

# **PULP LITERATURE**

## **A RE-EVALUTATION**

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

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

## **ABSTRACT**

### **PULP LITERATURE: A RE-EVALUATION**

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

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

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

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