

The history of popular culture is not simply an antiquarian collecting and cataloguing of nostalgia artifacts; it is the history of the social relations between the industries producing cheap commodities for mass entertainment and reaction, the symbolic forms and practices, both traditional and newly-invented, of working class communities, and the attempts by the dominant culture to police and reform the culture of the “lower classes.”

Michael Denning, *Mechanic Accents: Dime Novels and Working-Class Culture in America* (London: Verso, 1987), 4.

Pulpsters defined themselves against their slick competitors. Fighting for ever larger shares of the periodical market and for more secure brand recognition, the mass-circulation magazines developed giant editorial operations. They staffed large organizations devoted to developing, planning, and packaging their magazines and often paid exorbitant rates to attract the most renowned contributors to their pages. As a consequence, the slicks not only offered a wealth of information and entertainment, they tended to speak to their audience as experts, celebrities, and prophets. In response, pulpsters celebrated the local, intimate, and antielitist tendencies built into their industry....The pulps created an unusual literary marketplace—one intensely competitive and brutally labor-intensive, but also proudly democratic. Pulpsters bragged that their magazines ran on “laissez-faire principles” and that their reputations counted for nothing; “skill and craftsmanship” ruled, and the doors were always open to beginners and “apprentices.”

Sean McCann, *Gumshoe America: Hard-Boiled Crime Fiction and the Rise and Fall of New Deal Liberalism* (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2000), 51–52, JSTOR.

If there is one trait that the pulpwood reader has it is his predilection for sameness. If he subscribes to a smooth-paper sheet he may find one story on the theme he prefers; the pulpwood magazine, on the other hand, offers him nothing else. If he purchases a Western pulp he does so because he wants to read only fast-ridin', quick-trigger cowboy yarns—and half a million of him do so every week. The love-fiction magazine supplies the romantic thrills that the girl wants, to the exclusion of everything else.

With the coming of competition [from cinema, allegedly] the pulp underwent an ameba-like division. Adventure, Detective and Western periodicals were broken down into component parts—the basic titles persisting, however. For example, in place of the ordinary he-man magazine given over to general adventure yarns, the publishers became more and more specific with such titles as Sea, Air, Submarine, War, Spy and Sport.

Harold Brainerd Hersey, *Pulpwood Editor: The Fabulous World of the Thriller Magazines Revealed by a Veteran Editor and Publisher* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1937), 2, 162.

1889	Carroll John Daly b. Yonkers
1894	Samuel Dashiell Hammett b. Maryland
1896	Munsey's <i>Argosy</i> switches to pulp paper
1903	Louis Frederick Nebel b. Staten Island
1915	Street & Smith reboots <i>Nick Carter Weekly</i> as <i>Detective Story</i>
1915–20	Hammett works as Pinkerton detective (strikebreaking etc.)
1918	Nebel leaves high school, works shipping, railroads
1920	Pro-Distributors (George Jean Nathan and H.L. Mencken) debuts <i>The Black Mask: A Magazine of Mystery, Romance, and Adventure</i>
1922	Hammett and Daly's first stories in <i>Black Mask</i>
1923	Daly, "Knights of the Open Palm" (<i>BM</i> 6, no. 5) introduces Race Williams
1923	Hammett, "Arson Plus" (<i>BM</i> 6, no. 7) introduces Continental Op
1926	Nebel, "The Breaks of the Game," (<i>BM</i> 9, no. 1): first of 69 stories in the magazine
1927	Hammett, "The Main Death" (<i>BM</i> 10, no. 4)
1927–29	Hammett, <i>Red Harvest</i> (serialized <i>BM</i> ; New York: Knopf)
1929	<i>Black Mask</i> reaches peak circulation of 125,000
1930s	peak decade for US pulp magazines
1930	Hammett's last Continental Op story, in <i>BM</i>
1931	Nebel's first Jack Cardigan story in <i>Dime Detective</i> 1, no. 1
1934	Nebel, "Too Hot to Handle" (<i>DD</i> 14, no. 1)
1936	Nebel's last <i>Black Mask</i> publication (further stories in <i>Cosmopolitan</i> , <i>Collier's</i> , etc.)
1934	Hammett, <i>The Thin Man</i> (Knopf): last mystery
1955	Daly's last Race Williams story, in <i>Smashing Detective Stories</i>
1958	Daly d.
1961	Hammett d.

Sources: Wikipedia s.v. Carroll John Daly; chronology in Hammett, *Crime Stories & Other Writings* (New York: Library of America, 2001); Phil Stephenson-Payne, ed., *The Crime, Mystery, and Gangster Fiction Index*, 2026; Katherine Harper, "Frederick Nebel," in *American Hard-Boiled Crime Writers*, ed. George Parker Anderson and Julie B. Anderson (Detroit: Gale, 2000), Literature Resource Center; Brooks E. Hefner et al., *Circulating American Magazines*, osf.io/533ck/, 2022.

22

I know a forger who left his wife because she had learned to smoke cigarettes while he was serving a term in prison.

23

Second only to "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" is "Raffles" in the affections of the daily press. The phrase "gentleman crook" is used on the slightest provocation. A composite portrait of the gentry upon whom the newspapers have bestowed this title would show a laudanum-drinker, with a large rhinestone horseshoe aglow in the soiled bosom of his shirt below a bow tie, leering at his victim, and saying: "Now don't get scared, lady, I ain't gonna crack you on the bean. I ain't a rough-neck!"

24

The cleverest and most uniformly successful detective I have ever known is extremely myopic.

25

Going from the larger cities out into the remote rural communities, one finds a steadily decreasing percentage of crimes that have to do with money and a proportionate in-

crease in the frequency of sex as a criminal motive.

26

While trying to peer into the upper story of a roadhouse in northern California one night—and the man I was looking for was in Seattle at the time—part of the porch roof crumbled under me and I fell, spraining an ankle. The proprietor of the roadhouse gave me water to bathe it in.

27

The chief difference between the exceptionally knotty problem confronting the detective of fiction and that facing the real detective is that in the former there is usually a paucity of clues, and in the latter altogether too many.

28

I know a man who once stole a Ferris-wheel.

29

That the law-breaker is invariably soon or late apprehended is probably the least challenged of extant myths. And yet the files of every detective bureau bulge with the records of unsolved mysteries and uncaught criminals.

Dashiell Hammett, "From the Memoirs of a Private Detective," *Smart Set* 70, no. 3 (March 1923): 90; HathiTrust.

Hammett gave murder back to the kind of people that commit for reasons, not just to provide a corpse; and with the means at hand, not hand-wrought dueling pistols, curare, and tropical fish....He had a literary style, but his audience didn't know it, because it was in a language not supposed to be capable of such refinements. They thought they were getting a good meaty melodrama written in the kind of lingo they imagined they spoke themselves. It was, in a sense, but it was much more. All language begins with speech, and the speech of common men at that, but when it develops to the point of becoming a literary medium it only looks like speech.

Raymond Chandler, "The Simple Art of Murder," *Atlantic Monthly* (November, 1944): 58.

I was a Pinkerton's National Detective Agency operative for a number of years; and, more recently, have published fiction, book reviews, verse, sketches, and so on in twenty of twenty-five magazines.

Letter to Editorial Department, Alfred A. Knopf [inc., his future publisher], February 11, 1928, in *Selected Letters of Dashiell Hammett, 1921–1960*, ed. Richard Layman with Julie M. Rivett (Washington, DC: Counterpoint, 2001), 45.

I'm one of the few—if there are any more—people moderately literate who take the detective story seriously. I don't mean that I necessarily take my own or anybody else's seriously—but the detective story as a form. Some day somebody's going to make “literature” of it.

Letter to Blanche Knopf [editor of Knopf's mystery line], March 20, 1928, in *ibid.*, 47.

DIGITIZED CHEAP PERIODICALS

- Internet Archive, archive.org, especially the Magazine Rack and Pulp Magazine Archive. Deep, aggressive on testing copyright boundaries, but metadata is a mess.
- Pulp Magazines Project, pulpmags.org: selected issue scans, magazine histories, background information. Last updated 2014 (?) and showing its age.
- Galactic Central, philsp.com: an extraordinary library of cover images and digitized indices to fiction magazines.
- Chronicling America, chroniclingamerica.loc.gov: loads of scans of newspapers, 1756–1963.
- Dime novels and story papers: a couple of special collections websites, NIU's Nickels and Dimes and Villanova's Dime Novels and Popular Literature.
- The Online Books Page, onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu: a remarkably comprehensive database of links to freely available digitized books *and* serials, maintained by one librarian at Penn.

Principal General Magazines and Fiction Magazines in 1912, 1920, and 1925

Size: Standard, Oversize, Undersize.

Paper: Book, Slick, Quality mixture, Mixture of pulp and better grades.

Frequency: Monthly, Semimonthly, Weekly. Price per copy. CIRCulation in thousands.

	1912					1920					1925				
	S	P	F	Pr	CIR	S	P	F	Pr	CIRC	S	P	F	Pr	CIRC
Harper's	S	Q	M	.35	110	S	Q	M	.35	86	S	B	M	.50	31
Century	S	Q	M	.35	150	S	Q	M	.35	47	S	B	M	.50	69
Scribner's	S	Q	M	.25	175	S	Q	M	.25	98	S	B	M	.35	71
Overland	S	Q	M	.15	68	S	Q	M	.25	65					
Munsey's	S	Q	M	.10	400	S	P	M	.25	132	S	P	M	.25	71
Cosmopolitan	S	Q	M	.15	750	O	S	M	.25	1330	O	S	M	.25	1424
McClure's	S	Q	M	.15	400	O	S	M	.15	440	S	S	M	.25	
American	S	Q	M	.15	300	O	S	M	.25	1441	O	S	M	.25	2113
Everybody's	S	Q	M	.15	600	O	S	M	.25	298	S	S	M	.25	383
Metropolitan	S	Q	M	.15	291	O	S	M	.25	368					
Hearst's	S	Q	M	.15	100	O	S	M	.35	482					
Smith's	S	M	M	.15	129	S	P	M	.20	S&S					
Railroad Man's	S	P	M	.15	150										
Green Book	S	M	M	.15											
Lippincott's	S	B	M	.25	60										
Black Cat	U	B	M	.15		S	P	M	.20	50					
10 Story Book	U	B	M	.10	89										
Smart Set	S	B	M	.25	85	S	P	M	.35	50	O	S	M	.25	262
Ainslee's	S	B	M	.15	227	S	P	M	.20	S&S	S	P	M	.25	S&S
Red Book	S	S	M	.15	300	O	S	M	.25	791	S	S	M	.25	781
Young's	S	B	M	.15	109	S	P	M	.20	102	S	P	M	.20	NG
Snappy Stories, 1912						S	P	M	.20	175	S	P	S	.20	NG
Live Stories, 1913						S	P	M	.15	130	S	P	Q	.20	NG
Parisienne, 1915						S	P	M	.20	140					
Breezy Stories, 1915						S	P	M	.20	103	S	P	S	.20	NG
Saucy Stories, 1916						S	P	M	.20	120					
Telling Tales, 1919						S	P	M	.20						
Argosy, 1882	S	P	M	.15	300	S	P	W	.10	498	S	P	W	.10	MC
Popular, 1903	S	P	S	.15	370	S	P	S	.20	S&S	S	P	S	.25	S&S
Blue Book, 1905	S	P	M	.15	175	S	P	M	.20	200	S	P	M	.25	189
All-Story, 1905	S	P	M	.15	180										
People's, 1906	S	P	M	.15	180	S	P	M	.20	S&S					
Cavalier, 1908	S	P	W	.10	125										
Top-Notch, 1910	S	P	S	.10		S	P	S	.15	S&S	S	P	S	.15	S&S
Adventure, 1910	S	P	M	.15	100	S	P	S	.20	190	S	P	T	.25	126
Short Stories, 1910	S	P	M	.15	120	S	P	M	.20	132	S	P	S	.25	291
Gunter's/New St	S	P	M	.15	150										
Detective Story, 1915						S	P	W	.15	S&S	S	P	W	.15	S&S
Western Story, 1919						S	P	W	.15	S&S	S	P	W	.15	S&S
Love Story, 1921, replacing Smith's											S	P	W	.15	S&S
Flynn's Detective Fiction, 1924											S	P	W	.10	MC
Complete Stories, 1924, replacing People's											S	P	S	.15	S&S
Sea Stories, 1922											S	P	M	.20	S&S
Sport Story, 1922											S	P	S	.15	S&S
Black Mask, 1920; Action Stories, 1921											S	P	M	.20	NG
Ace-High, 1921											S	P	S	.20	NG
Atlantic	S	B	M	.35	30	S	B	M	.35	108	S	B	M	.50	119
Sat Eve Post	O	S	W	.05	1885	O	S	W	.05	2109	O	S	W	.05	2420
Collier's	O	S	W	.10	500	O	S	W	.05	1043	O	S	W	.05	1032
True Story, 1919						O	S	M	.25		O	S	M	.25	1193
The Street and Smith Combination										773					1,114
The Munsey Combination (Circulation for 1926)															444
The News Stand Group															About 600

R.D. Mullen, "From Standard Magazines to Pulp and Big Slicks: A Note on the History of US General and Fiction Magazines," *Science Fiction Studies* 22, no. 1 (March 1995): 145, JSTOR.

Overleaf: *Dime Mystery* 5, no. 1 (April 1934): 120, archive.org.

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10c DIME **WESTERN** MAGAZINE

COWMAN'S LAW, novelette by Walt Coburn, leads this smashing April issue along the Colt trail of the sage country. Also featured stories by Nafziger, Olmsted, Cassidy, Oliver King and others.

10c DIME **MYSTERY** MAGAZINE

For April conjures up spine-tingling thrills and chills in terror-mystery stories by Hugh B. Cave—*UNHOLY NIGHT*; A. L. Zagat—*DEATH DANCERS*; Wyatt Blassingame—*THE TONGUELESS HORROR*; and others.

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