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Pynchon in Popular Magazines

JOHN K. YOUNG

Any devoted Pynchon reader knows that "The Secret Integration" originally appeared in *The Saturday Evening Post* and that portions of *The Crying of Lot 49* were first serialized in *Esquire* and *Cavalier*. But few readers stop to ask what it meant for Pynchon, already a reclusive figure, to publish in these popular magazines during the mid-1960s, or how we might understand these texts today after taking into account their original sites of publication. "The Secret Integration" in the *Post* or the excerpt of *Lot 49* in *Esquire* produce different meanings in these different contexts, meanings that disappear when reading the later versions alone. In this essay I argue that only by studying these stories within their full textual history can we understand Pynchon's place within popular media and his responses to the consumer culture through which he developed his initial authorial image.

Simply by publishing in those venues Pynchon cannot help but participate in a mainstream literary publicity that he has otherwise avoided. His appearances in such popular publications presumably inflated sales of his first two novels.¹ More important for literary studies generally, this inquiry into publishing history shows the crucial role that materialist criticism can always play in literary scholarship. Any interpretation that seeks to locate Pynchon historically, or to understand the cultural contexts within which any author works, cannot neglect textual history itself, for, as editorial theorists have consistently demonstrated over the last twenty years, the material traces of that history speak volumes about the social, political and cultural negotiations necessary to make a text public. As George Borstein concludes, "studying texts only in our contemporary reprintings erases the original historicized meanings [. . .] and renders even readings that aspire toward the historic or political only a back-projection of an illusory politics fantasized in the present" ("How to" 56).² By transferring Pynchon's publishing history from the bibliographical margins to the interpretive center, I argue for both the specific ways in which these contexts compel new readings and the general ways in which they demonstrate the need to read materially and historically.

Postmodernist scholars have focused primarily on the ways in which context influences interpretation; yet in doing so, they have neglected the most basic literary context: publishing history.³ In an argument for the political engagement of postmodernism, for example,

Linda Hutcheon concludes that "Postmodern art cannot but be political, at least in the sense that its representations—its images and stories—are anything but neutral, however 'aestheticized' they may appear to be in their parodic self-reflexivity" (3). But Hutcheon here re-"aestheticizes" postmodern art by defining "representations" only as "images and stories," and not as material forms as well. I demonstrate that just as Hutcheon's aesthetic representations appear falsely neutral, so too the means of material transmission of post-modernism—or of any literary period—seem outwardly indifferent to interpretation, when in fact those representations too "cannot but be political." The specific political issue at hand here is the relationship among author, publisher, and reader in an increasingly commercialized literary market. Postmodern artists are implicated in commerce in ways modernists were not,⁴ but the more significant difference, as Fredric Jameson observes, is that "postmodernism replicates or reproduces—reinforces—the logic of consumer capitalism" ("Postmodernism and Consumer Society" 20).

One important way in which postmodern fiction resists that logic, as I argue here, is precisely through its transformation of popular media. Jameson is surely correct that "in postmodern culture, 'culture' has become a product in its own right; the market has become a substitute for itself and fully as much a commodity as any of the items it includes within itself" (*Postmodernism* x). But a corollary of that cultural commodification is the revised role of the popular audience for "serious" literature. That is, the continuing collapse of the high-low divide in definitions of "culture" complicates Jameson's picture of commodification because the implicit distinction between "culture" produced outside the market and the "low" cultural products that have, in prepostmodern times, been designed solely for sale disappears once the same art aims at multiple audiences. For example, when Toni Morrison appears on "Oprah's Book Club" to discuss *The Bluest Eye*, *Song of Solomon*, and *Paradise*, or when Paul Auster's *City of Glass* appears both from Sun & Moon Press and in the NeonLit series of graphic novels, the literary public undergoes an important transformation; the popular audience itself accommodates serious literature that engages that audience on its own terms.

Pynchon's stories in popular magazines operate in a different historical moment, arguably before the postmodern cultural marketplace had become centered on the "consumption of the very process of consumption itself, above and beyond its content and the immediate commercial products" (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 276). Looking back at these stories from the present moment yields new insights into the burgeoning relationship between fiction and the market of the 1960s as they forecast both the commodification of consumption and the possibility of revisionary resistance to that trend. We cannot read Pynchon's stories the same way in these different venues; but after encountering Pynchon's fictions we also cannot read ourselves in the same way as consumers of those popular magazines.

Pynchon as a Professional Author

In 1964, Pynchon notes in the introduction to *Slow Learner*, he had "embarked" on the professional "phase of the business" (22). Indeed, publishing in *The Saturday Evening Post* or *Esquire* is a business venture in a way that submitting stories to *Kenyon Review* or *Cornell Writer* (where "Entropy" and "The Small Rain" first appeared) is not. By publishing in the *Post* and in *Esquire*, Pynchon refashions himself as a mainstream author, forsaking the artistic pose attendant on small magazines for the commercial viability conferred by major-market publications.⁵ Not yet in the mid-'60s the brand name that he is today, Pynchon still carried enough literary and marketing weight to appear in both the *Post* and *Esquire* Christmas issues, when the magazines' fiction and advertising were marketed interconnectedly to a premium audience.

Pynchon being Pynchon, we may probably never know why he opted for such popular venues following the critical success of *V*. (And Pynchon's executors being Pynchon's executors, his surviving letters to former agent Candida Donadio may not answer that question for a long time either.)⁶ Following Jules Siegel's recollection that Pynchon lacked cash at the time (172), it seems reasonable to assume that, simply put, Pynchon sold out.⁷ Not yet the celebrity (nor MacArthur Foundation recipient) he would become, Pynchon presumably turned to popular magazines for the same reason that Faulkner, Fitzgerald, and so many other American writers before him had: they paid well and they carried a certain cultural cache, especially for male writers.⁸ (It is more difficult to speculate on Pynchon's reasons for publishing in *Cavalier*, but I return briefly to this question Beyond the motives of financial and cultural capital, we can also see Pynchon's subversive irony at work: the choices of *The Saturday Evening Post* and *Esquire* for these particular submissions are too deliciously peculiar to make their selections seem entirely mercenary.

In a broader sense, I hope through this attention to Pynchon's popular publications to demystify his usual stance as an isolated genius. Pynchon's reclusiveness has often produced critical rhetoric locating him beyond popular culture, despite his work's recurrent references to the music, movies, and television of his era. As Henry Louis Gates Jr. facetiously puts it: "Thomas Pynchon. Now there was someone you never saw on 'Oprah Winfrey'" (15). Of course, part of Gates's satirical point is the way in which the myth of the reclusive, genius author operates outside the cultural range of an African American woman's talk show. As a white, male author, Pynchon can choose to opt out of "Oprah" for reasons that are largely unavailable to Morrison.⁹ Michael Bérubé observes that "Pynchon's nonparticipation in his cultural transmission is a cultural position utterly inaccessible to minority writers, alien to *their* literary culture" (311). And as I have argued elsewhere, Morrison's participation in "Oprah's Book Club" is not just a reflection of her need for greater publicity; it also grants Morrison a measure of cultural integrity that Pynchon avoids by remaining on the cultural margins.

The kind of careful, materialist history I hope to provide here both amplifies and complicates those points. In "A Journey into the Mind of Watts," for example, published by *The New York Times Magazine* in 1966, Pynchon inveighs against dominant cultural perceptions of the inner city within one of the hallmarks of that dominant culture. Thanks to the mobility accorded him by race, Pynchon is free to enter and then to leave this "country which lies, psychologically, uncounted miles further than most whites seem at present willing to travel" ("Journey" 78), just as he can use Carl Barrington as an "imaginary friend" to point to the poverty of the white racial imagination while himself remaining racially "invisible and detached from the culture as a reclusive genius (Bérubé 297). The liminal position Pynchon occupies--critiquing American racism while remaining culturally invisible himself--appears in much clearer relief when taking these original publishing contexts into account. Reprints "tend to set the text free from its original time and place, locating it in our own principally as an aesthetic rather than historicized object," Bornstein writes ("How to" 31). Reading "The Secret Integration" in *Slow Learner* rather than in the *Post* produces precisely that kind of historical dislocation: The story functions within an entirely different context in a popular literary magazine aimed at a predominantly white audience in the midst of the Civil Rights movement. The specific ways in which Pynchon's story comments on the circumstances of its own production disappear in *Slow Learner*, where it operates as a dehistoricized exemplum of early fiction leading to mature work.

My primary method of reading this uneasy negotiation between commodity and literary culture therefore relies on the ways in which "bibliographic" codes, defined by Jerome McGann as "typesets, bindings, book prices, page format, and all those textual phenomena usually regarded as (at best) peripheral to [. . .] 'the text as such'" (13), express a text's economic, social, and cultural histories.¹⁰ The bibliographic codes for serialized fiction are particularly important because they demonstrate the full scope of postmodern literature's intersection with popular media. What McGann terms "radial reading" is the dominant mode of any serial fiction, as the reader encounters both Pynchon's stories and the advertisements and other articles surrounding them.¹¹ Similar to Raymond Williams's notion of "televisual flow," a general reading field is at work in a popular magazine directing the terms under which the pieces of fiction can be processed. Textual criticism focused on serialized fiction thus demonstrates through material evidence the specific interactions between "serious" literature and "popular" culture.

Unsafe Dreams in the Christmas Post

A brief note at the end of the *Post's* "Secret Integration" states, "Thomas Pynchon is the author of a first novel, called simply *V* [*sic*], which received extraordinary praise when it was published last year. Previously his stories had been in both the *O. Henry Prize Stories* and Martha Foley's *Best American Short Stories*. 'The Secret Integration' is his first story to be published since the appearance of *V*" (51). This description both identifies Pynchon as a

significant young writer, an important designation for any magazine marketing itself as a publisher of new fiction, and advertises "The Secret Integration" as his latest encouraging readers who are aware of *V.* only by reputation to take up this new, and more easily digestible, sample. By omitting mention of Pynchon's Faulkner Prize for *V.*, in favor of his inclusion in short story anthologies, the *Post* further markets Pynchon's accessibility.

Pynchon thus joins a long list of *Post* authors, who were well-known or well-received or both. In 1964-65, the magazine also published fiction by Nelson Algren, Louis Auchincloss, Saul Bellow, Kay Boyle, James Gould Cozzens, Joan Didion, William Faulkner (posthumously), Graham Greene, Shirley Jackson, Arthur Miller, William Saroyan, Isaac Bashevis Singer, Christina Stead, John Updike, Leon Uris, Robert Penn Warren, and P. G. Wodehouse.¹² As Susan V. Donaldson observes, the *Post* had built its reputation as a source of quality literature during the 1920s and 1930s by publishing Faulkner, Fitzgerald, and others. Though in the 1960s, the *Post* was going through financial troubles that lead to the magazine's dissolution in 1969, it continued to publish prominent writers and to pay well relative to other magazines.¹³ Pynchon thus aligns himself with one of the bastions of quality magazine fiction in America, implicitly joining Bellow, Greene, and the rest in the field of significant new (and predominantly male) literature. It is also important to distinguish between "typical" *Post* and *Esquire* readers.¹⁴ Whereas *Esquire* focused more on fashion, business, and sex, the *Post* that period retained much of its Norman Rockwell image, even during its unpopular abandonment of Rockwell's cover design. Although targeting ostensibly different audiences, the *Post* and *Esquire* in the end marketed to the same affluent readers at different stages of life.

Like others before him, Pynchon seems to have tailored his work to fit the *Post* audience, at least compared to his first novel. J. Kerry Grant observes that *V* makes extraordinary demands on most fiction readers, who share "a set of remarkably conservative expectations," because it is "informed by a satirical intention which implicitly targets the very act of reading itself" (xii). "The Secret Integration," for all its literary merits—even Pynchon admits "there are parts of it I can't believe I wrote" (*SL* 22)—is certainly not *V.*, not least because of its much more straightforward narrative style and structure. Whereas *V* challenges the foundations of fiction itself, refusing to provide a coherent narrative framework or a totalizing signifier that would explain (away) the novel by identifying "*V.*," "The Secret Integration" falls well within the generic parameters of the short story. Significantly more complex in its ideas and development than most *Post* fiction, "The Secret Integration" still works within the magazine's fictional conventions: developing tension leads to an unexpected ending. Gina Berriault's "The Birthday Party," which is in the same issue, focuses on a nine-year-old boy who spends the day in fear of his mother's abandonment, though she returns at the end to be consoled by her own mother. As in "The Secret Integration," a precocious main character struggles to understand the mysterious workings of the adult world—in this case his single mother disappears for hours at a time as her latest relationship ends painfully. By appearing within the broader context of *Post* fiction,

Pynchon at once invites the magazine's readers to approach the story with a certain degree of familiarity, even as he seeks to undo that comfort through his particular focus on the sinister consequences of the children's transition into the adult world. The grandmother's comforting presence in "The Birthday Party" reinscribes the idea of "home" as a safe, domestic location; in contrast, the children in "The Secret Integration" return to homes that now produce "dreams that could never again be entirely safe" (51). But in each case the same fictional structure applies, enabling Pynchon's story to mask its troubling implications within a form that seems easy and reassuring for the *Post* readers to consume.

Critical readings, although relatively few, generally agree on the story's powerful indictment of the cultural integration that leads the children to dismiss Carl Barrington as fictional, retreating from their imaginary world into the real, racist one that their parents inhabit. Robert Holton remarks that the story narrates a "complex socialization process" in which "Pynchon's kids are being imprinted with real imaginary racial lines" (16), and Judith Chambers concludes that "it describes a causal chain that leads to dehumanization and subtler forms of oppression" (37).¹⁵ In one of the few critical responses to account for the story's original site of publication, Joseph W. Slade concludes that "perhaps because the story was written for *The Saturday Evening Post*, it has an air of cuteness about it, as if Pynchon, having become a recluse like J.D. Salinger, felt constrained to write like him too" (22). That kind of reading essentially damns "The Secret Integration" for its appearance in a popular magazine, but, against Slade, I would argue that the "air of cuteness" indicates more about the quality of fiction high-cultural readers expect from a publication like the *Post*. In fact, this style does as much to undermine such readerly expectations in this context as to confirm them; the "air of cuteness" heightens the expected sense of readerly identification with the seemingly safe suburban lifestyle that the story critiques on every level.

A materialist reading of the *Post's* "Secret Integration" extends this focus on the text's commodification—and on its response to that commodification—by examining the bibliographic codes produced through this intersection of "high" and popular cultures. Even a contemporary reader interested only in the Pynchon story confronts a wide contextual range in the surrounding pages: illustrations in the style of a children's book, depicting Grover Snodd in coat and tie and menacing "adult" clouds hovering over the children in their hideaway; ads for tea, Ford's new "young" cars, Parker pens, portable TVs, and Old Crow bourbon; and six editorial cartoons depicting various child-adult interactions. Some of these cartoons speak to the general problems Pynchon addresses, especially one depicting a father sternly telling his doodling son, "Don't be a jerk—get into sales" (46) and one in which an anxious father leaves his maniacal son in a field with his chemistry set, with the reassurance that "Daddy will pick you up here at four o'clock as usual" (47). (The factory looming in this cartoon's background, its smokestacks mirroring the child's test tube, alerts us as well to a Pynchonesque parallel between corporate and parental pollutions.)¹⁶ Our first sight of Grover is Tim's discovery of him "down in the cellar, working on another invention" (36), just as our

introduction to Etienne Cherdlu comes through a report of his father's dire forecast for future jobs.

Editorial content and advertising similarly contradict and complement each other. The magazine's editorial, "Strangers in Our Midst," affirms the "machinery" of the school system by concluding that it "will break a few children in the process, but it will turn most of them into respectable wage earners and citizens," but it also reminds parents that, "As surely as a child combines the physical appearance of his father and mother, so his mind will reflect the total education that they have given him—or failed to give him" (74). That ambivalent praise for an oppressive educational environment appears opposite a cigarette advertisement, just as a bourbon ad lurks uncannily on the page following the police apprehension of Carl McAfee and the boys' failed A. A. mission, even hinting in its name (Old Crow Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey) at the Jim Crow system that haunts McAfee. The rhetoric of tradition and sophistication in the bourbon ad—"Old Crow has been the inspired gift bourbon for 129 years"—expresses precisely the self-image the *Post's* readers expect in all its pages. Set in a small New England town, "The Secret Integration" plays on this culture of tradition, exemplified by the *Post's* long association with Rockwell, and so undercuts the bourbon ad's implied connections among civility, sophistication, and whiteness.

Finally, this intertextual network positions "The Secret Integration," which David Cowart has called "a kind of moral touchstone within the Pynchon *oeuvre*" (5), as part of a special issue on "THE CHILDREN OF AMERICA: WHAT THEY THINK • WHAT THEY BUY • HOW THEY LEARN • HOW THEY PLAY." In its broad critiques of the school system's emphasis on social conformity, the garbage of consumer consumption, and the children's need to invent an imaginary black playmate in order to integrate themselves, "The Secret Integration" fits remarkably and subversively into these categories. The articles surrounding Pynchon's story include "Parents Will Never Amount to Much," a complaint of seven- and five-year-old siblings that "Parents don't know their own minds" (14); an account of the "Extraordinary Amidon School," with its integrated faculty and student body; a portrait of a "Little Genius" and (very briefly) his social problems; an outline of the rapidly escalating purchasing power held by children; a "day in the life of" a pediatrician (which, alas, includes no suggestion therapy to cure warts); and the editorial previously described. The repressive and racist adult world into which the children in Pynchon's story are being integrated is thus strikingly present in the *Post's* surrounding pages,¹⁷ expressed in often contradictory ways by the magazine's different kinds of content. Although some of the *Post's* articles attempt, usually halfheartedly, to address the American racial divide in 1964, others do not, and the advertisements' models are almost uniformly white. The ads and surrounding articles integrate Pynchon's story into their field of consumer culture at the same time that Pynchon's story integrates that culture into the critique of its consumers. Read in this context, "The Secret Integration" requires its *Post* audience to recognize themselves in Tim Santora's mother as she makes her

harassing phone call to the Barringtons. The shame implicit in her lie that this is a practical joke should reflect on Pynchon's readers, as they, unlike Tim, understand fully at what "he'd caught her" (39). By encountering this unexpectedly subversive story in a mainstream magazine, that is, Pynchon's readers may "catch" themselves.

The closing revelation that Carl Barrington has been the boys' imaginary friend all along thus unveils the fictionality of racial constructions generally. Just as Carl is "imaginary," a collection of the "phrases, images, possibilities that grownups had somehow turned away from" (51), so too the parents' image of the real Barringtons is composed of their own fictions. This point holds when reading "The Secret Integration" in the Christmas *Post* or in *Slow Learner*, but the *Post* story articulates much more clearly the commodification of such racial fantasies. The *Post* sells its readers a particular image of America that Pynchon's story aims to subvert. There can be no doubt that Pynchon uses the *Post* to boost his own commercial appeal, or that in doing so he implicates himself within the broader circuit of commodification that includes all the magazine's content. In publishing this particular story in this particular magazine, however, Pynchon also compels his readers there—many of whom were probably encountering his work for the first time—either to misread "The Secret Integration" altogether or to accept its critique of their presumed cultural values in a source that ordinarily confirms them. As a *Saturday Evening Post* story, this text adds another layer of "secret integration" through its acceptance and subversion of its context; in *Slow Learner* there is no such "secret" to integrate.

"The Flesh (Mrs. Oedipa Maas)" in *Esquire*

A year after "The Secret Integration" appeared in the *Post*, *Esquire* included "The World (This One), the Flesh (Mrs. Oedipa Maas), and the Testament of Pierce Inverarity" in its December 1965 issue. This excerpt covers the first two chapters of the *Crying of Lot 49*, which, as David Seed demonstrates, must by then have been finished ("Textual Revisions," 39). The following March, *Cavalier*, an odd combination of '60s political rhetoric and nude pictorials of the "Weekend Girl" (later the "Now Girl"), published "The Shrink Flips," a small portion of the novel's fifth chapter that recounts Dr. Hilarius's breakdown. As the more mainstream choice, *Esquire* offers clearer avenues for investigating Pynchon's relationship to popular culture and to popular audiences. In contrast to the magazine story, the novel lends itself more easily to readings like Cathy Davidson's, of Oedipa as a heroine who "challenges the cherished myths of a male-dominated society" (50), or like Frank Kermode's, of the narrative itself as full of "radical equivocations" and questions (14), which, as Hanjo Berressem writes, "remain open even beyond the termination of the text" (83). The story as a separate publication depicts Oedipa largely in terms of Metzger's sexual conquest and the text itself as a more clearly resolvable, if no doubt peculiar, tale of 1960s southern California. What Catharine R. Stimpson sees as Pynchon's early

"sexual conservatism" in *Lot 49* (43) is even more striking in an *Esquire* story identifying Oedipa as "the Flesh." "[W]hat *Esquire* demonstrated was that woman-trashing as such could be packaged and sold to a large, prosperous bourgeois audience" (20), Kenon Breazeale concludes in her history of the magazine's early years. Although Breazeale's study ends in 1946, ads surrounding Pynchon's story for such products as 007 After Shave, which "gives any man the license to kill [...] women," indicate a continuing misogyny. (And little had changed twenty years later; in a discussion of Tim O'Brien's *Esquire* stories Lorrie N. Smith observes that, "As with *Playboy*, the female reader opening these pages ventures into alien and dangerous territory" [23].) In *The Crying of Lot 49*, Oedipa's developing quest takes her far beyond her suburban dream state; but in "The World (This One), the Flesh (Mrs. Oedipa Maas), and the Testament of Pierce Inverarity" she ends in bed with Metzger following their game of Strip Botticelli. Whereas feminist readings based on the whole of *Lot 49* are viable, the *Esquire* story alone strongly circumscribes them.¹⁸

Esquire in the 1960s had become a cross between a "grandfatherly *Playboy*" and a "cultural magazine," in the words of its advertising director (Polsgrove 92-93); on the other hand, *Cavalier's* cover promotes an excerpt from Pynchon's "wild new novel" alongside an inside look at the SDS movement and "the 'New Miss World' in a Nude Mood." These magazines thus represent two important segments of Pynchon's presumed audience at this stage in his career: The literate, affluent men reading *Esquire* and the politically radical, though hardly feminist, men reading *Cavalier*. *Esquire* obviously reached a much larger readership than *Cavalier*. Although lacking the advertising or subscription strength of a magazine like *Life*, *Esquire* appealed to its audience partly on the strength of such young writers as Gay Talese, Norman Mailer, and Gary Wills, and partly through its "sophisticated" features on fashion, travel, and sex. Above the sardonic legend "Just an old-fashioned Christmas!" the December cover displays George Hamilton, Joey Heatherton, Sammy Davis, and Sybil Christopher all caught in mid-dance step. This is the kind of satiric cover for which *Esquire* became famous; the best-known (and most controversial, at the time) example was Sonny Liston dressed as Santa Claus (see Polsgrove 94-97). Inside the December issue are such features as "A Wine List for Patriots" and, in the "Wearables" section, the fashion editors' peculiar prediction that buttons would soon become anachronistic in men's dress shirts.

Advertising is an important part of the bibliographic codes here, as it reveals *Esquire's* intended readership. Surrounding "The World [. . .]" are ads for an executive typewriter kit, a lighting system for night golf, "New Kleenex Man-Size Tissues," a portable electric typewriter, a Jack Nicklaus golf cart, a Manhattan French restaurant, Aztec cologne, Rooster ties, Golden Vee shirts, Lancome fragrances, and Grommes & Ullrich "rich" bourbon. These ads speak to the images of refined masculinity promoted in "The Magazine for Men": the debonair *Esquire* reader who, when away from the office or the golf course, suavely beds women just sexually aggressive enough to buy their husbands' ties.

"The Flesh" (Oedipa) gallantly ignores Roseman's half-hearted efforts at footsie before succumbing to Metzger's evening of watching "Cashiered," drinking wine, tequila, and Jack Daniels, and playing Strip Botticelli. Similar attitudes prevail in an *Esquire* profile of Sybil Christopher, a thirty-six-year-old theatrical producer and Richard Burton's ex-wife, who had made headlines by marrying a twenty-four-year-old singer. Like Oedipa, Sybil (as the article refers to her) shrugs off routine flirtation: "'I was never one to be ticked to death at having passes made at me,' says Sybil casually. 'Very often I didn't even realize they were being made'" (164). This blithe indifference both mocks the men who flirt so inconsequentially and portrays Christopher as a different kind of woman from the "'lib, overeducated broads'" Metzger will accuse Oedipa of being in the chapter of *Lot 49* that follows the *Esquire* excerpt (76). Similarly, Oedipa, feeling "insulated" by her boots during lunch with Roseman, "decided not to make any fuss" ("The World" 173).¹⁹ Metzger, so handsome that Oedipa immediately assumes him to be a Hollywood actor, is more the kind of man that *Esquire* aimed at, albeit a satirized version with his sharkskin suit and not quite hidden belly. The story's ending, however, fits perfectly into the magazine's ur-narrative:

"What did Inverarity tell you about me," she asked finally. "That you wouldn't be easy." She began to cry. "Come back," Metzger said.
"Come on." After a while she said, "I will." And she did. (303)

In her monograph on *Lot 49*, Georgiana M. M. Colville reads this scene as evidence that "Oedipa is still quite malleable and under the influence" of Metzger as a "Hollywood-style male sex object" (79). Colville then charts Oedipa's psychological progression, noting that she flees similar advances in Nefastis's house, and concludes that Oedipa by the novel's end, "[h]aving been confined to sterile book learning [. . .] now finds herself propelled into the living world" (90). Colville's reading is typical of such interpretations: that the novel as a whole charts Oedipa's development from naive housewife to politically and culturally aware heroine, even as it subverts our confidence in any such easily digestible plot.²⁰ But in *Esquire*, we find only that Oedipa has moved from what will be the last meaningful days of her marriage to Mucho, through memories of her affair with Inverarity, to the closing tryst with Metzger. The dialogue in this closing scene, as Colville notes, mimics the language of wills and marriage (79), appropriately for an affair with a lawyer, but it also refers punningly to Oedipa's orgasm. The *Esquire* context, I argue, heightens our sense of this pun, as Oedipa becomes implicated with the magazine's larger structure of sexual conquest.²¹ The layout of this final page takes this punning sense even further, with the large bourbon bottle in the ad below pointing up toward the story's final lines.

This last page also offers the clearest demonstration of the story's commodification within *Esquire's* bibliographical environment; the large bourbon ad here refers readers indirectly to the issue's overall advertising text. "Want to know where to buy it?" we read in a box a

few pages earlier. "To make your shopping easier for the many products advertised in this Christmas issue, see page 319: then use the card appearing with it." This card, which lists the main products advertised, allows the reader to check all those he would like to buy and then send the card to *Esquire's* "C-0-M-P-U-T-E-R-I-Z-E-D Shopping Service" (no doubt an appealing innovation in 1965). The shopping service then returns a "convenient" list of those stores in the reader's area that carry these products; there is no need for the busy *Esquire* reader to waste time checking stores himself. Like most magazines of its kind, *Esquire* witnessed frequent battles between the editorial and business departments over the degree to which the copy should support and complement the ads, but these debates are ultimately moot: the magazine cannot help but commodify its editorial content by establishing what it hopes will be a closed circuit of readers and consumers.

During the 1950s, and probably through the mid-1960s as well, the magazine's advertising directors often reviewed the sequence of editorial copy to maximize ad placement.²² The Grommes & Ullrich ad for "THE *RICH* BOURBON" on the last page of the Pynchon story may not be a coincidence; in the column of copy facing the ad, Oedipa and Metzger "lay twined amid a wall-to-wall scatter of clothing and spilled bourbon" (303). (Remarkably, the Grommes & Ullrich bourbon is "charcoal-filtered," although we have not yet learned the secret of Fangoso Lagoons in this excerpt.) The ad's slogan, "THE *RICH* BOURBON," cleverly conflates taste in its physical and cultural senses, just as the story has circled around Inverarity's seemingly endless holdings as Metzger's means of impressing Oedipa. Despite her protests to the contrary, the evidence of "the Flesh" in *Esquire* falls on the conclusion that a rich bourbon and a rich client have indeed aided Metzger in another sexual conquest. The story's position within the magazine's circuit of commodification thus remarks on its textual history as another product used to sell images of taste, which is ultimately reducible here to sex appeal.

Pynchon, who once again becomes an indirect advertisement for bourbon, acquires an authorial image as an *Esquire* and *Cavalier* author, as a "wild" young writer rather than "as central a writer as one can imagine" to contemporary "theories of American, modern, and post-modern literature" (Berube 311). This difference is partly owing to the absence of *Gravity's Rainbow* in a 1965 assessment of Pynchon's place in the canon, but more to his participation in, rather than self-imposed exile from, the means of cultural production. By selling himself on the market for the "sophisticated" fiction that *Esquire* represents, Pynchon sacrifices some of his usual reclusiveness to become a particular kind of public author. Rather than sending his work out for readers to respond how they will, as one would ordinarily understand Pynchon's reclusive posture, the *Esquire* Pynchon already aims himself at a specifically gendered and classed audience, just as the *Post* Pynchon directs himself at an older, though still bourgeois, readership.

Yet to some extent, Oedipa, as both "flesh" and protagonist, calls into question the terms by

which *Esquire* readers identify her. Oedipa assumes a level of agency unfamiliar to most *Esquire* women, questing after her own identity and free from the societal constraints that pervade her home in the opening scene. She begins the story as a relatively typical California housewife, only to abandon that role within a few pages. Published a few months before *The Crying of Lot 49* arrived in bookstores, the *Esquire* story of course promotes sales of Pynchon's forthcoming novel, but it also leads readers of that novel who remember its first two chapters into a broader narrative structure in which totalizing systems—even patriarchal ones are questioned and critiqued. On the one hand Pynchon undoes this narrative subversion by publishing the early excerpt in a magazine whose ideology moves unswervingly toward the reinforcement of patriarchal values, but on the other hand he directs his *Esquire* readers toward the novel's undoing of those values, offering at least the possibility that, like the *Post* readers recognizing themselves in Mrs. Santora, they will catch themselves in the gender lies *Esquire* perpetuates in every issue. The effect here is subtler and ultimately less powerful than with the *Post* and "Secret Integration." The realization of an *Esquire* reader depends on his waiting for the published novel, but as an excerpt for a forthcoming novel, "The Flesh" inherently points the *Esquire* audience toward that book.

The liminal position occupied by Pynchon's subversive fiction in popular magazines demonstrates the general need for materialist, historicist readings. If we concur with Jameson's conception of the postmodern "as an attempt to think the present historically in an age that has forgotten how to think historically in the first place" (*Postmodernism ix*) that is, as a cultural moment that either represses history or, failing in that attempt, expresses history despite itself—we can read the material traces of these texts' interaction with popular culture as an example of both effects. Even as "The Secret Integration" and "The World (This One), The Flesh (Mrs. Oedipa Maas), and the Testament of Pierce Inverarity" push their readers to acknowledge the repressed American histories of race, patriarchy, and other totalizing systems, they simultaneously repress and express their own entanglement in and critique of the commodification of postmodern literature. This effect in Pynchon's popular fiction depends in part on his reclusiveness. His cultural position as a white, male author allows him entry to popular media despite his personal anonymity, because the class, gender, and racial assumptions perpetuated by the *Post* and by *Esquire*—and subverted by Pynchon's fiction—also support the myth of the reclusive (white, male) genius. In marked contrast, a writer like Morrison cannot avail herself of this myth. Indeed Morrison has made very public attempts to reach a popular audience, through reading her own audiobooks and appearing on "Oprah's Book Club." Morrison's fiction "catches" her readers in similar racial assumptions, as, most recently, in the opening sentence of *Paradise*, "They shoot the white girl first." Although the novel never explicitly identifies which one of the main characters is white, Morrison's public presence as an African American woman enables a different reading of the racial assumptions *Paradise* exposes, one premised on conversation and teaching (as in the "Oprah" episode for the novel, filmed in Morrison's university office) rather than on the more isolated interactions between Pynchon's popular

fictions and their readers. The emphasis in editorial theory on the material circumstances of textual transmission powerfully demonstrates these important differences between Pynchon and Morrison, arguably the two most significant contemporary American novelists. By recovering these original circumstances of publication, we can also undo literary criticism's own repression of textual history.

NOTES

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1. Pynchon's publishers have not released yearly sales figures, but by 1974, Bantam had issued 800,000 paperback copies of *V.* (Khiss). Unlike such "serious" literature as Saul Bellow's *Herzog*, which made the top ten list of best-sellers for both 1964 and 1965, neither of Pynchon's first two novels were best-sellers. (See Alice Payne Hackett, *70 Years of Best Sellers, 1895-1965*. New York: Bowker, 1967). Pynchon's popularity clearly grew over the years, though; *Gravity's Rainbow* became Viking's "first work by a major novelist to be issued simultaneously in hardcover, at the lofty price of \$15, and in quality paperback, at \$4.95" (Khiss). On Pynchon's early reviews, see Levine Leverenz's introduction to *Mindful Pleasures*.

2. Although such textual critics as Bornstein and Jerome McGann maintain that "poets have been the most zealous to exploit the bibliographic codes of their texts" ("Beyond Words" 388) and that "The object of poetry is to display the textual condition" (*Textual Condition* 10), I argue that fiction, especially in its serial form, generates equally productive examples of the interaction between linguistic and bibliographic codes, especially of the "[c]onflicts or even differences between authorial intent and the inevitable bibliographic codes of publishers" that Bornstein suggests "still await clarification" ("Beyond Words" 393). Serial fiction, which by its very nature depends on a reading environment that includes the magazine's surrounding articles and advertisements, offers a compelling test case for these kinds of conflicts. In a related argument, Philip E. Simmons observes, "As commodities marketed and distributed by national and multinational corporations, commercially published novels are themselves mass-cultural artifacts" (5).

3. For an example of one such reading, see my "Toni Morrison, Oprah Winfrey, and Postmodern Popular Audiences," *African American Review* 35 (2001): 181-203.

4. There are exceptions; Joyce, Woolf, and Eliot all appeared on the cover of *Time*, for example.

5. As Andrew Wernick observes of Salman Rushdie's *Vineland* review in the *New York Times*, "The brand-name promotion of cultural goods and the brand-name promotion of non-cultural goods intersect, indeed condense, within the same mass-communicated textual space" (92).

6. See Mel Gussow, "The Morgan Curtails Access to a Trove of Pynchon Letters," *New York Times*, March 21, 1998, B:7.

7. David Seed also suggests that Donadio may have urged him in this direction ("Textual Revisions" 39).

8. In addition to presenting its awards without a public ceremony, the MacArthur grant obviously has freed Pynchon from whatever commercial considerations might have remained. Michael Bérubé notes that "though Pynchon's rejection of the Howells Medal is rightfully the stuff of minor legend, still, he has accepted the MacArthur Fellowship—gracefully" (301 n17).

For an informative account of Faulkner's *The Unvanquished* in the *Post*, see Susan V. Donaldson, "Dismantling the *Saturday Evening Post* Reader: *The Unvanquished* and Changing 'Horizons of Expectations.'"

9. I develop this point further in "Toni Morrison, Oprah Winfrey, and Postmodern Popular Audiences." Although Oprah's Book Club, *Esquire*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, and *Cavalier* do not carry precisely the same cultural connotations, I would argue that they all fall within the broad category of popular media.
10. On the intersection of bibliographic and linguistic codes generally, see Bornstein, Greetham, McGann, and Shillingsburg.
11. See Chapter 6 of *The Textual Condition* and McGann's "Theory of Texts," *London Review of Books* (18 February 1988): 20-21. In "Pynchon in Watts," David Seed notes that "Pynchon's article suffered from a publishing irony which must have struck him when it appeared." Surrounding Pynchon's account of urban poverty are typical *New York Times Magazine* ads for luggage, wine, "and an obviously expensive Long Island inn. It is pointedly ironic that a piece of polemic against the white establishment should be placed side by side with expensive products of that establishment" (59).
12. The magazine's most frequent contributors during this period were John O'Hara, Stanley Elkin, and Herbert Gold.
13. On the magazine's final years, see Otto Friedrich, *Decline and Fall* (New York: Harper, 1970).
14. For an insightful account of the problems attendant on this kind of historical reconstruction, see Peter L. Shillingsburg, "The Faces of Victorian Fiction," in *The Iconic Page in Manuscript, Print, and Digital Culture*, George Bornstein and Theresa Tinkle, eds. (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1998).
15. See also Seed, *Fictional Labyrinths* 63-70.
16. My thanks to Donna Pasternak for first pointing this out.
17. As Stuart Barnett observes, "Only at the end of the story do we realize that the idea of a secret integration might refer, not just to an imaginary integration by means of the creation of Carl Barrington, but also to the integration of the children into the adult world by means of the banishment of Carl Barrington" (83).
18. Similarly, Smith observes that Mary Anne, the character in O'Brien's "Sweetheart of the Song Tra Bong" who appears to present "a deconstruction of the myths of the American sweetheart," in the end "is denied the freedom or power to tell her own story" (35, 36).
19. The *Esquire* text prints "insulted" for "insulated," a change that Seed concludes is "an important difference, although both would make sense because the early sections of the novel deal with the progressive peeling away of Oedipa's layers of insulation" ("Textual Revisions" 39). But surely for Oedipa to decide "not to make any fuss," she is more likely feeling insulated than insulted.
20. In addition to the sources cited here, see Patricia A. Bergh, "(De)constructing the Image: Thomas Pynchon's Postmodern Woman," *Journal of Popular Culture* 4 (1997): 1-11; William Gleason, "The Postmodern Labyrinths of Lot 49," *Critique* 34 (1993): 83-99; and Chris Hall, "'Behind the Hieroglyphic Streets': Pynchon's Oedipa Maas and the Dialectics of Reading," *Critique* 33 (1991): 63-77.
21. Tracey Sherard observes that Oedipa "realizes here that she has done exactly what Pierce and all he is coming to represent for her said she would do, expected her to do: she has enacted his fiction of her. Thus when Metzger urges her to 'Come back,' her response does not clearly indicate whether she wants to or is merely resigned to being a creature whose actions are conditioned and so predictable by men" (71). This dichotomy is even more striking within the *Esquire* context, in which Oedipa's desire to "come back" either confirms or confounds (but only slightly) the gender ideology Metzger represents.
22. Such coordination goes beyond the common practice of moving liquor ads away from articles on alcoholism, for example; in addition to shielding advertisers from embarrassing juxtapositions, *Esquire* (and other magazines) used editorial content in an effort to heighten reader-consumer's desire for advertised products. On the general relationship between *Esquire's* editorial and advertising staffs, see Polsgrove 72.

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