

Source 1b

“An Overview to Pulp Fiction Genres.” The Vintage Library, 2008,
<http://www.vintagelibrary.com/pulpfiction/genres/genre-overview.html/>.

Adventure

For those interested in traveling the world in their armchair, *Argosy*, *Adventure* and other magazines in this genre offered stories about strapping he-men caught in exciting situations spanning the globe. Heroes fought the bad guy in the South Seas, the Amazon and in the American west. *Argosy*, a magazine that actually started publication in the 1880s, settled mostly on the Adventure genre in the 1920s and thrilled readers with stories about voodoo ceremonies in Haiti, and battle excitement in the French foreign legion. The top adventure magazines always strived for as much realism as possible, which raised the quality of the stories and forced its writers to either be world-savvy travelers or research fanatics.

Source 2b

Jones, Robert Kenneth. Pulp Classics: The Lure of Adventure. Borgo Press, 1989.

In the twenties and thirties, if you wanted to journey to one of the four corners of the world, you didn't hop aboard a jet; you opened a pulp. Pulp magazines regularly stopped at far-flung ports of call, where adventurers hunted for pearls perhaps, or trekked through impenetrable forests to reach lost civilizations, or turned back the pages of history to view an exciting period of the past. Indeed, so little was known about many mysterious places on our globe, that whatever was said about them in magazines, books and the movies was readily accepted by an audience eager for vicarious thrills.

Who could resist the allure of a China of *femme fatales* like the Dragon Lady, the romance of a South Seas of sarong-clad seductresses like Dorothy Lamour, the excitement of a cattle drive ramrodded by a Hopalong Cassidy? In those days, the world was more idealized-- and this aura tinged pulp writing, particularly highlighted adventurous action in foreign lands.

Of the adventure-type pulps, many specialized. There were those chronicling the exploits of stalwart, soft-spoken but quick-shooting heroes and cattle-rustling desperadoes, intrepid captains of the clouds, crime-fighting Sherlocks and super heroes, to mention a few.

Far fewer were the general fiction pulps, covering a wide spectrum of adventures each issue. Of these, four, perhaps five, can be singled out as foremost among all such pulp magazines. They are Munsey's *Argosy*, McCall's *Blue Book*, Doubleday Doran's *Short Stories*, and The Ridgeway Company's (later Popular's) *Adventure*; there are many aficionados who class Street & Smith's *Popular* with them. In

any case, all reflect high literary values in the writing that compare favorably not only with other pulps, but with just plain storytelling in any shape or form.

Source 3b

Preston, Douglas. Foreward. The Big Book of Adventure Stories, Ed. Otto Penzler, Vintage, 2011.

Adventure literature is, at its core, escapist. It is not a genre but a category, and a broad one at that. Adventure fiction is not realistic. Its aim is not to mirror life. It moves fast. Things happen. People die. *To the Lighthouse* it is not. It transports the reader to the ends of the earth or into outer space. In adventure fiction the characters are larger than life. They are blazingly heroic or raging with malevolence; they are brutally repulsive or stunningly beautiful. Nobody is average. The settings are dramatic: impenetrable jungles, burning deserts, erupting volcanos, earthquakes, lost cities, measureless caverns, mountains beyond mountains. And yet, even in these exotic locales, the adventure story never fails to uphold society's values. *She* is a veritable encyclopedia of Victorian prejudices, attitudes, and beliefs. Tarzan, raised by an unknown tribe of apes in deepest Africa, is at the same time an exemplar of utterly conventional American morality.

That partly explains, in my view, the appeal of adventure fiction. The risk is considerable. Filled with excitement, exoticism, mystery, and violence, and set in the farthest corners of the world, these stories nevertheless reaffirm the safest values of home. They tell us who we are and what we believe, and they suggest such values are universal, even twenty thousand leagues under the sea.

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Source 4b

Penzler, Otto. Introduction. The Big Book of Adventure Stories, Ed. Otto Penzler, Vintage, 2011.

It is impossible to avoid the subject of insensitivity in many of these stories. In a time when arbiters of social conscience frown on, or forbid, even the use of such words as *terrorist*, *blind*, *handicapped*, *American Indian*, and *jungle*, this collection cannot help but send the extremely politically correct screaming into the street. I have read hundreds of stories written in the nineteenth century and for twentieth-century pulp magazines, British as well as American, and these tales exhibit a near-universal insensitivity that one can forget existed not so long ago. Asians are almost uniformly described as yellow, and generally as evil, sneaky, and vicious. Black characters are often referred to as niggers, and casually racist remarks are unthinkingly used to describe both villains and accomplished figures who play important, heroic roles. Anyone who is not white and Anglo-Saxon is liable-- no, make that *likely*-- to be referred to with an insulting epithet, even if it is not necessarily regarded as insulting by the speaker or by the object of the denigrating term. While they are the most egregious examples, racial slurs are not the only examples of language unlikely to pass muster these days. A one-legged man is called a cripple,

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women are girls or dames, a very short person is a midget, and so on. Yet to attempt to judge authors who worked in a different era by the standard usages of today is both narrow-minded and silly, just as it would be to impart sinister motives or attitudes to them. It would make as much sense to bring today's sensibilities to these usages as to complain that a character is using a horse and buggy when he should be using a car, or that he uses a messenger to deliver news when he should simply use his cell phone. Words, not to mention concepts, that never arise in this fiction are *diversity* or *multiculturalism*. That was then, this is now. [...]

Adventure fiction has the sound of a genre, but it isn't. It is a collection of genres, with the frequent inclusion of genre-defying stories that adhere to the requirements of the label: to be exciting and to follow primary characters engaged in bold and unusual activities. More often than not, these characters are larger than life-- whether a quiet-spoken cowboy who is slow to take offense but then proves to have the fastest gun in the West, a swordsman who can attack a dozen foes and emerge unscathed, or a thief (usually an honorable one, as is de rigueur for most burglars and highwaymen in the pulps and the literature of the nineteenth century) who has escaped the clutches of the law over a long career. [...]

Between these covers are heroes who do all these things and more, and fair number of villains as dedicated to ruling the world, or destroying it, as the good guys are to saving it or improving it. There is a nostalgia here for a simpler time-- when the difference between Good and Evil was less defined in shades of gray than in clear-cut black and white, and when stopping a madman took higher priority than understanding that his desire to wipe out an entire city might have been caused by a childhood trauma.

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Source 5b

Anderson, Vicki. The Dime Novel in Children's Literature. Jefferson: McFarland, 2004.

Pulp magazines and paperbacks were certainly important cultural factors; on their colorful and suggestive covers and on their pages of unfinished, rough paper, information about the conditions and circumstances that was found appealing at this time by the reading public was revealed.

These pulps, of course, received their share of both praise and condemnation. True to the literary evaluation tradition up to this time, for the most part, the people who read them, praised them; those who didn't read them pointed out their shortcomings. Byron Preiss, an author of books on pulps, gives his opinion this way: "The old American pulps were filled with adventure, ambitious plots, and taut dramatic stories. At times they were also filled with hack writing, racism, sexism, and titillation. They were products of their times, and, as such remain an accurate portrait of tastes and attitudes of America in the first forty years of the twentieth century."

Competition among the many pulp fiction publishers was fierce. Each company did whatever it took to sell its wares. The newsstands were filled with garishly pictured, generally poorly written stories, and the public was willing to spend its scarce and hard-earned money for this material.

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Source 6b

Cawelti, John G. Adventure, Mystery, and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture. University of Chicago Press, 1976.

The central fantasy of the adventure story is that of the hero-- individual or group-- overcoming obstacles and dangers and accomplishing some important and moral mission. Often, though not always, the hero's trials are the

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Result of the machinations of a villain, and, in addition, the hero frequently receives, as a kind of side benefit, the favors of one or more attractive young ladies. The interplay with the villain and the erotic interests served by the attendant damsels are more in the nature of frosting on the cake. The true focus of interest in the adventure story is the character of the hero and the nature of the obstacles he has to overcome. This is the simplest and perhaps the oldest and widest in appeal of all story types. It can be clearly traced back to the myths and epics of earliest times and has been cultivated in some form or other by almost every human society. At least on the surface, the appeal of this form is obvious. It presents a character with whom the audience identifies, passing through the most frightening perils to achieve some triumph. Perhaps the basic moral fantasy implicit in this type of story is that of victory over death, though there are also all kinds of subsidiary triumphs available depending on the particular cultural materials employed: the triumph over injustice and the threat of lawlessness in the western; the saving of the nation in the spy story; the overcoming of fear and the defeat of the enemy in the combat story. While the specific characterization of the hero depends on the cultural motifs and themes that are embodied in any specific adventure formula, there are in general two primary ways in which the hero can be characterized: as a superhero with exceptional strength or ability or as "one of us," a figure marked, at least at the beginning of the story, by flawed abilities and attitudes presumably shared by the audience. Both of these methods of characterization foster strong, but slightly different, ties of identification between hero and audience. In the case of the superhero, the principle of identification is like that between child and parent and involves complex feelings of envious submission and ambiguous love characteristic of that relationship. [...]

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Source 7b

"Adventure Stories." Encyclopedia of Media and Communication, Ed. Marcel Danesi, University of Toronto Press, 2013.

Adventure stories (sometimes called *action stories*) are narratives involving heroes or heroines who defeat villains [...] D'Ammassa (2008: vli-viii) defines such stories as narratives depicting events that 'happen outside the course of the protagonist's ordinary life, usually accompanied by danger, often physical action.' Although this appears to be a simplistic definition, it actually cap-

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tures the essence of the narrative formula that underlies the adventure story-- a formula in which excitement, suspense, and cathartic resolution constitutes its main ingredients, supporting the widely-held notion in psychoanalysis that this formula is a product of psychic Angst that is released through a fictional framework. While we cannot solve the world's problems ourselves, we allow our adventure heroes to do so in a make-believe way, thus restoring order to our chaotic experiences. [...]

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The adventure story typically revolves around the exploits of a hero or heroine who fights in the name of justice; searches for a lost empire, city, or treasure; seeks to save someone; or engages in some other quest. Martin Green (1991) points out that there are seven main types of adventure tales, but all of them share common elements. The story starts with a statement or portrayal of the situation that requires the intervention of a hero or heroine, who then sets out to accomplish the

objective posed by the initial situation. The protagonist faces a series of physically and intellectually challenging trials, which he or she overcomes, often with the help of a partner

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or sidekick (which may also be an animal, such as a horse, or a machine, such as a car), triumphantly reaching the objective at the end.

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Source 8b

Saricks, Joyce G. The Readers' Advisory Guide to Genre Fiction. American Library Association, 2009.

A DEFINITION

In his classic discussion of genre fiction, *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture*, John G. Cawelti defines Adventure fiction as the story “of the hero-- individual or group-- overcoming obstacles and dangers and accomplishing some important and moral mission.” He also alludes to the archetypal nature of this story pattern, which can be traced back to ancient myths and epics. The traditional Adventure hero passes through an array of frightening perils to reach

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some goal, as in such classics as *The Odyssey* and *Beowulf*. Thus, novels in the Adventure genre are action-packed, feature a hero on a mission, and are often set in exotic locales during times of peace and war. [...]

Thus, the prototypical Adventure story features a hero on a mission, and he must face a range of obstacles along the way. The reader gets a firsthand look at the exotic locale in which the story is set. The reader participates in suspenseful derring-do, joining the hero as he extricates himself from multiple dangers along the way and overcomes the physical dangers to complete his mission successfully. Figure 2.1 summarizes the characteristics [...]

Figure 2.1 *Characteristics of Adventure*

1. Pacing is generally brisk, as the hero escapes from one dangerous episode to the next. [...]
2. The story line focuses on action, usually a mission, and the obstacles and dangers met along the way. Physical adventure and danger are paramount, as the hero is placed in life-and-death situations from which he must rescue himself and others. There is generally a happy ending, with the hero safe and order restored.
3. There is always an identifiable hero, a character whom readers like and to whom they relate. Through ingenuity and skill, he accomplishes his desperate mission.
4. Detailed settings are important. These stories are set “elsewhere,” and this foreignness underlines the sense of danger and the obstacles to be overcome. [...]
5. In response to the life-threatening situations, the mood of many Adventure novels is dark, menacing, foreboding. In some, humor lightens the tone.

6. Colorful language and jargon (often military) fill these tales, and this conversational language invites the reader to participate in the hero's exploits.
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CHARACTERISTICS AND THE GENRE'S APPEAL

Pacing

Here, as in all Adrenaline genres, brisk pacing drives the story, and all else is secondary to the sense of forward motion. The action moves the story along at a breakneck speed, with the hero and his crew escaping from one dangerous situation to the next. [...]

Story Line

Action distinguishes the genre, and the story line emphasizes this orientation. In Adventure the plot usually concentrates on a desperate mission. It is always physically dangerous to those involved and usually has serious-- life and death-- ramifications. [...]

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Other features of the Adventure story line include survival amid the elements, with physical, human, and animal dangers; escape from perilous situations; and the nature of these wide-ranging missions-- from military operations to quests for treasures-- covered by the genre. Remember, too, that despite the danger and obstacles, the hero is successful. Others may be lost along the way, but the hero almost always prevails and survives [...]

Characterization

The nature of the hero is another hallmark of the Adventure genre. (Although inroads have been made by women, [...] this remains a male-dominated genre). He is a strong, honorable man, committed to his assigned mission. Both physical and intellectual skills are required: the hero must act to accomplish his mission, but he must also be able to figure out puzzles along the way. [...] The Adventure hero operates under a strong moral code, although it may be one of his own devising. Whether or not these heroes are the appointed leaders of their groups, they are the ones who display the ingenuity and skill that accomplish the mission and save the team from disaster. The hero's natural leadership ability, combined with intuitive skill at interpreting dangers and discovering solutions, sets him apart from the others on his team.

Although characters may be stereotypes, and secondary characters are more often either good or bad rather than fully developed, the hero and his plight capture the imagination and sympathy of the audience. [...]

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Frame/Setting

Physical setting plays an important role in Adventure stories. Heroes must go on a mission to another

place, often exotic or unknown and certainly mysterious. This must then be described in physical and cultural terms [...]

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WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT FANS

Readers of Adventure are a diverse lot who may also read in a number of related genres. There are, however, several general characteristics that describe these fans. First, Adventure readers expect the general template of characteristics mentioned earlier in the chapter: a hero on a mission' detailed, exotic settings; danger, with action, whether frequent or following a suspenseful buildup; and the ultimate success of the mission with

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the hero safe. Cinematic is a term often applied to Adventure story lines, and it is one readers may employ as they describe books they enjoy. These are stories made for the big screen, with larger-than-life heroes on seemingly impossible missions, often striving for the ultimate goal of making the world safe, if not actually saving it through their efforts. As in Romance and Suspense, readers expect a happy ending. [...]

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Source 9b

D'Ammassa, Don. Encyclopedia of Adventure Fiction. Facts on File, 2009.

Adventure fiction has been around since the first primitive man or woman began spinning wild tales about the exciting things that happened to them during the day, probably to explain why the hunter returned empty-handed or the gatherer harvested less than the usual volume of berries and roots. Adventure fills a gap in our lives; it interrupts the routine passage of time and suggests that life could be more interesting if we had only taken a different course somewhere along the way. Adventure is a relative and very personal experience. A police officer's daily patrol might be very exciting if you work in an office all day, but a routine flight in a hot-air balloon might seem like a wild adventure to him. In practice, a touch of real adventure is usually more than enough for most of us, and we are much more comfortable enjoying other people's adventures vicariously, on the screen or in the pages of a book. [...]

In one sense, almost all fiction involves some sort of adventure, exposure to new experiences or knowledge, changes in the shapes of the characters' lives. Although there is no easily definable line of demarcation, we will assume that an adventure is an event or series of events that happen outside the ordinary course of the protagonist's life, usually accompanied by danger, often by physical action. Adventure stories almost always move quickly, and the pace of the plot is at least as important as characterization, setting, and other elements of a created work. [...]

Sometimes the adventure is intellectual rather than physical, exposure to a series of revelations that changes how the protagonist thinks about the world. More often there is sharper conflict, either with a human antagonist or a force of nature, or there may be some other obstacle to

be overcome. The protagonist might choose to have

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an adventure-- join the foreign legion, participate in an expedition into unexplored parts of the world, or just try out a new experience. In other cases, adventure is thrust upon the characters, and they have to survive as best they can, pursued by bloodthirsty pirates, sinister foreign agents, or lava from an erupting volcano. Their adventures might take years to complete, or only a few minutes. Most, but not all, adventure stories require their protagonists to be displaced from their usual environment. These journeys might be conscious choices or involuntary responses to circumstances. In most of the better adventure stories, the physical journey is mirrored by an interior one; the protagonist learns something about the world at large, or about his or her own personality. Usually, but not always, there is a change in the protagonist's environment, typically a journey, possibly into previously unknown territory, of the mind if not of the body. [...]

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Source 5b

Beaumont, Charles. "The Bloody Pulps." Playboy September 1962: 2-10

There was a ritual.

It was dark and mysterious, as rituals ought to be, and-- for those who enacted it-- a holy and enchanted thing.

If you were a prepubescent American male in the Twenties, the Thirties or the Forties, chances are you performed the ritual. If you were a little too tall, a little too short, a little too fat, skinny, pimply, an only child, painfully shy, awkward, scared of girls, terrified of bullies, poor at your schoolwork (not because you weren't bright but because you wouldn't apply yourself), uncomfortable in large crowds, given to brooding, and totally and overwhelmingly convinced of your personal inadequacy in any situation, then you certainly performed it.

Which is to say, you worshiped at the shrine of the pulps.

What were the pulps?

Cheaply printed, luridly illustrated, sensationally written magazines of fiction aimed at the lower and lower-middle classes.

Were they any good? No. They were great.

Doc Savage, The Shadow, The Spider, G-8 and His Battle Aces, The Phantom, Adventure, Argosy, Blue Book, Black Mask, Thrilling Wonder Stories, Marvel Tales—and all the hundred-and-one other titles that bedizened the newsstands of America in the halcyon days—provided ecstasy and euphoria of a type unknown to this gloomy generation. They made to crawl deliciously young scalps. They inspired, excited, captivated, hypnotized—and, unexpectedly, instructed—the reckless young who have become responsible adults. Of course, they were infra dig. In line with the imperishable

American concept that anything that is purely enjoyable must be a sin, the pulps were considered sinful. Although they were, at their worst (or best), fractionally as "objectionable" as the immoral, amoral, violent, perverted product available nowadays to any tennis-shoe-shod sub-teen who has the price of admission to a movie theater or access to a television set, they were proscribed by most parents and all educators. Thus we indulged in them in much the same way that we indulged in the other purely enjoyable facts of life. Which was an altogether agreeable state of affairs.

Fortunately, the psychologists of the day did not understand the special sweetness of the stolen watermelon. So they denounced the pulps, wrote tracts on the fearful consequences certain to befall

those whose minds were polluted by “the newsstand trash” and otherwise did their best to create a nation of addicts.

Addicts we certainly were. We gave ourselves over wholly to the habit and pursuit of the most potent literary drug known to boy, and all of us suffer withdrawal symptoms to this day. No one ever kicked the pulps cold turkey. They were too powerful an influence. Instead, most of us tried to ease off. Having dreamed of owning complete sets, in mint condition, of all the pulp titles ever published, and having realized perhaps a tenth part of the dream-- say, 1500 magazines, or a bedroomful-- we suffered that vague disenchantment that is the first sign of approaching maturity (16, going on 17, was usually when it happened) and decided to be sensible. Accordingly, we stopped buying all the new mags as fast as they could appear, and concentrated instead upon a few indispensable items. Gradually we cut down until we were keeping up the files on only three or four, or possibly five or six, publications. After a few years, when we had left high school, we got the number down to two. Which is where most of us stand today. We don't read the magazines, of course. But we go on buying them. Not regularly, and not in any sense because we want to, but because we must. It is an obligation, a duty, to the bright untroubled selves we were. To plunge any further into adulthood would be an act of betrayal. But the times have betrayed us, anyway. The pulps, as we knew and loved them, are gone. The gaudy, gory covers, the dramatic interior illustrations, the machine-gun prose, the rough, rich-smelling, wood-chip-speckled paper-- all gone. The so-called “pulps” of 1962 are nothing of the kind. They are slickly printed, slickly written echoes of their own great past. Look at *Argosy* now, and then think of the magazine as it was when H. Bedford-Jones and A. Hyatt Verrill and Arthur Leo Zagat were waging their bloody Mongol wars; pick up the diminutive, pocket-size, lightweight *Amazing Stories* and try to imagine it 20 years ago when its special quarterly edition was the size of a dictionary (unabridged) and more exciting than a ride in a roller coaster. Buy one of these emasculated ghosts and display it on a subway. Wait for the frowns, and go on waiting forever-- there won't be any. The “pulps” are now socially acceptable, and I can think of no greater damnation of them.

Only the well-remembered “eight-pagers” (Toots and Casper, Dick Tracy, etc.) carried a greater stigma than the old-time adventure magazines. Happily, no sober, critical evaluation of pulps is possible. Like any other narcotic, they defy rational analysis. One can speak of their effects, even of their ingredients, but not-- without wearisome and unconvincing pomposity-- of their causes. Something in them froze the addict's critical faculties. He might entertain a difference of opinion

on the relative merits of Putnam's translation of *Don Quixote* as opposed to Shelton's, but on the subject of *Weird Tales* he was, and is, adamant. Reacting with typically honest fury to criticism of one of his favorite pulp writers, the eminent regional novelist and historian August Derleth wrote not too long ago: “With that sublime, egocentric stupidity which characterizes a certain subspecies of frustrate which goes in for book reviewing in order to find some compensation for its own singular lack of creative ability by deprecating the work of those who are creative, a reviewer recently brushed aside a book of supernatural tales as being, after all, ‘only pulp fiction.’”

The reviewer offered no evidence of being able to say just what stigma attached to writing for the so-called ‘pulp’ magazines.”

Of course the reviewer who enraged Derleth could not have been an addict, so he ought to be forgiven; particularly in that, no matter what he said, he was probably right. To the hooked, those wild and wonderful stories were all great; to the unhooked (a state of being difficult for the hooked to imagine), they were no doubt dreadful, hardly to be classed as literature.

It is true that they were unlike any other literature to which we had been exposed. Before our encounters with *Black Mask* and similar periodicals, we tended to think of adventures as belonging to a previous age. Buccaneers. Indians, Frontier Fighters, Soldiers of Fortune-- all were in the past, we thought. Then we read the pulps and learned that adventure surrounded us, that danger was omnipresent, evil a threat to be countered at all odds, and science not a laboratory curiosity but,

instead, an active tool. We learned a lot of other things, too, including the quaint but useful lesson that it is more rewarding to be a good guy than a bad guy [...]

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As we stretched out on the lawn swing with a copy of *Spicy Detective Stories*, we heard only the whisssk-whisssk-whisssk of the rotating sprinklers, the distant rumble of streetcars and a voice crying “Ole ole ocean freeeee!” And, of course, Dan Turner’s gun, sneezing kachow-kachow! The world was a small, quiet place for most of us then, and it was for that reason, as much as for any other, that we escaped into the vast, noisy world of the pulps.

They were at the crest of their popularity just before and during the war years. Hundreds of titles offered an almost unbelievable variety of reading experiences to the American teenager, and most were well within the boundaries of good taste-- the same boundaries over which our television networks leap casually every hour of every day in this age.

It must be admitted, however, that only those who actually bothered to read the magazines could be expected to understand this. Their physical appearance suggested nothing short of mortal sin.

Something about the quality of the paper-- so exciting to kids-- summoned up, for adults, visions of brothels, public toilets, French postcards and petty crime. The illustrations, generally of a low order of craftsmanship, depicted scenes of extreme violence. But it was the covers, more than anything else, that turned the grownup world against the pulps. To say that they were lurid is to say that the Atlantic Ocean is wet. They were fantastic. In a way unknown to me, and unduplicated by artists in any other field, those masters of the brush managed to work sex, action, horror, terror, beauty, ugliness, virtue, sin, and a dozen other elements, into every picture they painted. Their goal was to tempt the newsstand browser into parting with cash, and this goal they achieved with complete success. But they achieved a great deal more. Most pulp addicts were foxy enough to know that the cover of a magazine seldom bore the slightest connection to the fiction it was supposed to illustrate, that, indeed, the “backs” were simply come-ons for saps and suckers; yet we revered those pulp artists and regarded their contribution, and their position, as being equal to those of the writers.

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