American Horror Fiction and Class: From Poe to *Twilight*

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I dedicate this book to my father, David Robert Simmons, for introducing me to the novels and films that instilled me with a lifelong love of the macabre, the grotesque, and the terrifying.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1

Introduction: Establishing the Place of Class in US Gothic and Horror Fiction

The last century has witnessed a sea change in the way that Americans think about class, and particularly the poor. There has been a notable shift away from a widespread belief in the validity of Progressive ideals, to what many historians and critics have described as a post-Progressive ideology which embodies "a resurgent conservatism over the responsibilities of the fortunate towards the poor" (Newman, 1991, 115). There are a number of reasons for this shift. Progressive era attitudes, which widely circulated in the late nineteenth century and held sway until well into the 1960s, underwent a great deal of criticism during the 1980s as part of the rise and subsequent dominance of successive Conservative (and then Neoconservative) governments, beginning with Richard Nixon and reaching their pinnacle with the tenure of Gorge W. Bush. Tied to changes in government, the widely perceived failure of the 'war on poverty' (originated by Lyndon B. Johnson during the 1960s) has meant that, during the last thirty years, Americans have increasingly been encouraged to question the efficacy of welfare as a tool for social reform. Instead, and up until fairly recently with the election of Barack Obama and a move back towards social welfare reform, much popular rhetoric had sought to reassert the need for a free market and advocated an anti-interventionist approach by government that is more 'hands off' when it comes to the day to day lives of its voters, supposedly allowing for greater self-sufficiency and thus self-determination on behalf of the individual. The popularity of such laissez faire ideas in the contemporary era has meant that formerly Progressive attitudes, which would tend to theorise and position the poor as being 'like us' but as having lost their way as a result of environment or misfortune and thus deserving of our help, have been steadily eroded away to the point where Americans are often now encouraged to think the reverse; that the poor are fundamentally different to them; that they live in a different way with different values and models of behaviour and that this is their choice. Indeed, the growth in currency of the 'underclass' concept, seeing the poor as a distinct social group (coined by Ken Aluetta in 1982) would seem to testify to this change in thinking. In his book *Class Representation in Modern Fiction and Film* (2007) Keith Gandal explores this ideological shift away from progressivism, suggesting that what Americans have achieved in the last fifty years is a way of symbolically distancing the poor by foregrounding the notion of a difference between the materially wealthy and the poor in the form of 'a culture of poverty' (5). This reconfiguration of poverty into the domain of culture means that those who are poor can be blamed for their lifestyles and behaviour as they cease to become 'innocent' victims of larger societal systems in the eyes of the larger community. Liberal scholar William Julius Wilson argues that the concept of 'a culture of poverty' diverts attention away from important issues of social justice, transforming the idea of the poor as a changeable effect of inequalities in social and societal structures into an unalterable process of generational reproduction in which those who are poor are inevitably bound to pass on a mode of behaviour to their children, and their children's children and thus not worth helping.

The widespread ideology of culpability in relation to the poor within US society over the last thirty years has inevitably created an attendant, fundamental change in the way popular culture depicts the poor in its fictions. Indeed, it seems inevitable that given the wider ideological changes taking place in the US during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries the depiction of the poor as essentially comparable to the reader (or viewer) was also replaced with a representation of the poor which often stresses the difference and alien-ness of those living in poverty; as an ultimately, unknowable mass - more in keeping

with Edward Said's concept of the *Other*. While it is notable that, as Fiona Devine suggests in her sociological study *Social Class in America and Britain* (1997), the issue of class has been almost totally ignored in the field of mainstream politics during the latter half of the twentieth century: "Class issues ... have not been mobilised in any radical way by the Democratic Party, which is largely committed to moderate liberalism" (76). This shunning of the idea of class, speaks to a concomitant desire to ignore those living in poverty in order to believe in the 'successful' running of the country. The notion of America as truly egalitarian being ill at ease with the public recognition and acknowledgement of a sector of the population as poor. Consequently, as Gandal proposes, the working class in many parts of the U.S. have now become a type of 'cultural *Other*' (3), arguing, in parallel with Said's thinking on the ideological role of the colonial Other, that Americans have an innate need for the existence of a Othered poor as "an active and tortured fantasy life about poverty ... seems to play a role in their psychic equilibrium" (5).

We need not focus on examples of contemporary popular culture to see the complex positioning of the poor in the American popular psyche. Such is the case with Ambrose Bierce's "Beyond the Wall" in which Mohun Dampier, an aristocrat "with an aversion to work and a marked indifference to many of the things that the world cares for" (216) tells the narrator of the story of his refusal to publically acknowledge his feelings for "a girl not of my class" (220) and the spectral repercussions of his grave mistake in not later recognising her plea for help. Bierce's story functions as a cautionary tale, with the wealthy and arrogant Dampier being punished for his lack of moral qualms in ignoring the desperation of his poorer neighbour. We can see in Bierce's story a process of attraction then repulsion to the working classes, as though Dampier parallels the larger reading public and their interest in the 'Othered' poor. This introductory chapter will explore some of the multifaceted ways in which the U.S.A's 'active and tortured fantasy life about poverty' has been ever-present in its fiction, serving to mediate issues related to class to an increasingly fraught reading (and viewing) public. More specifically this chapter (and those that follow) will posit the thesis that popular incarnations of the Gothic have played a significant part in presenting these concerns, anxieties and fears about class to the wider reading public. In line with David Punter's claim that it is 'impossible to make much sense out of Gothic fiction without continual recourse to the concept of paranoia' (1996, 1) this study will explore how such work has sometimes served as a form of surplus repression, masking the horrors of poverty and exploitation behind the patina of fiction, and at other points it has brought stark attention to those class based issues that may have otherwise been sublimated by larger cultural or governmental hegemonies.

In his hugely influential study of the Gothic, *The Literature of Terror* (1980), David Punter suggests that the Gothic has always been used as a kind of psychic stabiliser by those who wish to conceive of themselves as the mainstream of their respective society: "the middle class displaces the violence of present social structures, conjures them up again ... and promptly falls under their spell" (418). This study argues that the Gothic, in a U.S. context, utilises the concept of the poor as Other (alongside other important concerns around race and gender)as a means of exploring and giving apposite voice to the anxieties, or what Punter terms "the specific taboos" (419), of twentieth and twenty first century Capitalism in a U.S. context. As Robert Seguin notes: America is "a nation that tries desperately to dream its way out of class" (154). Indeed, the central belief in laissez fair capitalism as an embodiment of the aspirations espoused in that nebulous concept of 'the American dream' have left any admission of poverty and the poor as dangerous evidence that all may not be as it seems. Put most simply, if

undeserved poverty exists in the U.S. then there is a worrying disparity between the dream and the reality, as the noted American sociologist J.K. Galbraith noted in *The Affluent Society* (1958): "in the United States the survival of poverty is remarkable. We ignore it because we share with all societies at all times the capacity for not seeing what we do not wish to see … this has enabled the nobleman to enjoy his diner while remaining oblivious to the beggars around his door."(268) A sentiment that is shared by Seguin, who suggests that at the beginning of the new millennium, there is still "a deep reluctance to discuss publicly or even acknowledge the social and political salience of class difference amid stunning disparities of wealth" (153). Poverty then is ignored whenever possible and the reality of its existence is disavowed for fear that acknowledgement would risk undermining larger national cultural imperatives; as Nancy Isenberg asks "How does a culture that prizes equality of opportunity explain, or indeed accommodate, its persistently marginalised people?" (2) Indeed, by eliding class, pretending that it is not a significant component of Americans' day to day lives, Lang claims that we "void the necessity of addressing the appalling extremes of wealth and poverty that characterise twenty-first-century America." (13) In such a situation the Gothic, as a non-realist form, is employed as an epistemological device through which poverty can be mediated to a readership uncomfortable with its truths. As Alan Lloyd-Smith notes:

> Because Gothic is of its nature extravagant and concerned with the dark side of society, and because it is in some ways freed by its status as absurd fantasy, this form is perhaps more able than realism to incorporate unresolved contradictions within the culture, or to express as in dream logic the hidden desires and fears that more considered and "reasonable" perspectives would shrug off or repress (34)

In a specifically national context, Agnieszka Soltysik Monnet has proposed that America's first novelist, Charles Brockden Brown was a horror writer who "made horror a genre of the social and political thought experiment" (59). Though Lloyd-Smith warns against over-reading the Gothic as political, a number of academics and scholars have succeeded in providing a host of enlightening interpretations of the genre, and its key writers and texts, as socially and culturally engaged. Perhaps, due to the number of female Gothic writers, there has been a host of excellent work carried on the subject of the 'Female Gothic' including Juliann E. Fleenor's *Female Gothic* (1983), Eugenia Delamotte's *Perils of the Night: A Feminist Study of Nineteenth Century Gothic* (1989), Lynette Carpenter and Wendy K. Kolmar's *Haunting the House of Fiction: Feminist Perspectives on Ghost Stories by American Women* (1991), Suzanne Becker's *Gothic Forms of Feminine Fictions* (1996), Jeffrey Weinstock's *Scare Tactics: Supernatural Fiction by American Women* (2008), and Dianna Wallace and Andrew Smith's *The Female Gothic: New Directions* (2009) to name but a few. Similarly, Toni Morrison's *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (1992) initiated a wave of interesting treatises on the place of race and (non-white) ethnicity in American Gothic writing. Notable work in this area to date includes Eric Sundquist's *To Wake the Nations: Race in the Making of American Literature* (1993), Teresa A. Goddu's *Gothic America: Narrative, History and Nation* (1997), and Justin D. Edwards' *Gothic Passages: Racial Ambiguity and the American Gothic* (2003). In addition to this a host of companions, guides, and introductions to, American Gothic, such as Charles L. Crow's excellent *A Companion to American Gothic* (2014) now contain sections devoted to the important roles that gender, race and ethnicity have played in constructing the American Gothic. Increasingly, gender and race have featured alongside other areas of cultural politics such as Imperialism (Johan Hoglund's *The American Imperial Gothic* (2014) or sexuality (George Haggerty's *Queer Gothic* (2006) in studies of the form. Yet amongst all of these, often pertinent and well

argued treatises, it is notable that the issue of Class remains a largely understudied field, as Amy Schrager Lang suggests: "paradoxically, given the broad recognition within literary studies of the complex interconnection of ideologies of race, class, and gender, much literary scholarship elides class and its conflicts and ignores their displacement into other domains of social difference" (Lang, 7). Similarly, David McNally writes in a recent study: "lacking a critical theory of capitalism, much of cultural studies is hampered when it comes to explaining the intertwining monsters with markets, and the genuinely traumatic ... experiences of subjugation and exploitation that occur when people find themselves subordinated to the market-economy" (12). Certainly, one would struggle to find a book length study of the Gothic (especially in a US context) that takes Class as its central focus. Individual chapters such as Clive Bloom's "This Revolting Graveyard of the Universe: The Horror Fiction of H.P. Lovecraft"[i] explore the relevance of class to the work of individual authors yet still there exists no sustained book length examination of the wider field of the American Gothic and its relation to class. The reasons for this somewhat glaring omission are perhaps both manifold and complex. In the introduction to *Class Representation in Modern Fiction and Film*, Gandal suggests that cultural politics in a US context has tended to unfairly elide Class as a signifier separate to issues such as Race and Gender:

> Multicultural themes today often circumscribe class issues, multicultural studies are also regularly considered somehow superior to or more important than studies of class. Sometimes multicultural studies assert a virtual monopoly on certain terms and issues that could be fruitful in the discussion of class (5)

Similarly, Lang notes in the introduction to her book *The Syntax of Class: Writing Inequality in Nineteenth-Century America* (2009): "Class ... is rendered the largely invisible third term in critical discussions that claim race, class, and gender as their heuristic terms" (Lang, 5). This subsuming of class into other taxonomies risks ignoring the important role that differentials of wealth, power and prestige have on the representations Americans make of and about themselves. Yet, I would suggest that Class has always played an important part in the Gothic in the U.S. If we turn to just two of the 'founding fathers' of American letters, Edgar Allan Poe and Herman Melville, we can see the significance of Class in their Gothic writing.

Edgar Allan Poe's own life seems for many to have come to embody the horrific possibilities of rapid downward mobility in the U.S. and its severest consequences for the individual; "the man who from vast dreams of literary fame descends to ignominious hackwork" (Cunliffe, 71). Adopted by John Allan, a wealthy family friend, after his pauper parents proved themselves unable to care for him, Poe moved to England where he attended and excelled in school. On returning to the U.S. to continue his education Poe ran up huge creditor's bills which he had used to fund his decadent lifestyle while being a student at The University of Virginia. To escape his creditors, Poe then enlisted in the army but deciding military life was not for him intentionally broke his general orders to be expelled in 1830. On hearing of his ward being discharged with 'gross neglect of duties', Allan disinherited Poe of his fortune. The writer then moved to the industrial port town of Baltimore and turned to journalism in order to make ends meet, writing stories inspired by the city's desperate people and their often shocking crimes.

Much like the later writer H.P. Lovecraft (who was, initially, influenced by Poe), historical evidence suggests that Poe died in both ignominy and poverty, Jeffrey Meyers suggesting that the writer earned just $6200 (186) for the stories that would make him posthumously famous. Once called the 'Poor-Devil

Author' by Washington Irving, Poe's life and writing were dogged by poverty yet there has been a tendency in critical thinking on the author to position Poe as an almost ahistorical figure, detached from the social and cultural context of his work. An approach typified by Vernon Parrington's famous suggestion that we should leave Poe and his work with "the psychologist and belletrist with whom it belongs" (58). This depoliticised reading of "the true head of American Literature" (qtd in Goddu, 77) has now been re-assessed by a growing body of work including Terence Whalen's *Edgar Allan Poe and the Masses* (1999) and the edited collection *Poe and the Remapping of Antebellum Print Culture* (2012). Parrington's comments now seem increasingly imprudent given that any considered reassessment of Poe's short fiction cannot help but demonstrate his interest in the changing nature of early nineteenth century America concerning issues such as Race, Democracy and Class.

If we turn first for a moment to perhaps Poe's most well known work "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1839), we are immediately confronted by the issue of class, as Stephen Dougherty notes of the story: "what one notices foremost is the emphasis on class and the aristocracy. At the beginning of the tale, class affiliation is primary means of marking division and establishing identity, and the story's focus is on filiation and estate patrimony" (9). Poe's tale tells the story of an unnamed narrator who ventures to the eponymous house to meet his boyhood friend Roderick Usher, a man now beset by "acute bodily illness" (2003: 91) and oppressed by an undiagnosed mental disorder. Usher's story is one of Upper Class isolation; "the Usher race, all time-honoured as it was, had put forth, at no period, any enduring branch" (2003: 92), leading to physical and moral degeneration and (it is implied) incest; "sympathies of a scarcely intelligible nature" (2003: 102). Yet, rather more interestingly, throughout the story there is an ever present sense of awe towards the Ushers, in spite, or perhaps because, of their aura of fading decadence and the horrors with which they live. The "sensation of stupor" (2003: 96) that possesses the unnamed narrator possesses the reader also as we read on, eagerly awaiting the culmination of the "ghastly and inappropriate splendour" (2003: 98) that permeates the tale. It is only with the story's horrific denouement, Madeline's 'attack' on Roderick; an appropriate punishment for their clandestine, and deviant, aristocratic behaviour, that the narrator and the reader are released from the grip of the Ushers to return to the normalcy of their presumably middleclass, orthodox lifestyles.

While "The Fall of the House of Usher" suggests a democratic impulse, or, at the very least, a writer eager to critique the aristocratic excesses of the Old World and the autonomy afforded by the wealth of the Upper Classes, historical investigation has shown that Poe's own feelings tended towards the opposite. Indeed, Poe's belief that the Jacksonian era of the 1830s and 1840s was inaugurating a set of social changes that he strongly disapproved of - distinctions between social classes were being blurred, while meritocratic republicanism was being replaced with populist democracy as the Northern industrial middle-classes asserted their growing power – more accurately reflect the writer's social and intellectual snobbery. The suggestion that Poe was, as Matthiesen writes in *American Renaissance* (1968) "bitterly hostile to democracy" (xii) during a period of considerable social transformation and change undoubtedly fed into his fiction in a host of ways.

Such elitist views should not be particularly surprising given the wider, mid-nineteenth century anxiety concerning the emergent concept of 'the mob', the embryonic masses who, it was feared, were claiming more and more power for themselves previously preserved for a social and political (Southern) elite. Such culturally conservative and discriminatory views are engaged with in another of Poe's short stories, "The Man of the Crowd". The tale introduces us to the Flaneur-like narrator as he sits in a coffee house "peering through the smoky panes into the street." (2003: 132) This unnamed observer watches

everyone pass by and at first seems very sure of himself due to his self-confessed ability to intuit the backgrounds and personal histories of the strangers walking past him. Yet, at first, the narrator is frustrated as he sees only respectable looking individuals out of the window, expressing satisfaction tempered with boredom that "There was nothing very distinctive about these two large classes beyond what I have noted. Their habiliments belonged to that order which is pointedly termed the decent." (2003: 132)

The narrator explains that the people in these two groups, each made up of a host of middle-class professions (noblemen, merchants, attorneys, tradesmen) do "not greatly excite [...his...] attention" (2003: 133). Instead, the narrator's attention is, as he tells us, drawn to those of the lower classes. That is to say that he is intrigued the most by the pickpockets and gamblers that are part of the crowd outside his window. They excite an interest in him because he does not feel as easily able to guess at what their life histories are in the same way that he feels able to understand the middle-classes. The narrator seems to exist in an abject relationship with the poor; he is simultaneously repulsed by yet attracted to them and the sensationalist stories they might represent. Because they embody a kind of scandalous puzzle, these down and outs incite excitement in the narrator, while also threatening his sense of superiority and control over those he observes.

As the narrator watches the pedlars, street beggars, prostitutes and lepers that also make up the thronging crowd he finds himself yet more puzzled and therefore excited: "Descending in the scale of what is termed gentility, I found darker and deeper themes for speculation" (2003: 134). This confusion is perversely appealing as we are told that the "pic-men, porters, coal-heavers, sweeps; organ-grinders, monkey-exhibitors, and ballad-mongers, those who vended with those who sang; ragged artizans and exhausted laborers of every description" (2003: 135) were "full of a noisy and inordinate vivacity which jarred discordantly upon the ear, and gave an aching sensation to the eye." (2003: 135)

It is now becoming apparent that the narrator's Othering of the urban poor has created a situation in which he feels compelled to exert intellectual mastery over them by 'understanding' their behaviour but cannot achieve this mastery because of the supposed distance (real and imagined) between him and the crowd, created by this self-same process of Othering. Staying in the cafe until nightfall, the narrator eventually spies a "a decrepid old man, some sixty-five or seventy years of age)" (2003: 135) with "a countenance which at once arrested and absorbed my whole attention," (2003: 135) This old man personifies the pleasurable frustration that the narrator feels towards the indeterminacy of the urban poor, being an ambiguous figure who has both a diamond and a dagger about his person. Indeed, despite the old man possessing a "fiend" (2003: 135) like appearance such is the narrator's interest in the old man that he feels compelled to physically leave the coffee house for the first time and actually follow the old man through the thoroughfare in order to try and learn more about him.

The narrator's perverse interest in the old man is just one example of a much larger trend that persists to the present day. In much of the writing under study throughout this book we are repeatedly confronted with an Otherising of those from a different, (lower) class, a process which, significantly, creates both disgust and fascination in those depicted. Much as the narrator of "The Fall of the House of Usher" speaks of a "thousand conflicting sensations" which cause him to proceed with "wonder" in the face of "extreme terror" (2003: 107) so the unnamed narrator of "The Man of the Crowd" is also drawn irrevocably towards

the mysteries of that story's decrepit old man in spite of the unknowable danger he represents. This repeated sense of contradiction, of simultaneous attraction and repulsion, laid down in the writing of Poe, will inform my analysis of Popular U.S. Gothic and its engagements with class. Such a dichotomy finds a theoretical voice in Julia Kristeva's theories of abjection. In *Powers of Horror* (1982), Julia Kristeva writes of the individual's relationship to the abject,

> It lies there, quite close, but it cannot be assimilated. It beseeches, worries, and fascinates desire, which, nevertheless, does not let itself be seduced. Apprehensive, desire turns aside; sickened, it rejects. But simultaneously, just the same, that impetus, that spasm, that leap is drawn toward an elsewhere as tempting as it is condemned. Unflaggingly, like an inescapable boomerang, a vortex of summons and repulsion places the one haunted by it literally beside himself. (1)

My application of Kristeva's ideas on abjection to the social sphere owes a debt to Hannah Arendt's discussion of the poor as abject, and builds upon the work of scholars such as Norma Claire Moruzzi and Bernard J. Bergen who have provided cogent readings of Arendt's writing, teasing out the connections between Arendt and Kristeva's overlapping concepts of the abject in relation to the poor. In *On Revolution* (1963), Arendt writes that "Poverty is more than deprivation. It is a state of constant want and acute misery whose ignominy consists in its dehumanising force; poverty is abject" (50). Arendt's concept of poverty as abject, positions the poor as other; individuals who have become trapped by physical necessity to the extent that any sense of subjectivity they may have once had is now lost. This way of constructing the poor, configuring them as devoid of identity and personhood, is both an effective coping mechanism and a perpetual threat, for, in a Kristevian sense, as we abjectify the poor, making them a taboo subject, so we position them outside of " desire for meaning," (Kristeva, 2) unwittingly creating a "pole of attraction" that promises to draw us "towards the point where meaning collapses" (Kristeva 126).

In a specifically U.S. context, the first signs of the reconfiguration of poverty into a taboo subject take place during the Gilded Age, a period of intense industrial and urban growth from about 1870 to 1900. Yet ironically as the poor are excluded their force as an ideological concept grows, as Moruzzi writes of Arendt's views: "For Arendt, the abject poor are the prisoners of their bodies, and the threat they bring to the political realm is that of the abject body's claim to recognition" (Moruzzi, 20). The poor then become an ontological danger, in the U.S context their existence is testament to the failings of a capitalist system and its innately exploitative practices and so they must be hidden, ridiculed or ignored: "The fear of poverty has become the threat to the idea of freedom, linked ... to the dream of a rich and fat nation." (Bergen, 141-142)

We can see some of these Kristevian processes at work in Poe's story. After following the old man across and around the city, the narrator ends up in the "most noisome quarter of London, where every thing wore the worst impress of the most deplorable poverty, and of the most desperate crime." (2003: 138) Beset by the deprivation that he witnesses, the narrator decides that in spite of his attempts, he cannot fathom out the behaviour and background of this poor individual. Feeling confused and frustrated the narrator concludes that though fascinating, the old man is ultimately incomprehensible, and that both he and the reader should not attempt to pry any further as some things are better left unknown: "one of the great mercies of God that "er lasst sich nicht lesen." (2003: 140)

A number of critics have read "The Man of the Crowd" as a variant upon the theme of the double or doppelgänger, recurrent in Poe's short fiction. In her insightful essay "Gumshoe Gothics" Patricia Merivale argues that the narrator and the old man and are one and the same. While the level of ambiguity in Poe's story is such that this kind of reading is possible, it seems more fruitful to interpret the relationship between the two characters in a less literal fashion. If, as Daniel Luker proposes "the flaneur reveals himself through his observation" (154) then it might be that the narrator is the intended target of the story rather than those amongst the poor he finds so shocking. If we allow for such a reading then it becomes the narrator's own sense of class superiority and his lack of a moral compass that is critiqued through the story's depiction of his eagerness to perceive evil amongst the urban poor even though he never witnesses the old man commit an actual crime.

The ambiguity concerning where our sympathies are meant to lie in "The Man of the Crowd" (with the failed Flaneur, with the old man, with the poverty stricken masses) and its sense of thwarted 'classploitation' (an exploitation narrative encourages envy, laughter or horror in its audience) point to a greater level of complexity in Poe's writing when it comes to depicting the working classes. Indeed, the story seems to resist any reductive reading that would see it as favouring either the middle-class over the poor or vice versa. The somewhat arrogant (unnamed) narrator might be seen as foolish in his belief that he can understand and explain away those around him based on little more than physical appearance and ostensible patterns of behaviour, yet it is his movement out of the relative safety of the coffee house and into the multitudes of the city crowd that contributes to his failure rather than success. It would not be too outlandish to suggest that the narrator's abject relationship with the old-man bears a passing resemblance to Poe himself, who espoused anti-democratic views while simultaneously being almost entirely dependent on the rise of popular magazines for his living; as David Reynolds notes "he struggled constantly as a writer of fiction and poetry for popular magazines" (43). These anxieties may have informed another of Poe's stories. The author's 1840 comic tale "The Businessman" explores the myth of the self-made man, humorously undermining the values of its titular character, Peter Profitt, and his desire to be seen as, above all, methodical, rather than possessing any kind of outstanding ability or originality of thought; as Profitt proposes, "the greater the genius the greater the ass ... you cannot make a man of business out of a genius." (1997: 270) "The Businessman", while not overly Gothic, evokes a feeling of horror towards Profitt, satirising his suggestion that his 'success' is down to hard work and self-discipline, by implying that the 'self-made man' is a ruthless, underhanded bully willing to exploit those around him in order to succeed at any cost.

Such a deconstruction of the class system is evident in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851). One of the central structuring devices of the text is Hawthorne's engagement with class, and the "class warfare" (Brodhead, 79) that arises as a result of the ongoing familial conflict between the wealthy Pyncheons and the poor Maules. The suggestion is that Colonel Pyncheon, a man of some standing in the community, and possessing an "iron energy of purpose" (Hawthorne, 7), accused the lowly, Matthew Maule of witchcraft so that he might destroy his "hut, shaggy with thatch" (6) and free the way to build the titular house. Untroubled by the fact that this accusation leads to the execution of Maule, Pyncheon takes possession of the land and builds upon it, prospering from this selfish act and condemning Maule's descendents to be "poverty-stricken; always plebeian and obscure; working with unsuccessful diligence at handicrafts; labouring on the wharves, or following the sea" (25). The novel proposes that rather than being alone in committing these heinous actions, Colonel Pyncheon is in fact

representative of a reality "that the influential classes, and those that take upon themselves to be leaders of the people, are fully liable to all the passionate error that has ever characterized the maddest mob" (8). In keeping with Bernice M Murphy's claim that in the American gothic, "a house is generally much more than a house" (107), by building the House of Seven Gables, The Pyncheons create a microcosm of the nineteenth century class structure, with an ostensible, egalitarianism thinly hiding a much more stratified truth:

> now trod the clergymen, the elders, the magistrates, the deacons, and whatever of aristocracy there was in town or county. Thither, too, thronged the plebeian classes as freely as their betters, and in larger number. Just within the entrance, however, stood two serving-men, pointing some of the guests to the neighborhood of the kitchen and ushering others into the statelier rooms,— hospitable alike to all, but still with a scrutinizing regard to the high or low degree of each. (12)

The majority of the novel details the experiences of half Pyncheon, Phoebe, as she tries to help her older cousin Hepzibah Pyncheon, and Hepzibah's brother Clifford, who has spent thirty years wrongly imprisoned for murdering his uncle. Hepzibah, having fallen on hard times has been forced into opening a small shop in her ancestral home though her upper-class heritage makes her particularly ill-fitted for the task:

> How could the born lady the recluse of half a lifetime, utterly unpractised in the world, at sixty years of age,—how could she ever dream of succeeding, when the hard, vulgar, keen, busy, hackneyed New England woman had lost five dollars on her little outlay! Success presented itself as an impossibility, and the hope of it as a wild hallucination. (48)

Also living at Seven Gables is the young, revolutionary Holgrave, whose views seem heavily influenced by the anarchist writing of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon - responsible for the proposal that all property is theft. Holgrave tells Phoebe that he believes:

> If each generation were allowed and expected to build its own houses, that single change, comparatively unimportant in itself, would imply almost every reform which society is now suffering for. I doubt whether even our public edifices—our capitols, state-houses, court-houses, city-hall, and churches,—ought to be built of such permanent materials as stone or brick. It were better that they should crumble to ruin once in twenty years, or thereabouts, as a hint to the people to examine into and reform the institutions which they symbolize. (183-4)

Holgrave seems to represent the more radical elements of New England culture; as the narrator notes: "in his magnanimous zeal for man's welfare, and his recklessness of whatever the ages had established in man's behalf ... the artists might fitly enough stand forth as the representative of many compeers in his native land" (181). These liberal views make it all the odder that Holgrave has chosen to lodge in Seven Gables, yet the Pyncheon residence has a special resonance for Holgrave, as he tells Phoebe: "The house, in my view, is expressive of that odious and abominable Past, with all its bad influences, against which I have just been declaiming. I dwell in it for a while, that I may know the better how to hate it". (184) Given his staunch opinions it is perhaps not surprising that Holgrave turns out to be a descendent of Maule, and that he seeks to redress the ills meted to his ancestors by the Pyncheons. However, the Maules themselves are not without blame in the ongoing feud between both families. Holgrave tells the story of Maule's great grandson, also called Matthew Maule, whose father stole "the lost title-deed of the Pyncheon territory at the eastward" (208), and whose desire to get revenge for being dispossessed

of his land sees him trick the latest owner of the House, and hypnotise his innocent daughter Alice Pyncheon. It is clear to the reader that the Matthew Maule of Holgrave's story has become twisted by his desire for revenge, as the narrator suggests "the carpenter had a great deal of pride and stiffness in his nature; and at this moment, moreover, his heart was bitter with the sense of hereditary wrong" (192). The carpenter's actions culminate in his accidentally killing the innocent Alice. Maule takes control of Alice so that she will perform his "grotesque and fantastic bidding" (208), yet with little thought for Alice's well-being, he summons her to serve at his bridal party one particularly "inclement night" (209) and she catches a fever that rapidly leads to her untimely death.

Though Michael Davitt Bell convincingly claims that "the haunted house is ... de-Gothicized" (XV) by the end of Hawthorne's novel, this process is only achieved once the issue of inheritance has been eliminated. As the narrator suggests in the preface, this problem is central to the plot of the novel, which concerns: "the folly of tumbling down an avalanche of ill-gotten gold, or real estate, on the heads of an unfortunate posterity, thereby to maim and crush them, until the accumulated mass shall be scattered abroad in its original atoms" (2). Interestingly, not only does the radical Holgrave rail against the inequities of the inheritance system but Clifford Pyncheon also espouses a decidedly proto-Marxist sentiment, stating at one point that:

> What we call real estate—the solid ground to build a house on—is the broad foundation on which nearly all the guilt of this world rests. A man will commit almost any wrong,—he will heap up an immense pile of wickedness, as hard as granite, and which will weigh as heavily upon his soul, to eternal ages,—only to build a great, gloomy, dark-chambered mansion, for himself to die in, and for his posterity to be miserable in. He lays his own dead corpse beneath the underpinning, as one may say, and hangs his frowning picture on the wall, and, after thus converting himself into an evil destiny, expects his remotest great-grandchildren to be happy there. (263)

Clifford's views are informed by the effects wrought on his own family by his cousin, Jaffrey Pyncheon. It is Jaffrey, not Clifford (or Hepzibah), who we are told is the manifestation of the Pyncheon bloodline: "Never did a man show stronger proof of the lineage attributed to him, than Judge Pyncheon" (232). Unfortunately, this means that the Judge is hell-bent on accruing more and more material wealth. As we find out, it is Judge Pyncheon, not Clifford, who is likely responsible for killing his own uncle in his "unscrupulous pursuit of selfish ends through evil means" (242). The Judge having shocked his uncle to death when his uncle discovered him rifling through his private drawers in search of his will. As evidence of his selfish character the young Jaffrey immediately "continued his search ... and found a will of recent date, in favor of Clifford –which he destroyed – and an older one in his own favour, which he suffered to remain" (312). It is this taint that leads Clifford to talk about the House of Seven Gables in such Gothic terms: "There is no such unwholesome atmosphere as that of an old home, rendered poisonous by one's defunct forefathers and relatives." (261)

The ending of Hawthorne's novel is, as several critics have noted, intriguing in terms of how it depicts the effects of wealth. While Judge Pyncheon's desire to greedily funnel all of the family's wealth to his own descendants is duly thwarted; his son dies unexpectedly meaning that "Clifford [becomes] rich; so did Hepzibah" and perhaps more significantly through marriage to Phoebe so does "that sworn foe of wealth and all manner of conservatism – the wild reformer – Holgrave"" (313), this change in material circumstance seems to fundamentally alter Holgrave's character. No sooner does Holgrave receive partial ownership of the Pyncheon inheritance than he goes from radical to "conservative" (315), happily

assimilating into his much wealthier, and landed lifestyle. This abrupt about face should be seen as at least partially born out of Hawthorne's stated desire to write a lighter novel than *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) and to "pour some setting sunshine over" (qtd Mitchell, 169) the ending of this later text, yet as Lloyd-Smith notes "Hawthorne's serious involvement with his theme of rapacious misappropriation and the evils of inherited wealth overwhelms his comedy to produce a disturbingly sinister effect" (51). Indeed, said effect is one of foregrounding the pernicious power of wealth; as Holgrave himself suggests of his change in attitude: "It is especially unpardonable in this dwelling of so much hereditary misfortune, and under the eye of yonder portrait of a model conservative, who, in that very character, rendered himself so long the Evil Destiny of his race" (315). Though perhaps not intended this seems to function as a coded warning that even a staunchly anti-materialist and intensely class-conscious figure such as Holgrave can quickly become everything he professed to oppose when he finds he is in possession of immense wealth.

Much of the middle-classes' relationship with the poor during the latter part of the nineteenth century was influenced by the shocking events of the class-based revolutions across Europe. The widespread fear of the poor this engendered, expressed in the title of Charles Loring Brace's *The Dangerous Classes of New York* (1872), created an uneasy fixation with the working classes. The poor must be watched and helped if only to steer them away from potentially revolutionary behaviour yet to publically recognise and communicate the deep divisions in American society risked fuelling a revolutionary spirit: "To publicly admit the reality of class in America was to open the nation to the threat of class conflict." (Lang, 2) Lang argues that one of the responses to this perceived threat was linguistic, that:

> In the quarter century following the revolutions of 1848, legislators, journalists, ministers, labour leaders, political radicals and fledging political scientists, playwrights, and novelists would struggle to find a social vocabularly adequate to the naming, ordering, interpreting, and containing the effects of class difference in a period that saw not only the emergence of new social groupings and new kinds of people but one in which new class formations challenged the ideals of traditional republicanism and political democracy. (Lang 3-4)

Lang's thesis, that writers displace class concerns through reference to gender and race - turning increasingly to the middle-class ideal of the home as a model for social harmony - is a well-argued one, yet it neglects to note that an attendant part of this attempt to depict the newly emergent working classes is achieved through the employment of recognisably Gothic lexis and imagery. Much of Herman Melville's writing touches on the issue of class including short stories such as "The Paradise of the Bachelors and the Tartarus of the Maids", the depiction of labour in *Mardi* (1849), and the engagement with middle class domestic values in *Pierre* (1852). Yet the way in which some of Melville's work fuses the Gothic and class is instructive. In particular, "Bartleby the Scrivener" (1853) gives us an increasingly spectral central character who appears to choose not to get by at any cost, "I would prefer not to" (12), and in doing so offers the reader a damning critique of the alienating effects of the capitalist system on the individual. Melville's narrator, an unnamed business owner, recounts the story of Bartleby, "a scrivener of the strangest I ever saw or heard of" (3). Indeed, although the narrator thinks "Bartleby was one of those beings of whom nothing is ascertainable" (3) he feels compelled to tell Bartleby's tale above all the other people that he has encountered over a lifetime in business. At first Bartleby, who seems to appear out of nowhere at the narrator's door, produces "an extraordinary quantity of writing" (11) though his approach

to his work - "silently, palely, mechanically" (11) – unnerves his employer. Time passes until one day, unexpectedly, Bartleby refuses to check over a document for his manager, only stating that he prefer not to. The narrator is shocked but feels unable to do anything due to the weird sensation that surrounds Bartleby, indeed, the narrator tells us that "had there been any thing ordinarily human about him" (12) then he would have fired Bartleby immediately but instead Bartleby's behaviour "strangely disarmed" (13) him. Much as was the case in "The Man of the Crowd", the middle-class narrator finds himself strangely infatuated with his poor employee, repulsed by his refusal to work, yet obsessed with his passive resistance to the system and increasingly weird behaviour.

Indeed, it is noticeable that as the story progresses the narrator's descriptions of Bartleby become more overtly Gothic in nature: the narrator initially notes Bartleby's inhuman behaviour; "I observed that he never went to dinner; indeed that he never went any where. As yet I had never of my personal knowledge known him to be outside of my office. He was a perpetual sentry in the corner" (14), as Bartleby's odd behaviour continues the narrator comes to call him variously a "lean, penniless wight" (16), "a strange creature" (32) and a "ghost" (33), possessing a "cadaverously gentlemanly *nonchalance*" (19). By the penultimate section of the tale, Bartleby becomes a kind of melancholic, spectral presence in the office, haunting it – he never seems to leave – until the narrator's perception of his employee becomes overwhelmed by Gothic imagery at the point of Bartleby's death: "The scrivener's pale form appeared to me laid out, among uncaring strangers, in its shivering winding sheet." (21)

Therefore, while the dominant reading of Melville's story is as an attack on a capitalist system of labour in which everything "takes on the structure of mechanical reproduction" (Weinstein, 214) and ultimately proves to be "ruinous to the minds and bodies of workers" (215), Melville's technique here is one that owes a debt to those contemporary Victorian ghost stories, reaching their apogee with Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* (1843), in which a spirit comes back to teach the living something morally instructive or important. Note that Bartleby's refusal to copy and, to in effect, become a copy of all those who submit to the dehumanising system of bureaucratic scrivening, seems to invoke in the narrator a questioning of the life he leads and the suffering of others exemplified in the famous last lines of the story "Ah Bartleby! Ah humanity!" (41) Indeed, the narrator goes from being a self-confessed "safe man" (4), focused only on himself and his immediate surroundings, to someone capable of contemplating the much larger scope of human misery and suffering:

> Dead letters! does it not sound like dead men? Conceive a man by nature and misfortune prone to a pallid hopelessness, can any business seem more fitted to heighten it than that of continually handling these dead letters, and assorting them for the flames? For by the cart-load they are annually burned. Sometimes from out the folded paper the pale clerk takes a ring:—the finger it was meant for, perhaps, moulders in the grave; a bank-note sent in swiftest charity:—he whom it would relieve, nor eats nor hungers any more; pardon for those who died despairing; hope for those who died unhoping; good tidings for those who died stifled by unrelieved calamities. On errands of life, these letters speed to death. (41)

The narrator's final comments here tie together the inequities of the capitalist system with the Gothic, configuring the plight of the poor and the desperate in a distinctly grotesque manner. Furthermore, Bartleby's deterioration into a haunting, and simultaneously haunted, presence mirrors the abject place that class has had in much nineteenth century U.S. Gothic fiction. Much as the narrator of the story is

unable to rid himself of Bartleby (to fire him, or remove him from the premises), due to his contradictory feelings towards his employee, so Class has existed on the margins unable to be removed completely from American popular culture, pointing to an ongoing desire amongst writers and readers to explore the subject. Perhaps such a desire is evidence of Kristeva's belief that what we try to expel only resurfaces in other, sublimated, ways, in the form of "A massive and sudden emergence of uncanniness". What we make abject re-emerges as "A "something" that I do not recognise as a thing. A weight of meaninglessness, about which there is nothing insignificant, and which crushes me" (2) Indeed, Class was to materialize in a number of interesting and interrelated ways as the century progressed, testifying to the suggestion that "the abject does not cease challenging its master ... it beseeches a discharge, a convulsion, a crying out" (Kristeva, 2).

The threat of poverty seemed ever-present throughout much of the nineteenth century. Despite Karl Marx's 1852 comments about the high levels of social mobility in America: "though classes already exist, they have not yet become fixed but continually change and interchange their elements in constant flux" (Marx qtd in Heath, 1981, 15) wealth was distributed unequally within American society. Amy Schrager Lang writes of the second half of the nineteenth century that "more than half of the nation's wealth was held by 5 percent of the population by 1860" (2) while Walter Fuller Taylor suggests that "In some measure, there existed even in youthful America, a class of the socially submerged, a class who appeared to be victims not so much of their own shiftlessness as of social arrangements that favoured exploitation" (18). More recently, in her pioneering study into social justice (1981) Jennifer L. Hoschchild found little evidence of successful redistributive measures to achieve equality in the U.S, and Devine suggests in her 1997 study *Social Class in America and Britain* that "a significant minority of the American population are poor" (33). In spite of (or perhaps because of) the central ideological tenets of the American Dream, "the promise that all Americans have a reasonable chance to achieve success as they define it – material or otherwise – through their own efforts, and to attain virtue and fulfilment through success" (Hochschild 1995, xvi), the idea of the 'self-made man' has always carried with it the dark mirror image of class demotion. Though the recent claim that a Wall Street financier "is nearly as vulnerable to downward mobility as the steel worker on Chicago's South Side" (Newman 1991: 15) still appears to be an exaggeration, the implication that even the wealthy and ostensibly, financially secure might be in danger, suggests the significance of class status to identity and a concomitant fear of downward mobility as central in both the private and public lives of US citizens.

One need only examine Stephen Crane's *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* (1893), in which the central character's apparent end involves a further horrifying fall down the socio-economic scale towards prostitution and death, to see the national preoccupation with downward mobility and its horrifying consequences. The ambiguous death scene merges anxieties and fears concerning downward mobility with elements of the Gothic to suggest a fatal descent into the hellish centre of the city slums. We are told that out of desperation, the fraught Maggie "went into darker blocks than those where the crowd travelled" (52), eventually reaching " gloomy districts near the river, where the tall black factories shut in the street and only occasional broad beams of light fell across the pavement" (53). Eventually Maggie reaches "the blackness of the final block" in which "The shutters of tall buildings were closed like grim lips [and] The structures seemed to have eyes that looked over her" (53), here she meets "a huge fat man ... [with] great rolls of red fat ... his whole body gently quivered and shook like that of a dead jelly fish" (53), who, we are told, "Chuckling and leering ... followed the girl of the crimson legions" (53) never to be seen again.

It is worth noting here that *Maggie* was part of a larger body of work, represented most famously by Jacob Riis' *How the Other Half Lives* (1890), which sought to expose the degradations - often for sensationalist effect - of life in the newly emergent slums: "the slum was in effect a fresh literary field ... both writers and readers appear to have explored the new area with an intense curiosity in which were mingled compassion, morbid fascination, and something akin to horror" (Taylor, 79-80). Technique is all here and Riis' text, like many of his contemporaries[1], depends on imagery and iconography more readily associated with the Gothic and Horror genres for much of its powerful effect. Riis promises that the story he has to tell "is dark enough ... to send a chill to any heart" (2); that it is about a way of life which is 'haunted' and rife with 'corruption' and in which the 'Devil' and 'evil' are ever present forces. The use of such Gothic infused metaphor and imagery, partially a consequence of the religious backgrounds of many of the writers involved in the reformist movement, speaks to fears many of those in the educated classes had concerning the expanding, urban working class. Riis (and Crane) both sought to utilise the tools of the Gothic to provoke their readers into a more meaningful consideration of the moral culpability of the poor in US society.

In this fashion, the use of a distinctly literary language (that of the Gothic) to describe the conditions of the poor, rather than shielding readers from the bare truths of the situation at hand, foregrounds the "irreducible" (Lang, 85) nature of class. The use of the Gothic becomes a means of highlighting the failings of art to reform and redeem: "Complicit though art may be in the system of capitalist exploitation, only art, it turns out, can speak the terrible question and reveal the prophecy" (Lang, 82). Crane, in particular, exposes the inability for upward mobility and escape amongst the urban poor in *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*, who are trapped by factors they have no control over, brainwashed into believing in idealistic and sentimental notions of middle-class morality espoused through popular art, and then judged against these self-same, and inappropriate, moralistic codes of behaviour which take no account of their material circumstances.

The values (or lack thereof) of the middle, and monied, classes also come in for an often stinging critique in the much overlooked ghost stories of Edith Wharton. As might be expected from the privileged author of *House of Mirth* (1905) and *The Age of Innocence* (1920), Wharton's Gothic tales engage, not with the depiction of the poor and their urban environment but with the horrors at the heart of the middle and upper classes borne of American capitalism, and testify to the continuing diversity of engagement with the Gothic and class at the beginning of the twentieth century. "Afterward" sees the central male character Ned Boyne swindle an associate of his out of a claim on a mining interest; "the kind of thing that happens every day in business" (Wharton 2009: 63) according to the man's lawyer. While "The Triumph of Night", the title of which hints at the story's condemnation of capitalism and the immoral behaviour it encourages, tells the story of George Faxon who meets Frank Rainier and travels with him to the snowbound Overdale. When there Faxon meets Rainier's uncle, John Lavington, and business associates who are engaged in a business meeting whose intentions are opaque but which ends with the witnessing of Rainier's will even though he is only twenty one years old. During the meeting, the participants discuss an impending financial crisis, however Lavington seems surprisingly unconcerned at the possibility of a "the biggest crash since '93" (98) as he has a plan to bail out the

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[1] Such as Reverend Thomas De Witt Talmage's *The Evil Beast: A Sermon* (1871)

Cement company he runs with a huge injection of his own money. Throughout his time at Overdale, Faxon is troubled by seeing what he believes to be Lavington's spectral double, yet no one else seems to be aware of the doppelgänger. Upon deciding to brave the snowstorms and escape from Overdale, the story ends with the death of Frank Rainier, ostensibly as a result of the inhospitable nature of the New England climate, something Rainier had been warned against by his doctor but which his uncle, Lavington, had dismissed. The ending of the story, in which Faxon reads, almost simultaneously, of Lavington's plans to come forward and miraculously save Opal Cement Company, and of Rainier's obituary, indicate that the double Faxon saw was in fact the physical embodiment of Lavington's unsavoury, 'intensely negative' (93) character, a man who prearranged for his nephew to die prematurely, so that he could inherit his wealth.

While Wharton was "using Gothic elements to go beyond the conventions of realism into the darkness of human experience" (Fedorko 2007: 117), authors such as Jack London continued Crane's Gothic expose of the poor into the twentieth century. The evocative title of London's *The People of the Abyss* (1903) foregrounds his particular reading of the life of slum dwellers (actually the poor and destitute of London). London goes undercover on the "screaming streets" (7) of the capital city to discover the truth at the heart of the "monster city" (14) and the "miserable and distorted humanity" (26) that it breeds. Of note, is the way that London apportions blame, not to the "poor wretched beasts" (40) who have to eke out a living on the streets of London's slums, but rather the urban environment itself: "The Abyss seems to exude a stupefying atmosphere of torpor, which wraps about them and deadens them" (20). Perhaps the most horrifying aspect of London's text is the way in which his initial conception of the slums as a sentient entity responsible for "a wealth of horror" (90), gives way to the appalling realisation that it is human greed, maliciousness and social inequality which are largely responsible for the horrific problems encountered. Therefore, while London suggests at the end of his text that he has encountered a "a new species, a breed of city savages ... unspeakably repulsive" (118-119) he attributes this to his belief that London is now a "social shambles" (119) in which "the people of England have come to look upon starvation and suffering ... as part of the social order" (120). Belying his socialist convictions, London concludes that these problems are the cause of "MISMANAGEMENT" (130) on a criminal scale which sees many among the working class poor starve through no fault of their own.

Writing in *The Urban Sublime in American Literary Naturalism* (1998) Christophe Den Tandt termed the work of Naturalist writers such as Stephen Crane and Frank Norris "Naturalist Gothic", a style which offers readers "a grim vitalist portrayal of the abject physiologies and living conditions of city dwellers" (42). Indeed, as we have already seen (in *Maggie*, in "A Man of the Crowd", and to some extent, "Bartleby the Scrivener") the growth and dominion of the city during the latter part of the nineteenth century is intrinsically tied to the rise of "Naturalist Gothic" and to a broader depiction of the extreme poor as abhuman products of their environment. Thomas Jefferson's claim that cities were "pestilential to the morals, the health, and the liberties of man" (qtd in Jackson, 32) seems to have informed the work of individuals such as Riis, Crane, London and Edward Bellamy, whose best-selling *Looking Backward: 2000-1887* (18) talks of being "Horror struck" (190) by the "moral abominations" (189) of the Boston slums and the degenerate children "with shrieks and curses" (189) that exemplify the horrific effects of urbanity on the individual's subjectivity.

That some of America's foremost writers would become obsessed with the city is not surprising given that the latter part of the nineteenth century witnessed such rapid urban expansion. During the period from the Civil War to 1900 the number of cities with 8,000 or more inhabitants trebled in number

(Bogart qtd in Taylor, 25), the percentage of the nation's residents living in cities doubling over the same period so that the distribution and positioning of power in America shifted decidedly from rural centres and communities to those clustered around large urban areas such as Chicago and New York. In *The Economic Novel in America* (1969), Taylor writes of the deep unease felt amongst the middle classes towards this rapid urban expansion and the concomitant processes of class realignment, mass immigration, wage exploitation, disease and squalor that came with it (28-29). Such changes were thought to threaten Jeffersonian models of democracy and to risk leaving America a deeply divided and stratified society, in which a new plutocratic elite held oppressive sway over the exploited working class masses. While the establishment of a plutocracy in a supposedly democratic country was worrying, perhaps even more troubling to the middle-class was the uncertain behaviour of the working class city dwellers. "Now a victim of society, now a violent disturber of the peace" (Taylor, 33), the urban poor increasingly came to occupy a dichotomous position in the American psyche, evident in the writing of Poe and Melville and the work of social and economic theorists such as Albert S. Bolles (*The Conflict between Capital and Labor* (1876) and H.D. Lloyd (*Wealth against Commonwealth* (1894). Indeed, because such depictions of the poor were almost inevitably "a product of the impression which industrial life made upon the middle class mind" (Taylor, 313) rather than the result of any concerted attempt at factual documentation, the dual depiction of the poor that was established in these texts (as suffering victim and inhuman product) would come to dominate many of the depictions of class in popular culture in the early part of the twentieth century too.

Concomitant with the urban spread of the nineteenth and (the early part of the) twentieth centuries was the emergence of the dime novel as a popular form of entertainment. The dime novel, costing a couple of cents, represented cheap, mass-produced sensational fiction: "the greatest literary movement, in bulk, of the age." as one reviewer for *The Atlantic Monthly* suggested. Series such as "Beadle's Dime Novels" frequently sold thousands (if not millions) of copies to an eager, working class audience unable to afford or access more 'respectable' literature. In his pioneering work *Mechanic Accents: Dime Novels and Working-class Culture in America* (1987) Michael Denning explores the appeal of such novels and the reading practises employed by their audiences. Applying a Marxist reading to characterise dime novels as contested sites of cultural struggle, Denning argues that working class readers consciously appropriated such texts and the narratives therein as allegories of social and political emancipation. Such Dime novels pose something of a problem for the argument that Class has played a significant part in the development of American Popular Gothic and Horror. While Denning writes that such texts were produced "almost exclusively for the use of the lower classes of society" (3) (being careful to point out that this does not mean they present us with accurate representations of such readers and their lives) there is very little evidence that such fictions dealt in the Gothic in any meaningful or sustained fashion. Instead, it is fair to surmise that such writers were cognisant of the effects that the Gothic and Horror had had on American popular culture more generally, as Denning argues: "Poe [...is...] continually evoked as the ideal of popular literary figures the dime writers sought to emulate" (Denning, 22). Perhaps the problem can be explained through the approach taken to writing such novels. Such 'Sensation' fiction often deliberately drew plot outlines from contemporary news stories, glamorising or otherwise exaggerating, for melodramatic effect, events and individuals that had been widely reported upon by the press. Such contemporaneousness may have precluded the inclusion of overtly Gothic settings and narratives in favour of a broader and more diffuse incorporation of genre elements.

One such example is George Lippard's immensely successful *The Quaker City or, Monks of Monk Hall* (1845), which, based partly on a notorious real Philadelphia murder case of 1843, nevertheless adopts many of the literary techniques of the Gothic.

Lippard was an avowed radical reformer, whose real life political activity was such that as David S. Reynolds notes "He could sound much like a revolutionary Marxist in his calls for worker's unity and revolt" (205). This revolutionary zeal manifests itself in Lippard's fiction in a fairly overt manner. We are told at the beginning of Lippard's labyrinthine text that what we are about to read is a kind of necessary expose of the "colossal vices and terrible deformities" (Lippard, iii) at the heart of antebellum Philadelphia. Indeed, the text provides the reader with expose after expose, both in terms of the various outlandish narrative reveals, and in the its commentary on the transgressions of the rich and moneyed. Philadelphia itself is a city in which appearances are nearly always deceptive; *The Quaker City* suggests that a sort of moral facade has been created by material wealth, we are told at one point that the Aristocracy "[give] but a grotesque outline, of the reality which it is intended to represent" (lxviii)). This malformation means even the individual businessman can be oblivious to their own inherent wickedness. As is the case with Mr Livingstone, a partner in an importing business, who we are told:

> Never dreamed himself that he carried a hidden hell within his soul. Had this man been born poor, it is probable that in his attempt to rise, the grim hand of want would have dragged from their lurking-places, these dark and fearful elements of his being. But wealth had lapped him at his birth, smiled on him in his youth, walked by him through life, and the moment for the trial of all his powers had never happened. He was a fine man, a noble merchant, and a good citizen we but repeat the stereotyped phrases of the town—and yet, quiet and close, near the heart of this cheerful-faced man, lay a sleeping devil, who had been dozing away there all his life, and only waiting the call of destiny to spring into terrible action, and rend that manly bosom with his fangs. (xv-xvi)

The novel rejects the aspirational tenets of U.S. ideology as the reader quickly learns that these moral abnormalities have been afforded the city's residents by their immense material wealth. We find out that the titular building "in its general construction and details, indicated a mind rendered whimsical and capricious by excessive wealth" (xix) while one character asks "how full the town would be if all who have sold their God for gold would hang themselves?" (xv) The answer it would seem is very full.

Though Lippard started his career as a journalist, in writing *The Quaker City* it seems apparent that Lippard realised that the most efficient way of depicting the urban horrors that constitute his anti-capitalist message is through the Gothic rather than the quasi-realism of journalism; as Denning suggests: "Lippard achieves his figurative energy by appropriating the conventions of the Gothic" (92). Indeed, Lippard's desire to expose the inequalities of the class system in his writing belies a wider egalitarianism that saw Lippard become a prominent supporter of the Working Man's movement and found the working class organisation, the Brotherhood of the Union. Lippard's marrying of the Gothic with a political impetus suggests a belief that "social reform [was possible] through the medium of popular literature" (17). The narrative therefore "transforms the spatial tropes of the conventional Gothic, adapting them to the exigencies of urban crime" (Hall 2014: 125); "Monk Hall emerges as a Gothic castle", (Denning, 92) and the novel's antagonist, Devil-Bug "loved not so much to kill, as to observe the blood of his victim, fall drop by drop, as to note the convulsive look of death, as to hear the last throttling rattle in the throat of the dying"(Lippard, xli). The emphasis on lurid depictions of violence

and sex is striking, even for a contemporary reader, yet Reynolds suggests, instructively, that in appropriating such a mode Lippard was "both speaking *for* and speaking *from* American working-class culture" (206), knowing "that this class took increasing pleasure in a gratuitous violence that embodied its fiercest aggressions" (206). In the industrial strife of the mid-nineteenth century, Reynolds notes that the American working classes frequently vented their frustrations by forming gangs and engaging in running brawls. Lippard's text absorbs the ever-present threat of violence and expounds its place as an almost inevitable by product of the frustration felt by so many at the bottom of America's social and societal hierarchies; as the author suggested elsewhere: "[if the demands of the workers are not met, they would be forced to] go to War ... War with the Rifle, Sword, and Knife" (Lippard qtd in Reynolds 1995: viii). Thus we get a small group of lower or working class 'villains' who are engaged in an ongoing attempt to, if not climb the societal ladder, a, of achieving social justice available to the poor; as an irate character in the novel exclaims:

> Justice and in the Quaker City! A Strange Monster I trow! One moment it unbolts the doors of the prison, and bids the Bank-Director, who boasts his ten thousand victims, whose ears ring forever with the curses of the Widow and the Orphan, it bids the honest Bank-Director, go forth! The next moment it bolts and seals those very prison doors upon the poor devil, who has stolen a loaf of bread to save himself from starvation! (lxxvi)

One instance of such a symbolic act is provided when Monk Hall's grotesque caretaker Devil-Bug effectively saves Mabel, from being sexually attacked by the supposedly respectable 'Parson' Pyne. Devil-Bug, "an orphan who emerged from a lowly background" (Reynolds 1995: xl), is aware that Mabel is his daughter, and in a move that speaks to the text's concern with challenging social inequality, believes there is a chance she might be elevated up the socio-economic scale even if he cannot: "I'll skulk along the street, and see her ridin' in her carriage; I'll watch in the cold winter nights and see her – all shini' with goold and jewels – as she goes into the theatre, with the big folks round her, , and the rich merchant by her side" (cxxiv). Devil-Bug's acceptance of his own degraded position when coupled with his aspirations for his daughter mark him out as one of the few sympathetic characters in Lippard's novel; as a figure whose often horrendous actions are at least partially redeemed by their desire to achieve some sense of social equality: "I'll cry to myself – there is old Devil-Bug's darter among the grandees o' the Quaker City" (cxxiv).

Of particular interest here is the chapter entitled "Devil-Bug's Dream". Lying unconscious after being knocked out, Devil-Bug experiences a revelatory vision of a dystopian future in which the U.S. is on the verge of returning to a monarchist system of rule. The text is not subtle in its attack of hierarchal societies and the stratification they entail:

> "Devil-Bug looked around him, and beheld the sidewalks lined with throngs of wayfarers, some clad in purple and fine linen, some with rags fluttering around their wasted forms. Here was the lady in all the glitter of her plumes, and silks, and diamonds, and by her side the beggar child stretched forth its thin and skinny arm, asking in feeble tones, for the sake of God, some charity good lady! And the lady smiled, and uttered some laughing word to the man of fashion by her side, with his slim waist and effeminate face, she uttered a remark of careless scorn, and passed the beggar-child unheeded by. (cxxxvi)

What is perhaps most significant here is that it should be Devil-Bug that witnesses this moment of epiphany. For, Devil-Bug is, in many ways, the monstrous, proletarian centre of the text; he is frequently brutal and aggressive; "He loved not so much to kill, as to observe the blood of his victim, fall drop by drop, as to note the convulsive look of death, as to hear the last throttling rattle in the throat of the dying" (xl-xli)). Yet, in contrast to much of Philadelphia's bourgeoisie, Devil-Bug is "an honest rogue" (lxxxviii), whose cruel actions are "at least open and direct" (Reynolds 1995: xl), and who experiences feelings of remorse for what he has done as the narrative progresses. Indeed, by the time we reach the midpoint of the text, Lippard sees fit to provide the reader with a sympathetic insight into the external societal factors that have lead this "deplorable moral monstrosity" (xli) to become what the man that he is:

> First came a vision of the fair woman, who had loved him. Loved the outcast of mankind, the devil in human shape! Could you have seen Devil-Bug's soul at the moment it was agitated by this memory, you would have started at the contrast, which it presented in comparison with his deformed body. For a moment the soul of Devil-Bug was beautiful.

> Then the scorn of the world crowded upon his soul. His ignominious birth, his lonely life, the hatred was felt for him, and the loathing which he felt for man (cxxiv)

This sense of frustration at the inequality of Philadelphian society also finds a voice in the occasional and self-reflexive interludes provided by the omniscient narrator. Functioning as a kind of implicit critique of the more genteel sentimental literature of the age, one can feel the vitriol of narratorial assertions such as: "Shallow pated critic with your smooth face whose syllabub insipidity is well-relieved by wiry curls of flaxen hair, soft maker of verses so utterly blank, that a single original idea never mars their consistent nothingness, penner of paragraphs so daintily performed with quaint phrases and stilted nonsense, we do not want you here!" (cxii). Sentiments which might be thought to reflect Lippard's own disgust "with [the] staid, predictable sentimental literature ... manufactured by a cadre of bourgeois magazinists upholding the economic and political status quo" (Reynolds 207). Such a direct instance of address to an implied, disapproving moral majority also helps to align Lippard, and his text, with an imagined (working-class) reader whose reading tendencies might lie outside of the middle class norm; as the narrator states "Our taste is different from yours" (cxii). The reader is positioned as rejecting the poetic excesses of the bourgeois writer in favour of a supposedly more authentic depiction of life; "We like to look at nature and at the world, not only as they appear, but as they are!" (cxii). Here Lippard brings together the alleged 'truth' claims of the emerging field of yellow journalism with the more obviously, excessive fictional techniques of the Gothic to create something that the narrator terms "the grotesque-sublime" (cxii). Lippard's claim to create verisimilitude out of two forms given to rampant sensationalism stands as an interesting sleight of hand on the author's part while also locating *The Quaker City* as perhaps the most commercially popular instance of Tandt's "Naturalist Gothic". Indeed, Lippard's distinctly Gothic trappings place *The Quaker City* "at the center of the urban Gothic mode" (Hall 2014: 125). Lippard's emphasis on "the threat of teeming urban profusion and threatening propinquity" (Hall 2014: 125) pointing presciently towards early twentieth century depictions of the city and its inhabitants as abject, particularly the troubling urban ethnic squalor we find in H.P. Lovecraft's writing.

Sensationalist rhetoric is also evident in the writings of Anthony Comstock, a young reformer, who, backed by a group of New York's elite, established a Society for the Suppression of Vice. Comstock

lobbied for the setting up of the 1873 "Comstock Law" aimed at prohibiting the selling of obscene and indecent material. Subsequently, during the 1880s, Comstock successfully prosecuted book dealers for selling "stories of bloodshed and crime" (qtd in Denning, 51). However, as several critics have pointed out, Comstock himself often resorted to decidedly melodramatic, horror-filled imagery in his campaigns against lowbrow fiction. Comstock wrote "the editor of ... Half-dime novels ... [is] willingly or unwillingly, [among] Satan's efficient agents to advance his kingdom by destroying the young" (242), while he believed such fiction "debases, degrades and perverts" (ix) young minds. Such rhetoric used the blood-and-thunder language of the dime novel to spread fear amongst the moral majority; as Christine Pawley notes, Comstock "designed his horror stories of fallen youth to feed the fears of middle and upper-class native-born parents." (36) Indeed, this process of situating popular fiction as a 'bad object', as likely to exert a pernicious influence over the working classes - in Comstock's parlance as "Satan [s] ...snare" (9) - continued into the twentieth century with moral crusaders such as Frederic Wertham and forms the second element of this study. As Stuart Hall notes in his famous essay "Notes on Deconstructing 'The Popular'": "cultural power ... depends, in the first instance, on this drawing of the line ... as to what is to be incorporated into the 'Great Tradition' and what is not" (236). If such lines are drawn primarily by the educated, literate bourgeoisie, and are an attempt to police taste, then it seems inevitable that texts which intentionally appear to transgress such boundaries will be excluded and consequently impugned as lowbrow and pernicious. This is the position that many of the examples of popular Gothic and Horror under study throughout this book have found themselves in, and which many find themselves still suffering from. Therefore, alongside a critical exploration of the ways in which poverty is depicted as abject within selected examples of popular U.S. Gothic and Horror texts, this book will also examine the ideological positioning of such texts as abject, within, and of, themselves. This dual focus is important. In keeping with the proposal, central to Hall's argument, that the "struggle over the culture of working people" (442) is a continuous and ever-shifting one in which classifications can change as the hegemonic culture seeks to "enclose and define [popular culture's] definitions and forms within a more inclusive range of dominant forms"(455) this study of popular Gothic and Horror will consider the social, cultural and historical contexts in which such material first appeared, elucidating the textual content alongside its reception by a range of diverse yet often interrelated readerships. For Hall popular culture inevitably becomes a site of "containment and resistance" (443), with attitudes towards texts perpetually shifting back and forth between the commercial imperatives of the capitalist, culture industries and the more 'authentic' needs and desires of 'the people'. In such a reading, popular culture, while not being entirely analogous to the working-class "refers to that alliance of classes and forces which constitute the 'popular classes'. The culture of the oppressed, the excluded classes: this is the area to which the term 'popular' refers us" (452). Hall's quasi-Marxist interpretation of popular culture returns us once again to the innate political potential of such material, a view that Gina Wisker shares when she talks of Horror's ability to attack ideological and societal hierarchies: "This radical deviant, wild energy assaults and exposes the lies upon which we either base our sense of security or by which others, defended by a status quo that claims to be 'right', ordered, logical, good, healthy, and in control, controls us." (31) Indeed, for Wisker, the impulse behind Horror is always, to some extent, political; aimed at revealing the control apparatus of the mainstream: "the release of energies Horror involves exposes pomposity; hypocrisy; power games; the artifice of respectability, hiding deception and violence; and the falseness of romantic relationships of family life and of social, political, and work hierarchies" (31).

This disruption is evident in a range of popular U.S. Gothic and Horror texts. Indeed, a reader need turn only to perhaps the early twentieth century's most influential Horror writer H.P. Lovecraft (and the

wider 'Lovecraftian Circle' of writers that were so inspired by him) to find a sustained critique of many of the values and tenets considered to be central to U.S. ideology. As Michel Houellebecq comments "[Lovecraft was] resolutely anticommercial, he despised money, considered democracy to be an idiocy and progress to be an illusion. The word 'freedom,' so cherished by Americans, prompted only a sad, derisive guffaw" (39). More recently novels such as *American Psycho* (1991), Chuck Palahniuk's *Haunted* (2005) and the whole Body-Horror and Splatter-Punk movements appear designed to critique and antagonise the moral values of the mainstream through their twin deployment of graphic excess and social commentary. Certainly, when Barbara Creed (paraphrasing Stallybrass and White) suggests that "carnival stood for everything despised by the newly emerging middle-classes, who attempted to give definition to their newfound identity by slowly withdrawing from all forms of popular culture" (Creed, 130), one feels lead straight towards the various moral panics surrounding the supposedly pernicious effects of popular Gothic and Horror. Moreover, Creed's assertion that "there are striking similarities between the practices of carnival, and the cinema [and other forms] of horror" (131) rings true when we consider the many examples she gives us in her essay on monstrous bodies and the carnivalesque in film.

Yet, though such rhetoric is seductive for the scholar seeking to validate studying popular culture, we must not get carried away with a singular reading of the genre as entirely liberatory. Several of the authors in this study are more frequently seen as being part of the culture industry and evidence of its worst excesses: "standardised commodities, yielding only degraded pleasures" (McCracken, 158). Stephen King, for example has been accused of being "the chief exemplar of the 'banalization' of horror" (Joshi, 95) while the Twilight series as reinforcing a "socially and sexually conservative message" (Moruzi, 48). Such examples point to an ultimately conservative, Bakhtinian reading of popular Gothic, suggesting that what it offers the eager reader is a temporary space in which to break from, and mock, the status quo. It is interesting to note here that, in line with Mikhail Bakhtin's original work on Medieval and Renaissance carnival as an "expression of folk consciousness, of folk culture" (7) in which "all were considered equal" (10), readings of the genre as carnivalesque inevitability work to foreground its function as a kind of "psychic relief" (McCrillis, 268) for a distinctly working class audience; as Wisker's interpretation exemplifies: "carnival is a moment for the working classes and others to both riot and rule. Many activities mock the social norms that would maintain subordinate positions." (161). The existence of a range of conflicting interpretative strategies points to the complexities in reading popular Gothic and Horror against the background of class, and the need for a critically nuanced re-assessment of the form, cognisant and sensitive to these concerns.

This book will therefore attempt to argue for Class as an integral element of twentieth and twenty first century US Gothic. It will focus on selected key authors and the diverse ways in which their popular fiction has engaged with anxieties related to Class (including social mobility, abhumanism and degeneration, and the debasement of Culture). Chapter one looks at the pulps of the early twentieth century and focuses on one of the better known authors from the period, H.P. Lovecraft. The chapter argues that while Lovecraft stands apart from many of his pulp contemporaries; in his uneasy relationship with his predominantly working class readership; and his often derogatory representation of the poor; Lovecraft's recurrent depiction of the poor as abject positions him as an important staging post in developing and establishing nascent genre tropes around Class. Indeed, while Lovecraft is often thought to have exerted a huge influence over twentieth century horror in a general sense, Lovecraft's often extreme (some might say pathological) depictions of penury as a debasing force, and the city as a

locus of horror, served to lay groundwork that later writers would engage with, if only to implicitly critique. In chapter two, therefore, I examine a germane selection of mid-century genre writers and chart their changing interactions with notions of social hierarchy and class as the pulps died away and were replaced with the growth in the cheap paperback market. I suggest that figures such as Ray Bradbury, Fritz Leiber and Robert Bloch provide a much more self-reflexive engagement with class than previous writers, partly as a result of their varying fortunes in publishing their work and the changing demands of the marketplace, partly as a direct response to their experiences of real life events such as the Depression and the increasing stratification of U.S. Society. These mid-century authors often found themselves cognisant of great inequalities that influenced their depictions of the poor and poverty in their fiction. Chapter three continues to chart the growth in the paperback format, focussing on perhaps the most well-known, and commercially successful author, to emerge out of the 1970s and 1980s 'Horror Boom', Stephen King. King's immense commercial success threatened the genre's desire to "regard itself as marginal, countercultural, different … as more *sub*cultural than mass cultural." (Gelder, 84). During this period, Horror infiltrated the mainstream like never before and this change had interesting repercussions for its depiction of class as it tried to appeal to larger numbers of readers. Though it might appear that horror went into something of a decline following the 1980s boom, In Chapter four I look at a range of writers whose work, while sometimes not classified as primarily as horror, nevertheless borrow heavily from the genre. In this final chapter I investigate the ways in which both mainstream novelists such as Thomas Harris, Bret Easton Ellis and Chuck Palahniuk, and more niche writers such as Poppy Z. Brite and Jack Ketchum, engaged with the commercial nature of the genre to produce work that still had interesting things to say about class in the U.S.A. as the nation entered the twenty first century.

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[i] Clive Bloom. ""This Revolting Graveyard of the Universe: The Horror Fiction of H.P. Lovecraft"[i]. *American Horror Fiction: From Brockden Brown to Stephen King*. Ed. Brian Docherty (Hampshire and London: Macmillan, 1990). 59-72.

Chapter 2

Class and Horror Fiction during the Early Twentieth Century

This chapter explores the solidification of trends examined previously by looking at horror fiction from the early part of the twentieth century; primarily the pulp magazines that were so popular during this period, including *Weird Tales* and one of its more noted contributors, "star writer" (Newitz 2006: 91) H.P. Lovecraft. In line with Jason Colavito's claim that "the period saw an efflorescence of horror fiction … as those hit hardest by the depression- the unemployed with time to kill – turned toward horror to deal imaginatively with the mounting horrors of the world around them" (174) I will argue that the pulp magazines were a class-conscious enterprise and that the writings of those who worked within the format were frequently informed by perceptions of class. Lovecraft, in particular, is an interesting example to examine here as he espoused a kind of cultural elitism, which saw him describe those at the bottom of the societal ladder as a "herd of crude and unimaginative illiterates" (qtd in Joshi, Kindle), frequently depicting them as horrifying and degenerate in his stories. In this sense Lovecraft's writing voices the social abjection that Georges Bataille responded to in his essay "Abjection and Miserable Forms" (1934). Bataille's essay, which Sylvere Lotringer describes as "essentially a reflection on fascism" (1999: 22), proposes the existence of a type of social exclusion resulting from class exploitation that continues into the early part of the twentieth century in the form of European fascism. Bataille believes that fascism and the fascist impulse define "a certain fraction of ... the proletariat, as abject." (Lotringer 1999 22-23). He argues that the abject positioning that the working classes find themselves in cannot be solved wholly through societal reorganisation as it is as much a result of representational factors as it is material conditions; that is to say the working classes have been "represented from the outside with disgust as the dregs of the people, populace and gutter" (Bataille 1999: 9). More specifically, Bataille suggests that it is the hegemonic classes who have configured the poor as abject in a conscious attempt to expel their repulsive Other (the poor, according to Bataille, have no Other through which to purge their own misery and so they remain in an abject position). Though many of Lovecraft's stories work to present the poor and working classes (as well as people of non Anglo-Saxon descent) as abject, frequently evoking what Bataille termed "the bestiality of the miserables" (1999: 11), Lovecraft was also almost exclusively dependent upon the tastes of the working class or petit-bourgeois readership who purchased *Weird Tales* (and similar pulp magazines). This paradox throws up some interesting complexities in Lovecraft's writing when he engages with issues of class.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, when depicting the twin issues of poverty and class, writers have repeatedly used the city as a prism through which to explore their fears and anxieties. Poe (one of the major literary influences in Lovecraft's early fiction) wrote of the fiendish poor in "The Man of the Crowd*"* and Naturalists such as Stephen Crane and Jack London depicted the city with "something akin to horror" (Taylor, 79-80). Though the public imagination might hold Lovecraft as a quintessential New Englander, who sets many of his more renowned short tales in the distinctly rural Providence, Rhode Island, Lovecraft's stories frequently, and in significant ways, utilise the urban environments of the inner city and the slum for their horrific effects. Furthermore, Lovecraft expands the remit of the city as the only space in which the horrors of poverty and the working classes exist, and encompasses the "lawless and sly" "white-trash" (2002: 274) inhabitants of backwater boroughs, villages and townships of New England in his fiction, in order to help conjure up striking instances of class-based horror. In story after story Lovecraft ties the abject nature of people to places as if to suggest, in part, as Bataille would later, that "human

abjection results from the material impossibility of avoiding contact with abject *things*: it is but the abjection of *things* passed on to those who are exposed to them" (1999: 11).

Equally, while it is now something of a truism to point out that Lovecraft's derogatory depictions of poverty and the poor are most explicitly tied to the U.S.A.'s changing racial and ethnic makeup. Lovecraft's prejudices are often also connected to issues of class; an area that is only just starting to attract study with the work of critics such as S.A. Reinert exploring the influence of economic theory in Lovecraft's writing. Such a symbiotic relationship should perhaps not be surprising given that, in a U.S. context, race and class are intrinsically linked. The disassembling of economic structures related to imperialism and slavery at the start of the twentieth century meant that "even the most simplistic and racist of these stories also reflects the moral confusion of a nation that feared, yet desired, an end to colonialism in the world and at home" (Newitz 2006: 90).

In "He", written in the midst of Lovecraft's time in New York City, we find the narrator, widely considered to be a partly autobiographical depiction, communicate abhorrence at the explicitly ethnically diverse 'strangers ... without kinship' who threaten the continuation of the 'blue-eyed' men who would otherwise make up the city:

> [T]he throngs of people that seethed through the flume-like streets were squat, swarthy strangers with hardened faces and narrow eyes, shrewd strangers without dreams and without kinship to the scenes about them, who could never mean aught to a blue-eyed man of the old folk, with the love of fair green lanes and white New England village steeples in his heart. (2002: 119-120)

To confirm the point further (if indeed such confirmation is needed), such racially prejudiced views also surface in Lovecraft's non-fiction, evident, among other places, in a 1931 letter he wrote following his time in Brooklyn:

> Yes—New York is pretty well lost to the Aryan race, and the tragic and dramatic thing is the speed with which the change occurred. People hardly past middle age can still recall the pleasant, free and easy New York which really formed an American metropolis, and in which there was nothing more foreign than the wholesome, cheerful immigrants from Ireland and Germany. As late as 1900 this old New York was still the visible state of things on Manhattan Island—but then the packed East Side, which had been silently filling up with Russian and Polish Jews since 1885 or 1890, began to disgorge its newly-prosperous foreign-born and first active generation. In 1905 certain troubles in Russia sent over countless hordes of cringing Jews; and by 1910 people began to notice the overwhelmingly Semitic tinge of the crowds on all the New York streets. (qtd in Schweitzer 2010: 53)

Note the sense of the city as a locus for lamentable (racial) change in Lovecraft's view, and the imagined past for New York as a more innocent location with Teutonic or Anglo-Saxon immigrants that Lovecraft creates. Interestingly, Lovecraft's depiction of the city here also appears to owe a debt to the earlier naturalist writers' often similarly sensationalist depictions of major urban areas of the U.S. as squalid, malevolent and horrific. Here such fears are re-orientated in order to blame explicitly racial sources; indeed, the suggestion that immigration from Ireland and Germany was to be welcomed would support this claim. However, though race is ostensibly the principal contributory factor in informing the vitriolic nature of Lovecraft's views towards the city, it is evident from the descriptions of the abject nature of the

poor and the environs they inhabit in stories including "The Horror at Red Hook", that Lovecraft is equally horrified by the working classes:

> From this tangle of material and spiritual putrescence the blasphemies of an hundred dialects assail the sky. Hordes of prowlers reel shouting and singing along the lanes and thoroughfares, occasional furtive hands suddenly extinguish lights and pull down curtains, and swarthy, sin-pitted faces disappear from windows when visitors pick their way through. Policemen despair of order or reform, and seek rather to erect barriers protecting the outside world from the contagion. The clang of the patrol is answered by a kind of spectral silence, and such prisoners as are taken are never communicative. Visible offences are as varied as the local dialects, and run the gamut from the smuggling of rum and prohibited aliens through diverse stages of lawlessness and obscure vice to murder and mutilation in their most abhorrent guises. That these visible affairs are not more frequent is not to the neighbourhood's credit, unless the power of concealment be an art demanding credit. More people enter Red Hook than leave it - or at least, than leave it by the landward side - and those who are not loquacious are the likeliest to leave. (2005: 120)

Furthermore, in many of Lovecraft's letters to friends and correspondents it is clear that the writer was just as deeply concerned with the poor, the working classes, and the power they might wield on the national stage, as we was with issues pertaining to race:

> While not all of this minority would care to lower the prevailing life-level to the wholly savage state, it is undeniable that they would like to see it pulled down to an intolerable degree of mediocrity. This actual hostility to the best human achievements is found in many proletarian groups and peasantries, and was markedly manifest in the earlier stage of both French and Russian revolutions (qtd in Schweitzer 2010: 73).

Central to Lovecraft's fears of both, those of non-Anglo-Saxon descent - and the poor - is the imagined threat of degeneracy, evident in the discussion of such groups' imagined oppositions to human progress and achievement. Perhaps somewhat inevitably for a man who once proposed that "All I care about is the civilisation" (SL 2.290) Lovecraft held an almost "pathological aversion to and fear of regression to a primitive state" (Goho 2014: 148). As Nancy Isenberg comprehensively details, such fears were fairly widespread throughout the early twentieth century, with many believing that the poor, particularly rural 'white trash' "marked an evolutionary decline" (Isenberg, 136) Lovecraft's belief that it was possible for white Anglo-Saxon peoples to descend the evolutionary ladder and revert back to the behaviour of what he perceived as their less-educated and less civilised forefathers is a recurrent thread through a number of his stories including "The Lurking Fear" (1923), "The Dunwich Horror" (1929), and "The Shadow Over Innsmouth" (1936).

It is interesting to note that Lovecraft was far from unique in depicting concerns around race and class as overlapping within his fiction. William Faulkner's work, which Kerr is not alone in suggesting "was positively Gothic" (220), also frequently engages with issues of degeneracy, miscegenation and the past impinging on the present. Allan Lloyd Smith makes this link explicit when he draws parallels between "The vernacular of the New England locals, their ignorance and interrelationships, and the sense of family history" (117) that exist in both Lovecraft's and Faulkner's fiction. Yet where Faulkner was able to see his work published in a series of novels which attracted the attention of mainstream literary critics during his lifetime (culminating in his receiving the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1949) Lovecraft was afforded no such

recognition, becoming trapped in the popular domain of the pulps; only having his work collected into dedicated volumes, following his death, by the small press Arkham House.

In "The Rats in the Walls" (1924) even as civilised a character as the scion of a wealthy English lineage is shown as being highly susceptible to degeneration. Delapore (an alteration of de la Poer), is initially depicted as a man who has "let no expense deter" (2002: 89) him from rebuilding and restoring Exham priory, his ancestral home. Delapore is unshaken by the local villagers' "unbelievable fear and hatred of the place" (2002: 91). Though, at first, oblivious to the details of his family's history, Delapore is alerted to the accursed records of Exham by his son, and then subsequently the Anchester villagers. He learns of the "dark worship" (2002: 92) of his ancestors. Significantly, given my focus, the corruption of the de la Poer family is explicitly linked to their upper class status in the story, with Delapore finding out that the worst offenders among his ancestors were "the barons and their direct heirs" (2002: 93). As if to further Lovecraft's suggestion that the aristocracy, rather than just the biological de la Poer lineage, are to blame, the narrator then finds out that "temperament rather than ancestry was evidently the basis of this cult, for it was entered by several that married into it" (2002: 93).

Upon restoration of the Priory back to its original finery, Delapore who has now reassumed the spelling de la Poer, marvels at the "great rooms, wainscoted walls, vaulted ceilings, mullioned windows, and broad staircases with pride" (2002: 94) and feels confident that he can "prove that a de la Poer ... need not be a fiend" (2002: 94). Yet, upon spending time living at the Priory, and having access to its great libraries, de la Poer uncovers the terrible history of the last family member to inhabit the house, Walter de la Poer. The narrator learns that Walter, though once "a shy, gentle youth" (2002: 95), had made a "shocking discovery" (2002: 95) during his time at the Priory and that this discovery seemed to exert a terrible affect as he went on to murder all of its residents, including several members of his own family. Notably, in a move that seems to include the working classes in this apparently barbaric act, we are told that Walter's actions were "condoned by the villagers" (2002: 95) who believed that it would put an end to the curse on the area and so remained quiet to serve their own interests.

At the climax of the story, de la Poer and his team of experts descend into the uncovered chambers below Exham priory to find horrific "semi-human remains" (2002: 104) of a "degraded mixture"(2002: 105) that clarify the de la Poer's as belonging to a cannibalistic cult that has enslaved and bred people for food. De la Poer is so horrified by what he has found that he instantly changes from a modern, civilized man to a cannibalistic monster: and is found "crouching in the blackness over the plump, half-eaten body of Capt. Norrys" (108) before being locked away at Hanwell Sanatorium.

Though it is likely that the reader is meant to see the narrator's ravings at the end of "The Rats in the Walls" as nonsensical gibbering; a result of the horrors that the de la Poer bloodline have long been guilty of, it is interesting to note the way in which the narrator's comments reiterate the linking of cannibalistic with capitalist motifs in the story. The suggestion that the rats have eaten members of the de la Poer bloodline just as "a de la Poer eats forbidden things" (2002: 108) takes on an extra resonance when read through a Marxist prism. Underpinning the narrator's desire to stay in Exham Priory in spite of the local villagers' superstitions might suggest a need on de la Poer's part to reassert a sense of hereditary control over the working classes of Anchester, one that finds extreme expression in the cannibalisation of the family's subjects. Indeed, the story's horrific events reveal that cannibalism has been taking place amongst a supposedly civilised English family being not that surprising given Darryl Jones's proposal that "cannibalism was rife in Europe into the medieval period and afterwards" (qtd in Wisker 2005: 180).

Earlier in the tale we are told of "the occasional disappearance of villagers" (2002: 93), a practise that in the light of the grotesque denouement of "The Rats in the Walls" indicates the de la Poers have been kidnapping, murdering and eating the poor for generations. Indeed, de la Poer's plaintive cries that "Shall a Norrys hold the lands of a de la Poer?" (2002: 108) and subsequent attack on his friend Capt. Norrys suggest, once again, the ties between the de la Poer's cannibalistic practises and their need to exert control over their lands and peoples. Furthermore, such an interpretation would be in keeping with the proposal that "The original spring of the Gothic ... revealed the decadent social edifice for what it really was: built on the bones of the working class, violent in maintaining a rigid social order, and full of horror against the poor" (Goho 2014: 138). As such, the imagined rats of Exham Priory are actually an attempt by de la Poer to transfer, through externalisation, his hereditary guilt concerning the actions of his forbearers. The tale, in its exposing of cannibalism at the heart of an English aristocratic family, giving voice to "the truth of Darwin's theory" (Joshi 2012: 503).

Lovecraft's tale was not alone in portraying the inescapability of genetic ancestry. Erskine Caldwell's pulp novel *The Bastard* (1929), "a Gothic tale of … monstrous progeny" (Currell, 2), tells the story of Gene Morgan who is from Louisiana, and of white trash stock, being son to an unknown father and prostitute mother. Gene spends much of his youth engaged in violent, thuggish behaviour; he mutilates women, rapes a child, has sex with a black woman, and murders a co-worker. Gene is eventually 'saved' when he falls in love with the poor but decent Myra Morgan. They move to the respectable city of Philadelphia where Gene gets a job and Myra gets pregnant. However, the cursed degenerate taint of Gene's ancestry rears its monstrous head when their baby starts growing black hair all over its body and Myra's doctor advises her not to have any more children. The end of the novel, which sees Gene drown his child and then leave Myra, presumably so that she can marry a normal man and lead a happy life, reinforces the eugenicist message that some types of (white trash) people are just not fit to reproduce.

While Morgan and De la Poer's respective narratives ultimately reveal a kind of hereditary form of barbarity that the stories suggest inevitably lead to examples of severe downward mobility, Faulkner's later novel *Absalom! Absalom!* (1936) is one of the few narratives from this period to critique the effects of upward mobility. The novel follows the poor, working class character Thomas Sutpen, as he becomes corrupted by his desire to achieve material wealth and a dynastic future for his offspring; leading one critic to describe the novel as "the transmogrification of the American dream into the American nightmare". (Kerr: 52). Things go wrong for the boy Sutpen from the opening scene of the novel when he is refused admittance into a Southern Plantation house by a liveried servant and instead told by "never to come to that front door again but to go around to the back" (Faulkner: 232), a textual variation on the commonplace practice whereby "planters forced poor whites to use the back door when entering the master's house" (Isenberg, 149). The shame that Sutpen feels affects him on a fundamental level, as Sutpen suggests "he would have to do something about it in order to live with himself for the rest of his life" (234). Allan Lloyd Smith notes, however, that "the ambitious design of Thomas Sutpen for a mansion and a family lineage is rotten from the start" (117), because, as Sutpen discovers, in a fashion befitting one of Lovecraft's protagonists, his bloodline is tainted through virtue of his first marriage to a woman with African heritage, thus ruining his chances of being viewed as suitable for "the social model of the American South" (Crow: 127). While Lovecraft was to present most of those at the bottom of the socio-economic scale in his fiction in an unfavourable manner, Sutpen is afforded some sympathy. He is, as Kerr suggests "the boy ... turned away from the door from caste or class motives" (45) and as such Faulkner encourages the reader to empathise with his motivation if not his methodology, indeed, it is frequently

suggested that Sutpen's problem is one of "innocence" (240) due to inexperience of the emergent hierarchal class system:

> he did not even imagine then that there was any such way to live or want to live, or that there existed all the objects to be wanted which there were, or that the ones who owned the objects not only could look down on the ones that didn't, but could be supported in the down-looking not only by the others that owned objects too but by the very ones that were looked down on that didn't own objects and knew they never would (221)

This naivety also incorporates a blindness to the dehumanisation of exploitative systems such as slavery, casting Sutpen as "a manifestation of the monstrous moral system he embraced" (Crow: 128) rather than a victim to be pitied. It is what leads the former innocent to become a grotesque version of his self, one driven by the all consuming desire to secure a fully white heir for his fortune: "*a walking shadow ... the light-blinded bat-like image of his own torment cast by the fierce demoniac lantern up from beneath the earth's crust ... clinging, trying to cling with vain unsubstantial hands to what he hoped would hold him, save him*" (171)

Though the working class are shown in a fairly ambivalent light in "The Rats in the Walls" - they are after all the implicit victims for the most part -"The Lurking Fear" might be read as an altogether more overt extrapolation of Lovecraft's fears concerning the working classes and the effects they might exert over the 'civilisation' that he so revered. Consequently, the story seems at least tangentially informed by emerging stereotypes of 'white trash', a concept that originated from government studies at the start of the twentieth century, and which created the image of "the hillbilly family, dwelling in filthy shacks, and spawning endless generations of paupers, criminals and imbeciles" (Newitz and Wray 1997: 2). "The Lurking Fear" tells of an unnamed narrator who sets out to find an unknown entity that is plaguing squatters that live in and amongst a "few ruined mansions" (Lovecraft 2005: 63) dotted around the Catskill mountain range. The narrator has been informed that the entity, the lurking fear, inhabits a disused mansion formerly owned by the cursed Dutch, Martense family, who possessed a "queer hereditary dissimilarity of eyes" and whose annals are "long [...and...] unnatural" (2005: 63). At the end of the first episode of the tale the narrator's two companions disappear and the second episode sees the protagonist forced into the mountains once again in a vain attempt to recover them. Upon further investigation, the narrator and his new companion, Arthur Monroe, come across a "man who possessed a marvellously illuminating ancestral diary" on the "terrible Martense family" (2005: 68) and end up in a small hamlet, where this time Monroe is killed in a grotesque fashion: his head being "chewed and gouged" (2005: 71).

Spurred on to find the entity by Monroe's unfortunate death, the narrator researches the area further. He discovers that the Martense family shared a "hatred of the English civilisation" (2005: 73), one that saw them living in a self-imposed isolation from other colonists. This exile lead the Martenses to "intermarrying with the numerous menial class about the estate" (2005: 73) and therefore starting a process whereby "the crowded family degenerated" to become "clannish and taciturn" (2005: 73). Lovecraft believed certain "mentally sluggish types will never lose their current cultural inferiority" (qtd in Joshi 2006: 93) and in "The Lurking Fear" we witness the horrifying effects Lovecraft's believed class miscegenation might cause.

At first, the squatters are depicted as poor, yet fairly benign, individuals: "When we came to know the squatters better, we found them curiously likeable in many ways. Simple animals they were, gently descending the evolutionary scale because of their unfortunate ancestry and stultifying isolation" (69).

However, by the end of the story, the narrator discovers that rather than there just being one, or indeed two creatures as he had initially presumed, the whole of the area around the Martense mansion is riven with burrows created and inhabited by the degenerate offspring of the Martenses and the local people. Out of these tunnels spills the "loathsome flood of night spawned organic corruption" (80) which threatens to overwhelm the narrator. At this point the narrator's depiction of the lurking fear is instructive: "God knows how many there were – there must have been thousands. To see the stream of them ... was shocking. When they had thinned out enough to be glimpsed as separate organisms, I saw that they were dwarfed, deformed hairy devils or apes – monstrous and diabolic caricatures" (80). Such a description of the entities that constitute the titular lurking fear renders them as a horrifying crowd or rabble, reminiscent of Lovecraft's views of Bolshevism as giving birth to an "almost sub-human Russian rabble ... preaching a ...reversion to savagery or medieval barbarism" (Lovecraft 2006: 37). Indeed, this mass, homogenous entity threatens to encompass the narrator, much as it has enveloped the once civilised Martenses, in a decidedly abject fashion.

For the duration of his investigation the unnamed narrator of "The Lurking Fear" is spurred on by a perverse desire to confront ever greater horror, what he terms "my morbid curiosity" (80). Even though he seems to realise that the confrontation with the lurking fear will be his undoing the narrator persists in his quest, coming to resemble Julia Kristeva's theories of the individual's relationship to the abject. In *Powers of Horror*, Kristeva writes of both the repulsion and the attraction of the abject or taboo, suggesting that we may be drawn to that which threatens to destroy our sense of identity because of the freedom that that destruction entails: "Hence a Jouissance in which the subject is swallowed up but in which the Other, in return, keeps the subject from foundering by making it repugnant. One thus understands why so many victims of the abject are its fascinated victims." (9) In "The Lurking Fear" the narrator is continually attracted to that which he suspects to be monstrous, losing his sense of self along the way: "What language can describe the spectacle of a man lost in infinitely abysmal earth ... There is something hideous in it, but that is what I did. I did it for so long that life faded to a far memory, and I became one with the moles and grubs of nighted depths" (75). When the narrator finally confronts the true horror of the Martense family line he is left unable to forget what he has seen: "If heaven is merciful, it will some day efface from my consciousness the sight that I saw, and let me live my last years in peace" (Lovecraft 2005: 80).

The narrator's unceasing desire to confront the horror of the unknown entity in "The Lurking Fear" might also be interpreted as a covert critique of the reading practises of pulp audiences. It is well known that Lovecraft disliked writing for such magazines. Just as the narrator - upon seeing Monroe killed - finds himself remarkably un-phased by witnessing such horrible events; commenting that his friend's grotesque demise has made him eager for even greater horror: "I myself seemed strangely callous. That shock at the mansion had done something to my brain, and I could think only of the quest for a horror now grown to cataclysmic stature in my imagination" (72), so the story might be seen as a coded warning for those pulp readers whose desire was for increasing levels of graphic violence at the cost of the suggestive horror that Lovecraft favoured. As Erin A. Smith notes "Rather than evoking a reader's refined, higher feelings [...the pulps...] were charged with appealing to baser, corporeal emotions." (141) Lovecraft particularly despised writing serialised fiction such as "The Lurking Fear", all the rage in pulp magazines such as *Weird Tales* and *Home Brew*. He suggested in a letter concerning his commission to write "Herbert West- Reanimator" (1922):

To write to order, to drag one figure through a series of artificial episodes, involves the violation of all that spontaneity and singleness of impression which should characterise short story work. It reduces the unhappy author from art to the commonplace level of mechanical and unimaginative hackwork. Nevertheless, when one needs the money one is not scrupulous—so I have accepted the job! (qtd in Joshi 2001: 151)

"Cheap, disposable and lacking literary quality" (Smith 2012: 141) the pulp magazines, so popular during the early part of the twentieth century in the U.S. (and particularly between the two world wars), in many ways embodied "the incursion of the Machine Age into the art of tale-telling" (qtd in Smith 2012: 141) as one disparaging 1933 *Vanity Fair* article suggested. Printed on cheap wood 'pulp' paper and banned from 'respectable' locations such as public libraries, pulp magazines consciously targeted a group of readers not catered for by more upmarket 'slick' magazines such as the *Saturday Evening Post* and *Cosmopolitan*. Indeed, such was the immense appetite for the kind of pulp fiction provided by magazines such as *The Argosy* and *Weird Tales* that those who worked for them quickly found themselves adopting an industrial-like approach to their writing. In one of the more literal manifestations of 'the culture industry', stories became commodities rather than art and writers were frequently viewed as labourers rather than as artists; as Smith notes "Pulp writers were piece-work producers, paid from one to five cents a word for fiction they cranked out at astonishing rates" (2012: 145-146). Many pulp magazine writers boasted of their swift work rates, with Eric Stanley-Gardner famously calling himself a 'fiction factory', able to write to order on almost any subject if the price was right. Lovecraft frequently despaired of the pulp magazines and the "coarse sensation seeker[s]" (qtd 2004: 58) he felt forced to write for. In his 1933 essay "Some Notes on a Non-Entity" Lovecraft derides the formulaic nature of so much pulp writing, stating that: "Current magazine fiction, with its incurable leanings toward conventional sentimental perspectives, brisk, cheerful style, and artificial "action" plots, does not rank high" (2006: 211)

S.T. Joshi has suggested that *Weird Tales* was "very much a product of its time, very much a part of the Roaring Twenties and Depression Thirties from which it had sprung." (Joshi, Kindle). The magazine, which Lovecraft began selling his stories to in 1923, though considered the "leading purveyor of similar fiction" (Klinger 2014: xlviii), was never the runaway success its backers had hoped for. Indeed, as Klinger notes: "[*Weird Tales*] never achieved the success of the bigger pulps such as *Argosy*, and its circulation was estimated at less than 50,000 at its peak" (2014: xlviii). These modest numbers might have accounted for the relative pittance that was paid to Lovecraft for many of his stories - the author was paid one cent per word - often amounting to a paltry sum for his shorter pieces: "Lovecraft received $35 for "The Festival" and $25 for "The Unnameable"" (2014: xlviii). Though, this is perhaps not surprising given that of the many genres explored in the pulps, Horror was never one of the more commercially successful; as Colavito notes: "Pulps devoted to westerns, science fiction, mystery and detection, and even railroad stories readily outsold horror by large margins into the '30s." (200)

Exemplifying Bataille's belief in a social dimension to the process of abjection, readers of such fiction were often made into a kind of literary Other, being condemned as undiscerning in their tastes: "stirred by the same things that would stir a savage" (qtd in Smith 2012: 146). Pulp readers were considered as "socially and economically marginal. They were young, often immigrants, working class, and lacking in formal education" (Smith 2012: 146). Yet, in the case of Lovecraft, though letters to *Weird Tales* on the author and his work "were apparently uniformly fulsome" (Klinger 2014: liii) he expressed a strong dislike of the culture industry of the pulps and the "hopelessly vulgar and stupid rabble" (Qtd in de Camp 2011: 460) that read them. Nevertheless, he was largely dependent upon such magazines and their readers for much

of his income as a writer, exclaiming at one point that "it is too bad that no magazine market for seriously intended weird fiction exists. One must make the book good (which I can't) or be satisfied to have things in the pulp rags" (2004: 15-16)

Perhaps somewhat ironically, given Lovecraft's views towards the pulps and their readers, those behind *Weird Tales* consciously sought to position it as unique in the marketplace; as a sole bastion of the artistically worthy esoteric - against the increasingly soulless nature of the mainstream. In an editorial published in 1924, entitled "Why Weird Tales?" writer Otis Adelbert Kline stated that "The writing of the common run of stories today has, unfortunately for American Literature, taken on the character of an exact science" (qtd in Weinberg 1999: 16). In opposition to this characterless trend, *Weird Tales*, it was suggested, would publish stories considered "taboo in the publishing world" (qtd in Weinberg 1999: 16) yet which, like the work of Edgar Allen Poe, nevertheless represented "true art in fiction" (qtd in Weinberg 1999: 16) for those able to recognise genre writing of critical merit. In a statement that would seem to reflect the magazine's publication of Lovecraft's early tale "Dagon" in 1923, Kline concludes his piece by suggesting that *Weird Tales* is determined to offer "an outlet for writers whose works would not find a ready market in the usual channels" (qtd in Weinberg 1999: 18). The truth of the matter is that the 'Unique Magazine', as it referred to itself, did, in many ways, stand apart from many of its more formulaic competitors. *Weird Tales* offered it's supposedly more discerning readers a repository of varied, 'weird' fiction when other pulps resorted to repetitious work proscribed by specific market lead requirements. Such claims of exceptionality were also evidenced through the publication of eclectic stories such as Elizabeth Colter's "The Last Horror" which dealt with race and bigotry and "was unique in recognizing the stereotype and destroying it" (Weinberg 1999: 28) and David H. Keller's "The Seeds of Death" which was noteworthy for having the antagonist, the evil woman, win out in the end.

Part of Lovecraft's detestation of the pulps may be due to his fear concerning what he perceived as the effects of writing for such a market. Lovecraft, who believed that art should be about pure self-expression "in which monetary considerations played no part" (Joshi 2002: xiii) and who often refused to tailor his work to the formulae of the pulps, is on record as suggesting that the routine practise of writing with *Weird Tales* (and its competitors) in mind lead to a corruption of his style so that it became more explicit, less suggestive, and therefore more pulp-like in nature; sentiments expressed in a letter to Fritz Leiber dated November 18th, 1936:

> Regarding the other point – springing marvels before I've sufficiently prepared the reader – I recognise that, too. This is without question a result of my constant writing for a pulp rag like W.T. The insidious influence of the cheap shocker gets at me despite my conscious efforts to exclude it. Recently I've felt this defect very keenly, & have made efforts to break away from it – though there are no results so far" (qtd 2004: 29-30)

The degree to which Lovecraft's writing was actually affected by being published in the pulps is still a matter of some debate. In "Lovecraft and Weird Tales" Joshi notes that "Despite [...Lovecraft's...] statements that he never wrote with a particular audience in mind, we have other remarks that attest to his desire to cater to the readership of the magazine—or, at any rate, to gain some needed revenue by placing tales there." (Joshi, Kindle) Similarly, in *Lovecraft and Influence: His Predecessors and Successors* (2013) Gavin Callaghan writes of Lovecraft's "method being inextricably rooted in his [pulp] *medium*" (70). Indeed, Callaghan's enlightening chapter suggests that Lovecraft, despite his later protestations to the contrary, adopted a common way of writing that was particular to the pulps. This lead to a situation in

which "So prevalent ... are the pulp elements that Lovecraft later appropriated and perpetuated, it is often difficult to tell which, if any, particular story might have influenced him ...or whether it was actually the collective pulp atmosphere that ultimately formed his main and lingering inspiration" (Callaghan 70). Moreover, Callaghan proceeds to argue that many of the recurrent and distinctive elements of Lovecraft's writing owe a debt to the writing of the pulp authors that both preceded Lovecraft, and in some cases were his contemporaries (such as A. Merritt). In particular, Callaghan notes the influence of Edgar Rice Burroughs, whose "gentlemanly ethic, his anti-effeminate and fighting ethos and his love for Virginia and the American South, would remain with Lovecraft for all his life" (71). However and perhaps more significantly given my emphasis here, Callaghan suggests that the major difference between Lovecraft and his fellow pulp writers was politics: "most of the early science-fantasy authors ... *opposed* aristocratic and absolute monarchies of the sort that Lovecraft supported for most of his life" (79). While, writers including Burroughs, Merritt, and J. U. Giesy often made the democratic overthrow of totalitarian regimes central to the plots of their stories (most notably in the case of Burroughs' John Carter series) Lovecraft instead depicts "blasphemous, hybrid, and idolatrous masses initiating a reign of bacchanalian madness and destruction against their rightful rulers" (Callaghan 80).

Such disparaging portrayals of what Lovecraft called the "Eyrie-bombarding proletariat" (Joshi, Kindle) can be found in two of Lovecraft's most controversial stories, "The Horror at Red Hook" (1925) and "He" (1926). Both stories were originally published in *Weird Tales* and both are widely believed to reflect Lovecraft's own anxieties born out of his sudden downward mobility during the two years he spent living away from his Providence in New York. The author's proclivity for civilisation and his desire to see himself (albeit self-consciously) in the mould of an eighteenth century gentleman were dramatically shaken when he experienced near poverty during the years between 1924 and 1926. Famously, following his marriage to Sonia Haft Greene, in 1924 Lovecraft moved from his beloved hometown to Brooklyn, New York, to live with his new spouse. While the pair were initially solvent, albeit with "Lovecraft ... essentially [...being...] supported financially by his wife and, to a much lesser degree, his aunts." (Joshi, Kindle) things quickly took a turn for the worse financially. Rather than continue in her position as a successful hat saleswoman, Sonia tried, in vain, to set up her own business, slipping into depression due in part to its subsequent failure. Meanwhile, Lovecraft turned down the potentially lucrative editorship of *Weird Tales* and then found that he was unable to secure any kind of stable work, writing or otherwise. Indeed, such was the mounting desperation of the couple's situation that Sonia was eventually forced to move to the Midwest to try and find a job, leaving Lovecraft to relocate into a single room apartment in a slum area of Brooklyn known as Red Hook to make ends meet. Lovecraft now found himself having to eke out a living in New York against his will. Depressed by his situation, Lovecraft's writing became noticeably more misanthropic, embodying "his feelings about the heterogeneous megalopolis in which he found himself" (Joshi 2002: xi).

French author and critic Michel Houellebecq, sees this period as crucial to Lovecraft's writing, as the point at which Lovecraft's dislike for non-Anglo-Saxon peoples and culture cohered around the idea of the Other as not just a threat to his rarefied sense of culture and civilisation but as a real, immediate material and financial rival: "he felt only a remote disdain for other races. His stay in New York's underbelly, in its slums, would change all that. The foreign creatures became *competitors*, enemies who were close by and whose brute strength far surpassed his" (Houellebecq 2006: 24)

Thus, in "The Horror at Red Hook" (1925) the writer's own first-hand experiences of downward mobility surfaces in an explicit fashion. Indeed, the story once again echoes the abjection that Bataille discusses in

his work. "The Horror at Red Hook" begins with a melodramatic if cryptic recounting of Police detective Thomas F. Malone's experiences in the titular area of New York City. We are told that Malone was put on a "disproportionately arduous" case (2005: 117) in Red Hook which engendered a "horror of houses and blocks and cities leprous and cancerous" (2005: 117) in Malone. So terrible were the detective's experiences on the case that they have resulted in a man who is now unable even look at something with a "touch of the urban" (2005: 116) without breaking into "a series of terrified, hysterical shrieks" (2005: 116).

It is perhaps not surprising that Malone should have this response to urban spaces given the apparent prejudice the narrator has towards cities and their people. We are told that Red Hook is "a maze of hybrid squalor" (2005: 119), which, though ostensibly quaint and "Dickensian" (2005: 119) in parts, is more accurately revealed as a "a babel of sound and filth [that] sends out strange cries to answer the lapping of oily waves at its grimy piers and the monstrous organ litanies of the harbour whistles" (2005: 119). Such an overwrought, abject depiction of the city and its inhabitants is typical of the story and might be considered central to its evocation of horror. Indeed, "The Horror at Red Hook" could be read as a hyperbolic rejection of the belief that the city and its inhabitants are linked to modernity and a positivist sense of historical progress and human advancement. Quite the reverse is true in "The Horror at Red Hook" as we are informed that Red Hook's residents demonstrate "some monstrous thread of continuity" (2005: 120) back to man's "primitive half-ape savagery" (2005: 120).

The plot of "The Horror at Red Hook" sees Malone tasked with tracking down Robert Suydam, an "arch-fiend" (2005: 124), who it seems is responsible for the illegal, mass importation of Kurdish immigrants into the Red Hook area of New York. Interestingly, while these foreigners are given short shrift by the narrator, it is possible to see those of race and the lower classes as Suydam's victims; in fact we are told that "Most of the victims were children of the lowest classes" (2005: 127). A sort of early twentieth century people-trafficker, Malone finds out that Suydam is holding cultish rituals that involve kidnapping and human sacrifices. At the climax of the tale and parallel with Suydam's apparent death, the police force carries out targeted raids in Red Hook to try and purge it of the abhorrent criminal activity taking place in the district. Malone, is, rather predictably, separated from his colleagues, and, in a confused state, finds himself dragged down "unmeasured spaces" (2005: 131) to Suydam's archaic summoning crypt wherein he witnesses the cult leader's ghoulish resurrection and eventual, albeit ambiguous, oblivion. The message is not hard to understand, the city and its people are the very locus of horror: "Satan held here his Babylonish court, and in the blood of stainless childhood the leprous limbs of phosphorescent Lilith were laved" (2005: 132). Suydam's actions, "extensive man-smuggling operations" (2005: 135) and the grotesque cultish rituals he engages in, seem to suggest a causal link between the commodification of human beings and the invocation of abhorrent horrors. Though it might be reassuring to read "The Horror at Red Hook" as almost compassionate in its depiction of the poor, who are in one sense preyed upon and exploited by figures such as Suydam, the narrator seems to disavow any sense of empathy at the end of the story, warning the reader in the final chapter that "Red Hook ... is always the same. Suydam came and went; a terror gathered and faded; but the evil spirit of darkness and squalor broods on" (2005: 136).

 "He" (1926) continues in the mode of "The Horror at Red Hook", locating its horror in the urban milieu, though like much of his fiction Lovecraft's target here is not as clear as it first might appear. The story follows an unknown narrator (also thought to be a thinly veiled version of Lovecraft) as he uncovers the "unsuspected horrors" (129) inhabiting the city of New York. "He" begins with the narrator feeling lost and desperate, having moved away from his native New England he has realised, albeit too late, that

"coming to New York had been a mistake" (119). Significantly, this initial sense of regret is due to the city's failure to live up to the 'cultured' aesthetic and historical expectations the narrator had for it. Instead of the "poignant wonder and inspiration" that the protagonist felt he would experience in the city's "teeming labyrinths of ancient streets ... forgotten courts, and squares and waterfronts ... Cyclopean modern towers and pinnacles that rise blackly Babylonian under waning moons" (119) he is stifled by the very material conditions of the city: "garish daylight shewed only squalor and alienage (sic)" (119). Embodying Lovecraft's later criticism "Of the Soviet's architectural vandalism, which destroys beauty right an left in the interest of "practical efficiency"" (qtd in Joshi 2006: 91), the narrator of "He" is disappointed that rather than remain a static space, cultured by virtue of its historical significance as a kind of museum exhibition writ large, New York has been physically changed towards utilitarian ends. Indeed, the sense is of a lost aesthetic utopia crushed by the weight of capitalist processes; "not a sentient perpetuation of Old New York" (120) but rather a space which is now irrevocably altered: "embalmed and infested with [the] queer animate things" (120) as a result of the tripartite horrors of urbanisation, immigration, and industrialisation. The second part of "He" reads much like a direct updating of Poe's "The Man of the Crowd" with the narrator of Lovecraft's tale seeking intellectual stimulation and aesthetic fulfilment from a strange man he meets in Greenwich Village and seems powerless to follow. However, whereas Poe's story hinges on the suggestion that the narrator wrongly perceived the poor to be a freely available source of entertainment, in Lovecraft's tale the protagonist seems drawn to follow the mysterious figure as he initially appears as a sort of kindred spirit, that is to say a man of a similar class and cultured background. We are told that the narrator is enamoured with the man's apparent refinement: he had "a noble, even a handsome, elderly countenance" (2002: 121) and "bore the marks of a lineage ... unusual for the age and place" (2002: 121). At the same time he is aware of a feeling that all is not normal with this individual; speaking of the man's appearance, the narrator states: "yet some quality about it disturbed me almost as much as its features pleased" (2002: 121). Once again, in Lovecraft we encounter something akin to Kristeva's concept of the subject's contradictory relationship to the abject. Nevertheless, despite (or perhaps because of) the man's dubious qualities the narrator feels compelled to follow him, suggesting on repeated occasions that he does so because the alternative would be much worse: "nothing was more deadly than the material daylight world of New York" (2002: 124). We have therefore a double bind wherein the narrator's horror at the unromantic "emptiness ... of reality" (2002: 125) forces him into a journey towards ever greater danger. In a somewhat complex and far-fetched conclusion, the narrator eventually finds out that the man he has followed is an ancient sorcerer with the ability to travel in time. The sorcerer stole his abilities from Native American Indians, later killing them so he would be the only one that possessed the arcane knowledge. Travelling forward in time, at the mercy of the sorcerer, to a dystopic future, the narrator screams with horror alerting a monstrous "barefoot or skin-shod horde" (2002: 127) of creatures that attack and carry away the sorcerer leaving the narrator to escape back into the present. The narrator's comments at the end of "He", that "I never sought to return to those tenebrous labyrinths, nor would I direct any sane man thither if I could" (2002: 129) seem to highlight a surprisingly self-reflexive message on Lovecraft's part, one that critiques the middle-class antiquarian impulse towards eulogising the past of the city at the expense of its utilitarian, working class present. Much as Kristeva's theories propose that the individual creates the abjected Other from themselves, externalising their fears and desires so that they may be 'destroyed', so we might read the sorcerer and his destruction as a working through of the narrator's own desires to travel back in time to an imagined point in the city's history. However, and lest we get too carried away with the possibilities of a psychoanalytical reading, the narrator's ultimate retreat to "the pure New England lanes" (2002: 129) and

refrain that "I repeat that the city is dead of full of unsuspected horrors" (2002: 129) also validate a more straightforward condemnation of the contemporary urban environment and the potential its racial and class-based horrors have to destroy the gentlemanly and cultured soul so dear to Lovecraft's self-identity.

Though both "The Horror at Red Hook" and "He" locate their horrors in the city, following 1926 Lovecraft quickly returned to setting his fiction in rural villages and towns. Significantly, many of his post 1926 stories depict backwards communities and the uneducated white working classes ('white trash') who inhabit them as a sort of lightning rod for corruption and degeneracy. In so doing Lovecraft's horror seems to follow the model set by the U.S. Eugenics Records Office, which:

> From 1890 to 1920 ... produced fifteen different "Eugenic Family Studies," wherein the researchers sought to demonstrate scientifically that large numbers of rural poor whites were "genetic defectives. Typically researchers conducted their studies by locating relatives who were either incarcerated or institutionalised and then tracing their genealogies back to a "defective" source. (Newitz and Wray 1997: 2)

"The Shadow over Innsmouth", which Joshi has called a "supremely masterful evocation of urban decay" (Joshi, Kindle), clearly foregrounds the material conditions that lead to the horrors the narrator uncovers, and interlinks fears concerning the processes engendered by capitalism with class snobbishness and racial intermixing. In this manner, it offers can be read against the background of "social exclusiveness" that prospered during the 1920s and 1930s and, more particularly, as a reflection of an underlying "disdain for rural backwardness and the mongrel taint" (205) that lead many prominent figures to call for mass sterilisation of the rural working classes.

Based, in part, on Lovecraft's "1931 visit to the decaying seaport of Newburyport, Massachusetts" (2002: 410), the story charts the missteps of a traveller, who, hoping to save on extortionate train fares, elects, instead, to travel by an old bus, "a terrible rattlerap" (2002: 270) that runs through the "dying and half-deserted" (2002: 269) coastal town of Innsmouth. The narrator quickly learns that Innsmouth has fallen on hard times, that it "used to be almost a city – quite a port before the War of 1812 – but [that it] has all gone to pieces in the last hundred years or so" (2002: 270). We are also told that the township now has "an enormous number of crumbling, worm-eaten, and supposedly empty houses along the abandoned waterfront" (2002: 268) and that there are "More empty houses than there are people" (2002: 270). Significantly, one of the problems that beset the port town of Innsmouth was an epidemic which we learn was "some foreign kind of disease brought from China or somewhere by the shipping" (2002: 272). Hence, Lovecraft ties together the undue financial processes of the town and its residents with their exchanges overseas. This anxiety is further espoused by the ticket agent who goes on to express his distaste for the business that all of New England's ships had to do with "queer ports in Africa, Asia, The South Seas, and everywhere else ... and what queer kinds of people they brought back with them" (2002: 272).

The extreme "civic degeneration" that has taken place in Innsmouth has left the town full of "'white trash' ... lawless and sly, and full of secret doings" (2002: 274). Consequently, the narrator, an educated man with interests in architecture, history and anthropology, feels under threat when faced with the "unpaved squalor and decay" (2002: 283) of Innsmouth and its people. At one point in the story he worries that the abject poverty that permeates the town will result in a financially motivated attack on his personage: "Was this one of those inns where travellers were slain for their money?" (311) Yet in a repetition of the Kristevian abject, push-pull relationship that permeates much of Lovecraft's short fiction when depicting the poor, the narrator is both horrified by the poverty he encounters, describing Innsmouth as "that vile

waterfront slum" (291), while also being irrationally drawn to the intrigue the run down township provides: "in this fascination there was a curiously disturbing element hardly to be classified or accounted for" (276).

Among the few notable figures who still live in Innsmouth is the refinery owner Barnabus Marsh, of whom various unpleasant rumours circulate. Foremost among the stories is that Marsh has made some sort of deal with pirates and that this is where "the Marshes get the gold they refine" (2002: 273). Indeed, it is repeatedly suggested that this gold is now crucial to the Innsmouth economy as the years have witnessed the intense commercialisation of the fishing industry to the point where a small township is unable to compete: "fishing paid less and less as the price of the commodity fell and large-scale corporations offered completion" (2002: 275). Much as the later *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974) "give[s] us proletarian monsters that are a product of US society" (Hutchings 2004: 120), it would seem that at some point in Innsmouth's history these escalating financial pressures drove the town's residents to a decidedly capitalist, Faustian pact with "some kind o' god things that lived under the sea" (2002: 296).

In line with quasi-scientific theories of phrenology, such as John Beddoe's *The Races of Man* (1862); which proposed that the Irish, Welsh and the lower classes were more primitive due to their physical features, "The Shadow Over Innsmouth" depicts the town's immoral denizens as physically abhorrent. Upon waiting for the bus, the narrator notes of the driver, a native of Innsmouth: "He had a narrow head, bulging, watery eyes ... a flat nose, a receding forehead and chin, and singularly undeveloped ears" (2002: 279) and walked with "a shambling gait" (2002: 279). Here, we see the beliefs of phrenology extrapolated upon so that the Innsmouth "look" (2002: 285) comes to represent both the residents' wholesale immorality but also their racial and class heritage. The narrator notes of the driver: "A certain greasiness ... He was evidently given to working or lounging around the fish docks, and carried with him much of their characteristic smell." (2002: 279). Similarly, upon reaching the port town, the narrator details the "dirty, simian visage children" and summarises by claiming that "every one [of Innsmouth's residents] had certain peculiarities of face and motions" (2002: 282).

The character of Zadok Allen, "a tall, lean, tattered form" (2002: 293), forewarns the narrator of the dangers to come, though his stories are initially taken for the ravings of a drunkard. It is the vagabond Allen who informs the protagonist of what is really going on in Innsmouth. Once plied with alcohol, Allen tells of Obed Marsh and the townspeoples' decision to turn away from the Christian God in order to worship the Deep Ones and the human sacrifices that they have made to them over the years. He tells the narrator that these actions were driven by the failing economy of Innsmouth: "they was in bad shape because the fishin' was peterin' aout an' the mills wa'n't doin' none too well" (2002: 299) and Obed promised that the Deep Ones would "bring plenty o' fish an' quite a bit o' gold" (2002: 299). This decision on the part of the townsfolk does bear fruit, and Innsmouth manages to survive albeit in an altered form as the Deep Ones demand a process of interbreeding with the townsfolk. In its depiction of a failing township and its people's mistaken decision to enter into a financial relationship with a more materially solvent community (in this case the amphibious creatures from Devil Reef), "The Shadow Over Innsmouth" offers the reader a bizarre sort of colonisation narrative, one in which the coloniser enacts a more overtly, biologically horrific cost on the colonised. Indeed, the coda of the story, in which the narrator realises the "terror of my own ancestry" (2002: 332), that he is in fact a descendent of the Marshes (the great-great-grandson of Obed Marsh) highlights the complex financial and biological interconnections between coloniser and colonised. In the closing paragraphs of "The Shadow Over Innsmouth" Kristeva's notion that the abject challenges individual subjectivity, confronting us with "those

fragile states where man strays on the territories of the *animal*" (12) is manifested as the pull of the narrator's biological ancestry is too much for him and instead of resisting his ancestry he plans to return to "marvel-shadowed Innsmouth" and "swim out to that brooding reef in the sea and dive down through black abysses" (2002: 335), embracing the capitalist imperatives that have so altered his biological inheritance: "dwell amidst wonder and glory for ever" (2002: 335).

The effects of a capitalist system on the inhabitants of Innsmouth are substantial and, though there is perhaps a sense of ambiguity in the narrator's decision to acknowledge his ancestry and all that entails, the story as a whole seems to condemn the forces that lead to the townsfolk striking their pact with the Deep Ones as much as it critiques the residents' own immorality. Lovecraft's distaste for capitalism and its ideology is clear; he would later claim to scorn "the poisonous, cheapening vulgarity of the commercial mind – the readiness to haggle, the tendency to relate all ideas & impressions to material advantage, & the rat-like intensiveness associated with 'Business enterprise'" (italicised in original, qtd 2004: 60). This aversion reared its head in Lovecraft's strong dislike of mechanisation. Many critics, including S.T. Joshi, have noted the importance of Oswald Spengler's ideas in Lovecraft's depictions of societal deterioration. Lovecraft remarked in a letter that "nothing good can be said of that cancerous machine-culture" (qtd in Joshi 1996: 41) and he believed that the industrialisation of society was immensely dangerous because it was leading to a position in which "Baldly stated – in a highly mechanised nation there is no longer enough work to be done" (qtd in Joshi 2006: 86). Such a situation, in Lovecraft's view, would mean the former working-man would have nothing to do and might therefore become more primitive and savage as a result of his decreased sense of purpose. This belief feeds into many of Lovecraft's stories, which engage with the idea that one of the constituent factors in inaugurating a process of degeneration is the industrialisation of society.

"The Mound" (written by Lovecraft for Zealia Bishop) relates the story of an American Indian ethnologist who visits Binger, in the western part of Oklahoma, in order to try and find the truth behind the "many ghost tales" (Lovecraft & Bishop 1975: 137) with "an ultimate Indian source" (137) that surround the "artificial-looking mounds" (137) that pepper the landscape. More specifically, the narrator investigates the history of 'disappearances' surrounding a mound on the outskirts of the town. While exploring said mound, the protagonist uncovers a "bizarre and provocative cylinder" (155) covered in "abnormal and blasphemous forms" (155) which contains a sixteenth century manuscript by a Spaniard, Pánfilo de Zamacona. The manuscript, which forms the central narrative of the story, tells of an expedition into what would become Oklahoma and of Zamacona's decision to venture into a remote region in search of "rich cities and unknown worlds" (156). Charging Buffalo, his Native American guide, regales Zamacona with the purported history of the Old Ones, a race of extraterrestrial beings who live in a city made of gold under this part of the state. At one time these Old Ones "had traded with men everywhere" (158) but had since moved entirely underground in order to shut themselves off from the surface dwellers. It would appear that the Old Ones have developed several processes which enable them to live a lifestyle concerned primarily with "pleasure-seeking" (176). Charging Buffalo tells Zamacona that the Old Ones have fashioned a "half-human slave-class which also served to nourish the human and animal population" (159). Similarly, Charging Buffalo believes that the Old Ones have created a kind of everlasting workforce: "The Old Ones knew how to make a corpse into an automaton which would last almost indefinitely and perform any sort of work when directed by streams of thought" (159). Zamacona, intrigued by Charging Buffalo's wild stories, duly ventures into the mound and finds an expansive netherworld (K'n-yan) inhabited by beings that are seemingly far in advance of terrestrial humans. These beings have eliminated

old age and death and have mastered the ability to "regulate the balance between matter and abstract energy" (174). Significantly, while the inhabitants of this underworld seem to live in a state of contentment, as Zamacona explores further he finds that the particular practices adopted by the people have lead to a state of decadence, engendering a spiritual and cultural decline. Thus, while the Old Ones have largely eliminated the need for mechanisation; Zamacona learns that the process of moving through an "industrial" period "drained the masses of all their brains and stamina." (176)

The taint of mechanisation is such that that its effects are still felt throughout all aspects of the Old One's society:

> The dominance of machinery had at one time broken up the growth of normal aesthetics, introducing a lifelessly geometrical tradition fatal to sound expression. This had soon been outgrown, but had left its mark upon all pictorial and decorative attempts; so that except for conventionalised religious designs, there was little depth or feeling in any later work. (177)

However, the story undoubtedly seems to save its greatest condemnation for the affect that mechanisation has had on the working classes. This revulsion at the effects of mechanisation surfaces as Zamacona is shown around the agricultural plains that surround Tsath, one of the major cities in K'n-yan. It is here that he witnesses the slave like race of beings that appear analogous to "semi-conscious machines [whose] industrial efficiency was nearly perfect" (185) and feels "disgust toward certain of them whose motions were more mechanical than those of the rest." (186) Yet "The Mound" encourages the reader to feel an equal amount of repulsion towards the "decadent" (177) masters whose daily routine now alternates between frivolity and cruelty: "games, intoxication, torture of slaves, day-dreaming, gastronomic and emotional orgies, religious exercises, exotic experiments, artistic and philosophical discussions, and the like" (176-177). The message is clear, the Old Ones' entire development has been altered for the worse by mechanisation so that society has split into a Wellsian binary in which both rich and poor are changed for the worse; as Zamacona himself suggests of K'n-yan's inhabitants: "reacting with mixed apathy and hysteria against the standardised and time-tabled life of stultifying regularity which machinery had brought it during its middle period. Even the grotesque and repulsive customs and modes of thought and feeling can be traced to this source" (192)

It is significant that Lovecraft's preoccupation with the deleterious effects of mechanisation do not lead him to create a protagonist in the mould of those other pulp (hard boiled) heroes whose "battles with clients and cops over the right to run their investigations their way had a great deal of symbolic resonance for workers engaged in a losing battle over Taylorism and scientific management in the 1920s and 1930s." (Smith 2012: 148). If anything, Lovecraft proceeded to write stories in which humanity's (and therefore the individual's) insignificance were emphasised.

This is not to say that Lovecraft's writing does not acknowledge the contemporary anomie and alienation felt by many workers at the beginning of the twentieth century. Taylorism and Fordism, models of economic and technological expansion designed to enable the large scale manufacture of standardized products using purpose built machinery and unskilled labour, birthed a 'scientific approach' to production that meant that the average employee was now viewed as a fairly insignificant cog in a much larger system. In his influential text *Alienation and Freedom: the Factory Worker and His Industry* (1964) Robert Blauner writes of the "high degree of alienation" (166) such Fordist practices can engender in the individual, reflective of a system of organisation that places very little importance on the personal satisfaction of the worker as a human being. Indeed, it is interesting to note the parallels here with one

of Lovecraft's central philosophies, cosmicism. The sense that individual is an unknowing victim to forces larger than their own understanding permeates much of Lovecraft's (later period of) writing. The Old Ones might be seen as tacitly reflecting contemporary worker's feelings of alienation, a sense of no longer being in control of their own destinies. Moreover, scholarly research suggests that Lovecraft himself felt immensely aggrieved with having to write 'to order' for the Fordist conveyer belt of pulp magazines. Duly experiencing his own sense of alienation from his work, in the sense that many of the stories he wrote, he professed to dislike. However, this is not to suggest that Lovecraft wrote directly about such changes in working practices in his fiction. When coupled with the author's repeated rejection of a humanocentric pose: "Man's relations to man do not captivate my fancy" (qtd in Joshi 2001: 7), it seems more likely that Lovecraft would have engaged with the contemporary scientific management of the workplace and the estrangement these approaches begat in a rather more oblique manner than many of his fellow pulp writers; writers such as Fritz Leiber, whose short stories have been described as the work of "a social critic" (Goho 2014: 181) giving "a voice to the underclass" (Goho 2014: 183).

At The Mountains of Madness, originally intended for *Weird Tales* but rejected and published in competitor *Astounding Stories*, tells the story of an ill-fated Antarctic expedition that discovers first, the world's tallest mountain range, and then a series of startling facts about man's origins. Indeed, the opening of the short novel provides an explicit, albeit broad, interrogation of the scientific approach, with the narrator decrying the unwillingness of scientists to believe in his story: "I am forced into speech because men of science have refused to follow my advice without knowing why" (1999: 11). Later in the story, the narrator himself notes the irrationality of his desire to continue investigating the "monstrous chapter of pre-human life" (1999: 82): "There were those who will say Danforth and I were utterly mad not to flee for our lives" (1999: 110) Indeed, the story might be seen as reiterating that now somewhat hoary cliché of scientists disregarding their instincts and their humanity in their quest for discovery. Central to the horrific fate of the exploratory party is the reluctance of the scientists to be guided by their emotions even when it is made quite clear to the reader that this is an ill-judged choice on their part. Upon discovering the scattered remains of the Lake sub expedition, the remaining scientists decide to push on, the "ingrained scientific habit" (1999: 66) helping to still their nerves, the narrator notes: "above all my bewilderment and sense of menace there burned a dominant curiosity to fathom more" (1999: 66) actually leading to the doom of all but two of the original party.

The story is also enlightening in its documentation of Lovecraft's changing attitudes to politics and social organisation. Several critics have proposed that the "omnipresent mural carvings" (1999: 76) discovered by the scientific party, and the history they recount of the Old Ones and the rise and fall of their once great civilisation, indicate Lovecraft's own wish for the reformulation of U.S. society along significantly different, socialist lines; as Joshi suggests: "In many ways they represent a utopia toward which HPL hoped humanity could aspire" (2001: 11). These carvings and the fragmented fictional history they document are particularly instructive to my emphasis on Lovecraft's engagement with capitalism and issues of class. In the story we are told that the murals are spread across many of the interiors of the buildings that the narrator and Danforth explore. In their entirety they record that the Old Ones first passed through a "stage of mechanised life ... but had receded upon finding its effects emotionally unsatisfying" (1999: 84). Indeed their "simplicity of natural wants" had aided them immeasurably to "live on a high plane without ... artificial manufacture" (1999: 84). Through careful cultivation of biological life forms, the Old Ones had created a subservient slave race, the Shoggoths, "who performed the heavy work of the community" (1999: 1999: 85) allowing their masters to develop "the arts of sculpture and writing" (86) to a high level:

"The prevailing intellectual and aesthetic life was highly evolved, and produced a tenaciously enduring sets of customs and institutions" (1999: 87). This high level of culture was also linked to the organisation of the Old One's government, which was "evidently complex and probably socialistic" though significantly there was still "extensive commerce" (1999: 88). This ancient manifestation of business does not seem to have proven detrimental to the Old Ones, instead they are beset by attempted revolution from within, following the development amongst the Shoggoths of "a semistable brain whose separate and occasionally stubborn volition echoed the will of the Old Ones without always obeying it" (1999: 91). However, the Old Ones manage to quell this pre-Marxist rebellion and resubjugate their creations, though eventually they are all but wiped out by invasion, geological, and climatological changes that see them pushed into living undersea.

It is interesting that we find out that the Old Ones often adopted a scientific approach to their own lives, one that seems to foreshadow the Taylorist and Fordist systems of the period Lovecraft was writing in: "[they] had gone about it scientifically – quarrying insoluble rocks from the heart h of the honeycombed mountains, and employing expert workers from the nearest submarine city to perform the construction according to the best methods" (1999: 100). Yet perhaps the story's most significant, though oblique comment on contemporary trends, its "monstrous, nefandous analogy" (1999: 32), is the hideous Shoggothian creature that the narrator and Danforth encounter at the end of their exploration. This grotesque entity, which the story suggests is an evolved form of the shoggoths that the Old Ones created, most resembles "a vast onrushing subway train" 1999: (1999: 132), itself perhaps a curiously exemplary image of early twentieth century capitalist innovation and expansion. Furthermore, the implication that this "indescribable thing" (1999: 133), a descendent of the "demoniac Shoggoths" (1999: 133), is all that is left of the once great civilisation of the Old Ones seems to embody Lovecraft's own views of the degenerating effects race and class based revolt might have on the culture of U.S. society that we have already examined in this chapter.

In the last few years of his life, Lovecraft seemed to perform an about face and his political views and opinions towards the poor changed quite radically. In a letter written in the midst of the Great Depression to Robert E Howard in 1933, Lovecraft expressed some compassion for those set to suffer from a capitalist system of free enterprise:

> "The present year, just before the beginning of the new administration's remedial programme, marks the low point of the workman's fortunes in America. The tendencies crushing him under a "free" or laissez-faire economic system were steadily growing, yet the "free" system of Hoover individualism was unchecked. Now, under the "slavery" of a governmentally regulated economy, there will be a steady but slow trend toward relief." (Lovecraft SL 2.290)

However, even here Lovecraft's intense fear of mob-rule resurfaces. In his essay, "Some Repetitions on the Times", written just before the election of Franklin D Roosevelt, Lovecraft cries out for social reform, asking the government and those with power to "think in terms of the entire population rather than of the larger business interests" (qtd in Joshi 2006: 92). Interestingly, Lovecraft's desire for such wide-scale restructuring is still not founded, primarily, on a humanist sense of compassion for his fellow man but rather the terror that without such large scale readjustment, those in power will inescapably "starve and goad the people into an uprising," which will lead to "bolshevism. . . a thing worth going to any length to escape" (qtd in Joshi 2006: 89–90). Indeed, the essay is underpinned with Lovecraft's fear of the "savage strife" (qtd in Joshi 2006: 91) that he believes was a central part of the Russian revolution. While Lovecraft

concedes that the Bolsheviks "have made it possible for everyone to live" he argues that they "have deprived life of all that makes it worth living" (qtd in Joshi 2006: 90). What Lovecraft means here is, of course, primarily culture and art, which he believes the utilitarian practices of the communist movement replaced with "political and economic propaganda" (qtd in Joshi 2006: 90). There is always in Lovecraft's non-fiction writing a sense that Anglo-Saxon culture and tradition should be retained at all costs; as he suggests in a widely quoted letter: "Any indignation I may feel in the whole matter is not for the woes of the downtrodden, but for the threat of social unrest to the traditional institutions of the civilisation." (qtd in Joshi 1990: 217)

It is interesting to note that 1933 also saw the publication of a very different take on social unrest and revolution to that contained in Lovecraft's writing; Guy Endore's quasi-historical novel *The Werewolf of Paris* (1933). Endore's political views were very different to Lovecraft, he was a leftist activist who had read Marx and publicly stated "I tend towards communism and the establishment of a classless society" (qtd in Grey Martin 2014: online). Endore's hugely successful *The Werewolf of Paris* is focused on the events of the Franco-Prussian War, depicting that conflict as "a destructive display of imperialist bravado that created the conditions of the [...1871 Paris...] Commune" (Grey Martin, 2014: online). The radically socialist Commune, which saw many of the working and lower middle classes elected to power following the defeat of Napoleon III's The French Second Empire, was proclaimed "the form at last discovered" (2014: 71) for the emancipation of the working classes by no less than Marx himself, stood as "the most worker-dominated government to appear in Europe thus far" (Priestland, 2009: 55). Endore, who was blacklisted during the 1950s because of his links to the communist party, fills his novel with overt depictions of the class based injustices meted out by those in power against the poor. The narrative begins with the rape of Josephine, "a young girl of about thirteen or fourteen, an orphan from her own village" (44) by the priest, Father Pitamont, in what can be seen as an indictment of the Church's hegemonic control over France's rural village communities. Aymar, the protagonist of the novel, initially has a "hatred of the Church and the aristocracy" (44) borne out of his readings of figures such as Karl Marx, and Louis Auguste Blanqui who "attacked the mysticism promulgated by the clergy, claiming that they did so only in order to maintain the lower classes the better in subjection to their masters" (82). Father Pitamont's actions transform Josephine from an innocent girl into a wanton woman, whose conduct is "c'est une devergondee!" (51), and who gives birth to Father Pitamond's child, Bertrand. In many ways Bertrand is a model child yet his eyebrows "are very full and join together across the nose" (74) and he howls uncontrollably preceding the death of family members. Unsurprisingly, Bertrand grows up to become a werewolf and, in spite of Aymar's attempts to control his ward's deviant behaviour, nevertheless escapes to commit a series of ever more violent murders. Eventually, Bertrand flees his village and goes to Paris, joining the National Guard out of necessity rather than desire; as the narrator notes sarcastically: "The workshops were empty, there was not a job to be had, but no man need worry with the National guard ready to take on anybody who was willing to sign his name" (173). It is during Bertrand's time in Paris that Endore most overtly criticises the repressive tendencies of those in power, depicting a city under siege where poverty and famine are rife: "Women and children wrapped in shawls against the cold streets, waiting in long queues to obtain their little rations of meat" (148). Indeed, one of the novel's targets is the monstrous behaviour of Paris' merchants and businessmen who seek to capitalise on the misfortune of the poor as the siege continues: "Everyone who was in a position to do so was hoarding food, hoping for greater profits, but partly scared into releasing their hoards upon the prospect of the siege ending

suddenly. There were indeed great quantities of food in Paris, but private profit was manipulating the market" (163). This leads to a situation in which "multitudes [are] starving, with babies dying like flies" (196). Furthermore, the situation for the poor does not improve when the siege is successful and an armistice is signed. Instead, the narrator suggests that class oppression and exploitation will continue irrespective of who is in power:

> The new government evinced itself as stupidly reactionary. The moratorium on debts which had saved the poor during the war was to be lifted. For now that the national enemy no longer threatened, it was time to put the poor back in the harness, and the momentary spell of making them think that French economic slavery was to be preferred to German economic slavery was no longer to be continued. (197)

In contrast to Lovecraft, it is clear that Endore's sympathies lie with those at the bottom of the socio-economic scale. He depicts the poor of Paris as victims of the rich, and extends this compassion even to the titular werewolf, whose monstrous behaviour is suggested, at one point, to be the creation of wider societal conditions: "a hint that the atmosphere of the times played a not inconsiderable share in these strange events" (195). Indeed, while it was an almost pathological fear of a Bolshevik-style revolution in the U.S. that lead Lovecraft to argue for the conditions of the poor to be improved, *The Werewolf of Paris* seems to argue that revolution was necessary even though it may have eventually failed to achieve its goals; like a "righteous man raising his axe to scotch a snake and gashing his shin instead" (198).

Endore's sympathies are once again evident in the novel's depiction of Bertrand's relationship with Sophie de Blumberg. It is in the besieged Paris that Bertrand falls in love with the wealthy heiress Sophie. Sophie is to be married to the boring but wealthy Barral de Montfort, a man whose "kiss was reminiscent of ... milk diluted with sweet warm water" (193), yet she quickly grows to prefer the lower class Bertrand, prizing his uninhibited, wild behaviour over the simpering platitudes of her more bourgeois suitor. Significantly, Sophie and Bertrand's first clandestine, romantic encounter is marked by an unleashing of violent passion, as Sophie gives in, willingly, to Bertrand's animalistic behaviour:

> "Hold me, hold me tighter still," she panted. And still she was on the point of dissolving and could not dissolve. In desperation she cried out "Hurt me! Bertrand, hurt me!" Then she felt his arms closing around her like a vise. And within this circle of pain she experienced a strange exultation, as if a bird within her had been released and was filling her ears with a wild singing. And it was as if all her body dissolved away" (191)

Putting aside the troubling gender politics, the implication here is clear; the poor possess a vitality that the wealthy lack. However, the novel suggests that this energy is not always put to good use. Bertrand struggles to contain his animal instincts, inflicting a kind of slow torture on Sophie as he feeds from her, and it is interesting that the final section of Endore's story depicts the socialist Commune at the point of collapse, as "The feel of approaching death roused the worst that hides in man" (259). The finale of the novel depicts the fall of the Commune in an ambivalent fashion. The narrator condemns the turn to unrestrained violence: "It was wrong to burn the treasure sof Paris, valuable libraries, irreplaceable archives. It was wrong not because these things have half the value that is placed on them, but because

the burning was the mere gesture of a beaten man taking a spiteful blow at his opponent's children ... this had no symbolic meaning, not any real value" (26). Yet he also seems to find it difficult to denounce those in the crowds whose "husbands had been killed, or [had] some other great loss had struck them" and "were anxious now to deal a blow, no matter how or where, but preferably against the rich, their permanent oppressors." (260). Instead, the narrator points out the excessiveness of the bourgeoisie's violence, noting "The whole Reign of Terror in fifteen months guillotined 2,596 aristos. The Versaillists executed 20,000 before their firing squads in one week" (263-4). Similarly, the reader might be surprised that once he is finally caught -accused of attacking a fellow member of the National Guard - Bertrand is not sentenced to death, rather the Commune's members show a degree of (perhaps misplaced) compassion and refuse to punish a man "suffering from an illness which leads him to go mad at times" (2470, sending him instead to La Santé mental hospital..

Though, upon reflection, the narrator describes the uniquely proletarian government of the Commune as "a mistake from which a new generation of revolutionaries was to learn a lot ... the Commune was never anything but the gnashing of teeth of men annoyed at their impotence and failure" (198), he implies that there was something of worth in what the movement tried to achieve. A more socialist or egalitarian reconfiguration of society is needed. In contrast the wealthy are criticised for their willingness to exploit those around them. The novel seems to argue that in times of great crisis, it is often those with material trappings who are the quickest to descend into beast-like behaviour. As Aymar surveys the fall of the Commune to the Versaillists he notes the viciousness of the bourgeoisie as power is returned to them:

> Now came the most terrible part of the journey. The march through the regal city of Versailles ... The city of the rich here demonstrated that it, too, could form mobs as mad as those of the poorest quarters of Paris. Not bare, dirty or calloused fists were shaken at the cohort, but neatly gloved hands, hands of demi-mondaines in lace gauntlets, and hands of bankers in yellow kidskin. And voices that spoke correct French howled; "No prisoners! Death, to the bandits!" ... And Aymar chuckled . "More Werewolves! ... The world is full of them..." (266 -7)

In the unpublished essay "A Layman Looks at the Government" Lovecraft's appreciation of socialism as a potentially viable way forward for the U.S becomes apparent: "a very likely and probably necessary way out of a very bad situation" (qtd in Joshi 2006: 98). Railing against the "constant objections of the bewildered capitalist element" (97) and the current financial model of "unsupervised private property and individual profits" (98), as Joshi has suggested, the text reads as a "scathing critique of capitalism, and of the capitalists that were waging a rearguard action to discredit FDR's New Deal" (2006: 111). Though Lovecraft's suggestions that he is personally uninterested in the amount of money people make, and sees almost no link between the levels of culture of an individual possesses and their material wealth appear slightly naive his proposal that "it does not matter what happens to property so long as individuals are guaranteed an ability to live dignifiedly and personally independently, with enough resources to continue the proper ...amenities and refinements of civilised life on a modest scale as we know it today" (qtd in Joshi 2006: 99) genuinely seems to evidence Lovecraft's shifting attitudes towards the poor and the issue of poverty in early twentieth century America. Moreover, Lovecraft's criticism of "bewildered reactionaries" who "consider the now passing economic order a *good* one" (99) as a fundamental error, and his admittance that "The sufferings of oppressed and impoverished classes have always been hushed up" (qtd in Joshi 2006: 99-100) go so far as to suggest that Lovecraft, by this point, had shrugged off his

conservatism and intense dislike of the masses in favour of a radicalism founded on compassionate, humane intervention. While Lovecraft stops short of apportioning personal blame to the wealthy plutocrats, who he sees instead as the "natural product of his age" he does proceed to "wish him a peaceful abdication ... for the sake of civilisation" (108) In place of these capitalist figures and their drive for individual wealth at the expense of others, Lovecraft sees "*the trained man of vision and cultivation without the profit motive*" (qtd in Joshi 2006: 102) assuming power. This intellectual and cultured dictatorship would oversee "the social control of resources" leading to "the competitive material struggle [being] subordinated as an interest" (qtd in Joshi 2006: 109) and a return to a set of more refined, aristocratic values.

At the end of his life Lovecraft came to espouse a version of democracy without universal suffrage, believing that economic wealth should be equally distributed to the many, but that political power (specifically the right to vote) should be restricted to the few. The writer's philosophy was born out of an Oligarchic way of thinking - "Laymen of slight education and low intelligence are wholly useless and potentially harmful as determiners of the national course" (qtd in Joshi 2006: 93) – he proposed that the socialism of the New Deal was the best way forward by democrats and republicans alike, because, Lovecraft believed, it was based on an amenable system of fascistic democracy. In the last of his political essays, "The Journal and The New Deal", Lovecraft confirms these views. He writes again of the failure of the old capitalist laissez faire system and the need "to regulate ... through the pressure of the whole social order" (qtd in Joshi 2006: 115) the distribution of labour and profits. Calling for a process of "adapting methods to conditions" (qtd in Joshi 2006: 117) Lovecraft indicates his confidence in Roosevelt's social reforms as an embodiment of his belief in the ostensibly contradictory concept of a libertarian planned economy: "It admits that laymen cannot cope directly with complex issues, and does not try to fool anybody in the matter. It leaves decision and action to intelligently selected commissions really capable of deciding and acting ... And yet, for all that, there is infinitely more genuine democracy ... in the New Deal than there ever was in the Old" (qtd in Joshi 2006: 117). This support for the New Deal is, in part, also born out of the anti-Marxist belief that Lovecraft has that the individual's relation to his work are not of primary importance in determining his happiness: "So long as his office work gains him a decently abundant and undisputedly free life, it matters little what that work is – what the ownership of the enterprise, and what and how distributed its profits" (qtd in Joshi 2006: 116). This disregarding of alienation strikes one as both naive and ironic on the part of a writer whose fiction has so frequently come to embody a sense of contemporary anomie and 'indifferentism'.

Significantly, Julia Kristeva suggested in a 1999 interview that: "the arts [are] precisely the means by which we purify ourselves" (1999: 17). In his attempts to purge himself of any apparent association with the uncultured and uneducated poor that might have been his core pulp audience, Lovecraft created a body of work that is brimming with contradictory elements, sometimes embodying the overwrought and melodramatic approach we might stereotypically associate with the medium, at other times subtle and developed in such a way that saw them rejected by successive pulp editors. Lovecraft's abject depiction of the poor in much of his fiction also seems to reflect his belief in those fears, exposed (and critiqued) in Faulkner's writing that miscegenation would lead to a form of interracial degeneracy. The often physical (in both senses of the term) proximity of poor whites and poor non-whites in both rural and deprived urban environments was more than Lovecraft could handle and his fiction is beset with unsympathetic depictions of monstrous destitution. Ironically, while Lovecraft's depictions of the poor are almost overwhelmingly negative; as we have seen they are the bearers of cultural deterioration again and again,

his stories, alongside those of other pulp authors such as Dashiel Hammett and Raymond Chandler, are now largely responsible for the re-evaluation and subsequent re-estimation of the distinctly working class medium of pulp writing as an art-form.

The importance of Lovecraft's concerns over the effects of poverty and the potential of the working classes to destabilise civilisation fiction should not be underestimated when considering his fiction. Given Lovecraft's status in the development of U.S. horror fiction it is crucial that the significance of his engagement with class be recognised; as Reinert has claimed: "In his own time, H.P. Lovecraft joined the likes of John Steinbeck in giving The Great Depression a continuingly resonant voice, though his tales conveyed neither humour nor succour but terror" (276). Furthermore, while horror may have found itself unable to get out of the literary ghetto of the pulps during this period it still found an audience which desired the genre's political commentary: "the lower and middle classes who felt wars and the Depression most gravely" (Colavito, 199). Lovecraft's immediate 'successors', writers such as Leiber, Robert Bloch and Ray Bradbury, all of who were published in the latter stages of *Weird Tales*' initial run, would build upon the often class-based concerns of much of Lovecraft's fiction. However, rather than continue to pathologize the poor, the writers that I look at in the next chapter, would be part of a sea-change in how horror depicted poverty, marrying social realism with the fantastic to evoke a sense of sympathy as often as revulsion.

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Chapter 3

Class and Horror Fiction at Mid-Century

In his pioneering work of genre criticism, *The Literature of Terror* (1996), David Punter makes a socio-political claim for the mode, suggesting that, "because of its historical or geographical distancing [...the Gothic...] does not appear to represent a 'real' world" yet it "may in fact be delivering that world in an inverted form, or representing those areas of the world, and of human consciousness, which are, for one reason or another, not available to the normal processes of representation" (Punter, 18). As we move through the twentieth century we witness a collapsing of these distancing techniques, so that the fiction under discussion in this chapter might be said to predominantly adopt a more 'realist' mode than that of writers such as Poe and Lovecraft. Yet, while it seems clear that figures such as Ray Bradbury, Fritz Leiber, Charles Beaumont, Robert Bloch, and Richard Matheson might collectively be thought of as representing a "midcentury shift of supernatural horror from the flamboyant cosmicism of Lovecraft and his colleagues to the mundane social realism that in some ways continues to dominate the field today" (Joshi, 2012: 561). The writing of these authors also signals an equally important shift towards an often more sympathetic depiction of the poor, reflecting what sociologist C.L.R. James saw in the mid-century U.S. as "an uncompromised hunger for what socialism alone could provide" (Brennan, 233). Where Lovecraft had frequently demonised the poor, writers like Bradbury, Leiber, Beaumont and Bloch offer their readers a decidedly more nuanced depiction of changing socio-economic factors and their effects on many within the U.S. Such writers often explore the pressures exerted on the individual by the "assumed humiliation of downward mobility" (Packard: 225) in an era when "the American dream [was] losing some of its lustre for a good many citizens who would [still] like to believe in it" (17)

Consequently, the writers discussed in this chapter tend to work contra to the prevailing trends in mainstream U.S. society, which in the 1940s and 1950s increasingly proclaimed the end of scarcity during a period of "great and unprecedented affluence" (Galbraith: 13), and, with it, the end of class; as Vance Packard notes in *The Status Seekers* (1959) "A number of influential voices have been advising us that whatever social classes we ever had are now withering away" (12). Such claims included the proposal that America was "the most truly classless society in history" and "one vast middle class" (qtd in Packard: 12). Yet, in line with Packard's more sceptical views, many of the writers in this chapter suggest "Such a notion unfortunately rests upon a notable lack of perception of the true situation that is developing. Class lines in several areas of our national life appear to be hardening" (12). We once again find an example of class being repressed in the mainstream; as Packard suggests: "Since class boundaries are contrary to the American Dream, Americans generally are uncomfortable when the subject of their existence arises" (13). One of the places that these anxieties find a voice is in the work of the authors here, who utilise genre tropes and motifs to mask what is still considered unspeakable in the culture in 'Realist' terms.

In Bradbury's short story "The Watchful Poker Chip of H. Matisse" the lower middle class character George Garvey, "a terrifyingly ordinary man" (59), becomes the cause celebre for a group of artists and intellectuals. Though these members of the avant-garde proclaim George to be "a colossal norm" and "American culture at absolute zero" they are nevertheless attracted to his homogeneity, his lack of cultural knowledge; as the narrator notes: "They came to study the dreadful vulgarity of this imaginary Mass Man they pretend to hate. But they're fascinated with the snake-pit" (65). Garvey is for those

artists and intellectuals around him emblematic of the formulaic mainstream of U.S. society: "a monstrous Ennui, produced by our materialistic society" (60). However, rather than encourage the reader to share tacitly in this elitist sniping, as a writer like Lovecraft might have done, Bradbury's story is decidedly more complex. Though Garvey eventually seems to undo himself by attempting to fulfil the expectations of those around him, it is the intelligentsia's attitudes towards Garvey that are critiqued, not Garvey's initial position as "symbolic of the crowd" (64-5). In contrast to Lovecraft's recurrent depiction of the poor as a "herd of crude and unimaginative illiterates" (qtd in Joshi, Kindle) the narrator of "The Watchful Poker Chip of H. Matisse" tells us that "Underneath, Garvey was a surprisingly brilliant man, but his unimaginative parents had crushed him in the Terribly Strange Bed of their environment. From there he had been thrown to a larger lemon-squeezer: his Office, his Factory, his Wife." (63) Furthermore, Garvey is shown to possess a keen intellect, wishing to understand the appeal that his new 'friends' have in him, Garvey reads widely on a range of pertinent philosophical subjects in order to engage with his visitors on a more meaningful level. Yet Garvey's attempts to further educate himself have the opposite effect and he is rejected by the other characters:

> They departed in short order when instead of being a delightfully mass-minded, keep-up-with-the-Joneses, machine-dominated chap leading a wishy-washy life of quiet desperation, Garvey enraged them with opinions on Does Existentialism Still Exist, or Is Kraft-Ebbing? They didn't want opinions on alchemy and symbolism given in a piccolo voice. (64)

It is clear that the horror in Bradbury's story comes from the callous objectification and exploitation of the lower-middle-class by those with more cultural capital, "who swarmed like vultures ... eyeing their prey" (60). Garvey and his wife are trapped in their mundane, stultifying lifestyles not only by their material conditions; "Both worked at anonymous jobs. And sometimes even they could not recall the name of the colorless company which used them like white paint on white paint" (60) but by intellectuals who desire a bathetic Other against which to define themselves as superior: "they only wanted Garvey's good old-fashioned plain white bread and churned country butter, to be chewed on later at a dim bar, exclaiming how priceless!"(64)

In its empathetic depiction of Garvey and its simultaneous critique of the elitist views of the middle class intelligentsia, "The Watchful Poker Chip of H. Matisse", like many of the stories in Bradbury's influential collection *The October Country* (1955), marks a significant shift in genre fiction. Bradbury's writing is often set in a poor rural milieu in which poor or destitute characters are drawn out of desperation to making decisions that lead to horrifying outcomes. The apotheosis of this pattern is "The Scythe". At the beginning of the story an impoverished farmer, Drew Erickson, and his family are travelling searching for work. We learn of the farmer's hardships; he has "A farmer's hands, with the farm blown out from under them by the dry, hungry wind that never got enough good loam to eat" (193) but also of his pride and self-respect: "Beggin'," he said harshly. "Ain't none of us ever begged before. Ain't none of us ever goin' to." (194) Taking a wrong turn the group happens across an empty house with a sizeable wheat field next to it. Upon entering the house in order to ask for food to feed his starving children, Erickson discovers the dead body of the house's previous owner, a scythe, and a note that bequeaths the house and field "to the man who is to come. Whatever his name or origin shall be, it will not matter. The farm is his, and the wheat; the scythe, and the task ordained thereto" (196). While initially hesitant over the meaning of the note – Erickson's wife proclaims ""It's too good to be true. There must be some trick to it" (196) – in truth the family cannot afford to pass up the offer

(given their present situation) and so they decide to stay. At first, it seems that the family's luck has indeed changed and Erickson is glad that "We'll have work to do, stuff to eat, somethin' over our heads to keep rain off" (196), however, things quickly take a turn for the worse when the wheat Erickson cuts starts rots immediately and next morning has magically regrown. Erickson continues working but breaks down suffering an episode in which he believes the wheat is crying out in pain, that there are "sad voices, out there. In the wheat" (201). The symbolism is clear; Erickson has become a version of the biblical grim reaper, wielding his scythe to cut down those who are due to die. Wanting to leave this horrifying situation behind, Erickson is faced with the dilemma of departing a house stocked with copious amounts of food and which provides shelter for his wife and children; as his spouse asserts: "We're stayin' here, where we're sure of eatin' and sleepin' and livin' decent and livin' long. I'm not starvin' my children down again, ever!" (202-3) Resigned, as a result of his desperate conditions, to his macabre situation, Erickson continues at his work until eventually he realises that his scything is due to take the lives of his wife and children. Refusing to kill those he knows and loves, Erickson refrains from wielding the scythe only to witness a fire that consumes the house leaving his family in a seemingly comatose state, neither dead nor truly alive. It would seem that you cannot cheat death and Erickson is forced into cutting down the strands of wheat that represent his family. The job having taken everything from him, the story ends with Erickson still 'harvesting' his wheat field and an image that seems to embody the universal, and horrific, toil of the 1930's agrarian worker's seemingly never-ending struggle as: "the one who works insanely, wildly, without ever stopping, night and day … on and on and on…" (210).

Joshi proposes that Bradbury's *The October Country*, alongside the work of his contemporaries such as Matheson and Beaumont, "fostered a modernisation of the supernatural by appeal to … the mundanities of contemporary life in America, with the result that much of their work features a social criticism of the increasing blandness and conformism of their time" (2012: 561). This social criticism is evident in stories like "The Watchful Poker Chip of H. Matisse" wherein the reader is encouraged to empathise with the lower-middle-class Garvey and to see his increasingly outlandish attempts to create "a wondrous facade" to hide the "the ancient boor" (Bradbury, 1996: 68) he comes to see himself as, as the unwarranted effect of his encounters with the grotesque Alexander Pape and his clique. Instead of depicting the lower middle class Garvey as abject and horrifying because of it as Lovecraft might have done, Bradbury presents Garvey's transformation into the pretentious as monstrous. "The Watchful Poker Chip of H. Matisse" points the way to a more complex and multilayered engagement with poverty and the poor that typifies post-Lovecraftian genre writing. In his *Monsters of the Market* (2011) McNally notes Marx's indebtedness to Gothic tropes and motifs, proposing that "Pillaging popular and literary imagination, from vampire-tales to Goethe's Faust, he cast capitalism as both a modern horror-story and a mystery tale, each inexplicable outside of the language of monstrosity" (13). Duly, in their turn to a more sympathetic depiction of the poor the mid-century writers under discussion in this chapter embody a Marxian stance in which capitalism, rather than those at the bottom of its socio-economic hierarchies, becomes a force with "monstrous objective power" (1973, 831).

This is not to say that any of these writers were outspoken Marxists. Instead, their increased class consciousness may have partly been the result of more practical factors such as the mid-century death of the pulps as a viable avenue for publication and the subsequent need to engage with supposedly more 'upmarket' and less genre savvy readerships. By the late 1940s and early 1950s many of the pulp

magazines had closed down and those that remained paid less and less to the writers whose work they published. This once relatively stable market had all but disappeared, and with it the major outlet for the more outlandish writing of authors in the mould of Lovecraft, Robert E. Howard and Clark Ashton Smith. Noticeably, Bradbury was the only genre writer of this period to have substantial success in getting his work into the 'slick magazines' and this was probably a result of his submitting stories under a pseudonym and his ability to successfully disguise genre fiction as something ostensibly literary. Instead, horror writers had to find alternative ways to reach their readers, often adapting to the changing conditions of the market. During the middle years of the twentieth century the pulps were replaced with a range of new popular forms including comic books, digest-sized science fiction magazines, and the emerging cheap paperback novel. Indeed, as any historian of the popular might have expected; just as the pulps were themselves castigated for their lowbrow appeal, so these 'new' popular formats were initially spoken of in a derogatory, and reductive, fashion; as "little more than second-rate trash. Literary flotsam. Schlock turned out to appease a gluttonous mass appetite for sex and sensationalism" (qtd in Davis 1984: xi). Yet such 'new' formats proved immensely successful, at least in commercial terms, and writers had to adapt to their requirements, or face losing their readerships. Bradbury, in a move that was emblematic of the problems facing horror writers, perhaps demonstrated a considered degree of commercial acumen in choosing to downplay the pulp roots of his first short story collection *Dark Carnival* (1947), minimizing "the copyright page references to the pulp origins of these tales ... [and] ... any references to the stereotype of low-carnival entertainment that broader market readers and critics always associated with *Weird Tales*" (Eller 2013: 136).

Increased levels of reflexivity with regards to class, and the position of genre fiction in the marketplace, are evident in Bradbury's "The Dwarf". The story, which tells the tale of a dwarf, Mr Bigelow, who visits a hall of mirrors in order to see himself reflected as 'normal' size, and the owner, Ralph Banghart, who plays an evil prank on him in an attempt to impress a woman, is fairly obviously symbolic in its characterisation and themes. Joshi has suggested that "the dwarf of the title is obviously a stand in for Bradbury himself, as he writes pulp detective stories ..." (kindle) and that "a more transparent symbol could scarcely be sought for Bradbury's own insecurity" (kindle) However, this symbolism does not detract from the evocative descriptions of the down at heel characters and setting. Indeed, if anything, it actually aids the allegory. While Bigelow is initially presented as a physically repulsive character, "a dark-eyed, dark-haired, ugly man who has been locked in a winepress, squeezed and wadded down and down, fold on fold, agony on agony, until a bleached, outraged mess is left" (4), we quickly come to empathise with his plight. Bigelow must put himself through this humiliation night after night because "he ain't got enough to buy a mirror like those. He might be savin' up, but where in hell in the world today can a dwarf work? Dime a dozen, drug on the market, outside of circuses." (6-7) We learn that the Bigelow's poor financial situation is down to his occupation as a writer, and furthermore a lack of confidence in his own ability that sees him write "just enough pulp detective stories to live" rather than getting rich "writin' for the big magazines" (8). As the female character in the story, Aimee, grows to empathise with, and even admire Bigelow, so the reader too is encouraged to feel sympathetic towards his predicament. Though the callous Banghart is bewildered by Bigelow's inability to get rich given the apparent quality of his writing, Aimee understands how the situation is not that simple. It is Aimee that makes a direct link between Bigelow's dire personal situation and his economic conditions. She suggests that the dwarf is suffering from a kind of writer's block born directly from his impoverishment: "Maybe because ideas come slow because he's down in the dumps. Who wouldn't be? So small that way? I bet it's hard to think of anything being so small and living in a one-

room cheap apartment" (8). Returning to the symbolism that Joshi sees as so important, this explanation works on two levels. In one sense the dwarf is indeed physically diminutive; however Aimee's words here also imply that Bigelow has been brought spiritually low by his relative poverty, that there is something tangible about the effects of poverty on artistic freedom of expression. Indeed, the fact that it is possible to read the prank that forms the climax of the story as hinging on the incapability of Bigelow completing an economic transaction; the character's inability to buy an enlarging mirror for use in his own accommodation means he has to keep coming to the hall of mirrors and is at the mercy of Banghart, suggests that the message of "The Dwarf" is that we are doomed by our material conditions despite our personal hopes and dreams; as Aimee notes of Bigelow's predicament: "Life fixed him so he's good for nothing but carny shows, yet there he is on the land." (10)

The story's fairground setting is one instance of Bradbury's preoccupation with carnivals - he would return to this setting numerous times in his writing (indeed, many of the stories in *The October Country* originate from an earlier Arkham House collection entitled *The Dark Carnival* (1947). Yet, Bradbury's carnival - though it does share some elements in common - is not imbued with the liberatory force of Russian formalist Mikhail Bakhtin's writing. Rather, as with "The Dwarf" Bradbury envisages the carnival as a pernicious entity, a force that both disgusts and attracts; Bradbury has spoken of his "old love and fright having to do with circuses and carnivals" (2013: 17). It tricks those in need, those who are on the bottom rungs of the social ladder by seemingly offering them a freedom from the societal constraints that appear to work to oppress them; a space in which to give in to their base desires and carnality, yet in actuality it works to trap them into something much worse than economic impoverishment. Bradbury's *Something Wicked This Way Comes* (1962) brings together the author's unique treatment of the 'dark' carnival as a horrifying, entrapping space, working several themes into a cohesive and terrifying whole that Stephen King has called "the fantasy genre's version of Dreiser" and "Bradbury's best work" (2002: 364).

The novel tells the story of two boys, Will Halloway and Jim Nightshade. At the beginning of the novel we join Will and Jim as Cooger and Dark's Pandemonium Shadow Show arrives in their middle-American hometown. Though the class status of the two boys is not made overt the impression that we are given is that neither of them come from particularly wealthy backgrounds, indeed, like much of the autobiographical texture of the novel, the boys seem to share the "similarly impoverished roots" (Eller 2013: 5) of Bradbury himself. Will and Jim's play time does not involve the purchasing of goods, they read their favourite books at the library where Will's father is employed; after having "floundered in lots of places" (173), as a lowly janitor, and Jim comes from a broken home after his abusive father left him and his mother to fend for themselves. Furthermore, the place they live, Greenwood, is an average Midwestern town, with a barbers, a library and a school, however it is far from being an affluent, cosmopolitan space evident in the depiction of the carnival's arrival as something special, able to freeze the townspeople with anticipation "mouth open, listening" (20).

Though *Something Wicked This Way Comes* is most frequently discussed as a rite of passage text; critics point to how it can be read as being about the loss of innocence in passing from youth to adulthood, the way that this transition is depicted is interesting if considered in terms of class. For, in one sense, the book's allegory might be read as a kind of dark fable concerning the deceitful nature of capitalism, which promises to provide spiritual and emotional fulfilment if we engage in the required material transactions, but which ultimately seeks only to create opportunities for further transactions. It is

noticeable at the start of the novel how far outside of the capitalist system Will and Jim are. They appear to exist in a kind of youthful, pre-capitalist Eden, in which "It was all so good" (12). Into this space, however, comes the seller of lightning rods, referred to thereafter as "the salesman" (5), who acts as a kind of advance guard for the carnival and asks the boys if they have any money to buy his products to which they reply in the negative: "the boys shook their heads" (5). Unperturbed, he proceeds to give the boys a lightning rod before moving on his way. This piques their interest in the supposed upcoming storm as well as the carnival it seems to presage. The opening section of the novel then details the varied ways in which the carnival drums up interest in its wares. Mr Crosetti, the barber, is hypnotised by the smell of cotton candy wafting over the town. Next, we witness Jim's father become entranced with the posters put up all over town: "Charles Halloway, not knowing why, crossed the street to watch the man pasting up one of the posters ... Halloway stared" (23). Then, the boys come across a poster that has blown down which advertises the attractions at the coming fair in a suitably hyperbolic fashion. Will, in particular, is excited by the prospect of acts such as "MR ELECTRICO!" and "THE SKELETON!" (28-29) and becomes spellbound by the thought of the carnival arriving: "Will thought of the smells and sounds flowing on the river of wind from beyond the darkening houses" (30).

The carnival is attractive to those who feel need ; as Will's father notes: "Need, want, desire, we burn those in our fluids, oxidize those in our souls, which jet streams out lips, nostrils, eyes, ears, broadcasts from antennae-fingers, long or short-wave, God only knows, but the freak-masters perceive itches and come crab-clustering to Scratch." (181-2). Though suggesting that they offer "Bargains galore!" (190) the carnival actually seeks to "buy souls" (181) from those who are desperate. At the centre of the carnival is a magical carousel which by "shrieking, plunging, going roundabout-back!" (69) can reverse the ageing process and make those who ride it younger. Miss Foley, one of the boy's teachers is the first to suffer at the carousel's hands. A lonely woman, she longs again to be young but discovers too late the truism "you can't get something for nothing" (178) when she finds she is isolated as a child-version of herself and has to join the other carnival workers in order to survive.

At the climax of the novel, and pursued by the carnival workers, Will's father discovers that the carnival has existed for many hundreds, if not thousands, of years and that it has fed off the base desires that human beings feel when they give in to their Dionysian impulses: "For being good *is* a fearful occupation; men strain at it and sometimes break in two. I've known a few. You work twice as hard to be a farmer as to be his hog" (121). That is to say that as long as there are those who feel that they can buy shortcuts to happiness then the carnival will continue. Consequently, in a allegorical move, the novel suggests that in order to combat the carnival, human beings must transcend the material and reach a state of self-contentment; as Jim's father does before he defeats Mr Dark "he accepted everything at last ... Jim, Will, and above all himself and all of life" (233). *Something Wicked This Way Comes* thus reaches a peculiarly conservative conclusion; rather than seek the radical liberation of the carnival, Will and Jim should keep their heads down, work hard, and do their best to avoid temptation of any sort, lest they finds themselves part of the "grand march Nowhere, join ... [ing] the fools who wanted everything! Idiot thing to want: everything!" (253) Bradbury has claimed that "I love the book best of all the things I have ever written" (qtd in King 2002: 368) and it is not difficult to see why. It embodies a sense of wistful nostalgia for childhood while also interrogating the construction of that self-same childhood, finally offering the reader a stark reminder of the physic processes of becoming an adult. Childhood is tied to a state of innocence here, which is itself strongly associated with Christian

virtues such as sex only within marriage, family, friendship and a strong Protestant work ethic. Ultimately, the novel can be read as advocating the message that a somewhat passive, un-ambitious approach to life garners the greatest (spiritual) rewards.

Though Bradbury remained a prolific short story writer for much of his life he is perhaps best known to the general public for his longer works - novels such as *Something Wicked This Way Comes* and *Fahrenheit 451* (1953), a position which exemplifies the mid-century shift from the pulp magazine as the primary purveyor of horror to the emergence of the cheap paperback or two bit novel. Though paperback novels had been around since the 1930s when advances in the printing process designed initially to advantage magazines (such as the advent of faster rotary presses and quicker drying glue) had enabled the production of cheap books on a mass scale, it was not until the post-war period that conditions really allowed for the paperback format to take off. However, as Christine Berberich points out, while "printing presses could now manufacture paperback books more easily and more rapidly ... the publishing process still cost money – so the requirement for paperback publications was high sales" (2015: 34), often meaning hundreds of thousands. One way of achieving these increased sales was to target previously untapped markets beyond traditional booksellers such as "newsagents, supermarkets ... petrol stations [...and...] railway termini" (Berberich 2015: 34). Paperbacks therefore had to appeal to the most readers possible, but also distinguish themselves in the public's perception from the lowbrow competition. The positioning the paperback as a culturally edifying object then became of paramount importance; as a 1939 press release for the pioneering paperback company Pocket Books proclaimed: "It has also been assumed that cheap books – for the 25 cent market – must be of a low common denominator – the sort that will compete with the "pulp" and "trash" market and magazines of vast circulation. I venture to question those traditional beliefs" (qtd in Davis 1984: 39). Horror, frequently seen as one of the most lowbrow (and disreputable) of genres, faced particular problems appealing to the mainstream or casual reader who was wary of the paperback form. Though there were exceptions to the 'no-horror' rule, these examples tended to come in the form of recognised Gothic classics such as Pocketbooks' 1939 reissue of *Wuthering Heights* and American News Company's *The Haunted Hotel and 25 Other Ghost Stories* (1941); which was populated by the late nineteenth and early twentieth century work of Wilkie Collins, Poe and Guy de Maupassant. Conversely, more contemporary fare, such as *The Werewolf of Paris* (1933), initially provoked complaints and was duly removed from circulation by Pocketbooks in an attempt to avoid controversy.

One possible way forward, as we have seen with Bradbury's work, was to blend genres to the point that the reader felt assured they were not reading something too unsavoury. Though Bradbury himself took "a negative view of the intellectual authors who were intent on making strong distinctions between serious and popular literature" (Eller 2013: 2), and strongly disliked the idea of writing to order for particular publications: what he called 'slanting' "to the genre or slick markets" (Eller 2013: 1), much of his work does mix elements of horror with other genres to commercial effect.

One writer who could not be accused of 'slanting' was Fritz Leiber. While much of Leiber's work "falls outside the domain of supernatural horror" (Joshi 2012: 548) the writing that might be considered horror manages to successfully update often tired genre tropes for an early twentieth century reader. This skill has seen the writer given the accolade of originating "the modern urban Gothic" (Goho 2014: 181) and as influencing a "long line of writers from Bradbury to Ramsey Campbell to Clive Barker" (Joshi 2012: 550). Indeed, Leiber's greatest achievement might be considered his ability to tease out the contemporary resonances in well-known Gothic archetypes - such as the ghost, the vampire, and

the witch - renewing them for a mid-twentieth-century readership. Leiber's first collection of short stories, published by Arkham House, *Night's Black Agents* (1950) contains much of his best work in this area. Amongst the tale in this pioneering volume is "Smoke Ghost", perhaps Leiber's best known story. Often considered "the prototype for the urban horror story" (Joshi 2012: 548), "Smoke Ghost" is significant for the way in which it utilises a concept of the urban and industrialised poor to create a very contemporary type of horror. The story follows Catesby Wran, as he rides to work on Chicago's elevated train system each day. Wran, a lonely, and emotionally isolated individual, thinks he sees a spectre on Chicago's "drab city roofs" (2011: 8) but this ghost is very different from the traditional "thing in white" (2011: 5) found in gothic tales. Instead, he tells us that this is "a ghost from the world today, with the soot of the factories on its face and the pounding of machinery in its soul. The kind that would haunt coal yards and slip around at night through deserted office buildings" (2011: 5). Born out of the "melancholy little world of tar-paper, tarred gravel, and smoky brick" (2011: 8), this spectre is depicted as the embodiment of the malign forces that exert control over the working class individual's life during the early part of the twentieth century: "the jangled century of hate and heavy industry and total wars" (2011: 5). Much as more traditional ghosts were often 'born' out of some act of injustice committed against them, so the "Smoke Ghost" seems to embody the nascent coalescing of a sense of Marxist class-consciousness: "the hungry anxiety of the unemployed, the neurotic restlessness of a person without purpose, the jerky tension of the high-pressure metropolitan worker, the sullen resentment of the striker, the callous viciousness of the strike-breaker, the aggressive whine of the panhandler, the inhibited terror of the bomb victim" (2011: 5-6). Leiber's use of Horror to provide social criticism is obvious here. We learn that Catesby was diagnosed as a "sensory prodigy" (2011: 11) as a child. His enhanced perception enables him to see things before normal people can, and what he sees during the story is that "It's a rotten world ... It's time the ghosts, or whatever you call them, took over and began a rule of fear. They'd be no worse than men" (2011: 6). "Smoke Ghost" might also be seen as re-energising one of the political functions of the Gothic. In his survey of the genre James Goho suggests that one of the primary functions of the eighteenth century instance of the Gothic was to expose "the decadent social edifice for what it really was – violent in enforcing a rigid social ... order" (Goho 2014: 182). In a story such as "Smoke Ghost" we can see how Leiber manages to update this purpose, revealing the oppressive nature of contemporary society and the effects it has on those who have to live on the bottom of the socio-economic ladder. At the end of the tale, Catesby saves himself from the "the brute" (2011: 18) by relinquishing control to it: "I will praise, I will sacrifice. In smoke and soot and flame I will worship you forever" (2011: 18). Yet this ending is only temporary, and much as Goho suggests a Marxist return of the repressed inherent to early instances of the genre: "in a distorted manner [the Gothic] gives a voice to the underclass, releasing taboos and speaking out on societal ills, dislocations and disparities" (2014: 183), so Leiber seems to resist any sense of closure. Catesby contemplates that with the titular entity "mankind had once again spawned a ghost" (2011: 18) that cannot be destroyed in an easy fashion.

With stories such as "Smoke Ghost" we return, once again, to the motif of the city or urban space as horribly sentient, exerting a terrifying toll on the weakest members of society, who become unwitting victims of larger forces beyond their control. In "The Inheritance" the unnamed central narrator thinks that his luck might be about to change when he inherits his uncle's rented apartment and belongings. Prior to this windfall the narrator was bankrupt and on the verge of homelessness: "I was broke ... after hitch-hiking all the way to the city, I'd been disappointed to hear that there was no real money involved ... Still, I was thankful I had a place to sleep" (Leiber 1977: 44). Therefore, the narrator accepts his

inheritance with relief, even though his uncle's apartment seems to be in a rundown part of town: "I ... looked down three stories at the dirty street" (1977: 43) and makes the narrator feel as though he is "inheriting his [uncle's] loneliness" (1977: 45). While the narrator seems aware that "People can inherit some pretty queer things" (1977: 43), he is unprepared for the discovery that his police lieutenant uncle was actually responsible for 8 horrific murders in the "decrepit" (1977: 55) part of town. The story reads as a Naturalist piece of horror writing, with the narrator being trapped into recreating his uncle's murderous tendencies in spite of his dawning realisation that his relative was not who he seemed to be. In particular, the narrator's financial situation means that he is largely powerless to escape his fate; as he suggests at one point "But where else could I go with forty-seven cents and my lack of gumption ... I would have to live in this room for some time."(1977: 48)

Indeed, in many ways, "The Inheritance" epitomises the effects that the Depression had on this particular group of mid-century genre writers, functioning as a kind of contemporary evidencing of the earlier Naturalist belief in "human life as subject to larger forces than any within the consciousness" (Lloyd-Smith 2004: 111). Indeed, much as Naturalist writers often attempted to reflect this belief by "reduc[ing] their characters to pawns of great forces, clinging to the illusion of self-determination while acting under influences they can barley understand" (Lloyd-Smith 2004: 111), so the writers under discussion in this chapter repeatedly write characters that are trapped into horrific situations and modes of behaviour with no chance of escaping. The Great Depression then becomes the most powerful way of conveying this fatalistic sentiment for Bradbury, Bloch and Leiber. It is perhaps not surprising that these three writers should use the Depression in this manner given the effects of the economic downturn lasted throughout much of the 1930's and 1940's, years which might be considered formative for these specific writers. Each writer lived through the Depression and might be considered to have acquired a subsequent loss of faith in the rich and powerful. Bradbury had witnessed the era of 'Bread Lines' and mass unemployment, developing both "a dislike for the idle rich and ... captains of industry" (Eller 2013: 33) and, one would imagine, a subsequent proclivity towards the unwarranted suffering of poor; as Eller suggests "[Bradbury] held an instinctive love of equality" (2013: 233). Similarly, Bloch experienced the degradations of the Depression first hand; as Lester Del Rey notes "his early teens were spent during the Great Depression ... Financial disasters plagued his family and forced them to move away from all the friends he had made ... he had to remain at home to protect a younger sister while his mother worked to support the family" (1977: xi). Leiber, though not threatened with poverty in the same way as other writers, Benjamin Szumskyj suggests that Leiber's worldview was influenced by the poverty he saw others suffering from: "at a time of Depression ... Leiber saw men who had faith and hope, not money (anti-materialism) as being the strongest" (2007: 180). Consequently, this group of authors explore poverty and class in a complex, multifaceted and often distinctly self-conscious manner. Though all three of these authors arguably shared Lovecraft's marginal status, both financially and culturally, for much of their working lives, they frequently embrace this marginality, utilising yet subverting previously employed tropes and motifs to aid their writing in its deconstruction of long held national myths of egalitarianism and social mobility. Consequently, we find a much more sympathetic depiction of those who bore the brunt of the Depression's worst excesses in their writing, with the sense of a more realist horror than Lovecraft ever achieved resting on a conscious shifting from demonising the poor themselves to the society that has effectively abandoned them; as the narrator of "The Inheritance" notes at the beginning of the story: "They say there's no law against being a failure, but there is, as I've found out. After a childhood in easy circumstances, things got harder and harder. The Depression. Family dying. Friends going off.

Jobs uncertain and difficult to find. Delays and uncomfortableness about government assistance" (Leiber 1977: 44).

While "The Girl With the Hungry Eyes" can be read as another instance of the city as predator, with the eponymous billboard advertisement "a vampire-like being ... which sucks away [...people's...] lives" (Goho 2014: 193) it also serves as a critique of the destructive effects popular culture and advertising have on stimulating, yet ultimately denying, our (sexual) desires; as the narrator suggests: "there's something a little perverted about trying to capitalize on sex that way" (2011: 19). The narrator of the story occupies an interesting position, separate to "the mob slavering up at [the Girl]" (2011: 19), he is nevertheless, both partly responsible for, and a victim of, the titular character. After a brief introductory preamble, the story charts the short period of time when the narrator was the titular Girl's personal photographer.

In a similar fashion to "The Inheritance", a sense of economic desperation runs throughout "The Girl With the Hungry Eyes". It is financial desperation that initiates the narrator's meeting the Girl. He tells us that "Business was lousy" (2011: 21) and that looking for a model to fulfil a potential contract with a girdle company he encounters a girl who walks into his office out of nowhere. Though not impressed with her "underfed look" (22) and the "cheap dress" (22) she is wearing, the narrator agrees to take some photos of her on the proviso that "If somebody should ever want to use a photo of you, which is about one chance in two million, I'll pay you regular rates for your first time. Not otherwise." (2011: 22). Not expecting much, the narrator is all the more amazed when all of his clients request the Girl model for them. The distinction seems to be that they have not met her "in the flesh" (2011: 24) but rather only as a commoditised image that they have been programmed to desire: "modern advertising gets everybody's mind ... wanting the same things" (2011: 27). This notion of a manufactured sense of lack, which the Girl is seemingly able to fulfil, relies then on the creation of a masochistic impulse in the individual. Indeed, the Girl's appeal is directly linked to a sense of her being poor, in need, and therefore controllable by the viewer; as the narrator comments upon first meeting her, that she has "the hungriest eyes in the world" (2011: 21). However, the sting in the tale is the reveal of the sado-masochistic rather than masochistic nature of this 'relationship'. Though the apparently subservient image of the Girl encourages us to see ourselves in a position of empowerment, feeling that we have control over this individual given her gender and class, the reverse is actually true as we become willing dupes to that feeling of empowerment; as the narrator explains of the Girl's abject 'allure': "she's the smile that tricks you into throwing away your money and your life. She's the eyes that lead you on and on, and then show you death. She's the creature you give everything for and never really get. She's the being that takes everything you've got and gives nothing in return" (31).

Perhaps the apogee of the city as a monstrous, omnipresent force in Leiber's early writing is "The Hound", Leiber here reworks the werewolf motif, reconfiguring the city as an almost tangible, physical force that seems to be hunting its prey, David Lashley . Goho notes "In this story, it is the city itself that is the horror" (2014: 185), and while Lashley is ultimately saved from the hound of the title, the story's depiction of the city as a place in which "every bolt and stone seemed subtly infected, whose every noise carried shuddering overtones" (Leiber 1977: 94) is enough to convey a sense of the oppression that Lashley feels in the urban environment: ""nothing whatever in the city promised him refuge" (1977: 100). Here again, Leiber utilises the Naturalist device of the unwitting victim who is subject to forces beyond his ken. Lashley is a member of "the working class" (1977: 90) and is effectively trapped in the city because of his material circumstances, he considers himself "a not-very-competent young

man tied down to the task of supporting parents whose little reserve of money had long ago dribbled away" (1977: 94-95), hinting at a reading of the titular hound as a literary manifestation of the colloquial 'wolf at the door'. Indeed, at one point in the tale, Lashley himself seems aware, if not able to interpret, the historical usages of the wolf in contemporary popular culture, commenting "What the wolf or hound in that earlier cartoon had represented – war, famine, or the ruthlessness of the enemy – he could not say" (1977: 90). The multifaceted symbolism of the hound is perhaps its greatest strength in Leiber's story. It is at once, an embodiment of Lashley's precarious financial positioning and the fears he has concerning the 'city's' uncaring response; the threat of looming War and enforced conscription (we are told that Lashley's only acquaintance, Tom Goodsell, has already been called up); and a manifestation of the urban environment's "endlessly varying howls and growls" (1977: 89).

Though Leiber did write novels, much of his longer work in the field of horror seems less occupied with class. Leiber's contemporary witchcraft text, *Conjure Wife* (1953), is a pertinent example here. While the novel seems to utilise a sense of post-war paranoia concerning the changing status of women to inform much of its horror, it is noticeable that the horrific actions of its female antagonists' are driven primarily by their desire for increased social prestige and status; as the protagonist notes "they lay awake nights plotting to poison the people between their husbands and the president's chair" (1991: 58)

The central character in the novel, Norman Saylor, is a sociology lecturer at a small New England college, eager for a chairmanship that has just become available: "now with Redding's retirement he was assured of the sociology chairmanship, and then it would only be a matter of months until one of the big universities came through with the right offer" (1991: 5-6) His wife, Tansy, has been indulging in witchcraft, "conjure magic" (1991: 14), as a means of safeguarding her husband from pernicious 'attacks' cast by the other faculty wives, who are all powerful witches. All of these women seem to desperately seek greater power; Evelyn Sawtelle is "dominated by a desire for social prestige" and spends most of "her time in unsuccessfully attempting to be snobbish" (1991: 142), while we are told that Hulda Gunnison "should have been the mistress of a feudal domain, She is a born tyrant and grows fat on it." (1991: 142) Head of this 'coven' is Mrs Car, a ninety year old woman who, in a repeat of Leiber's use of the psychic vampire motif, has fed on the younger students and faculty members: "she feeds on their feelings and innocence and enthusiasms" (1991: 176). In line with many postwar depictions of powerful female characters, Carr is positioned as "a creature who threatens to castrate and devour" (Spicer 2002: 90) both her male and female subordinates, in this case, quite literally, as she attempts to possess Tansy's more vital, youthful body.

In *Conjure Wife* the university campus functions as a kind of microcosm of the capitalist practises, prevalent in the U.S. at large, one in which the geographical and social proximity of its residents serve to intensify the sense of rivalry; as Norman suggests at one point: "it's a devilishly competitive and jealous world. And competition in an institution can be nastier than any other kind, because it's so confined" (1991: 92). University students are seen as libertarian and bourgeois "monsters of unwholesomeness and perversion" by the "lower classes" (1991: 46), yet ironically it is some of the staff that are, in fact, revealed to be monsters. The novel's dubious gender politics – it seems to imply that all women that seek power are monstrous – link Leiber's text to the hard-boiled tradition and its similarly paranoid depictions of controlling women. Empowered by changes to the class system following the Second World War, such women often served to "challenge ...the postwar consensus

that women should be fulfilled by the roles of wife and mother" (Spicer 2002: 91) and in hardboiled narratives were used to question, and frequently condemn the notion of the independent woman.

Leiber's contemporary Charles Beaumont was also criticised for his depiction of female characters, perhaps a result of his writing for publication in new men's magazines such as *Playboy* and *Esquire*. Indeed, men's magazines such as *Playboy* became increasingly important to genre writers as the century progressed, offering the community access to a wider readership than the declining fortunes of the genre magazines allowed for, much higher pay rates, and "something that had largely eluded [them]: respectability" (Liptak). At *Playboy* Hugh Hefner had long demonstrated a keen interest in genre fiction as had his first associate editor, Ray Russell. As the Encyclopaedia for Science Fiction notes, Hefner had been an "avid reader of Weird Tales during the 1940s and had even joined the 'Weird Tales Club'" and when he got the chance, *Playboy* repeatedly published fiction by a number of genre writers including Bradbury, Richard Matheson, Robert Bloch and Beaumont. Beaumont also found success writing teleplays for the seminal television series *The Twilight Zone* (1959-1964). Indeed, while "the notion of the horror host as auteur was best ... was conveyed by Rod Serling" (86) Beaumont, as the second most prolific contributor after Serling, was also instrumental to the show's success, as were a number of other contemporary genre writers (including, initially, Bradbury, George Clayton Johnson and Matheson amongst others). While this study's focus on fiction precludes a detailed examination of *The Twilight Zone's* important position as perhaps the most high profile pop cultural genre platform during the early 1960ss it is enough here to note the sociological emphasis of *The Twilight Zone*; as Brock suggests: "Serling ... was a champion of the underclasses, preoccupied with social justice" (129). Numerous episodes evidence this focus, with examples such as "Walking Distance" (1:5), "The Big Tall Wish" (1:27), and "The Masks" (5:25) demonstrating the skillful manner in which the genre trappings of the show "allowed Serling to deal with questions of social justice and ethics that would otherwise not have been acceptable for broadcast" (Beeler, 56)

Undergoing something of a renaissance amongst genre critics, Beaumont is responsible for some of the most interesting examples of genre fiction from the mid-century. S.T. Joshi has written of Beaumont's stories: "[they] simultaneously draw upon the heritage of supernatural literature and shine a pungent light on the social and psychological angst of the period (Joshi, 2012: 572), an approach evident in "The Vanishing American", which examines feelings of personal and social alienation through a genre lens. The central character of Beaumont's tale, Mr Minchell, is a low paid office worker, a man who has got used to being ignored by his colleagues: "He stretched and said good night to the people who filed past him. As usual, no one answered" (Beaumont: 24). On his forty seventh birthday Minchell begins to believe that this general obliviousness has somehow led him to become invisible; to "vanish" (29). A woman in a lift seems to take no notice of him, he realises that his supervisor has not spoken to him in ten years, and his wife and child appear to operate with no sense of his being there when he's at home. Though Beaumont leaves it intentionally ambiguous as to whether or not Minchell has literally disappeared from sight, the factors for this disappearance are made overt. As Minchell thinks over his situation he realises that "he had not just suddenly vanished" (30) rather:

> He had been vanishing gradually for a long while. Every time he said good morning to that bastard Diemel he got a little harder to see. Every time he put on this horrible suit he faded. The process of disappearing was set into action every time he brought his pay check home and turned it over to

> Madge, every time he kissed her, or listened to her vicious unending complaints, or decided against buying that novel, or punched the adding machine he hated so, or.... (31)

The story suggests that Minchell's condition is the direct result of the spiritually and intellectually stunted existence he is subject to in 1950s corporate America. Indeed, Minchell appears to become the living embodiment of Packard's later claim (1959), that "Employees in big offices ... are finding their work roles fragmentized and impersonalized ... there has been a startling rise in the number of people who are bored with their work and feel no pride or initiative or creativity" (16) The stultifying nature of his occupation has detached Minchell from his 'true' identity, dehumanising him to the extent that he seriously considers that he may have died but be condemned to continue in his job, like "a story he'd once read in a magazine ... about a man who dies and whose ghost takes up his duties" (26). Minchell feels trapped by the lack of any viable alternatives to the demands of the dominant capitalist system: "Then he thought about going back to work tomorrow and the next day and the day after that. He'd have to, of course. He couldn't let Madge and Jimmy starve; and, besides, what else could he do?" (31). Consigned to "go on punching the clock and saying good morning to people who didn't see him" (31), in a last ditch attempt to recapture some sense of self, Minchell decides to climb a great stone lion statue "he'd always wanted to ride ... since he was a child" (28). This act of self-expression leads others to see Minchell in what serves as a metaphor for the life-enriching tendencies of the imagination when unfettered from material concerns.

No such release is afforded the protagonists of Beaumont's macabre "Free Dirt". Very much in the vein of E.C. Comics' version of poetic justice, "Free Dirt" details the avaricious exploits of Mr Aorta, a man whose life seems devoted to "the acquisition of something for nothing" (55). Significantly, Aorta's desire to save and make money has warped his view of others. He is not above lying to and tricking those around him in order to get what he wants; the story open with Aorta conning a restaurateur into giving him a free meal, we find out he often steals food from a local grocer, and that he regularly pretends to be homeless to beg for money on the street. However, this grasping, materialistic approach to life, where others become pawns to be duped for monetary gain, is what ultimately leads to Aorta's untimely demise as he becomes a literal part of the system of commerce he sought to exploit. Certainly, Beaumont does not hold back in depicting Aorta as an individual who receives an almost sexual gratification from the saving of money: "Mr Aorta felt a familiar sensation come over him. It happened whenever he encountered the word FREE – a magic word that did strange and wonderful things to his metabolism" (56). In this case, Aorta sees a sign outside the local cemetery advertising "FREE DIRT" (56) and he is keen to get as much of it as he can. Indeed, we are told that the dirt itself does not hold any special appeal for Aorta, rather it is the act of acquiring something for nothing that brings him pleasure: "the fact that it was dirt which was being offered Free did not oppress him. He seldom gave more than a fleeting thought to these things" (56). Forcing a neighbour to lend him the use of his truck, Aorta proceeds to exploit this offer to its fullest, moving immense amounts of 'free dirt' to his barren backyard in order that it might become a makeshift allotment and thus prevent him from having to spend any money on food in the future. The venture is initially successful and Aorta looks forward to the saving he will make: "Mr Aorta glanced at his checkbook balance, grinned indecently, and went to look out the back window" (59). Unfortunately for Aorta he needs to continually replenish his soil but the stocks of free dirt he has been drawing from so heavily are running extremely low. Seemingly oblivious to the role he has played in the situation, Aorta is nevertheless angry that his crops might not survive without fresh dirt: "this Mr Aorta could not abide, for he had

put in considerable labor on the project and this labor must not be wasted" (60). Aorta duly decides to steal dirt from the cemetery by removing it from newly excavated but supposedly 'unoccupied' graves. Sure enough Aorta saves his crops, and tucks in to a gargantuan bounty, feasting until he feels "a sweet pain ... an almost sexual satisfaction" (61) from his ill-gotten harvest. Pained but satisfied, Aorta happens to catch sight of "A white fronded thing, a plant, perhaps only a flower" (62) on the rim of a ditch that, upon closer examination, looks like "a hand, a big human hand, waxy and stiff and attached to the earth" (63). Inspecting the 'hand' close up, a now increasingly ill Aorta falls into the ditch, which turns out to be "deeper than he'd thought" (62). Writhing with pain from over eating, Aorta is unable to climb out of the ditch and a gathering gale blows more and more of the dirt in on top of him until he is buried alive. Lest the sense of poetic justice be missed, the epilogue of the story details Aorta's funeral and the manner in which he is "laid ... to rest in a place with a mouldering green woodboard wall: the wall had a little sign nailed to it" (64). In a critique of the futility of desire for ever more material wealth, ironically Aorta finds himself commoditised, turned, against the wishes expressed in his dying screams, into a part of the very system of material goods that he was so enamoured with in life.

The effects of wealth are tackled no less favourably in "The Murderers". The story tells of two rich but bored individuals, Herbert Foss and Ronald Raphael, who set out to enliven their "infernally dull" (141) lives by murdering someone. In contrast to the "unbearably bourgeois" motives of those cases they have read about they believe that their aesthetic approach to the act will see them escape arrest. Duly they choose their victim from the "old men and women who sit on hard benches" (141) in the downmarket area of "Bughouse Square" (141), "passed many dark stores, many dirty gray brick apartments and hotels of clapboard" (143). This decision is significant for it seems to suggest the murderers' motives are driven by an elitist belief that there are people out there who will not be missed because of their class status: "a nobody, a nothing, without friends or relatives"(142). Raphael and Foss eventually find an individual, James Oliver Fogarty, who fits this category: "an old man ... his beard was the colour of Georgia mud. He was smoking the butt of a peeling cigar whose tip glowed red against his wrinkled leather skin. And his clothes were rags" (142). Exploiting the old man's need for a place to sleep, Raphael and Foss offer him lodging in their quarters, and return with him back home. The murderers' view Fogarty as an object to be used for their pleasure: "a fatted calf ... *exactly* what we wanted!" (144). After toasting to Fogarty: "To James Oliver Fogarty: R.I.P!" (146), and deciding upon the best way to dispatch him: "Club him to death with an *objet d'art*" (147), the two would-be murderers argue over which of them is going to do the deed.

Throughout "The Murderers" Raphael's and Foss' elitist world view is ridiculed, they believe that they will be able to commit the perfect crime because they do not share the base motives of the common criminal, but, in fact, they are hindered by this self-same desire to distinguish themselves from the masses: "We would be worse than bourgeois; we would be *common*" (151). Similarly, their condescending belief that Fogarty is nothing but a "poor old schmoe" who doesn't know "what he's got coming" (148) turns out to be incorrect, as he turns the tables and cons them, waiting until they are heavily drunk so that he can steal all of their most valuable possessions; as Prosser suggests, "Despite their high social standing, their wealth and their cleverness, and their roles as elitists, both young men have been upstaged and outwitted by one of life's derelicts" (63).

A cynical, often darkly comic, worldview permeates many of Beaumont's stories demonstrating the growing convergence of horror with noir, elsewhere "A Death in the Country", "The Night Ride" and

the chilling the "The Hunger", also explore deviant characters or motivations. Much of Beaumont's fiction contains a "sociological theme" (Prosser: 63) that examines the effects of societal deprivation and inequality upon the individual and their interactions with others: as Prosser suggests in the case of "The Murderers": "The rich are different from others, Beaumont seems to be saying ... they have everything the material world has to offer, but they lack a sense of ethics and morality" (Prosser: 63)

Robert Bloch, also offered the mid century reader a blend of genres, infusing his horror writing with the grit and realism of hard-boiled fiction and modern newspaper headlines but offering a decidedly harder edged approach than his contemporaries such as Beaumont and Leiber. Indeed the noir overtones of much of Bloch's horror fiction reflect a decidedly more practical, workmanlike approach to writing than either of his contemporaries. Bloch would often consciously angle his output to particular publications and audiences, raising the ire of many his associates such as Fritz Leiber who criticised his friend's desire to "make money by catering to current trends and some of the mean appetites of the mob" (qtd in Eller 2013: 182)

Much like Bradbury's writing, Bloch's more 'realist' approach is often credited with extending the appeal of horror beyond traditional genre audiences; Szumskyj suggests that Bloch's "stark realism ... helped to redefine horror and make it accessible even to those outside the genre" (2009), while Bloch himself proposed that "Fear is the main thing. Only it has to be a fear that is close to reality, something that people can recognize as part of the world around them. The more familiar, the stronger it is." (1993: 15) A central part of this 'realist' approach is manifested in the class concerns of Bloch's writing. Perhaps partially borne from his early life when he "struggled with poverty and unhappiness" (Lane 2009: Kindle) before the success of *Psycho* catapulted him to financial success, many of Bloch's stories reflect upon the repressive conditions that many lived in at the midpoint of the twentieth century. "American capitalism specifically comes in for a harsh critique" (Simpson 2009: Kindle). Indeed, Leiber accurately summarises the importance of class in Bloch's writing when he recalls Bloch "as a slender, serious, sensitive young man, keenly and responsively-sympathetically- aware of the plight of people, especially young people, ground down by the Depression and caught up in the fantastic, heartless buying and selling machinery that was America" (qtd in Flanagan 1979: 25). Though relatively few of Bloch's short stories deal directly with the issue of class; status, and the detrimental effects prizing material wealth can have on the individual, haunts much of the writer's work. In "All on a Golden Afternoon", a Dr Prager visits the wealthy Hollywood actress, Eve Eden. Born Wilma Kozmowski, Eden is on the verge of quitting her job and walking away from the "two swimming pools, an eight car garage, and a corps of resident angels with power mowers" (Bloch 1977: 154) because they have failed to make her happy. Lower down the socio-economic scale, "The Hungry House" sees the central couple trapped into staying at the haunted house they move into because "They'd taken a five year lease, secretly congratulating themselves on the low rental ... they had nowhere else to go; they had searched for months to find a home" (Bloch 1977: 55). "The World-Timer" sees a greedy psychiatrist travel to a parallel Earth without "prurience and poverty" (Bloch 1977: 259) in which society and the family unit is organised in a radically different fashion meaning there is "no fear of the domestic situation; it was not a life-long trap in which both parties became enslaved to a consumer economy ... the element of economic competition virtually vanished; there was no need to pile up great accretions of consumer goods ... The state regulated employment and recompense but did so benevolently" (Bloch 1977: 261).

Mention must be made here of "I Like Blondes". Though the story is ostensibly a sort of quasi-science fiction one due to the final reveal of the narrator's extraterrestrial origins, it can also be read as a sly

critique of intensifying post-war trends objectifying women based upon their physical appearance (the story was perhaps ironically first published in *Playboy*). For the narrator, Mr Beers, mistaken for "a disgusting old man" (Bloch 1977: 141), has a proclivity for women with blonde hair and spends his nights attempting to 'hunt' them down. Though initially, the narrator's rhetoric seems in line with his rakish demeanour; he speaks of "my business" (Bloch 1977: 144) and of avoiding the "prize heifers" (Bloch 1977: 143), he is in fact preying, in both senses of the word, upon the blonde women he encounters. Interestingly, on this particular night we witness this alien in sheep's clothing have most success with those at the bottom of the socio-economic scale, exploiting their desperation and weakness for his own gain. The narrator picks up a blonde by the name of Shirley Collins, who is paid to dance with men at the dance-hall; impressed by her naivety he surmises that she is probably a "small-town girl ... who quit school and came to the city. Perhaps she came with some man. If not, she met one shortly after her arrival. It ended badly, of course. Maybe she took a job in a restaurant or a store. And then she met another man, and the dance hall seemed easier." (Bloch 1977: 144). Beers is able to easily impress Collins with his money, we are told that she was "positively drooling" (147) after he "fans five twenties from the roll" (147) and offers her some of the cash. Consequently, at the end of the story, the reader is left with a sense of horror as they consider, not only the fantastical implications of the narrative, but also the ease with which Beers has been able to prey upon blondes because of the ingrained inequalities in American society surrounding gender and class.

The issue of class equality in the U.S. also plays a part in Bloch's "That Hell-Bound Train". The story reads like a contemporary spin on the Faust myth, but with a more ambivalent ending. "That Hell-Bound Train" follows the character of Martin, the son of a poverty stricken "Railroad Man" (Bloch 1977: 271) who used to sing of the titular method of transport when drunk. Following his father's premature death Martin tries to eke out a meagre existence in a series of low paid jobs but soon realises "he wasn't getting anyplace" (Bloch 1977: 271). Consequently he turns to crime but finds that even that doesn't give him enough to live on. Perhaps inevitably Martin finds himself drawn back to a life on the railroads but even this, it seems, has fallen victim to the vagaries of modernisation:

> So he tried to get on the railroad like his Daddy had, but they told him times were bad; and between the truckers and the airlines and those fancy new fintails General Motors were making, it looked as if the days of the highballers were just about over. (Bloch 1977: 272)

The suggestion that Martin is doomed to a life of poverty through no real fault of his own is overwhelming, and the reader might be forgiven for thinking they had discovered a more Naturalist bent to Bloch's writing than is usually apparent. However, it is not long before Martin encounters a train whose whistle shrieked "like a lost soul" and whose wheels "screamed like the damned" (Bloch 1977: 274). The conductor of this train offers Martin a deal, his soul for anything he wants. After some consideration, Martin decides that he wants "to be able to stop time" (Bloch 1977: 277), so that "Whenever I get to a point where I know I'm happy and contented, that's where I'd like to stop. So I can just keep on being happy forever". (Bloch 1977: 277) The seasoned reader of Horror will at this point predict some sort of twist in the tale leading to an untimely end for Martin. At first, given the promise of the ability to prolong indefinitely a moment of future happiness, Martin puts great effort into ascending the class structure, moving from a hobo, to a panhandler, to a contractor, to an office worker, to then working in the front office. All the time Martin is tempted to push the button on his stopwatch but on each occasion he is convinced that something better is imminent. Indeed it is not until private detectives, working for his soon to be ex-wife, break down his hotel door to arrest him

that Martin realises that his search for ever greater material wealth has been spiritually pointless: "He made his pile, eventually … [though] there wasn't much chance to have fun along the way" (Bloch 1977: 283). Ironically, Martin's pursuit of riches, and the contentment he believes they will bring, has lead him to push everyone he's known away while the pressures of his job, his family and his mistress, have left him a lonely and ill man. Martin's abject failure; his realisation that "somewhere along the line he'd outsmarted himself. And now it was too late" (Bloch 1977: 285), point to a broader critique of the aspirational tenets of the American dream. "That Hell-Bound Train" becomes a kind of extended metaphor for the 'rat-race' ideology espoused and encouraged by U.S. post-war society. Martin is tricked into believing he is getting ahead when actually he is never able to find any meaningful sense of self-fulfilment and actualisation; "looking ahead to find that perfect happiness. Waiting for the moment that never comes" (Bloch 1977: 286). Interestingly, and in what might be seen as an indication of where Bloch's sympathies lie, Martin has the last laugh of the story rather than the conductor. For, upon encountering the Hell-Bound train for one final time, Martin discovers a sense of true kinship with the other travelers, and chooses to press the button on his stopwatch. This action, which effectively damns the conductor to work forever, both empowers the ordinary working stiff (in both senses of the word) while also reinforcing the story's somewhat didactic message that a belief in material accoutrements and wealth is futile.

By far Bloch's most famous work, the novel *Psycho* (1959), tells the story of Norman Bates and his irrepressible mother. Known to most people through Hitchcock's towering film adaptation, what is perhaps often forgotten are just how much the initiating events of the novel revolve around the issues of impoverishment, class and capital. Indeed, if a reader were only to look at the opening few chapters of the book they might easily perceive the novel a kind of hard-boiled treatise on the motivations for crime amongst the working classes. As Kendall R. Phillips notes "it is the pursuit of money that starts the seemingly inevitable chain of unfortunate events" (2005: 73). However, this is not the whole story. As both the novel and the film make clear, there are two interrelated factors that motivate Mary to commit the crime. Of primary importance is the simple fact that Mary longs to escape her boring secretarial job and marry her beloved Sam Loomis. Being a proud and reputable man, Sam is clear that he wants to give Mary the marriage, and the life, she deserves. At present he is living just above the poverty line having inherited his father's business, but also his father's large debts: "Sam inherited the business, all right, plus about twenty thousand in debts. The building was mortgaged, the inventory was mortgaged, and even the insurance had been mortgaged" (16). He works hard but struggles to make ends meet; he sleeps and eats in the shop when it is not open: "That's right. Rigged up a place for myself in the back room. I'm living on baked beans most of the time" (17). Consequently, Sam suggests to Mary that "we'll have to wait. It may take two-three years before everything is paid off" (17) but Mary cannot bear her current situation for that long. Secondly, and perhaps more significantly, Mary gets the chance to steal from the property investor Tommy Cassidy. An obnoxious but rich man who is shameless in letting others know of his wealth (and who we learn has previously offered money to Mary to sleep with her). We are then presented with a pair of sympathetic characters who are poor and a rich character (or plot device) who is hugely unsympathetic in action and behaviour. Marion's desire to attain the societal 'norms' of marriage and romantic love are directly impeded by the unfair and exploitive arrangement of that self–same society in what might be seen as a sly textual critique of post-war American inequality; as Mary suggests "when you come right down to it, some people don't seem to get *any* opportunities at all" (14) We learn, for instance, that Mary has always been victim to

a system that, rather than help those with aspirations, seems instead to be unjustly balanced against those at the bottom of the socio-economic scale:

> The opportunity to go to college had vanished, at seventeen, when Daddy was hit by a car. Mary went to business school for a year, instead, and then settled down to support Mom and her kid sister, Lila.
> The opportunity to marry disappeared at twenty-two, when Dale belter was called up to serve his hitch in the army. Pretty soon he was stationed in Hawaii, and before long he began mentioning this girl in his letters, and then the letters stopped coming. When she finally got the wedding announcement she didn't care any more.
> Besides, Mom was pretty sick by then. It took her three years to die, while Lila was off at school. Mary had insisted she get to college, come what may, but that left her carrying the whole load. Between holding down a job at the Lowery Agency all day and sitting up with Mum half the night, there wasn't time for anything else. (14-15)

Furthermore, the novel emphasises that the America we see is one in which capitalism exerts an oppressive hold. *Psycho* depicts characters that are more than ready to exploit others for material gain. Mary works for a Mr Lowery of who we learn "Lowery would half kill himself to make an extra dollar, and he'd be perfectly willing to kill any of his employees for another fifty cents" (14). In fact, Mary notes that Lowery's entire business (and that of others like him) is built upon greed and a willingness to take advantage of other people:

> She watched him buy up shaky mortgages and foreclose, watched him make quick, cunning, cutthroat cash offers to desperate sellers and then turn around and take a fat profit on a fast, easy resale ... All Lowery did was stand in the middle, extracting a percentage from both parties ... He performed no other real service to justify his existence. And yet he was rich. (19)

In providing more exposition and background detail than the film was able to, in the novel we learn that it is not only the working class Mary and Sam's problems which are caused by economic factors. Norman's own troubles have been caused, at least in part, by his family's declining financial status. Norman's mother had originally owned "quite a bit of farm property", which brought in a good income, meaning that "she was well off" (178). However, her lover, Joe Considine, had convinced her to sell this property and purchase a motel business along the old highway where "there was a lot of business to be had" (178). At the start of the novel Norman is arguing with his mother over her prior decision not to sell their current business and move elsewhere when they had learnt of the plans to build a new highway that would redirect traffic away from their family run motel:

> "But it isn't likely anybody would be coming this way. Everyone takes the new highway." Norman heard the bitterness creeping into his voice, felt it welling up into his throat until he could taste it, and tried to hold it back. But too late now; he had to vomit it out. "I told you how it would be at the time, when we got that advance tip that they were moving the highway. You could have sold the motel then, before there was a public announcement about the new road coming through. We could have bought all kinds of land over there for a song, closer to Fairvale, too. We'd have had a new motel, a new house, made some money. But you wouldn't listen. You never listen to me. (Bloch 2013: 6)

As a rejoinder Norman's mother mocks Norman for his inability to become independent, both personally and financially: "Never had the gumption to leave home. Never had the gumption to go out and get yourself a job." (Bloch 2013: 7) Indeed, much as Norman seems to be judged against a proscriptive model of masculinity based upon economic factors such as employment and the accruing of material wealth, so Sam's refusal to get married in poverty stands as an indictment of capitalism's creation of restrictive bourgeois gender roles. However, Norman internalises this oppression, acting out fantasies of control by wearing the clothes of his dead mother. Norman's proclivity for taxidermy might be read as marking an interest in the literal objectification of living beings, often for material gain.

The role that money plays in the character's life is evident again in the means of Norman's capture. For it is the investigator the Milton Arbogast, a man employed by Parity Mutual to try and find out, not what happened to their missing employee Mary Crane, but rather the stolen $40,000, that initially tracks Norman down. As Arbogast himself reveals to Norman in a conversation they have, it is the amount of money that Mary stole that is of most significance to his case, and which will ultimately lead to Norman being arrested: "This girl stole forty thousand dollars in cash from a real estate firm ... That's right. Skipped town with the money, You can see it's a serious business. That's why everything I can find out is important." (107-8). In the world of the novel, it is quite clear then that money has superseded the individual employee as the most important factor in success, as Norman suggests "Everybody was interested in forty thousand dollars" (114). Perhaps the greatest irony comes in the events that follow Norman's capture and the exposing of his crimes. For, the novel suggests that the sensational nature of Norman's actions give birth to a renewed tourist interest in the Bates' motel: "there was no end to the morbid curiosity-lovers who sought it out. Quite conceivably, a goodly percentage would have been eager to rent rooms" (175-6). Though Norman may have been beyond any interest in saving his family's business at this point, the vagaries of capitalism, it would seem, have the last laugh.

In its depiction of Mary, Sam and, to a large extent, even Norman, as victims of larger –socio-economic factors, *Psycho* exemplifies the post-war change in depicting poverty and the poor in Horror. Though Norman is undoubtedly a monstrous character, his story (like Mary's) is one of oppression and ill-fated, downward mobility. Packard notes that "it is becoming more and more difficult to start at the bottom and reach the top" (16) Indeed, Lilla, Mary's sister claims that she feels empathy: "He must have suffered more than any of us. In a way I can almost understand" (183). In a society that defines self-actualisation in capitalist terms such as competitive control and domination how is Norman to define himself except by killing others? Perhaps the novel's most terrifying aspect then is its interrogation of U.S. inequality and its depiction of bourgeois spaces (the family home, the motel) and institutions (marriage) as complicit in this continuing inequity.

As Bernice M Murphy has rightly suggested, while "[Shirley] Jackson rarely dealt *directly* with contemporary social issues" (18) her work, nevertheless, repeatedly explores the "the pervasive anxieties and sociological fixations of post-Second World War American society." (18). Published in the same year as *Psycho*, Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House* (1959), like *Psycho*, explores the often dire consequences of social inequality. Though we are told only snippets of information about the novel's

central character, Eleanor Vance, and her background (for a number of years she has cared for her ill, now dead, mother; she owns half a car) a picture of deprivation is constructed around the character. Eleanor is noticeably different to the other members of the experiment; one significant disparity is her lower class background. While Dr Montague, Theodora, Luke (and later, Mrs Montague and her friend Arthur) are coded as members of the bourgeoisie, Eleanor is depicted as working class; as she proposes ""I *am* a kind of stray cat" (*House*: 209). We learn that she has not inherited a great deal as a result of her mother's passing: "My sister and I each took whatever we wanted ... small things; there was really nothing much ... not at all that much money" (*House*: 87). Indeed Eleanor's suggestion, to Theodora, that she has "a little place of my own ... An apartment, like yours, only I live alone. Smaller than yours, I'm sure" (*House*: 88) turns out to be a lie. Instead, following her temporary 'possession' by the house, when Dr Montague is trying to get Eleanor to leave, she reveals that: "I made it up. I sleep on a cot at my sister's, in the baby's room. I haven't any home, no place at all. And I can't go back to my sister's because I stole her car" (*House*: 239).

Of all the guests it is Eleanor who appears the most susceptible to the 'luxuries' of Hill House; as she claims: "I am too used already to the comforts of Hill House" (*House*: 244). While the others criticise the house and its contents for being un-homely and oppressive, Eleanor grows to feel "its good here" (230), when Theodora bemoans the cook's abilities and the House's facilities Eleanor disagrees, stating "It's a nice kitchen" (111) better to the one in her mother's house, which "was dark and narrow" (*House*: 111). Dr Montague suggests of Hill House that it attracts "lost abandoned soul[s]" (*House*: 217) and here, significantly, Eleanor's lower class background and her newly 'homeless' status seem to make her particularly vulnerable to the House. For, as we learn, the House continues to be a class bound institution which operates along clearly defined class lines: "the Dudleys have taken care of Hill House ever since anyone can remember; certainly the Sandersons were happy enough to keep them on" (*House*: 65). In this environment, Eleanor is gradually seduced by the "warm, drowsily, luxuriously warm" (*House*: 228) advances of Hill House, until she is ensnared; as she confesses: "I could go wandering and homeless, errant, and I would always come back here" (*House*: 239). Eleanor's attraction for the House seems based on her desire for recognition, which she believes can be achieved only through a close association with it:

> Climbing, looking down, she thought of the soft green grass outside and the rolling hills and the rich trees. Looking up, she thought of the tower of Hill House rising triumphantly between the trees, tall over the road which wound through Hillsdale and past a white house set in flowers and past the magic oleanders and past the stone lions and on, far, far, away, to a little lady who was going to pray for her. Time is ended now, she thought, all *that* is gone and left behind (*House*: 232)

Tragically, this love affair eventually grows to the point where Eleanor is unable to see the true horror of the House, instead she perceives the Doctor's decision to send her away as the result of a selfish desire to deprive her of the House's luxuries: "Eleanor, we don't want you any more, not in *our* Hill House, go away," (*House*: 245). The novel's end, with Eleanor seemingly killing herself by driving her car into a tree in the driveway, implies that she is finally unable to separate herself from the House. Like Sutpen in *Absalom! Absalom!*, Eleanor's eventual fate seems to foreground the perverting influence of striving for wealth and property.

Jackson's last novel *We Have Always Lived in The Castle* (1962) also melds the author's interest in class with the Gothic . Darly Hattenhauer has written of the novel as being one of Jackson's "most class

conscious" (Hattenhauer, 189), and "a case study in the neo-aristocratic haute bourgeois exploitation of the petit bourgeois and the lower class" (Hattenhauer, 187). Whereas *Hill House* gives us a member of the petit bourgeois or working class to identify, and perhaps, sympathise, with, Jackson's later novel shifts the reader's perspective to Mary Katherine 'Merricat' Blackwood, one of only three members of the landed Blackwood dynasty to survive "the most sensational poisoning case of the century" (*Castle*: 32). Merricat lives in near isolation with her older sister Constance and their Uncle Julian. Following the court case which saw Constance acquitted of the murders of her family the Blackwoods have shut themselves away from the community with only Merricat twice weekly venturing into the nearby village to get supplies. Right from the start of the novel it is clear that Merricat's actions are fuelled by an elitist view regarding class. It is clear from her descriptions of the "ugliness of the villagers" (*Castle*: 6) that Merricat does not like them. She claims that the "blight on the village" contrary to popular hearsay and gossip "never came from the Blackwoods; the villagers belonged here and the village was the only proper place for them" (*Castle*: 6). Part of this class snobbishness may be the result of Merricat's parents who tell her that the villagers are "trash" (10) and who quickly set about enclosing the Blackwood house and land so that no-one but them can enjoy it:

> Our Mother disliked the sight of anyone who wanted to walking past our front door, and when our Father brought her to live in the Blackwood house, one of the first things he had to do was close off the path and fence in the entire Blackwood property ... There was another gate at the other end of the path ... that gate too had a padlock and a sign saying PRIVATE NO TRESPASSING. "The Highways built for common people, "our Mother said "and my front door is private". (*Castle*: 18)

However, in case the reader thinks that Jackson is simply anti-bourgeois, later in the novel we are provided with a frightening scene of proletarian uprising when the villagers decide to try and finish the demolition of Blackwood house that was begun by an accidental fire: "Above it all, most horrible, was the laughter. I saw one of the Dresden figurines thrown and break against the porch rail, and the other fell unbroken and rolled along the grass ... I heard the sound of dishes smashing and at that minute realised that we stood outside the tall windows of the dining room and they were coming very close" (*Castle*: 106). Here, in line with Constance's own views, it is the raucous villagers that Jackson wants us to despise, along with their repeated refrain to "let it burn" (*Castle*: 105). Hattenhauer suggests that what fuels the villagers' anger in the novel is the sense of the "unearned privilege of the rich paid for by the commoners" (188) and much like Hawthorne and Faulkner before her, Jackson gives us an example of the warping tendencies of material wealth and property.

In the novel we learn that Merricat believes she must keep up a series of arcane practises, including burying items, in order to stop calamity befalling the remaining Blackwoods: "All of our land was enriched with my treasures buried in it ... my marbles, my teeth and my colored stones, all perhaps turned to jewels by now, held together under the ground in a powerful taut web which never loosened, but held fast to guard us" (*Castle*: 41). Merricat's actions point to a misguided belief in the protective power of material wealth. Indeed, it is not long before Merricat's cousin Charles Blackwood turns up at the Blackwood estate. Though Merricat immediately dislikes Charles, believing him to be "a ghost" (*Castle*: 61) Constance disagrees suggesting he "is *not* a bad man" (*Castle*: 69) while Uncle Julian calls him "chivalrous" (*Castle*: 64). Yet it is not long before Charles appears to be plotting against Merricat, he disagrees with her use of her father's items, exclaiming when she nails a gold pocket watch to a tree: "I could have worn it; what a hell of a way to treat a valuable thing. We could have sold it" (*Castle*: 77). What emerges then is a battle for possession of the Blackwood family's wealth. It is not long before

Merricat notes that Charles has "father's watch was in his pocket. I thought that tomorrow he would be wearing our father's signet ring, and I wondered if he could make Constance put on our mother's pearls" (*Castle*: 80). Charles' motives are made explicit when the Blackwood house sets on fire and he is heard to exclaim "Get the safe in the study," ... a thousand times (*Castle*: 102).Ultimately, Charles' attempts to possess the Blackwood wealth prove futile and following the fire, Constance and Merricat are left alone. While Merricat seems to see this outcome as a happy one, it is notable that it relies upon them losing almost everything they own:

> "Merricat, oh, Merricat." Constance dropped the tablecloth she was holding and put her arms around me. "What have I done to my baby Merricat?" she said. "No house. No food. And dressed in a tablecloth; what have I *done?*"
>
> "Constance," I said, "I love you, Constance."
>
> "Dressed in a tablecloth like a rag doll."
>
> "Constance. We are going to be very happy, Constance."
>
> "Oh Merricat," she said, holding me.
>
> "Listen to me, Constance. We are going to be very happy." (*Castle*: 136)

In her insightful afterword to the Penguin edition of Jackson's novel, Joyce Carol Oates writing on the recurrent fetishisation of food in Jackson's fiction: "ironic then, that the Blackwood family should be poisoned by one of their own, out of a family heirloom sugar bowl" (Oates, 154). Yet, given Jackson's interest in class it is not surprising that *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* should locate the blame for its tale of degeneracy within the restrictive confines of the quasi-aristocracy, and use the act of poisoning by a family member to symbolise the self-destructive properties of the class system. Similarly, the ending of the novel sees the remaining Blackwood's both freed from their aristocratic responsibilities – Merricat and Constance can now live how they wish to - while also continuing to occupy the top position of a feudal like system of hierarchy based upon class as the villagers bring "bacon, home cured, or fruit, or their preserves ... roasted chicken; sometimes a cake or a pie" (*Castle*: 139) to their doorstep in order to atone for their revolt: "Once or twice there was a note in the basket: "This is for the dishes, " or "We apologize about the curtains," or "Sorry about the harp." (*Castle*: 139).

In contrast to more tumultuous upbringing of writers such as Leiber and Bloch, Jackson came from a decidedly more comfortable background. Perhaps as a result of this Jackson had an easier experience when publishing her work; her short stories appeared in many of the slick magazines, including the *New Yorker* and *Harpers*, as well as mass market publications such as *Good Housekeeping*. Consequently, her writing was "among[st] the most lucrative of her time" (Hattenhauer, 19). Yet as Hattenhauer also notes, the early part of Jackson's intellectual life was decidedly Marxist, with Jackson's husband, Stanley Edgar Hyman radicalising this "suburban Anglo daughter of a Republican businessperson" (15), to the point where she joined the Young Communist league and co-edited a Marxist literary journal alongside Hyman.

This concern with social inequality manifests itself in a number of Jackson's non-genre works such as "Like Mother used to Make" in Jackson reverses the stereotypically proscribed gender roles of the two

central characters to expose class as the deciding factor in the subjugation of the individual. Similarly, "Come Dance with Me in Ireland" (reminiscent of Beaumont's "The Murderers") tells the story of three women who, in attempting to prove themselves selfless actually reveal their ingrained class prejudices, with the denouement revealing that the subject of their pity, actually views them derisively. Of more interest to this study is the way in which Jackson "uses the supernatural in her fiction to depict the interpellation of unstable subjects into the dominant culture's myths and ideologies – particularly about class and gender" (Hattenhauer, 10)). Such an utilisation of the Gothic is evident in Jackson's most well-known piece of short fiction, "The Lottery", which has been convincingly read as embodying a Marxist standpoint by Peter Kosenko in his 1985 essay. Kosenko makes a persuasive case that the story embodies a Marxist critique of the organisation of neoliberal, capitalist America:

> First, the lottery's rules of participation reflect and codify a rigid social hierarchy based upon an inequitable social division of labor. Second, the fact that everyone participates in the lottery and understands *consciously* that its outcome is pure chance give it a certain "democratic" aura that obscures its first codifying function.   Third, the villagers believe *unconsciously* that their commitment to a work ethic will grant them some magical immunity from selection. Fourth, this work ethic prevents them from understanding that the lottery's actual function is not to encourage work *per se* but to reinforce an inequitable social *division* of labor. (Kosenko, 28)

The heated response to "The Lottery"'s publication in *The New Yorker* has been well charted, not least by Jackson herself who claimed of the hate mail she received: "it had simply never occurred to me that these millions and millions of people might be so far from being uplifted that they would sit down and write me letters I was downright scared to open." (qtd in Hall, 127). While Jackson professed to be genuinely surprised by the reaction to her story, it is very likely that what many readers of the upmarket *The New Yorker* found most disturbing was "The Lottery"'s skewering of the basic ideological tenets that so many of them lived by. Indeed, one of the strengths of Jackson's writing is the manner in which the story can be read as collapsing the usual fictional boundaries between the fantastic and very mundane, exposing the deep seated problems with the midcentury U.S. capitalist agenda; as Kosenko suggests:

> [Jackson intended to] shock her complacent reader with an exaggerated image of the ideological *modus operandi* of capitalism: accusing those whom it cannot or will not employ of being lazy, promoting "the family" as the essential social unit in order to discourage broader associations and identifications, offering men power over their wives as a consolation for their powerlessness in the labor market, and pitting workers against each other and against the unemployed. (Kosenko, 32)

Jackson's adroit use of a mainstream publication as an effective platform for her ideological critique, and her successful blurring of the established distinctions between realist and non-realist formats both epitomises the work on many of the genre authors discussed in this chapter and points forward to the direction genre writers such as Ira Levin, William Peter Blatty and Stephen King would take in the Horror 'boom' of the 1970s and 1980s.

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Chapter 4

Representing Class during the Horror Boom of the 1970s and 1980s

This chapter looks at the horror novel 'boom' of the 1970s and 1980s, which represents "the heyday of literary horror in both paperback and hardcover publishing" (Hantke, 57). The chapter focuses on the most commercially successful writer of this period, "the 800-pound gorilla of contemporary horror fiction" (Joshi, 2012: 625): Stephen King. There were a number of reasons for the significant upturn in the market for horror fiction in the 1970s and 1980s. Foremost among them being the huge commercial success of three unconnected novels marketed as belonging to the horror genre. Ira Levin's *Rosemary's Baby* (1967), Thomas Tyron's *The Other* (1971), and William Peter Blatty's *The Exorcist* (1971) were all released within a few years of one another (during the late 1960s and early 1970s) and their immense combined sales indicated to many publishers that horror was "a profitable marketing niche." (Hantke, 57) Then, when King's first novel *Carrie* came along in 1974 - selling an estimated 4 million copies, it "shook the horror field up like a bomb" (Campbell qtd Flood) serving to "usher in a boom period of huge popularity for horror fiction" (Vandemeer qtd Flood). One that would see King's novels repeatedly enter, and top, the New York Times' Bestseller list throughout the following decades.

Much like the work examined in the previous chapter all of these Horror novels engage with contemporary social problems. Levin's novel might be considered in a Faustian light, exploring the self-centered lengths to which those in a capitalist system will go to attain their goals; as James Goho suggests "Guy does not sell his soul to the devil for wealth and fame; he gives his wife, Rosemary." (Goho, 175). At the start of *Rosemary's Baby* the aspirational Woodhouses move to a new, highly desirable apartment in the Bramford building in New York. Despite their friend's warning them that "the house has a high incidence of unpleasant happenings. Why deliberately enter a danger zone?" (17) the Woodhouse's are swayed by the apparent status that comes with those who live in the upmarket residence, and are impressed with its size and luxury: "the kitchen … was as large if not larger than the whole apartment in which they were then living" (7). The Woodhouses are fictional versions of Vance Packard's 'status seekers'. Rosemary is originally from the Midwest, has married out of her broken, working-class Catholic family, and feels deeply uncomfortable with her new found position as part of the lower-middle-class. Indeed, early in the novel we are told of the comedic references that Rosemary's middle-class friend Hutch makes to her Pygmalion-like situation: "He sent her to a night course in philosophy at NYU. 'I'll make a duchess out of this cockney flower girl yet,' he said, and Rosemary had had wit enough to say 'Garn!'" (14). However, Rosemary's more cosmopolitan life with Guy leaves her feeling "guilty and selfish" (13) and "oddly out of things" (56). This unease concerning her class status makes Rosemary easy pray for the Satan worshippers that occupy the rest of the Bramford building. Indeed, Rosemary's fate is foreshadowed by that of another vulnerable character, Terry Gionoffrio, who is 'saved' by the Castevets: "They picked me up off the sidewalk – and I mean that literally ; I conked out on Eight Avenue – and they brought me here and adopted me like a mother and father" (28). While the Castevets seem benign, the implication is that their desire to help rehabilitate Terry is for the sole purpose of using her in their Satanic rituals; as they talk at one point of the need to alter their tactics: "He made that foolish what's-her-name, Terry, made her get all scared and silly so we had to change our plans" (221). Following Terry's 'suicide' it is Rosemary that becomes the object of the Castevets's attentions. The Castevets exploit the ethical weaknesses sown by the materialist desire of those they 'help'. They shower Guy with complements, appealing to his pride: "He was vain, self-centered, shallow and deceitful" (91), and offer to further his career in exchange for taking Rosemary's

unborn child: "she knew what Guy was giving them in exchange for his success. The baby. To use in their rituals" (182). In effect it is Guy's desire to become a successful actor, coupled with Rosemary's aspiration to climb the class system: "to a house in Los Angeles, a spice garden, three children two years apart" (68), that expose them to the manipulations of the Devil worshippers and mean Rosemary gives birth to the son of Satan.

In line with Robin Wood's discussion of the correspondences between the post-countercultural pessimism of the 1970s and the birth of the more politically radical 1970's horror film, it is interesting to note that this 'golden age' of U.S. horror fiction occurred concurrently with the American government's increasing adoption of a set of neo-liberal economic policies. Such fiscal strategies, culminating in Reagan's 'trickle down' economics, evoked a strong reaction among many left-leaning sociologists, cultural commentators and spokespeople who grew increasingly concerned about the rising levels of social inequality in U.S. society; as Fiona Devine notes: "[while] America […became…] a more open society over the middle decades of the twentieth century … The somewhat more hostile economic and political climate in the 1970s and 1980s [… took its…] toll on patterns and trends in social mobility" (Devine, 46). This reduction in social mobility came about as a result of policies, which promoted a form of "greed and economic materialism" that brought with it a simultaneous "growing inequality […and…] a lack of concern for the poor" (Cannato, 71). The contemporary growth in materialism infuses many of the novels of the Horror boom. *Rosemary's Baby* depicts a situation in which the central character's own husband is willing to prostitute her pregnancy for the advancement of his career, *The Exorcist* explores the gap between the rich and the poor and the implications this has for the spiritual well-being of society, and many of Stephen King's novels engage with the debilitating effects of a society founded on greed and economic one-up-man ship.

Ironically, one of the other effects of the economic policies of the 1970s and 1980s "was a process of proletarianisation […as…] sections of the middle class were being absorbed into the working class as a result of deskilling" (Devine, 22) until, as Erik Olin Wright (1985; 1989) documents, the proletariat amounted to over half of to the total working population in the U.S. This shift had significant implications for the ideological make-up of the U.S. Sociologist, David Halle claims that many of these workers when faced with largely uninteresting jobs and with minimal opportunity for promotion spent much of their time attempting to reduce their work and enjoy some autonomy, in the process generating an increased 'class consciousness' centred on the idea of the 'common man', a blue collar worker who feels hostile towards big businesses. Yet interestingly, according to Halle this dissent did not manifest itself in a noticeably Marxist worldview; as Halle suggests: "those who perform the really productive work do not receive a fair reward compared with the reward of those who are related to production indirectly or not at all. But this is not accompanied by a view that capitalism itself should be replaced" (218). This may be because those in power successfully set about demonising the poor and poverty, transforming them into "economic and cultural pathologies" (Hantke, 2016: 174). Neoliberalism believing in less-interventionist government which "leads to the individualization of social problems" (Delavag and Chung, 211) as the primacy of the free-market takes over. Such a system, in effect, works to eliminate social institutions (such as workers' unions) "leaving individuals to face their employers and the market alone" (Phillips-Fein, 135).

Anxiety concerning the individualisation of social problems is apparent in Blatty's immensely successful *The Exorcist*. The novel's central story, the possession and subsequent exorcism of the 12 year old girl Regan MacNeil, can be read as a sort of symbolic confrontation and purging of the materialistic excesses that would come to define America during the 1980s. With its more class based elements arguably toned

down for the well-known film adaptation, the original novel "points out the disparity inherent in modern American capitalism" (Phillips, 114), allowing for the possibility of a quasi-Marxist reading which locates the devil Pazuzu's power to possess Regan as a symptom of a wider American social and ideological malaise. A disorder born out of America's failure to remember that "WHAT WE GIVE TO THE POOR IS WHAT WE TAKE WITH US WHEN WE DIE" (Blatty, 8).

Regan is the daughter of Chris, a wealthy, successful actress. Significantly, Chris' profession emphasises the superficiality of an America that is sharply divided along economic lines. As we first meet her Chris finds out she has been offered a directorial position on a new big budget film entitled "*Faith, Hope and Charity*" (Blatty, 45), suggestive of the frivolity that typifies the affluent, bourgeois world of Hollywood, one which is willing to debase the idea of spirituality in order to make money. Chris's desire to to retain as much of her wealth as possible to stop it being funnelled away by the government through taxes further emphasises her self-centredness and her tacit involvement in the abusive practises of the capitalist system:

> The third, and most important, of Chris's concerns was the failure of two financial
> ventures: a purchase of convertible debentures through the use of prepaid interest; and
> an investment in an oil-drilling project in southern Libya. Both had been entered upon for
> the sheltering of income that would have been subject to enormous taxation. (72-73)

While we meet Chris and her daughter Regan in the first chapter; learning of their colonial townhouse in Washington, D.C.; their live-in housekeepers; and Chris's personal assistant, the second chapter provides a marked point of contrast to this opening world of luxury, introducing the reader to Jesuit psychiatrist Damien Karras, a working class priest suffering from "*doubts*" (63) as a result of the terrible suffering he witnesses every day in his occupation: "A cough. He glanced to the left. The gray stubbled derelict numb on the ground in a pool of his own urine" (60). Karras is a good man who is haunted by his growing inability to empathise with the poor and the destitute that surround him: "He could not bear to search for Christ again in stench and hollow eyes" (60), and what this loss of faith might mean to his position in the Jesuit order. Of particular consequence to Karras's anxieties is the recent death of his elderly mother. Karras's mother was forced to spend her remaining days in the public Bellevue hospital as opposed to a more comfortable private hospital, which none of the family could afford: "*Private hospital? Who's got da money, Dimmy? You?*" (102). In contrast to Chris, who tells her business manager that she "made eight hundred *thou* last year" and therefore wants to buy a "Ferrari" (73), Karras cares "little for possessions" (182), living a Spartan existence in his "simply furnished … narrow room" (182) as a University Chaplain. Karras's "vow of poverty" (216) is a point of (self) incrimination that is exploited by the possessed Regan in the novel's climatic exorcism scenes. Karras feels a huge amount of guilt over his decision to try and escape his working class background: "his flight from his mother in search of status" (343) and the devil uses this remorse to attack Karras, suggesting that his mother died in poverty because of her son's failure to find a well enough paid profession: "If instead of be priest, you was doctor, I live in nice house, Dimmy, not wit' da cockroach, not all by myself" (339). These exorcism scenes notably also play upon Chris's anxieties concerning her assimilation into a materialistic, capitalist system at the expense of a sense of personal and spiritual morality. The possessed Regan attacks Chris, accusing her of selfishly prizing materialistic concerns above the well-being of her family, and thereby inviting in the devil: "Are you pleased? It is *you* who have done it! Yes, you with your career, before *anything*, your career before your *husband*, before *her*," (333). While such accusations suggest that Blatty intends for the possibility of a Marxist reading, the novel ultimately seems to shy away from foregrounding such an interpretation for

the devil's actions, instead, pointing the finger of blame at the instances of social inequality that are depicted in the novel as one of several key contributing factors behind Regan's possession. Though interestingly Karras's sacrifice at the end of the novel - he invokes the devil to possess him before leaping to his death - might still be read as an enactment of the ideologically socialist commandment to "love your neighbour as yourself" irrespective of their wealth or status.

In the light of Hantke's suggestion that the horror novels of the boom period such as *The Exorcist* "tally the prize that had to be paid in exchange for Reagan's neoliberal makeover" (Hantke, 2016: 161), it is significant that what neo-Marxist Erik Olin Wright identified as "dominance of the proletariat in the second half of the twentieth century" (Devine, 22) in the U.S. did not lead to any widespread social change on the level feared by earlier writers such as Lovecraft. In part, this is likely a result of the fragmentation of the working class as sectors of what had previously been the middle class "were being absorbed … as a result of deskilling" (Devine, 22), and partly a result of the "limited power of the labour movement" (Devine, 22) which meant it was progressively more difficult to mobilise collectively. Furthermore, a sense of collectivism among the working class decreased as lifestyles shifted away from "community orientated form [s] of social life towards recognition of the conjugal family and its fortunes as concerns of overriding importance" (Goldthorpe qtd in Devine 204). That is to say that as the working class grew in number, their desires also became less collectivist, and more individualist in nature, reflecting Thomas Wolfe's famous claim that the 1970s were "the greatest age of individualism in American history!" (qtd in Zaretsky, 194). It is interesting to note that it is during the same period that the U.S. saw an increasingly atomised, yet growing, working class that Stephen King's novels hit the bestseller lists. For, as John Sears suggests, King's earlier fictions recurrently depict the importance of community and communal action, repeatedly portraying "a small and disparate group […who must…] regroup and learn to live together … in the face of extreme manifestations of monstrous otherness." (3). Indeed, King's novels often explore the tensions caused by neoliberal policies: "the cardinal virtues […of which are…] greed, personal satisfaction, and indifference to the plight of others" (Blake, 240) with examples such as *The Shining* (1977) being called "a Marxist critique of class warfare" (Magistrale: 2003, XIV) and *Needful Things* (1991) providing the reader with an "image of an American society swallowing itself in pursuit of selfish goals" (P. Davis: 81).

King's own early life has something of the Horatio Alger myth to it, as Sharon A. Russell notes "the story of [King's] early life resembles tales about children born into poverty who grow up to be president or head of a big company" (1). King was raised by his Mother, after his father left the family when King was two. The story of King's childhood, which is detailed in the autobiographical *Danse Macabre* (1981), tells of a struggling family with few material possessions but which never went hungry due to the efforts of his mother, Nellie, who tirelessly supported her children with a variety of low paid jobs. Interested in writing from an early age, Stephen graduated high school and was accepted to the prestigious private Drew University, an offer he had to turn down as his family could not afford the fees for him to attend. King chose instead to attend the University of Maine. At university the future bestselling author had to work in several jobs, and even then he existed very near the poverty line; his future wife Tabitha recollecting her first meeting with Stephen notes: "Talk about going to college poor – this guy was going to college the way people did in the twenties and thirties. He had nothing to eat, he had no money, he had no clothes; it was just incredible that anyone was going to school under those circumstances" (qtd Winter, 26). Things did not significantly improve financially for King following University. Indeed, as has been well documented, King, Tabitha (now his wife), and their two children, found themselves living in a trailer, with "not … enough money to pay their telephone bill" (Magistrale: 2010, 8-9), King was working in a laundry

and Tabitha did shifts at a branch of Dunkin' Donuts. Desperate to progress his writing career and to begin making enough money to live on, King began sending manuscripts to one of the more prolific publishers of the time, Doubleday. Though initially unsuccessful, King's work found favour with one of the editors there, Bill Thompson, who, following revisions, convinced the publisher to offer King a $2,500 advance for a novel he had submitted to them called *Carrie* (1974). *Carrie* sold a reasonable "13,000 copies in hardcover in 1974" (Magistrale: 2010, 9) but then went on to have immense commercial success upon paperback publication, selling over 2.5 million copies. As a number of critics have pointed out, *Carrie*'s success was emblematic of changes in the publishing industry, particularly when it came to the release of work in 'disreputable' genres such as horror. *Carrie*, bought by New American Library for paperback publication, could almost have been engineered to capitalise on the huge success of Levin's *Rosemary's Baby* (1967) and the release of *The Exorcist* (1973) as a triumvirate of novels that deal with post-war baby boomer anxieties concerning reproduction and children. De Palma's cinematic adaption in 1976 further cemented the commercial success of King's initial novel. Interestingly, King speaks of this period with both elation and fear, evidencing a resistance to the trappings of wealth that speaks to his professed anti-materialist leanings: "Suddenly all of my friends thought I was rich. That was bad enough, scary enough; what was worse was the fact that maybe I was. People began to talk about investments, about tax shelters, about moving to California" (Danse, 448). Indeed, King's persona has always been one of the small-town boy done well. The author has always foregrounded his working class upbringing and outlook, self-deprecatingly calling himself "a hick" (qtd in Underwood & Miller, 254) in one interview, and suggesting in another that he most identifies with those who find themselves towards the bottom of the socio-economic hierarchy: "The people who I write about are generally speaking not very rich or very cultured, maybe because I'm not very cultured, because I don't have any idea what it is to be rich … like estates in Newport … or having portraits in the hall (qtd Underwood and Miller, 235-6).

While it has often been suggested that King chooses to centralise protagonists and write about experiences that a predominantly "mainstream middle-class audience can easily identify with" (Simpson, 89) my focus on King as a significant writer in terms of Horror and class during the 1970s and 1980s marks a conscious rejection of critics' claims that "King's unswervingly middle-class vision has nothing good to say about either the lower or upper class." (Joshi: 2001, 93). Indeed, I believe that many of King's novels offer surprisingly detailed and complex explorations of class. Sometimes, King offers the reader decidedly, blue collar protagonists whose homespun values act as a bulwark, an often empowering force, in the face of a capitalist form of modernity (see *Salem's Lot*, *Needful Things*). In other cases, King's novels wrestle with class prejudice and social inequality, exposing the lack of compassion that permeates society and the pernicious effects this can have on the individual (see *Carrie, The Shining*). The last two novels I will look at in this chapter, *Misery*, and *The Dark Half*, are perhaps the most interesting in the ways in which they expand this consideration of class to encompass an, at times, startlingly critical interrogation of the writers and readers of popular fiction.

Tony Magistrale has proposed that "King's strong blue-collar work ethic and respect for the working class was born in early real life struggles" (Magistrale: 2010, 3) and given its position as King's 'breakthrough' novel it is interesting to note just how overt King's engagement with class is in *Carrie*. Famously, King's inspiration for the novel's central character, Carrie White, was formed from a composite of two girls he knew of while at high school:

> "She was a very peculiar girl who came from a very peculiar family. Her mother wasn't a religious nut like the mother in *Carrie*; she was a game nut, a sweepstakes nut who

subscribed to magazines for people who entered contests … the girl had one change of clothes for the entire school year, and all the other kids made fun of her. I have a very clear memory of the day she came to school with a new outfit she'd bought herself. She was a plain-looking country girl, but she'd changed the black skirt and white blouse – which was all anybody had ever seen her in – for a bright-colored checkered blouse with puffed sleeves and a skirt that was fashionable at the time. And everybody made *worse* fun of her because nobody wanted to see her change the mold." (qtd Einfeldt, 2016)

What is more interesting here is the manner in which King's reading is informed by an awareness of poverty as a demobilising and pernicious force. King is sensitive to the girl's entrapment as a victim of larger social forces beyond her control. Carrieta 'Carrie' White is, we are told "A frog among swans" (4) and a "group scapegoat" (18) who lives in a down at heel bungalow with a cuckoo clock bought with "green stamps" and a "faded, starting-to-be-threadbare rug" (37). Moreover, Carrie's life, we quickly discover, has always been influenced by her family's class status. We learn that Carrie's father "died in February of 1963 when a steel girder fell out of a carrying sling on a housing-project job in Portland" (13), a fate distinctly unlikely to befall the wealthy, middle-class parents of Carrie's classmates such as "typical society bitch" (135) Christine Hargensen whose father is a well-paid lawyer. Though, largely presented as a one dimensional character in the film adaptation, King's novel provides Carrie's mother, Margaret, with a backstory that details the difficult circumstances that led her to fall into poverty and then religious fundamentalism. In the novel we find out that Margaret's own "parents were fairly well to do" (58) but when her father was killed in a barroom shooting, Margaret found herself jettisoned by her uncaring mother and her new lover who want rid of her as quickly as possible. As a result of her own husband's work related death, Margaret is then forced to work in a low paid job: "Momma worked on the speed ironer and folder down at the Blue Ribbon Laundry in Chamberlain Centre. She had worked there since Carrie was five, when the compensation and insurance that had resulted from her father's accident had begun to run out. (37)

This alertness to the injustices of the class system feeds into *Carrie*, combining, in parts, with a broader sense of the Gothic's recurrent concern with "notions of power and agency, the forces of social conformity and their effects upon individual freedoms" (Sears, 30). King utilises the novel's high school setting to examine the class related anxiety that plagues all of its central female, teenage characters. The novel's depiction of high school is riven with elitist cliques and the biggest worry that most of the girls have is that they will be prevented from going to the prom and therefore excluded from the symbolic social order; as Sue Snell laments "No fifth wheels need apply. Mortimer Snurd, please keep out. Aspiring country club members and future residents of Kleen Korners only" (76). Indeed, this exploration of class extends beyond the young women in the novel. *Carrie* also mirrors the victimised central character with her eventual tormentor, Billy Nolan. Both characters' poor backgrounds have limited their capacity for self-fulfilment and actualisation. Billy is "what the other kids called a white-soxer or a machine-shop Chuck" (127), from "what the social workers called a broken home" (135). Billy's actions in disrupting the high school prom are clearly motivated by class hatred, a distinct sense that he has been excluded from the pleasures afforded his richer classmates: "They breasted the Brickyard Hill and there was the high school below them, the parking lot filled with plump, glistening daddies' cars. He felt the familiar gorge of disgust and hate rise in his throat. We'll give them something." (136) The novel's liberal ideological standpoint works to explain the reasons why Billy and Carrie do what they do, suggesting, in a Naturalistic fashion, that they are as much victims as victimisers, sufferers at the hands of a larger system which they can do

little to change. Indeed, perhaps the novel's most important statement about class is contained in what at first appears to be a simple digression by one of the White's previous neighbours, Estelle Horan. Horan, being interviewed for *Esquire* magazine, recalls a vivid memory of experiencing poverty first hand in the big city:

> I wanted to cry but it was too real to cry about, not like the movies. Once when I was in New York I saw an old drunk leading a little girl in a blue dress by the hand. The girl had cried herself into a bloody nose. The drunk had goitre and his neck looked like an inner tube. There was a red bump in the middle of his forehead and a long white string on the serge jacket he was wearing. Everyone kept going and coming because, if you did, then pretty soon you wouldn't see them any more. That was real too. (32-33)

In this sequence, "the surface of life is peeled back … to show the abject which lies 'behind' it", that which is secret" (Hanson, 142). Horan's recollection foregrounds the novel's concern with exposing the debilitating effects of poverty, which come to a climax in the spectacular events at the end of the novel.

The prom functions as a symbolic entry into middle-class society for the school girls; the event culminates with the crowning of a symbolic king and queen. It is significant that in order to even be allowed to attend the event Carrie has to enter and engage with the world of the American bourgeoisie; represented in her purchasing of material from an upmarket clothing store: "she … bought the material at John's in Westover. The heavy crumpled velvet richness of it frightened her. The price had also frightened her, and she had been intimidated by the size of the place, the chic ladies wandering here and there … it was worlds from the Chamberlain Woolworth's where she usually bought her material (90). It is also important that it is the outsider Billy that leads the plan to ruin the prom, an event he resents exclusion from, convincing himself that it is ridiculous: "Someone had drawn the floor silhouette of the King and Queen thrones which would be placed the following day. Then the entire apron would be strewn with paper flowers … why, Christ only knew" (138). Pointedly, Billy uses his working class skills to break into the gym where the dance is to be held, using a jimmy that he has made in "the Chamberlain metal shop" (137). Though, initially convinced to ruin the prom for Carrie by his desire to please his higher class status girlfriend Chris, Billy quickly transcends this motivation reconceptualising his actions in terms of a class war; as he suggests:

> Chris said chances were good that Tommy Ross and the White bitch would be the ones under the buckets … That would be good, if it happened. But, for Billy, any of the others would be all right too. He was beginning to think that it would be all right if it was Chris herself." (141).

Accompanied to the prom by Tommy Ross, one of the very few "socially conscious" (89) young men at her school, upon entry Carrie is instantly entranced by the wealthy trappings on show: "The first thing that struck Carrie when they walked in was Glamour. Not glamour but Glamour. Beautiful shadows rustled about in chiffon, lace, silk, satin … scooped bodices … Empire waists. Long skirts, pumps. Blinding white dinner jackets, cummerbunds, black shoes that had been spit-shined" (142). However, this novel's version of Cinderella does not experience a happy ending through assimilation into the bourgeois order; as Carrie later realises: "now the fairy tale was green with corruption and evil" (181). Instead of experiencing what it's like to "go first-class" (158) for the night of the prom, Carrie and Tommy have buckets of pigs' blood dropped on them by Chris and Billy causing Carrie to react and unleash her devastating telekinetic powers on the town of Chamberlain. Significantly, Carrie's first thoughts are to revenge herself in class terms, by destroying the markers of decadent glamour that belong to those around her: "Turn on the sprinkler

system and close all the doors. Look in and let them see *her* looking in, watching and laughing while the shower ruined their dresses and their hairdos and took the shine off their shoes" (184). While Carrie's violent retaliation leaves Chamberlain "a blackened and shattered hub" (236), her destructive actions ultimately mean she is unable to claim a place in the bourgeois order of the town. Carrie longs for the self-empowerment she reads into the glamour of the prom but ends up "a scarecrow figure with bulging eyes" (187), whose actions are mediated and controlled by the host of middle-class professionals that author the varied documents (medical reports, police dispatches, sociological treatises) which constitute the 'official' history of the events presented in King's novel.

This attempt to control Carrie - "burying the Carrie White affair under the bureaucratic mat" (240) – is, the novel indicates, futile, as the final excerpt in the text demonstrates. As the disastrous events in in the town of Chamberlain come to their close, the reader is provided with information that suggests another little girl from a poor background has telekinetic powers. Though currently just "playin with her brothers marbles … giggeling and laffing [sic]" (242) this girl, Annie, points to the novel's critique being directed not at the individual and their potential for evil, but rather the larger system's mishandling of those at the bottom of the socio-economic scale.

Whitley Streiber's *The Wolfen* (1978) also warns of the dangers of ignoring the victims of society's socio-economic failings, infusing the werewolf myth with an implicitly anti-capitalist element. In the novel a race of wolf-like creatures have preyed upon mankind for centuries but it is the twentieth century's almost complete indifference for those at the bottom of society that has meant the titular creatures have been able to operate without fear of repercussion:

> Toward the end of the nineteenth century the human population all over the world had started to explode, poverty and filth had spread. Huge masses of people were ignored and abandoned by the societies in which they lived. And they were fodder for these werewolves, who range through the shadows devouring the beggars, the wanderers, those without name or home. (141)

One such instance of this deprivation is the Bronx, where the Wolfen feed on the "dregs, the isolated, the forgotten" (81) of society, of which the novel suggests there are many. Indeed, the Wolfen are only uncovered by the two central detective characters because they mistakenly kill someone who is not one of the usual "unnumbered corpses rotting in the abandoned basements and rubble of the empty neighbourhood." (49) In contrast to the Wolfen's usual victims, Mike O' Donnell has "a home and was missed."(49). The much later *The Light At The End* (1986) would also use New York's deprived neighbourhoods as the location of its horror, capitalising on the vampire as a metaphor to explore fears concerning the spread of infection and disease amongst the poor. The recurrent use of New York City as a *locus terribilis* should not be surprising given its status as "the most famous example of urban decay" (Colavito, 287) during the 1970s and '80's. Indeed, as Colavito details many inner cities were perceived as "hotbeds of violence and penury" (286) as the middle classes, aided by post-war affluence, the automobile, and the rapid expansion of the Highway system moved out of urban centres to more picturesque suburbs, leading in turn to "a vicious cycle, poverty and crime reduced the willingness and ability of city governments and businesses to invest in city infrastructure, promoting more decay that only reinforced the cycle of poverty and crime." (Colavito, 286) *The Light At The End's* antagonist, Rudy Pasco, is linked literally and symbolically to the sense of inner city decay; before being turned into a vampire he is a punk who frequents New York's bars and clubs, once he becomes a vampire he is able to control a

horde of pestilent rats and hides out in Avenue B or "Junkie Heaven" where "Young men … were passed out in the filth on the sidewalk. Little kids were running around, calling each other motherfuckers … Everybody either looked armed or too wasted to care any more." (255) The vampire Rudy prospers in the city, riding its underground in order hide from the sunlight and infect the poor who use the subway network as a makeshift home: "They were derelicts all, and the stench was overwhelming: they were already rotting before they died, and un-death had done nothing for their personal hygiene." (325) The novel makes it clear that because Rudy moves in a part of the city more familiar to "*junkies, whores, bums, and dealers*" (232) his actions go largely undetected by the city authorities, and, instead, the task of vanquishing him falls to a ragtag bunch of individuals familiar with the inner city environment.

One of the influences on *The Light At The End* must have been King's next major novel, *Salem's Lot* (1975), which contemporises Stoker's *Dracula* narrative and was, according to the author, born out of a desire to meld the literary with the popular: "to combine the overlord-vampire myth from Bram Stoker's *Dracula* with the naturalistic fiction of Frank Norris and the EC horror comics I'd loved as a child" (ix), in the process, giving us a central vampire antagonist, Kurt Barlow, who is "a pop-cult hybrid … part nobility and part blood-thirsty dope" (King, "Afterword", 749).

Like *Carrie*, *Salem's Lot* critiques (albeit more implicitly) the unfair distribution of wealth in the US; King himself has suggested the novel is "a metaphor for everything that was wrong with the society around me, where the rich got richer and the poor got welfare … if they were lucky" ("Afterword", 749). Though possessing some of the extra-sensory powers of Stoker's vampire count, it is the capital that Barlow wields through his helper, the "courtly" (281) Straker, which enables him to so easily gain a foothold in the town of 'salem's Lot, putting others at his "beck and call" (93) with his wealth. Straker is first aided in his attempt to takeover by Larry Crockett, a sleazy real estate agent who arranges his move to the Lot. The novel suggests that Crockett is willing to overlook the morally suspect aspects of the Barlow job because of his greediness: "The deal this crazyman was offering him was the kind of thing that came along once, if ever." (92) A decision made worse by the fact that we learn Crockett is already "without doubt, the richest man in 'salem's Lot" (121). The message seems to be that wealth corrupts exponentially; in spite of his money (or perhaps because of it) Crockett is driven to do his "deals with the devil" (95) bringing dire consequences for the rest of the town. The corrupting power of Barlow's wealth then extends to Crockett's silencing of Hank, one of the men he employs to carry out the removal job: "Crockett took out his wallet out of his back pocket, opened it, and counted five ten-dollar bills out on the desk" (139). Hank has a strong suspicion that Straker is behind the disappearance (and death) of the young boy Ralphie Glick, but Crockett threatens him with blackmail and then bribes him to keep quiet. In a somewhat heavy-handed fashion Barlow articulates his reasons for coming to the U.S.A in an exchange with one of the town's residents, suggesting that what drew him specifically to the U.S. is its inherent materialism:

> The country is an amazing paradox. In other lands, when a man eats to his fullest day after day, that man becomes fat… sleepy … piggish. But in this land … it seems the more you have the more aggressive you become … like a child at a birthday party, who will push away another baby even though he himself can eat no more. (332)

Though King's attempt to "combine *Dracula* and *Tales from the Crypt* and come out with *Moby-Dick*" (x) is not always successful in literary terms it is nevertheless important as the first sustained instance of King's recurrent concern with interrogating the validity of popular fictions and as such can be read in terms of the often class-based discourses surrounding horror fiction during the 1970s and 1980s.

The protagonist of *Salem's Lot*, Ben Mears, is a kind of idealised author substitute who combines intellectual knowledge - he chose to drop out of college for ideological reasons - with the sort of manual skills King favours in his central characters: "We first see Ben as the man who is good both with his hands and his mind; he fixes cars and writes a novel" (Russell, 35). Ben's background is as a writer of 'literary' novels with titles such as *Conway's Daughter* and *Billy Said Keep Going*, texts that are thought of as "pretty racy" (270) by some of the Lot's residents and which have not been well received by the cognoscenti either: "most of the critics had clobbered it" (27). However, as King's story begins Ben is at the point of writing a new novel, however this time he is "writing it for money. Art is wonderful, but just once I'd like to pull a big number out of the hat" (225). This new book is inspired by the previous horrors surrounding the history of the Marsten house, and the novel sets up an abject dynamic between author and subject that speaks to Gothic horror's own preoccupation with revisiting and commercialising the experience of trauma. Though Ben ultimately chooses to burn the manuscript at the end of the novel in a move that presages his burning of the Lot itself, Ben believes that "tapping into the atmosphere of the place" will enable him "to write a book scary enough to make me a million dollars" (168) while also enabling him to take "control of the situation" (168) and exorcise his childhood fears.

Though S.T. Joshi rather dismissively suggests that King's popularity is down to his ability to deliver "a reliable product that, for the most part, remains within fairly fixed parameters and therefore delivers a predictable effect on his readers, in the same manner as McDonalds or Budweiser" (2012: 625) his criticism does not go much further than this to consider the reasons why a formulaic author like King might have initially found such success during the 1970s. Yet, as has been noted by a host of critics, Wood foremost among them, these decades of "cultural crisis and disintegration" (Wood, 84) gave birth to a "legacy of paranoia" (Phillips, 108) in which Americans felt as though they were "standing about in the ruins of structures that had, little more than a decade before, seemed stable and changeless" (Skolnick, 127). It is possible then that the mechanical nature of King's novels, and the host of King "wannabes, opportunists" (Joshi, 2012: 632) might have served a reassuring function in an era of moral and ideological uncertainty, adhering to the Frankfurt School's criticisms of popular culture as a type of "social cement" (Adorno, 82). Joshi notes the propensity in fiction of the boom period for "happy endings that neatly resolve the myriad crises elaborated upon in the text" (2012: 618). Certainly, King himself has always discussed the horror genre as one that "confirms our good feelings about the status quo" (*Danse*, 22), creating for the reader an imaginative space in which they can "see their own world is not as bad as the world of the novel" (26). The horror novel boom of the period might have functioned in a palliative fashion, giving a necessary voice to the "collective nightmares" (Wood, 78) of the U.S. during the 1970's and the 1980's, for, as one of the characters in 'salem's Lot exclaims: "if a fear cannot be articulated, it can't be conquered" (289). The class-based implications of such a reading of the Horror novel boom are significant. Frankfurt School thinker Leo Lowenthal suggests that because of its tendency towards "standardisation, stereotype, conservatism, mendacity" (11), popular culture has depoliticised the working classes, limiting its hopes and dreams to political and economic goals that can be realised safely within the pre-existent capitalist system.

It is possible to read King's fiction as fulfilling this social purpose, the possibility of interpreting a novel such as '*Salem's Lot* as a self-reflexive commentary upon the function of popular fiction does indicate a desire to use Horror to explore something more potentially radical. Though we are told that most of those in 'salem's Lot continue to enjoy the base pleasures of "tales of nastiness and murder" (176) the majority of the town's residents have long since stopped believing in the literal reality of monsters; as the teacher

Matt Burke suggests "One was taught that such things could not be … Of course monsters existed; they were the men with their fingers on the thermonuclear triggers in six countries, the hijackers, the mass murders, the child molesters. But not this. One knows better" (237). The two exceptions to this are the writer Ben, and the twelve year old Mark Petrie, a "slender … and bookish" (78) boy who shares Ben's openness to the fantastic: "Mark Petrie had the entire set of Aurora plastic monsters – wolfman, mummy, Dracula, Frankenstein, the mad doctor, and even the Chamber of Horrors." (109) When others in the town are oblivious to the presence of Straker's vampire invasion it is Mark's familiarity with popular narratives which gives him the capacity to save himself from the vampire Danny Glick. We are told that Mark is able to make an "accurate judgement of his position in seconds" (338) and that he knows not to invite Danny in "from his monster magazines, the ones his mother was afraid might damage or warp him in some way" (338-9). The novel proposes that it is Ben and Mark's willingness to believe in the validity of popular narrative forms; that others have dismissed as crazy or childish (in this case the Gothic excesses of the vampire tale), that helps them survive the horrific events which take place in 'salem's Lot. At the midpoint of the novel, Mark combats the vampirised Danny Glick by literally using a physical incarnation of the pulp stories he loves:

> The plastic ghoul was walking through a plastic grave-yard and one of the monuments was in the shape of a cross.

> With no pause for thought or consideration … Mark swept up the cross, curled it into a tight fist, and said loudly: 'Come on in, then' … The smile of triumph on the Glick-thing's mouth became a yawning grimace of agony. Smoke spurted from the pallid flesh, and for just a moment, before the creature twisted away and half dived, half fell out the window, Mark felt the flesh yield like smoke (340).

Ben, specifically, has returned to 'salem's Lot because of an unresolved incident in his childhood in which he believes he saw the hanging corpse of devil worshipper Hubie Marsten open his eyes and stare right at him. Ben is one of the few adults in the narrative who is open to the possibility of non-rational interpretation:

> There may be some truth in that idea that houses absorb the emotions that are spent in them, that they hold a kind of … dry charge. Perhaps the right personality, that of an imaginative boy, for instance, could act as a catalyst on that dry charge, and cause it to produce an active manifestation of… of something. I'm not talking about ghosts, precisely. I'm talking about a kind of psychic television in three dimensions. Perhaps even something alive. A monster, if you like. (55)

As Russell notes, "[Ben] accepts the reality of what he encountered in the Marsten House as a child" (35) even though this reality appears to contravene an empiricist, rational worldview. Such is the impact of this childhood experience that Ben now sees himself as forever altered; as someone who is "extremely sympathetic to people whose stories seem utterly insane in light of rational knowledge" (255). It is the horror obsessed Mark that eventually kills Straker and Ben who dispatches Barlow and purges 'salem's Lot of its vampire curse. Horror, and its ability to alert the individual to the persistence of Evil, not in a metaphysical or Freudian sense, but rather as a literal reality, serves an empowering function in the novel. Ben's experience of horror as a child opens him up to a belief in the existence of further horrors as an adult, a sensitivity that ultimately saves his own life.   Indeed, it is not too much of a leap to read the novel's desire to confirm the existence of Evil as a self-reflexive gesture towards validating the Horror

genre itself. Though we may have chosen to believe that we live in a world "where there are no witches or incubi or vampires … but only child-beating, incest, and the rape of the environment" (426), ultimately *'Salem's Lot* seems to argue for a more Manichean worldview in which those who are not alert to the truths contained in the Horror novel are put at risk.

Given the popularity of Marxist readings of the vampire as "perfectly embod[ying] the way in which human life nourishes the machine of capitalist production" (Punter & Byron, 269) it was perhaps inevitable that King's novel was far from the only work during the 1970s and 1980s to feature the figure. Anne Rice's *Interview With The Vampire* (1976) takes a very different approach to *'Salem's Lott*, reconfiguring the vampire into an anti-heroic and Byronic individual, much more directly indebted to the aristocratic nature of Stoker's titular *Dracula* (a trend that would be followed by a host of later novels including Whitley Streiber's *The Hunger* (1981). Rice's novel recounts the life story of young, rich plantation owner, Louis de Pointe du Lac, first, as he is transformed into a vampire by Lestat de Lioncourt, and then detailing the tumultuous relationship that develops between the two characters as their differing responses to being immortal bring them into conflict. Though Rice is much more concerned with exploring the philosophical questions raised by the idea of living forever, the novel does engage with class in some interesting ways. At the beginning of the novel a conservative priest tells Louis that the "entire country of France was under the influence of the devil, and the Revolution had been his greatest triumph" (15). This anti-revolutionary stance is personified in the figure of Lestat, who though depicted as a decadent aesthete by the time we meet him in the novel, is supplied with a backstory (elaborated further in Rice's other Vampire Chronicles) that hints at both an element of class struggle and the pernicious effects of wealth on the individual. We find out that Lestat turns Louis into a vampire "because [he] wanted the house I owned and my money" (308). Initially, these are needed so that Lestat can afford to look after his elderly father, yet, as Louis soon realises, Lestat's desire for wealth seems to be as tied to a necessity to convince himself that he has done all he can for his father as it is about actually fulfilling his father's wishes; his father exclaiming at one point that "He would have been content on his little farm" (42). Instead of leaving his father to live this more simple life, Louis notes that Lestat pushes "luxury upon his father to an almost ludicrous point" (41), emphasising the character's twisted, material values. Lestat's attitude towards his father, and the distance this has put between them - "a great gulf existed between father and son, both in education and refinement" (42) – also hints at some previous experience of class mobility on Lestat's part, but one that has left him "Consumed with envy", in a position where "nothing pleased him unless he could take it from others" (52). While Darryl Jones rather reductively dismisses any attempt to interpret "Rice's novels as the work of a Marxist satirist" as "wrong" (97) Lestat's punishment at the end of the novel, as he is left a bitter and decrepit figure; while conversely Louis experiences a moment of (albeit melancholy) self-realisation, and lives on, suggests a desire, on Rice's part, to condemn Lestat's avarice and self-indulgence as a waste of his immortality. A theme that Rice would return to throughout The Vampire Chronicles.

King's *The Shining* (1977), contains less self-referential commentary than *'Salem's Lot*. Instead what we find in the first of King's novels to enter the hardcover bestseller's list is a kind of an anti-capitalist fable about the corrupting and debilitating effects of materialism. As the noted critic Frederic Jameson has suggested "*The Shining* lends itself to a Marxist critique of class warfare between the ruling hegemony ensconced at the hotel and Torrance's working class positioning" (Magistrale: 2003, XIV). The novel sets up this class divide from the very first chapter where we witness Jack Torrance's "Job Interview" with the Overlook Hotel's manager, Stuart Ullman; an "*officious little prick*" (3). We quickly learn that Ullman is a snob who believes the Overlook to be a "great hotel" (11) primarily because of the rich and wealthy people

that have stayed there: "Vanderbilts … and Rockefellers, and Astors, and Du Ponts. Four presidents have stayed in the Presidential Suite. Wilson, Harding, Roosevelt, and Nixon." (6) Furthermore, while Ullman is fully conversant with the day to day running of the hotel he is a man whose knowledge stops at the level of the bourgeois sphere. Ullman, for example, does not "concern himself with such mundane aspects of the Overlook's operation as the boiler and the plumbing" (5). While Torrance takes an instant dislike to the hotel's manager, he recognises the limitations of his socio-economic situation: "he kept quiet. He needed the job" (4). Jack, his wife Wendy, and five year old son Danny, are currently struggling to pay the rent in a downmarket property in Boulder, Colorado:

> The hallway walls were gouged and marked with crayons, grease pencil, spray paint. The stairs were steep and splintery. The whole building smelled of sour age, and what sort of place was this for Danny after the small neat brick house in Stovington? The people living above them on the third floor weren't married, and while that didn't bother her, their constant, rancorous fighting did. It scared her. (12)

At the start of the novel Jack and his family are living in a precarious economic situation. Previously a creative writing teacher at "one of the finest prep schools in New England" (39), Jack was fired from his job when his drinking fuelled anger got out of hand and he assaulted a pupil, George Hatfield. This attack is couched in terms of class warfare. George, is the wealthy, some might claim spoilt son of "a corporation lawyer" (120). Though George is all but guaranteed a place at a prestigious law school due to his father's ability to "pull some strings" (120) he nevertheless signs up for the school's debating team believing the experience will look good on his admission form. Unfortunately, George has a stutter that prevents him from speaking effectively, and Jack removes him from the team. Jack then finds George slashing the tyres of his VW and violently beats him. In line with the suggestion that "class is more keenly felt by those who experience its deprivations than by those who enjoy its privileges" (Jackman and Jackman, 69), we are told that Jack, feels a "sick sort of exultation" (122) upon physically attacking George, a joy born out of his realisation that "For the first time in his life George Hatfield had wanted something he could not have. For the first time there was something wrong that all of daddy's money could not fix" (122).

Jack's actions have dire consequences. The family's "unravelling finances" (38) mean that Jack can no longer afford to send Danny to nursery school, he cannot afford to get the fuel pump fixed on his VW car, and all the Torrances have left in their checking account is "six hundred dollars" (39). The family's terrible financial situation has a direct emotional effect on their psychological well-being too: as Danny notes when reading his mother's mind: "Some of the things that she worried about were too grown-up for Danny to understand - vague things that had to do with security, with Daddy's *selfimage*, feelings of guilt and anger and the fear of what was to become of them" (29). Significantly, so much of what we learn about Jack, his insecurity and self-hatred, is filtered through Danny's 'shining', a form of telepathy that enables him to accurately read the thoughts of others. The result being that we, like Danny, enter an abject relationship with the character of Jack, feeling some sympathy for him when we learn of his intense self-anxiety brought on by his inability to provide financially for his family: "He seemed to think they would be better off if he left" (30). Mediated through his son's eyes, Jack becomes a tragic figure, as Russell suggests: "Jack, already trapped by his past, must take this job. It is his last hope. If the hotel draws him in, he is a partner because his circumstances give him no room to move" (48). Manchel concurs, proposing that "Like many anxious and insecure men, out-of-work and deluded by myths of success and a second chance, Jack Torrance is a sad figure more deserving of our pity than our contempt" (92). Jack's decision to take the job at the Overlook is one at least partly born out of his prior inability to find satisfaction in

the class system. To make matters worse we also learn that Jack's artistic ambitions (he hopes to write a play while stopping overwinter at the Overlook) have always been stifled by his socio-economic background; as Wendy recalls "She had been thinking of her mother for most of the five hours Jack had been gone, her mother's prophecy that Jack would never come to anything. *Big Ideas*, her mother had said. Sure. *The welfare lines are full of educated fools with big ideas*" (53). The novel's positioning of the character of Jack as a victim of larger socio-economic systems which he is powerless to combat showing something of King's debt to "naturalist writers [such] as Thomas Hardy, Jack London, and Theodore Dreiser" (Russell, 4). King depicts Jack as trapped between the need to earn a wage in order to support his wife and child and his desire to re-enter the cultured middle class position he previously occupied as teacher and writer; "his extracurricular literary ambitions" (114). In a Marxian sense, Jack is shown to be suffering from alienation, his economic situation preventing him from realising his creative potential.

The Torrances are, at first, ill-suited to the ostentation of the Overlook hotel. Jack is immediately out of place in the lobby: "I feel conspicuous standing out here in the middle with my denim jacket on" (73), while Wendy feels decidedly gauche in relation to the hotel's upmarket splendour: "The Presidential Suite, with its cold elegance, had made her feel cooperative and clumsy" (104).Yet in spite of these concerns, the Torrances nevertheless have to stay, for "If they leave, they have no place to go, no money, no hope" (Russell, 53). Before the winter sets in Jack finds a scrapbook of the Overlook's "great and honourable past" (196). A past that includes the former owner selling the hotel to "a bunch of Las Vegas sharpies who dealt it through so many dummy corporations that not even the IRS knew who really owned it. About how they waited until the time was right and then turned it into a playground for Mafia bigwigs, and about how it had to be shut down in 1966 when one of them got a little bit dead" (196). Even though he is aware of its morally dubious past the corrupting influence of the hotel is such that Jack is unable to resist its dissolute attractions; as the character notes "while he was fascinated by the Overlook, he didn't much like it" (203). Indeed, in addition to using the contents of the scrapbook to get revenge on Ullman and his "little Caeser tendencies" (203) by phoning him up and threatening to expose the truth, Jack believes the hotel's checkered history will make for a great story, providing him with the material for the novel he has promised himself he would write:

> God, what a story! And they had all been here, right above him, in those empty rooms.
> Screwing expensive whores on the third floor, maybe. Drinking magnums of champagne.
> Making deals that would turn over millions of dollars, maybe in the very suite of rooms
> where Presidents had stayed. There was a story, all right. One hell of a story. (179)

Though, seemingly aware, on some level, that his phone call to Ullman may have been an attempt "to be fired while there was still time" (203) Jack nevertheless, chooses to stay at the Overlook. Even when Danny emerges from Room 217 with mysterious bruises on his neck, Jack never seriously contemplates leaving. Partly this reluctance is due to the family's dire financial situation: "When they got down to Sidewinder they would arrive with sixty dollars and the clothes they stood up in" (294); partly it is to do with his realisation that: "It wasn't Danny who was the weak link, it was him. He was the vulnerable one" (306); and partly it is due to the Overlook's hold over him: "Consider the difference if they didn't go down, if they could somehow stick it out. The play would get finished … Perhaps it would even make him some money … even lacking that, Al might convince the Stovington board to rehire him." (296) The Overlook has managed to ensnare Jack like so many others. Indeed, the hotel and the wealth that it promises is depicted as a trick in the novel; a lure for those in need, or want, of the profligacy it purports to offer them. Indeed, the season caretaker, Watson, himself the descendent of the hotel's original failed builder,

suggests that Ullman's real job is to help maintain this ruse on the part of the hotel: "that's what they pay him twenty two thousand bucks a season for … it's like some people just come here to throw up and they hire a guy like Ullman to clean up the messes" (24). The wealth of those involved with the Overlook has meant that its venality has gone unpunished; as one character notes: ""things had been done up at the old Overlook that never made the papers, because money has a way of talking" (445). Following Jack's discovery of the scrapbook detailing the many owners and scandals associated with the hotel, we learn that the Overlook's association with the corrupting influence of wealth goes back several decades, the building repeatedly attracting those who have placed money above everything else in their lives; as Russell notes: "Money brings the gangsters to the hotel and causes the gang war in which they are killed. A woman commits suicide because she learns she can't buy love. Grady is forced to isolate himself and his family because, like Jack, he needs money … The hotel destroys itself at the end because of money. It becomes a symbol of the abuse of power which can come with money" (Russell, 55). Though Jack believes that he can use the Overlook's past to fuel his re-entry into bourgeois society, he is in fact merely the latest in a long line of willing dupes. Correct in his belief that the Overlook "forms an index of the whole post-World War II American character" (205), Jack is not perceptive enough to see that given his position as merely "an employee of the hotel, no different from a busboy or a kitchen pot scrubber" (198) he is powerless to change this situation. Much as Marx notes of the individual worker under Capitalism: "capital is his existence, his life, for it determines the content of his life in a manner indifferent to him" (335), so the Hotel is ultimately unfeeling towards Jack and his family. Although Jack believes that he has entered into a mutually beneficial relationship with the Overlook: "He had served the Overlook, and now the Overlook would serve him" (366), the truth is that the Overlook wishes to subjugate his child: "the manager … is very interested in your son. Danny is a talented boy" (379) much as it has successfully enslaved him. The hotel, and those in charge of it, see Danny as a resource to be exploited: "Your son has a very great talent, one that the manager could use to further improve the Overlook, to further … enrich it" (388). Much like the Castavets's promise to further Guy's career in *Rosemary's Baby* if he will effectively prostitute his wife, allowing Satan to impregnate her, so the Overlook in *The Shining* tries to force Jack to choose between saving his son or promotion within the establishment: "Think how much further you yourself could go in the Overlook's organizational structure. Perhaps …in time … to the very top" (390). In what can be seen as a critique of the overwhelming effects of capitalism, what seals Jack's downfall is that he eventually chooses the Overlook over his family. He is overwhelmed by a desire to please his potential employers: "He heard the fawning servility in his own voice but was unable to control it" (425), and sets about trying to prove that he is worthy ": He would show them that … that he … that he was of *managerial timber*!" (461) Jack has been so consumed by the materialist lure of the hotel and its wealth that even when his son pleads with him and tries desperately to alert Jack to the Overlook's lies Jack ignores him. Significantly, at the end of the novel, Jack, a white, working class, middle-aged man has become the most immediate threat to those around him. This is due to his openness to becoming a tool of the larger patriarchal, capitalist system. In spite of his son's pleas, Jack is unable to see the con at the Overlook's heart: "'Yes, they promise,' Danny said, 'but they lie'" (474). Ironically, following his death in the explosion that also destroys the hotel, Jack is literally reduced to his material worth. His life insurance providing for his family by paying out to the sum of "over forty thousand dollars" (294). While symbolically Jack's very life has been assimilated into the machinations of the capitalist system, significantly it is those who exist at the edges of said system; a black man, Halloran, a downtrodden mother, Wendy; or are yet to enter the system; Danny, a five year old child, who are more aware of the inequities at the heart of the Overlook and so manage to survive its deceptive appeal.

King would not be the only author to explore the calamitous effects of misjudged tenancy during the 1970s. In his hugely commercially successful, though controversial, account of the 'true' events of *The Amityville Horror* (1977), Jay Anson constructs a haunted house narrative that relies, in part, on the threat of downward mobility for its scares. Indeed, the text can be read as a sort of warning that if something seems too good to be true then it probably is; as Murphy suggests "the Lutze's desire for the house and for the better way of life it represents blinds them to its unsavoury history" (111). At the start of the book the Lutzes, George and Kathy, and their three children Danny, Chris and Missy, move into the luxurious "6 bedroom Dutch Colonial" (7). Promised a chance to see "how the other half of Amityville lives" (6) by their estate agent, the Lutzes are drawn to the house by the appeal of getting a bargain; as the narrator reflects: "Eighty thousand dollars! For a house described like that in the listing, it would have to be falling apart, or the typist could have left out a "1" before the "8"" (7). Contrary to their initial expectations the house is "in fine condition" (7) and though they learn of the violent history of the house's previous tenants the Lutzes choose to buy the property. Somewhat inevitably, things quickly take a turn for the worse and the Lutzes are plagued by a series of strange events. What is more interesting is the emphasis Anson places on the material conditions that prevent the Lutzes from reacting in the manner that they should. George is best with financial problems: "George was beginning to choke with the pressure of mounting bills; for the house he had just taken on, and for the office, where he would shortly have a serious payroll deficit. All the cash that he and Kathy had saved had gone toward the expense of the closing, an old fuel bill, and paying off the boats and motorcycles" (126). To compound matters, George's brother in law, Jimmy, loses the $1500 he had drawn out to pay for his wedding caterer when he visits George and Kathy at the house, leading George to borrow money from his business to cover the lost cash. Much as Thomas Sutpen does in Faulkner's *Absalom! Absalom!*, and like Jack in *The Shining*, The Lutzess quickly become trapped by their property, with George exclaiming at one point "Every goddamn thing we own in the world is in this house! … I've got too much invested here to give it up just like that!" (229) Indeed, Murphy makes a compelling case that it is the "powerful economic undertow" (Murphy, 112) of the Lutzes' situation which accounts for the text's immense popularity: "the spectre of looming bankruptcy is more compelling than the alleged paranormal activity" (Murphy, 112). Duly, though the Lutzes' attempt to stop what is happening to them by reference to science (parapsychology) and religion (the Catholic Church and the act of blessing the house), the only thing that seems to work is to disinherit the house completely: "They left behind all their belongings, all their worldly goods, and all the money they had invested in their dream home. Just to be rid of the place, they signed their interest over to the bank that held the mortgage." (304) Much as the Lutzes initially ignore the house's violent history in favour of the material advancement it represents so they can only free themselves by sacrificing all of the wealth and possessions they own.

Though King has repeatedly suggested that his novels are there to entertain, being the "literary equivalent of a Big Mac and a large fries" (qtd in Bloom, 147) *Misery* (1987) occupies an important place in King's catalogue, marking an interesting shift towards a more concerted form of self-examination. Tony Magistrale proposes: "King's extensive canon can be divided roughly into half, since the books prior to *Misery* constitute the first part of his career, while those that follow tend to reflect a markedly different set of priorities" (Magistrale, 61). *Misery* constitutes a surprisingly complex statement on popular fiction, exploring, in part, "the 'misery' of popular authorship, its predictability, its oppressive repetitiveness and its overwhelming readerly demand" (Sears, 115).

When we first meet the protagonist of the novel, the writer Paul Sheldon, he is an elitist who thinks of popular fiction as "a degenerate sort" (272) of art. Even though his Misery Chastain novels sell hundreds

of thousands of copies and are responsible for "his main source of income over the last eight years" (13), Paul longs to break away from the Misery series. Paul wants to leave behind the "darling of the dump-bins and sweetheart of the supermarkets" (63) in order to try and be seen as a more 'serious' novelist "capable of producing better work" (Magistrale, 64). His latest attempt at a 'literary' novel is *Fast Cars*, a more self-consciously serious piece of work than the Misery Chastain series, Paul has high hopes for *Fast Cars*: "he sat there in front of the typewriter for a moment, thinking, *You may have just won next year's American Book Award, my friend*" (16). Paul has just completed *Fast Cars* when he is involved in a serious car accident and 'saved' by Annie Wilkes, who professes to be his "number one fan" (6).

Annie represents "fans as psychopaths whose frustrated fantasies … take violent and antisocial forms" (Jenkins, 13), embodying a negative interpretation of the term fan that has "connotations of religious and political zealotry; false beliefs, orgiastic excess, possession, and madness" (Jenkins, 12). Indeed, one of the first things Annie does, is confess her devotion to her favourite author: "In fact, Paul, I love you" (22), giving voice to the fear that fans are obsessive in their relationships to the items that they fetishize. More specifically, Annie represents the undiscerning reader of popular fiction, unable and unwilling to move beyond an emotional and, at times, irrational response to the work: "a woman who loved stories without having the slightest interest in the mechanics of making them. She was the embodiment of that Victorian archetype, Constant Reader. She did not want to hear about his concordance and indices because to her Misery and the characters surrounding her were perfectly real" (71). This description is highly reminiscent of Pierre Bourdieu's writing on the class bound nature of reading popular fiction in *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (1984). Bourdieu proposes that popular taste often favours content and emotional investment because it is excluded from the world of bourgeois cultural capital. Therefore, while Paul believes that Annie "*doesn't like the new book because she's too stupid to understand what it's up to*" (30) Bourdieu would see Annie's choosing to "want[s] Misery, Misery, Misery" (31) as a conscious response to being refused access to the cultural capital of the bourgeois sphere. Furthermore, Annie's reluctance to prize the "Technique" (24) of Paul's literary novel *Fast Cars*, which he believes is evidence of her lack of understanding, can be read as a deliberate refusal to participate in a mode of reading the logic of which serves to exclude her; as Bourdieu proposes: "Formal refinement – which, in literature or the theatre, leads to obscurity – is, in the eyes of the working-class public, one sign of what is sometimes felt to be a desire to keep the uninitiated at arm's length" (33).

The class and gender dynamics at the heart of *Misery* are significant and, at first glance, seem to reflect traditionally held attitudes towards the pernicious effects of popular fiction on its readers. Cora Kaplan notes in her study *Sea Changes: Essays on Culture and Feminism* (1986) while the common myth of the eighteenth century was that educated men were thought to read critically, women and working class readers were, in contrast, believed to identify uncritically with the characters and be swept away by the fantasy offered by popular romance. As Paul notes early in the novel, Annie's desire to keep rereading about the outlandish exploits of Misery Chastain are shared by a much larger group of (predominantly female) readers:

> while she might be crazy, was she so different in her evaluation of his work from the hundreds of thousands of other people across the country – ninety percent of them women – who could barely wait for each new five-hundred-page episode … each time he had taken a year or two off to write one of the other novels … he had received a flood of protesting letters from these women … The tone of these letters varied from bewilderment (that always hurt the most somehow), to reproach, to outright anger (31)

Though Paul is more than aware that his Misery novels are "hackneyed adventures" (39), devoid of the skill that he has employed in his other 'better' work, Annie's inability to look beyond the unsophisticated appeal of genre fiction initially appear to mark her out as inferior; as Sears suggests: "Annie's apparent perception of the worlds of Gothic and romance … is constructed in *Misery* as a limitation on her reading ability" (127). Annie is conceived of by Paul as an uneducated, uncritical reader. Though "the character of "Misery is capable of helping her to "forget about the world"" (Magistrale, 67) this is not presented as an empowering feature of the Misery novels but rather as evidence of Annie's broader insanity. The novel seems to configure the reader of popular fiction's desire for the repetition of a set formula as a type of psychosis, enslaving both the reader and writer to the endless reiteration of an increasingly banal structure; as Sears suggests: "*Misery* explores … the horror latent in a world constructed solely of a certain kind of rereading demanded by a certain kind of rereader who wants only to read the same text repeatedly" (Sears, 4).

Annie's desire for repetition is evident throughout the text: "In addition she told him she had read … her very favorites [sic], the *Misery* novels, four, five, maybe six times." (10) When the pleasure of repetition is threatened, as it appears to be when Annie finishes reading the latest Misery novel only to find that the titular character has been killed off, she is absolutely enraged by Paul's authorial decision: "*She can't be dead!*" Annie Wilkes shrieked at him" (38). It is at this point that Annie attacks Paul, further punishing him by burning the only manuscript of *Fast Cars* that he has. Annie then sets about trying to force Paul to write a further sequel in the Misery series: "You're going to use this typewriter to write a new novel! Your best novel! *Misery's Return!*" (69).

Duly Paul's entrapment becomes both a literal and figurative one, he must remain in Annie's isolated Colorado house until he has produced the next Misery novel, in the process remaining a very real slave to the demands of his popular readership.

In contrast to Paul Sheldon, who feels "typecast into a genre that has made him wealthy and famous … a captive to its form and to his audience" (Magistrale, 68), King has repeatedly sought to align himself with his readers, refusing to denigrate them in the way that some critics have. King has been described as emerging "from an American tradition one could regard as sub-literary: Poe and Lovecraft" (Bloom, 207) to become "The Master of Post-Literate Prose" (qtd in Underwood & Miller, 49). Such accusations speak to an obvious cultural elitism among literary critics, one which King himself has spoken about on several occasions:

> It was this guy saying, well, okay, the Visigoths are in the crumbling ruins of Rome, and they're pissing on the curiae and the steps of the Senate. And what he was talking about were these people who aren't very bright, who are reading these books, and I thought, "My God, this guy, I wonder if he knows how elitist all this shit sounds. (qtd in Underwood & Miller, 49)

That this elitism should seek to depict the readers of popular fiction as an uncultured and ignorant rabble is instructive, making a causal link between the popularity of Horror fiction and the 'uneducated' working classes. Certainly, as Beem points out "[King has] taken his lumps for appealing to the lumpenproletariat" (Beem qtd in Underwood & Miller, 278), a position that King has chosen to respond to by emphasising the accessibility of his work, proposing that writing for him is about collapsing the barriers that might exist between author and reader, irrespective of their level of education or ability as readers: "I think of writing as an act of communication with other people, as an act of getting in touch with them. And people seem

to like what I do and I have always wanted to please other people. I was raised to please people" (qtd in Underwood & Miller, 260). In this manner King's self-proclaimed position as the purveyor of digestible, entertaining popular fiction; "Brand X … the low priced spread" (qtd in Underwood & Miller, 118), becomes a conscious decision on the author's part to appeal to as many (constant) readers as possible at the potential cost of excluding those who believe that such accessibility betokens a facile and formulaic approach to writing fiction.

It is important to note that at the end of *Misery*, Paul's attitudes towards his popular novels has changed. Magistrale suggests that "his ordeal with Annie brings him to a deeper – more humble – awareness of his craft" (Magistrale, 68) and it is possible to see Annie as aiding Paul in attaining a greater appreciation for his popular output: as she claims at one point "I know I look slow and stupid. But I am not stupid" (85). Interestingly, it is Annie who first rebukes Paul for discussing the writing of the Misery novels in terms of a commercial, professional process: "I hate it when you call it that … When you pervert the talent God gave you by calling it a business. I *hate* that" (81), pointing out that this means that Paul "might as well call yourself a whore" (81). Paul's initial attempt to meet Annie's demands for another Misery book reflect his disregard for his popular character and her world. After reading the first three pages of the proposed sequel, Annie's delight is quickly replaced with anger at Paul's crass use of a contrived plot device, a deus ex machina, to revive the seemingly deceased central character: "I didn't say anything about not *liking* it, I said it wasn't *right*. It's a cheat. You'll have to change it." (117) *Misery* complicates any simple interpretation of Annie as an unperceptive reader, with even Paul coming to recognise that his number one fan has a keen critical mind concerning the material she loves: "She really *was* Constant Reader, but Constant Reader did not mean Constant Sap." (118) As the novel progresses, we, like Paul, are encouraged to reassess our attitudes towards Annie's often emotional reactions to the Misery novels and perhaps therefore our own attitudes towards the supposed simplicity of popular fiction:

> Part of him, the part that listened to even the best, fairest editorial suggestions with ill-grace – protested that the woman was crazy … But another part – a far more sensible part – disagreed. He would know the real stuff when he found it. The real stuff would make the crap he had given Annie to read last night, the crap it had taken him three days and false starts without number to write, look like a dog turd sitting next to a silver dollar. (126-7)

Upon witnessing Annie's livid response to his 'cheating', Paul recognises the strength of feeling that fuels such a demonstrative reaction and feels a degree of respect towards Annie's passion: "He could see the seeds of her current instability in the window of past she had just opened for him, but he was also awed by it – the injustice she felt was, in spite of its childishness, completely, inarguably real" (124). In this manner Annie as popular reader embarrasses Paul into a realisation of his strengths (and weaknesses) as a writer, imbuing him with a greater appreciation of his talent for producing affective, commercially successful fiction:

> *Couldn't hit a curve ball, even back in high school. Can't fix a leaky faucet. Can't roller-skate or make an F-chord on the guitar that sounds like anything but shit. I have tried twice to be married and couldn't do it either time. But if you want me to take you away, to scare you or involve you or make you cry or grin, yeah. I can.* (131)

Given Paul's situation, one in which he must write in order to stay alive, it is perhaps not surprising that King references *The Arabian Nights* and its frame narrative on several occasions: "But of course it wasn't

Annie that was Scheherazade. *He* was." (75). Paul must attempt to prolong his life by writing the latest *Misery* novel, however, by the end of the text it is noticeable that Paul has become as enthralled with the storytelling process as Annie is as a recipient. Paul reflecting that "he had decided to live. Some part of him that was as addicted to the chapter-plays as Annie had been as a child had decided he could not die until he saw how it all came out" (263). The harrowing nature of his situation leads Paul to acknowledge the importance of the addictive, visceral qualities of popular fiction: "Nasty as a hand-job in a sleazy bar, fine as a fuck from the world's most talented call-girl. Oh boy it was bad and oh boy it was good" (265). Qualities that he terms "*the gotta*" (265) and which fulfil something equally important in Paul as they do in his readers, leading to his realisation that rather than continuing to tell stories just to please Annie he has benefitted from them too; as he suggests "*You were also Scheherazade to yourself*" (266).

Significantly, Paul eventually manages to kill Annie by tricking her into believing that he has set the *Misery's Return* manuscript alight. Horrified at the thought of not being able to read the novel, Annie attempts to save it but inadvertently catches fire herself and burns alive. Though Paul's actions here seem to indicate a continuing contempt for his popular work, he has actually burnt a dummy manuscript, "blank pages interspersed with written rejects and culls" (354). In a move that indicates his changed attitude towards Misery Chastain we are told that Paul has done this because he is unable to destroy "The best of the *Misery* books" (345). The published novel, which will have "an unprecedented first printing of a million copies" (362) becomes the embodiment of Paul's new found respect for popular fiction and its emotive potential. At the end of *Misery*, Paul has moved beyond his elitist embarrassment at being associated with a series of bodice rippers: "The *truth* … was that the increasing dismissal of his work in the critical press as that of a 'popular writer' … had hurt him quite badly" (314), to a celebration of the *Misery* series and its latest instalment as "maybe the best thing I ever wrote, mongrel dog or not" (265).

Much as *Misery* charts an author's painful struggle to come to terms with his popular creation, so King's final major novel of the 1970s and 1980's Horror boom, *The Dark Half* (1989), returns to the self-reflexive motif of the author of popular fiction. Referred to as "perhaps the most autobiographical of King's texts" (Sears, 61) *The Dark Half* tells the story of writer Thad Beaumont, who like Paul Sheldon in *Misery*, has a twin career, writing both respectable, 'literary' novels and lurid fiction under the pen name of George Stark. Stark's novels, which might be considered mongrel dogs in their combining of a number of popular genres: "Gothic, crime fiction, police procedural and *noir*" (Sears, 80), have been hugely successful: "going to number one on best-seller lists coast to coast" (29). However, as the story begins Beaumont has decided to 'kill off' his Stark pseudonym, a choice made by Beaumont to try to re-orientate his career towards the more literary work he favours: "I wanted to write my own books again" (29). Soon however, people connected with Beaumont's 'secret' as a popular novelist are being brutally murdered by someone who appears to be a physical manifestation of the George Stark alias: "Was he supposed to believe Stark had come BACK FROM THE GRAVE, like a monster in a horror movie?" (162). Though Beaumont is, at first, adamant that "pen names did not come to life and murder people" (132) he quickly comes to realise that Stark is in fact "out there, ramming around like some weird cancer in human form" (161). The pernicious effects of popular fiction have taken on human form and have set out to ensure their survival in a manner that is in keeping with the visceral excesses of their host field.

Perhaps surprisingly self-loathing in its damning attacks on the visceral and sensual extremes of popular fiction, *The Dark Half* does not afford the central, physical manifestation of these excesses, George Stark, much sympathy. While we are encouraged to share the Beaumont family's perspective of Stark as a monstrous abomination for the vast majority of the story, the novel does suggest, albeit briefly, that a

sense of class inequality might be fuelling Stark's actions. Though Beaumont is a wealthy man (he lives in a "A roomy New England Colonial, maybe one wing shy of qualifying for mansionhood" (327), and occupies a respectable position in the community (as a university lecturer) Stark has not benefited from the commercial success of the novels written under his pen name. Upon taking Beaumount's wife hostage in the latter part of the novel, Stark is struck by the financial and material unfairness of his situation:

> Suddenly, he wanted to burn the charming white house to the ground … But not until he had been inside. Not until he had smashed the furniture, shat upon the living room rug, and wiped the excrement across those carefully stencilled walls … Not until he had taken an axe to those oh-so-precious bureaus and reduced them to kindling … What right did Beaumont have to children? To a beautiful woman? What right, exactly, did Thad Beaumont have to live in the light and be happy while his dark brother – who had made him rich and famous –when he would otherwise have lived poor and expired in obscurity – died in darkness, like a diseased mongrel in an alley? (328)

Stark's growing class consciousness at this point in the novel; the character considers destroying the bourgeois symbols of Beaumont's lifestyle as a means of correcting the exploitation that he has suffered, comes perilously close to advocating something akin to a Marxist destruction of middle-class property. Marx famously claimed that "modern bourgeois private property is the final and most complete expression of the system of producing and appropriating products, that is based on class antagonisms, on the exploitation of the many by the few." (2008: 16) Ultimately, however, the novel pulls back from any pro-communist manifesto, perhaps as a result of King's own conservative stance – he once claimed that "The Writer of horror fiction is neither more nor less than an agent of the status quo" (*Danse Macabre*, 56) - and instead Stark is positioned as a monstrous individual, as an uncontrolled force whose destructive impulses are, to all intents and purposes, impetuous and personal, rather than political in nature.

Though *The Dark Half* resists explaining its antagonist's destructive actions by reference to class, the novel can be read as a critique of the visceral extremes of horror fiction produced during the latter part of the boom decades, most notably splatterpunk, *The Dark Half* takes issue with the commercial imperatives that might be perceived to motivate the creation of much popular fiction; as Beaumont suggests in an interview with *People* magazine: "I'm as vulnerable to the siren-song of money as anyone else" (30). We learn that for a number of years Beaumont, against his better judgement, has had to rely on the commercial success of the George Stark novels to make a living: "And every day for about three months … Stark would leap out promptly at ten o' clock … seize one of the Berol pencils, and commence writing his crazed nonsense – the crazed nonsense that paid the bills Thad's own work could not pay" (255). Beaumont's description of the process of writing popular fiction as "like the crazy old man who had woven straw into gold" (255) emphasises the Faustian overtones pertinent to his situation. *The Dark Half* asks us to understand the desperation that turns Beaumont towards the visceral excesses of Stark and his fiction, but it also warns us of the danger inherent in doing enmeshing oneself so fully in a capitalist mode of fiction. In this sense Beaumont is analogous to Marx's view of the bourgeoisie, as a "sorcerer, who is no longer able to control the powers of the nether world whom he has called up by his spells." (2008: 8) Witness how Beaumont quickly loses control of his creation, becoming enraptured by the pleasures of his lowbrow alter-ego; as Sears concurs: "*The Dark Half* is a fable of writerly creativity gone monstrously wrong, a version of the allegory of the author enslaved by a popular readership" (61). It is soon evident that Beaumont's desire for the money generated by writing as Stark is superseded by other factors that are just as important, as Russell notes, Beaumont "also enjoys the freedom of writing as Stark." (91) When

Beaumont writes as his popular alias he is freed from the restrictions of respectable literature and is able to experience, even if only vicariously, the "direct and vivid experience unattainable through the intellectual veil" that is supposedly the preserve of the "lower classes" (Skal, 365). Beaumont develops an abject relationship to popular fiction: "Hadn't there always been a part of him in love with George Stark's simple, violent nature?" (352) The supposedly baser pleasures of popular work proving to be such an attractive escape for the author, "I enjoyed him for a long time" (29), that he is initially willing to overlook the tangible and adverse effects that producing such writing is having on him. In this regard it is interesting the way in which writing popular fiction and its capacity to block out the complexities of everyday life is paralleled with the similarly suppressive qualities of other forms of addiction: "If Frederick Clawson hadn't come along and forced my husband's hand, I think Thad would still be talking about getting rid of him in the same way. The way an alcoholic or drug addict tells his family and his friends that he'll quit tomorrow … or the next day … or the day after that" (197). In its depiction of (popular) art as perniciously addictive *The Dark Half* has interesting echoes of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890), replacing the eponymous picture of Wilde's text with Beaumont's lurid crime novels. Consider that Stark comes to embody all of Beaumont's baser thoughts and desires. When Beaumont stops writing about Stark, Stark loses cohesion, his skin begins to disintegrate and his body fester yet Beaumont's wife wonders if "Stark began to write on his own, would his wounds and sores begin to heal … And afterward, how long would it be … before the first sores showed up on *Thad's* face?" (412).

Much of *The Dark Half* chimes with conservative rhetoric concerning the supposed "deleterious effects of sensation" (Daly, 41), and perhaps, more specifically, critics such as Edmund Wilson's writing on the negative effects of crime fiction: "a kind of vice that, for silliness and minor harmfulness, ranks somewhere between smoking and crossword puzzles" (qtd in Krystal, 37). Compare Wilson's comments on the popular crime fiction reader's dependence on the simple pleasures of the form and Beaumont's wife's description of her husband's behaviour when working on the Stark novels to witness how closely King's text draws upon such conservative ideas:

> he'd become distant. He was less interested in going out, in seeing people. He'd sometimes blow off faculty meetings, even student appointments … although that was fairly rare. He'd go to bed later at night, and sometimes he'd still be tossing and turning an hour after he did come to bed. When he fell asleep he'd twitch and mutter a lot, as if he were having bad dreams. (202)

Somewhat inevitably, given the novel's conservative attitude towards popular fiction, it is no surprise when it is revealed that what the physical manifestation of George Stark really wants is for Beaumont to write another novel in the series: "It's time to start a new book. A new Stark novel." (241). In what is essentially a variation on Annie Wilke's monstrous desire to see the Misery Chastain novels continue, George Stark can only remain alive if he can get Beaumont to continue writing about him. Magistrale suggests that Annie Wilkes can be seen as a kind of "country vampire: she sucks out Paul's inspiration and creativity" (65) so Stark is described in *The Dark Half* as "A goddamn vampire." (335) by Beaumont's wife. However, whereas Annie Wilkes criticises the commercial imperatives behind popular fiction, complaining when she thinks Paul has been lazy Stark embodies the debilitating nature of popular fiction that is produced for primarily commercial rather than creative reasons. In one sense, Stark's physical manifestation needs, literally, to feed from Beaumont's creativity, forcing him to produce more crime novels in order to sustain himself and continuing 'living'. The fact that this process will leave Beaumont drained; creatively exhausted, is not one of Stark's priorities. Indeed, Stark's symbiotic relationship with

Beaumont - it transpires that Stark is in fact the in-utero twin that was surgically removed from Beaumont as a child – ultimately serves to collapse the boundaries between Beaumont as reputable, literary author and the architect of sensual, low brow, popular fiction. The host of ways in which the two characters are doubled confusing any clear distinctions between them. At the end of the novel, when Stark has finally been dispatched and it appears everything is due to return to normal, we are still left with the sense that the duality of Beaumont, as a writer of both literary and popular fiction, makes him a potentially dangerous entity; as one of the characters exclaims: "*Thad. Standing next to you is like standing next to a cave some nightmarish creature came out of. The monster is gone now, but you still don't like to stand too close to where it came from.*" (457) Though, at points such as this, *The Dark Half* seems to be on the verge of providing the reader with some meaningful commentary on popular fiction it is frustrating that it ultimately seems to shy away from any such discussion. Instead, the novel extolls a conservative attitude towards the popular, leaving us in little doubt that it is the 'respectable' version of Beaumont as a literary writer that we are meant to root for.

While a number of scholars writing on King have noted his literary faults: "repetition and formulaic structure, sometimes excessive length and tendencies to over-or under-writing, legitimising uses of pre-cursor texts, clichéd or banal denouements, two dimensional characterisation, sentimental bathos and nostalgia" (Sears, 8), an equal number have pointed out the author's ability to grip his readers on a more primal and emotional level: "King's books may more passionately and viscerally *involve* their readers than much literary fiction" (Skal, 364). In its final pages, as Stark is dispatched back to the underworld by the psychopomps that have come to take him back to his rightful home, The *Dark Half* seems to effectively ask us to disregard the pleasures of popular fiction. Perhaps Beaumont's realisation that "Stark was running out of things to say" (30) is a talismanic statement on King's part concerning the state of the field by the end of the 1980s. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, Horror fiction experienced a significant commercial decline. Though Hantke qualifies this waning by suggesting that "a transformation of marketing categories […was…] taking place during the 1990s, and not an actual decline in production, quality, or profitability of a certain kind of fiction." (59), it is clear that the market for horror had become oversaturated, as greater numbers of publishers had attempted to flood the market with increasingly similar creations. Perhaps inevitably, as more publishers, and authors, sought to capitalize on King's success by following his formula (incorporating increasingly quotidian scenarios in their work, writing longer and longer novels) the field experienced a process of "banalization" (Joshi 2001: 95). Though some authors of this period did produce work with a message, such as Thomas M Disch's *The Businessman* (1984), which skewers the self-centered outlook of its titular character a decade before Ellis would do so: "You're a businessman, right? From you I inherit pimples, pus, corruption. Shit." (115) Writers driven primarily by commercial imperatives no longer seemed interested in trying to say something significant with the genre and instead the horror novel increasingly became a standardized product, deprived of the "creativity, inventiveness and the potential to shock, outrage and shake up" (Berberich, 43) of the most radical popular fiction.

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Horror Fiction and Class in the Contemporary Period

While Hantke's claims that the horror novel effectively 'went undercover' during the 1990s as publishers sought to reposition the genre away from the negative perceptions of it; in terms of their engagement with socio-economic factors, many of the texts in this final chapter provide perhaps the most explicit engagement with issues such as class and poverty that we have encountered so far. Giving further credence to the widespread critical claim that horror provides "a kind of space and opportunity to imaginatively question the seeming security of the status quo" (Wisker, 234) it is perhaps apt that as the U.S entered the last decade of the twentieth century, and respected sociologists such as Daniel Bell and Ronald Ingleheart suggested that economic change, technological developments, and a growing level of widespread affluence had made the U.S. a more egalitarian and open society, horror increasingly sought to expose the fracture-lines embedded within the country's socio-economic makeup. At the same time as Clark and Lipset (1991) were arguing that 'Class is an increasingly outmoded concept'; believing traditional class hierarchies had died and new social divisions had emerged, a number of genre novels were emphasizing the horror of the divisions that still existed within society.

Perhaps the most influential U.S. horror novel of the late twentieth century, Thomas Harris's *The Silence of the Lambs* (1988), is a book that embodies this paradigm. Indeed, it is not unfair to claim that the huge success of the Hannibal Lecter series of novels ushered in the serial killer as "the great fictional monster of our time" (King, 4), a figure that has its "origins in literary naturalism" (Newitz, 15) and therefore might be considered to be intrinsically linked to the exploration of socio-economic issues in American fiction. Much as earlier Naturalists presented their central working-class characters as victims of larger societal forces, so Harris positions the novel's protagonist, Clarice Starling, as an ambitious social climber, who struggles against a set of prejudiced institutional and ideological systems (the middle class bias of institutions such as the FBI, and the patriarchal nature of her chosen career path) that work to disempower her. Much as in the work of Crane and London, the reader is given the overriding sense that due to Starling's background and gender she will never be able to truly succeed in what is presented as being a fundamentally, discriminatory environment.

Furthermore, though not the first in the Hannibal series, it is in *The Silence of the Lambs* that Harris successfully foregrounds the issue of class and social mobility, beginning an ongoing critique that proposes Starling's only real means of social advancement is through the embrace of a serial killer.   Therefore, the novel's engagement with class is most immediately explicit in the central relationship between Starling and Lecter. Strikingly, Lecter initially uses Starling's working-class background as a means of undermining her:

> You'd like to quantify me, Officer Starling. You're so ambitious, aren't you? Do
> you know what you look like to me, with your good bag and your cheap shoes?
> You look like a rube. You're a well-scrubbed, hustling rube with a little taste. Your
> eyes are like cheap birthstones – all surface shine when you stalk some little

answer. And you're bright behind them, aren't you? Desperate not to be like your mother. Good nutrition has given you some length of bone, but you're not more than one generation out of the mines, Officer Starling. Is it the West Virginia Starlings or the Okie Starlings, Officer? It was a toss-up between college and the opportunities in the Women's Army Corps, wasn't it? (25)

Significantly, Lecter immediately identifies Starling's biggest fear as pertaining to her former working class status; as the terror of being "common" (26). To combat this anxiety, Starling has sought to distance herself from those uncultured individuals who remind her of a background of "meat processing" (31) and "motel maid[s]" (188), comparing them at one point to the patients she encounters in a hospital for the criminally insane: "She would have to pass Miggs again ⋯ Damn Miggs. It was no worse than passing construction crews or delivery louts every day in the city" (27-8). Lecter correctly notes that Starling's greatest love in life is "Advancement" (29), advancement that signals to Starling that she has escaped the limiting confines of her 'lower' class origins. We learn that Starling's path to the FBI academy has been fraught with reminders of her class status: "Starling had done her time in boarding schools, living on scholarships, her grades much better than her clothes." (238) As a result of her upward mobility, Starling harbours a great deal of bitterness towards those "self-absorbed, blunted, boarding-school kid[s]" (238) who she believes have had things easier than her. This acute class-consciousness threatens to overwhelm Starling's objectivity when trying to discover the whereabouts of the kidnapped Senator's daughter, Catherine Baker Martin:

> Starling knew she had to be careful here because she had her own prejudices and resentments. She had seen a lot of kids from rich, troubled families, with too much boarding-school time. She didn't give a damn about some of them. (238)

Starling's ire is also provoked by the relative lack of compassion afforded the previous victims of the serial killer Buffalo Bill. The working-class status of these women means that no effective action was taken by investigatory bodies. Indeed, Starling goes so far as to conflate their treatment by the killer with their dismissal by the authorities:

> Jesus, everybody was named Kimberley, four in her class ⋯ Kimberley, with her soap-opera name tried to fix herself, punched all those holes in her ears trying to look pretty, trying to decorate herself. And Buffalo Bill looked at her sad flat tits and stuck the muzzle of a gun between them and blew a starfish on her chest ⋯ *Kimberley, are you angry somewhere?* No senators looking out for her. (251-252)

While Starling tries to take care to prevent her class prejudices from clouding her view of the case, the novel also suggests that Starling's modest background helps her on a number of occasions. For one thing, Starling knows how to pick locks: "her father had showed her how" (52); a skill that enables her to access the garage at the beginning of the novel and expose the gruesome tableau set up by one of Lecter's previous patients. Furthermore, she has an innate understanding of the

blue collar residents of the backwater towns the case takes her to: "at once she knew about them ⋯ she knew that the older deputy had grown up with a pump on the porch and had waded to the road in the muddy spring to catch the school bus with his shoes hanging around his neck by the laces, as her father had done." (90) Nevertheless, one of the reasons for Lecter's strange appeal to Starling (and perhaps to the reader too) is his cultured, loftier class status. As Stephen Fuller notes, Lecter is defined as distinct from the other villains in the novel based on his class-driven taste: 'Only class attributes, then – such as Lecter's impressive erudition, his cultivated aestheticism, and some appealing personal qualities – distinguish villain from antihero' (2005: 824). Robert W. Waugh suggests that Lecter belongs to a cultural "elite" that is presented in opposition to the "vulgarians" (79) that populate the rest of the novel. When Clarice first meets Lecter he is reading "the Italian edition of *Vogue*" (17) and his cell is strewn with paintings of European cities and landscapes. He listens to Classical music and is a connoisseur of fine dining. Equally significant is the way that Lecter uses his greater cultural capital to aide Starling. Given his unique position in relation to the Buffalo Bill case; he was the psychiatrist of one of Bill's former lovers, Lecter is able to offer Starling the information that she wants to advance the investigation. Like an upper class Svengali, Lecter's relationship begets the career progression that Starling prizes above all else. In her desire to better herself and her staunch ingrained set of ethics, Lecter sees a similarity between them: "some of our stars are the same" (421). At the end of the novel, rather than use Starling's sense of "class resentment" (332) against her, as Starling expects him to, Lecter instead seems to acknowledge and admire the strength that Starling gains from her need to help others who are less fortunate than herself, writing in his farewell letter: "it's the plight that drives you, seeing the plight, and the plight will not end, ever. I have no plans to call on you, Clarice, the world being more interesting with you in it." (420-421)

The follow up to *The Silence of the Lambs*, *Hannibal* (1999), further emphasizes the tensions around class that became integral to the series as a whole. Set seven years after the previous novel, Starling is now an outsider with many of those in positions of power at the FBI gunning for her. Rather than her success with the Buffalo Bill case leading to greater acceptance, it has solidified the resentment that those in power at the FBI feel towards her. As the novel opens, Starling is on the verge of being fired as a result of a 'bungled' drugs raid. However, Starling's career is saved once again by the intervention of Lecter, this time in the form of a condolence letter he sends to her which reinvigorates official interest in his whereabouts. Starling's re-involvement with Lecter noticeably reopens her feelings of class antagonism. In the seven years that have elapsed since the events of the last novel the hatred of inequality that so drives Starling has intensified, evident in the renewed sense of injustice she experiences when returning to the now disused Baltimore State Hospital:

> It was here she came on her first FBI assignment, when she was still a trainee, still believed everything, still thought that if you could do the job, if you could cut it, you would be accepted, regardless of race, creed, color, national origin or whether or not you were a good old boy. Of all this, there remained to her one article of faith. She believed that she could cut it. (87)

In line with *Hannibal*'s tendency to give us more explicit detail about its central players than *The Silence of the Lambs*, we also learn more about the nature of Starling's working class childhood.

We are told that Starling comes from "poor white" origins, from "people often referred to on campuses as crackers or rednecks or, condescendingly, as blue- collar or poor-white Appalachians" (31). We find out that Starling's father was a night watchman and her mother a chambermaid, and that Starling lived for a period in a "Lutheran Orphanage" (285). Perhaps most significantly we are told that Starling has now hit a glass ceiling "like a bee in a bottle" (32) at the FBI, which, it is heavily implied, is down to her class as much as her gender.   A tension that Lecter further spells out in his letter to Starling: "*Do you see yourself doing the menial tasks your mother was reduced to, after the addicts busted a cap on your DADDY? Hmmmm? Will your failure reflect on them, will people forever wrongly believe that your parents were trailer camp tornado bait white trash?*" (35)

While *The Silence of the Lambs* seemed to depict Starling achieving some success battling the prejudices that beset her, *Hannibal* charts a sea change in the character, as her stunted position at the FBI invokes a rejection of a belief in the usefulness of a protestant work ethic and its ability to advance her career: "her faith in *technique* was dying and leaving room for something else" (264). Importantly, this movement is away from what might be considered a stereotypically working class approach - centered on a utilitarian worldview - and towards a more bourgeois idea of beauty. That is to say, in place of the practical and efficient Starling is now pulled towards the aesthetic: "It was taste that itched at her in the daily round of her institutional life with its purely functional equipment in utilitarian settings" (264). Yet, given Starling's working class upbringing, an appreciation of bourgeois taste purely for its own sake is figured for her as something licentious. Indeed, it occupies an abject position for Starling, with the character finding herself increasingly attracted towards the class mobility and cultural capital that it signals, even as she is aware of its possible decadence:

> For years she had read couture publications on the sly, guiltily as though they were pornography. Now she began to admit to herself that there was something in those pictures that made her hungry ⋯ she felt as though she were giving in to a delicious perversion. (264-265)

In the novel's antagonist Mason Verger, Harris creates just such a perverse embodiment of the monstrous upper classes, as Robert Waugh suggests "Mason is too rich and too powerful" (76). However, in contrast to Lecter, who is humanized in *Hannibal* through the inclusion of a backstory in which his sister is cannibalized by desperate wartime deserters, Verger remains "an exceptionally despicable character" (Hassert, 75) throughout the text. The Verger family's money is built on the meat packing business, itself a symbolic manifestation of the brutality of the capitalist system. Furthermore, we learn that Mason's father's money enabled his son's abuse of other less fortunate children: "He paid for the whole thing ⋯ Some of them were unfortunates and they would do anything for a candy bar. Maybe I took advantage of it, maybe I was rough with them if they wouldn't take the chocolate and do what I wanted" (68). Mason' inhumaneness continues in his proclivity for abusing socially deprived children as an adult, embodied, in suitably baroque fashion, in his using underprivileged children's tears as an ingredient in his martinis.

Tellingly, *Hannibal* ends with Starling finally choosing to side with the elites against the vulgarians; as Ling notes: 'Clarice is transformed by the end of *Hannibal* into a bejeweled cosmopolitan who attends opera around the world with that cannibal of exquisite taste' (392). Ultimately, Starling

chooses to embrace the only true opportunity for social mobility offered to her, ironically (or perhaps deliberately and intended as a symbol of the bourgeoisie) by a serial killer who cannibalises his victims, literally getting fat off the flesh of those less cultured than himself. Indeed, Starling's transformation is completed in the novel's closing moments as she and Lecter "share a cannibal feast of the brains of Starling's still living former boss" (Crow, 168), giving credence to the claim that the serial killer is "a nightmarish manifestation of our greatest aspirations" (Lee, 119). The man whose brain they are eating, Deputy Assistant Inspector General Paul Krendler, is a vulgarian motivated only by "financial self-interest" (420) who colludes with Mason Verger to capture Lecter, discredit Starling, and advance his own career. In one sense Krendler's punishment seems to enact a criticism of the type of bourgeois careerism that flourishes under a capitalist system, and we are encouraged to take some pleasure in the grotesque comeuppance of a man who is willing to sell out his colleagues for material self-gain. Equally, Starling's actions at the end of the novel might be seen to represent a wholesale rejection of the hierarchal order of the workplace; as she tells the incapacitated Krendler "Every time you wrote something negative in my personnel folder, I resented it, but still I searched myself. I doubted myself for a moment, and tried to scratch this tiny itch that said Daddy knows best. "You don't know best Mr Krendler. In fact you don't know anything" (548). Starling's actions at the end of the novel might also be considered in the context of a wider disavowal of the capitalist system. As a result of hypnotic therapy, Starling realizes that her father's inability to say 'no' to his employers leads directly to his death "He should have told those town jackasses to stuff the job." (525) Out of this realization Starling is reborn as a culturally sophisticated aesthete alongside Lecter: "Her hair was a shapely platinum helmet and she wore a soft sheath of coral frosted with an overlayer of tulle. Emeralds flashed green at her throat." (557) Unable to succeed in an FBI in which her class and gender is used against her: Starling has forgotten much of her "old life" (562) and, in the novel's closing sections, lives, freed from the constraints, of the capitalist system via Lecter's immense personal fortune.

Interestingly, the Svengali relationship that Hannibal seems to have with Starling would be echoed in one of the most divisive set of 'horror' novels of the last few decades, Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* (2005-2008) series. A number of critics have suggested that it is possible to read the saga as a "celebration of wealth and consumption" (Campbell, 274) and the central vampire 'family', the Cullens, as "an embodiment of capitalism itself" (Lucas, 178). Certainly, the Cullens are differentiated from the rest of the Forks Washington community via their cultured, materialist trappings; they live in a bespoke mansion, listen to classical music, and wear designer clothes. Protagonist Isabella Swan (or Bella as she is known) is by contrast originally from a lower class background; noting that "at home I'd lived in one of the few lower-income neighborhoods" (Meyer, 2008: 12-13). Throughout the four novels in the series we discover that the Cullens have utilized their vampiric 'gifts' to accrue a great deal of cultural and economic capital, most obviously in the form of Alice Cullen using her foresight to predict developments on the stock market. What is significant though is the manner in which Bella eventually ends up benefitting from this wealth. Much like Starling, Bella's outsider status is redeemed through a relationship with a figure who would be viewed as monstrous by the mainstream. Indeed, the end of the first novel stands a sort

of homage to *Carrie*, only this time it is the monster who encourages the protagonist to experience the bourgeois rite of passage of the prom. By the end of the series Bella has been accepted into "an Ivy League college" (Meyer, 2011: 4); a far cry from the Phoenix school, with its "chain-link fences [···and···] metal detectors" (Meyer, 2008: 11) she attended before moving to Washington; has gone from driving a battered pickup truck to a Mercedes (a gift from Edward); and has married, and thus been accepted, into one of the richest families in the U.S. That the Twilight series has been so popular during a period when the U.S. has experienced one of its deepest and longest recessions is perhaps not surprising, Bella's decision to marry the vampire Edward at the end of the saga provides readers with a desirable example of upward class mobility.

Drawing from both the Hannibal novels and the splatterpunk movement, Bret Easton Ellis's hugely influential (and controversial) *American Psycho* (1991) offers readers an incredibly graphic yet satirical expose of the socio-economic factors effecting the national psyche during the 1980s. Several of Ellis' previous novels suggested an interest in class and social inequality. Naomi Mandel notes that *Less Than Zero* (1985) interrogates the existence of "Two worlds – the worlds of limitless privilege and the chasm of utter despair" (6), and Christopher Findeisen writes about *Rules of Attraction* as one of the few campus novels that "denies the transformative power of education" (292). However, these themes are brought together in Ellis' "definitive work" (Mandel, 1) *American Psycho*. S.T. Joshi has called the novel a "satire on the shallowness, rootlessness, and irresponsibility of the Yuppie lifestyle of the 1980s" (186) Similarly, Annalee Newitz suggests that "Ellis represents Bateman's murders as consumerism taken to its logical extreme ··· when Bateman kills, he's just going the extra mile, continuing his work during off-hours" (Newitz, 36-37). Undoubtedly, the novel conflates the conspicuous consumption of goods and services, so central to the ideology of 1980s materialist culture, with Bateman's violent actions towards those around him, embodying the Marxist claim that "[Capitalism] ··· has resolved personal worth into exchange value ··· In one word, for exploitation, veiled by religious and political illusions, it has substituted naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation" (Marx and Engels, 5). Like the numerous possessions he owns and describes in interminable detail, Bateman sees other people as objects to be controlled and disposed of as he desires. Indeed, part of the horror of the novel comes from the realization that, if anything, Bateman considers his material possessions with more compassion than he does the many individuals he brutally murders. That class is a crucial contributing factor in Bateman's actions is undeniable. The novel suggests that he is only able to treat people as objects because of his elevated position within a materialist society that is willing to overlook immorality among those who 'make' the most money. That this situation is literally monstrous is explored in Amy Bride's insightful analysis wherein she draws out the links between Bateman and the Byronic version of the Gothic vampire, arguing "Although not specifically titled, Patrick Bateman's wealth and elevated social status, resulting from his role on Wall Street, puts him in an equivalent aristocratic position above the poor and homeless of 1980s New York." (Bride, 7).

At the beginning of *American Psycho,* Bateman professes to have a humanitarian interest in the victims of social inequality: "But we can't ignore our social needs either. We have to stop people

from abusing the welfare system. We have to provide food and shelter for the homeless and oppose racial discrimination and promote civil rights while also promoting equal rights for women ⋯ Most importantly we have to promote general social concern and less materialism in young people" (15-16). However, Bateman soon reveals that he has little pity for those less fortunate than himself: "Once outside, ignoring the bum ⋯ and holding a sign that reads: I'VE LOST MY JOB I AM HUNGRY I HAVE NO MONEY PLEASE HELP ⋯ I pull the tease-the-bum-with-a-dollar trick and tell him "Jesus, will you get a fucking shave, *please*" (113). The novel makes it clear that Bateman's class prejudices, he gives thanks that he doesn't "live in a trailer park or work in a bowling alley or attend hockey games or eat barbecued ribs" (117), are shared by those around him: "Well at least it's not green and I haven't tried to cut it with a butter knife," Tim says, referring to Vanden's dye job and Stash's admittedly cheap, bad haircut. A haircut that's bad because it's cheap" (21). Indeed, one of the more interesting questions raised by the novel is whether or not Bateman's actions, as violent and grotesque as they often are, mark him out as exceptional or not in terms of the wider yuppie culture of the 1980s. A decade of "surface, surface, surface" (Ellis, 342) in which concern for those less fortunate than yourself is only permissible in a heavily mediated form, represented by the repeated sighting of posters for *Les Miserables* "a play (based on a novel) about homeless poverty in nineteenth-century Paris that in 1980s New York has become a vehicle of consumer pleasure and a generator of wealth" (Clark, 24).

Certainly, the novel suggests that in many ways Bateman is, in fact, the embodiment of the decade: an "Everyyuppie" (Young, 49), he is described as "*total GQ*" (90), the "Boy Next Door" (11), and "Mr. Wall Street" (283). Furthermore, the 'relationships' between the group of yuppies that surround Bateman are defined by increasingly aggressive rhetoric and a violent sense of competitiveness; one of Bateman's colleagues asks "If you're your friends are morons is it a felony, a misdemeanor or an act of God if you blow their fucking heads off with a thirty-eight magnum?" (35) Equally, those around Bateman also have no regard for those poorer than them, frequently abusing the people they meet who do not belong to their own, privileged circles: "Tim grabbed the napkin with Van Patten's final version of his carefully phrased question for GQ on it and tossed it at a bum huddling outside the restaurant feebly holding up a sloppy cardboard sign: I AM HUNGRY AND HOMELESS PLEASE HELP ME" (39-40). In what can be read as a critique of Reaganite attitudes towards the poor, though Bateman's group seem to think their behavior is permissible by blaming the poor for their own misfortune: as Julian Murphet suggests in his insightful study of the novel: "All the urban poor ⋯ in *American Psycho* are in effect victims of a ruthless history of evictions and factory closures, which hinges on speculations in land rent. Bateman, who represents one of the three pillars of this process (finance capital), crystalizes the implicit ideology of the entire event: savage indifference." (59) Much as Neo-conservative economic policies sought to cast welfare programs as contributing to, rather than solving, social ills, so Bateman begins his violent behavior by stabbing an example of someone he sees as belonging to the undeserving poor; a homeless "bum, a black man ⋯ fortyish, heavyset" (128-129) called Al. Bateman takes issue with Al's request for money to buy food, and accusing the

vagrant of being responsible for his own destitution: "Why don't you get a job? ⋯ if you're so hungry, why don't you get a job?" (129). After further ridiculing Al, a frustrated Bateman exclaims "I'm trying to help you ⋯Listen, Do you think it's fair to take money from people who *do* have jobs? Who *do* work? ⋯ Get a goddamn job, Al ⋯ You've got a negative attitude. That's what's stopping you. You've got to get your act together" (130). Tellingly, while Bateman ultimately offers to assist Al, this 'help' consists of blinding him so that he will evoke more sympathy when begging; an action that can itself be read as encouraging readers to question the distinctions concerning the 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor.

Bateman's actions often appear to be motivated by his fear of descending the workplace hierarchies he perceives as being such an important part of his identity. Indeed, the ever-present sense of competition Bateman feels can be read as a critique of the rat-race yuppie culture of the 1980s. The novel suggesting that it is Bateman's struggle to be atop this hierarchy which causes his increasingly aggressive behavior as he attempts to maintain a sense of 'control'. Indeed, Newitz argues that the fictional serial killer's actions reflect our own sense of alienation towards the capitalist system: "the serial killer ⋯ acts out the enraged confusion with which Americans have come to regard their late twentieth century economic and social productivity" (Newitz, 27). The perverted need to feel superior to those around him most obviously manifests itself in Bateman's increasingly violent actions towards the prostitutes he hires. It is significant that it is Bateman's immense wealth which enables him to instigate this deviant behavior; his affluent appearance convincing the first prostitute he sleeps with to break her usual rules:

> "Would you like to see me apartment?" I ask, flipping the light on inside the back
> of the limo so she can see my face, the tuxedo I'm wearing ⋯ "I'm not supposed
> to," she says again, but after another glance at the black, long car and at the bill
> she's now putting into her hip pocket and at the bum, shuffling towards the
> limousine, a cup jangling with coins held in a scabby outstretched arm, she
> manages to answer, "But I can make an exception." (169)

If Bateman's violent behavior seems fueled by extreme misogyny it is also the result of an intense fear of the poor. Bateman, hires women that are of noticeably lower status than him; one comments "You live in a palace, mister" (301), mocks them by asking if they've ever heard of Harvard, and uses class based slurs, alongside those related to gender to insult them: "You bitch, you piece of bitch trash" (289).

By the end of *American Psycho* there is a sense that the national mood is changing and that the worshipping of materialism exemplified in the Yuppie figure of the 1980s is nearly over. However, deep divisions still exist within U.S. society born out of a pervasive sense of inequality and a widening gap between the very rich and the very poor. A cab driver, possibly a relation of someone that Bateman kills earlier in the narrative, mugs him, calling him a "yuppie scumbag" (394) and claiming that he would rather be dead than in Bateman's place. Then in the final chapter of the novel, Bateman and his friends watch as George Bush Sr is instated as president, taking over from the now disgraced symbolic father of the yuppie, Ronald Reagan. The characters

discuss Reagan and his government's selling arms to Iran in order to back genocide in Nicaragua. Though no-one but Price seems to care about Reagan's actions, the reference to the Iran-Contra Affair serves to textually connect U.S. international policy with Bateman's murders. As Towlson has noted "[the] subversive conclusion sees the narcissistic, macho individualism of the Reagan doctrine likened to that of the serial killer" (178). The novel's final sentence; the bar sign hanging up which indicates that "THIS IS NOT AN EXIT" (399), seems to imply that there is both no escape for Bateman but also that there is no avoiding a future in which the "working class [are] dissatisfied" (Towlson, 178) as the rich and powerful continue to occupy a position above the law. The decidedly ambiguous depiction of the central serial killer in both Harris' Lecter novels and Ellis' *American Psycho* (as well as the author's wider output) speak to the uneasiness of contemporary attitudes regarding wealth and class. That it is possible to read both figures as effectively pathologizing the conventional markers of the 'successful' capitalist bourgeoisie: aggressive interpersonal competition, material wealth, an understanding and appreciation of 'highbrow' culture, in effect positioning the serial killer as the embodiment of the system; "a social functionary; a cautionary dark reflection of specific cultural and historical contexts" (Lee, 119) is clear. Indeed, the 'respectable' and professional occupations of both characters (Lecter was a psychiatrist and Ellis is an investment banker) point to an condemnation of the ideals required to progress in the capitalist workplace as inherently psychotic; as Newitz points out, such characters "use their work skills to advance their careers as murderers" (35). However, the lack of a complete moral condemnation of Lecter and Bateman within the respective texts is confusing in this light; indeed, Lecter seems to become the overarching 'antihero' of Harris' series (a claim supported by the prequel *Hannibal Rising* (2006) which delves into the character's early life). Though there is no likely no single explanation for this situation, in terms of class, such figures seem to attain a specific resonance through their exposing and transgression of the divisions that persist, the novels they inhabit reading as black comedies, in which the target of satire is the belief that the U.S. is, or ever has been, fair and just for all.

The graphic nature of *American Psycho*; Roger Rosenblatt infamously called it "the most loathsome offering of the season", while Kristen Baldwin claimed it was "one of the most shockingly violent novels ever published" (36), has proven to be one of the most divisive elements of Ellis' novel, and of post 1980s Horror more generally, which has increasingly been accused of "a fixation on the luridly venal" with a "hyperbolic insistence on cruelty, betrayal and savagery" (Fisher, 11). Certainly, authors such as Harris, Ellis and Palahniuk appear to utilize, self-consciously, the conventional excesses of the genre (as Botting suggests "Gothic signifies a writing of excess" (1)) in order to ridicule late-stage capitalism's claims of "bureaucratic control" (Jameson, xviii). Such novelists therefore position their work as subversive, 'bad objects', opposed to the conventionality of more, respectable, literary fiction; Ellis notably rebutted those who rejected the book's more extreme elements, by asking the question "Do most critics' taste extend beyond the hopelessly middlebrow?" (qtd in Young and Caveney, 86). Yet the often

baroque, parodic and self-reflexive nature of the violence in novels such as *American Psycho* could equally be seen as working against the potentially emancipatory nature of the horror genre; as Jameson claims "transforming the past [into] visual mirages, stereotypes or texts, effectively abolishes any practical sense of the future and of the collective project, thereby abandoning the thinking of future change" (54). Consequently, James Annesley has proposed that the depiction of graphic violence in Ellis' text undermines any social critique because it "mimics the very processes he's criticizing" (20-21). In a broader context, the accusation that the use of such excess "quickly becomes pantomimic" (Fisher, 11) hangs over the genre at the end of the twentieth century, leading to the charge that rather than providing a break from the capitalist system, horror now offers a form of "super-identification with capital at its most pitilessly predatory" (Fisher, 11).

As a subgenre that seems to revolve around increasingly graphic depictions of sex and violence, splatterpunk's claims to offer anything more meaningful than "amplified gore" (Hantke, 179) can seem disingenuous. However, the movement's emphasis on the materiality of the body has interesting implications for the intersections of Horror and class; as Hantke notes:

> As Reagan's delimited, accelerated form of capitalism had created entire classes
> of dehumanized bodies - a vast army of the homeless, the drug-addicted, those
> left behind and maimed by neoliberal measures of economic recovery after a
> decade of stagflation – splatterpunk reacted by putting these bodies and the
> violence done to them on display (178)

"Acclaimed as a splatterpunk writer" (Wisker, 106), Poppy Z. Brite publishes work that has been described as "confrontational, oppositional, and carnivalesque" (Wisker, 46). Like the fiction of Harris and Elliot, Brite's *Exquisite Corpse* (1996) takes serial killers as its subject matter and often seems to revel in the explicit depiction of transgressive sexual practices and extreme violence to the exclusion of any 'worthier' ideological purpose; as one of the novel's characters proposes: "the terrible joy of the act was reason enough" (6). *Exquisite Corpse*'s two serial killers, Andrew Compton and Jay Byrne, prey upon the destitute and the poor as a means of satiating their particular appetites. Compton has already killed twenty three such men when we meet him at the beginning of the novel:

> My boys and young men were transients in the city: friendless, hungry, drunk and
> strung out on the excellent Pakistani heroin that has coursed through the veins of
> London since the swinging sixties. I gave them food, strong tea, a warm place in a
> bed, what few pleasures my body could provide. In return, all I asked was their
> lives. Sometimes they appeared to give those as readily as anything else. (1-2)

What is perhaps most interesting in the depiction of Compton is the attitude he displays towards those poor "half-starved, drug-addled waifs" (2) he kills. In a move that takes us all the way back to the paradoxical relationship between the bourgeois reader and working class subject matter that we find in late nineteenth century genre fiction, the educated and cultured Compton seems to fetishize the abject poverty and destitution of those he preys upon, viewing his victims as somehow liberated from the stifling constraints of middle-class society:

> I thought of a boy I'd seen in the King's Road the night before, his black hair teased
>
> wild, his smile open and easy and free. Quite possibly he didn't have the price of

a meal in his pocket, but nobody could tell him when he might or mightn't eat one.

Very quietly but very firmly, something in me rebelled. (54)

Indeed, Compton's fascination with the impoverishment of his victims is made explicitly sexual when, after faking his own death in order to be transported out of prison, he dreams of the plague years of London. In his dream Compton imagines himself as one of the diseased corpses being carted away from a plague ridden house, however, he is so aroused by the deprivation he envisages that he worries he will "get an erection and give [⋯himself⋯] away" (15). In Compton's case his eroticization of poverty appears bound up with his desire to be freed from the hegemonic sexual norms of the period. We learn that Compton is a diagnosed necrophiliac who can only experience full sexual pleasure with the bodies of the recently deceased. For Compton this perverse desire seems rooted in his need for absolute control over those he is intimate with, something he feels he achieves with those who are poor or needy.

The novel's other serial killer, Byrne, is also drawn towards those at the bottom of the socio-economic scale: "stragglers from the housing projects" (29). The son of a wealthy family (his real name is Lysander Devore Byrne), much like Bateman, Byrne's wealth has been an enabling factor in his deviant activities; as he comments "it leaves me free to pursue my interests" (209). Byrne predates the poorer areas of New Orleans in a manner that echoes his father's exploitation of the natural landscape for material gain:

> At first his father's factory had been a boon to the impoverished area, creating jobs
> for people who were too old or too weak to make their living off the bounty of the
> swamp. It didn't seem to matter that the factory was pumping waste water into the
> same waters that nourished that bounty (32).

The corruption that Byrne's money has enacted in New Orleans is evident at the novel's climax when Byrne is able to bribe two local police officers to let him take the clearly beaten and drugged character of Tran back into his house in spite of the angry protestations of Tran's friend, Luke: "Silently he calculated the contents of his wallet He'd given the cops fifty dollars each. Would another fifty make them turn a deaf ear to anything Luke might say? Jay thought so, but wasn't sure. Better make it a hundred more apiece." (224) Like *American Psycho*, *Exquisite Corpse* depicts a U.S. in which money allows the individual an unethical freedom from the law.

Like Lecter and Bateman, Byrne also engages in the act of cannibalism, inducting Compton into the practice when the two become lovers at the end of the novel. Much like Compton's desire to exert control through his necrophilia, so Byrne dominates those he sleeps with by killing and eating them. It is not difficult to see the repeated cannibalism motif in these contemporary genre novels as being linked to capitalism; as Lee proposes: "the vigor of late capitalism has turned people into resources for production *and* consumption" (117). In contrast to claims that the graphic nature of the contemporary horror novel is little more than an attempt to trade off shock value, the recurrent depiction of the serial killer as devouring other human beings as food, and the emphasis placed on the figure's frequently grotesque acts can be read as a critique of late stage capitalism, capturing "the public imagination not only because of its deplorability, but also because we – as the audience – have helped create it and participated in its fetishization" (Lee, 119). Wisker suggests that Brite's fiction "indicts the vacuity of Middle America" (158) part of which seems to

encompass the nihilistic view that the individual, like Jay's photos that chart his "guest's devolution from human to property" (Brite, 101), are now little more than objects to be consumed in whatever way those with the most power in society see fit to do so Jack Ketchum, another splatterpunk writer, has repeatedly explored the effects of social inequality and class prejudice in his work. Many of Ketchum's short stories explore the sometimes horrifying effects of class divisions and disparities in wealth. This preoccupation is epitomized in "The Turning" which imagines a future U.S. with the "wealthy – or almost wealthy – and the poor living in wholly separate camps, paths barely intersecting." (349). The action of the title reflects the beginnings of a revolutionary uprising of the poor, as they begin to mobilize:

> *He had seen it happen once before. A long, long time ago. When the collective will and consciousness of an entire people had grown intense enough, black enough, angry enough, fearful enough and focused enough to rend deep into the nature of human life as it had existed up till then, all that dark cruel energy focused like a laser on an entire class, transforming them in reality into how they were perceived and imagined to be almost metaphorically. (352)*

Interestingly, it is the perception of class difference, the 'othering' process itself, that brings about the transformation here. The suggestion being that the internalization of other's prejudiced perceptions brings about a turning for the worse.

Ketchum's first novel, *Off Season* (1980) pitted a bunch of privileged New Yorkers, used to a lifestyle of bourgeosis "waste and self-indulgence" (37), against a group of feral, inbred white trash cannibals who we learn typify the degradation born of "centuries of social immobility" (77) in the "depressed area" (74) of Maine, New England. While Ketchum's *The Girl Next Door* (1989), tries to avoid providing a simple rationale for the actions of its central characters; who imprison and torture a teenage girl, there are hints that class plays a part in the abuse that is carried out. The novel suggests that Ruth, the adult that initially gives permission for the abuse to take place and then joins in, is driven by a psychotic self-loathing of her own gender, this is frequently tied to a sense of class injustice.

Though she lives in a respectable suburb, Ruth is coded as white trash. We find out early in the story that the narrator's mother "didn't approve of Ruth" (61), an opinion that seems to be a result of Ruth's failure to adhere to proscribed class conduct. Ruth is a single mother, drinks, and allows her children freedoms that others in the neighborhood do not. The novel implies that some of this behavior is a result of Ruth's unfortunate downward mobility. We learn that Ruth worked in an office job during World War 2, until the "*little GI pukes came strutting back home again*" (13) and that she has been unable to find employment since then, living largely hand to mouth. Ruth's dire financial position; following her husband leaving her she moans about being left "to starve with" (173) her three sons, only gets worse when she is tasked with caring for her recently orphaned nieces, Meg and Susan. Once they are living with her, Ruth frequently insults Meg and Susan, even before she prompts the more physical abuse that takes place towards them. She explicitly blames them for her hardship and, in part, uses this to justify her later actions: "God knows they don't pay me enough to bother trying to correct you. Hell, with what they pay it's a wonder I can even feed you!" (119)

The older of the two girls and the victim of the worst of the abuse, Meg, is othered based on perceptions of her class by both David and Ruth. Following a surprise first meeting with Meg, David is immediately besotted with her, revealing that he is drawn towards her difference to the lower middle-class people he is more used to: "Probably she was smarter than the girls I knew too, more sophisticated. She lived in New York City after all and had eaten *lobsters*." (9). While David initially responds positively to Meg's supposedly more cultured character, Ruth resents any perceived sense of superiority Meg might possess. Ruth uses this sense of class division to justify her behavior. She is quick to encourage the boys that frequent her house to see Meg's more bourgeois conduct in the negative: "Meg's *squeamish*. You understand how girls get squeamish, don't you boys? *Ladies* do. And Meg here is a lady" (67). Indeed, while there is little tangible evidence that Meg is any more middle class than David (or Ruth, for that matter), one of the novel's strengths is the way in which it depicts the horrifying proclivity humans have to demonize individuals based upon determining factors such as gender, age and class as a means of reaffirming their own power and worth. Despite the often harrowing depictions of violence and abuse, the narrator's comment that it is all too easy to see difference rather than commonality: "I stood among them swamped by otherness. By evil." (234), is perhaps the novel's most disturbing message.

Chuck Palahniuk's *Fight Club* (1996) contains the kinds of "astonishing grotesqueries" (Kuhn, 36) that would not seem out of place in Ketchum's splatterpunk fiction, so overt is its critique of materialist culture and ideology that the most common interpretative trend has been to read it as an anti-capitalist satire; as "the first stage of [Palahniuk's] plan to wage war on capitalist America" (O'Hagan, 1) and the novel's central character, Tyler Durden, as a kind of "Adornian (anti) hero waking the narrator from his passive, subdued state as a slave of the capitalist system" (Simmons and Allen, 118). Though such grandiose assertions risk oversimplifying the complexities of the text - Simmons and Allen have noted that as frequent bestsellers "an argument could be made for the construal of Palahniuk's novels as examples of Marcusian "release valves;" that is, state sanctioned vehicles that allow for the safe discharging of dissent" (118) –*Fight Club* nevertheless remains an interesting marrying of anti-capitalist sentiment with the conventions of the Gothic.

Newitz positions *Fight Club* as a "hyper-ironic critique of capitalist culture" (Newitz, 48) and Kuhn (alongside Melissa Iocco, Lauren M.E. Goodlad and Sherry Truffin) claims the novel contains "a veritable catalog of Gothic conventions" (Kuhn, 36). However, whereas both Harris, Ellis, and to an extent Brite, largely embed their critiques of late stage capitalism in the figure of the wealthy and 'cultured' serial killer, Palahniuk explores the consequences, for society, of a wider-scale adoption of the anti-capitalist ideology that permeates all of these texts. It is significant that while Harris and Ellis both make the bourgeoisie monstrous, Palahniuk looks to the opposite end of the socio-economic scale for his demons.

The opening of *Fight Club* exemplifies this realigned focus, references are made to both the narrator's occupancy in a low paid job: "Tyler gets me a job as a waiter" (11), and the Gothic nature of the character's situation: "This isn't really death," Tyler says. "We'll be legend. We won't grow old." I tongue the barrel into my cheek and say, Tyler, you're thinking of vampires." (12)

This realigned focus is central to the novel's message of impoverishment as the only effective means of achieving, first, self-actualization, and then, larger collectivist revolution. In this sense *Fight Club* draws from Lovecraft's fiction (and a number of writers before him) in codifying the working classes as a potentially destabilizing force, analogous to Edmund Burke's "Swinish multitude" (81). When they are mobilized the blue collar workers and dropouts of *Fight* Club's world become a monstrous other to the mainstream conformity of bourgeois consumer capitalism, the only significant difference between Lovecraft and Palahniuk being that the latter's novel initially encourages us to empathize with the proletarian revolt that is carried out before questioning the efficacy of its nihilistic worldview.

In the early part of the novel, the narrator's insomnia, coupled with his largely nocturnal life attending a series of self-help groups for people with conditions such as "brain parasites ⋯ degenerative bone diseases ⋯ organic brain dysfunctions" (19) all evoke the twin Gothic figures of the zombie or ghoul. Indeed, the narrator's self-description of his face as looking like "bruised, old fruit ⋯ you would've thought I was dead" (19) only serve to further emphasize the parallel. Yet, the narrator attends these groups full of grotesque and gothicised bodies, in order to feel a release from the mind stultifying mundanity of his 'normal', everyday life; as he says "this was freedom, losing all hope was freedom. If I didn't say anything people in the group people assumed the worst. They cried harder. I cried harder. Look up into the stars and you're gone" (22). Here, at this early point in the text, the narrator experiences a version of the negative sublime: "Every evening, I died, and every evening, I was born. Resurrected" (22), which informs much of the narrative.

This motif of being reborn through destruction —"Maybe self-destruction is the answer" (49) - recurs throughout *Fight Club*. The abject nature of the Other, so commonly found in Gothic and Horror fiction is subverted, becoming a tool in the hands of the Marxist individual that enables them to reject the safe, ordered procedures of the capitalist system. Significantly, the narrator is initially a white collar worker, working as "a recall campaign co-ordinator" (31); a job that exemplifies capitalism's attempts to systematize and control the abject body: "If a new car built by my company leaves Chicago travelling west at 60 miles per hour, and the rear differential locks up, and the car crashes and burns with everyone trapped inside, does my company initiate a recall?" (30) The narrator travels the U.S. assessing motor-vehicle accidents to determine whether a recall should be initiated, yet the job bores him, to the extent that he frequently "pray [s] for a crash" (23) while flying between locations. The narrator's life is that of the upwardly mobile individual: "Home was a condominium on the fifteenth floor of a high rise, a sort of filing cabinet for widows and young professionals" (41) until his apartment blows up one day and all of his carefully collected possessions are destroyed with it. In some of the novel's best known passages, the narrator experiences an anti-consumerist epiphany, quickly realizing that the explosion has freed him from the "nesting instinct" (43) that has seen him trapped by his artificial need to accrue more and more material possessions: "and the things you used to own, now they own you." (44)

In place of his possessions, the narrator turns to the character of Tyler Durden, who espouses a message of anti-materialism reliant upon the individual's wholesale rejection of consumer-capitalism: "It's only after you've lost everything ⋯ that you're free to do anything" (70). Tyler seems to embody this quasi-Marxist rebellion, working in a variety of low paid, low skilled jobs: "Tyler's a banquet waiter, waiting tables at a hotel, downtown, and Tyler's a projectionists with the projector operator's union" (27), and living in a dilapidated house that is "waiting for something, a zoning change or a will to come out of probate, and then it will be torn down" (57). Tyler gets the narrator a job as a waiter in order to "stoke [his] class hatred" (65), something we see depicted in Tyler's self-appointed role as a "service industry terrorist. Guerrilla waiter. Minimum wage despoiler" (84). Tyler regularly sabotages the expensive dinners he works at, utilizing his "cockroach level" (80) position as a means of empowerment to enact class revenge on the "titans and their gigantic wives" who "know the tip is already included in the bill so they treat you like dirt" (80). Indeed, rather than suffer as a result of the alienation caused by working in such a "chickenshit job" (83), Tyler transforms the lack of status it affords him into a source of power; as the narrator notes "Tyler had nothing to lose. Tyler was the pawn of the world, everybody's trash" (113). Furthermore Tyler believes "Getting fired ⋯ is the best thing that could happen to any of us" (83) because such a comprehensive exclusion from the capitalist system forces those in a similar position to dedicate their lives to a more radical, and therefore, in Tyler's mind, worthy cause. Tyler's rhetoric adopts the bourgeois fear of the working class mob to create a sense of the socio-economic underclass as implicitly threatening:

> "Remember this ⋯ The people you're trying to step on, we're everyone you depend on. We're the people who do your laundry and cook your food and serve your dinner. We make your bed. We guard you while you're asleep. We drive the ambulances. We direct your call. We are cooks and taxi drivers and we know everything about you. We process your insurance claims and credit card charges. We control every part of your life." (166)

The titular fight clubs that Tyler and the narrator establish work along comparable lines, offering the individual the chance to experience the abjectification of the body, as it is mutilated in the act of fighting. These fights serve as a tool for escaping the conventional, capitalist markers of identity: "As long as you're at fight club, you're not how much money you've got in the bank. You're not your job. You're not your family, and you're not who you tell yourself." (143) Such a pseudo-philosophy has clear echoes of Kristeva's theories concerning the abject's dual effect: "The time of abjection is double: a time of oblivion and thunder, of veiled infinity and the moment when revelation bursts forth" (9).

One of the consequences of the unnamed narrator's involvement in fight club is a concomitant rejection of the ordered practices and sense of workplace decorum he had previously been operating under. We learn that the narrator frequently turns up to work with the often horrifying physical effects of the fight clubs evident on his body: "a black eye and half my face swollen" (47).

However, the narrator feels no embarrassment about his appearance, relishing the discomfort this causes to those around him, particularly his boss who stops him from continuing in the workplace: "my boss sends me home because of all the dried blood on my pants, and I am overjoyed." (63). The novel suggests that the narrator uses the increasingly grotesque, abject nature of his body as a means of empowering himself. We learn that the narrator sees his boss as a "nagging, ineffectual, whining, butt-sucking, candy-ass" (98) and has violent day dreams in which the "totally fucked hero could go the length of mahogany row and take out every vice president with a cartridge left over for each director" (89). However, in case the reader thinks this is only an impulsive, uninformed example of rebellion, the narrator begins to consciously espouse an overtly anti-capitalist ideology in his work, writing and distributing poems to many of his colleagues: "Worker Bees can leave, Even drones can fly away, The queen is their slave" (63).

This desire to alert others to the injustice of late-stage capitalism's hierarchal systems and lack of social equality eventually feeds into the creation of the underground anarchist group, Project Mayhem, but before that we learn that the expansion of Fight Club is funded by the criminal actions of the narrator and Tyler as they effectively blackmail their workplaces into giving them money. Upon losing his projectionist job due to downsizing, itself a process associated with the dehumanization of the blue collar worker in the capitalist system, Tyler threatens to go public with the information that he has sliced pornographic images into all of the film reels he has handled, while the narrator similarly suggests he will let the media know that he, and the other waiters, have long been peeing in the food that is served at the restaurant they work at. The 'political' nature of these threats are repeatedly emphasized by Tyler and the narrator, who seek to position their actions as ideological in nature: "I wouldn't be just an unbalanced peon diddling in the soup. This would have heroic scale. Robin Hood Waiter Champions Have-Nots" (116)

In another playfully self-conscious distortion of the Robin Hood myth, *Fight Club* also depicts Tyler and the narrator fund their subversive activities by robbing the discarded fat of the rich and turning it into luxury soap which is then sold back to upmarket customers. This activity, which leads Marla to compare Tyler and the narrator to "a ghoul and a cannibal" (88) and "a monster two-faced capitalist suck-ass bastard" (94) is significant as it marks the first perversion of Tyler's anti-consumerist ideology. There is, of course, an intentional textual irony in the fact that the narrator and Tyler rely on the same exploitative practices embedded in the capitalist system in order to fund their own supposedly anti-capitalist movement. Project Mayhem, which was set up with the goal "to teach each man in the project that he had the power to control history" (122), is intended as a liberating, democratic force; indeed one of the members looks forward to a future "when we call a strike and everyone refuses to work until we redistribute the wealth of the world" (149). Yet the desire the narrator and Tyler have to escape from being "the slaves of history" (123) via the "complete and right-away destruction of civilization" (125) points towards a decidedly more selfish and destructive end goal. Tyler, in particular, has visions of reinstating a wilderness lifestyle dependent on an idealized version of rugged masculinity positioned in opposition to bourgeois society and its consumerist trappings: "Imagine ⋯ stalking elk past department store windows and stinking racks of beautiful rotting dresses and tuxedos on hangers; you'll wear leather clothes

that will last you the rest of your life, and you'll climb the wrist-thick kudzu vines that wrap the Sears Tower" (125).

Tyler seeks to shape the disillusionment of the members of Project Mayhem into a collective force for change yet the means he adopts for running the organization rely on processes of objectification and exploitation meaning he is unable to escape from the system. In a structure that has obvious parallels with late stage capitalism, wannabe Project Mayhem recruits, after a period of training, are set to work on a Fordist assembly line set up in which "No one guy understands the whole plan, but each guy is trained to do one simple task perfectly" (13). These 'space monkeys' are then told to work all day, and often into the night, performing mundane, repetitive tasks, "pull a lever. Push a button" (13). They do this in the hope that they will find enlightenment encouraged by the speeches of a charismatic leader. Furthermore, the claim that: "the essence of capitalist monstrosity is its transformation of human flesh and blood into raw materials" (McNally, 115) finds an echo in the ways in which Project Mayhem (and fight club, before it) ultimately dehumanizes its members to the point where they see their lives as inconsequential in terms of serving the larger aims of the Project. Each individual 'space monkey' is subservient to the larger needs of Project Mayhem, to the extent that they must be willing to give their lives in order to perpetuate the system. The viral nature of Project Mayhem also emphasizes its similarities to capitalism. Like a virus, Project Mayhem quickly spreads out of the original host's control – the narrator comments: "The cancer I don't have is everywhere, now" (159) – echoing claims made about capitalism as a self-perpetuating entity in a host of recent sociological studies including *The Cancer Stage of Capitalism* (1999) and *The Selfish Capitalist* (2008).

The concept of capitalism as an inescapable disease is also explored in Thomas Liggotti's novel *My Work Is Not Yet Done* (2002). Written after S.T. Joshi's bold claim that "I don't not think it would be possible to study ⋯ the socio-political aspects of Liggotti's fiction" (244), *My Work Is Not Yet Done* is evidence that the weird writer's work engages with the 'real world' in a number of direct and interesting ways. The novel is a kind of bureaucratic or "corporate horror story" (Schweitzer, 132) which fuses Kafka and Lovecraft in order to comment upon the overwhelmingly pernicious effects of the capitalist system upon the individual. Functioning as a kind of bourgeois mirror to Ellis' novel, which charts the murderous actions of someone at the top of the capitalist system, *My Work Is Not Yet Done* follows middle manager, and nascent serial killer, Frank Dominio, as he experiences a supernaturally enhanced breakdown brought about by the stultifying nature of his office workplace job. Despite his intense distaste for his position as a "white collar drone" (Schweitzer, 127), Dominio has managed to find some success working for the novel's faceless corporation: "I had risen, somewhat reluctantly but with a definite touch of swinishness, to the position" (6). Dominio's subsequent downfall is inaugurated by his uncharacteristic decision to put forward a proposal for a genuinely original "New Product" (10) to the "Seven Swine" (45), or middle managers, that he works with. Much like Bateman and the narrator of *Fight Club*, Dominio feels estranged from those around him, describing his coworkers as "a complete mystery to me on every level" (9). Almost immediately upon announcing his new

idea to his colleagues, Dominio recognizes that he has made a terrible mistake. Instead of wishing to ascend the company hierarchy Dominio realizes he would rather remain exactly where he is, he wishes to:

> ⋯ keep my working life securely in the status quo, and I wanted to be left alone.
>
> This had been the motive for all my actions in my job. This was why employees of a similar disposition transferred to my department whenever there was an opening. We were a troupe of contented parasites, self-made failures, and complacent losers. (17)

Dominio feels safe in the lower echelons of the organisation, preferring to keep his "head in the sand" (34) rather than climbing the corporate ladder. Furthermore, Dominio views any form of career progression with a large degree of self-loathing; as further evidence of his implicit perpetuation of the exploitative practices of the wider company, who "strived only to serve up the cheapest fare that its customers would tolerate, churn it out as fast as possible, and charge as much as they could get away with." (43)

In opposition to the sense of modernity and opportunity for upward mobility that the company he works for provides, Dominio is drawn towards the poor and the needy in society. Even though he could afford better accommodation, Dominio chooses to live above a rundown diner and his only hobby is to take photos of derelict buildings in the deprived parts of the city he lives in. Significantly, Dominio sees his hobby as a tacit rejection of the glossy, capitalist future he is involuntarily helping to maintain in his place of work: "I'm drawn to those old buildings and junk because ⋯ because they take me into a world ⋯ a world that is the exact opposite of the one ⋯ the one I'm doomed by my own weakness and fear to live in." (41) Much like the narrator of *Fight Club*, Dominio finds succor in embracing the entropic forces at work in the destitute spaces of the city; what he considers its "degraded wonders" (39). As the character explains:

> my picture-taking was something of an excuse to justify and explain (both to myself and anyone else that might wonder) my presence in the city's many regions that had passed from squalor to abandonment to decay, and from decay into the ultimate stages of degeneration. (37)

Afraid that his innovative product proposal will turn his coworkers against him, things take a further turn for the worse when some important paperwork goes missing from Dominio's desk and he feels compelled to resign rather than face being fired for incompetence. Fearing that he has "been railroaded into the status of a non-person" (65) by the company, Dominio undergoes a rebirth of sorts, one which begins with his experiencing "the loudest sound I had ever heard in my life" (59). This mysterious event results in Dominio acquiring a set of ill-defined supernatural abilities or "monstrous powers" (117), which leave him (and the reader) unsure as to whether he is alive or dead, or somewhere in-between. Dominio's new status as a disembodied entity, can be read as a literal manifestation of the dehumanizing effects of the homogenized capitalist workplace which deprives the individual of a stable identity and sense of individuality. Newly empowered, Dominio proceeds to murder his former coworkers in increasingly bizarre and grotesque ways. Each time Dominio murders someone he leaves a variation of the message "Work Not Done" (118) as a threat for his intended, final victim, his former boss, Richard, "the evil one" (42). However, as Dominio dispatches each coworker he comes to realize that he is still, in fact, a slave to a larger

system or entity that governs his behavior, telling him what to do: "A limit had been placed on my labors before the blackness would close in on me entirely. I was still being manipulated." (110) When Dominio catches up with Richard, his former boss reveals that Dominio has been the victim of a failed suicide attempt. Though Dominio's initial plan was to take down the capitalist microcosm of the company by throwing himself in front of a bus - "By killing myself I felt that I would also be killing all of you, killing every bad body on this earth ⋯ I forfeit my part of this estate to my heirs in the kingdom of the swine" (136) – he was instead left alive but in a comatose state. In an incisive comment upon the inescapable nature of capitalism and its pervasive apparatus, Richard suggests that Dominio, in his comatose state, has been manipulated as a tool to fulfill the desires of "The Great Black Swine ⋯ that looks to us like sunrises and skyscrapers" (137). Left bereft by his 'failure' to effectively rebel against the system: "I was weak I was afraid" (138), Dominio makes a plea to the reader at the end of the story. Echoing the Marxist idea of raising class consciousness, Dominio suggests that each one of us must become cognizant of the "the secret nightmares that are suffered by millions every day" (136) so that we do not inadvertently let ourselves become, like Dominio has, a "deadly weapon wielded by a dark hand" (138).

One of the most interesting aspects of *My Work is Not Yet Done* is the way in which it "correlates capitalist apparatus and systems of control, to a complete disintegration and ruination of the subject (individual)" (M'Rabty). The concept of late stage capitalism as a not particularly convincing façade for monstrous entities was also explored in William Browning Spencer's earlier Lovecraftian novel *Résumé With Monsters* (1995). Giving voice to the claim that "it is impossible to accept that there are no controllers, that the closest thing we have to ruling powers now are nebulous, unaccountable interests exercising corporate irresponsibility" (Fisher, 63) Spencer's novel takes a decidedly more pulpish approach than Ligotti, proposing that capitalism is the latest front for Lovecraft's Great Old Ones; a group of immensely powerful beings that once ruled over the earth:

> The system. The Old Ones, crouched at the beginning of time, malevolent and patient. They thwarted all aspiration, all true and noble yearning. Ironically the system bound Lovecraft himself to a life of poverty – so Philip's father raved, in drunken, lunatic eloquence – forcing the reclusive New Englander to eke out a near starvation existence revising the dreadful scribblings of lesser writers and finally killing him with a cancer in the guts. (33)

In what can be seen as a semi-comedic take on the Naturalist trope of the individual as unwitting victim to larger, unalienable forces, over which they have no control, the Old Ones are, in fact, real in this case. However, now that his father is dead, only the protagonist of Spencer's novel, the struggling writer, Philip Kenan, knows this to be true. Given the novel's implicit debt to Naturalism, it is inevitable that Philip should find himself a part of the capitalist system his father warned him against: "Don't let any bastard steal your dreams, or trick you out of them with a pension and a promise. Don't let the system eat your soul." (33) Graduating from college with little sense of the "world of employment" (41) Philip and his then girlfriend Elaine set out to

become "young artists" (41) working diligently in the late nineteen-sixties until one day their money runs out: "All of a sudden, it seemed. They had to get jobs. Philip hadn't finished his novel, and Elaine had made a few hundred dollars from her paintings ⋯ and the bank account was empty and the rent was coming due." (42) Philip's early attempts to live outside of the system prove impossible and he and Elaine eventually have no choice but to submit to the capitalist system's ordering of worth based upon their quantifiable skills. Unable to cope with the "implacable weight" (43) of "the bourgeois world" (42) Elaine resigns from her job as an admissions clerk and sinks into alcoholism, eventually committing suicide.

Subsequently, Philip acquires a job at the giant corporation called MicroMeg Management Systems. This is where he meets the current love of his life, Amelia. Unfortunately, Philip's coworkers at MicroMeg are engaged in summoning the Lovecraftian entity Yog-Sothoth: "The Old Ones were coming through, summoned in some damnable bargain between vast corporations" (126). In a secret, subterranean basement of the MicroMeg building, the company have set up "row upon row of desks, stretched out like mirrored reflections echoed into infinity. On each desk, an identical computer terminal rested. And seated at the desks were men and women, or what had once been men and women." (134) In a parody of disempowered white-collar workers across the U.S., these zombified workers toil against their will translating the Necronomicon in order to bring forth the Old Ones of Lovecraft's stories. Indeed, the novel suggests that company culture hinges, intrinsically, on the propagation of a hierarchal, quasi-class system of which the Old Ones might be seen as the ultimate embodiment:

> "You may say to yourself, 'I am an insignificant person in this big company. I could be laid off tomorrow along with five hundred of my fellow workers, and no one would care.' The truth is, what you do is important to people who *are* important. While you may, indeed, be one of many, your labor can benefit someone who is, in fact, *genuinely* important." (56)

The permeation of Lovecraftian monsters into corporate culture means that when Amelia gets a job at a new company entitled Pelidyne it is not long before it is revealed to be another subterfuge on behalf of the Great Old Ones and their followers. Duly Philip realizes that there is "a degenerate subculture living within Pelidyne, an atrophied race of office workers" (170). Philip's resistance to the capitalist system as a writer and artist; as his boss exclaims: "You rotten malcontent ⋯ Slacker. Bum. Lazy welfare parasite scum!" (144), gift him with the ability to see through the façade of corporate America and rescue Amelia from being sent to the planet of Yuggoth as part of Pelidyne's Employee of the Month scheme, designed "to weed out any humans who are a little too innovative, too intelligent" (212).

That the cubicle workers in Spencer's novel are depicted as mindless 'zombies', who "nod rhythmically" (64) and carry out the tasks allotted to them with no resistance, should come as little surprise if we share Roger Luckhurst's suggestion that "The zombie [is] the symbolic figure for contemporary capitalism" (11).

Diana Rowland's series of White Trash Zombie novels make this link explicit. Starting with *My Life as a White Trash Zombie* (2011) and running through four sequels (to date), Rowland's series follows the adventures of "redneck trailer trash" (50) Angel Crawford. In the first novel, Angel awakens in hospital following a car crash to find a mysterious letter that tells her she has been given a job working for the local pathologist. While Angel comes to enjoy this change in her life she also finds out that she is slowly transforming into one of the undead, a process that involves having to control a strange new addiction to human brains. Indeed, much of the humor in the novels arises from Angel's self-reflexive commentary about her white trash identity: "this bitch considered me to be one step away from starring in my own loser reality show" (2); and the conventions of the zombie sub-genre: "Hunger prodded me, as if to taunt me about the loss of my brains. I let out a harsh laugh – *yeah, I was brainless*" (224).

However, alongside this humor the series has several more serious points to make about the treatment of white trash individuals by wider society. Right from the beginning of *My Life as a White Trash Zombie* (2011), Angel alerts us to the prejudice she experiences every day; commenting of the ER nurse who is meant to be looking after her: "Her eyes narrowed with contempt and disapproval. I didn't care. I was used to seeing that when people looked at me" (1-2). This prejudice is tied to Angel's status as a "charity case" (193). We learn that Angel lives with her alcoholic father in "St. Edwards Parish, which wasn't much more than a big stretch of swamp and marsh in the southeast corner of Louisiana" (33). She works a series of dead end jobs and has a boyfriend, Randy, who lives in a trailer, and who she uses as an escape when her father is abusive. The series repeatedly foregrounds that Angel is a victim of her socio-economic conditions. At the start of the first novel, Angel has to deal with the repercussions of the accident because she does not have the money to pay for help: "some social worker or psychologist would come in and tell me that I needed rehab or counselling or some crap like that, which was a stupid suggestion since I didn't have money or insurance." (3) In a statement that seems to consciously hark back to literary Naturalism, Angel declares that "the universe sure seemed to be rigged against me, and most of the time it didn't seem to matter how hard I tried since I was obviously never going to catch a break" (13).

One of the more plaintive elements of the series is that Angel comes to see her transformation into one of the undead as an improvement on her previous white trash life: "*But hell, anything's better than working a minimum wage job at Bayou Burger*" (16). In a manner akin to the space monkeys in *Fight Club*, Rowlands presents the reader with a character for whom there is very little to lose, and who therefore, experiences the nihilistic as empowering. Angel's new condition enables her to withstand the punishments meted out by her abusive father; she doesn't bruise and has reduced sensitivity, and also leads her to stop taking drugs and getting drunk: "If I hadn't been zombified I probably never would have found the strength to stop doing the pills and hold down a job. I never had the desire to. Why the hell should I? I had no pride, no drive. I'd never been able to see a world beyond what I'd always known." (306-7). However, lest the reader think that Rowlands is suggesting that addiction was the cause of all Angel's problems rather than a

symptom, she replaces a dependence on drink and drugs with zombie Angel's need for fresh human brains. The novels' depiction of the zombies' need for brains implicitly parallels other forms of addiction that disproportionally effect those at the bottom of the socio-economic scale, such as Angel's father's drinking as a result of his unemployment and failed marriage. Rowlands shows those characters suffering from addiction as victims and encourages the reader to be sympathetic towards the complexities of their plight; as Angel notes of the reconciliation with her father at the end of the novel:

> This whole conversation could end up being a goddamned Hallmark Movie of the Week with us failing into each other's arms and tearfully promising that everything
>
> was going to be wonderful now because he'd stop drinking and I'd be a devoted and supportive daughter. I knew damn good and well that nothing was as easy as that. (306)

Despite appearing to depict Angel's white trash identity as something she shouldn't be embarrassed by, Rowland's novels still offer a somewhat conservative, bourgeois narrative of self-improvement. It is noticeable that by the end of *My Life as a White Trash Zombie*, Angel realizes that she is no longer content with the "laid back" white trash lifestyle of her boyfriend Randy and his ilk. As she explains, she "is sick of being a loser" (226) qualifying the term 'loser' as referring to "people who don't want anything for themselves. Or who don't do the shit that needs to be done to get anywhere in life" (226). The belief that "We're only trash if we keep acting like it." (307) comes perilously close to suggesting that poverty is a choice and that the individual can escape it if they merely choose to behave in the 'correct' fashion. Though Angel qualifies this statement by admitting that "expecting my dad to become a better person ⋯ was totally unrealistic" (307) the character nevertheless acquires a protestant work ethic, positioning her as a wannabe member of the materialist mainstream rather than a self-confessed, white trash outlier.

Perhaps the most commercially successful of the more recent zombie novels, Max Brook's *World War Z* (2006), often represents the zombie apocalypse, and its aftermath, in distinctly Marxist terms. It is indicative that the outbreak that destroys much of the developed world in the novel is initially allowed to gain a foothold due to the ineptitude of those in power. Of the many narrators that we are presented with, one claims that the pandemic originally spread via the movement of infected refugees, whom it is suggested were ignored by the authorities: "What better place to hide than among that part of society that no one else even wants to acknowledge. How else could so many outbreaks have started in so many First World ghettos?" (15) Similarly, a doctor speculates that the disease may have been spread through the illegal trafficking of transplant organs from developing to developed countries. The message that capitalist exploitation of the poor has played a significant part in the promulgation of the infection is clear. Indeed, in the early days of the outbreak those in power, and the system of "big-time, prewar, global capitalism" (54) are shown to be almost universally corrupt in nature; willing to exploit the suffering of their fellow men to make as much money as possible. Breckenridge Scott invents, and becomes rich selling, a false cure for the infection, defending his actions by claiming that "All I did was what any of us are ever supposed to do" (58), while the novel details the attempts made by the wealthy to isolate

themselves from the trauma of the outbreak, whether this means zombies, or by isolating themselves from "other not-so-rich people who just wanted a safe place to hide" (88).

What is perhaps more interesting than the pre-outbreak sections of the novel however is the attention that is paid to the aftermath of the 'War'. Following the containment of the zombie hordes, those people that are left alive must decide how best to rebuild their communities. Significantly, the novel suggests that what is needed in this new post-industrial, post-capitalist society are "methods that were almost Marxist in nature, the kind of collectivization that would make Ayn Rand leap from her grave and join the ranks of the living dead" (138). As money is now effectively worthless, a different system of (re) organisation needs to be employed, one that completely overturns the previous hierarchies based on wealth and associated bourgeois concepts of cultural capital: "The more work you do the more money you make, the more peons you hire to free you up to make more money. That's the way the world works. But one day it doesn't. No one needs a contract reviewed or a deal brokered." (140) Though, as Lanzendörfer has noted, "World War Z needlessly foregoes the new system" (10) of use-value rather than exchange-value that it envisages for the post-outbreak world, indicating that a return to a capitalist system is imminent at the end of the novel, the threat alone of a temporary overhaul to the class system is presented as a sufficiently terrifying prospect to many. Indeed, the claim that fear of this re-organisation exceeded the thought of being eaten alive: "For some, this was scarier than the living dead." (140) suggests the continuing anxiety surrounding class in the U.S. It seems fitting that it is "classism" (140) that underpins this most contemporary horror bestseller. As the U.S. moves further into the twenty first century, horror continues to successfully articulate the fears that plague the national psyche.

In this chapter, and those that have preceded it, we have seen the many ways in which gothic and horror has played a part in depicting the class based concerns of the American public. Beginning with the representation of the poor, and their urban squalor, in the work of nineteenth century authors including Edgar Allen Poe and Naturalist writers such as Jack London, Stephen Crane and George Lippard, the idioms of the gothic were used to try and provoke a bourgeois audience into a greater understanding of the plight of those at the bottom of the socio-economic scale. Ironically, the use of such intentionally horrifying language and iconography may have contributed to a perception of the poor and working classes as abject that has remained to the present day. Certainly, the contradictory attraction and repulsion to the poor that we can see in the work of a writer such as Lippard filtered through to the populist pulp magazines of the early twentieth century. Although many writers working in the pulps sought to court their audiences by offering narratives of proletarian heroes triumphing over evil hegemonic rulers, the most critically appreciated of such writers, H.P. Lovecraft took quite a different approach to class. Informed by his own elitist anxieties concerning the real world effects of Marxist ideology, mass immigration and the eugenics movement, Lovecraft's writing offered readers a set of depictions of the poor, both urban and rural, that found an intense horror in their tainted bloodlines and potential for revolution. At the same time as Lovecraft demonised the poor, other writers such as William Faulkner and Guy Endore used horror to provide readers with decidedly more complex and, at times, sympathetic explorations of the socio-economic conditions that served to victimise individuals, beginning a critique of the effects of capitalism that drew from Hawthorne and the Naturalists. Though many of the writers that followed Lovecraft were in some way, indebted to his work, mid-century authors including Ray Bradbury, Robert Bloch and Shirley Jackson offered a much more multifaceted engagement with class. Partly as a result of their growing up during the

Depression of the 1930's, these authors expanded the depiction of the poor as victims, often satirising America's claims to be an egalitarian society by foregrounding the persistence of the class system. A greater sense of realism, both social and psychological, helped authors such as Fritz Leiber and Bloch to make the point that the horrors facing many in the contemporary U.S.A. were not the mere creations of fantasists but rather tied directly to wider social and political issues. The death of dedicated outlets for horror lead to a diversification of the genre during the mid-century, a broadening which was arguably repealed when a series of unexpectedly, commercially successful novels released during the late 1960s and early 1970s caused an immense boom in horror fiction. The most successful of the authors to emerge from this period was undoubtedly Stephen King, who self-consciously built upon the work carried out by earlier writers such as Bradbury and Jackson to create bestselling novels that crossed over and appealed to 'mainstream' readers. Yet, though King has been criticised for 'dumbing down' or diluting the transgressive elements of the genre, much of his work offers a surprisingly nuanced exploration of class and the pernicious effects of late stage capitalism on the well-being of the individual. King's writing is also notable for its self-reflexivity. Novels such as *Misery* contain some of the most pertinent self-examination of what it means to be a writer, and reader, of horror in the twentieth century. King's attempts to grapple with the status of horror as 'bad object' make explicit a strain of self-consciousness that has permeated horror from its earliest days. The knowledge that horror has been widely perceived as populist and lowbrow has alternately plagued and empowered writers. While Lovecraft sought to elevate the genre to a higher literary plane, the splatterpunks of the 1970s and 1980s wanted to push the boundaries as far as possible, reclaiming the genre from what they considered to be its (too) respectable heyday of the 1980s. Writers such as Jack Ketchum and Poppy Z Brite did this positioning their work as too 'extreme' for the mainstream, offering readers increasingly graphic depictions of sex and violence. Interestingly, this fiction often dealt with those who were marginalised by mainstream society, either because of race, gender, sexuality or class. In the process, and much like punk, splatterpunk often contained a radical rejection of bourgeois ideology in favour of valorising the proletariat. In another irony, splatterpunk's excesses now seem to have filtered through into the

'mainstream' of horror, informing both the erudite cannibals and sympathetic serial killers of authors such as Thomas Harris and Jeff Lindsay, and the literary horror of Chuck Palahniuk and Bret Easton Ellis. These most recent writers often take explicit aim at the class system, exposing the deep divisions that exist between the rich and poor within the U.S.

Though many in the U.S. might like to think that class is now irrelevant as a lived reality, the first two decades of the twenty-first century have witnessed the return of several ongoing narratives concerning class. The concept of the undeserving poor has reared its head in political rhetoric: "this has been the convenient refrain of Republicans in Congress [⋯with⋯] former Speaker of the House John Boehner publicly [⋯equating⋯] joblessness with personal laziness" (Isenberg, 319). Following the worst recession in the U.S. since the 1930s there has been a return of 'them and us' oratory, with the phrase, the "1 percent", being widely employed as shorthand for the continuing deep divisions between the rich and poor. Even more recently, Donald Trump's energising of a significant sector of the rural working class has seen them demonised as monstrously out of control. As this study has tried to prove, the continuing discomfort that many feel "when forced to acknowledge the existence of poverty" (Isenberg, 319) finds its most interesting representation in the nation's horror fiction. Whether this means horror is a politically

transgressive format or a conservative "safety valve" (Johnson, 105) negating radical feeling is a matter for subjective interpretation. What cannot be disputed is that Horror addresses the blind spots in the national psyche, providing a platform for what Isenberg describes as the "disturbing thread in our national narrative" (321). Be it in the form of the serial killer or the vampire, the Lovecraftian Great Old Ones or the zombie, the genre serves as a tool through which the reader can come face to face with the terrors that haunt a nation still unable, or unwilling, to address poverty and class in a more direct, and open fashion.

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