviction”²⁷. Haut maintains that due to the “threat of guilt by association, the investigation for these writers had turned into a political double bind because, as had happened with Hammett, anyone who failed to represent the interests of the state risked engaging in a subversive activity”²⁸. Therefore, ironically, it was only the “likes of Mickey Spillane, who could afford to make overt political statements”²⁹. He adds that this was also the case in Hollywood, where many Pulp writers were working as scriptwriters for the major studios. Although, even in Hollywood, Haut reports, “film-makers found it necessary to insinuate that all was not perfect in America through the ambiguities of *film noir*, rather than confront the system and having one’s message co-opted”³⁰. Yet as Richard Maltby explains, in the frenzy of paranoia which characterised the era, these writers soon came to the realisation that “having any message, could prove to be just as dangerous as having no message at all”. Maltby reports that in 1948, the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) set itself the task of investigating the Communist infiltration of the motion picture industry. The purpose of its investigation was to prove that card-carrying Communists were writing, producing, or directing “subversive” movies. However, according to Maltby, it rapidly became clear to the committee that “there was no evidence to support these claims”. In desperation, they latched onto ten ‘unfriendly witnesses’, who, like Hammett, had refused to divulge their political affiliations. And encouraged by comments made by Jack Warner (the head of Warner Brothers), where he claimed that “‘intellectual’ writers were avid supporters of the Soviet Union, who could write lines with innuendoes and double meanings that would take “ten Harvard law degrees” to find out what they meant”, the HUAC declared that it did not need proof to assert what the Communists had done, and were doing things to the movies that were so smart that the “general public did not know they were being brainwashed”. As a result of this, the Hollywood Ten were imprisoned, a blacklist was drawn up of two hundred others who

refused to co-operate, and a graylist was compiled of ‘fellow travelers’ or suspected sympathisers³¹. It was true the general public was being brainwashed. Perhaps not by any imagined or real Communists. But by the right-wing zealotry of adult Gary Dale Babins.

This is not to say that I am naive enough to insist that there were no Communists, or Marxists, or their multifarious sympathisers in Hollywood making subversive movies with the aim of brainwashing the general public. They most certainly were there, and they did. And ironically, I happen to agree with Jack Warner that these writers were subtle, and smart – shifting their thematics from overt manifestos, to innuendoes and double meanings that were hidden in the margins, or between the lines. As the Pulp writer Jim Thompson once said, “there are 32 ways to write a story, and I’ve used every one, but there is only one plot – things are not what they seem”³². Such was the case with the Oscar-winning motion picture *High Noon*, in which Gary Cooper plays an embattled sheriff, who suddenly finds himself deserted by his whole community, and must face certain death alone. According to Dan Epstein, whereas most viewers thought the film was just a really good western, it was claimed by its screenwriter, Carl Foreman, to be an anti-HUAC allegory³³. Furthermore, Epstein asserts that in 1950, the surest way to mark yourself as a Communist sympathiser was to oppose the war in Korea. He maintains that *The Los Angeles Times*, “had even advised its readers to report peace petitioners to the FBI”. And it was largely due to this extreme kind of reaction, Epstein claims, that prompted Hollywood’s Monogram Studio to shelve a film on the life and exploits of the Indian brave Hiawatha. The studio feared, he says, that “Hiawatha’s efforts as a peacemaker might cause the film to be interpreted as pro-peace, and therefore pro-Communist”³⁴. Epstein also argues, that most of the B-grade schlock science fiction movies with their unfriendly aliens and uncontrollable monsters, such as *War of the Worlds*, *It Came from Outer Space* and *Invasion of the Body*

Snatchers, were essentially outward manifestations of America's fear of being invaded by Communism. And yet, by writing between the lines, the screenwriters of such movies as *The Day the World Stood Still*, and *The Thing from Another World*, still managed to "slip plenty of pro-peace and anti-nuclear sentiments past the censors"³⁵.

Of course, the problem with Jack Warner, the HUAC committee, or McCarthyism for that matter, was they all considered that any form of criticism of the United States political system was automatically tied to the Communist regimes of China, and the Soviet Union. Unfortunately, in the hysteria of the moment, anyone who pointed this out as erroneous was immediately branded a left-wing extremist, so innuendo became a very useful technique during the Cold War period. And it was one, that Richard Maltby intimates which was immediately adaptable. For instance, Maltby outlines how "the 'friendly witnesses' who had 'named names' in Hollywood during the right-wing witch-hunt were also keen to use the technique to present their own side of the story", such as in Eli Kazan's *On the Waterfront*, which had won eight Oscars. Although the film ostensibly dealt with corruption in the New Jersey dockyards, its central dilemma focused on the mixed emotions felt by its main character, Terry Molloy (played by Marlon Brando), who is eventually persuaded to "testify to the Crime Commission against the union in which his brother is a corrupt official". The message, which is clear probably to everyone except Jack Warner, is that the Marxists or Communists are criminals and must be denounced no matter who they are. Therefore, those people who chose to co-operate with the investigation should not be judged for their acts of personal betrayal, because, as it is implied, their actions were correct³⁶.

And yet perhaps it could be suggested that it was this overt political manipulation of the medium which may have prompted Holden Caulfield (J. D. Salinger's ultimate diviner of all things 'phoney' in his novel of 1951, *The Catcher in the Rye*), to declare, to his dismay, that his brother D. B., who "used to be a regular writer", was now out in

Hollywood: “being a prostitute”. While adding, just in case this might be a little too ambiguous for the Warners of the world, that “if there’s one thing I hate, it’s the movies. Don’t even mention them to me”³⁷. Of course, in the conservative climate of the fifties, a voice espousing such a plethora of anti-social antagonisms was not about to go unnoticed. According to Kenneth C. Davis, parents became “so incensed that reading Salinger’s book would lead to the ruination of their children, that the *Library Journal* reports that *The Catcher in the Rye* soon became the most censored book in the educational institution”³⁸. However, take heart, for according to Colin Shindler these same parents would also allege that “the children’s fable Robin Hood promoted the Communist line because Robin robbed from the rich to give to the poor”³⁹. I am not sure how well Jack Warner would have coped with that one, but at least Holden Caulfield was only a non-conformist.

Dan Epstein asserts the fears of these parents were also allayed by a treatise by Fredric Wertham called the *Seduction of the Innocent: The Influence of Comic Books on Today’s Youth* (1954)⁴⁰, in which he charged that comic books were corrupting the youth of America. Parents who read his book were duly horrified to discover, for instance, that Batman and Robin, according to Wertham, were homosexuals. The reaction to the allegations made in *Seduction of the Innocent* was so strong, Epstein reports, that “Wertham successfully forced twenty-six comic-book publishers to adopt a voluntary code to eliminate obscene, vulgar, horror-oriented comics depicting the walking dead, torture, vampires, ghouls, cannibalism, werewolfism, along with their excessive bloodshed depravity, lust, sadism, and masochism”⁴¹. And yet I very much doubt that this code would apply to Mickey Spillane’s ultra-patriotic, Commie-busting cartoon hero Captain America, and his sexually suspect sidekick, Bucky. However, Dan Epstein points out that the parents of the McCarthy era did not miss Henry David Thoreau’s *Walden*, which was banned from libraries across the country for being

“downright socialistic”⁴². Colin Shindler reports it was John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath*, which held the dubious honour of being one of the first books designated to be burnt⁴³, while Kenneth C. Davis surmises that it was probably these events, which inspired the science fiction writer, Ray Bradbury “to write his novel *Fahrenheit 451*”.

The novel, whose title refers to the temperature at which book paper catches fire and burns and Davis argues it was “no fantastist’s vision. It concerned a future dystopia in which books are burned, while the people were anaesthetised by a vacuous, omnipresent, television soap opera”⁴⁴. From this synopsis alone, it is clear the novel could be viewed as a thinly veiled political and social allegory which reflected the totalitarian zeal of a period where the challenge to reading by the new medium of television could, inadvertently or not, perpetuate conditions for the downfall of democratic justice. Whatever the implication, Davis reports that in 1953 (the same year Bradbury’s book was published), in a famous speech at Dartmouth College, President Eisenhower, in a rebuke aimed at McCarthyism, warned the students, “Don’t join the bookburners”⁴⁵. However, by 1956, with McCarthy’s reign all but cast in the shadows, Americans, according to Dan Epstein, “were more concerned that the minds and morals of their younger generation were being corrupted – not only by illicit books, or movies – but destroyed by the new medium of rock’n’roll”. Epstein explains that the average teenager had more pocket money than ever before, and the “sexy, rebellious music held more than a little allure for those raised in the conservative climate of the Eisenhower era”⁴⁶.

What I have tried to explicate here, by shifting from one medium or genre to another, is although I agree with Woody Haut’s assessment that the cultural critique of this period by hardboiled fiction writers had to be covert in order to avoid the wrath of McCarthyism, I also happen to believe this to be true for many other forms and genres

which inhabit popular culture. And I would stress that where I say McCarthyism, I see it as just a symbol, or symptom, of a much larger universal oppression. That is to say, for instance, where Jim Thompson says there are “32 ways to write a story, but there is only one plot” – the thirty-two ways would be symptomatic of the multitude of forms and techniques available to popular culture, which, as far as this thesis is concerned, would be considered as synonymous to those classified for Pulp Culture. Similarly, I would argue that Thompson’s one plot, could be construed to be the equivalent of Pulp Culture’s dominant thematic (which I have already admitted is not homogenous, but nevertheless exists): and that is freedom from oppression. This theme, I suggest, is a blanket term which covers all forms of inequity and inequality including freedom of lifestyle, of sexuality, of religion, of drugs, from racism, to equal rights, to freedom of information, to free speech, from censorship, or political correctness. And although I realise, of course, that ideologically, the concept of a marginalised form of literature presenting these themes to a monological society is not new, particularly as Mikhail Bakhtin, and Julia Kristeva have already traced this subversive tradition back through the picaresque and carnivalesque, to their parodic roots in Menippean satire⁴⁷. However, what I have attempted to demonstrate, is how vital this marginalised Pulp critique – which is a continuation of the Menippean tradition – has been during this difficult political period in the history of America, and ultimately, of the world.

The legacy that Pulp passed-down from the fifties to the sixties, was its ability to covertly condemn the society that would destroy the continuation of its political values, and its ability to transmit these themes of freedom to a new generation. However, these themes, are not homogeneous. They are not necessarily left-wing democratic, nor Marxist, nor whimsical apolitical fence-sitting non-starters, nor right-of-centre extremist. And yet, within its breadth and depth, Pulp contains elements of any, or all of

these political persuasions within its thematics. Therefore, it does not have an exclusivist political polemic. Its political agenda, if it could be said to have one, is to critique the societies of the world. Yet there is no paradox in claiming this, because as we are aware, all literature carries ideology containing social criticism in one form or another. And we know this must be the case, or otherwise authoritarian governments, or powerful minority groups would not keep trying to destroy the threat of literature by gleefully burning or banning books at every available opportunity. And as Ray Bradbury points out, in his Afterword to the 1981 edition of *Fahrenheit 451*: “the world is full of people running around with lit matches”⁴⁸. That the truth of this is still as valid today as it was in the fifties is confirmed by the Australian author Richard Flanagan, who recently remarked that “as the avenues for the expression of the individual voice are closing down on all sides, the novel remains one of the last vehicles in which a single voice can speak freely and unimpeded by money or power or their stooges”⁴⁹.

From the Pulp Culture of the Sixties, to 2001

Jonathon Green maintains, that “we live in the shadow of the Sixties”. Similarly, he also proclaims that the sixties are as much a “state of mind as a chronological concept”⁵⁰. What this means is it is impossible for me to delineate any part of my identity from this formative era. That even when I attempt to separate myself from the fifties, I view it through the retrospective filter of the sixties. The Beats equal Dylan, Dylan equals The Beatles, and The Beatles *were* the sixties. And the truth is, I want to *disagree* with Jonathon Green. In retrospect – even through paisley-coloured sunglasses – I consider that the sixties take more credit than they deserve. Although, this decade

had its moments, I would like to be able to separate my consciousness from it for a moment, so I could prove – dispassionately – what I believe instinctively to be the truth. That is, that it was the fifties which went through the hard yards to create a comfortable cultural foundation for the artists of the following era to gestate in a warm, and relatively safe, environment. However, perhaps this is just the bias of someone who considers that the high-point of Pulp in its purest form belongs to the era of its covert political criticism of McCarthy, Eisenhower, and the Cold War, rather than the overt posturing of a disparate popular culture. Or, perhaps I have just become too cynical of the notion that big is necessarily better. As for myself, the sixties will always remain bigger, and more influential, than any other decade in my lifetime. But at least I am aware of this, and hopefully I might find a new perspective, in this brief overview of Pulp culture from the sixties to 2001.

For the Times They Are A-Changin'

Come mothers and fathers,

Throughout the land

And don't criticize

What you can't understand

Your sons and your daughters

Are beyond your command

Your old road is rapidly agin'

Please get out of the new one

If you can't lend your hand

For the times they are a-changin'

Bob Dylan (*The Times They Are A-Changin'*, 1963)⁵¹

In 1963 when Bob Dylan was singing “The Times They Are A-Changin’”, which would become an anthem of the sixties protest movement, the simple observation to make, of course, would have been that he obviously was right. And clearly he was. However, having said this, I am not completely convinced, that even armed with his seemingly prodigious visionary insight, that Dylan would have realised quite how fast the times around him were changing. Alvin Toffler, on the other hand, who at the time was researching the rate of change of the present in order to postulate how it might effect, what he referred to as the ‘sociology of the future’, was already making some interesting observations concerning the rate of change apparent in the landscape of the sixties. Put tackily, Toffler proposed, that “not only was the rate of change changing, but we had also extended the scope and scale of this change, while radically altering its pace”. By doing this, he argued, we had “released a totally new social force – a stream of change so accelerated that it would influence our sense of time, revolutionise the tempo of our daily life, and affect the very way we ‘feel’ the world around us”. It was due to these altered states, he said, that people in the sixties no longer felt life as men had in the past. This was a distinction, Toffler claimed, which “separated the truly contemporary person from all others”. Because behind this acceleration, “laid an impermanence – a transience – that penetrated and tintured their consciousness,

radically affecting the way they related to other people, to things, to the entire universe of ideas, art and values". Toffler postulated, for instance, that due to its "unprecedented power for analysis, and the dissemination of extremely varied kinds of data in unbelievable quantities and at mind-staggering speeds, the computer had become a major force behind the latest acceleration in knowledge-acquisition". Prior to 1500, with the Gutenberg press, he says even the most optimistic estimate for producing books was at the rate of 1000 titles per year. However, by 1960 – due to the computerisation of many of the processes – Toffler claims this figure could be achieved in a single day. Borrowing from Francis Bacon's maxim that 'Knowledge is power', Toffler extended this notion even further, adding that "knowledge-acquisition must mean not only power, but the acceleration of change"⁵².

Evidence of this dramatic acceleration of social change for the sixties can be seen in Thomas R. Whissen's description for the decade. He reports that when we refer to the sixties, we usually mean the last half of the decade, not the first, for "the two halves are as different as day and night". The first five years, he says, were the years of "beehive hairdos and rhinestone glasses, button-down shirts and narrow ties, Audrey Hepburn movies and Henry Mancini music". But then, after the assassination of John F. Kennedy and the beginning of the Vietnam War, from 1964 on "everything got turned upside down". It is was from the latter half of the decade, that we get the image of the sixties as an era of "long hair and granny glasses, headbands and serapes, bellbottoms and muumuus; of strung-out flower power children clustered in communes, strumming dulcimers against a psychedelic backdrop of dope, sex, and hard rock"⁵³.

The Beats Become Hippies

By the end of the fifties, Thomas R. Whissen supports Dan Epstein's earlier view, maintaining that young people were beginning to turn their backs on the past. The Baby-Boomers, he said, "despised on principle anything that happened before Elvis, and set about systematically driving their parents crazy". Or to put it another way, Whissen argues, the children of the World War II generation "set about dismantling the value structure in which their parents had – innocently, proudly, but relentlessly – imprisoned them"⁵⁴. And one of the quickest ways to achieve this, was to "drop-out of conservative middle-class society and become a 'Beat', which was also known by the derogatory term 'Beatnik' (with its leftist slur implied by the reference to the Russian spacecraft the 'sputnik')". The Beats, as Lisa Philips reminds us, were very much "enchanted with modern jazz, Eastern mysticism (particularly Zen Buddhism), the decriminalisation of drugs, freedom of sexuality, ecological consciousness, the liberation of the word from censorship, and the glorification of poverty". For as Jack Kerouac had pronounced, in what would become, Philip's says, the "bible for the Beat Generation", *On the Road*: "Everything belongs to me because I am poor"⁵⁵. According

to Alvin Toffler, the sudden influx of young people toward the Beat movement, was aided significantly by the technological innovation of the drug LSD. He argues that it was due to the messianic advertising of Timothy Leary, Allen Ginsberg and Ken Kesey, who distributed the drug freely to thousands of young people, that it began to claim a following in America, and almost as quickly spread to Europe as well. He adds, that “it was out of these two sources, the Beat subcult of the mid-Fifties and the ‘acid’ subcult of the early Sixties, that their sprang a larger group – that might be described as a corporate merger of the two: which was the Hippie movement”⁵⁶.

Camille Paglia corroborates this history of events. She rhapsodises that the “psychedelic Sixties” were about rebelling against the fifties bourgeois conformity and respectability, by “taking life to its extreme and exploring the far edges of the possible. Opening oneself to sensations and messages from above, below, and beyond the social realm. Seeking the oracular, the mystic, “vibrations” between persons and planets”. Paglia also recognises the impact of Elvis Presley during this turbulent period, declaring him to be one of the “most influential men of the century”, and accrediting him with “breaking-down the racial barriers in the music industry, so that her generation could experience the power, passion, and emotional truth of African-American artists”. She also reveres the older Beat poets, with their disdain for material possessions, as spiritual mentors. Particularly Allen Ginsberg, whose poems *Howl* and *Kaddish*, Paglia argues, managed to “fuse the American bardic tradition of Whitman with the Jewish moral passion to deconstruct institutions, history, social class, and concepts of sexual and mental normality”. Furthermore, she maintains, that through his influence on Bob Dylan, Ginsberg “not also changed rock music, but ultimately the world”⁵⁷. David Glover maintains that the same cultural impulses were also apparent in Britain. He describes how the “‘warm, total and all-involving’ counter-culture took artistic experimentalism in general and anti-realist/fantasy in particular as its ally in subversion,

signalling ‘a new culture which was alive, exciting, fun, unified, organic and popular’, opposing the old as ‘infinitely divisible, elitist, remote and detached’”. Indeed, Glover insists, that these discourses prepared an ideological space for which Hippie ideology “could offer itself as critical commentary which highlighted the limits of liberalisation and the repressive role of the State”⁵⁸.

It was this dichotomy between the older and the new generation, according to Thomas R. Whissen, that readers identified with Joseph Heller’s cult novel of the era *Catch-22*. Yossarian, he argues, was one of the great “drop-outs” in American literature, who came up against the two chief enemies of the counter-culture: the Establishment and the System. Yet, Whissen claims, that like his admirers, Yossarian found it impossible to live within the Establishment, even to reform it, because he felt, as his admirers had at the time, that it “tended to treat human beings as mechanisms, to value conformity above creativity, to regard people’s files as far more important than the people themselves, and to indulge in official lying as a matter of policy”⁵⁹. Although I agree with Whissen to large extent, I do not believe that the Hippie movement were as inert, or as immobilised as Yossarian’s self-defeatism had made him. On the contrary, the whole purpose behind the Hippie movement was to create holistic remedies which would drastically humanise the System, and determinedly reform the Establishment. When the Hippies failed, and later became the Establishment – that is when they became as self-defeated as Yossarian. When they mutated into Yossarian Yuppies, in fact.

The Failure of the Hippie Generation

LSD, yeah, the big parade – everybody’s doin’ it now. Take LSD, then you are a poet, an intellectual. What a sick mob. I am building a machine gun in my closet now to take out as many of them as I can before they can get me

Charles Bukowski⁶⁰.

Along with the Pulp writer Charles Bukowski, Jack Kerouac – the King of the Beats – did not like psychedelic drugs, and he did not like Hippies. In his biography of Kerouac, Barry Miles describes how Allen Ginsberg and Dr. Timothy Leary convinced him to try the drug Psilocybin. Leary explained that “although he had taken trips with more than a hundred people, he had never seen anyone try to control the experience as Keroauc had done, and he confessed he was propelled into his first negative trip”. What the experiment revealed, Miles argues was that Kerouac was an “old style Bohemian without a Hippie bone in his body”⁶¹. Further evidence of this fact is born out, where Miles points out that although Kerouac had described his vision for a future Utopia in *The Dharma Bums*, which he had written in 1958, as “being a great rucksack revolution, with thousands or even millions of young Americans wandering around with rucksacks, going up to mountains to prey, all of ‘em Zen Lunatics who go about writing poems that happen in their heads for no reason”⁶². According to Miles, Keroauc’s actual politics

were as far right wing as possible just short of joining the American Fascist Party, and what was worse, he had been a staunch supporter of Senator Joe McCarthy since 1954⁶³. Therefore, we can safely surmise, that he did not like Hippies. Miles asserts that this feeling was reciprocal. The counterculture, he explains, considered Kerouac to be an “anti-Hippie, anti-Communist, pro-Vietnam war, alcoholic redneck”. However, all politics aside, I think that the disappointment Jack Kerouac felt towards the rucksack generation he had received, over his ideal, was inspired directly by their use of psychedelic drugs more than any other factor. Kerouac’s vision, was for a generation genuinely seeking spiritual satori, in order to raise the karmic tone of America as a nation. Therefore, Kerouac would have considered the Hippies to have copped-out, by opting for the soft-option of the instant-Nirvana of LSD. For him, even Zen Lunatics were required to work towards their own salvation – and that of the United States.

This view is supported to a certain extent by the one person, who it might be said, could be considered to be the most successful liaison between the Beat Zen Lunatics, and the Hippie drug psychedelia of the era: Allen Ginsberg. In an interview with Steve Turner, Ginsberg attempted to locate the Beat position. He said for the core of the Beats, “spirituality was our primary thing because we had all had some kind of visionary experience that pushed us out of the notion of art as just some career or commerce. We suddenly realised that actually art did influence people, that it had consequences and could clarify consciousness, could bring one to other modes of awareness. Realising that opened up a whole world of possibility”⁶⁴. However, although few of the psychedelic Hippies would have admitted it at the time, one of the possibilities opened by drugs, would have been the possibility of destruction. In her candid recollections of the era, Camille Paglia makes similar observations. She admits, “although it was true that experimentation during the Sixties may have revolutionised

consciousness, the road by which the Hippie generation sought the palace of wisdom, also led to the excess by which many lost their minds, lives, or careers through drugs, sexual orgy, or constant challenges to authority”. Therefore, for all those for who psychedelia was a profound reordering of Western perception, there were also those casualties of the drug culture, “who blew their brains out on acid”. This is why Pagila argues, that “everyone who honestly explored the Sixties ideals, would have to eventually confront the limitations of those ideals”⁶⁵. To be fair to Jack Kerouac (despite his red-neck views), I consider that from his own experience as a Beat, experimenting with various kinds of substance abuse, and alternative lifestyles, he was clearly ahead of the game: and this is why he was so reluctant to bequeath⁶⁶ his approval to the Hippie movement as his heirs and successors.

Forget LSD, I thought. Look what it’s done to *that* poor bastard

Hunter S. Thompson⁶⁷.

Hunter S. Thompson could well be referring to Jack Kerouac in his quote, because as a self-professed adherent of the psychedelic lifestyle (still!), and a chronicler of its excesses (along with it his own legendary consumption), he believed quite resolutely in the Hippie ideal of the new guard replacing the old. And yet, in his novel *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas: a Savage Journey to the Heart of the American Dream*, which was written in 1971, Thompson could well be reflecting, retrospectively, on the amount of drug casualties drifting around after the fall-out of the psychedelic era. Had it been worth it, he asks himself? Replying that maybe it *meant something*. Maybe not, in the long run. He adds, “no explanation, no mix of words or music or memories could touch

that sense of knowing that you were there and alive in that corner of time and the world.” However, whatever this meant, there was a “fantastic universal sense that whatever we were doing was *right*, that we were winning. We had all the momentum; we were riding the crest of a high and beautiful wave”. And yet, why “less than five years later, you can go up on a steep hill in Las Vegas and look West, and with the right kind of eyes you can almost *see* the high-water mark – that place where the wave finally broke and rolled back”⁶⁸. Camille Paglia, on the other hand, is not so prosaic. She maintains the sixties was an “attempted return to nature that ended in disaster. The gentle nude bathing and playful sliding in the mud at Woodstock”, Paglia argues, was a “short-lived Rousseauist dream”. Although, she also claims that inspired by the “Dionysian titanism of rock, her generation had attempted something more radical than anything since the French Revolution”. That was in “questioning the validity of every law, and acting on every sexual impulse”. However, she concedes that the result of such “anarchy, was a descent into barbarism”, and they soon “painfully discovered that a just society cannot, in fact, function if everyone does their own thing”⁶⁹.

Paglia’s revelations are supported by Thomas R. Whissen. He argues that the Hippies of the sixties fancied themselves as “throwbacks to the pure Romanticism of Rousseau, and his back to nature principles. Long hair, communal living, naked romps in the forests, folk singing – all were attempts to shake off the cheap veneer of modern life and get back to basics”. In order to prove the self-delusional quality of this impulse, Whissen refers us to the views expressed by Robert M. Pirsig in his philosophical enquiry of the period, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, which was published in 1974. According to Whissen, Pirsig concludes that the adoption of such an attitude, “was not a road to freedom at all, rather it was just as restrictive as trying to dance on one foot only”. Therefore, unlike Hunter S. Thompson’s veneration of the Hippie ideals, Pirsig’s goal was to propose a reconciliation between Romanticism and

Classicism. This he believed could only be achieved by “awakening in the Romantics, who thrived on chaos and abandon, an appreciation of the classical notion of structure and discipline”. Whissen maintains that “Pirsig wanted both sides to see that Romantic aesthetics and Classical principles shared the same coin, each side containing the key to the other”⁷⁰. For instance, in Pirsig’s novel, the narrator ponders an encounter with a couple of Romantic-type fellow motorcyclists (Hippies), who disclaim that there is no escaping from ‘it’ – meaning the System. However, after his initial puzzlement, the narrator finally deduces that ‘it’ was mainly, if not entirely, “technology”⁷¹. What Pirsig recognised, along with Alvin Toffler, was that the Hippies attempt to deny change by fleeing from technology was a flight doomed from the outset. He rationalised that, if they wanted to affect change in the Establishment, it could not be done so from outside. Therefore, for Pirsig, you have to be part of the System, to be in a position to alter it successfully. As he asserts: “the place to improve the world is first in one’s own heart and head and hands, then work outward from there”⁷².

Another person who was making the same connections between Romantic impulse and the importance of technology, who pre-dated both Robert M. Pirsig and Alvin Toffler, was the Canadian theorist Marshall McLuhan. McLuhan asserted his devotion to Romantic poetry was closely related to his concerns with the effects of the media in our personal and political lives, insisting that “the *effects* of the new media on our sensory lives were similar to the effects of new poetry. That is, that they changed not only our thoughts, but the structure of our world”⁷³. In this sense, for example, it would probably be safe to assume that McLuhan would have concurred with Camille Paglia’s credo that “where rock goes, democracy follows”⁷⁴. That is, along with Paglia, McLuhan determined that the “new media were not just mechanical gimmicks for creating worlds of illusion, but new languages with new and unique powers of

expression". He pointed out that, in the past the printing press had "changed not only the quality of writing, but the character of language and the relationship between the author and the public". Whereas radio, film, and TV were pushing written English, he insisted, "towards the spontaneous shifts and freedom of the spoken idiom by recovering the intense awareness of facial language and bodily gesture". Furthermore, he maintains, that although it is implied "by the phrases 'mass media', or 'mass entertainment' that the value of the experience of the book is diminished by being extended to many minds – such as a television show which reaches 50 million viewers simultaneously". McLuhan concluded that these phrases were useless, because they obscured the fact that "English as a language is itself a mass medium"⁷⁵. Camille Paglia supports McLuhan's stance. From a contemporary standpoint, she maintains that "pop culture *is* mass culture", that people live their "lives in it and through it, while television vividly speaks their thoughts and dreams"⁷⁶.

This is what the psychedelic Rousseauian Hippies sitting beside the lake in their tepee missed. That is, their attempted flight from technology could never conceivably put them *outside* of the Establishment, or the System because, as Toffler warned us, for contemporary mass culture there is "no possible escape from the tyranny of technological change". That therefore, even the *alternative* form of lifestyle the Hippies had chosen to escape with, was just one of "many commercially-produced lifestyles which had already been predicated in pop culture" (the Beats meet Aldous Huxley's *The Doors of Perception*), and tailor-made for their generation. This observation was reinforced by Marshall McLuhan, who had insisted at the time, that if the mass media "should serve only to weaken or corrupt previously achieved levels of verbal and pictorial culture, it would not be because there is anything wrong with them". Rather, it would be because "we had failed to master them as new languages in time to assimilate them into our total cultural heritage"⁷⁷. However, further evidence that the Hippie

movement had failed to recognise itself as complicity part of mass media, rather than being separate from it, is highlighted by the fact that the relics of the failed Rousseauian dream are now available for rent at any video-shop for three dollars per week. And yet, along with *Woodstock*, which documents three halcyon days at the pinnacle of the Hippie peace and love era, it must be remembered that there is also the cataclysmic nadir of *Gimme Shelter*, the Rolling Stone's documentary of the chaos, and violence at their free concert at Altamont speedway, at the very end of the decade – December, 1969.

For Camille Paglia, Altamont was the psychedelic generation's "Waterloo". She proclaims the events of that particular day – "when the Hell's Angels beat people with pool cues, while the Rolling Stones presided over a murder before the stage", where the "Dionysian forces released by the Sixties showed their ugly face". Due to the severity of the carnage and tragedy of Altamont, Paglia also claims it marked the "end of the Sixties illusions about the benevolence of human nature and mother nature"⁷⁸. Therefore, it would seem fair to assert for Paglia, that Altamont would be the equivalent of Hunter S. Thompson's high-water mark where the wave crashes and rolls back. Unless, of course, they were both looking at the same dark spot on the horizon. Paglia, herself concludes that the sixties revolution "collapsed because of its own excesses", attesting that it had followed and fulfilled its own inner historical pattern, "a fall from Romanticism" (as Pirsig and McLuhan would have agreed) "into Decadence" (as Kerouac had warned). From out of which, she confesses, that the "pagan promiscuity of the Sixties – meant that everyone who had preached free love, was ultimately responsible for AIDS"⁷⁹.

However, although I consider the Hippie movement to be a greater failure than that of the Beat generation of the fifties, I happen to agree with Steve Turner who points out, that "the blame for social decay can be attributed just as easily to the latter". Turner

maintains Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg saw themselves as “liberating Americans from soulless uniformity⁸⁰ – by generating an interest in mysticism, ecology, indigenous cultures, freedom of expression, altered states of consciousness and alternative sexual lifestyles”. The critics of the Beat movement, however, regard what they did “as the start of the rot which led ultimately to crack, AIDS, sexual promiscuity, family breakdown, religious cults, rising crime, pornography, and disrespect for authority”⁸¹. And yet, before I would begin attributing blame for the decay of contemporary society to either the Beats, or the Hippies – I think it is important to remember, that as Alvin Toffler and Bob Dylan warned us, these changes were inevitable, and as we are witnessing, the consequences of any such times are still in themselves changing.

The purpose of this postscript could be seen either as an apology, or possibly even as a disclaimer. Or both. The fact is, I had promised at the beginning of this chapter that I was going to provide a chronological overview of the ideological impact of Pulp from the fifties through the sixties, and continue this format up to the new millennium. However, I am afraid this is not going to happen now, I have run out of space. Having said this, I do not consider this to be a grave mistake. The issues which we have covered in the ideological discussion of the fifties and sixties tend to encapsulate those for the following decades. Pulp continued to do the same job, for the same marginalised people. And its primary theme of freedom from oppression remained constant, and vigilant, in all of the new emerging technologies, and forms of media.

Of course, I do not intend to leave the reader completely empty-handed.

Here is a short overview of the last thirty years of Pulp.

From the Seventies to the Resurrection of *The Thin Man's* Erection

In an effort to prove how *un-unusual* the past thirty years have actually been I shall refer to a forward projection made by Alvin Toffler in his book *Future Shock*, which was written in 1970. Toffler predicted, on the strength of his observations of the effects of accelerated change on the sixties, that in the three short decades from the seventies to the twenty-first century, “millions of ordinary, psychologically normal people, many of whom would be citizens of the richest and most technically advanced nations, would find it increasingly painful to keep up with the incessant demand for change that characterises our time”. (These are the people, I would suggest, who blamed the Beats and the Hippies for starting the sociological rot). Toffler also postulated that “as this change swept through the highly industrialised countries it would spawn in its wake all sorts of curious social flora: from psychedelic churches and free universities to science cities in the Arctic and wife-swapping clubs in California”. (What is important here, is not only does Toffler indicate these changes were already on their way, but does so without attempting to attribute any blame for the rise of sexual promiscuity, or any religious cults to either the Beats or the Hippies). Toffler’s projection also suggested that this thirty year period would breed odd personalities, “children who at twelve are no longer childlike, adults who at fifty are children of twelve, rich men who play-act poverty, married priests, atheist ministers and Jewish Zen Buddhists” (such as the singer/songwriter/poet: Leonard Cohen). He also pointed towards “the rise of Playboy Clubs and homosexual movie theatres, and a widespread increase in the use of amphetamines and tranquillisers in order to cope with the mood of anger, and much oblivion produced by such monumental change”⁸². However, I suspect that many of these symptoms were already well established prior to the sixties. Yet, this is not to imply that they are not relevant to the period from the seventies to today. They most certainly are. In fact, the lyrics of one of Leonard Cohen’s songs would seem to aptly illustrate the anger, and much oblivion prescribed by Toffler for the era:

Everybody knows that the dice are loaded.
Everybody rolls with their fingers crossed.
Everybody knows the war is over.
Everybody knows the good guys lost.
Everybody knows the fight was fixed:
The poor stay poor, the rich get rich.
That's how it goes – everybody knows.
Everybody knows the boat is leaking.
Everybody knows the captain lied.
Everybody got this broken feeling
Like their father or their dog just died

*Everybody Knows*⁸³.

The people who fit Alvin Toffler's description, or inhabit Leonard Cohen's demographic for his song are, to a large extent, the dispossessed, or those who at least feel they have been dispossessed in some way. This might be through no fault of their own. They could be the victims of economic rationalism, or they could simply be, as Toffler points out, unable to cope with the accelerated change in the Global Village. Yet, it is these kinds of marginalised people, who are likely to be the readers, and the authors of contemporary Pulp literature. And while it is true that some of them might write under the influence of amphetamines, such as science fiction author Philip K. Dick⁸⁴, who is reputed by his biographer Lawrence Sutin, to have written eleven novels, eleven short stories, two essays, and two extended plot treatments in a single year with

the aid of the drug⁸⁵. Or more famously, Jack Kerouac, who according to Barry Miles managed to write his masterpiece *On the Road* on continuous 20 foot rolls of teletype paper, in a single amphetamine-induced fervour over a four week period⁸⁶. However, as further proof that Kerouac was in tune with Cohen and Toffler, Miles reports that the original first sentence of the manuscript read, “I first met (sic) Neal not long after my father died . . . I had just gotten over a serious illness that I won’t bother to talk about except that it really had something to do with my father’s death and my awful feeling that everything was dead”⁸⁷. Of course, not all these writers are as talented as Dick, and Kerouac. In fact, many others read as if they had written their books while taking tranquillisers. And yet, this does not matter. The point is that Pulp provides a medium within which these marginalised writers can be represented. For better or worse . . . in sickness or in health, so to speak.

This view is supported by Andrew Calcutt and Richard Shephard. In their definition of the role of Cult Fiction, they assert its primary function is to “represent the socially marginalised”, which they argue is “essentially anyone who is not towing the line and has to pull against social norms in order to force themselves into being”. Their list of people who exhibit transgressive behaviour toward the mainstream of society includes those who might be perceived as “sexual deviants (gay, lesbian, S&M, fetishists), gamblers, hustlers, grifters, drug users, drug dealers, political radicals, philosophical radicals, drifters, hobos, hippies, punks, new agers, prisoners, black and ethnic minorities, pornographers, prostitutes, pimps, alcoholics, fighters, gangs, criminals, the immoral, the amoral, killers, psychopaths, occultists, religious extremists, anarchists, bohemians, the insane, and cynics”. Or to use a broader brush-stroke, “members of any other subculture who have *chosen* their lifestyle for its outsider qualities or otherness”⁸⁸. Therefore, for Calcutt and Shephard, the determining characteristic for this form of writing is its deviation from the norm. However, they also argue that

although this deviant behaviour can be anything that is seen as “socially undesirable or unacceptable which unites a hidden community in recognition of a truth, this message could be presented in forms that vary from the benign (such as an unhealthy obsession with record collecting) to the more extreme (as in your average satanic murder rituals)”. In fact, they add, that this deviance may “need not involve any action at all and can be transgressive in thought alone, as long as the book dislocates its protagonist(s) and its readers from the generally accepted world view of society at large”⁸⁹. This is also true for Pulp Literature, as I will discuss in greater detail in the next chapter.

What I have attempted to demonstrate here, briefly, is that Pulp’s role did not die along with the icons of the sixties: Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin, Jim Morrison, Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, or John F. Kennedy. In fact, I consider that its ideological function, as the translator of its primary theme of freedom from oppression has increased in importance, and value. That due its continual engagement with, and appropriation of, the most advanced technologies, the Pulp message has become inextricably and intertextually entwined with these new media to the extent that the medium and the message are now totally inseparable. This can be seen as evident in today’s economic climate of conspicuous consumption, where all these different versions of the Pulp media tend to spontaneously erupt together. The successful novel, or movie, or comic, or play, or television series, will spin-off to become a successful soundtrack CD, or Playstation game, or T Shirt, or fashion craze, or radio programme, or pop group, or game show, or web site. Or in the reverse order. Or all of the above. Whichever? However, my point is that where these media go – the message – like ‘The Force’ – goes with them.

A good example of this, is in Alvin Toffler’s discussion of the potential subversiveness of the media, in his last book *Powershift*, which was written in 1990.

Toffler reports that the overthrow of many of the Communist regimes across Eastern Europe, had prompted the *Financial Times* to exult that “the medium which George Orwell saw as the tool of enslavement has proved the liberator; not even Ceausescu could blindfold his people”. The medium, which they are referring to is television, and its misuse in order to manipulate and control the population of a totalitarian regime, refers to Orwell’s dystopic novel *1984*. However, Toffler points out, by “overfocussing on television, many observers have missed the larger story”. He argues, “it is not just television that is revolutionary, but the combined *interplay* of many different technologies”. He makes the valuable observation, that “millions of computers, fax machines, printers and copy machines, VCRs, videocassettes, advanced telephone, along with cable and satellite technologies, that now interact with one another and cannot be understood in isolation”. This is why, he says, the “role of television is not as important as it has been implied”. It is simply only a “part of this much larger system, which links up at points with the intelligent electronic networks that business and finance use to exchange computerised data”. Therefore, he insists, it is this “new over-arching media system, which is both a cause of and a reaction to, the rise of the new, knowledge-based economy, that represents a quantum leap in the way the human race uses symbols and images”. Furthermore, he adds, that in this system, “no part of this vast web is entirely cut off from the rest”. And that is, Toffler argues, “what makes it potentially subversive – not just for the remaining Ceausescus of the world but for all power-holders”. The new media system itself, he says, is a “powershift accelerator”⁹⁰.

This is why I consider that if there is one area which separates the not too distant past from today, it is our seemingly heightened appreciation of the interconnectedness between the texts of our lives and those from different technological mediums. Although I realise that the concept of multi-media as an art form, and our relationship to

it has been around for some time, I believe it is only recently that we have come to understand, and accept how our interactions with these various kinds of media form a large part of our consciousness. That we have evolved web-mentalities. In a sense, Thomas J. Roberts would appear to agree with this view. He maintains in his discussion of Junk television, that “viewers today cannot watch a rerun of a show in which Ronald Regan played a part without being aware that they are watching someone who was later to become president of the United States’. Furthermore, he asserts, that “although we think of the shows themselves as forgettable, some are not forgotten. Their names evoke for viewers histories and qualities and fond memories: *Star Trek*, *Mission Impossible*; *Gilligan’s Island*, etc.”⁹¹. To this list I would add *Batman*, *Hogan’s Heroes*, *I Dream of Jeanie*, *The Munsters*, *The Addams Family*, *Skippy*, *The Monkees*, *Bewitched*, *The Flintstones*, and *The Jetsons*. However, on a more serious note, Robert’s comments support my earlier conviction regarding my inability to disengage my sixties consciousness long enough to observe the fifties from an unbiased, paisley-free perspective. In fact he reinforces my own prognosis, which is that this is never likely going to happen. And yet this point begins to sound all the more ironic, when we consider that at the end of her essay on the subject, Camille Paglia proudly announces that “the children of the Sixties have returned”⁹². While I have to admit, for myself, of never being aware that we had been away.

It is for this reason that I would like to conclude this chapter by presenting further evidence, of what I believe to be our inescapability from the ideology of Pulp, and its intertextual influence on other forms. In particular, the example I wish to refer to, concerns the resurrection of the *Thin Man*’s erection.

In his dissertation on the aesthetics of Junk fiction, which was published in 1990, Thomas J. Roberts refers to an exchange of dialogue that was censored from Dashiell Hammett’s novel *The Thin Man*, which was published some fifty years earlier in 1932.

The conversation was between a married couple, Nick and Nora Charles, who were private detectives discussing the completion of their latest case. It went like this:

“Tell me something, Nick. Tell me the truth: when you were wrestling with Mimi, didn’t you have an erection?”

“Oh, a little.”

She laughed and got up from the floor. “If you aren’t a disgusting old lecher,” she said.

“Look it’s daylight.”⁹³

Robert’s maintains that contemporary readers “would hardly notice such an exchange, other than to note that it indicated that the relationship between the husband and wife was easy and comfortable”. And yet he reports that even in the 1940s, readers of *The Thin Man* were finding Hammett’s “reference to an erection remarkable, and possibly unique for detective fiction”. For these readers, according to Robert’s, “the words would have seemed to have been shouted from the page. Although not because they were outraged, but because the use of the word was an announcement that the tough-guy detective story would now speak frankly and easily about sexuality”. Finally, he maintains, these readers would come to expect that the “coyness, the suppression of sexual motive and act would now pass away. And they could expect the next detective story they read to go through that newly opened door into new areas of human motivation and behaviour”. However, as Robert’s rues, this was not to be. It was a false dawn. The next generation of stories, he reports, “did not go through the door Dashiell Hammett had opened because the editors had already chosen to close it by suppressing the exchange from later editions”. In fact, Roberts points out that it would not be for “some fifteen years after this that sexuality would be reintroduced into the paperback

novel, albeit with great promise, but underlying timidity in Wade Miller's 1950 thriller *Devil May Care*". And it would be a further ten years after that "before writers and their editors would go beyond the early shock value of sexual references, to get to the point Hammett had already reached twenty-five years earlier". Regretfully, Roberts argues that *The Thin Man*, "ended up like a minor character who makes a shrewd suggestion that everyone ignores"⁹⁴.

So I note with some considerable pleasure, that shortly after reading Thomas J. Robert's account of the censorship of the *Thin Man*'s erection, I witnessed its resurrection through into the intertextualities of popular culture. No longer is *The Thin Man*'s suggestion of sexuality to be ignored. But rather it has been reclaimed, uncensored, and reinserted into the contemporary Pulp consciousness. However in its transition from the 1930s to the 1990s, the exchange has acquired some intertextual alterations. It has shifted genre. It has shifted gender. It has shifted time and location. It has shifted media. And it has gained a moral and religious dimension. But most importantly, its central ideological message concerning freedom of speech, and frankness of sexuality remains intact. The exchange, I am referring to, which I prefer to think of as a *homage* to Dashiell Hammett, and an understanding of his plight, occurs in the final scene of *John Carpenter's Vampires*⁹⁵. In the scene, a young Catholic priest, and the head vampire slayer, Jack Crow (played by James Woods), have just completed their mission in destroying a nest of vampires. As they walk away from the destruction, Jack Crow begins this exchange with the novice priest who had never killed vampires before. This is how it goes:

Crow: "Let me ask you a question? When you were stabbing that vampire in there".

Padre: "Yeah?"

Crow: "Did you get a little wood?"

Padre: "Mahogany."

Crow: "Excuse me?"

Padre: "Ebony."

Crow: "What?"

Padre: "Teak."

Crow: "Are you possessed by demons?"

Padre: "Major chubby."

Crow: "Language, Padre. Language."

REFERENCES

¹ *The Sixties: the decade remembered now by the people who lived it then*. Edited by Lynda Rosen Obst and designed by Robert Kingsbury. New York: a Random House/Rolling Stone Press Book, 1977:108.

² *The Pulps: Fifty Years of American Pop Culture*. Compiled and edited by Tony Goodstone. New York: Bonanza Books, 1970:viii.

³ *Classic Cult Fiction: a Companion to Popular Cult Literature*. New York/Westport, Connecticut/London:Greenwood Press, 1992:xxxviii.

⁴ The earlier citation comes from a longer quote indicated Babin concurred with this position. Babin explains: "Groups of students began doing different things. Some students sang choruses of 'Glory, glory, hallelujah.'" Others cheered "Hip! Hip! Hooray!" Everyone was happy, laughing putting their arms around each other, slapping each other on the back. It really seemed like a joyous occasion. The teachers who were standing by their classroom doors did nothing to stop the celebration. They only smiled at our antics" (*The Sixties*:108).

⁵ *Ibid.*, pxii,

⁶ *Ibid.*, pxxxviii.

⁷ "Introduction: Popular Fiction: Ideology or Utopia?" *Popular Fiction and Social Change*. Edited by Christopher Pawling. London:MacMillan, 1984:4.

⁸ *Cult Fiction: Popular Reading and Pulp Theory*. London:MacMillan, 1996:44.

⁹ J. G. Ballard on How Crime Stimulates Creativity:

Ballard, whose novel *The Atrocity Exhibition* deals extensively with this question, particularly

in relation to the impact of the death of John F. Kennedy on the collective unconscious of human society, very much agrees with sentiments expressed by Marx.

“The formula works. He stumbled on the first and last truth about the leisure society, and perhaps all societies. Crime and creativity go together, and always have done. The greater the sense of crime, the greater the civic awareness and richer the civilization. Nothing else binds a community together. It's a strange paradox” (281).

“Crime has a respectable history – Shakespeare's London, Medici Florence. Warrens of murder, poisons and garrotting. Name me a time when civic pride and the arts both flourished and there wasn't extensive crime . . . “People are like children, they need constant stimulations. Without that the whole thing runs down. Only crime, or something close to crime, seems to stir them. They realize that they need each other, that together they're more than the sum of their parts. There has to be that constant personal threat” (260). *The Atrocity Exhibition*. Flamingo, London (1967) 1993.

¹⁰ *Theories of Surplus Value*, Part 1., cited Woody Haut, 1995:100.

¹¹ Lee Server on *Red Harvest*:

Server says that *Red Harvest* “contains writing as spare and clear as any in the history of American fiction”.

The plot concerns a mining town which is completely run by criminals, and he cites this passage from the novel:

“*The strike lasted eight months. Both sides bled plenty. The wobblies had to do their own bleeding. Old Elihu hired gunmen, strike-breakers, national guardsmen and even parts of the regular army, to do his. When the last skull had been cracked, the last rib kicked in, organized labor in Personville was a used firecracker*” (*Danger is my Business: an Illustrated History of the Fabulous Pulp Magazines: 1896-1953*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1993:67).

¹² Diane Johnson: Hammett & The Continental Op:

“On October 1, 1923, the first Op stories was published in Black Mask, and people took to “the little man going forward day after day through mud and blood and death and deceit – as callous and brutal and cynical as necessary – towards a dim goal, with nothing to push or pull him towards it except he’s been hired to reach it.” Hammett understood the Op very well. He wrote about him in twenty-six stories and short novels and in two novels.

In them the fat little detective finds nothing to surprise him. There are crooks, and then there are upper-class people who are more sinister – their interest in power and money will make them do anything. And there are foreigners who are as bad. The women are never as nice as they look, but deeply unprincipled, with the morals of cats” (*Dashiell Hammett: a Life*. New York: Random House, 1983:48).

¹³ *Ibid.*, pxix.

¹⁴ *Pulp Culture: Hardboiled Fiction and the Cold War*. London: MacMillan, 1995:210.

¹⁵ *This Fabulous Century*. By the Editors of *Time-Life Books*. Alexandria: Time-Life Inc., 1970: 116-7.

¹⁶ Haut:15.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p63.

¹⁸ Diane Johnson: In Prison, Dashiell Hammett Rereads Marx and *Dracula*:

“There was a lot of time for reading . . . He reread Marx and also *Dracula* (“fine and scary – though the garlic always brought in a touch of comedy for me. . . it’s pretty difficult to make horror last throughout a whole book, which is why most shock stuff has been either short story or novelette length” (*Dashiell Hammett: a Life*, 189).

I wonder if Hammett made any connections between the two (i.e., see below)?

Ken Gelder Explains How Franco Moretti did:

He reports that, in his book *Signs Taken for Wonders* (1988): “Moretti boldly begins his account by discarding the conventional but ultimately erroneous representation of *Dracula* as a ‘noble’ (albeit degenerate) aristocrat. For one thing, he has no servants. Drawing on Marx's striking observation in *Capital* – ‘Capital is dead labour which, vampire-like, lives only by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks’ (cited Moretti, 92) – Moretti instead characterises *Dracula* as ‘a true monopolist: solitary and despotic, he will not brook competition’ (*Reading the Vampire*. London: Routledge, 1994:17-8).

Neil Young Makes the Connection in his Song 'Vampire Blues':

"I'm a vampire, baby.

Sucking blood from the earth

I'm a vampire, baby.

I'll sell you twenty dollars worth

I'm a black bat, baby

Hanging from your window pane

I'm a black bat, baby

I need my high octane". (From the album *On the Beach*. Warner Bros., 1974).

¹⁹ *Shadow Man: the Life of Dashiell Hammett*. New York and London:Harcourt Brace

Jovanovich, 1981:221-32.

²⁰ Ibid. pp1-3.

²¹ Ibid. p277.

²² Ibid. p235.

²³ *This Fabulous Century*:132.

²⁴ Ibid. p3-4.

²⁵ London:Pan, 1967:71.

²⁶ Haut:3-4.

²⁷ Ibid., p9.

²⁸ Ibid., p65.

²⁹ Ibid., p70.

³⁰ Ibid., pp9-10.

³¹ *Hollywood Cinema: an Introduction*. Oxford:Blackwell, 1996:375-6.

³² Cited Calcutt & Shephard, 1998:271.

³³ *Twentieth Century Pop Culture*. London:Carlton, 1999:40-1.

³⁴ Ibid., p32.

³⁵ Ibid., p38.

³⁶ Ibid., p376.

³⁷ London:Penguin, 1986:5.

³⁸ *Two-Bit Culture: the Paperbacking of America*. Boston:Houghton Mifflin Company, 1984: 245-6.

³⁹ "Cold war cinema" in *Films of the Fifties*. Edited by Ann Lloyd, Consultant editor David Robinson. London: Orbis, 1982:23.

⁴⁰ Robert Warshow's Criticism of Wertham's Diatribe:

John Springhall reports that not everyone agreed with Wertham's view, referring to an article published in June 1954, by the cultural and film critic Robert Warshow entitled "Paul, the Horror Comics, and Dr. Wertham". Springhall says that Warshow criticised Dr. Wertham's "extraordinary diatribe for being morally confused, intemperate and simple-minded". Warshow claims that Wertham's book was not written for the psychiatric community, but the general public. Pointing out that, "He had used inadequate sampling and the book had lacked a proper control group, consisting mostly of random, undocumented and unverifiable case histories about children who had supposedly been harmed by reading comic books. Wertham failed to substantiate that his case studies were in any way typical of all juvenile delinquents who read comics, or that delinquents who did not read 'horror comics' did not commit similar types of offences" (*Youth, Popular Culture and Moral Panics: Penny Gaffs to Gangsta-Rap 1830-1996*. Houndsmills: MacMillan, 1998, 124-5).

⁴¹ Lee Server on the Witch-hunt on the Pulp:

Server reports that as "would happen to comic books and Communists in the 1950s, the Terror pulps became the object of disaffection and witch-hunts by outraged moralists and political opportunists such as New York's Mayor La Guardia. Magazines were threatened with confiscation (*Danger is my Business*, 115)".

⁴² Ibid., p49.

⁴³ Ibid., p23.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p168.

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp168-9.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p49.

⁴⁷ See Kristeva's "Word, Dialogue and the Novel" or Bakhtin's "Discourse Typology in Prose".

⁴⁸ Ray Bradbury, from his Afterward which was written in 1979, for the 1981 edition of *Fahrenheit 451* (1953):

"The point is obvious. There is more than one way to burn a book. And the world is full of people running about with lit matches. Every minority, be it Baptist/Unitarian, Irish/Italian/Zen Buddhist, Zionist/Seventh-day Adventist, Women's Lib/Republican, Mattachine/Four Square Gospel feel it has the will, the right, the duty to douse the kerosene, light the fuse. Every dimwit editor who sees himself as the source of all dreary blanc-mange plain porridge unleavened literature, licks his guillotine and eyes the neck of any author who dares to speak above a whisper or write above a nursery rhyme (New York:Ballantine, 1981:182).

⁴⁹ "Canon Fodder". *HQ Magazine*, JAN/FEB, 1998:95.

⁵⁰ *All Dressed Up: the Sixties and the Counterculture*. London:Picco, 1999.ix.

⁵¹ Warner Bros., 1963.

⁵² *Future Shock*. London:Pan, 1973:25-39.

⁵³ Ibid., pp374-5.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p63.

⁵⁵ *Cited Beat Culture And The New America: 1950-1965*. Paris:Flammarion, 1995:19.

⁵⁶ *Future Shock*:268-70.

⁵⁷ *Sex, Art, and American Culture: Essays*. London:Viking, 1992:211-9.

⁵⁸ "Utopia and Fantasy in the Late 1960s: Burroughs, Moorcock, Tolkein" in *Popular Fiction and Social Change*. Edited by Christopher Pawling. London:MacMillan, 1984:192-3.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p56.

⁶⁰ Cited Harry Sounes, *Charles Bukowski: Locked in the Arms of a Crazy Life*. Edinburgh:Rebel Inc, 1998:83-84.

⁶¹ *Jack Kerouac: King of the Beats: a Portrait*. London:Virgin, 1999:324-35.

⁶² Ibid., 281.

I was a Dharma Bum . . . , & so was My Wife:

As further evidence of the impact of Pulp literature on its reader's lives, I will confess that in 1991, whilst heavily under the influence of Beat writers, my wife, my best friend Mark Helm, and myself; quit our day jobs, filled our backpacks with Kerouac, Burroughs, Ginsberg, Corso, Snyder, and Ferlinghetti . . . & went on the road for ourselves. In 18 months we travelled further than Kerouac had ever achieved in his own life time. We dragged our Dharma bums through Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand (to find *The Beach* before the book was even written), Nepal (to see Everest), India (for the Taj & Varanasi), United Arab Emirates, England, Spain (for Dali), Morocco (for Burroughs & Paul Bowles), France, Holland (for Van Gogh), Italy (to die in Venice), to Greece, and Turkey (for Istanbul).

⁶³ Ibid., p239.

⁶⁴ *Angelheaded Hipster*. London:Bloomsbury, 1997:23-4.

⁶⁵ Ibid., pp211-12.

⁶⁶ Steve Turner: Kerouac Burnt Out 1969:

"A decade later, when the hitchhikers were flooding into San Francisco and Kathmandu, and the Beatles were spreading the gospel of Krishna, Jack was an exhausted old man of forty-five who spent most of his time at home drinking beer and watching daytime television. He claimed to see no connection between his writings and the new generation which revered him as a Founding Father. In 1969, the year of his death, he wrote an article for the *Chicago Tribune Magazine* in which he attempted to answer the question, 'What does the author of *On the Road* and *The Subterraneans* think of the hippie, the drop-out, the protester, the alienated radical?'" (*Angelheaded Hipster*, 21).

⁶⁷ *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas: a Savage Journey to the Heart of the American Dream*. Frogmore:Paladin, 1977:64.

⁶⁸ Ibid., pp65-7.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p16.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p298.

⁷¹ London:Corgi, 1981:14-15.

⁷² Cited Whissen:298.

Whissen on Changing Yourself in Alter the World:

Whissen also refers to the popular Sixties author, Richard Brautigan (who wrote in 1961) that: "It mattered little how vocal you were or how dedicated to changing the world, the truth was that the only person you could ultimately reform was yourself" (278).

However the Dalai Lama Says that Education Enables Us to Effect Changes Within to Develop a Good Heart:

He explains: "The more sophisticated your level of education and knowledge about what leads to happiness and what causes suffering, the more effective you will be in achieving happiness. So, it is because of this that I think education and knowledge are crucial. Sensing, I suppose, my continued resistance to the idea of simple education as a means of internal transformation, he observed, "One problem with our current society is that we have an attitude towards education as if it is there to simply make you more clever, make you more ingenious. Sometimes it even seems as if those who are not highly educated, those who are less sophisticated, are more innocent and more honest. Even though our society does not emphasize this, the most important use of engaging in more wholesome actions and bringing about discipline within our minds. The proper utilization of our intelligence and knowledge is to effect changes from within to develop a good heart" (His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Howard C. Cutler, M. D. *The Art of Happiness: a Handbook for Living*. Hodder Books, Sydney, 2000: 50-1.

⁷³ Marshall McLuhan on the Effects of Television & Kennedy:

"The *effects* of new media on our sensory lives are similar to the effects of new poetry. They change not our thoughts but the structure of our world.

All this is merely to say that my juvenile devotion to Romantic poetry is closely related to my present concerns with the effects of the media in our personal and political lives.

Must we continue to mow down the Kennedys in order to illustrate that the hot politics of the old machines won't work on the cool and involving TV medium?" (*The Interior Landscape: The Literary Criticism of Marshall McLuhan 1943-1962*. Edited by Eugene McNamara. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1969:xiv).

⁷⁴ Ibid., p19.

⁷⁵ *McLuhan: Hot & Cool: a Primer for the Understanding of and a Critical Symposium with a Rebuttal by McLuhan*. Edited by Gerald Emanuel Stern. Toronto:New American Library of Canada, 1969:121-2.

⁷⁶ Ibid.,p245.

⁷⁷ 1969:121-2.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 212.

⁷⁹ Ibid.,p216

⁸⁰ Glenn O'Brien on the Pain of Missing Out on Beatdom:

O'Brien states: "My generation didn't go on the road. There was no road left to go on, only the interstate which seems to describe how we often feel, suspended between modes of being, rebels without a context. The interstate is the road, made all the same. No fifty states of being. Just McDonalds or Burger King. Coke or Pepsi. The cream of the crop got homogenized. Skim milk of human kindness. We're living off the fat free of the land. Born with plastic spoons in our mouth.

The Beats are still our heroes, but we live in a gone world and look back on the adventures of the Beats as a saga, great legendary adventures from a real gone world. Neal Cassady = Gilgamesh. We read their books, of which they are the heroes, and we wonder what's a hero to do and we ask what's new and there's no answer, just a busy signal.

Most of the Beats are gone, real gone. Their work survives them. Their work animates them "safe in heaven dead." But how do you do that kind of work today? What is the essence of Beat? How does Beatness work?

Beatness once worked in opposition to hell-bent consumer culture. Beatness was a holy backwater, an underground of secret society where secrets were sayable but unsayable. But today the underground has been institutionalized and marketed by titanic corporations. There is no underground. There is just bargain basement bohemia funded by advertising and the

Department of Defence". Cited in *Beat Culture And The New America: 1950-1965*. Paris: Flammarion:178-9.

⁸¹ Ibid., p24.

⁸² Ibid., p19.

⁸³ *Everybody Knows*. Stranger Music, Inc. and WB Music Corp, 1987.

⁸⁴ Lawrence Sutin Highlights Philip K. Dick's Amphetamine Intake:

Extract from a letter, 1964.

"Well, I have an East Oakland care quotation, which is the brochure from the pills I've been taking for seven years (or is it nine? My mind seems oddly fuzzy, somehow), semoxydrine hydrochloride, which I now learn is methamphetamine hydrochloride (i.e. another name for methedrine), because, see, this last refill time – I am up to six 7.5 mg of them a day, and 7.5 is their strongest dose – the druggist forgot to snatch loose the accompanying brochure, so after all these years I got to read about the side-effects, etc. of the pill. One sentence under the subtitle HUMAN TOXICITY particularly made my decade. It reads like this, gang: Overdoses, may in addition, cause hallucinations, delirium, peripheral vascular collapse and death. (Eek, gak, wach, fug, gugh, whuh!)". *Divine Invasions: a Life of Philip K. Dick*. London:Paladin, 1991.119.

⁸⁵ Philip K. Dick died of heart failure March 2, 1982, aged 53 (Sutin, 119).

⁸⁶ Barry Miles Describes Jack Kerouac Writing *On the Road* :

"He began work early in April 1951, working continuously, often with little sleep, and by 9 April he had already written 34,000 words. He typed furiously, fuelled by Benzedrine, soaking his white T-shirts with sweat. Periodically he would peel one off and wring it out, replacing it with a fresh one . . . By 20 April, *On the Road* was almost finished with over 86,000 words on the 120-foot roll, consisting of one long text with little punctuation except for a couple lines' break when a new session began"(176).

Lee Server on the 'Automatic' Writing Speeds of the Early Pulp Writers:

Server argues, that "Long before Kerouac, the pulpsters had, by necessity, invented their own form of automatic writing. "Up in the morning and hit the typewriter," says pulp veteran Richard Sale of his work routine in those days. "I wrote a story a day. Three thousand words, five thousand words. Some times it carried over to the next days if you were doing novelettes – that would be 12,000 words. You might spend some more time for the top magazines – *Arogosy, Adventure, Blue Book* – but for the others you really rattled them off. First draft was the last draft, straight out of the typewriter and send it off. You had to keep them coming all the time . . . otherwise you'd starve" . . . "The top pulp writers churned out 500,000 and one million words per year; year after year, a prodigious feat of *typing* let alone original, coherent storytelling" (*Danger is my Business*,11).

⁸⁷ Ibid., p176.

⁸⁸ *Cult Fiction: a Reader's Guide*. London:Prion Books, 1998:xi.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p x.

⁹⁰ *Powershift: Knowledge, Wealth and Violence at the edge of the 21st Century*. London: Bantam, 1991:342.

⁹¹ *An Aesthetics of Junk Fiction*. Athens:University of Georgia Press, 1990:245.

⁹² Ibid., p247.

⁹³ Cited Thomas J. Roberts, 1990:151-2.

⁹⁴ Ibid., pp151-2.

⁹⁵ Largo Entertainment Inc., 1998. Based on a novel called *Vampires* by John Streakley; Screenplay by Don Jakoby.

CHAPTER 6.

Questions of Questionable Quality: The Problems of Evaluation

What greater prestige can a man like me (not too greatly gifted, but very understanding) have than to have taken a cheap, shoddy, and utterly lost kind of writing, and have made of it something that intellectuals claw each other about

Raymond Chandler (January 15th, 1945)¹.

Questions of Questionable Quality

What Raymond Chandler, was referring to here, is a form of alchemy. Taking the ‘cheap and shoddy’ base materials of an ‘utterly lost kind of writing’, and transmuting it, miraculously, from Pulp, into ‘something that intellectuals claw each other about’ – literature of quality. What Chandler was proposing, was that it was up to his fellow American writers (as the English writers had opted for the bourgeois middle-class drawing-room style of complicated plots and puzzles) to strive to reach the standard of quality in the style of gritty realism, that Dashiell Hammett had already achieved. Chandler knew that it was only by dogging in Hammett’s footsteps, that the new writers, himself included, were ever going to accomplish the alchemic goal Hammett himself had set for the detective genre. That is, as Hammett stated: ‘some day somebody’s going to make “literature” of it’². Both of these writers, I would suggest, have achieved this aesthetic milestone. And yet, if one were forced to choose one author over the other, I might have to admit to harbouring a predilection for the rich poetry of Chandler’s prose over that of Hammett’s sharply-honed realism. However, these statements assume, for one; that it is possible to identify, categorically, what literature is (what it looks like when its at home), and two; that we can judge the level of aesthetic achievement of one text over another within literature. Quite simply, what I have done, is mistakenly taken the notion of aesthetic evaluation as a given. Whereas, theoretically, this notion may, or may not actually exist. One can never be sure. Particularly, in a theoretical environment where the accepted aesthetic standard for literature can shift from being an autonomous ‘well-wrought urn,’ to a cultural relativism which encompasses everything including the ‘kitchen sink’³. More

importantly for Pulp, this theoretical drift from the method of evaluation of the New Critics (who believed it was possible to ‘objectively’ determine the ‘literariness’⁴ of a text), to the relativistic perspective of a Poststructuralism (which has argued successfully against this view), raises a number of questions. The most important of which, is without some form of ‘objective’ aesthetic evaluation, how can academics still dare to draw a line in the sand and determine that one element of Pulp is literature, while the others are not? For as Chandler identified, the process of transmuting Pulp to literature essentially requires the assent, approval, or consensus of the literary academy. This, to a large extent, is still the case today. That is, although the rules for playing the game may have changed drastically, it is these same ‘intellectuals’ who determine when a certain text might have succeeded in achieving the required level of artistic performance to be acknowledged as having crossed over from the ‘utterly lost’ writings of Pulp, into the hallowed halls of literary respectability. Sadly, Chandler and Hammett were not to know that the academics of the future present, in which they had entrusted their literary transmutations, would be unable to assess the value of their accomplishments. Although it is possible, since the era of the New Criticism was not that long ago, that many of these literary critics might actually remember that once upon a time the evaluation of literature had something to do with attempting to establish the ‘quality’ of one work over another. Unfortunately now however, whatever the meaning of the word ‘quality’ may once have meant, it has long since drifted away on the cold semantic blue/green/aqua/ turquoise sea of indeterminacy⁵.

Having made these comments, it should be made perfectly clear, that it will not be my intention in these final chapters to engage in a revisionist diatribe against postmodern, or poststructuralist theories. On the contrary, many of the questions that I consider to be questionable, have in fact been highlighted by these theories. This explains why the poststructural perspective will come into sharp relief, when we begin to explore some of

the theories expounded for and against the notion of the Western Canon. And where we investigate the proposal that the overproduction of books due to the great leap in technology, has led to a dearth of literary quality, which has forced readers to desert books in favour of other technologies, such as the cinema, and the Internet. A situation which would leave the book, according to the Australian writer Kate Grenville, in the unenviable position of becoming “an obsolete curiosity, in the multi-media age, as the crumhorn or the scrimshaw”⁶. If this were the case, it would lead then to our next questionable question, which would be: how would this effect literary studies? Defenders of the faith, such as Harold Bloom, we shall find, believe that certain theorists (mainly of the poststructuralist or postmodern disposition within the Communications Department of the University) are already beginning to consider literary studies as an “archaeological sub-section of their ever-widening expansionism”⁷. Be this as it may, it is not my role to attempt to save literary studies, if it indeed it even needs saving from cultural relativity. Although I can sympathise with Bloom, that any kind of relativism where advertising sound-bytes can seem to transmit profound truths because all profound truths are negotiable, may lead to the dumbing-down of intelligence. And, of course, as the quota for intelligence falls, it could become perfectly reasonable to accept that you can arrive at the same amount of intellectual illumination from applying poststructuralist theories to the study of cornflakes boxes as you would from Shakespeare’s plays. On the other hand, there is a certain irony in as far as literary studies is concerned, that regardless of whether the aesthetic certainties of the New Criticism had prevailed, or the relativistic uncertainties of Poststructuralism are to continue, one fact remains perfectly clear. And that is, the study of Pulp Literature, has never been considered anything more than the equivalent to studying cornflakes boxes⁸. It is therefore, the goal of the final two chapters of this thesis to challenge this perception. They shall attempt to force the academy to reassess Pulp’s

demeaned status as a literary aesthetic, and to recognise the fact that it is only by engaging in the dynamic role which Pulp plays within literature, that literary studies might hope to escape its downward path to cultural obsolescence.

What is 'Objective' Aesthetic Taste?

Before I continue with this discussion, I should point out, although I am aware that there is a vast body of theory which has accumulated around the subject of literary evaluation since the beginning of the history of literature as an art form, for the sake of the clarity, this thesis will restrict itself to more contemporary theories, particularly those which ultimately impact on the assessment of Pulp as an aesthetic. Hopefully, the reason for this decision should be made apparent, by the end of the next chapter.

To return to our question: "what is objective aesthetic taste?", I would like to suggest that the question in itself, is erroneous. That is, it undermines itself as a question because it presupposes that its subject can be known epistemologically. Or rather, that we can demonstrate the existence of 'aesthetic taste' in the world in an 'objective' manner. This would mean, to paraphrase T. S. Eliot⁹, that the superior aesthetic merits of a text would be instantly recognisable to the reader. As I have already mentioned, this claim was the cornerstone of the determinant for the literary evaluation of the New Critics, of which Eliot was one. Where Eliot and his associates proved to be mistaken, was although it is possible to demonstrate in an 'objective' manner, what the aesthetics of a literary object might look like. It is not possible to presume the same level of 'objective' explication for the reader's 'taste'. This is because 'taste' is an evaluation which is formed 'subjectively', and as such, it cannot be presented in an 'objective' manner. Equally, the same can be said for the emotion of "fear". Although we can

easily witness a reader's reaction to 'fear' 'objectively', we cannot do the same for the emotion itself. This is because the emotion of "fear" cannot be epistemologically picked up, and placed on the table for dissection.

Of course this is the sort of argument which has been used by Structuralism and Poststructuralism, over the last forty years, to successfully debunk the New Critics presumption for an 'objective' aesthetic for literary assessment. However, I would like to point out, that there may not have been anything particularly new or novel in this theoretical approach. If we can cast our minds back to the beginning of the thesis, to where two English academics, J. M. Parrish and R. D. Coole determined in 1935, that literature is not a stable form, but one which is "splendidly rebellious". In the same article, they also assert (long before the New Criticism had been seriously debunked), that there "is thus no infallible test by which we can tell whether a novel is good or bad". A novel, they argue, is a work of art which "cannot be examined, tested, and judged with the accurate precision possible for a motor-car or a roll of cloth. For a work of art, novel, poem, picture, or symphony is neither independent and self-contained nor a dead machine" Moreover, (pre-empting a field of thought which would be expressed by Reader-Response Theory), they maintain that a work of art is peculiar, in that "until it is read, heard, or seen it is non-existent". However, the "moment it is appreciated it leaps into life and at once gives life". So therefore, "a novel until it is read, is nothing". But more importantly, they add that once read, "the novel lives in the reader and in this way some of its quality depends upon the reader. *Thus we can say the only test of a novel is its value to the reader*" (my italics)¹⁰. By this Parrish and Coole are insisting that any such aesthetic assessment is necessarily 'subjective', not 'objective'. This view is shared by Robert Hughes. He maintains that, "the appreciation of art and literature has no scientific basis whatever". On the contrary, he says "one is dealing in the unquantifiable coin of feeling, intuition and (from time to

time) moral judgment, and there is no objective “truth” to which criticism can lay “scientific” claim”¹¹.

And yet, although I have read the arguments and accepted the evidence which demonstrates that an ‘objective’ standard for literary taste cannot exist. The problem remains, in analysing my own experiences and those of others, that this evidence leads me to understand that literary studies is not playing on a level playing field. Why do I say this? Because although the ‘objective’ aesthetic evaluation of the New Critics is supposedly obsolete, it is quite evident, it is not. We know this to be the case, because these forms of aesthetic evaluation are constantly being utilised by academics to demean, or devalue the status of Pulp Literature as an object for serious artistic contemplation. This is an inconsistency between literary theory and its practise which Barbara Herrnstein Smith recognises in her article “Contingencies of Value”. She says, “although evaluative criticism remains intellectually suspect, it certainly continues to be practised as a magisterial privilege in the classrooms of the literary academy and granted admission to its journals as long as it comes under the cover of other presumably more objective types of literary study, such as historical description, textual analysis, or explication.”¹² This double-standard to which Smith is eluding, is one which I have often encountered while researching this thesis. What is clear, is although many tutors, lecturers, and theorists have accepted the premise that the ‘objectivity’ which underpinned the methods of the New Critics has been killed-off by the convincing evidence presented by Structuralism and Poststructuralism many of these people continue to make evaluative judgments in a manner that would imply this assassination had never occurred. Tarantino, for arguments sake, can be a “better” filmmaker than Lynch. Derrida can be a “better” theorist than Baudrillard. Shakespeare can be a “better” writer than Spillane. The reason for this, I would propose, is not that these people are attempting to latch on stubbornly to the outmoded theories of the New

Criticism. On the contrary, I believe, it is simply that they are not comfortable with the aesthetic uncertainties presented by the alternative. In fact, I would go one stage further, and posit that although many of these people mouth the platitudes of these theories, they do not actually embrace them. Of course, this is all supposition. And yet, it must be remembered, in the theoretical dichotomy between the New Criticism and Poststructuralism, that not all literary theorists are Poststructuralists. Far from it. Therefore, perhaps it is possible that these theorists, whatever particular theoretical persuasion they elicit to, have simply chosen to ignore the death of 'objective' evaluation. If so, how can we possibly trust the aesthetic assessments of these theorists? And yet, then again, it may be that my assessment of the status of their aesthetic statements might be wrong. Perhaps, in their own defence, these people could well counter, that their evaluations, are all simply 'subjective'. But, if this were the case, what does this mean? How can any theorist expect their 'subjective' assessment against Pulp Literature to carry any kind of authority? It cannot. However, not only does this happen, these assessments continue to be taught by tutors, lecturers, and theorists. Therefore, it will also be the goal of these next two chapters to expose how these contradictory perspectives concerning the subtle shifts between 'subjective' and 'objective' aesthetic taste move within the literary academy, and outside it.

What is 'Subjective' Aesthetic Taste?

I do not intend to expend an inordinate amount of time attempting to elucidate what 'subjective' aesthetic taste is. This is because firstly; it has largely been defined through its binary opposition to the 'objective' counterpart which we have just

discussed, and secondly; taking this into consideration, I believe it would be much easier just to show the reader what it is, and how it works.

Anyone who may have watched Oprah Winfrey's television show recently, would more than likely have encountered a segment which would have included one of her regular guests, the therapist Dr. Philip C. McGraw. In his book, *Life Strategies: doing what works, doing what matters*, published in 1999, McGraw illustrates one of his points by outlining the uniqueness of our individual perception. He explains when our eyes receive light waves, and our ears receive sound waves, that this "phenomenon of stimuli being received by your sense organs" is called "sensation". On the other hand, when we organise and interpret these sensations by assigning meaning to them, this is known as "perception". This process of perception, McGraw maintains, is the foundation for our own particular aesthetic 'taste'. He says, we know this because although we may both view the same painting, he might like it, you on the other hand may not. For McGraw, this is not only evidence which proves that "your perceptions may be vastly different from mine," but it also validates the old 'subjective' truism that 'beauty is in the eye of the beholder'¹³.

To extrapolate on this point a little bit further. What McGraw has determined is that this form of aesthetic taste is not without merit. That is, it is an import factor in our assessing any work of art. Although your taste may not be exactly the same as the person standing beside you at a Robert Mapplethorpe exhibition, their perspective is not going to be a million miles from your own. This is because, whether a million people have a million different views on this particular work of art, ultimately this multitude of perspectives can be broken down to three main categories. They will either like it, dislike it, or be completely disinterested. What may be unclear perhaps, is the reason a person might opt for one of these categories. This determination can be influenced by any number of factors which impacts on our 'perception' of a work of art. These are

genetic, social, cultural, economic, and psychological predisposition's which may often prejudice the capacity of our decision-making ability unconsciously; such as gender, sexual preference, religion, homophobia, political persuasion, class, education, racial prejudice, ideology, the media, fashion, spirituality, apathy, and many others. However, once we have chosen a category, this choice automatically identifies us as part of a broader community which shares in this aesthetic point of view. Even if the reasons for these choices were not identically the same.

What this means, is just because these choices cannot be proven scientifically to be 'objective', this should not invalidate them as an important means of evaluation. In fact, they should be considered as more valid than ever before, because now at least, we are aware that they are all we have. Robert Hughes would tend to agree. He maintains, it is "in the nature of human beings to discriminate. We make choices and judgments every day." What is more, "these choices are part of real experience. They are influenced by others, of course, but they are not fundamentally the result of a passive reaction to authority". And yet the most important point Hughes makes in this discussion, is when he says of 'subjective' aesthetic taste, that "we know of the realest experiences in cultural life is that of inequality between books and musical performances and paintings and other works of art. *Some things do strike us as better than others – more articulate, more radiant with consciousness. We may have difficulty in saying why, but the experience remains*" (my italics)¹⁴. I completely sympathise with this position. That is, I would enjoy nothing more than to be able assert, with some degree of 'objective' certainty, that Chandler and Hammett had indeed achieved a level of aesthetic prowess which could be determined to be literature. However, once again, if the premise for determining these categories 'objectively' has disappeared, how can we discriminate between Pulp and canonic literature? Can we evaluate, or attempt to re-situate Pulp's role within literature, without so-called 'objective' criticism? If so, what

strategies are being used, to distinguish one from the other? And are they themselves valid means of evaluation?

In an attempt to answer these questions, and in order to support Robert Hughes's claim for the existence of a 'subjective' aesthetic where some works of art strike us as being "more radiant with consciousness", this investigation will turn next to some circumstantial evidence presented by the Pulp writer Charles Bukowski¹⁵. (Please note: although, for the sake of this discussion, this is all the reader need address, I have attached a footnote to this article, which outlines my own literary 'epiphany'. It has been lodged here out of interest, and to corroborate Bukowski's experience. It is a personal perspective, and as such, there is no obligation to read it, unless the reader feels so inclined).

Without further ado, here is my anecdotal evidence.

Charles Bukowski Finds Gold at the City Dump

In his Preface to the American author John Fante's novel *Ask the Dust* (1980), which was originally published in 1939, the Californian Pulp writer and poet Charles Bukowski made the following observations. He said that as a "young man, starving and drinking and trying to be a writer", that he did most of his reading at the downtown L. A. Public Library. However, it seemed that nothing that he read related to him or to the

streets or the people about him. It was “as if everybody was playing word-tricks, and that those who said almost nothing at all, were considered excellent writers”. He admitted although their writing was an “admixture of subtlety, craft and form”, he also felt it was designed to be “read and taught, ingested and passed on, like some comfortable contrivance” of a “very slick and careful Word-Culture”. According to Bukowski, one had to go back to the pre-Revolution writers of Russia to find any “gamble, any passion”. There were a few exceptions, he insists, “but those exceptions were so few that reading them was quickly done, and you were left staring at the rows and rows of exceedingly dull books”. With the centuries to look back on, with all their advantages, he finally decided that the “moderns just weren’t very good”. Then one day, he reports that he pulled down a book and opened it, and there it was. He maintains, as he stood reading, he “felt like a man who had found gold in the city dump. The lines rolled easily across the page, there was a flow. Each line had its own energy and was followed by another like it. The very substance of each line gave the page form, a feeling of something *carved* into it”. And here, at last, he declares, was a man “who was not afraid of emotion. The humour and the pain were intermixed with a superb simplicity”. The beginning of that book, proclaims Bukowski, “was a wild and enormous miracle for me”¹⁶.

What is ‘Subjective’ Aesthetic Taste? (Revisited)

This is the end of my circumstantial evidence. And as I said, I realise the experience of a drunken Pulp author, and my own footnote, can hardly be considered sufficient proof for the justification of the existence of ‘subjective’ aesthetic taste. On the other

hand, I felt it was important to demonstrate its existence here, as I am quite confident its ramifications, and those of the disappearance of its binary opposite 'objective' aesthetic taste, will raise their ugly heads, as this chapter unfolds.

That is, without access to an 'objective' evaluative aesthetic, how can we possibly determine which texts might be superior to others in a world that Alvin Toffler described in the previous chapter, which had already witnessed an increase in the production of books from 1000 titles per year in 1500, to 1000 titles in a single day by 1960?¹⁷ Of course, the relativist claims of Structuralism and Poststructuralism, would assert this cannot be done. And yet, such assessments are made on a daily basis, by respected literary critics and academics. And mainly, I should add, at the expense of Pulp texts.

Can Too Many Books Spoil the Broth?

What is happening is not so much the death as the bewilderment of the reader. In America last year, more than 5000 new novels, were published. Five thousand! It would be a miracle if 5000 publishable novels had been written in a year. It would be extraordinary if 50 of them were good. It would be cause for universal celebration if five of them – if one of them were great

Salman Rushdie¹⁸.

Alvin Toffler: The Transience of Books and Literature

In his own book, *Future Shock*, which as I mentioned earlier was published in 1970, Alvin Toffler had already observed that the rapid overproduction of books had altered the way in which we perceive them. The book itself, he maintained, like the information it held, was “becoming transient”. He explains that this was “largely due to the paperback revolution, which had made inexpensive editions available everywhere, lessening their scarcity value at precisely the very moment that the increasingly rapid obsolescence of knowledge lessens its long-term informational value”. For instance, Toffler reports that in the United States, at that time, “a paperback would appear simultaneously on more than 100,000 news-stands, only to be swept away by another tidal wave of publications delivered a mere thirty days later”. This accelerated turnover, he argues, meant the book had achieved “the transience of a monthly magazine”. At the same time, Toffler also points out, that “the public’s span of interest in a book – even a bestseller was beginning to shrink”. By comparing the life span of bestsellers on *The New York Times* list, he demonstrates how within a ten year period, “the life expectancy of the average bestseller had shrunk by nearly one-sixth”¹⁹.

Fortunately this trend toward transience did not exacerbate, and the book has not, as yet, been rendered obsolete. However, as Clive Bloom confirms, the rate of production of books that Toffler observed, continued to accelerate as he had predicted, even after it encountered competition from other forms of media. Bloom reports that “although 11,000 titles were published in America when television first appeared, this figure had increased to 36,000 when the computer hit in 1970”. He asserts that “even after competition from 30 years of television and 10 years of computers”, the figure had continued to climb, until by 1980 it had reached 45,000 titles, with a corresponding

expansion in publishing revenues from 500 million dollars in 1950 to 7 billion²⁰. And yet, after outlining this enormously successful preponderance of literary production, Bloom declares, that for some critics “this production was itself proof that ‘real’ or serious reading was in terminal decline”²¹. For these critics, whom Bloom refers to as the ‘guardians of culture’ these texts are not literature at all, but rather “corporate consumables merely dressed-up as literature” by a new and powerful culture industry who dupe their mass readership into consuming a daily diet of dumbed-down product which is laced with the systemic values of corporate fascism”²². They argue, rather cynically I would suggest, that the people who buy these books do not read them at all. In fact, “they wear them as badges, or labels which indicate their cultural savvy or hipness”. This explains, they insist, why these books must be thick. Not only does the weightiness “imply the instant erudition in the reader who carries them,” it also acts as a “deterrent for any potential reader who might decide to try to read these hip books”. After all, according to these ‘guardians of culture’, above everything else, the ultimate goal of these books is that they are “not to be read”²³. This is almost as good as people buying books in order to burn them. However, there is a flaw in this argument. If the people who buy these hip books do not read them – and I know they are out there – how do they manage to ingest their diet of evil systemic values forced upon them by unscrupulous marketing divisions? It seems that you cannot have one without the other. On the other hand, of course, we are aware from our opening quote that Salman Rushdie, is one of the ‘guardians of culture’ who shares the view that the production of too many books equates to the dumbing-down of literature. Albeit, his conspiracy theory is quite different, in that he lays the blame at the feet of the writer, more so than the gullibility of the reader. However, I would protest that these ‘guardians of culture’ are accrediting far too much power to this group of people. After all, they do not determine what we read (this should become clear by the next chapter).

Now let us turn to another phenomenon in modern culture. That is, contrary to the people who buy books in order *not* to read them, is the growing proportion of people who do not buy books, or read books at all. Robert Hughes reports that in 1991, “the majority of American households (60 per cent, the same as in Spain) did not buy one single book”. Furthermore, he asserts that “most American students do not read much anyway and quite a few, left to their own devices, would not read at all”. And it is for this reason, he argues, that “no American university can *assume* that its first-year students are literate in a more than technical sense”. In fact, he muses, that perhaps they never could? Yet if they did, he maintains, that “they certainly cannot now”. Hughes attributes the reason for the “narrowness of reference, the indifference to reading, and the cultural shallowness of many of young products of American culture, even the privileged ones”, at the door of the “their moronic national babysitter”: the television set. Adding that before long, “Americans will think of the time when people sat at home and read books for their own sake, discursively and sometimes even aloud to one another, as a lost era – the way we now see rural quilting-bees in the 1870s”²⁴. I very much doubt that Robert Hughes, with this argument, would get more than a cursory shrug of the shoulders from Alvin Toffler. Even Kate Grenville, who is far more sympathetic to Hughes’s complaints, is amenable also to the plight of the book publishers who have to try and appeal to the hordes of non-readers with their short-attention spans, and their itchy trigger-fingers. Along with Hughes, she recognises the book business is experiencing stiff competition from TV and the movies. However, unlike Hughes, Grenville respects the fact that these “visual media have made us used to storytelling that is high-speed, larger-than-life, and plot-driven”. Moreover, she adds, that for many, “the time to read might just take too long, or the contemplative process of reading can seem to be too ponderous”. Therefore, contrary to Hughes, Grenville implies that not reading books does not necessarily indicate a lack of literacy, or

intelligence, but rather only a shift of those intelligent minds to other media. Talented storytellers, she argues, “who once would have become novelists are now making films instead”. As a matter of fact, Grenville concurs with Hughes’s observation concerning the fate of the book. She states that there is a “very real danger that the novel will end up in the multi-media age as an obsolete historical curiosity, like the crumhorn or scrimshaw” (or like Hughes’s rural quilting-bee)²⁵. Yet I believe the reason for her assessment is more akin to Toffler’s theory for the natural transience of the book form, rather than Hughes’s cultural nostalgia.

Although I understand Robert Hughes’s concern, and I appreciate Kate Grenville’s openness towards the visual media, I feel Thomas J. Roberts’s opinion would come the closest to matching my own. That is, even if people gave up reading books completely – which is quite possible – this would not necessarily imply that they would discontinue to read entirely. As Roberts asserts, “for all the claims that have been made recently that humanity has left the culture of the letter and entered a culture of the image, humans are living now in an environment saturated with visible language as it never has been before. Even the people who never open a book, our hordes of illiterate non-readers, may be reading more words each year than did the scribes of ancient Egypt, the librarians of Alexandria, or the monks of the Middle Ages”. This is because, he maintains, “they see these words on billboards, on cans of corn, on television screens, and in store windows”²⁶. But more importantly, particularly when we attempt to account for the rise in Robert Hughes’s non-book-reading student demographic, according to Daniel Okrent, they read them on the Internet. Okrent reports that in America, in 1998, “17 million kids ages 2 to 18 had already gone online, and he predicted that this number was expected to increase in five years to more than 42 million”²⁷. Happily, these figures would seem to support my opinion that people have not discontinued reading, they have simply just moved on to other forms of media.

However, now that we have exposed the readers who buy books in order not to read them, and excused the non-readers who do not buy any books at all, a nagging question remains: who are Salman Rushdie's 'bewildered readers' who are responsible for reading 45,000 different titles, and spending 7 billion dollars for the pleasure of doing so? Bewildered, or not, according to Thomas J. Roberts, these readers do exist. In fact, Roberts claims, "in the hours after they have completed the day's work and fulfilled their obligations to their families, these people do not find it difficult to obtain and read one hundred books a year²⁸". This, he points out, is "fewer than two books a week"²⁹. Finally, we have found the people we are interested in. The ones that seem to be causing all the problems for Salman Rushdie by reading, what he asserts, to be too many badly written books.

Salman Rushdie: Odds of 4449:1 (maybe?)

So what is it that is bothering Salman Rushdie exactly? His argument boils down to one of our dubious questions of 'quality'. That is to say, starting from the beginning of his statement, that Rushdie feels quite strongly that unscrupulous publishers are bewildering the reading public by providing too many novels, and therefore, too many options. But is this the case? I do not believe it is. Especially when we consider that the United States has a population of over 250 million people, out of which we can comfortably assume that 200 million are possible readers. I refer to them as possible readers, because we must remember Robert Hughes's comment that 60% of the American population do not buy any books at all. However, even with taking this statistic into account, that still leaves 80 million readers, who as Thomas J. Roberts asserts, can quiet easily consume around one hundred books per year. It is when we

come to the thought of publishing enough titles that might hopefully cater for the immense diversity of cultural ethnicities and subcultural tastes among this demographic, that the figure of 5000 suddenly becomes completely insufficient. And this would probably explain why, as we know from Clive Bloom's observations, the overall figure for titles that were published – not necessarily novels – even by 1980's statistics, was up to 45,000 per year. From this, should we assume then, that the readers who Rushdie claims are bewildered by the range of possibilities presented by 5000 new titles, would therefore likely to be stupefied into paroxysms of confusion when confronted by the range of choice offered in 45,000 titles per year? Perhaps so. And yet, once again, 45,000 titles into 80 million readers does not seem to me to be an overwhelming statistic.

Of course, many people would argue, that I am being unfair to Rushdie, because I have twisted his words to suit my own conception. That his concern is not with the vast American readership, but rather it resides with the bewilderment of an individual 'reader' who has to choose from 5000 titles per year. And I would agree wholeheartedly with Rushdie on this point, if I thought it were true. However, once again, I do not. Firstly, the individual reader is not faced with the prospect of actually having to read all of the 5000 titles. I doubt very much that even Salman Rushdie, who has chosen to judge these books out of hand, has read them all. (And clearly, if he has not read them, he should not be making such judgments). As we are well aware, our regular reader, still only faces the prospect of reading a maximum of one hundred novels per year. The factor for their 'bewilderment' in deciding which hundred novels they should, or should not read, out of the possible 5000 becomes negated by Rushdie's own formula. The fact is, it does not matter which hundred novels the reader chooses out of the 5000 presented because Rushdie has already prescribed that 4999 of them, as far as he is concerned, are of an unpublishable standard. Therefore, as his concept

creates a plateau of mediocrity, there can be little chance of bewilderment for the reader because the danger of missing out on something good, or even great is virtually non-existent. However, I would suggest, that this situation could quite easily be remedied. That is, if Rushdie is actually as concerned for the bewilderment of the reader as he protests, then he should simply adjust his methodology to one where he dictates the one novel out of the 5000 he considers might possibly come close to greatness. And that novel should be the only one published for our 80 million 'no longer bewildered regular readers'. If this novel does not exist, then – so be it.

In this exaggerated scenario – probably the literary critic's wildest dream come true – can we, or should we expect, that one person, such as Salman Rushdie, can deliver the goods by choosing the one great book which will stand head and shoulders above all else – and satisfy every cultural idiosyncrasy of taste for 80 million readers? Assuming that Rushdie could physically prove that it would be possible for him to assess the whole of the 5000 novels, I have little doubt that he would recognise the one potential classic text. However, this praise of his abilities, comes with a caveat. And that is, we must understand that any said choice would, naturally, have been determined by his own particular aesthetic taste, standards, and cultural bias. Therefore, even if we agree with his particular choice, Rushdie's 'subjective' aesthetic taste, although perfectly valid for himself, could never hope to be accepted as a universal standard, or authority.

What Salman Rushdie's formula has exposed, is that we should not allow the 'subjective' aesthetic tastes of literary critics or theorists to influence our own evaluation of literature. After all, in this instance, this is all we have. And as Dr. Phillip C. McGraw mentioned earlier, when a critic assesses a work of art, they are either going to like, or they are not. So there is a fifty-fifty chance, that the reader might concur with the critic, before the process of assessment even begins. On the other hand, there is also a fifty-fifty chance that we may not agree. And in this case, I would

recommend, that the reader should never accede to the self-imposed authority of the critic, or theoretician. To illustrate this point, this investigation has chosen to journey back to the 1940s, to reveal how the application of 'time' is an important factor for not only determining the longevity of a particular text, or author, but also in assessing the validity of the evaluative 'authority' of the consensus method of literary assessment. That is, that this form of literary assessment is not so much an aesthetic evaluation at all. Rather it is simply an exercise in the assertion of presumed 'authority', or 'power'. And once again, we shall see, the main loser in this form of assessment is Pulp Literature.

Sir Walter Murdoch & the Queer Freaks of a Chaotic Time

I saw that it was perfectly useless for two people to argue about whether James Joyce is or is not good literature, until those two people have agreed as to what good literature is

Sir Walter Murdoch³⁰.

What Sir Walter Murdoch, whom after this university³¹ is named, is proposing, appears at first glance, to be a perfectly good recommendation. His suggestion is that critics should forget the microscopic details for a moment, and return to the Big Picture in order to see if they cannot reach some mutual understanding, or possible consensus, regarding what the basic fundamental parameters which define literature might be? It

would then be hoped, after establishing a level playing field, that these critics could then lob the texts in question over the net at each other, and attempt to determine the veracity of their claims to literary value on the basis of the amount of points they may have scored in their favour during the playing of the game. And although this is all very nice, and cordial, on closer inspection, Murdoch's proposal seems to be one that is intrinsically fraught with danger. His main tenet presumes that the literary quality of the text is not inherent to itself, from whatever elements the author has instilled into it; rather it is based on the consensus between two critics who have reached some form of agreement as to the text's value. Therefore, according to this argument, this means that Shakespeare's *Hamlet* has no literary merits of its own as a text, and if our two critics choose to agree that it has no worth, they are welcome to back-hand it out-of-bounds. Furthermore, from my own understanding of the word, 'consensus' requires that at some stage of the evaluation process, each critic must be prepared to give ground to the other, or to make compromises. Is this an acceptable method for establishing literature? Kate Grenville argues it is not. She maintains, that "committee decisions, with their various agendas, do not always guarantee that the 'best book' (however you might define that) has been chosen, only the one that the judges could all agree on"³². Therefore, under this model, there is probably a greater chance of them missing the one great book in the 5000, than having Salman Rushdie point it out for us on his own. In fact, as Sir Walter Murdoch's argument unfolds, he not only identifies the problems involved in establishing the grounds for consensus. But, unwittingly I suspect, he becomes an example of the refusal to compromise. In other words, for all its good intentions, Murdoch's model becomes hopelessly prescriptive.

In his essay, Sir Walter Murdoch recounts he had been up most of the night pondering a solution to his question concerning the establishment of a common ground for consensus for what literature may be. By the time the clock had struck two in the

morning, he says, that he had “formulated a literary creed”. However, unfortunately, not only did he have his literary creed, but he announces that “henceforth he will not argue with anybody who does not accept his creed for a start”³³. Having stipulated this particularly inflexible formula for negotiating consensus, he then launches into what appears to be a denunciation of the Modernist writers. This proves to be because the Modernists exemplify the opposite of Murdoch’s literary creed, which is that literature is, “above all, communication, not self-expression”. He maintains James Joyce, Gertrude Stein, Edith Sitwell, and scores of other writers, appeared “to have risen to the same high plane, far above the ignoble thought of making themselves intelligible to others, that self-expression is their goal”. They have misunderstood, he says, that “the whole effort at the back of real literature is the effort to be articulate, to be significant, to convey to other minds, with the utmost possible precision, a meaning”³⁴. However, it must be pointed out that Murdoch’s own meaning becomes less than precise, and certainly less altruistic when it finally comes down to which readers this clarity of meaning was to be afforded to, and by which writers. He says, “it is not necessary that writers must write for the butcher-boys and barmaids all over the country”. On the contrary, he prescribes that the secret of good literature is that “writers should not write down to ignorant or stupid people, but write to their equals, making their meanings clear to them”³⁵. Although, the paradox of these statements, is that they appear to completely undermine Murdoch’s own literary creed, that literature is about communicating meaning accurately to the reader. But as we are aware, this statement comes with a disclaimer: that “the writer’s accurate meaning is subject to it being aligned with the right reader”. And yet, it would appear, by proposing that writers need only to make sense to their peers, that Murdoch is actually advocating the kind of literature which he accuses the Modernists of writing. After all, the Modernists were a just a group of writers who were doing exactly what he proposes. That is, they

were writing for their literary peers. Therefore, since Murdoch is not really concerned with literature as a means of conveying accurate meaning with the utmost possible precision to the general reader, I believe his problem with the Modernists, is not one of self-expression, or any lack of meaning on their behalf, at all. It is simply, that in their refusal to write down, they have cut him out of the intellectual loop, by surpassing his own frame of reference.

I make this observation because, unfortunately, in the construction of his argument, Sir Walter Murdoch paints himself into a corner. This is due, essentially, to a flaw, that as I just mentioned, was as fatal to him, as it was for everyone he included in his discussion. Put simply, Murdoch's model for 'consensus', (which in fact proved to be anything but), performs the same trick as we witnessed with Salman Rushie's failed formula, in that it ultimately removes the participation of the reader from an evaluative role in deciding what they consider to be literature, or not. Moreover, as I have just implied, I believe Murdoch's model goes one stage further. That is, when taken to the nth degree, it completely removes the reader, including himself, from the proximity of literature all together. For instance, after deeming that literature should not be written with butcher-boys, and barmaids, as a potential audience, Murdoch ups the ante, declaring that it should not be readily understood by the "average billiard-marker, or the average bank manager, or the average anything". And of course, by implication, as we rise up the social ladder, the question begs that eventually it should not even be aimed at the average literature professor? However, Murdoch contradicts this statement when he later suggests that in the history of literature, that the writers of what is considered to be great literature have most often aimed their works at the very people he would wish to ignore. He admits, that it is "highly improbable", that Homer's audience for the *Iiad* would have consisted of "a little group of intellectuals", and nor would Shakespeare's audience for *Hamlet* have been "an exclusive esoteric clique". Furthermore, he

confesses that Moliere “wrote for a wide public”, that “*Don Quixote* “was a best-seller”, and Wordsworth looked forward to a time when the enjoyment of his poetry should be “in widest commonality spread”³⁶. And yet, after having made all these incisive observations, and concluding from them that the great writers of the past, “who have survived, and who now sit enthroned above the dust of time”, did as a matter of fact strive to communicate with as large an audience as possible, what does Murdoch prescribe for his ‘reader’? Well nothing close to contemporary literature, that is for certain. For literature, he maintains, is “way beyond the comprehension of even university students, who constantly mistake self-expression for good literature because it is so delightfully obscure”. And most likely, it would not even be popular fiction, because as Murdoch pontificates, “he had the highest admiration for the artist who refuses to sacrifice on the vile and filthy alter of popularity”. Although, one wonders if this includes Homer, Shakespeare, Moliere, Cervantes, and Wordsworth. If so, what is left? Probably, what was always left. Something that was perhaps not popular in the same vein as Pulp Literature might be said to be popular, and yet according to Murdoch, this something should not to be considered as literature at all. That is because, as he predicts, the “thing they were producing was something which would not survive, except to be pointed at by historians as one of the queer freaks of a chaotic time”: Modernism³⁷. And yet, as we have already ascertained, the Modernists were not writing for the average reader, nor indeed even for the average Professor, they were in fact, writers writing for the only readers left in Sir Walter Murdoch’s literary schema, themselves.

Picking Eagles from Turkeys

So where does this leave us as far as the questionable practise of literary evaluation goes?

Well, hopefully this discussion will leave us with a clearer understanding of the foible of presuming that just because aesthetic evaluation is performed by respected members of the literary establishment that it is somehow mysteriously impartial, or value free. It is not. As Kate Grenville indicated “all critics have their own particular agendas, and personal aesthetic opinions, which they bring to the negotiation table when it comes to deciding which literary texts are superior to others”. This would explain why Sir Walter Murdoch’s proposal for a consensus model for evaluation turned out to be little more than a pretence on his behalf, to promote his own personal agenda against the Modernists. And furthermore, it would explain why, at first glance at least, Murdoch’s slight nod towards the sharing of views and the possibility of debate made his proposal appear to be not quite as totalitarian as Salman Rushdie’s formula, although on closer inspection, it revealed itself to be just as restrictive, elitist, and prescriptive as Rushdie’s dictatorial formula ever was. Why? To put it simply, largely because of Murdoch’s stated aim that he would not debate the microcosmic details of literature with anyone until they had agreed to his macrocosmic terms of his literary creed: that literature is about communication, not self-expression. What this determined, was that ultimately, he was only prepared to identify and negotiate what might be considered the great contemporary literary works of his era, with those who acceded to his agenda against the Modernists. Therefore, Murdoch’s model was not a proposal for a consensus for

debate at all. But rather it was an attempt to manipulate and dominate any such debate, which is essentially just as totalitarian as Salman Rushdie's consensus-of-one ever was.

Similarly, with the benefit of hindsight, Sir Walter Murdoch's model highlights another evaluative problem which confronts, not only our 'regular' reader, but literary critics, and those in the publishing industry also. And that is the difficulty in assessing and identifying, not only good or bad literature *per se*, but particularly those literary works which might be deemed to be canonical, or great literature, when they are fresh off the press. Kate Grenville agrees with this assessment. She maintains that "publishers do not have a crystal ball about lasting value, any more than prize judges or critics do. For instance, she points out that *Moby Dick* bombed in the shops when it was first published, and survived as a single copy in someone's attic until the world was ready for it some 70 years later"³⁸. It is for this reason that, although I can sympathise with Murdoch's disdain of James Joyce (I do not intend to read him again in this lifetime, either), the truth is, as much as I have reached an aversion threshold for his works, I can understand quite readily why his novels are considered to be canonical. Murdoch complained that Joyce's later prose used language largely made up of words coined by himself, words that were without any meaning for anyone but himself, if indeed they had any meaning even for him³⁹? Once again, although I can concur with Murdoch's claim concerning the difficulty of James Joyce's approach (especially in his final novel), I do not believe that Joyce's experimentation with prose can be simply written-off as excessive self-indulgence. Nor do I agree that Joyce's texts have no meaning (even the last one). They may have no meaning to Murdoch perhaps? But I very much doubt if he was trying too hard to find it. I say this because, to the contrary, my own problem with Joyce, stems from his overdetermination of meaning within his prose. Every aspect of his novels seem to offer an over-abundance of intertextual

allusions to Irish history, Catholicism, to the history of literature, the Classics, a variety of other mythologies, plus exercises in different literary styles and forms: journalism, drama, romance, poetic, reports, etcetera, etc., ad infinitum. Furthermore, I have heard Joyce read aloud by readers of Irish descent, and it sounded extremely poetic and exceedingly humorous. And yet, having said all this, personally I would rather watch paint dry than read Joyce. Why? Because, quite simply, for all his pretension to greatness, I find his subject matter moribund and tedious in the extreme. But all this is beside the point, because James Joyce is not Modernism. For me, the true Modernists are T. S. Eliot, Virginia Woolf, and Samuel Beckett. Therefore, in attacking them, Sir Walter Murdoch demonstrated that it was quite feasible, in the murky world of literary evaluation, for literary critics to back the wrong horse. As the reader may well be aware, many of the Modernist writers, including James Joyce, Gertrude Stein, T. S. Eliot, Virginia Woolf, and Samuel Beckett, are all well placed in Harold Bloom's compilation of canonical texts *The Western Canon*⁴⁰.

Of course, to be fair to Sir Walter Murdoch, Salman Rushdie, and every other literary critic: the epithet that we *can* all make mistakes is not good enough. In truth, the epithet, should in fact read: that we all *do* make mistakes when evaluating aesthetic objects. This is quite simply because societal fads, fashions, tastes, critical judgments, opinions, schools of thought, of politics, of philosophy, of community consensus are all predisposed at any period of time, from a minute to a millennium: to change. Alvin Toffler knew this, and so did Bob Dylan. As did Robert Hughes, who reported witnessing its effects in his observation of the buying frenzy in the art world in the 1980s, and the subsequent sense of vertigo felt by these investors when time later revealed how many of the eagles of the period had turned out to be turkeys⁴¹. Naturally, the same can be said to be true for literature, as we have seen with *Moby Dick*, 'time' is an important factor for how we determine what is good, bad, or possibly great literature.

The Australian writer Elise Valmorbida argues, in response to Salman Rushdie's dismal view of contemporary literature, that he is "ignoring the simple fact that it actually takes time to become great"⁴². Valmorbida points out how in *The Times's* recent Top 100 fiction list (a 20th-century classics chart compiled from votes from the literary world), the "past decade demonstrated a truly poor showing for novel-making". However, she maintains "this is not because authors are not writing good novels any more, but because it takes time for a novel to become a 'classic'". She reminds us that Dr Johnson's benchmark was for 100 years, and although Valmorbida does not agree with his stipulation, she does insist that "we need the time to have grown up with a book, to watch it grow, to see if it will continue to inspire, challenge, astonish, entertain, provoke, and seduce"⁴³. Richard Flanagan agrees. He maintains along with Valmorbida, that books are "an on-going affair between writers and readers, and that ultimately all writers are in the end made or broken by the feeling of their readers". And although Flanagan admits that he does not know what it is that determines a good book or a bad book, he acknowledges that such "judgments are fashioned over time by readers, and as such are finally social and historical"⁴⁴.

In fact, if we return to our original questionable questions, those being: are there too many books, and does the propensity of these books reduce or increase the probability for great works of literature to be produced? It appears that our most important evaluative tools for answering these queries would happen to be 'readers' and 'time', not 'literary critics' and 'time'. If we have learned anything from Salman Rushdie, and Sir Walter Murdoch, it is that we cannot trust the aesthetic evaluation of either the individual critic, nor the consensus of the literary committee, or school. They all have an agenda to push. And as we have witnessed, quite often the critic's role to literature in the identification of 'subjective quality', can easily become compromised. When this occurs many of these critics will go to extraordinary lengths, expending vast amounts

of energy in the cause of attempting to convince others to accept the validity of their own warped aesthetic opinions, as if theirs were the only justifiably sane options. Our 'regular' readers should ignore these critics, as 'time' shall erase them. For it is in fact these readers, the ones who actually take the 'time' to launch their way through the 5000 novels on offer (unlike Salman Rushdie), judging the literary quality of these books by their own 'subjective' aesthetic tastes, and who pass this knowledge on by promoting the best of them to other readers. These are the people that create great literature. Or as Richard Flanagan puts it, in a more eloquent manner "perhaps all that does matter is that in spite of all the forces arrayed against them, writers here or there continue to write good books, indeed great books, and readers continue to search them out, no matter how long and arduous the search"⁴⁵. 'Time', as we have witnessed with our literary critics, could prove to be either the most hazardous, or most valuable tool for literary evaluation. As Sir Walter Murdoch discovered to his detriment, 20/20 hindsight could well have been his saving grace. Similarly, as Kate Grenville implies, an expansive application of 'time' would very likely have solved Salman Rushdie's dilemma when it came to determining which novel was the eagle out of the 4999 turkeys. Certainly, at the very least, it would have afforded him the chance to read the objects he was dismissing out of hand. However, on this issue Grenville argues that "at any point in the novel's 200-year history, not-very-good novels have always far outnumbered works of lasting value". But for literature to flourish, she asserts "it needs the whole forest, not just giant oaks. And that even weeds have place in the literary eco-system"⁴⁶. I whole-heartedly agree with Kate Grenville's view. And in a sense her analogy completely encapsulates the view of this thesis (albeit, my perspective does differ significantly in one major respect. I will not elaborate on this here, but I shall return to it at the conclusion to the next chapter).

At this juncture, I would like to conclude by taking Kate Grenville's literary eco-system to its logical extension, and in concurring with her personal philosophy that "there can never be too many books in the world, or too many different kinds of books"⁴⁷. However, when it comes to questions regarding the 'quality' of these books, and how they might effect the long term tradition of literature (whether it be high or low), I would point our regular readers towards Richard Flanagan's point of view, where he declares "the beauty of books and the joy which resides in them is that they are not reducible to systems, nor intelligible as formulas. Books are as extraordinary as life itself, and constantly remind us how much larger than and more varied life is than our experience, or even our imaginings. Their variety is as infinite as humanity itself, and carries equivalent possibilities for good or bad"⁴⁸. Having accepted this, readers may still need to know how to pick the eagles out from the turkeys. In this case I would suggest they should sharpen their aesthetic instincts, and otherwise heed the advice of Raymond Chandler when he proposes that "when a book, *any sort of book* (my italics), reaches a certain intensity of artistic performance, it becomes literature". That intensity, he says, "may be a matter of style, situation, character, emotional tone, or idea, it may also be a perfection of control over the movement of a story similar to the control a great pitcher has over the ball, or half a dozen other things"⁴⁹. And yet, if I were asked how much of this literature is likely to be recognisably 'great' in the classic sense in the history of the tradition? Then I would refer our regular readers to Elise Valmorbida's definition for what we might define as a 'great book'. The problem, as far as Valmorbida sees it, is not so much whether contemporary writers want to write great books, or not? It is that perhaps, this option is no longer available. She argues that "today's authors are quite capable of writing *War and Peace*, but they are far too aware of the subjectivity of viewpoint to have the audacity to presume their works would conquer time or death, endure through the centuries, and what they have to say will

“speak for the whole of society”. Therefore, for Valmorbida, today’s ‘great’ books require the writer and the reader to think in economies of scale. If size is important to you as a reader then perhaps, it may be better for you to seek out the books recommended by Harold Bloom in his *The Western Canon*. If not then I suggest that you accept Elise Valmorbida’s pertinent observation, that “a novel is not any less great because it transports us to an apparently small world with small concerns. The point is that we *are* transported, that we can experience, via language, a virtual reality more engaging, more enriching and more portable than any electronic medium”⁵⁰.

Interestingly, Valmorbida’s sentiments echo those of Henry Steeger (the President of Popular Publication Inc) who declared, way back in Chapter Three, that the Pulp magazines were “an unflickering, uncolored T.V. screen upon which the reader could spread the most glorious imagination” they possessed⁵¹. But, besides this similarity, I believe she has raised an extremely valid point. That is, that the vast majority of the Pulp magatext *does* restrict itself to apparently “small worlds with small concerns”. And yet, should such a restriction automatically disqualify the literature of Pulp from ever being considered ‘great’? Or what, Harold Bloom amongst others, would refer to as becoming ‘canonic’. Does the possibility that literary academics might be able to legitimately form a ‘canon’ of ‘great’ texts, mean that the texts produced by Pulp artists will necessarily always be considered as the opposite to these hallowed texts? Not ‘great’.

It is to this battle between Pulp Literature and the Western Canon that we turn to next.

What, I wonder, might be the odds on Pulp winning?

REFERENCES

¹ Quote taken from *Raymond Chandler Speaking*. Edited by Dorothy Gardiner and Kathrine Sorley Walker. London: Penguin, 1988: 73-4.

² Dashiell Hammett: Pulp as Literature:

"I'm one of the few – if there are many more – people moderately literate who take the detective story seriously. I don't mean that I necessarily take my own or anybody else's seriously – but the detective story as a form. Some day somebody's going to make "literature" of it" (*Dashiell Hammett: a Life*. New York: Random House, 1983:71).

³ This is a play on words which refers to the 'kitchen sink' drama introduced in the theatres of Britain in the late fifties, and which many critics felt threatened to demean the theatre, due to its proletarian ideals. It was utilised by the so-called 'angry young men' to air certain antagonistic themes, such as class, racism, and other social issues. John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* is a good example.

⁴ Literariness for the Uninitiated:

According to J. A. Cuddon: "The object of literary studies in the early phase of Russian Formalism (*q.v.*). Roman Jakobson defined it thus in 1919: "The subject of literary science is not literature, but literariness, i.e. that which makes a given work a literary work" (*The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*. Third Edition. London: Penguin, 1992).

⁵ What I mean by this, is as stated earlier in the Introduction, that it not is possible or useful to separate Pulp from what many academics ascertain to be 'high' Literature.

⁶ "Canon Fodder" *HQ Magazine* JAN/FEB, 1998:93.

⁷ Harold Bloom on The Death of Literary Studies:

"What are now called "Departments of English" will be renamed departments of "Cultural Studies" where *Batman* comics, Mormon theme parks, television, movies, and rock will replace Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, and Wallace Stevens" (London: Papermac, 1995: 519).

Imelda Whelehan and Deborah Cartmell: On the Death of the Literature Department:

In order to demonstrate that Bloom is not errant in this opinion. Here are the same views expressed by his opposition:

They state: "Similarly, horrified defenders of traditional English studies lament the fated take-over by media studies of English, with courses in *Star Trek* and *Batman*, replacing in Milton and Shakespeare. There is no doubt that media studies will continue to seduce students away from more traditional subject areas (in Britain in 1995 there were approximately 1500 fewer English 'A' -level students than in the previous year, while media students increased by roughly the same number). English departments, with an eye to economic and academic survival, are increasingly joining up with media studies" (*Pulping Fictions: Consuming Culture Across Literature/Media Divide*. Edited by Deborah Cartmell, Q. Hunter, Heidi Kaye and Imelda Whelehan. London/ Chicago: Pluto Press, 1996:1).

Niall Lucy: On the Demise of the Literature Department:

"Since the publication of Eagleton's book in 1983, two things have happened to explain the 'demise' of the English Department: Cultural Studies, and postmodernism. Both of these owe their formations, if in part, to the disruptive effects of literary theory on the status of English as 'Queen' of the humanities. The demise is by no means universal, but, in Australia at any rate, the strong English departments today tend to be those in which Cultural Studies – which is rumoured to have the word on postmodernism – is an internally significant and at least semi-autonomous entity, with its own Chair and separate quota of teaching staff. Other English departments, sans Cultural Studies and still looking more or less like the pre-*Literary Theory* model, seem to have a little harder to work every year at getting the student 'numbers' up to the budgetary bottom line" (*Postmodern Literary Theory: an Introduction*. Oxford/Malden: Blackwell, 1997:vii).

⁸ John Sutherland on the Literary Academy's Attitude to Studying Pulp in the Eighties:

Sutherland supports this view. He states: "When I tell my colleagues that I am 'working' on best-sellers I have detected behind their polite interest the unseated question, 'Why bother?'" (*Best-sellers: Popular fiction of the 1970s*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981: xii).

Robert Leeson on Studying Pulp in the Eighties:

Peter Hunt, quoted in Robert Leeson's *Reading and Righting* (London:Collins, 1985:145):

“. . . I would as soon consider including [Enid Blyton] in a study of children's literature as I would consider including say Mickey Spillane in a literature degree course. One is inclined to ask, despite changes in current university curricula how much has, or would change? (Cited Clive Bloom, *Cult Fiction: Popular Reading and Pulp Theory*. London:MacMillan, 1996. :7)

Christopher Pawling on Studying Pulp in the Eighties:

“Although there has been a growth of interest in popular fiction over the last few years, one could not claim it has been established in schools or colleges as a central component of literary studies. The English lecturer who proposes a course in this area may well be told that it would be difficult to find space on the timetable for such a ‘minor’ field of study, although the same objections do not seem to apply when one of his/her colleagues suggests yet another option in seventeenth-century poetry. A course dealing with popular genres such as science fiction or thrillers is, apparently, a luxury which the department cannot afford”.

. . . . “To the disinterested, non-literary specialist the neglect of those texts which have captured the interest of wide sections of the reading public must seem a little strange. For, in as much as the discipline lays claim to a position in the human sciences, literary criticism should be looking forward to the moment when it is able to account for the whole of literary culture, and not just that segment which has been canonised within the academic institution. We should do well to heed Darko Suvin's warning that, ‘a discipline which refuses to take into account 90 per cent or more of what constitutes its domain seems to mean not only to have large zones of blindness but also to run serious risks of distorted vision in the small zone it focuses on (so-called high lit.)

There are some indications that attitudes are changing and that popular fiction is beginning to be accepted as a serious area of study However, it would be foolish to assume that popular fiction has been accepted into the academic fold on a permanent basis. In a period of educational contraction, the principal of ‘last in, first out’ may well be operated by those who feel happier with a more traditional approach to literature and, consequently, welcome the opportunity to jettison those ‘illegitimate’ areas which have been added to the curriculum since the 1960s Those who are not aquatinted with the subject still find it difficult to accept that the ‘reading’ of a thriller or romance could be anything other than the most straightforward exercise in comprehension. Accordingly, they may assume that the study of popular fiction involves a simple process of familiarisation with a number of ‘second-rate’ novels and question the logic of devoting valuable time to such a seemingly peripheral activity” (“Introduction: Popular Fiction: Ideology or Utopia?” *Popular Fiction and Social Change*. Edited by Christopher Pawling. London:MacMillan, 1984:1-3).

To David Lockett's view of Studying Pulp Today.

In his article “Why the Rings will endure” (*The West Australian*. Saturday February 2, 2002, Big Weekend Liftout:6), which concerns the recent return to popularity of J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*.

Lockett maintains: “Tolkien's epic *The Lord of the Rings* is one of the three or four landmark novels in English of the 20th century and will out-live its present readers, who are themselves almost two generations removed from those whom it first enchanted.

The book will still be read and loved long after most of its contemporaries have been reduced to dusty curiosities of only historical interest” (Please note: this also supports my later argument in this chapter concerning the value of the application of “time” as a means to assess the success of a literary object).

“There are academics and critics for whom these facts are a bitter provocation. For them, popular literature must be syrupy, shallow and sensational, because that is the necessary corollary of a proposition by which they live – namely that great, deep, complex books appeal only to the educated cognoscenti.

To themselves, in other words. It's necessary to them to believe this. It is one way by which they separate themselves from the common herd (my italics).

But *The Lord of the Rings* confounds them. It is long, rather slow – at least to start – vastly complex and written in a language which is occasionally infelicitous and inaccessible, but it is enormously and enduringly popular. They can't bear that. So it is necessary for them to attack it.

Here, they find themselves in a quandary. They cannot deny the scope of the work, its complexity, or its grandeur. They can try to deny its force. But they know that if they do, they will be laughed at. The immense scale of Tolkien's readership, and the palpable fact that his epic has written itself into the collective consciousness of the entire culture, refutes them".

⁹From Clive Bloom on Taste and the Canon:

"The concept of taste as a synonym for refined sensibility was a device inherently conservative, anti-democratic and reactionary, it served to separate and sift non-economically separable groups on lines as invisible as those of the phrenologist or spiritualist (whose own habits of mind reinforced the methods by which critics determined taste in the first place). In such a way political order in unruly and industrialized mass democracies could be maintained in other ways.

Taste became a special concern for an ability to understand the important modern work, instantly historicized into continuities of civilized taste and behaviour. This was the province of those experimentalists whose modernism was avidly collected by patrons with considerably educated palates. They were collecting, in their taste for the avant-garde, the very nature of the future. This cultural investment (also, of course, an economic speculation) was a form of refusal of the past which was apostrophized more and more as mere cliché.

F. R. Leavis & Eliot: "The validation of the contemporary work of literature by reference to 'tradition' and the appearance of a so-called fiction canon, creations of Eliot and Leavis respectively (Leavis based his ideas on Eliot), was the neurotic outcome of this new entity, *the instantly recognizable work of art* (my italics).

Rules seemed now to have replaced the work of longevity and common recognition. Once learned, these rules could be used to measure the new literary work and place it in the canon or *expel it into the abyss of popular taste* (my italics). In such a way, the work of literature, the new great novel, was either eternal in an instant or ephemeral and irrelevant. Taste was a weapon which had an aesthetic power beyond mere aesthetics. It crept into all areas of personal life as a marker of self-respect and integrity.

The guardian of the new culture of taste and refinement were always a minority. T. S. Eliot's *Criterion* never had more than 800 subscribers, and F. R. Leavis's supposedly influential *Scrutiny* never printed above 750 copies in the 1930s" (106-108).

¹⁰ *The Modern Home University: The English Language Its Beauty and Use*. Edited by J. M. Parrish and R. D. Coole. London:Odhams Press, 1935:5.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp61-2.

Camille Paglia Agrees with Robert Hughes:

She maintains: "The Humanities "unlike medicine, marine biology, and astrophysics are about great enduring human truths that in fact never change but are rediscovered again and again" . . . They are "about insight, illumination, wisdom" (Paglia, Camille. *Sex, Art, and American Culture: Essays*. London:Viking, 1992:220).

¹² Barbara Herrnstein Smith from her essay on the "Contingencies of Value":

"The debate over the proper place of evaluation in literary studies remains unresolved and is, I believe, unresolvable in the terms in which it has been formulated. Meanwhile, although evaluative criticism remains intellectually suspect, it certainly continues to be practised as a magisterial privilege in the classrooms of the literary academy and granted admission to its journals as long as it comes under the cover of other presumably more objective types of literary study, such as historical description, textual analysis, or explication . At the same time, however, the fact that literary evaluation is not merely an aspect of formal academic criticism but a

complex set of social and cultural activities central to the very nature of literature has been obscured, and an entire domain that is properly the object of theoretical, historical, and empirical exploration has been lost to serious enquiry" (*Canons*. Edited by Robert Von Hallberg. Chicago:University of Chicago Press, 1984:10).

¹³ New York:Hyperion, 1999:150-1.

¹⁴ Ibid., p171.

¹⁵ Harry Sounes: Bukowski on Money, Writing & Sex:

“‘And to think I used to work for 35c an hour,’ said Bukowski in genuine wonder. He was talking about the factory jobs he had worked at nearly all his adult life, most recently as a mail clerk in Los Angeles, sorting letters while the supervisor yelled at him to hurry up. He held that terrible job almost twelve years before leaving, when he was forty-nine, to become a writer. Everybody said he was mad – what about his pension? – but this proved he had been right. He held the money to his face.

‘Poetry, I love poetry,’ he said, kissing the bank notes. He meant it seriously, but couldn’t help making a joke that lived up to his image. ‘It’s better than pussy,’ he added, ‘almost’” (*Charles Bukowski: Locked in the Arms of a Crazy Life*. Edinburgh:Rebel Inc., 1998:6).

¹⁶ London:Panther, 1985:7.

A Pulp Perspective of My Past

A similar epiphany occurred in myself in 1973.

However, unlike Bukowski, at that moment, although I was a young man, I was not starving, or drinking nor trying to be a writer. On the contrary, I was disinterested fourteen year old high school student, who, for the first time in his life, was trying to be a reader.

However, the choice to read had not been my own, it had been thrust upon my weary frame, through the force of an unusual circumstance.

As the result of an illness the previous year, it was considered beneficial to my health; one: not to drink too much water, and two: not to place my kidneys in any situation which could endanger the continuation of their functioning, i.e., sport.

As I remember it, the summer heat was just beginning to melt the bitumen, when I smiled at the sports master, and handed him the gift certificate from my kidney specialist: it was an exemption from sport for life.

Later, the ramifications of this exoneration began to set in.

Sport was the whole of Tuesday and Thursday afternoons.

What was I going to do with seven hours of every week, for what seemed, an eternity?

At first I found some amusement watching everyone else sweat, while I sat in the shade of the Library.

But you soon tire of watching bullies kicking goals, or throwing their victims at medicine balls. And, as I was short-sighted, but was too vain to wear glasses, I could not see the girls practising. Therefore, the only thing of any interest on the whole of the oval, was an amalgamous blue and yellow blur of blonde hair and gym slips. And thus the closest thing that came to anything even remotely sexual, on those hot afternoons, was the lawn-beetles mating in the dry grass. This was the situation I had to overcome. And overcome it I did. Out of pure desperation. By choosing to read.

The first problem was in deciding what it was that I wanted to read. Intrinsicly, I knew that whatever it was, it must have nothing to do with school work. For that would have been perceived as studying, by both the students and the sports masters, which was not a healthy perspective from either faction. Therefore, unlike Bukowski, I decided to avoid the library with its ‘rows and rows of exceedingly dull books’, and begin by scouring the local Second-hand Book Exchange.

I had no idea what I was hoping to find. Although, while I was flipping through row after row of cheap, and often salacious paperbacks with their flagrant covers, and anonymous authors I remembered observing my grandmother settling into a comfortable chair, with a packet of cigarettes, and a glass of gin, to read book after book by someone called Agatha Christie. I went to the C’s, and found three novels written by Christie. I bought them, and they were the beginning of my education in Pulp literature.

However, the truth is, I did not like the Christie books at all. They seemed too artificial. Too contrived. The characters she drew appeared to me to be not drawn from life at all, but from some bourgeois upper-middle class drawing-room of her imagination. So I moved on to F, and read all of Ian Fleming’s spy novels. And immediately, I sensed their was enormous shift in the quality and craft of Fleming’s prose. Sure, essentially these novels were meant to be cartoonish, portraying one-dimensional characters reacting to implausible plot-lines in a two-dimensional

world. But, Fleming had something Christie did not: sex. Yet, this was a significant factor, because in order to make the sex scenes successful, he had to convince us that his characters were human. Whether an international terrorist group could steal a nuclear device, or rob Fort Knox, or otherwise threaten the security of the world did not matter. What really mattered was the inter-personal relationships between the characters. Whether James Bond would ever do anything more than flirt with Miss Money Penny, or whether he could convert Pussy Galore from lesbianism, or recover from the death of his wife on their honeymoon. For me, by instilling his characters with human prejudices, foibles, vanities, tastes, and desires, Ian Fleming proved that there was value to be found in reading paperbacks. And yet, after all this, I have to admit that none of Ian Fleming's books were my equivalent to Bukowski's benchmark experience with John Fante's *Ask The Dust*. This book arrived a little later.

One afternoon, when I walked into the Book Exchange, the proprietor was leafing through a book. He had a quizzical look on his face. When I asked him, what was so amusing, he responded that the person who had traded that particular book, had declared it to be the weirdest novel he had ever read. I walked over to him, and picked the book up. It was entitled *The Naked Lunch* by someone called William S. Burroughs. The blurb on the back exclaimed it to be both 'horrible and haunting', 'gruesome, tormented, and chillingly pessimistic'. Reading like 'Ulysses put through a speeded-up projector onto a distorted cinema screen' (London: Corgi: 1972/1959). I have to admit, although at the time I did not know what all this meant, I was intrigued. I bought the book. Not because the claims on the blurb had convinced me of its merits, but because I could not believe that any novel could possibly live up to such acclamations.

However, as I sat under the shade of the Library, with my school companions blurring around me in a film of sweat, and I read William S. Burroughs's idiosyncratic prose, I felt exactly as Charles Bukowski had described after discovering John Fante's *Ask the Dust*: 'like a man who had found gold in the city dump'. Certainly, *The Naked Lunch* was like no other novel I had ever encountered. It lived up to everything its promoters had claimed, and surpassed my own expectations many fold. In fact, by the end of the sports session, it had completely transformed any concepts I had held for the possibilities inherent within the construction of the novel. Albeit, not that the word *construction* would seem to be particularly applicable in this case. On the contrary, precisely the opposite, in fact. That is, although *The Naked Lunch* had, as Bukowski expressed for Fante's prose, the 'feeling of something *carved* into it'. It also contained the feeling of someone disgruntlingly trying to short-circuit this artistic process by blasting the sculpture with repeatedly with 30 gauge buckshot. Then, disappointed with the effect, or perhaps fearing failure, remorsefully trying to glue the pieces back in an ad hoc fashion. Yet, although this method is not always successful, Burroughs makes it perfectly clear, from the outset, that the dislocation we experience as a result of his technique was completely intentional. Without having read very many novels at the time, it was obvious to me, that this novel was an attack on the preconceived stipulations which had been established for traditional narrative. For instance, linear plotting had disappeared in favour of mini-narratives called 'routines', which could be interrupted by a multitude of digressions, some of which would be lost completely, while others might return at inopportune moments in a different part of the text. The same could be said for the characters. That is, although many of them were strongly realised, their importance became dissipated by the constant threat of their imminent demise, like haughty Shakespearean actors trying to retain their composure as the set falls apart beneath the feet.

Finally, I hope my last example provides some testament to what I believe it is most people miss when they read any of William S. Burroughs's texts, but particularly *The Naked Lunch*, and that is the sustained blackness of his humour. Whereas I can sympathise with Bukowski's sentiment for Fante's prose, when he proclaims that the 'humour and the pain were intermixed with a superb simplicity'. Fortunately for myself, there has always been more humour than pain in any of Burroughs's novels. Agreed, there were times, where his experimentation could be a difficult, if not painful reading experience. On those occasions, however, it has always been worth remembering what his experimentation achieved for literature, and for my own intellectual illumination. That is, that he opened my eyes to the unlimited possibilities available

to both narrative and the novel. Therefore, I would like to acknowledge that it is due to Burroughs, and his deconstruction of language and form, that I am writing this thesis today. His novel, *The Naked Lunch* has proven to be my ‘wild and enormous miracle’. And it is for this reason that it has remained my bench-mark text for gauging the aesthetic quality of all other texts throughout my life, and it shall continue to do so.

¹⁷ *Future Shock*. London:Pan, 1973:25-39.

¹⁸ *The New Yorker*, June 24/July 1, 1996.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp152-3.

²⁰ Clive Bloom sources these statistics as being quoted by Alvin Kernan, *The Death of Literature* (New Haven:Yale University Press, 1990:6).

²¹ Clive Bloom, p114.

²² Clive Bloom p115, refers here to Herbert I. Schiller, *Culture Inc.: The Corporate Takeover of Public Expressions* (New York:Oxford University Press, 1989:33).

²³ Clive Bloom refers here to Paul Fussell, *BAD or, The Dumbing of America* (New York:Summit Books, 1991:59-60).

²⁴ *Culture of Complaint: the Fraying of America*. London:Harvill, 1994:114.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp92-3.

²⁶ *An Aesthetics of Junk Fiction*. Athens:University of Georgia Press, 1990:227.

²⁷ “Raising Kids Online: What Can Parents Do?” *Time* May 10, 1999:46.

²⁸ Notes on the Recent Resurgence of the Book

Ruth Callaghan reports in her article “The Books Bites Back” (*The West Australian*, June 8, 2002:8), that thanks to Oprah Winfrey “the book is back”. She says, far from being superseded by electronic mediums, “suddenly tomes of all types are selling like recipe books on hotcakes”. “Australia’s \$1.2 billion book industry is thriving – producing thousands of new titles a year and racking up double-digit growth” . . . “Production of books in the United States soared 10 per cent last year, pushed by a massive 20 per cent rise in adult fiction titles. Book sales are rising in Britain and Europe” . . . “At the production end of the industry, things are also improving. Australia’s publishers are printing close to 10,000 new titles a year, beating the US in terms of releases per head of population.” While respected American researcher Bowker says “Britain tops the world for per capita production, releasing a new title for every 545 people”. Callaghan explains that the revival in reading in America has been attributed to Oprah Winfrey because those authors who carried her book club’s seal of approval have realised staggering increases in sales, on average from 30,000 to 500,000. Placing these authors in the best-seller lists.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p227.

³⁰ *72 Essays*. Sydney/London:Angus and Robertson, 1947:157.

³¹ Murdoch University, in Western Australia.

³² *Ibid.*, p94.

³³ *Ibid.*, p157.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp158-9.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p160.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p159.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p159.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p94.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p158.

⁴⁰ 1995:554-62.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p168.

⁴² Raymond Chandler: on How it Takes “Time” to Become Literature:

An excerpt from a letter by Raymond Chandler to H. F. Hose, (a contemporary of Chandler’s at Dulwich College, and subsequent master at the school, February 1951):

“I agree with you that most contemporary writing is rubbish. But hasn’t that always been true? The situation is no different over here, except that hardly anyone pays much attention to Latin or Greek any more. I think the English writers generally speaking are apt to be much more leisurely and urbane than ours, but these qualities do not seem to carry them very far. I suppose a generation gets the literature it deserves, just as it is said to get the government it deserves.

Most of us become impatient with the messiness that is around us and are inclined to attribute to the past a purity of line which was not apparent to the contemporaries of that past. The past after all has been sifted and strained. The present has not. The literature of the past has survived and it has prestige on that account, apart from its other prestige. The reasons for its survival are complex. The past is our university; it gives us our tastes and our habits of thought, and we are resentful when we cannot find a basis for them in the present. It is quite possible that they are just the same. You can't build a Gothic cathedral by assembly line methods; you can't get artistic stone masons from the union. For myself, I am convinced that if there is any virtue in our art, and there may be none at all, it does not lie in its resemblance to something that is now traditional, but which was not traditional when it was first produced. If we have stylists, they are not people like Osbert Sitwell – Edwardians who stayed up too late; nor are they pseudo-poet dramatists like T. S. Eliot and Christopher Fry; nor bloodless intellectuals who sit just at the edge of the lamplight and dissect everything and nothing in dry little voices that convey little more than the accents of boredom and extreme disillusion. It seems to me that there have been damn few periods in the history of civilization that a man living in one of them could have realized as definitely great. If you had been a contemporary of Sophocles, I think you might have thought Euripides a little vulgar. And if you had been an Elizabethan, I am quite sure you would have thought Shakespeare largely a purveyor of stale plots and over-elaborate rhetoric" (*The Raymond Chandler Papers: Selected Letters and Non-Fiction 1909-1959*. Edited by Tom Hiney and Frank MacShane. London:Hamish Hamilton, 2000:149-50).

⁴³ "Canon Fodder" *HQ Magazine* JAN/FEB, 1998:97.

⁴⁴ "Canon Fodder" *HQ Magazine* JAN/FEB, 1998:96.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p96.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p94.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p94.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p95.

⁴⁹ *Selected Letters of Raymond Chandler*. Edited by Frank MacShane. London:Jonathon Cape, 1981:81:69.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p97.

⁵¹ Cited Tony Goodstone in *The Pulps: Fifty Years of American Pop Culture*. Compiled and edited by Tony Goodstone. New York: Bonanza Books, 1970:v.

CHAPTER 7.

Pulp versus the Western Canon

For some literary critics writing a book that is popular and commercially successful
rates very high on the list of white-collar crime

Irwin Shaw¹.

Sturgeon's Law: 90% of Everything is Crap!

If we are not completely comfortable with any of the suggestions proposed in the previous chapter, there is another way to determine the quality of the literature we are reading. That is, by the application of Sturgeon's Law. Thomas J. Roberts reports, "for the aficionados of science-fiction, there is a formulation so well known reviewers allude to it simply as Sturgeon's Law". Put simply, the law dictates newcomers to the genre are to be informed ninety percent of science fiction is crap! However, this revelation is to be followed immediately with a disclaimer. It states this presupposition assumes – that fairly applied, of course – potentially ninety percent of *everything* is crap! Therefore, the law (fairly applied, of course), provides not only is ninety percent of science fiction potentially crap, but the same could be said for the whole of literature. As we are well aware, for some critics, ninety percent is not going anywhere near far enough. Certainly, the existence of such a law would appear to prove Salman Rushdie's ratio of 4999:1 was not such a particularly original formulation, after all. Although it must be admitted, his is, shall we say, definitely a more stringent, if not extreme variation of this notion. And yet, in comparing Sturgeon's Law to Rushdie's totalitarian ideal, we may be doing it an enormous injustice. This is because, unlike Rushdie's 99.9 percent formula, Roberts asserts "the law does not actually believe 90 percent of science fiction is crap at all". On the contrary, he argues, "the law's formulation was designed as a counter-measure to defuse the opinions of reductionist critics and reviewers", such as Rushdie. The law, in fact, is the exact opposite of Rushdie's exclusivist formula. It decrees *everything* which is written within the genre is automatically part of the science fiction megatext, regardless of any tenuous claims to

quality. Rather than restricting itself to some critics' nebulous presuppositions regarding the nature of the reader's taste, or the quality of the texts, the law on the other hand, prepares the reader for the possibility of encountering vast quantities of writing of various quality: much of which may be below par. Roberts says, it warns them: "*beyond this point read at your own risk*". However, it also promises any such risk is negligible, because unlike Rushdie's schema (which offered our regular reader of a hundred novels per year the slim possibility of encountering one novel of quality), the law guarantees the chance of discovering at least ten quality texts, if not more. We know this to be true, because Sturgeon's Law is a generalisation with its tongue firmly stuck in its cheek. And therefore, as Roberts proclaims, "it does not actually require that the other ninety percent of the novels within the genre must be all bad. Indeed, far from it"². As for the real figure? Well, the law leaves that up to the reader to decide – not the critic.

Pulp is not Junk: The Failure of Thomas J. Roberts's Aesthetics for Junk Fiction

Although Thomas J. Roberts describes Sturgeon's Law correctly in his *An Aesthetics of Junk Fiction* (1990). When it comes to its application to his subject matter, he applies it incorrectly. It is this gross mis-application of the law, which will ultimately form the core of my argument against Roberts's aesthetics. In what he describes as his *defence* of Junk Fiction,³ Roberts suggests a model for literature as a whole which results in him actually doing a disservice to stated cause. Indeed, Roberts's mistaken reading, I will argue, leads him to have more in common with Salman Rushdie's exclusivist formula for canonic elitism, than of the inclusivist science-fiction fraternity whose genre he is purporting to represent. Please note – considering many people hold a vast array of notions concerning exactly what the Western Canon might look like, for the purpose of this thesis, any reference to the canon presumes it would look like Harold Bloom's Appendixes in *The Western Canon* (1995)⁴. Rather than applying an inclusivist model of the law which would have extended fair results to both canonic and non-canonic texts equally, Roberts fails to appreciate that if 90 percent of Junk fiction is crap, so too is 90 percent of the Western Canon. This is a reading of the law, as we have previously discussed, which ensures neither faction is wholly perfect, nor being summarily dismissed out of hand. And where both Junk, and Canonic literature, would have the same opportunity to provide quality texts to the reader. On the contrary, Roberts's application of the law, essentially implies the Canonic is the 10 percent of literature containing the 100 percent of quality, while Junk Fiction is the 90 percent which he considers to contain 100 percent of the crap! Albeit, this does come with a

disclaimer. I should mention as a defender of Junk fiction, Roberts's aesthetics comes with an unhealthy propensity of these. So much so, as I was reading Roberts's dissertation, I was constantly reminded of a statement made by Clive Bloom, where he claimed "there had been those who had defended popular fiction (in its middle-brow/low-brow and pulp incarnations) but in many cases this had been tempered with disclaimers in order to placate those who felt anyone interested in popular culture (and therefore contemporary life) was a pathetic case"⁵. Roberts's actual statement was: "I do feel that much of what I hear, see, and read indeed deserves to be called junk". I would argue Roberts's use of the word "junk" is being used at this juncture in its derogatory sense, and not as a classification which might illicit some sense of pride for his chosen subject matter. Although, as I have said, he does temper this accusation by adding a disclaimer. This is, that the parameters of his statement does apply, to at least: "some" Canonical Fiction⁶.

It is more than evident from these statements, Roberts has been misguided in his application of Sturgeon's Law. The fact that his formulation decrees most of Junk Fiction belongs to a derogatory category, while only "some" of his revered canonical literature might be tainted, leads me to believe his system of classification is closer to the elitism of Rushdie's position, rather than the altruistic spirit of the science fiction community. And yet, this remains, but one of the many contradictions inherent in Roberts's work. Another, is although it is clear from the painstaking length to which he has gone in his attempt to define Junk Fiction as an aesthetics worthy of academic consideration, that Roberts has an obvious enthusiasm for his subject matter (particularly science fiction). However, ultimately, his thesis does not attempt to renegotiate the distinctions between Junk Fiction and the canonical literature of the academy because he insists, incorrectly, that "these two categories never interact at

all”⁷. What is more if his belief were true, it is hard to conceive how Roberts could possibly have envisaged his approach might hope to remedy, or defend, the status of Junk Fiction within the literary academy. If anything, although his aesthetics does manage to highlight some interesting facets concerning the function popular fiction plays in contemporary society, essentially his argument is nothing other than a defence of the status quo. Therefore, although it may appear we are both attempting to assess the same aesthetic object, it is here I believe our paths divide. More importantly, it is for this reason I would argue that my definition for Pulp Literature is not the same as Roberts’s is for Junk Fiction. Or, for clarity’s sake: why it is I believe Pulp is not Junk. As this fundamental difference between Roberts’s aesthetics and my own is what I consider a macro-structural problem, I do not intend to spend a great deal of time debating the micro-structural details of his argument. Rather, I will be drawing attention to some of the contradictions inherent in the structure of his model, and some of his disclaimers.

It is my contention that, it was Roberts’s intention, from the outset, to assert his aesthetics of Junk Fiction was a reassessment of this area of research, but then to subordinate it, or subdue it, by forcing it to comply with the preconceived academic notions of the subject’s relationship to the Western Canon. Thus, for myself, Roberts’s dissertation equates not to a *defence* of Junk Fiction, but a betrayal. I can say this with a clear conscience because early in his introduction, Roberts states “although he had chosen to refer to these stories as *junk fiction*, it was not without misgivings and regret”. For the phrase, he proclaims, is “offensive to the very writers whose minds and work I admire deeply and seek to defend”⁸. However, if he genuinely felt so strongly about the negative effect of this phrase – which I agree wholeheartedly is a lousy terminology that emits rank connotations – then why did he not change it? He uses other terms

within his thesis with which he could have easily replaced this awful misnomer: Paperback Fiction, the Paperback Bookscape, Popular Literature, or Contemporary Fiction all come to mind. None of which have the stink implicit in Junk Fiction. And yet, my own suspicion is these positive terms would not have suited Roberts's actual motive. That is, to make his subject appear as unappealing as possible to his literary peers. In his defence, Roberts maintains he chose the phrase "because it made us face the problems of these stories *honestly*" (my italics)⁹. But what price does this honesty exact? For my mind, it affords Roberts one valuable opportunity, and this is to denigrate his subject matter in the dishonest guise of an objective defender. And yet, as we have already witnessed, despite his previous reservations regarding *his own* choice of terminology, Roberts is not so shy when it comes to applying this disparaging term to the subject of his aesthetic: contemporary paperback literature. Much of which, we must remember, he determines, unequivocally, without a hint of misgivings or regret to those authors he might offend in his so-called defence, as deserving "to be called junk". In the derogatory sense of the word. Of course, Robert's position raises some obvious questions.

Such as, who does his aesthetic defence offend? Which authors? Of which texts? And when the answer arrives, it is quite blatantly clear. We can rest assured, it is not any of the Canonical variety. We know this, because according to Roberts's definition, Junk Fiction is diametrically opposed to Canonical Fiction. This is made perfectly clear, when he argues, Junk "is the kind of fiction that does not ask to be read more than once, and it certainly does not expect to be studied"¹⁰. This is a point Roberts reiterates throughout his thesis, as a way of separating the chaff from the wheat. He constantly reasserts how the Paperback Bookscape "rarely offers its readers a monumental text". Claiming if it did, its readers would "most likely become annoyed by the fact such a

text was asking them to give it careful attention”. For these readers, he maintains it is “the systems, the traditions, the genres, that keep people reading through *the work they themselves think mediocre*” (my italics). They do not want a literature with monumental texts, “which might require thoughtful and experienced reading”¹¹. This would explain, Roberts argues, why it is when “people who have learned to read literature before anything else come upon paperbacks, and they are looking for books and authors to study, that they are deeply disappointed: for the texts they find in the Paperback Bookscape are thin, obvious, and repetitive”. Furthermore, he maintains, it would explain why these readers say the texts are “not worth re-reading, or rather, they mean, that they are not worth studying”¹². Unable to resist hammering the last nail in the coffin, Roberts asserts “even those students who have developed an interest in Junk Fiction are not interested in reading texts about it”¹³. And yet, there would seem to be some obvious contradictions inherent to this argument. For instance, if Roberts were correct, and it were the case that nobody studied Junk Fiction at all, who therefore, would he be writing his aesthetics for? Who would his potential audience be? If not, the academic, nor the disinterested student, not the lay reader: then who? Similarly, it would certainly be of interest to know what it is that the students who populate Roberts’s classes in science fiction at the University of Connecticut do *not* study.

Now to return to my macro-structural problem with Roberts’s aesthetic. Roberts’s aesthetic distinction for Junk Fiction is founded on the assumption that there is an agreement to his compartmentalisation of literature into two groups. The Literary Bookscape, which is composed of two types of Learned Fiction (namely Canonical and Serious Fiction), and what he refers to as the Paperback Bookscape, which is comprised of two types of Popular fiction (Plain and Junk). My argument, to put it as succinctly as possible, is that although I do not have a problem with the notion for a category of a

Literary Bookscape composed of canonic texts, I expect it should contain only canonic texts. That is, texts which appear in the canon, which for the sake of this argument, means Harold Bloom's *The Western Canon*, but it could also mean any other formations based on the traditional conception of what the canon may look like (I intend to discuss the problematics surrounding this issue in our next subsection). This would mean that much of what Roberts refers to as Serious Fiction, which is what I consider to be uncanonised contemporary fiction, would necessarily revert back to the auspices of Popular Fiction: where it belongs. Moreover, such a re-classification would bring Roberts's aesthetics for Junk Fiction closer to my own conception for Pulp Literature. As many of these texts would then become the Top Ten percent of quality available to Junk, or Pulp Fiction, through my own application of Sturgeon's Law. Equally, this re-classification would expose how it was only due to Roberts's removal of these serious contemporary texts from the Popular Fiction category, he could make the claims he does. For it is more than apparent, without Serious Fiction, Junk, like Pulp becomes a body without a head. Or a Bookscape without a brain. Or as Roberts prefers to refer to it, like "a literature without monumental texts". In fact, it is on this point, I intend to challenge Roberts's aesthetic next.

As I have previously mentioned, Roberts's categorisation for Learned Fiction, which inhabits his definition for the Literary Bookscape, contains two sections: Canonical Fiction, and Serious Fiction. Given what we understand from our previous discussion concerning the extremely unlikely possibility of the canonisation of any of the serious contemporary literature categorised in a model such as the one proposed for Serious Fiction, I suggest we should first take a closer inspection at what it is exactly that Roberts is prescribing for his category of Canonical Fiction. For instance, he maintains Canonical Fiction "contains that part of the fiction of the past that still interests us"¹⁴.

And yet, as his categorization unfolds, it soon becomes clear there is much more at stake than what appears here. This is due to the fact that, for Roberts's, the Literary Bookscape also contains a subcategory which he refers to as The Secular Sacred. It is here he locates those texts, he tells us, which "the reading of, is an act of reverence". They demand, that if we have any difficulty understanding them, "we should blame ourselves, recognizing it is we who are dull or ignorant or slow". This is because when a book is sacred, Roberts pronounces, "it is the dissatisfied reader who is always wrong". Mainly these books, are religious texts such as the Gospels, the Talamud, and the Koran. However, Roberts does include books of less divine origin into this company: namely Shakespeare, Dante, Goethe, and Cervantes¹⁵. His other subsection which falls under this umbrella term is: The Classics. Once again, we are told the books which inhabit this classification (Roberts refers to James Joyce, T. S. Eliot, and Charles Dickens), do so because "they win from us that odd kind of reading-rereading we call studying"¹⁶. As I have said before, although I do not have a particular problem with canon formation. However, if we recall our discussion in the previous chapter concerning the intangibilities of aesthetic evaluation, I find it extremely difficult to comprehend how Roberts can justify this categorization. Whether a text is re-read, or studied might be a useful indicator of literary value, until we consider that this kind of reading is usually performed by students largely against their will. As such texts are normally chosen by the institution, and *not* by their readers. And yet, to be fair, Roberts is well aware of this anomaly. He points out, on the very first page of his thesis: "*at least we are told* (my italics) – that these stories require a highly specialized response, one marked with a deep respect, by close attention, and by careful rereading called *studying*"¹⁷. It is shortly after this stage, that his stance on evaluation, starts to become somewhat confused. By page three, Roberts declares that "although the question of

whether one novel is better than another in an absolute sense – independently of a human observer – is a fascinating question, it is irrelevant in this study”¹⁸. A position he reasserts again before page fifty, when he maintains “questions of absolute and relative literary value are not at issue, for we are not concerned with whether one novel is, or can be, intrinsically superior to another”¹⁹. If this is so? The question therefore beckons. Why does he continue to form a category for Canonical Fiction which relies upon the superiority of one literary text over another? Once again, to be fair to Roberts, I would have been prepared to forgive him this evaluative indiscretion. If – as a *defender* of Junk Fiction – he had argued that by not accepting questions of absolute and relative literary value no such categories could be formed and all literature was relative, and value free. Yet, he does not. As a *defender* of Junk Fiction, Roberts insists in fact (without any form of aesthetic evaluation other than we have already discussed), that “the novel recognized as canonical literature also tells a story, and *almost always the story it offers is superior*” (my italics). To add insult to injury, he adds, that “some apologists for the paperbacks become angry when critics say this”. A response, I would argue, which should not be wholly unexpected. Although I do not regard myself as an “apologist for the paperbacks”, rather as a defender of Pulp Literature, and its accompanying Culture, I can certainly empathise with any feelings of anger at such a ludicrous evaluative proposal. These are feelings, I should add, which became further exacerbated, when he later proclaims that “one *unpretentious* (my italics) but useful definition of canonical fiction is that they are “*the best stories written before we were born*” (my italics). Painful, though this may be, however. What is more important than any feelings of dismay, is this statement is evidence that Roberts’s definition for the canonic is not interested in, and nor does it include, serious contemporary literature. This is a point he reinforces, in the conclusion to his

definition. Where he states “it is when readers compare the typical story of their own time with the atypically superior stories of the past that they come to feel that the Paperback Bookscape is offering a literature without texts – that is, that the Paperback Bookscape cannot compete on a text-for-text basis with the Literary Bookscape”²⁰.

For the sake of clarity, I should reiterate at this point, that although I have said that I do not have a problem with canon formation, as such. This does not mean that I consider these formations to be without problems. They are not. And Roberts’s aesthetic is a perfect example of this. For instance, where I take issue with critics such as Roberts, is when they construct their canons in a manner which deliberately weakens the status of their *implied* area of interest, and then later they utilise their own flawed formulations in order to denigrate their subject matter for demonstrating a propensity towards this weakness. This process can be seen to occur when Roberts argues that the lack of academic literary criticism surrounding contemporary paperbacks, compared to the vast quantity available for those texts which are deemed to be canonic, is indicative of a lack of aesthetic quality. He asserts that “the Paperback Bookscape has nothing to rival these works of theory or any of these hugely intricate verbal objects – works monumental in themselves but now further enriched with at least half a century, and in the case of the Greek classics as much as two millennia, of explanation, analysis, controversy”. And it is therefore due to the absence of such literary criticism that “it is hardly surprising that when readers who formed their expectations inside the Literary Bookscape visit the Paperback Bookscape they find the texts thin”²¹. However, Roberts’s statement proves to be founded on a form of Catch-22 assumption, which places Junk Fiction in a kind of no-win situation. This is because, he determines “the moment a body of commentary begins to accrue around a text or an *oeuvre*, this means that it is being accepted as a part of canonical literature”²². However, this seems to be a

slightly odd position to adopt, especially when we take into account that Roberts's dissertation on paperback fiction is meant to be a contribution designed to remedy this situation. And yet, in a sense, he may be right.

His statement implies that, the more writers like ourselves create a commentary around this form of literature, the sooner it will fit this criteria for canonisation. Not that I believe this to be Roberts's true objective. Particularly, as his negative attitude towards his subject is not only indicative of his betrayal of Junk Fiction, but a denigration of contemporary literature. Similarly, I consider Roberts's overt reverence for Canonical Fiction to be further evidence in support of my contention that his motives for categorising Serious Fiction under the umbrella of the Literary Bookscape are exceedingly suspect. By his own volition, Roberts declares that contemporary fiction can not compete with the superiority of the texts of literature's glorious past. And yet, perversely enough, he is prepared to remove Serious Fiction (which he wrongly defines as "contemporary fiction that is *not* (my italics) primarily concerned about popularity". Rather, he stipulates "it is aimed at a small, highly educated readership who will give these books the same thoughtful attention as those readers give canonical fiction"²³). Therefore he separates these other other forms of contemporary fiction in the Paperback Bookscape; Plain Fiction and Junk Fiction, and yet situates Serious Fiction as an inferior subset within his overdetermined Literary Bookscape. Why?

I believe Roberts's answer to this question would be to claim, as he does, that "*some* (my italics) of these texts are already considered canonic"²⁴. However, as we are aware from Elise Valmorbidia's observations in the previous chapter, that the Western Canon is not really concerned with contemporary fiction, I would argue the number of these texts would be virtually nil. As you may remember, in Morbivida's assessment, she maintained inclusion into the Western Canon "was not based on the vagaries of

contemporary taste, fashion, for acceptance, but on how well the texts in question survived the vicissitudes of time". She also reminded us, Dr Johnson's recommendation was we should allow at least one hundred years for the successful transition of a novel into a canonised "classic"²⁵. Whether we agree with this benchmark or not (I happen to think it is a useful indicator), the proof of its veracity rests in the fact that a perusal of Harold Bloom's *The Western Canon*, indicates very few contemporary texts have actually entered into this hallowed hemisphere. And there is a very good reason for this. If, for example, we take into account 5000 serious novels are published in America per year, and then multiply this figure by ten in order to represent America's contemporary literature over the last decade, we end up with 50,000 novels. If we then enquire as to how many of these 50,000 novels might appear in Bloom's comprehensive version of the Canon (which contains just over 3000 titles²⁶), the figure would appear very close to Salman Rushdie's ratio of 4999:1. This is an equation I believe Roberts is well aware of. That is, I consider he is not concerned with the canonisation of what I would assert to be uncanonised Popular Fiction. His motive is simply to deprive the Paperback Bookscape of its monumental texts. Therefore as such, my suggestion to Roberts would be, by all means remove these canonised contemporary texts from Serious Fiction, and file them under the banner of Canonic Fiction:

BUT DO NOT, IN ANY CIRCUMSTANCES,

ATTEMPT TO REMOVE THE BRAIN FROM THE PAPERBACK BOOKSCAPE.

For as we have continued to witness throughout this thesis, in its uncanonised contemporary authors; from Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler, (even Mickey Spillane), through to The Beats, Charles Bukowski, Robert M. Pirsig, and Hunter S. Thompson:

IT HAS A SERIOUS SIDE THAT IS NOT AFRAID OF POPULARITY,
AND IT DOES NOT LIKE TO BE MESSED WITH.

Now let us take this fight to the Western Canon.

Pulp versus the Western Canon

“I got no beef with the canon as such. It serves a legit purpose.” She looked around nervously and lowered her voice. “What I’m telling you is, it’s fixed. It’s not on the level.” She paused.

“What I’m telling you is, this is the biggest scam since the 1919 World Series.”

“Let me be blunt, Mr. Slade. Do you know what happens to people who stick their noses into other people’s business?”

On my left, Elizabeth Hardwick. On my right, one of her gorillas. I turned to the lady.

“I seen *Chinatown*,” I murmured.

“A good film,” she said. “But not a great one. The great ones are taught in film classes, in universities around the country. For example, anything by Eisenstein.”

“I saw one of his films once. It bored me stiff.”

“As it does avid film students around the world. But that, my friend, is how canonization works. All the films you’d never see if it were up to you, all the books you’d never read if you really had a choice – they are the very lifeblood of the canon.”

“You’re losing me, Lizzy.”

“Come, come. The nineteenth-century American novels that go on for hundreds of mind-blowing pages about cetaceans. The endless Russian novels about theodicy,

suffering, and salvation, with their unpronounceable cast of thousands. Where would they be without the required reading list?”

“Out of print?”²⁷

Is Henry Louis Gates, Jr.’s opinion, in his entertaining essay “Canon Confidential”, correct in his assessment that the Western Canon is “not on the level”. That it is, in fact: “fixed”? The short answer to this question is, yes. Albeit, although, the shorter answer would naturally be, no (as it only requires two letters). However, this response, of course, would not – under any circumstances – be representative of the truth. Should we be concerned about this situation? On this occasion, I would choose the shorter answer, and say no. This is because, regardless of whether Gates’s view of the canon as a “scam” proves to be correct, or not, I would argue that, as long as any proposed canon has been constructed in a responsible manner, it can “serve a legit purpose” as an indicator in understanding what various literary critics may consider to be, as Thomas J. Roberts referred to as: “the best stories written before we were born”²⁸. Indeed, what I wish to demonstrate here, is how Roberts’s reverence for the sanctity, or sacredness for a shared notion of the Western Canon, is an attitude which is more than flawed: it is completely redundant. To refresh our memories concerning his juxtaposition between his so-called aesthetic for the defence of Junk Fiction, and the Western Canon, the reader may remember Roberts espouses the view that “nothing is sacred in the Paperback Bookscape”. The writers of paperbacks, he says, “are not in awe of their readers nor are their readers in awe of them”²⁹. Moreover, he adds: “slow minds read paperbacks”, “juvenile minds read paperbacks”, and “sick minds read paperbacks”.

While some writers, “are sick or juvenile or slow and write for people like themselves”. And finally, he concludes that paperbacks as a class, “are written for wearied minds – sick minds wearied, slow minds wearied, good minds wearied”³⁰. What is more, Roberts proclaims “it is this absence of professional solemnity that guarantees the Paperback Bookscape will lack the atmosphere of reverential awe that is characteristic of all high-art environments, including the Literary Bookscape”³¹.

In response to Roberts’s over-reverential attitude towards the canon, I would argue it is representative of an attitude in the literary establishment, which Darko Suvin accurately diagnosed over twenty years ago in his book *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* (1979), and it is one which is still prevalent to a lesser degree today. Suvin’s observation, maintained a discipline which refused to take into account 90 per cent or more of what constituted its domain seemed to not only have large zones of blindness but also to run serious risks of distorted vision in the small zone it focused on (so-called high lit.). The question Suvin is raised, was whether this “small zone” of literature deserves such disproportionate approbation?³² The simple answer to this question, for any number of reasons, is it does not. Firstly, and one of the most important reasons, is that proposed by Jan Gorak, in the investigations outlined in his book *The Making of the Modern Canon* (1991). Gorak claims, that “no review of the classical evidence will support any nostalgia for a time when everyone agreed about the unquestioned authority behind the word *canon*”³³. What this indicates, he argues, is that “no homogenizing entity called ‘the Canon’ ever existed”³⁴. To the contrary, rather than a closed, static, or rigid form of exclusion, Gorak manages to trace the root of the term to an analogy used by Aristotle where he declares “the *canon* should be as flexible as the light ‘leaden rule’ [*molibdinios kanon*] used by the builders of Lesbos, which should not be so rigid that it cannot be constantly readjusted to the demands of the people who use it”³⁵. Arguably,

Aristotle's formula would hardly appear to be advocating the rigid elitism, and exclusivity that Roberts's "distorted" aesthetic ideal of the modern canon would eventually embrace. This interpretation is supported by Gorak. He maintains "the conviction the canon survives only by virtue of institutional control and sponsorship has made it difficult to argue for the intrinsic merit and genuine worth of the works included in it". And that although, it is traditional to suggest that some works are "more linguistically or aesthetically rewarding" (nee Roberts) or "more humanly moving than others, and that this explains their status as objects of study, this appeal to emotional or evaluative criteria has fallen dramatically out of favour"³⁶. Therefore, given what we know from our previous discussions concerning the dubious questions surrounding the absolute and relative literary value of the texts within literature, I consider it was this lack of grounds for exclusion, which prompted Gates to claim that the canon was "fixed". Indeed, Gorak's investigation seems to have uncovered evidence which supports Gates's claim. Gorak points out "from *Paradise Lost* to *Moby Dick*, canonical works have always allied themselves with a spectrum of vested interests which include male dominance, Anglo-Catholic orthodoxy, national self-definition, and professional aggrandizement"³⁷. Even more significantly perhaps, the most ardent defender of the institution, and the author of his own idealisation of the subject in *The Western Canon*, Harold Bloom, admits it is "not on the level", as Gates put it. Painted into a corner by the current back-lash of argument against the canon, Bloom reluctantly concedes that "all canons, including our currently fashionable counter-canon, are elitist"³⁸. Furthermore, adding to Roberts's woes, Bloom warns us "*no one* (my italics) has the authority to tell us what the Western Canon is". He maintains that "from about 1800 to the present day, it cannot be, precisely the list I give, or that anyone else might give. If it were, that would make such a list a mere fetish, just another commodity"³⁹.

The line of reasoning, which lies behind Harold Bloom's claim, is one we are well acquainted with. And it is one which supports our criticism of Salman Rushdie. That is, there are simply too many books involved for one reader, or certainly one critic, to assess – justly. A factor, Bloom obviously must have encountered in his recent compilation of texts, which *he* presumes to be canonical. He proclaims, “it is now, virtually impossible to master the Western Canon”. What is more, he asserts, “we have reached a point at which a lifetime's reading is scarcely enough” to accommodate even the three thousand books which he decrees to possess the authentic cognitive and imaginative difficulties that are prerequisite for inclusion into his own version of the canon⁴⁰. Although, admittedly, at first glance, his proposition of a *lifetime's reading* for three thousand texts may not seem to be as daunting as Rushdie's five thousand novels: *per year*. However, this figure is compromised by the fact, that Bloom is in accord with what would appear to be Thomas J. Roberts's central determinant for canonic inclusion. He asserts “one ancient test for the canonical remains fiercely valid: unless it demands rereading, the work does not qualify”⁴¹. Whether this criteria is valid or not. It does predicate that all of these texts require to be re-read, at least once. A distinction, of course, which automatically doubles Bloom's reading requirements to six thousand, mostly difficult readings, in a single lifetime. This requirement of enforced repetition, is one Bloom realises, would be particularly unpalatable to many of today's regular readers. However, his suggested solution to this problem, throws into sharp relief the reductionist elitism I do have “a beef” with when it comes to canon formation. Bloom's ideal, he dictates, would be to refine the three thousand texts he has chosen from the history of western literature, not to four hundred texts. Nor even to just fifty. Ultimately, it would contain only the works of twenty-six writers⁴². This figure could be achieved, Bloom insists through the strict application of his criteria for determining

“greatness”. Unfortunately, Bloom’s method for ascertaining this rarefied level of quality (in a theoretical climate which is already suspicious of ambiguous evaluative formulations), turns out to be the recognition of a heightened sense of *strangeness* (my italics) within these texts. They must exhibit, what he prescribes as “a mode of originality that either cannot be assimilated, or that so assimilates us that we cease to see it as strange”⁴³. Although I happen to believe some texts are intrinsically better than others, possibly even ‘great’ (whether this is provable, or not). I would argue the oxymoronic obtuseness of a strangeness which is not strange, is hardly an adequate contribution for the aesthetic evaluation of literary texts. On the contrary, such a methodology, simply reinforces the delusional paucity of any such criteria. Furthermore, if such a formulation were to be employed, in order to refine the Western Canon to a manageable sound-byte, then why not simply just reduce it to Shakespeare, or even better, just to *Hamlet*? Then we could argue for its omission – and be done with it. The notion of Bloom’s ideal canon, raises the question, of course, as to what might then happen to the thousands of discarded canonical, or potentially canonical texts, which are to be ejected from the sanctity of the Western Canon? That is, without the guarantee of support from the required reading lists of the school syllabus, and government-funded libraries – where would these texts end-up?

Once again, Henry Louis Gates Jr., gives us the straight dope:

Heaped high on the conveyor belt, thousands and thousands of books were being fed into a belching, grinding mechanical maw.

Turned into pulp.

I could make out only some of the titles. There were fat novels by James Jones and

Erskine Caldwell and Thomas Wolfe and James T. Farrell and Pearl Buck. Thin novels by Nelson Algren and William Saroyan. The old Brooks and Warren *Understanding Poetry* nestled beside the collected plays of Clifford Odets. I tried to lookaway, but my eyes were held by a sick fascination. *Butterfield 8* and *The Big Sky*, *Young Lonigan* and *Manhattan Transfer*, *Darkness at Noon* and *On the Road* – the literary has-beens of our age, together at last, blended into high-fiber gruel⁴⁴.

Why Pulp is not Cult: Criticism of Thomas R. Whissen's Cult Canon Formation

If Jan Gorak is correct, and there is no historical precedent to support the presumed authority behind the formation of the Western Canon as we know it, this lack of consensus proves it cannot justifiably exist. Or, on the other hand, if the composition of the Western Canon that does exist, proves to be one which is unrepresentative of the category it purports to support, as is the case with Harold Bloom's reductionist ideal, then I believe Henry Louis Gates Jr. is correct in his assumption these homeless texts would revert back, if not physically, as he would have it, to pulp. At the worst they make up what Clive Bloom refers to as the canon's "other" – Pulp Fiction. At the beginning to his book *Cult Fiction: Popular Reading and Pulp Theory* (1996), Bloom states "the other of the canon was pulp and pulp was also its bastard offspring"⁴⁵. However, I do not intend to discuss the problems surrounding Clive Bloom's binary at this point. Rather, I simply wish to draw the reader's attention to the fact, which is apparent even from his title, that within Bloom's definition: the terms Pulp and Cult are synonymous.

It is for this reason, I wish to separate him, at this stage, from our other theorists, who I believe share a similar view of Cult Literature. They are Thomas R. Whissen, the author of the excellent *Classic Cult Fiction: a Companion to Popular Cult Literature* (1992)⁴⁶, and Andrew Calcutt and Richard Shephard who co-authored the equally essential *Cult Fiction: a Reader's Guide* (1998)⁴⁷. The argument to be put under

scrutiny here, is if the Western Canon did not exist, then Cult Fiction would then necessarily fall under the umbrella Pulp Literature. However, if it does exist, and we can to some extent respect Clive Bloom's binary with Pulp being the "other" to the canon, then Cult Fiction becomes something different altogether. It becomes an autonomous category, which straddles both of these divisions, and in doing so, recontextualises them for their specialised readership. What is more it will be shown by attempting to determine which texts belong within its confines, that an investigation into Cult Fiction, can further expose the dilemma surrounding the prospect of any kind of canon formation.

I should like to point out that although I happen to agree with Jan Gorak, that all such versions of the Western Canon, or any form of canon formation in general, must exist without legitimate authority. I also happen to believe that these illegitimate, or "toothless" canons are preferable to none at all. That is, any assistance in locating what may well prove to be exemplary texts, not just from the past, but also from the increasing deluge of contemporary publishing, is greatly welcomed. Therefore, in this sense, although it is clear that canon formation of any form is flawed, I also happen to share in Gates's view, that these canons also "serve a legit purpose". This purpose, to be precise, is to act as *guides* to reading, never to *prescribe* reading. What is more, I would stress, it would be under this pretence, and this pretence alone, that I could find myself supporting Harold Bloom's three thousand volume vision for the Western Canon, not his whimsical ideal containing just twenty-six writers. That is, I subscribe to the view, that although all canons are obviously elitist, the smaller they are, then exponentially, the more elitist they become. Robert Hughes would appear to confirm this opinion, when he warns us that "the idea we can construct a hierarchy of Timeless Values, and maintain it against the vicissitudes of the present is wrong". However, this

does not mean he is suggesting we should be “junking the classics”. Indeed, what Hughes is advocating, is that we should be moving in the opposite direction to Harold Bloom’s minimalist ideal. He argues, “the trouble with rigid, exclusionary canons of Great Writing is that they will ossify at a time when reading should be *expansive* – not exclusive”⁴⁸.

Ultimately, what this debate shows, is whether they are expansive, exclusive, legitimate, or not: canons of taste do exist. Moreover, as Harold Bloom points out in the defence of his own canon formation, “not only are such canons not restricted to literature, but they must exhibit the same kinds of aesthetic problems we associate with the formation of literary canons”. He points out if the literary canons are “the product only of class, racial, gender, and national interests, presumably the same should be true of all other aesthetic traditions, including music and the visual arts”⁴⁹. As an avid viewer of televised awards ceremonies, I would concur with Bloom’s assessment that there appears to be an imbalance in the weight of criticism as it applied to literature, which does not seem to find a correlative within these other aesthetic traditions. This may simply prove to be an indication of the double-standards inherent within these media. Or, on the other hand, it might be more than just a hint that the general public does not take the impossibility of the grounds for evaluative judgment as seriously as some literary critics might think they should. I say this, due to the fact that after a lifetime of discerning viewing the situation has never arisen where an actor, director, producer, cinematographer, stage/set or costume designer, singer, comedian, or T. V. personality has handed back their Oscar, Logie, Emmy, Grammy, ARIA, AFI, BAFTA, Tony, or Golden Globe (for being judged ‘the best’ in their field), due to a crisis in their belief in the lack of credibility which may surround the current modes of aesthetic judgment. I have waited breathlessly, for this moment. The moment when Geoffrey

Rush would heave a pensive sigh, and say: "I am sorry. It is with grave regrets, with all conscience, I cannot accept this award tonight for Best Male Actor in the motion picture *Shine*, because I firmly believe, at this point in time, that the foundation for any such evaluative judgments must be constructed on a flawed set of aesthetic imperatives. Hopefully, this awful theoretical predicament may change sometime in the very near future. It is until then, I must thank you, and the Academy, and offer my regrets. Good night". He then returns the Oscar to Billy Crystal, and walks off the stage, to a standing ovation.

Glib, as this may appear, I believe the fact this situation is never likely to occur in my lifetime, is evidence that Harold Bloom's concern that literature is bearing the brunt of a theoretical witch-hunt is valid. Or that the views espoused in certain theoretical debates do not reflect those in a wider community where one aesthetic object can, and is, intrinsically thought of to be superior to another. Where, for instance, the notion of the *superiority* of certain cult television shows and movies, such as *Star Trek*, *The X Files*, or *Star Wars*, to *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* over others within these formats, is not debated rationally and quietly by some devoted fanbase, rather it is asserted maniacally, with totalitarian zeal. For the hardliners, the superiority of these shows wins them a life-long appreciation which borders on the certifiable. However, this quasi-religious dedication is largely based around the assumption these shows in some way have been instrumental in changing the way these people view or respond to the world. And therefore, in this sense, such demonic obsession with these shows should be seen as a form of *homage*. Or as a way of maintaining the connection or retaining this perspective, for whatever reason, to keep 'The Force' alive. However, according to Thomas R. Whissen, there is nothing new in this type of response to Cult texts. He points out "long before the multimedia fixations of the X, Y, or Z Generation,

Cult obsessives founded their infatuations in books”. That is “although the word “cult” is used quite freely these days to identify anything that is offbeat, and kind of quirky, usually something that is not commercially successful but has a devoted following”⁵⁰ . In fact, Whissen claims, “Cult books have been around ever since the novel became a genre in the eighteenth century”⁵¹. With the honour for the first cult book, going to one of the founding fathers of the School of Romanticism, in Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, which was published in 1774⁵². He also predicates cult fiction as a natural outgrowth of Romanticism, and a “revolutionary movement in art and thought that dethroned reason and objectivity in favour of emotion and intuition”⁵³.

Thomas R. Whissen is not alone in his view. Although Andrew Calcutt and Richard Shephard might not agree with his choice of *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, as a corner-stone text. Goethe does not appear in their guide to Cult Fiction at all. However, one of their earliest exponents for cult writing, whom it could be argued well and truly, deserved to wear the mantle of “dethroned reason” in Romanticism’s extreme form, is the Marquis de Sade (1740-1814). Interestingly, these choices prove to be significant for a number of other reasons which are pertinent to our aim of establishing the differences between Cult and Pulp Fictions. For example, in his discussion of Goethe’s novel, Whissen remarks the author was only twenty-four when he wrote it, and “its notoriety caused him great embarrassment as he grew older. So much so, he eventually denounced its excesses, and would have disowned the book if he could have”⁵⁴. This supports Calcutt and Shephard’s assessment, that from the outset, it has always been the reader’s, not the publishers, or the authors who determine which books become cult texts. They argue, “this shows how readers not writers can put the cult into cult fiction, in light of or sometimes despite of the life and times of the

author and his text”⁵⁵. This also appears to be true of the Marquis de Sade, who Calcutt and Shephard would suggest is successful as a cult icon “despite his life as a multiple rapist, torturer, and proto-murderer”⁵⁶. Whereas, on the other hand, Whissen indicates Goethe’s success appears to be in his survival as cult writer despite his text. He maintains “it is curious to note how many cult books of modern times, so ardently admired in their day, have become almost unreadable to a later audience”. For instance, he remarks “*The Sorrows of Young Werther*, is readable today only to scholars of the Romantic movement who understand its excesses and appreciate its quaint charm”⁵⁷.

Goethe’s “quaint charm”, as opposed to the pornographic violence of de Sade’s opus, can give us some insight into the immense diversity of texts harboured within the polarity of good and evil, under the banner of Cult Fiction. As Calcutt and Shephard explain “the most charismatic cult writers are those who seem to have lived as saints, seers, or pioneers of consciousness at its extremes”. This is why, they say “writers such as Kathy Acker, William S. Burroughs, and Charles Bukowski, rank so highly. Their art does not survive, vampiric, off the life blood and experiences of others, rather they dip their pens in their own blood”⁵⁸. Whissen goes one stage further, by pronouncing the engagement in such forms of extremity should be considered as the first law for Cult Fiction. All Cult books, he dictates, must above all, “serve as the mirror in which the alienated see themselves reflected – and rejoice”⁵⁹. And yet, it is the fact they do, he asserts, is explanation enough. “For they have such a mesmerising effect on their readers, holding them in thrall with a passionate intensity that has much in common with obsessive love”⁶⁰. However, this love is not unconditional, Whissen argues, it is augmented by other factors. The contents of these books, he says “dream of a different, usually better, world – or warn against the direction they see the world heading, and as such, they expect, or demand a response”. And it is for this reason, Whissen points out,

they usually have few neutral readers. “One either rejects them as trivial or boring, or falls under their spell, and becomes a cult follower”⁶¹. Although Calcutt and Shephard, would clearly agree with Whissen on most of these points, they do go to some lengths to defuse the perception of Cult Fiction as an either/or proposition. That either the reader experiences complete mesmerisation leading to an instantaneous change of life, and personality, or otherwise, they must automatically dismiss all Cult texts. They argue, there is a middle ground, which might simply equate to sheer escapism. For them, “not every guy in a suit on the rush hour train reading a battered copy of *American Psycho* need necessarily be as unlovable as Patrick Bateman”. While on the other hand, “not every Bukowski fan need be an alcoholic”. They argue, “it is equally likely that in reading these works we are enjoying the experience of extremes vicariously without ever having to leave our mundane mainstream existence.” While others “may read their cult fiction ironically or blankly taking the buzz and thrill but none of the philosophical intention”. Because, they surmise, “as we all know, there are as many ways to read as there are to write”⁶².

Another important factor Thomas R. Whissen’s choice of Goethe, and Calcutt and Shephard’s choice of de Sade, has thrown up, is that it demonstrates how Cult Fiction straddles the two literary camps of canonic literature, and of Pulp. That is Whissen’s choice of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s *The Sorrows of Young Werther* can be located in Harold Bloom’s version of *The Western Canon*⁶³, whereas Calcutt and Shephard’s choice of the Marquis de Sade, cannot. The fact one of these authors is canonic while the other is not, while simultaneously it is claimed that both are cult texts, demonstrates the veracity of Calcutt and Shephard’s definition for Cult Fiction. They proclaim “it is a ‘catholic church’ and takes its authors from every denomination. Some, are arch-modernists culled from the Literary Canon, and yet, the majority operate outside the

traditional literary *conservatoire*⁶⁴. I consider Whissen's act of choosing his cult text from the literary *conservatoire*, as evidence enough, he would support Calcutt and Shephard's perspective. However, the problem which arises at this stage. Is if their opinions actually do concur, then why is it, their chosen authors do not exist in each of their Cult canons? That is, Goethe does not appear in Calcutt and Shephard's guide, and de Sade is absent from Whissen's introduction to Cult Fiction. In defence of Harold Bloom's right to construct a literary canon, it is more than apparent whoever it is who is doing the "culling" from the canonic and non-canonic texts for the formation of a Cult canon, they are doing it differently. In fact, it could be argued, these differences themselves reflect the dilemma Bloom experienced during his own attempt at canon formation. Or at the very least, it could be implied, the absence of each of these formative authors from one another's canons, is indicative of the flawed nature of such an enterprise. A predicament which is further exacerbated when we discover that almost 50 percent of the books hand-picked by Thomas R. Whissen as his All-Time Top Fifty for Cult Fiction⁶⁵, do not rate a mention in Calcutt and Shephard's own Hit-Parade of Two-Hundred and Thirty-Three Cult Writers⁶⁶. Moreover, there are other anomalies. Some of which pertain to the accusations Harold Bloom reports to have been unfairly levelled at himself, such as "elitism in class, race, gender, and national interests"⁶⁷.

Before I begin, I should like to make it perfectly clear, it is not my intention to criticise either of these texts in a serious manner. I regard both books too highly to subject them to that. Rather, I simply wish to use these texts, to illustrate the lack of credibility in any form of canon formation. That is, regardless of whatever position we might wish to adopt even if it were restricted to one text, or one author, any canon can quickly be shown to be flawed, via the mechanisms inherent in the debates to which

Harold Bloom has alluded. For instance, given Thomas R. Whissen is an American professor, who claims “although cult books first appeared in Europe and cult literature continues to be an international phenomenon, its center in this century is clearly located in the United States where, in the first few decades following World War II, the growing number of books that became underground or campus favorites turned the phenomenon of the cult book into a discernible movement”. What is more, he adds, that “the ‘golden age’ for this cult movement”, was “those decades immediately following WWII, and especially the prolific sixties”⁶⁸. We should hardly be surprised to learn, that sixty percent of his All-Time Top Fifty books for Cult Fiction are written by American authors. With the second largest component being composed of twenty percent English writers, followed by French, German, and Irish. However, should this disproportionate bias toward the writers of his own country, be considered as evidence of Whissen’s elitism along nationalist lines? Especially if we take into consideration, according to Clive Bloom, how “American authors played an insignificant part in the everyday reading matter of most Britons between 1900 and the 1950s. Indeed, of the top 130 bestselling authors read between 1900 and 1960 by British working people only 10 were actually Americans”. A trend, he asserts, which was “to continue largely unchanged, through to the latter half of the 1980s”⁶⁹. The answer to our question is, of course, yes we could. Although, in Whissen’s defence, it should be pointed out, an analysis of the two-hundred and thirty-three writers who inhabit Andrew Calcutt and Richard Shephard’s Hit-Parade reveals a very similar split along national lines. And while this still means the American’s might have a disproportionately large slice of the pie, at least on this occasion the pie was sliced by two English academics.

However, continued analysis reveals this consensus did not remain for long. For example, on the issue of class, which for the sake of this argument I have decided can

be seen in those formations that harbour a predilection towards the more intellectualised canonic texts, over the more proletarian forms of non-canonic Popular Fiction. Although it is clear from our understanding of the Calcutt and Shephard's definition for Cult Fiction, that it is "a 'catholic church' which reserves the right to cull from both the Literary Canon, and from outside the literary *conservatoire*"⁷⁰, Thomas R. Whissen's canon does demonstrate a propensity towards the canonic. That is, twenty of Whissen's Top-Fifty Cult texts, some 40 percent, could be located in Harold Bloom's *The Western Canon* (only six short of Bloom's own ideal). It is not that there is anything wrong with this. It is simply, as a matter of comparison, this percentage proves to be twice the amount of canonic texts found in Calcutt and Shephard's compendium (fifty-two), with them leaning far more heavily towards more obscure uncanonic authors. Similarly, although Calcutt and Shephard maintain the writing of Cult Fiction is essentially "a boy thing"⁷¹, when the issue of gender representation raised its wary head, they managed to beat Whissen hands down. This is largely due to the deplorable fact, Whissen's cult canon was highly under-representative of input from women writers. It only contained three women: Mary Shelley, Ayn Rand, and Sylvia Plath. A piffling six percent of his vote. Although I would argue Calcutt and Shephard's figures are still vastly under-representative, as far as reflecting the role of women writers in any form of literature is concerned. However, with thirty women authors (out of their two hundred and thirty-three choices), they are ten times better than Whissen to my mind: even if this may not prove to be mathematically accurate. Finally, there are other anomalies I would have liked to have drawn the reader's attention to, such as why is it, given Whissen's book was published in 1992, his most recent inclusion to his All-Time Top Fifty for Cult Fiction is Douglas Adams's novel *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, which was published in 1979? Sadly, for now, any attempt to answer this question, and many

others like it, must remain unanswered. As we have, I consider, completed our stated objective. In demonstrating, although all canon formation is necessarily elitist, no form of elitism is beyond criticism.

Finally, we close the thesis where my investigations into this subject first began. That is, in attempting to unravel the problematics surrounding some of the claims made for a postmodern Pulp.

Criticism of Clive Bloom's Poststructuralist Agenda for Pulp

Having examined Thomas R. Whissen, Andrew Calcutt and Richard Shephard's definitions for Cult Fiction, let us return to some of the problems inherent in Clive Bloom's *Cult Fiction: Pulp Reading and Pulp Theory*. Particularly, his binary that "the other of the canon was pulp and pulp was also its bastard offspring"⁷². As I mentioned earlier, from the very title of his book, it is more than obvious that Clive Bloom's definition for Cult Fiction differs enormously to those of Whissen, and Calcutt and Shephard. For Bloom, the notions that might separate Cult from Pulp are collapsed into a synonymous whole. He argues, "it is through this dynamic model, that Cult Fiction manages to become an exploration of pulp literature and pulp mentalities"⁷³. A noble sentiment, perhaps. However, it is not one that would withstand too much scrutiny. In attempting to separate his Cult/Pulp texts from the Western Canon in this manner as opposed to a Cult Fiction, which chooses from any denomination, Bloom's model inadvertently aligns itself to the traditionalist perspective which Thomas J. Roberts advocated for Junk Fiction. Even if their intentions are diametrically opposed, Roberts argued that the Paperback Bookscape "could not compete on a text-for-text basis with the Literary Bookscape, because it was a literature without texts"⁷⁴. Yet, Bloom's binary opposition in which Cult/Pulp is the bastard "other" to the Western Canon, only reinforces Roberts's stated position, that "the two should be seen as separate". And yet, further investigation reveals that Bloom's desire to separate his Cult/Pulp texts from the canon, is premised on the belief, unlike Whissen, or Calcutt and Shephard, that canonicity kills the authenticity of these texts. Bloom claims that Pulp "does not want

to be part of the canon”⁷⁵. On the contrary, he insists, it wishes to be “viewed as process: unfixed, illicit and anonymous”⁷⁶, with its “legitimacy as pulp correlative to its illegitimacy as ‘serious art’”⁷⁷.

Towards the end of his book, Clive Bloom admits that his design for his Cult/Pulp dichotomy with the Western Canon, is founded on a poststructuralist agenda. His contention is that “*contemporary poststructuralist criticism is the new ‘pulp’*” (my italics). Bloom argues that his concept is based on the fact poststructuralism’s, “metaphors and obsessions parallel that of pulp fiction and that around the critical genre, modern criticism has created a subculture at once arcane and escapist: a fantastic arena in which the body, sexuality and violence underwrite the cult’s wildest fetishes”. And what is more, that such criticism “toys with the idea of somehow going beyond, transcending and deconstructing the boundaries and realities presented in these fictions”⁷⁸. However, I would suggest that Bloom has adopted this stance, not because it is the natural paradigm for his Cult/Pulp subject matter, but because this flawed poststructuralist debate is the only thing which might support his thwarted ambitions to become a pulp writer, rather than an academic one.

I have attempted to demonstrate in this thesis that throughout the history of publishing there has always existed a covert, or subversive alternative to the mainstream: from Martin Luther, Sir Thomas Malory, through the Gothic excesses of the penny-dreadfuls, to the skull-fracturing misogyny of Mickey Spillane, and a thousand other ‘paperback originals’. However, I do not believe, as Clive Bloom does, that we draw a chalk-line around this body of work, and maintain it has a monopoly on such themes as: sex, violence, and the aberrations of the body. Far from it. In fact, even Thomas J. Roberts does not agree with Bloom. He points out, that “ugliness is not unique to pulp fiction. On the contrary, even serious readers can find enough intellectual and moral roughage

within the learned tradition to satisfy all their hungers, no matter how bizarre”⁷⁹. Indeed, I would argue that it was the very impossibility of Bloom’s imaginary dissection, which might have inspired the playwright Tom Stoppard, in his play *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, to prompt his Shakespearean Player to exhort the proposition: “they’re hardly divisible, sir – well, I can do you blood and love without the rhetoric, and I can do you blood and rhetoric without the love, and I can do you all three concurrent or consecutive, but I can’t do you love and rhetoric without the blood. Blood is compulsory – they’re all blood you see”⁸⁰. From the canonic tragedies, comedies, and romances of Shakespeare, through to the postmodern narratives of Quentin Tarantino, they are “all blood”⁸¹. In situating his Cult/Pulp texts as the “unfixed” postmodern opposite to a static modernist Western Canon, Clive Bloom is determining that only Cult/Pulp texts can be inherently postmodern, while canonic texts cannot. And although I would allow that this notion seems reasonable as a generalised proposition, in actuality this dichotomy is as difficult to prove as Pulp having the sole right to *all* the “blood”. If we cast our minds back to the introduction of this thesis we will remember that my original idea was for a thesis to be entitled *Postmodern Pulp*. During the research for this thesis I approached Pulp from the same perspective as Clive Bloom and encountered these same theoretical problems. However, rather than ignoring the logical consequences of adopting such a position, due to the realisation this argument was a theoretical dead-end, I abandoned this approach in favour of the one you are currently reading. As such, my advice to Clive Bloom is he should have done the same. That is, just as we cannot draw lines around literary themes in some lost effort to segregate them for our own cause, neither can we hope to delineate the postmodern imperatives of poststructuralism for Pulp alone.

We only have to compare the language used by Clive Bloom to describe his contention concerning contemporary poststructuralist criticism as the new ‘pulp’, to that used by Calcutt and Shephard to describe their criteria for determining which authors they might choose for the Cult Fiction, from what Bloom would assert to be a strictly “modernist” literary canon, in order to witness the fallibility of his Cult/Canon binary opposition. As the reader may recall, Bloom maintains “such criticism toys with the idea of somehow going beyond, transcending and deconstructing the boundaries and realities presented in these fictions”⁸². And yet this prerequisite for postmodern pulp sounds remarkably similar to Calcutt and Shephard’s own prerequisite for culling Cult authors from the Western Canon. Of which they maintain “some of these are arch-modernists: avant-gardists whose narrative strategies break the rules and cross boundaries to question the very nature of reality”⁸³. However, this should hardly come as a surprise to anyone who understands that the avant-garde ideals of literary modernism can be seen to complement those of postmodernism. Scott Lash points to this. He observes, that “literary modernism seemed to contain two streams, the high modernist aesthetic which conceived of ‘representations being problematic’, and the proto-postmodern avant-garde which ‘problemizes reality’”⁸⁴. The difficulty, as Ihab Hassan discovered many years ago, when he investigated the same binary opposition proposed by Clive Bloom, was in determining where to draw the line between these two groups. Eventually, Hassan’s indecidability led him to concede that “there was a constant blurring between the poles of modernism and postmodernism, and that the postmodern spirit lies coiled within the great corpus of modernism”⁸⁵. I would like to add that even without the insights of Scott Lash and Ihab Hassan, Clive Bloom would have had a difficult time trying to convince even those theorists of the poststructuralist persuasion that texts which reside in the supposed literary canon, such as those written

by T. S. Eliot, or even James Joyce, are less postmodern than the complete works (with no disrespect intended) of Barbara Cartland, or Wilbur Smith, or Arthur Hailey. This is not an elitist position. Far from it. It is simply that these texts were not written with the pretensions to postmodernism that Clive Bloom attributes to them. After all, at the same time Harold Bloom's version of the Western Canon includes authors who are considered to be paragons of the postmodern, such as Thomas Pynchon, John Barth, Donald Barthelme, and Ishmael Reed⁸⁶.

The fact is, it is not necessary to prove whether the contents of the Western Canon can be divided into neat little categories of modern versus postmodern in order to debunk Bloom's binary. Its oppositional nature is shown as defective the moment we can demonstrate evidence of the existence of Pulp texts within the canon. Quite clearly, given our understanding of the origins of Pulp Literature as being in the popular publishing of serialized Gothic novels in the form of penny-dreadfuls and penny-bloods at the dawn of the industrial revolution, this should prove to be a relatively easy task. However, in order to reinforce the connection between the illicit Pulp practises of the past, to what may be considered the canonic literature of today, I shall refer to a reminiscence by Sir Walter Murdoch on buying an illegal penny-dreadful while on holiday in Rome. He reports that:

my way led past the vast church of Santa Maria Maggiore, past the little church of Saint Praxed's (where Browning's bishop ordered his tomb), and past a little bookshop where I used to buy my penny-dreadfuls. On the morning I am telling you

about I bought one of these little books – in two volumes at threepence each, with pictures on the cover so lurid that the bookseller looked at me with kindly scorn

when I selected it – called *L'Isola del Tesoro*, by Roberto Luigi Stevenson. (It is all

about pirates and buried treasures – just the kind of thing I like. The villain of the yarn is a formidable cook with one leg, named Giovanni Silver, who was once the quartermaster with the celebrated Capitano Flint. These pirates are the real thing; they sing, when not engaged in the practice of their profession, a rousing chorus: *Quindici uomini sul cassero dell' Uomo Morto, Ho-ho-ho, e una bottiglia di rhum!*⁸⁷.

Sir Walter Murdoch's reminiscence, is a good example of the fluidity of an illicit Pulp text which has now become canonic. That is, the fact that Robert Louis Stevenson's adventure classic *Treasure Island*, now resides within Harold Bloom's *The Western Canon*, does not mean it has lost its status as a Pulp text. And, of course, this is not an isolated case. The same is true for the Gothic texts; *Melmoth the Wanderer* by Charles Maturin, *Frankenstein* by Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, *Dracula* by Bram Stoker, and even Robert Louis Stevenson's strange tale, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. To this list I would add, the serializations of the novels by Charles Dickens, plus the short stories and novels of Edgar Allan Poe, H. G. Wells, Rudyard Kipling, and W. Somerset Maugham. All of which, inhabit Harold Bloom's version of the canon⁸⁸. To take this one stage further, I would suggest the presence of these Pulp texts within Harold Bloom's canon is evidence to support his argument that the canon is never closed. In his response to accusations against his formation of a literary canon Bloom maintains "no secular canon is ever closed, and what is now acclaimed as "opening the canon" is a strictly redundant operation"⁸⁹. Yet the fact that these Pulp texts exist within Bloom's

canon, along with more contemporary outsiders, such as with Jean Genet, George Bataille, Ursula K. Le Guin, Jeanette Winterson, Raymond Carver, and Robert Coover is indicative of an attempt to create a canon which might come close to Robert Hughes's ideal for a canon which is "not a fortress, but a permeable membrane"⁹⁰.

A Last Word on the Implications of Pulp on the Western Canon

Hopefully, the evidence for the failure of Clive Bloom's Cult/Canon binary will help us to understand the relationship between Pulp Literature and the Western Canon is not one of a dynamic postmodernism opposed in splendid isolation to a static modernism. It is more than apparent, that both of these categories share in a dynamic inter-relationship, with each of them constantly open to new modernist and postmodernist texts. However, the major difference in the balance of power between these two "potential" canons of literature is that it is not, as we are commonly led to believe, the Western Canon which is the dominant partner. Rather, it is the aesthetic of Pulp. This is due, to the *oeuvre* of Pulp Literature being vastly superior in size to the Western Canon (remembering Harold Bloom's compilation only contains three thousand texts in its generous form. And this could soon be reduced to twenty-six by the next edition). Even the publication of Salman Rushdie's five thousand unpublishable titles which are published each year in America alone, would easily eclipse this. Of course, Rushdie's statistic is a minor indication. We have no way of establishing an accurate estimate of the actual amount of Pulp texts which have been published over its lifetime. However, I think I can safely assert, its megatext to be immense. Particularly, when compared to the Western Canon. Without the enormity of the range and scope of the Pulp megatext with the dynamism of its aesthetic's tendency to plunder, pastiche, and contemporize

the old, along with providing a platform for the new texts for consideration, the Western Canon would become static, obsolete and die.

This is why we should not think of the Western Canon, and Pulp Literature, as two poles which have become isolated from each other. Rather, they should be seen as Kate Grenville asserted earlier, in her ecological analogy for literature, “for literature to flourish, it needs the whole forest, not just giant oaks. And even weeds have a place in the literary eco-system”⁹¹. However, as I indicated at the close of the last chapter, I must stress that my interpretation of Kate Grenville’s sentiment differs significantly from her own. Although, I am prepared to agree that the canonic may be represented by the ‘giant oaks’. I do not consider that Pulp’s natural place in the scheme of things, is simply to be a convenient repository for the ‘weeds’. In my ideal reading of Grenville’s analogy, although it is true that Pulp accepts responsibility for the ‘weeds’, it does so, whole-heartedly. This is because it recognises that despite the theoretical deadlock between the ‘objectivity’ of an un-dead New Criticism and the uncertainties of a relativistic Poststructuralism, the ‘weeds’ represent the only possibility of providing some form of ‘quality’ from which ‘giant oaks’ might grow. What is more, now we are aware of how Pulp Literature works. That it is prolific in producing both ‘weeds’ and ‘giant oaks,’ without discrimination. The same cannot be claimed for the Western Canon. Pulp’s role becomes perfectly clear. It produces the *whole* of literature. So, in Kate Grenville’s analogy, it is not represented by the ‘weeds’ at all. On the contrary – Pulp Literature is the ‘forest’.

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Writers:Alphabetical Listing (vi-viii):

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| 1. Kathy Acker. | 79. Sylvie Germain. | 157. Vladimir Nabokov. |
| 2. Nelson Algren. | 80. William Gibson. | 158. Anais Nin. |
| 3. Richard Allen. | 81. Andre Gide. | 159. Jeff Noon. |
| 4. Martin Amis. | 82. Donald Goines. | 160. Flann O'Brien. |
| 5. Guillaume Apollinaire. | 83. William Golding. | 161. Flannery O'Connor. |
| 6. Anton Artaud. | 84. David Goodis. | 162. Joyce Carol Oates. |
| 7. Paul Auster. | 85. Alasdair Gray. | 163. George Orwell. |
| 8. J G Ballard. | 86. Radclyffe Hall. | 164. Dorothy Parker. |
| 9. Iain (M) Banks. | 87. Patrick Hamilton. | 165. Pier Paolo Pasolini. |
| 10. Georges Bataille. | 88. Dashiell Hammett | 166. Mervyn Peake. |
| 11. John Barth. | 89. Knut Hamsun. | 167. Georges Perec. |
| 12. Donald Barthelme. | 90. Jim Harrison | 168. Robert M Pirsig. |
| 13. Simone de Beauvoir. | 91. John Hawkes. | 170. Edgar Allan Poe. |
| 14. Samuel Beckett. | 92. Nathan Heard. | 171. Richard Price. |
| 15. Brendan Behan. | 93. Richard Hell. | 172. Thomas Pynchon. |
| 16. Thomas Berger. | 94. Joseph Heller. | 173. Raymond Queneau. |
| 17. Ambrose Bierce. | 95. Gil Scott Heron. | 174. Thomas de |
| Quincey. | | |
| 18. Jorge Luis Borge. | 96. Hermann Hesse. | 175. Raymond Radiquet. |
| 19. Jane Bowles. | 97. Carl Hiaasen. | 176. Ayn Rand. |
| 20. Paul Bowles. | 98. Chester Himes. | 177. Simon Raven. |
| 21. Kay Boyle. | 99. S E Hinton. | 178. Derek Raymond. |
| 22. Michael Bracewell. | 100. John Clellon Holmes. | 179. John Rechy. |
| 23. Leigh Brackett. | 101. Stewart Home. | 180. Ishmael Reed. |
| 24. Scott Bradfield. | 102. Nick Hornby. | 181. Luke Rhinehart. |
| 25. Richard Brautigan. | 103. Robert E Howard. | 182. Anne Rice. |
| 26. Andre Breton. | 104. Dorothy B Hughes. | 183. Rainer Maria Rilke. |
| 27. Poppy Z Brite. | 105. Herbert Huncke. | 184. Tom Robbins. |
| 28. Charles Bukowski. | 106. Aldous Huxley. | 185. Henry Rollins. |
| 29. Mikhail Bulgakov. | 107. Joris Karl Huysmans | 186. Damon Runyon. |
| 30. Anthony Burgess. | 108. John Irving. | 187. Leopold von Sacher- |
| Masoch. | | |
| 31. William Seward Burroughs Jr. | 109. Tama Janowitz. | 188. J D Salinger. |
| 32. James M. Cain. | 110. Sebastien Japrisot. | 189. James Salter. |
| 33. Paul Cain. | 111. Alfred Jarry. | 190. Jean-Paul Sartre. |
| 34. Italo Calvino. | 112. Jerome K Jerome. | 191. Budd Schulberg. |
| 35. Albert Camus. | 113. B S Johnson. | 192. Bruno Schulz. |
| 36. Truman Capote. | 114. Erica Jong. | 193. Delmore Schwartz. |
| 37. Jim Carroll. | 115. James Joyce. | 194. Hubert Selby Jr. |
| 38. Lewis Carroll. | 116. Franz Kafka. | 195. Will Self. |
| 39. Angela Carter. | 117. Anna Kavan. | 196. Samuel Selvon. |
| 40. Raymond Carver. | 118. James Kelman. | 197. Mary Shelley. |
| 41. Nick Cave. | 119. William Kennedy. | 198. Alan Sillitoe. |
| 42. Celine. | 120. Jack Kerouac. | 199. Herbert Simmons |

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43. Raymond Chandler.
 44. James Hadley Chase.
 45. Jean Cocteau.
 46. Leonard Cohen.
 47. Nik Cohn.
 48. Colette.
 49. Clarence Cooper Jr. Stevenson.
 50. Dennis Cooper.
 51. Robert Coover.
 52. Douglas Coupland.
 53. Harry Crews.
 54. Aleister Crowley.
 55. James Crumley.
 56. Don DeLillo.
 57. Samuel R Delany.
 58. Marquis de Sade.
 59. Philip K Dick.
 60. Joan Didion.
 61. Adam Diment.
 62. E L Doctorow.
 63. J P Donleavy.
 64. Fyodor Dostoevsky.
 65. Bret Easton Ellis.
 66. Harlan Ellison.
 67. James Ellroy.
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 69. Frederick Exley. Wilson.
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 75 Ibid., p134.
 76 Ibid., p35.
 77 Ibid., p12.
 78 Ibid., p236.
 79 Ibid., p47.
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 83 Ibid., pix.
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 125. Milan Kundera.
 126. Hanif Kureishi.
 127. Gavin Lambert.
 128. Ring Lardner.
 129. Sheridan Le Fanu.
 130. Elmore Leonard.
 131. Doris Lessing.
 132. Ted Lewis.
 133. Mark Leyner.
 134. Jack London.
 135. H P Lovecraft.
 136. Malcolm Lower.
 137. Colin MacInnes.
 138. Norman Mailer.
 139. Dan Mannix.
 140. William March.
 141. Cormac McCarthy.
 142. Horace McCoy.
 143. Carson McCullers.
 144. Ian McEwan.
 145. Patrick McGrath.
 146. Thomas McGuane.
 147. Jay McInerney.
 148. Gustav Meyrink.
 149. Martin Millar.
 150. Henry Miller.
 151. Yukio Mishima.
 152. Michael Moorcock.
 153. Seth Morgan.
 154. Walter Mosley.
 155. Ryu Murakami.
 156. Robert Musil.
200. Iain Sinclair.
 201. Iceberg Slim.
 202. Susan Sontag.
 203. Terry Southern.
 204. Gertrude Stein.
 205. Bruce Sterling.
 206. Robert Louis
 207. Bram Stoker.
 208. Robert Stone.
 209. D M Thomas.
 210. Jim Thompson.
 211. Hunter S Thompson.
 212. Newton Thornburg.
 213. John Kennedy Toole.
 214. Alexander Trocchi.
 215. Dalton Trumbo.
 216. Boris Vian.
 217. Gore Vidal.
 218. Kurt Vonnegut Jr.
 219. Keith Waterhouse.
 220. Denton Welch.
 221. Irvine Welsh.
 222. Nathanael West.
 223. Oscar Wilde.
 224. Charles Willeford.
 225. John A Williams.
 226. Colin
 227. Jeanette Winterson.
 228. Thomas Wolfe.
 229. Tom Wolfe.
 230. Tobias Wolff.
 231. Cornell Woolrich.
 232. Richard
 233. Rudolph

⁸⁶ Ibid., p565.

⁸⁷ “My Roman Adventure” from *72 Essays*. Sydney/London: Angus and Robertson, 1947:112.

⁸⁸ Ibid., pp542-553.

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⁹⁰ Ibid., p94.

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The Conclusion

“Thank God for the Pulps!”¹

So in The End – what do we have? The premise for this research was based on a number of evaluative questions which appeared, historically, to have been ignored by the literary academy and its theoreticians. And yet in essence, the spirit of these questions, could be coalesced into two key propositions. “Why does the academy regard Pulp as a low and disposable form of literature?” And – “what are the attributes or mechanisms that the aesthetic of Pulp Literature possesses which makes it *more illuminating* to contemporary audiences than the literary academy’s preferred ‘canonic’ texts?”

The preliminary research into the etymology of ‘Pulp’ not only provided evidence to support the thesis’s presupposition concerning the status that Pulp Literature has traditionally held within the academy, but it also indicated how literary academics had been actively discouraged from studying such an inconsequential form, meriting neither serious contemplation nor artistic recognition. However, we also discovered that the literary academy’s stance in this position was, and still is, founded on a number of theoretical and evaluative inconsistencies that are in drastic need of re-assessment. The paradoxical nature of this anomaly was reinforced by the survey of the field, which pointed out that although the quality of the work by many of the theoreticians in

this area of inquiry had proven to be of an exceedingly high standard, surprisingly none of these authors had attempted to re-situate this popular form within the literary academy. It was this omission that impelled the thesis to attempt to re-evaluate the aesthetic of Pulp Literature, by providing it with a 'new' descriptive definition, with a view towards elevating the stature of this much maligned and often misunderstood literary form.

The most promising avenue by which the thesis might best achieve this result, proved to be to model the structure for the scope of its research and the method of its argument upon the lair of the 'funnel-web' spider. That is, it appeared to be necessary to cast the view back to locate a point in human evolution where the capacity to communicate in ochre on cave walls to enhance the transmission of near-death adventure, would intersect with technology to inspire the inclusion of gaudy illustrations on cheap paper to feed the imaginations of a mass-market audience with a lust for the tales of the macabre. And as we are now aware, such a moment turned out to be the invention of the printing press. Having established this moment as the birth of the Pulp Literature, any viable research into the subject then had to trace, chronologically, the parallel existence of this aesthetic and the implications of its subversive agenda on mainstream culture up to the present. Moreover, it followed, that once Pulp had been ensnared and dragged in from the generalised historical presumptions of the past, its aesthetic had then to be subjected to specific forms of theoretical and evaluative interrogation.

And it is for this reason that we should begin our inspection by reviewing the revelations of the historical overview.

What did the Historical Overview Uncover?

One of the accusations commonly levelled at Pulp Literature for its poor standing within the literary academy was that it had never been an agent for social, or political change. However, if the historical overview clarified anything at all, it was that over the last five hundred years, the aesthetic of Pulp had always had its own social, cultural, and political strategies and agendas that had provided an alternative platform from which to attempt to challenge and change mainstream thought.

And yet, although most academics had always tended to attribute the revolutionary impact on the culture of the world to the invention of the 'printing press' itself, the thesis demonstrated that 'the press' was merely the medium for the message of enlightened dissent that was made all the more palatable to the newly literate by the vicissitudes of the constantly changing forms of the Pulp aesthetic. That is, as it evolved, whether it was via pamphlets, broadsheets, chapbooks, newspapers, magazines, Blue Books, Shilling Shockers, Penny Dreadfuls, the short story, or the novel, Pulp Literature had not only managed to help alleviate the alienation of the working-classes by keeping them informed of the issues of the wider political debate, but in doing so it had also continued to transmit its subversive criticism of the dominant hierarchies.

Indeed it was due to its diversity that Pulp Literature managed to demonstrate conclusively that it was beyond the manipulation or controlling influence of any one power base, whether this may have been the point of view of any particular publisher, author, or government. And yet ironically it was the fact that the Pulp aesthetic did *not* present a single, unified, or dominant ideological viewpoint, but rather a platform for

every denomination and political persuasion, that caused it to be seen (even in supposedly democratic nations) as a threat. Of course, the irony did not end here. At the very same time that the paranoid tendencies of a Cold War America of the fifties and early sixties attempted to uncover any excuse to ban, burn, or censor Pulp's texts, and to imprison or otherwise silence its authors and artists for their political and ideological threat to the nation, those in the literary academy still refused to accept that Pulp Literature could possibly be an agent for social and political change.

However as we saw in the fifties, not only did the popularity and success of a new form of Pulp Literature in the inexpensive 'paperback' novel help to democratise and demystify the classics of American literature by prising them from the elitism of the academy and supplying them to the masses, but it also became a risk to national security, as well as to moral values. Eventually this hysteria would lead to the establishment of the CIA and the House Committee on Un-American Activities, both of which, in their attempt to tame Pulp, would unfortunately ruin many innocent lives. And yet in this battle, Pulp Literature would prove itself not only to be a formidable opponent, but ultimately that it was one of the few mediums left available to criticise such power structures. This was a factor that became more than evident by the end of decade, when Pulp opened its doors to a new variety of writers and artists who were intent on voicing their own particular brand of spiritual dissent, which culminated in forcing people to have to acknowledge the power this medium had to test the boundaries surrounding the – supposed – 'freedom of speech'.

Of course there were those other critics, authors, readers and publishers, who claimed that Pulp's successful campaign against censorship directly contributed to the downfall of its illicit edge, and who complained that its subversive function had been compromised by its absorption into the corporate sector. However, this argument failed because it attempted to restrict the aesthetic of Pulp to paper. In actuality Pulp had

slipped the shackles of its humble beginnings on 'rough paper' long before these complaints had ever been uttered, and it is still constantly adapting to the challenge of competition from new techniques and technologies, whether they appear in the form of radio, television, cinema, animation, interactive games, the Internet, or rock'n'roll. In fact, as the thesis demonstrates, this aesthetic has leaked into so many different facets of our everyday life that we now, however unwittingly, are forced to construct our consciousness and our relationship to the world, through the intertextualities Pulp Literature. That is, due to its continual engagement with, and appropriation of, the most advanced technologies, the Pulp message has become inextricably and intertextually entwined with these new media to the extent that the medium and the message – as McLuhan has told us – are now totally inseparable. This is more than evident in today's economic climate of conspicuous consumption, where all the different versions of the Pulp media tend to spontaneously erupt in the world, and in our consciousness. This is why, living today, we can no longer see the trees for the Pulp!

And yet as this historical overview has demonstrated, that although Pulp Literature has been an aggressive competitor and it is a consummate survivor, the war is not over yet. Indeed it still has a long way to go. And clearly it will never cease until authors such as Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett can stand shoulder to shoulder with Joyce and Eliot without the slightest derogatory snigger from some anachronistic academic who refuses to acknowledge the talents of these distinguished authors for the fear that Sam Spade might shake-down J. Alfred Prufrock, or Philip Marlowe may want to collect the bill on Leopold Bloom. After all these critics should remember that it was Pulp Literature which introduced the world to the gritty realism of urban decay, unconventional morality, eroticism, the controversial and taboo, long before the Moderns had even got out of bed. Furthermore, Pulp had already explored many of the

extreme regions of the psyche and its corresponding bizarre forms of behaviour (in the name of popular entertainment), centuries before these slumming dilettantes deigned to touch them with an allegory, whether it be yours or theirs. In fact, if it were not for the open-endedness of Pulp's agenda and its inability to be influenced by and large by the censors of any era, many transgressive sub-groups and their cultures would not have been represented in the mainstream at all. Therefore the literary academy should recognise that rather than just being considered a literature of 'escapism', Pulp Literature should be venerated as a ledger for the history of human pathology that has existed on the margins of acceptable society, without which many of these aberrations and digressions would have remained successfully repressed or suppressed.

What did the Evaluative Section Uncover?

One of the most significant factors for the theoretical discussion of the evaluation of literature for this thesis was the discovery of some of the representations for literature proposed by J. M. Parrish, R. D. Coole, and B. E. Sears² in *The Modern Home University: The English Language Its Beauty and Use*³ which, although it was published in 1935, appeared to have transcended time. In fact the reader may remember that the historical overview does not actually begin with the invention of the printing press. Rather it very deliberately begins with a definition for literature by two of these English academics from Oxford University that recognised a certain *instability* in *all* literature that not only totally side-stepped the conventions proposed by the impending New Criticism, but also pre-empted this tendency of thought which has more often than not been attributed to be a feather in the cap for the French poststructuralist theorists of the late nineteen sixties or early seventies. And while their omission from contemporary literary history might seem to imply to a lack of critical vigour on behalf of the literary academy, what is more important here than political point-scoring, is that with the inclusion of Sears, these academics had also already determined that genres were *unstable*, and literary evaluation could not be founded on the notions of *objective quality*. Therefore, as far as this thesis is concerned, their prescience not only predicted the failure of the 'objective' evaluative method of the New Criticism, it also suggests that the vacuum which was left by its death need not necessarily be filled by the claims of Poststructuralism. On the contrary, it should not be presumed that these claims naturally belong to anyone *beyond* the New Criticism at all, but rather they can be returned to Oxford in 1935 – to before either of these theoretical paradigms existed.

Although to some, such quibbling may have implied that the thesis had adopted a slightly anti-theoretical viewpoint, hopefully the reader would come understand that this was not the case. That is, rather than refusing to engage in these theories, it was

simply attempting to find a point of entry from which it could observe the history of the evaluation of Pulp Literature over the last five hundred years without becoming hopelessly entangled in the conjecture of these paradigms. Ideally, what Parrish, Coole, and Sears provided was a mechanism that allowed the thesis to critique the New Criticism without it running the risk of being seen to be coming from a poststructuralist perspective. Why was this so important? Quite simply, because neither of these theoretical perspectives do the Pulp aesthetic any particular favours as to how it is perceived within the literary academy. Ultimately, whether they were assessed under the 'objectivism' of the New Criticism or the 'subjective relativism' of Poststructuralism, the study of Pulp Literature is deemed to carry no more significance than the study of cornflakes boxes. Given these considerations, it appeared that any research that wished to re-evaluate the status of the Pulp aesthetic would not only have to separate itself from these two theoretical paradigms, but it would also have to discredit many of the theoretical foundations which appeared to support their attitude towards Pulp.

In its review of the New Criticism's 'objective' methodology for the evaluation of texts for their inclusion into the literary canon, the thesis uncovered that the history of the literary academy was founded on the presumption to an authority that it did not possess, because its evaluative assessments were essentially 'subjective'. For the New Critic's of course, their main theoretical thrust disappeared when it was demonstrated that critics such as B. E. Sears were correct in their assumption of 1935, that there was no 'objective' method to evaluate the quality of a text. Such a debunking, combined with the understanding that 'taste', whether it be the opinion of a single critic or the consensus of a group of critics, is 'subjective' and therefore can never carry any legitimate authority, should have reduced these opinions within the literary academy to the level of 'toothless tigers'. And yet within the walls of the contemporary literary

academy many academics continue to employ 'subjective' evaluative statements in their assessments of texts. Worse still, although many are aware that such judgments are *not* valid, they continue to deploy this kind of criticism against the texts of Pulp Literature. However this should hardly come as a surprise, especially when we consider that not only in the other aesthetic traditions such as cinema, television, and music, but particularly in the broader community, the idea of the impossibility of the grounds for 'objective' evaluative judgment does not appear to have even suffered a flesh-wound. Therefore, although this thesis had gone to great lengths to establish 1935 as a moment when literary academics were beginning to understand that aesthetic evaluation could *not* be founded on the notion of 'quality', in fact such a framework proved to be negligible. This was because whether they recognise it or not, responsible 'high-brow' academics have traditionally latched on to, and will continue to latch on to any form of *illegitimate* authority in order to keep the texts of Pulp Literature away from the hierarchy of respect they afford their purported 'classics' of literature's subjectively instituted past and its relativistic postmodern future⁴.

And yet, all is not lost! That is, although the corridors of power and community taste seem to be seething with the ghosts of the undead evaluative theories of the New Criticism, it is hoped that this thesis has managed to convince its readers that all forms of canonicity or canon formation are necessarily 'subjective'. As such they are inherently biased, elitist, prescriptive, and can never possess the authority which their authors tend to claim. Further, in order to stem the tide of confusion in this regard, the thesis stresses that without an 'objective' method of evaluation the New Criticism is dead! May it rest in peace. In its death resides the demise of that safe-haven for the 'subjectively' instituted classics of the past, the Western Canon. Stripped of their canonic sanctity, these homeless texts have been forced to return to the 90 per cent of its domain that the literary academy has traditionally refused to accept as anything other

than its supposedly inferior binary opposite, Pulp Literature. Yet paradoxically, the fact that Pulp had become the repository for what many academics had previously argued to be 'canonic' texts, should in itself have forced the literary academy to automatically re-evaluate its status as a subject worthy of respect and study. Particularly when we consider that, under the old aesthetic modelling, it was always asserted that Pulp Literature only existed due to its vicarious opposition to the Western Canon. The death of its literary binary *did not* of course result in its reciprocal disappearance, but rather in determining that the Pulp aesthetic could no longer be ignored as anything other than a multi-faceted megatext with an vast array of functions which had exponentially increased in importance.

Evidence to support the fact that the Pulp aesthetic has never depended upon its binary opposition to the Western Canon for its existence was reinforced by the demonstration that its identifying characteristics could be thrown into sharp relief by comparing and contrasting their relationship in the world to the definitions which have been proposed by other theorists for the categories of Cult Fiction, Junk Fiction, as well as the notions for a Postmodern Pulp. Because these categories tended to rely heavily on their opposition to the Western Canon for their existence, its disappearance therefore weakened their criteria to such an extent as to relegate them as mere subsets of Pulp. That is, without the canon, Junk Fiction would not exist. While Cult Fiction would be restricted to culling the texts which adhere to its specific guidelines from the *oeuvre* of Pulp. On the other hand, Postmodern Pulp not only revealed itself to be terminally flawed by its determination to be conceived as an unfixed postmodern 'other' to a static modernist Western Canon, but it also failed to understand that we cannot delineate the postmodern imperatives of poststructuralism for Pulp alone. Of course, it was the awareness of these factors, which prompted the thesis to attempt to distance itself from being perceived as a poststructuralist dissertation.

Particularly when we consider that within the contemporary literary academy it is now the cultural relativism of Poststructuralism, as opposed to the 'objective' evaluative methodology of the New Criticism, which is being employed in order to keep Pulp Literature outside the walls of academia. And yet as the thesis demonstrates, even within the flat-lining of 'value' which is inherent in the cultural relativism proposed by Poststructuralism, *all things are not equal*. That is, although a study of cornflakes packets might reveal how much 'iron', 'riboflavin' or 'dietary fibre' we can receive from the contents of the box, it could never possibly compare to the study of a literary form which commands access to a lineage of thought that has contributed to, and continues to critique, the whole of philosophy, history, psychology, anthropology, sociology, mythology, political ideology, and popular culture. What is more, the fact that such a disproportionate comparison does exist, is evidence enough to support the view that the relativism of Poststructuralism can only culminate in the continued trivialisation of Pulp Literature.

Coda: "Thank God for the Pulps!"

If the combined weight of the historical overview and the evaluative section has highlighted anything, it was that although literature may have appeared to have lost its literary 'value' (admittedly via the application of some extremely dubious theories), we should never make the mistake of presuming for a second that it has been rendered as 'valueless' or 'trivial'. For as we have discovered, nothing in literature can ever be considered as trivial. Particularly when we consider some of the answers that were

offered in response to the questions which underlined the foundation of this inquiry. For instance, what the answers to the question “why does the academy regard Pulp as a low and disposable form of literature?” reveal most significantly is that the history of the trivialisation of this aesthetic form has been politically motivated and is founded on a false set of ‘evaluative’ parameters. More importantly, the implications of these revelations clearly demonstrate that it is not Pulp Literature which *needs* to be re-evaluated; rather it is the double-standards inherent within the literary academy which *need* to be re-assessed.

Furthermore, evidence to support this position was reinforced during the thesis’s attempt to uncover answers to its secondary line of inquiry, that being “what are the attributes or mechanisms that the aesthetic of Pulp Literature possesses which makes it *more illuminating* to contemporary audiences than the literary academy’s preferred ‘canonic’ texts?” The results of this investigation revealed that its importance lay in the contemporaneity of its social critique, as opposed to that of the Western Canon (whether it can be said to exist or not), which proved to have little or no interest in the contemporary. Pulp Literature then functions as a pugnacious watchdog, straining its leash towards the violations and inequities of the dominant power structures of the world. What is more, this factor not only demonstrated that Pulp was a superior form of literature to the canonic, it also tended to explain why it was that its readers found its texts to be ‘more illuminating’ than the classics of the past.

Pulp’s texts have emerged as more vital than canonic texts, because they live in the now. Their explorations are a reflection of the contemporary psyche, and therefore the issues they discuss are particularly relevant to the person of today. For example, a ‘Big Kahuna Burger’⁵ would mean nothing at all to William Shakespeare. Just as the debate concerning the cultural transformation of a ‘quarter-pounder’ into the French equivalent of ‘Le Big Mac’ might seem equally as trivial. However, these trivialities are never

trivial. Everything counts. In fact the reader should be able to recognise by now, that the Pulp aesthetic is a continuous critical commentary on the mores of contemporary society. It is constantly comparing and contrasting the mechanisms of the dominant hierarchies, showing how their sleight of hand appears perfectly normal. Even trivial. And we are all subject to this process. It is unavoidable. Because, as we have discovered, our consciousness is largely shaped by the references we make to the culture we live in. And yet, luckily for us, if we are prepared to read it, the artists who help create the culture that forms the reality we often take for granted, have also managed to install a critique of this power structure. Therefore a 'Big Kahuna Burger' is always more than it seems. By reading the critique, for instance, we might come to see the 'Big Kahuna Burger' as a symbol, or a cultural marker for something much bigger than burgers.

That is, it could also be seen as an indicator of the creeping cultural standardisation due to the spread of globalisation. The word 'Kahuna' itself, could be seen as a token nod to the last state to be added in the expansionism of the United States of America: Hawaii. And yet, not only is Hawaii home to the word 'Kahuna', it also serves as a reference point which demonstrates the continued cultural normalisation of these multinational burger kings beyond the borders of America's 52nd State, not only into France (with its token mollifier in 'Le Big Mac'), but beyond into Europe – and the rest of the world. Before too long, the 'Kahuna' warns us, climbers will be able to get a coke and fries at the top of Everest. It is this virulent form of globalisation, the thesis would argue, that we should not try to ignore. What Tarantino, through the medium of Pulp is saying, is this is what is happening to the world now! Whether we decide to take up his 'Pepsi challenge', and try to address this situation, is irrelevant. What is relevant, is that they allude to contemporary issues, and as much as they might have wanted to, Shakespeare, Goethe, or Dante cannot help us here. Of course, in an historic sense, the

motive which drives these multi-nationals to dominate is not new. Greed, and the will to power, are universal human truths which canonic literature knows more than well. However, no matter how valuable their insights may appear, I would remind the reader that canonic authors cannot raise for debate any of the questions and issues which impact on our lives in the present moment in the way Pulp Literature and its associated megatext does.

These factors would only seem to support the claims found in the evaluative section of the thesis, that *time changes everything*. As such, it was apparent from the inordinate amount of time which had been applied to the Pulp aesthetic, that it was long overdue for a re-evaluation of its status. And yet, although it would be somewhat unrealistic to expect that this thesis could ever possibly hope to remedy the error of the theoretical assumptions of the literary academy over the last five hundred years, or even the evaluative inaccuracies it has promulgated for the last thirty. It is hoped, at the very least, that it has provided a 'new' definition for Pulp Literature and its associated megatext, which will replace those representations that have traditionally chosen to denigrate and dismiss this valuable literary form. Indeed, if our explorations of this medium have provided any insight, it is that the transmission of wisdom cannot be segregated, or restricted, to the auspices of an illegitimate 'high' literature. Clearly, whether it arrives via a *Batman* comic, an historical romance, a western, a radio show by the Goons, in an episode of *The Simpsons*, or *Seinfeld*, in film by Tarantino, or from a poem written by a beer-bellied Bukowski, it *is* there for the taking. Ironically, a significant side-effect of this realisation is that Pulp Literature may ultimately save literary studies from the very real threat that many academics in the literary establishment fear coming from the encroachment of the rapidly expanding popularity of students opting for the departments of communication studies. After all, what do these departments of communication studies investigate, if not the manifestations of a

popular culture, which to a large extent, is inextricably entwined in the intertextual narrative techniques and technologies of the aesthetic of Pulp Literature.

Therefore, even the literary academy should “Thank God for the Pulps!”

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³ Edited by J. M. Parrish and R. D. Coole. London: Odhams Press, 1935.

⁴ What I mean by this, is as stated earlier in the Introduction, that it not is possible or useful to separate Pulp from what many academics ascertain to be ‘high’ Literature.

⁵ For those who may not have seen Quentin Tarantino’s classic film *Pulp Fiction* (1994), the reference to ‘The Big Kahuna Burger’ can be found in the screenplay (London/Boston: Faber and Faber, 1996:26).

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APPENDIX***Selected Highlights from a "List for Life"***

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Blood and Guts in High School, Plus Two (1978).

Kathy Goes to Haiti (1978).

Pussy, King of the Pirates (1996).

ADAMS, DOUGLAS.

The Hitch Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy: a Trilogy in Four Parts (1986).

Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency (1987).

The Long Dark Tea-Time of the Soul (1988).

ALLEN, RICHARD.

Skinhead (1970).

Suedehead (1971).

Boot Boots (1971).

Skinhead Escapes (1972)

AMIS, KINGSLEY.

Lucky Jim (1954).

AMIS, MARTIN.

London Fields (1989).

Night Train (1997).

BALLARD, J. G.

The Atrocity Exhibition (1967).
Crash (1973).
Concrete Island (1973).
Cocaine Nights (1996).

BOWLES, PAUL.

The Sheltering Sky (1949).
Let it Come Down (1952).
Up Above the World (1966).

BRAUTIGAN, RICHARD.

A Confederate General from Big Sur (1964).
Trout Fishing in America (1967).
In Watermelon Sugar (1968).
The Abortion: an Historical Romance 1966 (1970).
Revenge of the Lawn (1972).
The Hawkline Monster: a Gothic Western (1974).
Willard and his Bowling Trophies (1975).
The Sombrero Fallout (1976).
Dreaming of Babylon: a Private Eye Novel 1942 (1977).
The Tokyo-Montana Express (1980).
So the Wind Won't Blow it All Away (1982).

BROWN, LARRY.

Big Bad Love (1990).

BUKOWSKI, CHARLES.

Notes of a Dirty Old Man (1969).
Post Office (1971).
Factotum (1975).
Women (1978).
Ham on Rye (1982).
Tales of Ordinary Madness (1983).
The Most Beautiful Woman in Town & Other Stories (1988).
Pulp (1994).

BURGESS, ANTHONY.

A Clockwork Orange (1962).

BURROUGHS, WILLIAM S.

Junkie: confessions of an unredeemed drug addict (1953).
Naked Lunch (1959).
The Soft Machine (1961).
The Ticket that Exploded (1962).
Nova Express (1964).
Exterminator! (1966).
The Wild Boys (1969).
Cities of the Red Night (1981).
The Place of Dead Roads (1983).

Queer (1985).
The Western Lands (1987).
Interzone (1989).
My Education: a Book of Dreams (1995).

CAIN, JAMES M.
The Postman Always Rings Twice (1933).
Mildred Pierce (1941).

CAPOTE, TRUMAN.
Breakfast at Tiffany's (1958).
In Cold Blood (1965).
Music for Chameleons (1975).
Answered Prayers (1986).

CARROLL, JIM.
The Basketball Diaries (1969).

CARVER, RAYMOND.
Where I'm Calling From (1986).

CHANDLER, RAYMOND.
The Big Sleep (1939).
Farewell My Lovely (1940).
The Lady in the Lake (1943).
The Little Sister (1949).
The Long Goodbye (1953).

COOVER, ROBERT.
Pricksongs & Descants (1969).
Spanking the Maid (1982).
A Night at the Movies or, You Must Remember This (1987).

DEIGHTON, LEN.
The Ipcress File (1962).
Funeral in Berlin (1964).

DICK, PHILIP K.
The Man Who Japed (1956).
Time Out of Joint (1959).
The Man in the High Castle (1962).
Clans of the Alphane Moon (1964).
Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? (1968).
We Can Build You (1972).
A Scanner Darkly (1977).

DIDION, JOAN.
Play It As It Lays (1970).

DIMENT, ADAM.

The Dolly Dolly Spy (1967).

EFFINGER, GEORGE ALEC.

When Gravity Fails (1988).

ELLIS, BRET EASTON.

Less Than Zero (1985).

Rules of Attraction (1987).

American Psycho (1991).

The Informers (1994).

FARREN, MICK.

Exit Funtopia (1988).

FIELDING, HELEN.

Bridget Jones's Diary (1996).

FLEMING, IAN.

Casino Royale (1953).

Live and Let Die (1954).

Diamonds Are Forever (1956).

From Russia With Love (1957).

Dr No (1958).

Goldfinger (1959).

The Man With the Golden Gun (1965).

On Her Majesty's Secret Service (1966).

GARLAND, ALEX.

The Beach (1996).

GIBSON, WILLIAM.

Neuromancer (1984).

Count Zero (1986).

Burning Chrome (1986).

Mona Lisa Overdrive (1988).

Virtual Light (1993).

GOODIS, DAVID.

Nightfall (1947).

GREENE, GRAHAM.

The Quiet American (1955).

Our Man in Havana (1958).

The Honorary Consul (1973).

HAMMETT, DASHIELL.

The Continental Op (1923).
The Maltese Falcon (1930).
The Thin Man (1934).

HIAASEN, CARL.
Lucky You (1997).
Native Tongue (1991).

HINTON, S. E.
The Outsiders (1967).

HORNBY, NICK.
High Fidelity (1995).
About a Boy (1998).

ISHERWOOD, CHRISTOPHER.
Goodbye to Berlin (1940).

KEROUAC, JACK.
On the Road (1957).
Dharma Bums (1958).
The Subterraneans (1958).
Visions of Cody (1959).
Mexico City Blues (1959).
Maggie Cassidy (1959).
Lonesome Traveller (1960).
Big Sur (1962).
Desolation Angels (1965).
Satori in Paris (1966).

KESEY, KEN.
One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest (1962).

KING, STEPHEN
The Shining (1977).

LOWRY, MALCOLM
Under the Volcano (1947).

MacINNES, COLIN.
Absolute Beginners (1959).

McCOY, HORACE.
They Shoot Horses Don't They? (1935).

McEWAN, IAN.
First Love, Last Rites (1976).
In Between the Sheets (1978).
The Cement Garden (1979).

The Comfort of Strangers (1981).

The Child in Time (1987).

The Innocent (1990).

McGAHAN, ANDREW.

Praise (1992).

MAUGHAM, W. SOMERSET

The Razor's Edge (1944).

MILLAR, MARTIN.

Lux the Poet (1988).

Ruby & the Stone Age Diet (1989).

The Good Fairies of New York (1992).

Dreams of Sex and Stage Diving (1994).

MILLER, HENRY.

The Tropic of Cancer (1934).

The Tropic of Capricorn (1939).

Sexus (1949).

Plexus (1953).

Nexus (1960).

MURAKAMI, RYU

Almost Transparent Blue (1976).

NAUGHTON, BILL.

Alfie (1966).

O'BRIEN, JOHN.

Leaving Las Vegas (1990).

ORWELL, GEORGE.

Down and Out in Paris and London (1933).

1984 (1949).

OSBORNE, JOHN.

Look Back in Anger (1956).

POE, EDGAR ALLEN.

The Fall of the House of Usher and Other Stories (1986).

RECHY, JOHN.

City of Night (1963).

ROBBINS, HAROLD.

A Stone for Danny Fisher (1955).

SALINGER, J. D.

The Catcher in the Rye (1951).
For Esme - With Love and Squalor (1953).
Franny and Zooey (1961).
Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters (1963).
Seymour: An Introduction (1963).

SELBY, HUBERT.
Last Exit to Brooklyn (1964).

SHELLEY, MARY.
Frankenstein (1818).

SILLITOE, ALAN.
Saturday Night, Sunday Morning (1958).
The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner (1959).

STEVENSON, ROBERT LOUIS.
The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde and Other Stories (1886).

STOKER, BRAM.
Dracula (1897).

THOMPSON, HUNTER S.
Hell's Angels (1967).
Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas: a Savage Journey to the Heart of the American Dream (1977).
Generation of Swine (1988).
Songs of the Doomed (1990).

THOMPSON, JIM.
The Killer Inside Me (1955).
The Getaway (1959).
The Grifters (1963).
Texas by the Tail (1965).

TROCCHI, ALEXANDER.
Young Adam (1954).

WATERHOUSE, KEITH.
Billy Liar (1959).

WELSH, IRVINE.
Trainspotting (1993).
The Acid House (1994).
Marabou Stork Nightmare (1995).
Ecstasy (1997).

WILLEFORD, CHARLES.
High Priest of California (1956).

Pick-Up (1967).
Miami Blues (1984).
The Way We Die Now (1988).

WAUGH, EVELYN.
Black Mischief (1932).
A Handful of Dust (1934).
Scoop (1938).
Brideshead Revisited (1942).

WOLFE, TOM.
The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test (1968).
Bonfire of the Vanities (1988).

YURICK, SOL.
The Warriors (1965).