Patricia Highsmith and the Postwar Literary Marketplace:
The Middlebrow, Print Culture, and Canonisation

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This is to certify that to the best of my knowledge, the content of this thesis is my own work. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or other purposes.

I certify that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work and that all the assistance received in preparing this thesis and sources have been acknowledged.

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Abstract

Typically pegged as an author of suspense fiction or crime writing, this dissertation argues that engaging the material artefacts of Highsmith’s presence in postwar print culture provides a lens onto the author’s forgotten middlebrow ambitions. Analysing Highsmith’s frustrated attempts to enter the booming postwar market for middlebrow fiction, it draws on an array of resources underutilised in middlebrow studies: rejection slips, abridgements, and book jackets. Tracing her many failures and limited successes within the literary marketplace, the dissertation is also an attempt to understand how Highsmith’s posthumous canonisation has provided misleading narratives about the author that overlook her investments in middlebrow culture. This dissertation emphasises that reorienting the methodological approaches used in middlebrow studies—via analyses of rejection slips, abridgements, and book jackets—opens the dialogue between suspense writing and middlebrow fiction, two genres of writing traditionally thought to be diametrically opposed. It concludes by suggesting that any attempt to define the various cultural practices designated as middlebrow must remain incomplete until the links between print culture, the literary marketplace and canonisation have been carefully articulated.
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Introduction: Highsmith’s Middlebrow Market

Francis Wyndham’s review in *The New Statesman* of Patricia Highsmith’s lacklustre 1962 novel *The Cry of the Owl* is visually overshadowed by an eye-catching advertisement. Taking up the entire third column of the page, and towering over Wyndham’s eloquent review, is an advertisement for Everyman’s Library, the publisher of cheap hardcover classics that had recently, in 1960, ventured into paperback editions. The advertisement tagline reads: ‘**ALL** the Books you **must** read are in EVERYMAN.’ Offset by Everyman’s colophon of a devout pilgrim from the *Everyman* morality play, a few paragraphs of information follow:

ALL the books you **should** read—and **will** enjoy—are in EVERYMAN—and in good bookshops now. From your bookseller, now and for the future, you can easily, regularly and inexpensively build up a library of your own; an EVERYMAN Library, elegant in appearance, rich and satisfying in content. The writers and thinkers who matter are all in EVERYMAN: Fielding, Trollope, Dickens, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Forster, Jane Austen, Conrad, Tchekhov, Wells, Bennett, J.S. Mill, Adam Smith, Darwin; hundreds more.¹

¹ ‘Everyman’ advertisement, Francis Wyndham, ‘Miss Highsmith,’ *The New Statesmen*, May 31, 1963 (italics and underlining in original). A similar though less exemplary instance of Highsmith’s peculiar relation in print to advertisements for notable books occurs in a famed review of the author’s work by Terrence Rafferty in *The New Yorker*. Rafferty’s 1988 review, moreover, is often cited as one of the foundational documents of Highsmith’s nascent canonisation. On the last page of Rafferty’s analysis on Highsmith’s thematic preoccupations, a small ad for ‘BOOKS ON TAPE’ is lodged half down the page in the left side column. The company claims to provide ‘Best Sellers on Cassette’ with an image of Tracy Kidder’s new book *The Soul of a New Machine*. See Rafferty, ‘Fear and Trembling’ *The New Yorker* (4 January 1988). Incidentally, Highsmith also sourced the surname for her most famous creation, Tom Ripley, via an advertisement. ‘I got his name when I was driving up the West Side Drive, and saw a billboard for Ripley clothing. ‘Tom Ripley,’ I thought: the talented Tom Ripley.’ Quoted from the memoir by Marijane Meaker, *Highsmith: A Romance of the 1950s* (San Francisco: Cleis Press, 2003), 17.
The juxtaposition between Wyndham’s review and the advertisement prompts the curious reader to ask: will Highsmith’s fiction one day be published by Everyman? The answer, it turns out, is yes, though it was a fraught path for Highsmith.

While printed in an English newspaper, Everyman’s advertisement captures some of the key cultural anxieties that animated postwar American print culture, the middlebrow, and the broader literary marketplace. Packaging classic literature into affordable editions has long animated discussions of the middlebrow. Likewise, the advertisement’s colophon (the pilgrim) symbolises the reverential attitude towards high culture noted as one of the middlebrow’s key markers. On the other hand, a touch exclusively, Everyman states that their products are only available from traditional booksellers, going against the trend of American paperback publishers who sold books at drugstores, supermarkets and gas stations, thereby partially democratising the book. The tension between the books one ‘must read’ but ‘will enjoy’ evokes the quintessential middlebrow problem, glossed in one of the Book-of-the-Month Club’s first advertisements, of forcing oneself to ‘read the books you promise yourself to read, but which heretofore you have never “got around to.”’ In other words, the consumption of high culture is used instrumentally as a route to middle-class self-improvement. This facet is reinforced by Everyman’s declaration that their books are ‘elegant in appearance,’ unwittingly indicating books that are unread status objects, displayed to

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demonstrate cultural proficiency in middle-class homes. Perhaps most importantly, however, is the simple collocation of text and advertisement, art and commerce, specifically writers’ particular relations to the marketing material that interacts with their own written work.

Highsmith’s proximity to the towering Everyman advertisement prompts another question: is Highsmith a middlebrow author? And yet if a modern-day editor was to assemble a collection of contemporary reviews of Highsmith’s fiction, the Everyman advertisement would be scrupulously excised from the final product. As Sean Latham and Robert Scholes note, early archivists of periodicals tended to cut out advertisements, cartoons, classifieds and so on, because they fell outside the legitimate (read: ‘literary’) contents of magazines and newspapers. This editorial practice of excising nonliterary contents that ensues upon canonisation, however, has the tendency to obscure an author’s immersion in the literary marketplace more generally.

This dissertation argues that engaging the material artefacts of Highsmith’s unrecognised presence in postwar US print culture provides a lens onto the author’s hidden middlebrow qualities. Erroneously conceived by Tom Perrin as an ‘anti-middlebrow satirist,’ Highsmith’s forgotten middlebrow ambitions have skewed the manner in which she has been posthumously canonised. More broadly, Highsmith’s route to canonisation has the potential to alter the materials used as evidence to determine canonical status, and to bring to critical consciousness the implicit styles of thinking literary scholars exhibit when thinking of the canonical. As such, this dissertation contends that any attempt to define the various cultural

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5 Anna Creadick, ‘Gendered Terrain: Middlebrow Authorship at Midcentury,’ Post45 (2016), no pagination, accessed at http://post45.research.yale.edu/2016/07/gendered-terrain-middlebrow-authorship-at-midcentury/. Analysing reading habits in James Jones’ From Here to Eternity, Creadick glosses the words of one character guilty of such ‘middle-class status-seeking’: ‘the books look good in the livingroom even if I dont read them.’

6 Latham’s and Scholes’s critique points to the disciplinary priorities of early archivists of periodicals, priorities centred on magazines and newspapers as purely linguistic texts. See ‘The Rise of Periodical Studies,’ PMLA 121:2 (2006), 520.

practices designated as middlebrow must remain incomplete until the links between print
culture, the literary marketplace and canonisation have been carefully articulated. It must be
stressed, however, that the following analysis is not governed by the politics of canon
revisionism. I do not make a case for Highsmith as a forgotten (queer) middlebrow author,
thus explicitly shifting the parameters of the canon. Quite the opposite. This thesis affirms
that the past two decades of Highsmith's canonisation have overlooked her investment in
middlebrow culture, an investment borne out in the materiality of postwar periodicals. Recent
scholarship in the growing field of middlebrow studies has highlighted the benefits of tracing
the middlebrow in materiality of print culture, specifically within the subfield of periodical
studies. Ann Ardis suggests that analysing the dynamic interplay between fiction,
advertisements, puffs (brief, eye-catching information set in a rectangular pattern), cartoons
and so on, provides fruitful ground for middlebrow studies. As Ardis makes clear, this type of
intertextual analysis keys scholars into the interdisciplinary opportunities for middlebrow
studies; too often literary scholars fail to avoid the trap of cherry-picking literary work out
from the advertisements and 'ephemera' that surround it. Taking its cue from Ardis, this
dissertation attempts a similar operation in cultural recovery, of recuperating the material
contexts in which fiction originally appears, or as was often the case, the contexts in which it
failed to appear (see Chapter 1). Reconstructing the marketplace conditions in which
canonical authors produced their work affords literary scholars new ways of looking at
classic writers.

Scholars linking canonisation and periodical culture have pointed to the way magazines
feature canonical and noncanonical authors simultaneously, often abutting each other. The
upshot is a more democratised inventory of twentieth-century authors coded within the

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8 Ann Ardis, ‘Making Middlebrow Culture, Making Middlebrow Literary Texts Matter: The Crisis,
medium of print.⁹ I am interested in quite a different relationship between periodicals and canonisation, however. This interest is borne out by the complementary, or perhaps separate, notion of two distinct materialities. First, the image of the canonical author whose works are regularly reissued, their books almost always displayed in bookstores—a kind of material plenitude of the text. Second, there is the rather scant knowledge of the periodicals canonical authors contributed to, material presences in vibrant print cultures that have either been lost or overlooked. In the last fifteen or so years, the noble efforts of literary and historical scholars to digitise hundreds of twentieth-century periodicals attests to the desire to forestall the erasure of texts from an increasingly digitised world. To digitise a periodical is to give it a solidity, not just to save the contents of any particular magazine but a desire to hold off the insubstantiality of print itself. Following historians of the book, then, this dissertation extends scholarship founded on the central claim that ‘materiality matters.’¹⁰ Periodical scholar Patrick Collier has recently (and pointedly) asked what is the ‘object of knowledge’ behind work on individual periodical, the broader set of implications that are brought to answer the ever-present ‘so what?’ or ‘who cares?’ of scholarly work.¹¹ In this dissertation, I want to suggest that a fruitful reply to Collier’s question is that a different conceptual relationship between periodicals and the canonical is possible via the study of Highsmith’s frustrated dalliances in postwar print culture. A set of questions here nicely situates the work that is developed in the following chapters: Are there continuities or disparities between the difficulties of marketing Highsmith then and the difficulties marketing her now? How do narratives surrounding the canonisation of Highsmith (as a ‘woman author,’ for instance) distort or fail to take into account the manner in which she was featured in midcentury

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magazines? How do the different magazines Highsmith wrote for, and those she wanted to write for but was turned away from, provide clues as to her motives and ambitions in the literary marketplace? Furthermore, how do Highsmith’s marketplace negotiations highlight affective states that have yet to be read back into the thematic preoccupations of her fiction? And where does the middlebrow sit in regard to Highsmith and her presence in postwar print culture?

As suggested, Ardis’s scholarship provides a preliminary blueprint for a materially based examination of the middlebrow within the broader framework of the literary marketplace itself, something which Lise Jaillant has inadvertently suggested is key to our understanding of the midcentury middlebrow. In the introduction to her recent monograph, Modernism, Middlebrow and the Literary Canon, Jaillant, drawing on scholarship by Botshon and Goldsmith, hints that one corner of the middlebrow resides in the navigation of new media technologies flourishing in the early twentieth-century. The middlebrow author is one who successfully exploits the commercial possibilities of the literary marketplace: abridging for magazines, serialising for newspapers, selling scripts to radio and making profits from film rights.

And yet as the interwar years, often styled as the ‘battle of the brows,’ seeped into the postwar era, negative accounts concerning the middlebrow became markedly more vociferous. The interwar years could at least sustain arguments from both sides of the cultural debate. If in 1926 J.B. Priestley could defend the virtues of the ‘broadbrow’ (synonymous with the middlebrow) and Virginia Woolf could conversely excoriate the in-betweenness of the middlebrow in 1932, then by the postwar era the latter side had firmly won out. Jaillant accurately stresses that the ‘flexibility’ of judgments regarding the

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13 J.B. Priestley, ‘High, Low, Broad’ Saturday Review (February 1926); Virginia Woolf, ‘Middlebrow,’ The Death of the Moth and Other Essays (Adelaide: ebooks Adelaide, 2015; originally published 1942), note however that Woolf’s essay/letter was written to The New Statesman (though not sent) in 1932. Jaillant accurately stresses that the ‘flexibility’ of judgments regarding the
Macdonald’s seminal critique of the middlebrow in his 1960 two-part essay ‘Masscult & Midcult’ set the negative terms in which the middlebrow would be conceptualised for three decades. Most importantly however, was the manner in which Macdonald framed the inextricability of the market and the middlebrow as something to be spurned. The middlebrow was the ‘Book-of-the-Month Club,’ cultural producers that combined massive popularity with artistic pretence, ‘a full year six hard-cover lavishly illustrated issues of *Horizon*’ for just ‘$16.70.’\(^{14}\) Turning his back on the Marxism he had nurtured in the interwar years, conservative cultural critics like Macdonald framed culture in the postwar era as an intensely political affair naively drained of market forces. The blistering force of Macdonald’s piece left the budding American writer in a precarious position: how to make a living professionally from the pen without sacrificing one’s aesthetic principles? Framed from the opposite angle, how could the middlebrow be reclaimed from the cynical vocabulary enacted by Macdonald as something to be striven for?

Highsmith serves as the focal point for a new definition of the middlebrow, one that stresses the ways in which authors at midcentury were caught between attitudes of self-posturing and self-sacrifice in their negotiations with the literary marketplace.\(^{15}\) The flexibility of this proposed definition allows for the contingencies in print culture recently construed as middlebrow artefacts (witness the above juxtaposition between Highsmith and the Everyman advertisement), while also taking in the manner in which Highsmith marketed herself as a writer of quality, saleable material. Wyndham’s review of *The Cry of the Owl* next

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\(^{15}\) Melissa Sullivan and Sophie Blanch provide the groundwork for this definition when they track middlebrow authors relations to the labels ‘middlebrow’ and ‘highbrow’: ‘While many cultural producers engaging with modes or audiences often associated with the middlebrow were not eager to take on that appellation, they often vehemently maintained their nonhighbrow status.’ See their ‘Introduction: The Middlebrow – Within or Without Modernism’ *Modernist Cultures* 6:1 (2011), 3.
to the Everyman advertisement may have made Highsmith an associational accomplice to the middlebrow, though it cannot account for Highsmith’s own aspirational middlebrowism, her desire to be published in the slick magazines of the postwar period: the first of these is an aspect of page layout and editorial practice, the second, however, was firmly within Highsmith’s control.\footnote{Aspiration is primarily conceived in middlebrow studies as an element of an upwardly-mobile middleclass readership. Here, I want to switch this quality of aspiration to suit the parameters of an author-based approach. Scholars of the middlebrow including Janice Radway, Beth Driscoll, and Anna Creadick have drawn attention to the aspirational desires of readers of the middlebrow across the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century. See Radway, *A Feeling for Books: The Book-of-the-Month Club, Literary Taste, and Middle-Class Desire* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).} Thus, building on recent developments in print culture scholarship, I argue that the material traces of Highsmith’s engagement with the postwar literary marketplace allows for a fresh take on the middlebrow. In addition, I want to suggest that Highsmith’s long trail of rejection slips, abridgements, short stories, interactions with agents and editors, paperback and hardback editions, provides some early clues as to the manner in which she has been posthumously canonised. I am interested in how the largely forgotten material presence of Highsmith in mid-century print culture has been elided by canonical authorities like Norton and Bloomsbury, suggesting that canonisation is as much about forgetting as it is about remembering the authors whom are re-created in the classroom. An elision in Highsmith studies thus provides the opportunity for a new view of the middlebrow for literary studies.\footnote{By digging up the printed artefacts which mark Highsmith’s attempts at literary professionalisation in the postwar literary marketplace, I aim to fill a gap in Highsmith studies, which from the late 1990s has been predominantly centred around psychoanalytic, existentialist, and queer readings of the author, with a sizeable amount of scholarship on the various film adaptations of Highsmith’s fiction. See Fiona Peters’s psychoanalytic monograph, *Anxiety and Evil in the Writings of Patricia Highsmith* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2011). For an existentialist-based approach to Highsmith, see Russell Harrison, *Patricia Highsmith* (New York: Twayne Publishers; London: Prentice Hall, 1997). Another text that takes in the existentialist reading of Highsmith combined with mid-century sociological accounts of authenticity and selfhood is Abigail Cheever’s *Real Phonies: Cultures of Authenticity in Post-World War II America* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010). Queer interpretations of Highsmith’s fiction include but are not limited to Victoria Hesford, ‘Patriotic Perversions: Patricia Highsmith’s Queer Vision of Cold War America in *The Price of Salt, The Blunderer, and Deep Water*,’ *Women’s Studies Quarterly* 33:3-4 (2005). 215-233; Chris Straayer, ‘The Talented Post-Structuralist: Heteromasculinity, Gay Artifice, and Class Passing.’ *Masculinity: Bodies, Movies, Culture*, edited by...}
It is no accident that the definition of the middlebrow I propose, tracking the middle-ground between self-posturing and self-sacrifice, also serves as a suitable framework for examining literary professionalisation in the postwar years. If literary professionalisation in the postwar period was largely marked by how well an author could sell, resell, and recycle their fiction in the marketplace, then it cannot be overstated how snobbish critics dominated a cultural debate predicated on quashing this commercialisation of the writer. Macdonald’s strongly anti-commercial position, for instance, was largely a reflection of his desire for a self-sustaining American avant-garde that wrote for and spoke to a select, limited audience. Given that Macdonald’s polemic was aimed precisely at the middlebrow—its authors, institutions, and readers—it is quite illuminating to realise how skewed his and other elitists’ views were of the commercialised writer. What passes for an evaluation of the middlebrow as a site of cultural production in Macdonald’s eyes is a reductive selection of four middlebrow authors who have each attained great fame and high sales: Ernest Hemingway, Thornton Wilder, Stephen Vincent Benet and Archibald MacLeish. It is important to realise, however,


18 Sparked by the example of the various European avant-gardes of the early twentieth-century, Macdonald showed great disdain for the average American reader’s need for cultural mediation. Interestingly, *Reader’s Digest* and the *Book-of-the-Month Club* both conducted market research to accurately gauge their audiences taste in books, successfully mediating contact between the author and the American reading public. While on the one hand vindicating Macdonald’s critique, this fact also points to how market research could allow for closer contact between authors and the reading public, who if not for *Reader’s Digest* and *The Book-of-the-Month Club* would perhaps never have come into contact with a wide variety of fiction. See Linda M. Scott, ‘Markets and Audiences,’ *A History of the Book in America: Volume 5: The Enduring Book: Print Culture in Postwar America.*
how few of the writers actually producing middlebrow fiction line up with Macdonald’s equation of the middlebrow with massive popularity and commercially selling out. Indeed, most writers (including Highsmith) producing middlebrow books were not as popular as Hemingway or Wilder; indeed, most were split between aesthetic pursuits and pragmatic matters, caught between the sites I term self-posturing and self-sacrificing while navigating the literary marketplace.

To explain the links between the middlebrow and literary professionalisation more fully, it is vital to contextualise the double-bind of the professionalisation of authorship in postwar America. In March 1949, the English poet Stephen Spender penned a piece called ‘The Situation of the American Writer,’ an essay that sketches the terms of literary professionalisation while reiterating how lop-sided conservative cultural critics’ assessments of the literary marketplace could be. Recently returned from an eighteen-month tour of the United States, Spender offered an outsider’s thoughts on the twin extremes that lodged the nation’s writers. For Spender, these twin extremes resulted in a predicament, or as he terms it, a ‘situation,’ for American authors. Reflecting on the lack of an established European café culture that provided fertile ground for that continent’s high culture and avant-garde, Spender recognises the lack of any ‘community of letters’ in America. Foreshadowing the schematising mindset that characterised much cultural criticism in the postwar years, Spender sees the writer in America as either a ‘commercialized success’ or as a ‘subsidized commercial failure.’ The first is a product of the ‘Hollywoodization of literature,’ whereby literary works are fed into the machine of American film production, creating literary celebrities. The second category falls to those who reject such mainstream success, and thus their chances of ever finding a wide audience, in favour of a highly academicised pursuit of literature (and increasingly literary criticism) in the university system—so-called ‘subsidized failures.’ Reflecting early fears about the dominance of the ‘culture industry,’ Spender does
not see in America ‘a kind of jury of middle-class middling readers’ whose independent judgment redeems the literary merit of select authors. Spender’s opinions are contestable, however, considering that he casts aside the ‘Book Clubs’ as examples of the culture industry, rather than as evidence of the ‘middle-class middling readers’ he does not seem to notice. Moreover, Spender does not linger on the astonishing success of paperbacks, begun in 1939 by Pocket Books and widely referred to as ‘the paperback revolution,’ that effectively provided reading material to the growing postwar American middle classes. Indeed, Spender is suspicious of the fact that ‘[t]he only book shop in most towns is the drug store,’ hesitant to endorse this democratisation of reading because the shopkeepers only sell ‘those [books] which are in the widest demand.’

While these oversights limit Spender’s account, the English poet does highlight the degree to which ‘success’ and ‘failure’ tended to be conceived in absolute terms in postwar American literary discourse. At least from the perspective of highbrow cultural critics. As Spender notes, ‘In Europe, after all, success and failure are comparative terms, particularly failure. One has the feeling that the European failure is often a kind of secret success, at any rate among a small circle… But in America there are scarcely these public failures who are secretly private, highly superior successes.’ Most importantly for my current purposes, however, is how Spender intricately ties the success or failure of American writers to their differing relationships to marketing and public relations. Without simplistically tying these positions to either ‘corruption and integrity’ respectively, success and failure for Spender are the result of a conscious ‘choice’ on the part of the writer to engage the literary marketplace. While a portion of talented writers accepted mainstream success, and capitalised on the subsidiary rights (serialisations, film adaptations, abridgements, and so on) to their

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20 Spender, ‘Situation,’ 165.
intellectual property, another portion rejected it, favouring instead an alleged aesthetic purity within the university and outside of the market.

Though for the writer who wanted to make a living from their pen, it was hardly ever a ‘choice.’ Writers in postwar America variously survived, thrived, got by, sold out, gave up, compromised, made millions or made pennies by negotiating the literary marketplace. Depending on a writer’s personal ethics and aesthetics, success or failure were variously etched into each transaction within the literary marketplace, sometimes the result of personal choice, other times the result of personal negligence, often a mixture of the two.  

John Cheever, the postwar New Yorker writer par excellence, never employed a literary agent to handle his business dealings, not realising until the late 1960s that he was being stiffed financially by the magazine. Thinking that he could avoid the ‘unnecessary’ cost of a literary agent, Cheever dealt directly with the New Yorker, counting on his relationship with the magazine’s staff and editors, though resulting in financial ruin. In a different vein, the astute Willard Motley made a fortune by continually recycling his 1947 novel Knock on Any Door. Like many others before and since, Motley monetarily benefited while aesthetically distancing himself from the multiple bastardisations of his masterwork.

Most writers, however, like Highsmith, fell squarely in the middle. In her lifetime, Highsmith never received the critical acclaim of Cheever nor the enormous commercial

21 In his musings on literary professionalism, Spender rejects both the dominant narratives of the left and the right concerning the marketplace, which had taken on alarming potency in the dramatic early days of the Cold War. The leftist strain argues that the marketplace reflects social relations, such that the individual—let us say here the individual writer—is rendered powerless before the formidable and impersonal workings of the market. The right, contrarily, contend that the meeting between the individual and the marketplace is shaped by the former’s uninhibited freedom of choice. See Michael W. Clune, American Literature and the Free Market, 1945-2000 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) for a theoretical third contender (the ‘economic fiction’) as to how the market functioned for postwar writers.


success of Motley. Putting a positive spin on Spender’s condemnatory remarks, to navigate the postwar literary marketplace the novelist needed a ‘training in self-commerce.’ 24 I want to suggest that this training in self-commerce was how Highsmith attempted to write herself into the middlebrow. The postwar literary marketplace was different in several aspects from the one of the 1920s. The paperback revolution offered the growing middle classes cheap reading material, while the decline in general-interest magazines in the 1950s (more on this later) narrowed the avenues for publishable fiction. Yet in many respects, the key frameworks for literary professionalism were erected in the 1920s. The work of literary historian James L.W. West III is useful here to gather a sense of this new phase in the professionalisation of authorship:

By the late 1920s, standard publishers’ contracts had begun to mention all kinds of subsidiary possibilities—book clubs, magazine serials, second serials, abridgements, translations, syndications, and paperback rights in addition to drama, radio, and movie rights… The standard arrangement was for receipts from such recyclings to be split fifty-fifty between publisher and author. 25

Additionally, the employment of a literary agent had become standard practice by the 1920s, mediating contact between author and publisher and superficially excising ‘business’ from the artistic labours of the writer. By the 1940s and 1950s, the terms of authors’ contracts had become increasingly specified, the amount of fine print had magnified. 26 The unsavvy author, no matter how critically successful, could be ruined without careful attention to business matters.

24 Spender, ‘Situation,’ 170.
25 West III, American Authors, 140-41.
26 West III, American Authors, 142.
Sketching these contextual details allows us to see how Highsmith cut her teeth within the landscape of the postwar literary marketplace. Never popular in her home country, Highsmith shrewdly immersed herself in the ‘subsidiary possibilities’ of her fictional products. Highsmith’s fiction was serialised in German newspapers, translated for French editions, abridged in American magazines, paperbacked/pulped in Britain, and adapted for screen and television across the globe. While not always completely rational concerning what was due her, Highsmith nevertheless learned quickly the small subterfuges and random dodges of the literary marketplace. *Strangers on a Train* (1950), her first novel, was sold to an anonymous bidder ‘in perpetuity’ for $6000 by her agent, the renowned Margot Johnson of Brandt and Brandt. The disguised buyer was Alfred Hitchcock, obviously cognisant of the fact that Johnson would have asked for much more money if she knew the identity of the famous director. A deceptive episode worthy of a Highsmith plot, the young novelist was understandably irritated.\(^27\) By December 1958, still relatively unknown in America though with a better reputation on the continent, she was asking for $15000 for the film rights to *The Talented Mr Ripley*, a sale she was wise enough not to grant in perpetuity. (The film was leased for a shorter period of time, allowing Highsmith and her future agents to re-sell *Ripley* at a later date.)\(^28\) In 1965 and 1966, Highsmith played her French publishers, Calmann-Lévy

\(^{27}\) Highsmith did concede, however, that $6000 was a good price for an author’s first novel. Unbeknownst to Highsmith, Willard Motley received a rumoured $60000 for the film rights to his first novel, *Knock on Any Door* (1947), courtesy of Columbia Pictures. See West, *American Authors*, 139, and Andrew Wilson, *Beautiful Shadow: A Life of Patricia Highsmith* (London: Bloomsbury, 2010), 168-69. Given that much of the following argument is indirectly derived from Highsmith’s distinct lack of popularity in the States, it is worth briefly pausing here to explain why Hitchcock’s adaptation of *Strangers on a Train* failed to make the young author a household name in her home country. The answers are rather prosaic. In her youthful arrogance and disdain for Hollywood and the film industry, Highsmith simply failed to capitalise on the potential of *Strangers*. Hitchcock eagerly asked for more material from Highsmith; Highsmith failed to answer the call. Without more popular films bearing the name of Highsmith, her literary talent was relatively dwarfed by towering presence of the British direction. While dedicated fans of Hitchcock and *Strangers* committed the name ‘Highsmith,’ to memory, it was not enough to make a sizeable dent in the American cultural imagination. See Schenkar, *The Talented Miss Highsmith*, 320.

\(^{28}\) Wilson, *Beautiful Shadow*, 218.
and Laffont, against each other for financial gain.\textsuperscript{29} A financial haggler, Highsmith fired Johnson in 1959 for failing to increase book sales in America and secure the author larger advances from publishers, particularly Coward McCann and Harper & Brothers.\textsuperscript{30} Hence, Highsmith’s professionalisation as a writer by trade came by cleverly learning and then exploiting the mechanics of the postwar literary marketplace.

And yet because she does not fit the terms of the middlebrow set down by Macdonald or the positions of ‘success’ or ‘failure’ sketched by Spender, Highsmith’s middlebrow sensibilities have gone largely unnoticed. As Highsmith did not achieve enormous popularity in the States, she went under the radar of the middlebrow police. This fact should give us pause, however, for it points to the limitations of conceptualising the middlebrow as a site for only ‘popular’ authors: Spender’s ‘commercialised success’ and Macdonald’s identification of the ultra-popular Hemingway and Wilder. Vital recent scholarship on the middlebrow has largely followed the logic of fusing the middlebrow and the popular under one rubric.\textsuperscript{31} Although the authors of middlebrow fiction often wanted their works read by as many people as possible, that does not mean that all middlebrow texts were equally visible in the landscape of postwar fiction. Far from it. Indeed, an account of the middlebrow that foregrounds the changing character of the postwar literary marketplace makes it clear why the middlebrow has been too-easily tied to the popular.

The early postwar period saw significant economic, social, and cultural changes effecting periodicals and the book trade. Martin Halliwell and David Abrahamson have documented how the rise of television in the 1950s caused substantial declines in cinema-going, the

\textsuperscript{29} Wilson, \textit{Beautiful Shadow}, 261-62.
\textsuperscript{30} Wilson, \textit{Beautiful Shadow}, 218.
circulation of magazines and newspapers, and the virtual collapse of lending libraries.32 As the cultural historian David Abrahamson notes, by the early 1970s three ‘general-interest’ magazines, ‘Life, Look, and the Saturday Evening Post, having lost to television significant portions of their national advertising incomes… were all forced to cease publication.’33 In the 1950s and early 1960s American lending libraries discontinued purchases of suspense fiction that had sustained publishers and authors working within crime-related genres, something that affected Highsmith particularly harshly.34 American readers walking into their local public library at this time and looking in the crime or suspense section would not have been able to pick up a Highsmith novel. It is intriguing to consider the common perception of the postwar middlebrow as ‘popular’ as an offshoot of these changes. As the avenues for publication in periodicals dwindled, a bottlenecking effect took began to shape the marketplace for fiction. Those crime authors like Highsmith eager to leave the pulps in search of an (ostensibly) more respectable audience flooded the already crowded markets of middlebrow publishers, newspapers and magazines.35 Between the niche corners of the ‘little reviews’ and the sizeable circulations of magazines like Good Housekeeping, middlebrow publications like The New Yorker, Harper’s Bazaar, and Cosmopolitan became visible as middlebrow precisely because they had survived such seismic changes in the postwar media ecology. Yet most middlebrow authors who littered the pages of these periodicals have been briskly forgotten.

33 Abrahamson, Magazine-Made America, 2.
34 Wilson, Beautiful Shadow, 218-19. This information is based on correspondence between Wilson and Highsmith’s agent from the late 1950s to the late 1970s, Patricia Schartle Myrer.
35 Joan Kahn, an editor at Harper & Brothers, relates how the creation of Harper Novels of Suspense in 1947 led to a flood of roughly two hundred manuscripts from agents that ‘had been everywhere and seen everyone.’ See the Jewish Women’s Archive brief article on Kahn, available electronically at https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/Kahn-Joan.
This bottlenecking effect found another outlet in the book industry, and further points to why the middlebrow has been tied to the idea of popularity. After the war and the subsequent lifting of paper rationing, paperback publishers sought new models for profitability amidst the growing threat of television. Capitalising on the cheap cost of paper, publishers soon realised that they could yield significant revenue by releasing hundreds of books so long as one among their titles became a bestseller. Indeed, publishers actively cultivated such an approach. Once a book began to sell moderately better than its competitors, publishers marshalled sizeable marketing campaigns behind the soon-to-be-bestseller. The cheap cost of producing paperbacks and the ensuing modernisation of the book trade in the postwar years set the context for a business model that actively shaped the perception of the middlebrow as popular, even though most middlebrow novels published were soon forgotten. It would be more accurate to say then that the vast bulk of middlebrow literary production was made invisible by trends in the postwar publishing industry, at the same time that middlebrow bestsellers became increasingly visible as marketable products.

Highsmith’s inconspicuousness in the postwar literary scene is exemplary of these trends in the publishing industry, though ironically, current critics tie her invisibility to the perceived nonliterary cast of her fiction. In an article published in 2004, Edward A. Shannon made the unsubstantiated claim that Highsmith held a ‘longtime reputation in the United States as “merely” a popular mystery writer.’ Drawing on the recollections of prominent New York figures in the literary world, including Norman Mailer, Daniel Bell (the American sociologist), and Robert Gottlieb (Highsmith’s editor at Knopf), Joan Schenkar contrarily indicates ‘how absent from the American literary landscape’ Highsmith was in the postwar

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36 Other factors also influenced this trend. If publishers agreed to greater advances for writers, they would then have to market the novel more aggressively to make back their money.
37 ‘Where Was the Sex?’ *Modern Language Studies*, 17. Given that Andrew Wilson’s excellent biography of Highsmith was released in 2003 and narrates in detail the author’s lack of stature and popularity in the states, Shannon’s oversight is particularly exasperating.
years.\textsuperscript{38} Schenkar also registers contemporary attitudes to the author when describing the quasi-literary nature of the Harper Novels of Suspense, an imprint of Harper & Brothers under which most of Highsmith’s fiction in the 1950s and early 1960s was published: ‘Marc Jaffe, from 1948 onwards an editor at the New American Library… says that Harper Novels of Suspense were considered a “literary” category and that he always thought of Highsmith as a “classy mystery writer” who work belonged in a category “with Josephine Tey, who was, perhaps, a tad more literary.”’\textsuperscript{39} While she had a select few admirers, Shannon’s summation of Highsmith ‘as “merely” a popular mystery writer’ is particularly productive for this study. For one, it suggests how often academic criticism, which forms one crucial element of canonisation, manages to conflate ‘popularity’ with the label of ‘mystery/crime writer,’ which as we have seen is a false equivalence in Highsmith’s case.

Another useful aspect of Shannon’s solecism, perhaps unbeknownst to the critic, is that those few contemporary readers who did come across Highsmith would likely have seen that she was a pulp author, and presumably popular. Highsmith was often presented by midcentury publishing outlets in the language and visual signifiers of pulp fiction, a strategy that tended to solidify her insignificance to postwar cultural commentators. Pan Books, the English publisher who reissued several Highsmith paperbacks, ran Deep Water under the tagline, ‘She knew why her lovers died – but who would believe her?’ This text is offset by a large image of a blonde bikini-clad woman looking appealingly and seductively into the eyes of the potential reader (see image 1). A twentieth-century variant of the ‘fallen women,’ Pan’s paperback artwork is deeply imbued with the style and allure of pulp iconography. A few more examples of similar pulp marketing make this clear. ‘Nightwalker,’ one of Highsmith’s short stories, was promoted by The Saint Mystery Magazine in 1958 in the

\textsuperscript{38} Joan Schenkar, \textit{The Talented Miss Highsmith: The Secret Life and Serious Art of Patricia Highsmith} (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2009), 140-41. 
\textsuperscript{39} Schenkar, \textit{The Talented Miss Highsmith}, 131.
following racy terms: ‘She’d stopped seeing him—and then he’d become angry. If she ever went out with another man he’d kill him!’ Cosmopolitan marketed Highsmith’s self-penned abridgement of Deep Water (rebranded as ‘A Mask of Innocence’) in a similar fashion: ‘Vic was too gentle, people said. He should have stopped Melinda’s bold love-making with other men. Yet he only smiled. And smiled more gently as one by one they died.’

Admittedly, Highsmith has been partially complicit in this framing of her work as pulp fiction, portions of mass culture. In her writer’s manifesto, Plotting and Writing Suspense Fiction, Highsmith makes liberal use of word ‘entertaining,’ something sure to raise the eyebrow of any modernist critic that takes aesthetic value as the core principle of literary creation reception. Highsmith sums up one of her lesser novels, The Two Faces of January, as ‘an entertaining book’; Ellery Queen’s Mystery Magazine are praised by Highsmith for their publication of ‘mystery stories that have suspense and are good entertainment’;

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counselling against rigid plots, Highsmith asserts that her own element of surprise in writing a story is important: ‘I have to think of my own entertainment, and I like surprises myself’; later she sums up the opening paragraphs of her 1953 novel *The Blunderer* as ‘entertaining movement.’

Yet the image of a pulp Highsmith should be carefully balanced with counterexamples demonstrating the author’s specifically middlebrow qualities. Conceiving of the mid-century

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middlebrow as a concatenation of forces—‘an aesthetic mode,’ ‘dissemination and transmission practices,’ and ‘consumption practices’—allows us to reorient Highsmith as an author thoroughly invested in the middlebrow.\(^{43}\) Often Highsmith’s middlebrow qualities are to be found in the fact that she deliberately shunned the trademarks of pulp writing (and its concomitant associations with lowbrow taste). As David Cochran has noted, Highsmith inflexibly avoided the clipped, hardboiled use of dialogue prominent in *Black Mask*, the 1920s pulp magazine that published Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler.\(^{44}\) Like several more easily recognisable middlebrow authors, Highsmith’s fiction is replete with pointed references to middlebrow reading practices (see chapter 3).\(^{45}\) Tellingly, reading in Highsmith’s novels and short stories is tied to self-education and upward mobility, both prime middlebrow traits. These formal features are bolstered by Highsmith’s preferred avenues for publication, her middlebrow aspirations. Her choices for publication in periodicals always came down on the side of prestigious magazines like *The New Yorker*, *Harper’s Bazaar* and *Cosmopolitan* and away from pulps like *The Saint Detective Magazine* and *Ellery Queen’s Mystery Magazine*, even though she most often published in the two latter magazines. As opposed to the typically male (and masculinised) audience of the pulps, the mid-century quality magazines in which Highsmith sporadically published were undoubtedly aimed at women readers. ‘The Heroine,’ published in *Harper’s Bazaar* in 1945, is surrounded by advertisements for women’s gloves, hair removal products, and chic wool frocks.\(^{46}\) An abridgement of ‘The Blunderer’ in *Cosmopolitan* in 1954 features multiple


\(^{44}\) David Cochran, “‘Some Torture That Perversely Eased’: Patricia Highsmith and the Everyday Schizophrenia of American Life,” *America Noir: Underground Writers and Filmmakers of the Postwar Era* (Washington & London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2000), 244. Incidentally, Schenkar highlights how dialogue was always a weakness in Highsmith’s writing, perhaps another reason for her avoidance of it (323).

\(^{45}\) For detailed accounts on intratextual middlebrow readers, see Creadick, ‘Gendered Terrain,’ *Post45* and Perrin, ‘Introduction: Remake It New’ in *The Aesthetics of Middlebrow Fiction*, 1-17.

advertisements for ‘Blu White’ washing flakes and ‘Sweetheart’ soap, spruiking ideals of cleanliness and beauty.\(^47\) Harper’s Bazaar’s ‘construction of fashionable femininity’ and Cosmopolitan’s pitch for the suburban housewife implicate Highsmith in the female consumption practices of the middlebrow.\(^48\)

The posthumous canonisation of Highsmith—propelled by the well-known and acclaimed 1999 film adaptation of The Talented Mr Ripley (1955)—highlights another key strain of middlebrowism associated with the author: her distribution as high culture to wide audiences. Brow-ness, here, is a matter of circulation. On July 1, 2015, the American author Yiyun Li read Highsmith’s short story, ‘The Trouble with Mrs. Blynn, the Trouble with the World’ for The New Yorker’s fiction podcast. The reading is bracketed by a discussion of the short story between Li and The New Yorker’s fiction editor, Deborah Treisman. In the same year, Australia’s First Tuesday Book Club featured Highsmith’s 1960 novel This Sweet Sickness as its ‘classic’ for the week.\(^49\) As a part of her canonisation, what The New Yorker’s podcast and The First Tuesday Book Club do is to mediate Highsmith for readers/listeners not familiar with her intensely psychological novels and her disturbing, often psychopathic characters. (In an oft-cited article for The New Republic, Terry Castle wrote that one needs to put on a ‘decontamination suit’ before reading Highsmith’s disquieting fiction.)\(^50\) Mediation is often marked as a prime element of the middlebrow; after her death, it seems, Highsmith is being

\(^47\) See Highsmith, ‘The Blunderer,’ Cosmopolitan 137:3 (September 1954), accessed via the Swiss Literary Archives, see SLA-PH-A-01-C-1/07, Berne, Switzerland.

\(^48\) Quote is from Steven Dillon, Wolf-Women and Phantom Ladies: Female Desire in 1940s US Culture (Albany: SUNY Press, 2015), 236.

\(^49\) The international reach of The New Yorker and its ability to still make or break authors cannot be overstated. For the audio of The New Yorker’s podcast on Highsmith see: http://www.newyorker.com/podcast/fiction/yiyun-li-reads-patricia-highsmith. Panel guest Marieke Hardy summarises This Sweet Sickness in the book club as ‘a great creepy romp!’ For the full streamed video to the First Tuesday Book Club’s discussion of Highsmith’s novel see: http://www.abc.net.au/tv/firsttuesday/s4267237.htm.

mediated by middlebrow authorities for middlebrow audiences. Much of this admiration Highsmith would have relished, especially if it put more dollars in her bank account.

If the disquieting landscape of Highsmith’s fiction resonates with the twenty-first century middlebrow, then it is important to remember that Highsmith’s ventures into the postwar middlebrow were far from assured. However, it is precisely Highsmith’s attempts to find a home at various middlebrow publications that points to one of the key interventions of this dissertation: to resituate the middlebrow as a contested cultural zone where crime and mystery authors eagerly sought to locate themselves in the postwar period, away from the indignity and lack of prestige produced by the pulps. Yet in the early postwar period, the demarcations separating the pulps from more respectable middlebrow periodicals could not purportedly have been clearer. Russell Lynes’s famous tongue-in-cheek article ‘Highbrow, Lowbrow Middlebrow’ was published in early 1949, written ‘to gauge the social significance of “taste” in the postwar era.’\textsuperscript{51} The success of the article resulted in a reprint on April 11, 1949 in \textit{Life Magazine}, with an additional schematising ‘socio-diagram’ clearly differentiating the differences in taste between highbrows, upper-middlebrows, lower-middlebrows, and lowbrows. The column on taste in reading is particularly illuminating: lowbrows read ‘pulps,’ lower-middlebrows read ‘mass-circulation magazines,’ and upper-middlebrows read ‘quality magazines.’\textsuperscript{52} Highsmith’s journey from the pulps through to the quality magazines can be conceived in spatial terms as climbing the ladder of taste set by prominent voices in the cultural landscape of the early postwar years.\textsuperscript{53}

\textsuperscript{51} Russell Lynes, ‘Highbrow, Lowbrow, Middlebrow,’ republished again in \textit{The Wilson Quarterly} 1:1 (Autumn 1976). The quote in this sentence appears as a short introduction to Lynes’s piece and thus precedes the article proper. It has presumably been written by the editorial team of the quarterly, 146.

\textsuperscript{52} Lynes, ‘Highbrow, Lowbrow, Middlebrow,’ 155.

\textsuperscript{53} It would be a mistake, however, to give the impression that this journey for Highsmith was a completely linear one. The reality is more complex. Highsmith’s short fiction weaved its way into and out of the pulps and back again, making pit stops at the mass-circulation and quality magazines. In the late 1960s for instance, a short story called ‘The Snails’ appeared in \textit{The Saturday Evening Post} (1967), an abridgement of \textit{Those Who Walk Away} was featured in \textit{Cosmopolitan} (1967), and several short stories ran in \textit{Ellery Queen’s Mystery Magazine} (two stories in 1969 alone).
Indeed, many crime writers sought entry into the middlebrow market as a way to balance aesthetic drives with financial needs. Erin A. Smith has defined Vera Caspary, the author of *Laura,* which was turned into the famous 1944 film directed by Otto Preminger, as a ‘mystery middlebrow writer.’ Helen Eustis’s *The Horizontal Man* was brought out by Harper Novels of Suspense and won an Edgar Award for Best First Novel, though the author ‘hated mysteries,’ instead preferring to find her fiction in the glossy pages of *The New Yorker,* which she did in 1944. From the opposite angle, Katherine S. White at *The New Yorker* longed to feature contributions from Elizabeth Sanxay Holding, the acclaimed mid-century crime writer. A good example of this courting appears in a letter from November 1947 and reads as follows: ‘Dear Mrs. Holding: I sent a message to you by your daughter but want to write to you myself to say how welcome a manuscript of yours would be here. Is there any hope? Sincerely, K.S. White.’ Contrary to the image that *The New Yorker* did not solicit contributions from anyone, let alone crime authors, White’s admiration for Holding serves to open up the traffic between suspense writing and quality magazines in a way that broaches the purview of the postwar middlebrow.

To up the stakes then, I ask how recovering the material artefacts which constitute Highsmith’s presence within postwar print culture aids in this reconceptualisation of the middlebrow. This reconceptualization, however, has consequences. For one, noting the examples of Highsmith, Caspary, Eustis and Holding, I necessarily depart from one of Macdonald’s comments that has largely determined the texture of middlebrow studies. In ‘Masscult & Midcult,’ Macdonald wrote that ‘Midcult is not, as might appear at first, a

56 Letter from K.S. White to Elizabeth Sanxay Holding, dated November 10, 1947, located in box 448, folder 16 in *The New Yorker*’s archives at the New York Public Library, New York City.
raising of the level of Masscult [mass culture]. It is rather a corruption of High Culture which has the enormous advantage over Masscult that while also in fact “totally subjected to the spectator,” in Malraux’s phrase, it is able to pass itself off as the real thing.’

Following from this conceptual split, it is vital to resituate the common literary attitude to advertising in magazines as a whole, usually an attitude of disdain that privileges art over commerce. The pulps in which Highsmith published many of her short stories did not need to run advertisements because of their high circulation. Highsmith’s fiction in the pulps reads as relatively untainted by any visual commercial influence that distorts the meaning of the prose. Yet as Schenkar notes, Highsmith dreamed with a certain naivety in her earlier years of becoming a New Yorker writer, though to her ‘embarrassment’ often settled by publishing stories in Ellery Queen’s Mystery Magazine. This means that Highsmith’s aspirational desires do not cohere with familiar narratives concerning the unfortunate influence of advertisements on the legibility of a writer’s fiction. A thoroughly bourgeois figure, Highsmith wanted to be associated with the dazzling commercial world that the slick magazines of the postwar era presented page after page. Contrary to the New Critical project that delimited fiction to a series of purely linguistic units distinct from the commercial world, Highsmith dreamed of being ‘rewardingly lost’ in the advertisements of the fashion magazines.

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57 Dwight Macdonald, ‘Masscult & Midcult,’ 38.
58 Schenkar, The Talented Miss Highsmith, 131.
59 Every single Highsmith novel includes at least one character who comes to some form of self-realisation by the possession of, and loving care for, commodities. Most notable in this respect is Tom Ripley’s famous musing: ‘He loved possessions, not masses of them, but a select few that he did not part with. They gave a man self-respect. Not ostentation but quality, and the love that cherished the quality. Possessions reminded him that he existed, and made him enjoy his existence. It was as simple as that.’ Highsmith, The Talented Mr Ripley (New York & London: W.W. Norton, 2008), 236.
60 The quote is again from Spender and is worth quoting in full: “[T]he fashion magazine [Vogue, Harper’s Bazaar], where poems and stories are buried under hundreds of pages of advertisements for underwear, are scarcely a medium in which the writer can be said to ‘appear’. He is, rather, rewardingly lost, as in a drawer crammed with artificial silks.” ‘The Situation,’ 175. See also John Berryman in ‘The State of American Writing: 1948: A Symposium,’ a key document in the elitist
Via this focus on a single author, it is to be hoped that this reconceptualisation of the postwar middlebrow elicits a broader conversation about the relationship of suspense writing and the quality magazines in the literary marketplace. Critically acclaimed authors including Caspary, Eustis and Holding would be an ideal place to start in this endeavour. Writing in February 1952, Raymond Chandler knew well the contingencies that were the burden of a crime author’s life navigating the literary marketplace, trade-offs that often kept the author in the pulps and out of the slicks. Chandler interestingly ties the compromises of the gifted author of crime fiction to the rashness of literary agents looking for a quick buck and losing sight of the potential loss of prestige that resulted. In wry, excoriating form, Chandler writes, ‘That story he [the literary agent] sold to a pulp magazine might, with a little careful polishing, have made Cosmopolitan or Red Book. But the big market was a gamble, and here was a pulp magazine with money in its hand, and the agent’s secretary bothering him for something on account of her overdue salary.’

This clue from Chandler about the exigencies of the literary marketplace provides far more for the scholar of the middlebrow than the potential ‘literary’ quality of crime fiction at midcentury, an outmoded and unhelpful way of thinking that has long been assimilated into English studies.

More importantly, it was these compromises of which Chandler writes, executed by agents with or without the consent of the author, that have the potential to enrich the conception of the postwar middlebrow: ‘a brave new talent may be corrupt in the fashion magazines before it can vote.’ Partisan Review 15:8, 858.


scholarly conversation regarding the links between gender and the middlebrow.\textsuperscript{63} It is noteworthy that at the time Chandler was writing, \textit{Cosmopolitan} and \textit{Red Book} were both aimed at general-women’s audiences. And of course, quite a bit of crime fiction \textit{did} actually make it into the magazines Chandler mentions (particularly \textit{Cosmopolitan}), a peculiar alchemy of crime authors trying to get out of the pulps and select postwar periodicals struggling to find a new identity in a highly competitive industry. Locating Highsmith’s appearances in middlebrow periodicals allows us to begin the project of charting in what way descriptions of women in her fiction interact with the highly commercialised middle-class world that general-women’s magazines at midcentury typically depicted. Schenkar has correctly identified Highsmith’s female characters as variations on a set of caricatures: ‘vengeful bitches,’ ‘instinctual sluts,’ ‘blank innocents,’ ‘nagging wives,’ and ‘passive dilettantes.’\textsuperscript{64} It is oddly fitting that Highsmith’s unflattering portrayals of women in her fiction are juxtaposed in postwar magazines with advertisements targeting the ‘middle majority woman,’ simplistic portraits of a feminine ‘ideal’ marshalled to sell products like refrigerators and Cadillacs to suburban housewives.\textsuperscript{65}

It is one of the innovations of the present study to point out how the largely forgotten story of Highsmith in the magazines has inadvertently cast a long shadow in the way she has been remembered. This paradox requires some explanation. While heretofore unrecognised by scholars, the hidden history of Highsmith in postwar periodical culture provides an intriguing clue as to how publishers with canonical credentials have sacralised Highsmith as a ‘woman writer.’ Andrew Wilson’s 2003 biography of Highsmith has been reprinted by


\textsuperscript{64} Schenkar, \textit{The Talented Miss Highsmith}, 163.

Bloomsbury as part of their ‘Lives of Women Series,’ along with other biographies of famous women like Coco Chanel and Ava Gardner. Patrick Collier has sensibly warned of using the periodical as an instrumentalist tool, a mere pit-stop in which to ‘contextualiz[e] a hyper-canonical author.’\textsuperscript{66} It remains to be seen, however, what an author’s presence in periodicals before they were canonised tells us about the manner in which they have been subsequently institutionalised via the university and publishing sectors. The link between periodical culture and canonisation, then, is not as reductive or as limiting as Collier suspects.\textsuperscript{67} Remembering that Highsmith made contributions to \textit{Woman’s Home Companion}, \textit{Harper’s Bazaar}, and \textit{Cosmopolitan} suggests that the elusive question of who actually read Highsmith at the time she was writing is a difficult though useful task for the scholar. The middle-class homemaker (\textit{Woman’s Home Companion}), chic upper-middle fashionista (\textit{Harper’s Bazaar}) and general woman/sexually liberated office girl (\textit{Cosmopolitan}) are perhaps not the usual suspects that come to mind when thinking of Highsmith’s audience. The neurotic anguish and psychological cat-and-mouse games that colour her fiction had unlikely readers, it seems.

Drawing from the methodologies of print culture and middlebrow studies, this dissertation finds in Highsmith’s engagements with the literary marketplace an aspirational figure aiming high but willing to compromise: in short, a portrait of postwar literary professionalism. To that end, it also makes innovative use of certain textual materials that are infrequently brought to bear on the practice of literary studies. Chapter 1 draws on the numerous rejection slips Patricia Highsmith received from \textit{The New Yorker}, sourced from the magazine’s archives at The New York Public Library. The relatively new field of periodical

\textsuperscript{67} Another link between periodicals and canonisation useful to this study resides in the perceived fleetingness or longevity of the material artefacts themselves. Until recently, as J. Stephen Murphy describes, magazines have been conceived as ‘ephemeral’ cultural products, a stark contrast to the material solidity of a canonised author’s works which are constantly reprinted and reissued. If magazines are tossed in the recycling after a quick perusal, then the classic is the ever-present adornment of bookstores and bookshelves the world over. See ‘The Serial Reading Project,’ \textit{Journal of Modern Periodical Studies} 1:2 (2010), 182-83.
studies has so far tended to frame fiction published in magazines and newspapers as marking the parameters of analysis. Substantially less attention has been paid to the pre-publication histories of texts. By ‘pre-publication,’ however, I mean not simply the composition histories of texts—including emendations, drafts, revisions, and so on—but their intended or preferred publication targets, so-often thwarted by unimpressed editorial teams.  

Many of Highsmith’s early short stories from the 1940s and 1950s were cast into the literary marketplace by her agent Margot Johnson long before they were actually published: a series of rejections came first, the initial trails of the text, editors expressing concern about this or that aspect of the short story at hand, before the piece found another home, a different avenue for publication. Chapter 1 builds on recent scholarship of The New Yorker as a middlebrow tastemaker, and asks what it meant to be rejected (repeatedly) by the magazine. The chapter then reads the notion of rejection into Highsmith’s rebuffed stories themselves, framing rejection as the denial into an ‘imagined community’ of educated, liberal New Yorker readers. It ends by taking a look at Highsmith’s posthumous publication in The New Yorker in 2002 that served as one of the opening shots in her early canonisation.

Chapter 2 also considers a resource often neglected by literary scholars: novel abridgements, also known as condensations. In ‘Print and the Creation of Middlebrow Culture,’ Trysh Travis states that ‘abridged editions’ were one of the main middlebrow targets of elite critics in the midcentury decades, who were intent on quashing the easy accessibility of literary works.  

Acknowledging this lacuna, Chapter 2 marks the first attempt to bring abridgements into the purview of middlebrow studies. Garnered from

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69 Travis, ‘Print and the Creation of Middlebrow Culture,’ 359.
Highsmith’s archive in Berne, Switzerland, I analyse Highsmith’s three quickly-penned abridgements for *Cosmopolitan*, slyly labelled by the magazine as ‘complete mystery novels.’

Too often thrown into the dustbin by academics as attenuated, childish versions of the source texts from which they are drawn, Highsmith’s abridgements at *Cosmopolitan* mark one of the main avenues the exiled author engaged to gain a broader, middlebrow American readership. Timed for release in conjunction with their source texts, these abridgements make a gamble that *Cosmopolitan*’s fiction readers will be spurred to then buy the original, complete novels. Taking its cue from the Everyman advertisement mentioned above and building on the work of Ann Ardis and Catherine Clay, Chapter 2 explores the middlebrow as a juxtapositional effect. It tracks the relation between Highsmith’s abridgements at *Cosmopolitan* and the advertisements, cartoons, classifieds and puffs that crowded, contradicted, and coalesced with her fiction. Given Highsmith’s three abridgements (1954, 1957, 1967) cut through the rebirth of *Cosmopolitan* in the mid-sixties with the hiring of controversial editor Helen Gurley Brown, Chapter 2 studies how Highsmith’s fiction was pitched at two different types of reader: the general women’s audience of the 1950s and then the ambitious, sexually-liberated ‘pink-collar’ girl of the mid-1960s and beyond.

Chapter 3 leaves the world of periodicals and turns towards Highsmith’s posthumous construction as a canonical figure in American letters. It maps Highsmith’s ‘canonical makeover’ by W.W. Norton and suggests that publishers with canonical credentials have a hidden investment in forgetting ‘Highsmith in the magazines.’ The materials for analysis in Chapter 3 derive from what Gérard Genette in 1997 bracketed under the label of the ‘paratext’: book jackets, blurbs, dedications, biographical notices, publishing information, and so on. Chapter 3 argues that Highsmith’s nascent canonicity is increasingly recognised

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70 Highsmith, ‘A Mask of Innocence,’ 106.
in and through misleading paratexts that seek to clip the author of her ‘lowly’ crime-fiction roots. The chapter’s key intervention in middlebrow studies is to open a space for the middlebrow as the clash between Norton’s awkward performance of prestige and the academic consecration of genre fiction as canonical object. Cued by the oversaturation of the twenty-first century Highsmith market, Norton seeks to frame Highsmith as ‘more than’ or ‘not just’ an author of suspense fiction, positioning the author for a middlebrow readership anxious about reading mere crime books.

These three chapters might be helpfully conceptualised in the following way: Highsmith as she wanted to be marketed, a ‘New Yorker writer’ (chapter 1); Highsmith as she actually was marketed in postwar periodicals like Cosmopolitan (chapter 2); and Highsmith as she has been marketed since her death in 1995 (chapter 3). In the postscript, I offer a few brief comments on the future direction of middlebrow studies, paying attention to the role of the literary marketplace and the potential for crime-writing to be conceived in middlebrow terms. Now, let us begin at what is so often the end for aspiring writers: manuscript rejection.
Chapter 1: In and Out of *The New Yorker*

‘Rejection after rejection, nonetheless.’

—Highsmith, ‘The Female Novelist.’

In a diary entry of April 14, 1949, upon yet another rejection of one of her short stories, Patricia Highsmith made a familiar lament. ‘The New Yorker, alas, does not like my alcoholic story. ‘Too unpleasant a subject—two people who become alcoholics,’ says Mrs. Richardson Wood. And that it doesn’t move. The N[ew] Y[orker], I thought, made a science of stories that don’t move.’ Fittingly, what it was that did not ‘move’ has been documented with an almost scientific rigour in a range of cultural histories of *The New Yorker*, one of the so-called ‘slick’ or ‘smart’ magazines that emerged in the early decades of the twentieth century. Whether it was founding editor Harold Ross’s authoritarian desire for lucidity at all costs, a stultifying overdependence on commas, the disavowal of modernist formal experimentation, or subject matter chained to the stifling social sphere of the American upper-middle class, the lack of ‘movement’ in *New Yorker* fiction is a matter that has produced much comment, some of it scornful, some purely documentary.

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2 Schenkar, *The Talented Miss Highsmith*, 162.

3 Most convincing regarding the formulaic nature of *The New Yorker* is the cultural historian Ben Yagoda, who catalogues voices critiquing the magazine from outside its pages as well as inside. See *About Town: The New Yorker and the World It Made* (New York, London, Sydney & Singapore: Scribner, 2000), 199-211. Similarly, for Dwight Macdonald, ‘the magazine’s own “formula” is often monotonous and over-restrictive, and the editorial pencils sometimes fly too busily,’ ‘Amateur Journalism,’ *Encounter*, November 1956, 19. Fiona Green likewise glosses claims regarding *The New Yorker*’s overreliance on formulae in her ‘Introduction,’ *Writing for The New Yorker*, 5. Stephen Spender laments that ‘most writers who write for’ the magazine ‘are edited (or edit themselves)
Highsmith’s recount of one of her short story’s rejections from *The New Yorker* is but one example of a process—what I want to suggest is a largely unexamined cultural process—that lasted for approximately three decades for the author. Indeed, even by 1979, nearly a decade since she had finally stopped sending the magazine unwanted stories, poems, and cartoons, Highsmith still thought two recently-penned pieces (‘The Terrors of Basket-Weaving’ and ‘Not One of Us’), which found a home in her short-story collection *Black House*, were ‘perfect’ for *The New Yorker*. Filtering most of her contact with the periodical through her literary agents, in 1958 Highsmith even asked her editor at Harper & Brothers, Joan Kahn, to communicate with *The New Yorker* on her behalf, still finding the magazine ‘so forbidding.’

almost out of existence so that everything in it appears to be by an anonymous body called *The New Yorker.*’ ‘The Situation,’ 173. The lone voice to counterbalance the opinions of Yagoda, Macdonald, Green and Spender is Mary F. Corey, who notes that *The New Yorker* was characterised by ‘its lack of a monolithic editorial policy.’ Corey’s reasoning runs against the general intentions of her argument, however. While only a part of her focus is on *The New Yorker*’s fictional content, Corey maintains that the magazine structured itself to mirror the socio-economic world of the upwardly-mobile American middle class, a tactic that does not exactly lend itself to a diversity of worldviews and writing styles. See *The World Through a Monocle: The New Yorker at Midcentury* (Cambridge & London: Harvard University Press, 1999), 17; italics added.

4 Wilson, *Beautiful Shadow*, 317 and 381.

5 Schenkar, *The Talented Miss Highsmith*, 133. As suggested by Highsmith’s outsourcing of contact with *The New Yorker*, the task of tracking down her rejection slips presents several methodological problems. Rejection from a prestigious magazine or publisher is rarely something that authors broadcast or make widely-known: in fact, the natural tendency is to variously forget, discard or erase all traces of such authorial failure. My correspondence with Highsmith’s archive in Berne, Switzerland revealed the disheartening fact that the author did not keep virtually any business or professional papers before the 1960s when she settled permanently in Europe, roughly the time-period when Highsmith’s submissions to *The New Yorker* dried up. Moreover, an archivist in Berne, Dr. Ulrich Weber, stated that he had never seen any mention of the magazine in all Highsmith’s papers. However, such mentions of *The New Yorker* that are peppered throughout Wilson’s and Schenkar’s biographies, which have aided immeasurably in the construction of this paper, are sourced from Highsmith’s diaries and cahiers. Unfortunately, these journals are closed to the general public for legal reasons; only after obtaining permission from Highsmith’s publisher, Diogenes Verlag (who own the world copyright to her works) did Wilson and Schenkar gain access to such materials. Apart from one isolated example in 1942, Highsmith used her two agents, and occasionally editors, in her liaisons with *The New Yorker*. An exhaustive search of the *New Yorker* archives revealed a smattering of documents related to Highsmith’s submissions to the magazine, though all come from the period when Margot Johnson was her literary agent (early 1940s-1958). In the short stories examined below, only for one, ‘The Heroine,’ was there no hard evidence of a rejection slip from *The New Yorker*. Yet given that both Schenkar and Wilson are in complete agreement concerning Highsmith’s assiduous submissions to the magazine, and the *New Yorker* archives contain the occasional frustrating lacuna (as the cultural historian Ben Yagoda experienced when trying to source *New Yorker* fiction editor Gus Lobrano’s papers), it is reasonable to view ‘The Heroine’ within the lens of its rejection from the
Highsmith’s dream of gracing the pages of *The New Yorker*, a dream for literary sophistication in a marketplace where she was routinely condemned to the pulps, was a lifetime pursuit, it seems.⁶ To knock at the door of *The New Yorker* so repeatedly, so insistently, and in so mediated a manner—it is this overlooked aspect of Highsmith’s literary career that I want to suggest is a crucial part of the author’s aspirational middlebrowism. Exemplifying the pitfalls of the liberal-capitalist injunction of ‘trying and trying again,’ Highsmith’s repeated failures at the door of *The New Yorker* demonstrate the productive capacities of ‘disappointment, disillusionment, and despair.’ Building on scholarship by Judith Halberstam, this chapter goes some length to articulating the far-reaching consequences of specifically American models of ‘positive thinking’: hoping for the best despite enormous amounts of evidence to the contrary.⁷

Indeed, though it receives virtually no comment, the literary marketplace is structured around manuscript rejection. Precisely by blocking the access of writers to new or well-trod markets, rejection lubricates and fulfils a system built on partial, completed, and forestalled exchanges. Rejections are thwarted transactions, instances of sellers without buyers. They are the debris of periodical culture. However, literary criticism and literary history have tended to treat the published manuscript as a *fait accompli*, a done deal. Even textual critics are not so interested in rejection slips, though they provide material signs of authorial intentionality located at a crucial point between manuscript composition and target audiences. As they represent authorial attempts to gain public exposure, rejection slips form an important, though overlooked, part of ‘the accumulated social history of the work in its various public

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⁶ According to Schenkar, ‘as late as 1969 [Highsmith] was still having her stories and poems and cartoons rejected from *The New Yorker*.’ *The Talented Miss Highsmith*, 501-02.
postures.8 At a glance, approximately half of the correspondence in the New Yorker’s archives are rejection slips, yet the vast bulk of this resource has scarcely been noticed in cultural history and criticism, the job mainly left to biographers of individual authors narrating tales of failed ambitions. As a result, empirical details of manuscript rejection dotted across the American cultural landscape have yet to be sufficiently theorised, or even commented upon at length under a sustained argument.9

Intricately connected to Highsmith’s textual trail of rejection slips are the narratives of resuscitation which have been put forth by canonical authorities like the renowned publisher, W.W. Norton. Here is the German critic Paul Ingendaay on the ethical dilemma of posthumously publishing a collection of Highsmith’s uncollected short stories:

[T]he work is hardly a violation of her will; on the contrary, Nothing That Meets the Eye can be seen as a liberation—from the self-doubts assailing her as a writer and the conditions under which she earned her living. We may therefore feel justified today in rescuing undeservedly unknown or forgotten texts of considerable quality from the paper grave of her literary estate.10

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9 Gavin Roger Jones’s Failure and the American Writer: A Literary History engagingly ‘tells the story of the emergence of failure as a kind of aesthetic practice and literary identity’ in the nineteenth-century. The monograph’s treatment of failure is well-rounded: failure is developed in personal, romantic, professional, intellectual, and spiritual contexts. Yet because of Jones’s broad thematic scope, details of manuscript rejection in his study are relatively scarce. Furthermore, while Jones tantalisingly mentions ‘the virtual coincidence of intellect and self-conscious failure that marks a twentieth century turn of thought,’ his nineteenth-century focus limits the applicability of his research to the present study. Writing of failure as an aesthetic position, an embodiment of nineteenth- and twentieth-century intellectual currents, Jones’s argument curiously elides the idea of manuscript rejection as the site of frustrated middlebrow ambitions that I specifically develop in this chapter. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 12, 2.
Ironically, many of the short stories featured in *Nothing That Meets the Eye* can only be considered as ‘forgotten texts’ if one simply forgets that they were aimed at and then rejected from *The New Yorker*, the peak of Highsmith’s literary aspirations. Norton gives the appearance of plucking this short fiction out of thin air and saving it from critical neglect. While partially true, given that Norton have brought Highsmith to the attention of new readers, redemptive narratives of critical rescue fall prey to the teleological instinct overseeing the unpublished work of canonical authors, thereby obscuring the market ambitions of many writers. Consequently, the more fables that emerge and proliferate regarding the ‘forgotten’ status of Highsmith’s work (particularly the short stories), the more cloistered a figure she mistakenly appears to twenty-first century readers.  

All of this leads to a false image of Highsmith as a writer missing from the literary marketplace, an author who stowed her genius away.  

In this chapter, I treat failure as a productive exercise by correspondingly viewing rejection slips as overlooked forms of textuality. Rather than caving to a traditional idea of seeing in manuscript rejection an end in and of itself, or conversely ceding ground to the

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11 Thus, there is no contradiction that in 2001 the book-jacket of Norton’s *The Selected Stories of Patricia Highsmith* mendaciously claimed that ‘Highsmith came to use the short story form in the mid-1970s, in particular to showcase her talents for brevity, jolting irony, and a voracious control of her craft’ (italics added). Expunging from Highsmith’s career the first three decades of her short story production has remarkably similar effects to Ingendaay’s claim of ‘rescuing’ the author’s formerly unpublished stories. Given that for much of its history the canon debates have dealt in the language of inclusion and exclusion, it should come as no surprise that book jackets and other elements of the publishing apparatus misrepresent authorial biography and fictional content (see chapter 3 for more on this matter). There seems a profitable link then between this grammar of inclusion and exclusion (of course, these terms originally referred to black writers, women authors, and so on, excised from the canon) and the paratextual frame of literature. Exclusion it seems, particularly the elision of uncomfortable details like rejection, belongs just as much to the canonised as to the canonically disregarded. See *The Selected Short Stories of Patricia Highsmith* (New York & London: W.W. Norton & Co., 2001). For an exemplary account of the complicated employment of the terms ‘inclusion’ and ‘exclusion’ during the canon wars, see John Guillory, *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1993), chapter one ‘Canonical and Noncanonical: The Current Debate,’ 3–82.

12 A further claim can be adduced here: canonisation often proceeds by amplifying the forgotten stature of writers so as to portray the historical blindness of an author’s contemporaries, thereby tacitly increasing the perceptive discernment of current critics and publishing authorities.
teleological narrative that has shaped the canonical texture surrounding Highsmith’s unpublished short stories, I want to explore a fruitful middle-ground. Certainly, with a little shifting of terms, there is more that unites these opposing positions regarding rejection than may at first appear. Not to be discounted, Highsmith was well-aware of the courage it took to persist through rejection. Soon into her pragmatic writer’s guide, *Plotting and Writing Suspense Fiction*, she writes that ‘Psychologically speaking, a proper and decent period of mourning for a rejected manuscript is good—that is, one rejected about twenty times, really rejected, not just two or three times—but it shouldn’t last more than a few days.’ In a sense, she also framed rejection in noble terms, seeing in the disavowal of her short stories and novel manuscripts proof that she was boldly writing against a sea of mediocre, conformist, and formulaic fiction. ‘A writer can be assured of a good living by imitating current trends and by being logical and pedestrian, because such imitations sell and do not take too much out of a writer in an emotional sense. Consequently, his production can be twice or ten times that of a more original writer who not only puts his back and his heart into his writing, but runs the risk of having the book rejected.’ Disguised bravado aside, Highsmith’s critique is important and contains a noteworthy historical dimension. Responding to centripetal shifts in the media ecology—decreases in the number of periodicals accepting fiction, the growth of television audiences at the expense of readers, ongoing censorship via the postal system—the early postwar years were marked by the appearance of several ‘guides’ for writing magazine-ready fiction. These guides were mainly proscriptive, and aimed at writers hoping to grace the pages of the women’s magazines like *Cosmopolitan*, *Good Housekeeping*, and *Ladies’ Home Journal*. Thus, Sheila Sibley in 1955: ‘The heroine has got to be a nice girl, high-spirited, if you will, but not vice in her, or if there is vice, you’ve got to work yourself to

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the bone to justify it. If she’s acting awfully strange, it’s because of that neglected childhood or that fractured romance.’ In 1951, Gertrude Schweitzer lectured aspiring writers on similar dos and don’ts: ‘You cannot… sell a story of miscegenation, nor may you allow immorality or wrong-doing to emerge victorious.’ Highsmith’s persistent concerns with amorality and violence, and the ready availability of her fiction to psychoanalytic readings, suggests that much of what she wrote transgressed the norms of the acceptable in the cluttered market of the mainstream magazines. Perusing the rejection slips she received from *The New Yorker*, Highsmith’s tacit self-fashioning as ‘a more original writer’ than the orthodox peddlers of lacklustre (women’s) magazine fiction therefore seems rather apt. Though it is a rather short step from viewing manuscript rejection as a virtuous enterprise to Norton’s accounts of having saved Highsmith from critical obscurity.

In what follows, I seek to find an alignment between Highsmith’s cravings for a postwar literary-professional aesthetic and the stature of *The New Yorker* as an upper-middlebrow tastemaker.16 Against the backdrop of postwar guides to writing saleable magazine fiction, I ask what about Highsmith’s short stories is specifically anti-*New Yorker*, and concurrently what is implicitly wrought by Highsmith as ‘in the style’ of the glossy periodical. Despite Highsmith’s misgivings about *The New Yorker*’s fiction that ‘didn’t move,’ there can be no denying that, had she been successful in placing a story in the magazine, she would have

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considered it a fabled urtext, the text from which all other textual versions must be judged. The reasons why are complex and elaborated below, but naturally coalesce with the stature of the postwar *New Yorker* as a home for sophistication on all fronts—literary, social, cultural, and economic. Furthermore, framing rejection as the denial into an ‘imagined community’ of *New Yorker* readers, the goal of the chapter is to understand how rejection, viewed as Highsmith’s attempt to enter the middlebrow literary marketplace, undercuts canonical misrepresentations of the author.¹⁷ I end by considering how the 2002 appearance of ‘The Trouble With Mrs. Blynn, The Trouble With The World’ in *The New Yorker* tames Highsmith’s legendary subversiveness.

At this point, it is worth considering that Highsmith was not alone in the category of authors continually denied entry into *The New Yorker* during their lifetimes, though posthumously featured in the magazine as canonical writers. The same fate befell Richard Yates. As Martin Naparsteck writes, though ‘he [Yates] was a New York writer, one of his great regrets was he did not become, while he was alive, a *New Yorker* writer. The magazine, which he greatly admired, refused to publish any of his work until 2001, eight years after he died.’¹⁸ Several of Yates’s short stories were rejected by *The New Yorker*, including ‘A Really Good Jazz Piano’ and ‘Trying Out for the Race.’ Yates’s best shot, his attempt to have his superb first novel, *Revolutionary Road*, featured in *The New Yorker*, was fumbled by his agent, who had already agreed to have the book excerpted by *Esquire*. Yates, a critically acclaimed writer, ventured as far as stating to *The New Yorker* that he would willingly alter, cut, and rearrange any aspect of *Revolutionary Road* if the magazine deemed it necessary.¹⁹

Safe at a posthumous distance with a slowly-growing critical status, *The New Yorker* finally

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¹⁷ Dwight Macdonald is certainly correct to note that the midcentury *New Yorker* was ‘a weekly letter to its readers, whose tastes are disregarded simply because they are assumed to be those of the editors and writers who compose the letter.’ ‘Amateur Journalism,’ 19.


¹⁹ *New Yorker* archives, New York Public Library, box 783, folder 9.
ran Yates’s short story, ‘The Canal,’ in early 2001. Likewise, James Salter, who though still alive when *The New Yorker* finally published his work, had already achieved canonical status outside the hallowed pages of the magazine. *The New Yorker*, in uncharacteristically cruel style, rejected story after story of Salter’s, as well as the opportunity to excerpt or serialise *Light Years*, his 1975 novel. ‘[N]obody here liked this… the writing is terribly affected and toney. I can’t make myself care about anybody here’ wrote one editor at the magazine of *Light Years*. The postwar author, Robert Phelps, a close friend of Salter’s, underhandedly took the latter’s story, ‘Via Negativa’ along to a tea in 1971 with William Maxwell, a prominent fiction editor at *The New Yorker*. Putting aside his ineffective literary agent, it seemed that not even leveraging personal networks with substantial cachet at the magazine would work for Salter. An excerpt called ‘Passionate Falsehoods’ from Salter’s memoir finally appeared in *The New Yorker* in 1997, exactly forty years after he first sought admission into the magazine.

I linger on these historical details of rejection as an antidote to contemporary highbrow dismissals of *The New Yorker*, which implicitly negate the power of the magazine to make or break upcoming authors. Spender is exemplary in this regard: ‘*The New Yorker*, superbly edited, is what is called a ‘wonderful job’: most writers who write for it are edited (or edit themselves) almost out of existence so that everything in it appears to be by an anonymous body called *The New Yorker*.’ Yet linked to the purported anonymity of *New Yorker* contributors was an avenue that beckoned Highsmith’s suspense fiction, Yates’s realism, and Salter’s refined neo-impressionism. The cure for the anonymity these New York writers suffered was, with slight irony, appearing in *The New Yorker* itself.

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It is important to realise that Highsmith’s rejections from *The New Yorker* are not simply (or not only) evidence of her occasional inability to see that the subversiveness of her fiction was perhaps not quite in keeping with the light, witty tone of the magazine. The tricky question of how Highsmith crafted her *New Yorker* pitches—did she attempt to manufacture pieces in the style of the magazine or rather pen stories and then simply send them through?—is carefully juggled in the following pages. Highsmith exemplifies the ‘reciprocal adaptations, conscious or otherwise, between writer and periodical context’ that Fiona Green has articulated so precisely in *Writing for The New Yorker*.24 Furthermore, following Ben Yagoda, I do not wish to imply that *The New Yorker* was foolish or short-sighted to reject short stories they considered unsuitable for the magazine.25 To up the stakes regarding manuscript rejection, it is interesting to ask what readership Highsmith was being locked out of in her failed bids to grace the pages of *The New Yorker*.

The task of mapping the demographics, political leanings, and socio-economic levels of *The New Yorker*’s readership in the postwar years has largely been left to cultural historians. In *The World Through a Monocle*, Mary F. Corey states that *The New Yorker*’s readership was ‘overwhelmingly white,’ while 75% of its subscribers earned two and a half times the national average family income. Furthermore, ‘According to a 1946 *New Yorker* marketing pamphlet, the magazine’s subscribers were apt to be “at least all of the following: Intelligent, well-educated, discriminating, well-informed, unprejudiced, public-spirited, metropolitan-minded, broad-visioned and quietly liberal.”’26 Corey argues that by placing the magazine

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24 Green, ‘Introduction.’ ‘One thing that brings the chapters together, and sometimes holds them apart, is the shifty preposition involved in ‘writing for’. Whereas Sylvia Plath, for example, studied her markets and made a deliberate *New Yorker* pitch…the letters exchanged between Marianne Moore and the Ford Motor Company ended up in the magazine almost by accident, yet seemed unmistakably to belong there’ (4).

25 Perusing the *New Yorker* rejection slips of Jack Kerouac, Flannery O’Connor, William Styron and others, Yagoda is right, however, to state that ‘what leaps out is the magazine’s intense reluctance to stretch.’ About Town, 294-96.

within ‘the broader context of postwar liberalism,’ *The New Yorker* allowed its readers to occupy an ambiguous position. Placing ‘[a]dvertisements for cigarettes or whiskey or luxury liners’ next to ‘serious articles concerning African-American heroin addicts… [and] the bombing of the Bikini Atoll,’ *The New Yorker* developed a ‘social contract with its loyal readers.’ By reporting on middle class readers’ concerns with ‘national and global ills,’ the magazine could simultaneously sate the same subscribers ‘desire for comfort’ and social distinction, thus paradoxically fulfilling the ideals of liberal progressivism.²⁷ Building on Corey’s notion of a ‘social contract’ between *The New Yorker* and its upwardly-mobile readership, it is a relatively simple step to advancing the thesis that the majority of the magazine’s fiction rested on the principle of reader-identification. Just as readers saw themselves in the images of expensive commodities *The New Yorker* advertised, so did they catch a mirror image of their predilections, attitudes and postures in the short stories the magazine ran. Yagoda’s synopsis of the partialities of Katherine S. White, the leading fiction editor at the magazine from 1943 onwards, testifies to the crossover I mention: White loathed ‘experimentation or abstraction,’ looked poorly on ‘depictions of classes lower than the upper-middle (in subject matter), and valued writers who paid ‘close attention to subtleties of manner, mood, and behaviour.’²⁸

While Highsmith thought unfavourably of ‘reader-identification’ as a concept, it is fascinating to track how her would-be *New Yorker* stories weave in and out of the magazine’s embedded liberalism.²⁹ ‘The Heroine,’ Highsmith’s most widely-anthologised short story, follows the neurotic actions of a governess newly employed at an upper-middle class home in Westchester, New York. Keeping with *The New Yorker*’s implicit guiding principles, in Highsmith’s story the governess/servant, Lucille, is white. Clashing with the empirical reality

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²⁹ Highsmith, *Plotting and Writing*, 47.
that most servants in the early postwar years were African American, *The New Yorker* resisted publishing fiction featuring black servants.\(^{30}\) Stories with black ‘help’ (always as minor characters) cut across the ideals of the magazine’s liberal readership, yet in so doing transferred progressive concerns with race onto the tricky issue of class. As Corey notes, the ‘practice [of employing servants] clashed with the ideals of a democratic society that were the chapter and verse of liberal doctrine.’\(^{31}\) By having a white servant as the protagonist and therefore foregrounding the matter of domestic help, ‘The Heroine’ simultaneously reads and misreads *The New Yorker*’s liberal cues. Lucille is uninterested in her wages, and so anxious about pleasing her new employers, the Christiansens, that she wonders whether they would ‘think it very strange if she asked to work for nothing?’ Internally tallying how much her forty dollars per week income will come to in a year or two, Lucille believes that ‘[e]ventually she might have as much as the Christiansens themselves and that would not be right.’ Highsmith’s quasi-aristocratic belief in rigid class hierarchies emerges in ‘The Heroine’ as an affront to *The New Yorker*’s readership; the fixity of the social order in the story operates as a satirical dig at the magazine’s pretences to liberal ideals of class equality. In Highsmith’s world, servants *like* being servants. The Christiansens reject Lucille’s strange offer that, in the words of Mrs. Christiansen, would result in ‘sheer exploitation.’\(^{32}\) Subversively, ‘The Heroine’ takes the anxiety *New Yorker* readers felt around the issue of keeping domestic servants and transfers it onto the delusional mental state of Lucille. At the conclusion of the story, Lucille sets fire to her employer’s house so that she can run into the flames and save the family’s two children, thus proving her loyalty to the Christiansens. Read in the shadow of its rejection from *The New Yorker*, ‘The Heroine’ unmasks liberal fantasies regarding race and class that propped up the magazine’s readership.

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While not as subversive as ‘The Heroine,’ ‘The Baby Spoon’ is exemplary of the publication history of many Highsmith short stories. Rejected by The New Yorker in May 1950, the story languished on the shelf for over two decades before being resurrected in virtually unaltered shape to feature as a ‘new’ piece in the March 1973 issue of Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine.33 The point here is not to dispute the accuracy of the so-called 'newness' of rehabilitated short stories so much as to identify how a lack of scholarly awareness regarding the hidden histories of Highsmith's fiction has implicitly dictated the terms of critical debate. Attempting to unlock why Highsmith has risen to popularity in the twenty-first century, Tom Perrin has usefully asked, 'what is it about the mid-century (the period that Highsmith's work seems to exemplify, despite her multi-decade career), and about now, that suddenly seems to make her an avatar of her society? Why, to paraphrase Meaker [author of a memoir of Highsmith], does the 1950s suddenly seem to us to be a story of Highsmith?’ Perrin offers multiple reasons that seek to find an overlap between Highsmith's contemporary concerns and the issues that resonate with twenty-first century critical inquiry and culture more generally. Sourcing Slavoj Zizek and Leonard Cassuto, among others, Perrin argues that the peculiar amorality depicted in Highsmith’s fiction, her obsessions with the performativity of identity and fluid sexualities, combined with the ‘national anxiety’ of our post 9/11 world, all to some degree mimic the psychological world of the 1950s.34 Not to discount any of these thematic crossovers that fuse similar American contexts, Perrin’s argument misses the curious reemergences that characterise Highsmith’s short stories. Like in so much scholarly thought, the answer Perrin searches for lies hidden in the question itself. Highsmith's short stories 'exemplify' the 1950s precisely because that is when they were

written, thus accounting for why a story like ‘The Baby Spoon,’ despite its publication in the 1970s, is particularly coded with contextual clues reaped from two decades prior.

In ‘The Baby Spoon,’ a professor of English at Columbia University, Claude, despises his older wife, preferring instead to spend time with a poverty-stricken former student, a poet called Winston. When a prized object of Claude's wife, Margaret, goes missing (the titular baby spoon), he accuses Winston of having stolen it. Winston reacts angrily before promptly murdering Claude with a blow to the back of the head. The rejection slip addressed to Highsmith’s agent, Margot Johnson, reads as follows: ‘There are many things we like about this Patricia Highsmith story, but, regrettably, we feel it isn’t sufficiently motivated, and the final resolution doesn’t seem quite satisfactory. Many thanks, though, for letting us see this manuscript. We hope you’ll send us others by this author.’35 ‘The Baby Spoon’ is redolent of the cultural preoccupations and artistic movements that mark the story as a product of the 1950s. In an undisguised nod to the pervasiveness of popular psychoanalysis in the early postwar years that seem dated by the 1970s, Highsmith writes that Claude had married his older wife ‘because of certain unconscious drives in himself toward the maternal.’ Also, Margaret appears to be regressing to girlhood, while Claude is like a father figure to Winston, the young poet grasping onto ‘Claude with the persistence of a maltreated child.’36 Likewise,

35 Rejection slip for ‘The Baby Spoon,’ dated May 3, 1950, New Yorker archives, box 494, folder 6. The rejection is kinder and more detailed than any other that Highsmith received from the magazine.
36 Highsmith, ‘The Baby Spoon,’ 76-79. Another of Highsmith’s psychoanalytically-infused stories was rejected from The New Yorker twice. Initially titled ‘Flow Gently, Mrs. Afton,’ the story was rebuffed once in March 1947, before being completely rewritten as ‘Mrs. Afton, Among thy Green Braes’ and rejected again in May 1949. Drawing on Highsmith’s own cynical experience of psychoanalysis, in the story a middle-aged woman, Mrs. Afton, implores her psychoanalyst to visit her neurotic husband, who has developed an obsession with exercise. Eventually agreeing to visit the husband at the couple’s hotel, the psychoanalyst alarmingly discovers that the husband is a figment of Mrs. Afton’s imagination. An overt critique of the blindness of psychoanalysts (who cannot spot fantasy and delusion in their actual patients), like ‘The Baby Spoon’ the story wears its psychoanalytic preoccupations on its sleeve in too conspicuous a fashion for the typical subtlety of midcentury New Yorker stories. See submission and rejection slip in New Yorker archives for ‘Flow Gently, Mrs. Afton,’ A. & S. Lyons, box 450, folder 8; and again for ‘Mrs. Afton, Among thy Green Braes,’ A. & S. Lyons, box 478, folder 22.
concomitant with Highsmith's disdain for countercultural movements, Winston is unmistakably an early beat poet, though one ambiguous about the beats in general. Satirically billed by Highsmith as 'a genuinely starving poet who lived in a genuine garret,' Winston's most promising poem is a 'satire' on 'directionless rebellion.' The violent ending of 'The Baby Spoon' is 'not satisfactory' to editors at The New Yorker because the magazine preferred 'nonending ending[s],' having by 1950 already ceded ground to a handful of short stories that ended on notes of abrupt cruelty, most notably 'The Lottery' by Shirley Jackson. The related comment from the magazine that ‘The Baby Spoon’ is not 'sufficiently motivated' invokes the way the story wears its psychoanalytic leanings on its sleeve, perhaps too blatantly for The New Yorker. The study of rejection slips therefore adds to our understanding of the way The New Yorker functioned as a midcentury tastemaker, policing the limits of the acceptable and underlining the peculiarities in fictional submissions that cut across the staid conventions of the magazine.

Rejection from the magazine is not merely an index of The New Yorker’s ‘dos and don’ts,’ however, but evidence of the varied affective responses from editors to new fiction. The language of rejection is consequently often simpler than the complex grammars developed by literary critics. For C.M. Newman, an editor at The New Yorker, Elisabeth Savage’s ‘The Beginning of Love’ felt too ‘familiar in outline,’ while Paul Bowles’s ‘Sylvie Ann, The Boogie Man’ was simply not ‘quite convincing.’ A reader’s report for Highsmith’s short story, ‘These Sad Pillars,’ which the author did not see, contains similar subjective emotions common to rejection slips from The New Yorker. ‘No. Notes written by man and girl, unknown to each other, on a subway pillar, trying to make dates and never

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38 Yagoda, About Town, 231.
succeeding. Sordid and not pointed. The actual ones are better than this fictional (I presume) try. If actual, still No.40 Sent to *The New Yorker* in 1942, the story is a preliminary version of Highsmith’s ‘The Birds Poised to Fly,’ published by *Ellery Queen’s Mystery Magazine* in August 1969. A twist on tales of unrequited love, in the story a lonely man called Don waits futilely for a response from his beloved. Intercepting the mail of one of his neighbours who is beset by a similar problem, in letters Don poses as his neighbour’s sweetheart and then arranges to meet. Don never shows up, though watches the neighbour from a distance. The irony that ‘These Sad Pillars’ deals with rejection via letters and then is harshly rejected by a magazine the young author worshipped would not have been lost on Highsmith.41 Only in relation to its accompanying rejection slip then does the short story develop a metatextual quality—commentary on itself as a text. More importantly, the rejection of the story intimates how specific editors at *The New Yorker* were against the precepts of the Flaubertian narrator (Highsmith’s depiction of Don is detached and non-judgmental) when dealing with fictional material more ‘sordid’ and furtive than the magazine tended to encounter.

The paper trails of ‘These Sad Pillars’ and ‘The Baby Spoon,’ the stories’ material pre-publication traces, also bear witness to the unnoticed links connecting periodical culture and canonisation, all the while speaking to Highsmith's middlebrow desires at *The New Yorker*. A particularly significant example of this link congeals around the issue of dating Highsmith’s fictional worlds. One of the opening shots in Highsmith’s canonisation was the 1997 publication of Russell Harrison’s *Patricia Highsmith*, the first academic monograph on the author. His interest sparked by the difficulty of locating the temporal setting of Highsmith’s

40 Attached to a note from William Shawn to Highsmith, dated September 24, 1942, *New Yorker* archives, box 376, folder 7, underlining in original.
41 Contemplating whether Highsmith had read a specific issue of *The New York Review of Books* in the 1970s, Michael Trask references ‘her inveterate cultural striving, reflected in her masochistic partiality to venues… that neglected her work.’ As Trask points out, *The New York Review of Books* reviewed only one of Highsmith’s books (*Edith’s Diary*) during her lifetime. See ‘The Ethical Animal: From Peter Singer to Patricia Highsmith,’ *Post45* (2012), no pagination, accessed at: http://post45.research.yale.edu/2012/11/the-ethical-animal-from-peter-singer-to-patricia-highsmith/
fiction, Harrison reaches towards the philosophical dimensions of her fiction. Harrison reasonably argues that placing Highsmith within the legacy of existential literature explains this slightly disorienting element of her fiction. Drawing on the popularity of existentialism in postwar America, Highsmith outsourced the political (by which Harrison means contextual markers) to the domain of existential choice, thereby giving the appearance that her works take place within a contextual vacuum. Without wishing to disavow the intellectual currents she reacted to and fictionally explored, Harrison’s approach is particularly lacking when it comes to dealing with Highsmith’s short stories. As previously indicated, the time that elapsed between the composition of Highsmith’s short stories and their eventual publication (often a gap of two and a half decades) sheds some light on this ostensible de-contextualisation. While Highsmith often rewrote minor aspects of her fiction over long periods of time, the short stories always gesture back towards their immediate contexts at the time of composition. As the case of Harrison’s argument suggests, an examination of the material traces surrounding Highsmith’s engagements with the literary marketplace complicates philosophical readings of her work.

Though Harrison is drawn to the apparent decontextualisation of Highsmith’s fiction and Perrin is captivated by the way her work is emblematic of the 1950s, what these two critical

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42 Harrison, Patricia Highsmith, x and 5.
43 Highsmith’s first short-story collection, Eleven, was published in 1970. The canonical texture of Highsmith’s short stories has largely been determined by the two monograph studies of her work. Harrison begins his analysis of Highsmith’s short stories with the collection Slowly, Slowly in the Wind (1979) and rounds it out with The Black House (1981). Fiona Peters’ study touches on many of Highsmith’s short stories, but only those from the short-story collections. The point here is that the significant portion of Highsmith’s canonisation that has occurred via academic consecration has presented an image of the author that glosses over nearly three decades of short story production. Thus, even Norton’s fairly comprehensive Nothing That Meets the Eye: The Uncollected Stories of Patricia Highsmith does not include two short stories she published in the mass-circulation magazine Woman’s Home Companion, ‘The World’s Champion Ball-Bouncer’ (April 1947) and ‘Where to, Madam?’ (October 1951). Undoubtedly, these two stories in Woman’s Home Companion reached more readers than any other Highsmith novel or piece of short fiction, so Norton’s lacuna is particularly glaring. Norton’s oversight filters into a canonical project that effectively misses ‘Highsmith in the magazines,’ an oversight that distorts our image of not only the author, but also of the frayed relationship between canonisation and periodical culture.
approaches share is an inability to chart the marketplace demands Highsmith was variously adhering to and refusing. As previously mentioned, Highsmith’s fiction largely spurned the strictures laid down by postwar guides to writing saleable fiction, yet the compromises she made are noticeable and often overlooked. Seen in this context, Highsmith painstakingly, if half-heartedly, attempts to model normative rules laid down by *The New Yorker*. Nowhere is this striving for normativity in the marketplace of fiction clearer than in ‘Not One of Us,’ according to Highsmith a ‘perfect’ *New Yorker* short story. While by the late 1970s, the time of composition of the story, Highsmith was no longer submitting fiction to the magazine, ‘Not One of Us’ anachronistically mimic the basic formulae of midcentury *New Yorker* pieces, particularly in its depiction of listless upper-middle class denizens. ‘Not One of Us’ so keenly interrogates a gossipy circle of sophisticated, well-to-do Manhattanites that it mischievously recalls the magazine’s opening ‘Talk of the Town’ section, a long-time staple of *The New Yorker*. Incidentally, Highsmith had tried her hand at a couple of unsuccessful ‘Talk of the Town’ pieces in 1942, before being asked by William Shawn, then a staff worker at *The New Yorker*, to come back later in the year to write a few trial pieces for the magazine’s famous opening section. Nothing ever came of the offer, however.\(^4^4\) In ‘Not One of Us,’ the lightly satirised group of bourgeois New Yorkers try to understand why one of their clique, the recently-divorced tax accountant Edmund Quasthoff, has become ‘a bore.’\(^4^5\) Keeping with the style of midcentury *New Yorker* fiction, ‘Not One of Us’ is dialogue heavy and therefore uncharacteristic of much of Highsmith’s more introspective fiction, another impediment to its lack of saleability.

\(^{44}\) See letters between William Shawn and Highsmith, July and October, 1942, *New Yorker* archives, box 376, folder 7.

What is important to recognise here is how Highsmith’s collected short stories effectively play out a cat-and-mouse game with the shifting demands of \textit{New Yorker} models for fiction. For Schenkar, by the 1970s and 1980s, Highsmith’s self-imposed exile in Europe had so severed her from her home country that her fiction simply mimicked the details of the America of her youth. All the subtleties of ‘the habits of hip young couples,’ ‘food and drink,’ general ‘social scenes’ and so on, are drawn from the mid-century USA that coloured Highsmith’s earlier, more vivid work.\textsuperscript{46} In addition to the accounts from Harrison and Perrin, Schenkar’s explanation forms a third example of the contextual disjointedness of Highsmith’s fiction. Certainly, the slightly stunted quality of Highsmith’s later fiction gives the impression that she is writing back into the concerns of the 1950s, bearing out Schenkar’s point regarding temporal ossification. An addendum to Schenkar’s argument, and what I would like to stress here, is the unnoticed idea that rejection persists. Highsmith’s liberal ideal of trying and trying again, of persisting through failure and rejection, of writing for \textit{The New Yorker} while not even submitting to the magazine anymore, shape and alter current critical conceptions of the author. While from one view manuscript rejection signals the end of a textual journey for specific individual stories, Highsmith’s fictional output in the aggregate was shaped by an ongoing compulsion for her short stories to land in \textit{New Yorker} territory. Highsmith’s desired trajectory for ‘The Ugly Girl’ and ‘One for the Islands,’ both summarily rejected from the magazine in the early postwar years, therefore mirrors her intentions for ‘Not One of Us’ and ‘The Terrors of Basket-Weaving,’ the two later stories not sent to \textit{The New Yorker} though for Highsmith almost ineffably belonging there.\textsuperscript{47} The powerfully magnetic force of the magazine for Highsmith meant that even in her later years

\textsuperscript{46} Schenkar, \textit{The Talented Miss Highsmith}, 501.

\textsuperscript{47} See submission and rejection slips in \textit{New Yorker} archives for ‘The Ugly Girl,’ box 494, folder 6, April 1950; and ‘One for the Islands,’ box 478, folder 22, November/December 1949.
*The New Yorker* continued to inflect her craft in temporally-dislocated and anachronistic ways.

Into Highsmith’s variegated affective positions towards *The New Yorker* came the posthumous publication of ‘The Trouble with Mrs. Blynn, the Trouble with the World’ by the magazine on May 27, 2002. Despite a lifelong pursuit of *The New Yorker*, replete with different strategies of approach towards the magazine, the publication of Highsmith’s short story certainly would have come as a surprise to the author. In a typed comment on a slip of paper attached to one typescript of ‘The Trouble with Mrs. Blynn,’ Highsmith wrote, ‘With occasional word change, probably necessitating retyping, this story is not bad -- though where's the market?’ On a separate typescript of the story, Highsmith wrote and then lightly crossed out a more exasperated and explicit comment on the marketability of ‘The Trouble with Mrs. Blynn’: ‘women's mag? age group 60!’48 Certainly, ‘The Trouble with Mrs. Blynn’ is an anomalous Highsmith short story, as ‘nothing uncanny, odd, or abysmal occurs.’49 Composed in approximately 1963/1964 though never submitted to *The New Yorker* at the time, the question of whether Highsmith misjudged her own middlebrow tendencies is partially offset by the temporal distance separating the composition of the story and its posthumous publication. While there is not space here to chart the intricate differences distinguishing these two incarnations of the magazine—the classic, midcentury *New Yorker* and the post-Tina Brown *New Yorker* from 1992 onwards—there is critical agreement regarding the significant editorial changes marking the magazine as it entered the twenty-first


49 Ingendaay, ‘Afterword,’ 444.
century.50 Let it be said that the most significant among these changes was the manner in which *The New Yorker* courted celebrity; under the editorship of Brown, the magazine for the first time set up an enormously expensive ‘publicity department,’ a department that continued after Brown left *The New Yorker* in 1998.51 In contrast to the midcentury years when Highsmith assiduously submitted to *The New Yorker*, the bonds between the content of story submissions and the editorial policies of the magazine were now much less important. What took precedence was the level of hype, the celebrity status, surrounding the author. Thus, following the success of Anthony Minghella’s 1999 film adaptation of *The Talented Mr Ripley*, the appearance of ‘The Trouble with Mrs. Blynn’ in *The New Yorker* was timed to coincide with the 2002 publication of *Nothing that Meets the Eye*, Norton’s collection of uncollected Highsmith short stories. A portion of Highsmith’s middlebrow market therefore lay in a posthumous future, at a time when *The New Yorker* were inclined to be more appreciative of the canonically popular author. While tempting, it would not be right to excoriate *The New Yorker* for capitalising on Highsmith’s rising reputation after a lifetime of rebuffing her advances. Highsmith’s own fondness for celebrity culture certainly pre-empts such an accusation. Rather than falling prey to the narrative that sees a lifetime of authorial failure redeemed by posthumous recognition (a liberal narrative the author herself would have accepted), Highsmith’s appearance in *The New Yorker* demonstrates the complex relationship connecting canonisation and periodical culture. Preceded by significant events and changes in the media ecology—Minghella’s film, Norton’s publication of Highsmith’s back catalogue, *The New Yorker*’s newfound appreciation for celebrity—‘The Trouble with Mrs. Blynn’ marks the unnoticed interplay between canonisation and magazines, rather than

50 For a succinct account of these differences, see Iain Topliss, *The Comic Worlds of Peter Arno, William Steig, Charles Addams and Saul Steinberg* (Baltimore & London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 315.
51 For information regarding *The New Yorker*’s newfound ‘publicity department’ and its ‘delivery of advance copies of the magazine to “opinion makers” in New York, Washington’ and elsewhere, see Yagoda, *About Town*, 422-23.
the simple recovery of an overlooked midcentury American author. While the short story is sedate by Highsmith’s standards (there is no murder, for instance, a mainstay of her repertoire), this facet is only partially proof of the anaesthetisation of the author by The New Yorker. Why did the magazine not print ‘The Heroine,’ or any of a host of more violent, previously unpublished Highsmith stories, for instance? Yet with the publication of the short story, the bourgeois Highsmith finally found herself among the glittering commodities and services still filling The New Yorker’s pages. Advertisements for the Ritz-Carlton and Paul Duggan watches surround ‘The Trouble with Mrs. Blynn,’ providing pictorial examples of the upper-middle class world that is the home of Highsmith’s cast of characters across her fiction. In this sense, there is a fulfilment of sorts for Highsmith as she enters The New Yorker, but not the kind that collapses into the teleological narrative of an unrecognised author receiving her due.

As to Highsmith’s dislike of ‘The Trouble with Mrs. Blynn,’ her sense that it belonged in a ‘women’s mag,’ and the misogynistic sentiments expressed in her fiction, it is to these matters that we now turn.
Chapter 2: Highsmith at Cosmopolitan: An Unlikely Connection

In January 1967, beset by insomnia and sickness, Patricia Highsmith sat down to write an abridgement of her most recent novel, Those Who Walk Away, for Cosmopolitan. It was Highsmith’s third and final ‘complete mystery novel’ for the magazine, though the first she wrote for a newly-reinvigorated Cosmopolitan. Since mid-1965, the magazine had been under the editorship of Helen Gurley Brown and had transformed into a sex-positive periodical for ‘pink-collar women’: office girls and secretaries ‘in their twenties and thirties, most of them married, some divorced, most without a college education… living in the cities and suburbs.’ The mismatch between a misogynistic Highsmith and a sexually-liberated female readership has found a fitting legacy in the author’s canonisation. In another ironic contingency, Highsmith’s desire to find a broader middlebrow audience at Cosmopolitan occurred at a point when the magazine itself was being targeted as a trashy, even pulpy periodical, a label Highsmith was forever keen on avoiding. There were some continuities for Highsmith in writing for Cosmopolitan, however, mainly in the printed form of the abridgements themselves. Like her other abridgements, ‘Those Who Walk Away’ was to be printed in the triple-column format of newspapers, requiring the reader to get very close to

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1 See Schenkar, The Talented Miss Highsmith, 387. Following standard practice in literary studies, this chapter italicises the book-versions of Highsmith novels, while marking the corresponding abridgements in quotation marks.
2 Cosmopolitan deceptively marketed its abridged texts in each monthly edition of the magazine as ‘complete mystery novels.’
3 Landers, The Improbable First Century, 229.
4 In so doing, I am following in the footsteps of Michael Trask, who, drawing on the pathbreaking work of John Guillery, argues that ‘canonization might be said to proceed necessarily through distortion.’ Trask uses Highsmith’s short story ‘The Middle-Class Housewife’ from the collection Little Tales of Misogyny, with its ‘mobilization of sexist conceits about female unreason’ and ‘violent antagonism toward “Women’s Lib” and other “silly protest movements,’” to demonstrate how the author ‘has not lent herself easily to the project of gay and lesbian canon-formation.’ Where I differ from Trask is in locating how Highsmith as a postwar magazine writer connected or failed to connect with a changing female readership. See, ‘Patricia Highsmith’s Method,’ American Literary History 22:3 (2010), 584-85.
the page in order to decipher the tiny font. Consistent with her feverish work ethic, Highsmith finished the condensation in approximately a month, cutting her 250 page book by about 75%, the work now resembling a compressed short story more than an abridged novel.\(^5\)

Highsmith’s act of textual recycling, capitalising on her subsidiary rights to her new novel, was just one of several common ways writers at mid-century could profit from one of their original texts. Yet of the various formats in which subsidiary rights can be put to use (the most widely-known is the film adaptation, of course) the abridgement comes in for especially harsh critique. These require brief review. First, the most palpable, as Jennifer Snead has observed, is that ‘[a]esthetically, abridgements – shortened, condensed or abstracted versions of longer texts—imply loss: something of the original author’s genius has been cut out and removed.’ Abridgements false equivalence to the practice of bowdlerisation, where improper or inoffensive is removed from the text, is not to be forgotten.\(^6\) Second, abridgements tend to flatten character growth in a manner that short stories, which traditionally involve fewer characters and changes of scene, circumvent. Dialogue and narrative digressions are cut to foreground the plot and to maximise reader entertainment. Third, as opposed to serialisations of novels, which provide an element of suspense for eager readers and thus increase their chances of purchasing the next issue of the magazine or newspaper, condensations are an inherently finite resource, in that the form expends all the energy of its master text in one bang. Fourth, countering the optimistic idea that reading the novel condensation will rouse readers to buy the source text, or to investigate the author’s

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\(^5\) Though done at high speed, Highsmith’s cutting was tailored precisely to *Cosmopolitan’s* needs, a fine example of Highsmith’s professionalism. ‘One should ascertain the exact required length when aiming at a magazine market. It is a very profitable market, if one has the knack.’ *Plotting and Writing Suspense Fiction*, 33.

back catalogue, the form opens itself to charges of catering to readers’ short attention spans, providing the cliff notes summary to the lazy reader.

It may come as some surprise, then, that at mid-century the verdict was still out on abridgements. Several authors who had their works abridged by The Reader’s Digest Condensed Books were quite impressed by the magazine’s editorial clipping. Herman Wouk, the famous middlebrow author, wrote of the Digest’s abridgement of one of his novels: ‘I was astonished at the way the main plot was preserved, in about one-fifth the compass of the novel.’ Likewise, Kathryn Hulme, the author of The Nun’s Story, which was not only abridged by the Digest but selected by the Book-of-the-Month-Club choice, was greatly impressed: ‘I have read and reread your condensation of The Nun’s Story, with tiger-bright eyes looking for the sentences, paragraphs, or pages which perforce must be left out of any condensed version of a book. But sharply as I searched ... I could not find where you made your skillful cuts, so exceedingly skillful were the transitions you achieved to carry one smoothly over them.’ The Condensed Books brought the works of John Steinbeck, Shirley Jackson, Pearl S. Buck, John Hersey, Arthur C. Clarke, William Faulkner, Isak Dinesen, Daphne du Maurier, John O’Hara, Truman Capote and some less notables into the homes and business places of reading Americans for just ‘$2.44, plus 12 cents postage for each volume.’ For historians of reading, it would be a particularly rash act to discard abridgements out of hand, given that by 1954, just four years after its founding, The Reader’s Digest Condensed Book Club boasted a staggering 2,500,000 members. The staggering popularity of Omnibook Magazine with American readers from 1938 to 1957 solidifies the

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8 Wood, Of Lasting Interest, 194.
9 Wood, Of Lasting Interest, 187. The rapid circulation of texts in the postwar era suggests that many more people read The Reader’s Digest Condensed Books than were actual members of the club.
currency of the abridgement as an important, mostly unrecognised, textual form at mid-century.

Abridgements did not always circulate amongst the reading public in texts exclusively dedicated to them, however. *The Reader’s Digest* magazine had featured abridgements of non-fiction books since the 1930s, the compressed texts placed in between articles and news items.\(^\text{10}\) Likewise, when *Cosmopolitan* in the 1920s decided to feature abridgements in its pages, the form was placed alongside short stories, excerpts, serialisations, reviews, comics and essays.

I rehearse this brief history of the abridgement in the midcentury decades of the twentieth century to underscore how the form, despite its proximity with other textual forms and its immense trade with the American reading public, has been forgotten by scholars. More specifically, abridgements’ close symbiosis with the periodical as a means of transmission, and its capital with middlebrow authors and a middlebrow readership, has been left untouched by both periodical studies and middlebrow studies.\(^\text{11}\) Placing these fields in conversation with one another goes some way to patching up an omission that hampers our understanding of a key method engaged by authors in the literary marketplace to locate an enthusiastic middlebrow readership. Abridgements occupied a position of cultural value precisely because they abbreviated longer, more complex, texts for wider middlebrow audiences eager to catch the gist of works without persevering through their moments of tedium. Abridgements, of course, are mediated texts—if not by cultural authorities then at least by business-minded cultural institutions and periodicals—that filter through channels of

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editing for the middlebrow reader unsure of what book to pick up next. And yet not all abridgements are mediated in the same way.

What is particularly notable about the Highsmith abridgements in *Cosmopolitan* was that it was the author herself taking the scalpel to her own novels. The abridgements she composed for the magazine were public-relations gimmicks, synchronic acts of textual reproduction that foreground Highsmith as a designated self-abbreviator. As Wouk’s and Hulme’s comments above make clear, it was the editorial team for the *Condensed Books* that erased excess material in the club’s selections, and, when called for, made ‘transitions… in the manner of the author.’ Roughly similar to how a screenplay passes through multiple sets of working hands, weaving its way from scriptwriters to script doctors, from producers to directors and back again, the process of the *Condensed Books* appears as a partially anonymous enterprise. Robb White, author of an early selection for the *Condensed Books*, makes this clear in a short note he wrote to the editorial team thanking them for their labours. ‘I would like to congratulate somebody on the excellent condensation of Our Virgin Island.’

The process of abridgement was a sizeable operation. As Samuel A. Schreiner, Jr. writes, the staff at the *Condensed Books* ‘adapted the magazine’s assembly line of readers, cutters, check

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13 Given that Highsmith remoulded her own fiction in the condensed form, the scholarly literature on abridgements, scarce already, is curiously inadequate. Most accounts of abridgement, episodic as they are, tend to highlight the temporal distance between the original work and the condensation, as in bowdlerisations of Shakespearean plays for nineteenth-century school children. The reworking of an original text for later generations proceeds either as a means to make the source material accessible for broader audiences or else coheres with the ideological dispositions of the abridger. Joseph Grigely’s poststructuralist/Foucauldian account of abridgement notes ‘the continuously discontinuous remaking of texts by editors and curators in the process of their dissemination,’ stressing the diachronic nature of ‘textual transformation[s].’ For Grigely, textual reworkings occur for ‘political reasons’ primarily related to the ‘distribution of power.’ See *Textualterity: Art, Theory, and Textual Criticism* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 4-6. Likewise, Jennifer Snead looks at the abridgements the eighteenth-century Anglican cleric John Wesley made of John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* and Henry Brook’s *The Fool of Quality* to highlight these texts’ Methodist leanings for his audiences. See ‘The Work of Abridgements.’

14 Wood, *Of Lasting Interest*, 188.

cutters, and the like to a new medium.’

Highsmith, conversely, abridged herself. In this capacity, Highsmith was not alone; most writers for *Cosmopolitan* condensed their own novels. Not popular enough to make the *Condensed Book Club* in the US, where her sales were dismally low, Highsmith nevertheless took the opportunity to abridge her works for *Cosmopolitan* in this popular format.

Highsmith’s abridgements in *Cosmopolitan* highlight unrecognised acts of authorial self-fashioning for the literary marketplace that ‘resis[t] the centripetal forces of disciplinary expertise,’ typically concerning the thorny and contested status of the author.

Abridgements provide lucid instances of a literary marketplace at work that neither rarefies nor dispenses with the author-figure entirely, methodological practices linked respectively on the one hand to New Critical close-reading and on the other to Franco Moretti’s theory of distant reading. The empirical recovery of abridgements from the paper grave might be said to cleave these methodologically divergent practices of reading by instead offering new questions for literary critics. In the case of Highsmith, these include but are not limited to:

What did Highsmith consider extraneous to her own novels? Were cuts made by Highsmith to cohere with the editorial wishes of *Cosmopolitan*? Or was Highsmith looking to erase details, phrases and sentences she was no longer content with, the abridgement providing one last opportunity for Highsmith to re-envisage her fiction?

Highsmith acts as one who cuts,

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17 To put the differences between abridging for *Cosmopolitan* and being selected by the *Condensed Book Club* into perspective, it is useful to consider the financial details. While the top sum for bestselling writers at *Cosmopolitan* was $3000, authors and publishers for the digest were paid in fees ranging from $10000-$100000 for reprint rights. See Landers, *The Improbable First*, 220-21 and Wood, *Of Lasting Interest*, 192.
18 Ann Ardis, ‘Editor’s Introduction: Print Culture and Transatlantic/Transnational Public Sphere(s)’ *Modernism/Modernity* 19:3 (2012), v.
20 It should be noted here that the study of abridgements does not have to proceed along the lines of a bland annotational exercise, where the student methodologically cross-references the abridgement with the source text, thereby almost agnostically mapping the changes between texts.
hews, and moulds her own work, practices which find a distant cousin in the cut-up techniques of the Dadaists and the postmodernists. More specifically, abridgements indicate a blueprint for how periodical studies can spark new scholarly conversation regarding these ‘evolving notions of authorship’ provided by a repository of neglected print artefacts.21

Highsmith’s self-abbreviations for *Cosmopolitan* must therefore not be misrecognised as a regression in midcentury authorship, but rather as one avenue whereby authors could adapt themselves to the needs of editors and readers at a largescale level.

Typically, Q.D Leavis’s influential highbrow lament that midcentury magazines had effectively ‘close[d] the market to genius, talent, and distinction’ hides a disdain for the cravings of the middlebrow reader. For Leavis, ‘the modern magazine… while being very much more ‘readable’ for the exhausted city worker than it ever was, has achieved this end by sacrificing any pretension to be literature.’22 Responding to reader demand, *Cosmopolitan* had been running abridgements of novels (some popular, others less so) since the early 1940s. Critically acclaimed authors engaged in the practice of abridging for additional income. In 1946-1947 alone, Booth Tarkington, Robert Penn Warren, Evelyn Waugh, and a young J.D. Salinger penned abridgements for *Cosmopolitan* readers.23 A measured stocktake of *Cosmopolitan* as a periodical including diverse textual forms consequently expands the category of practices that constitute midcentury authorship.

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22 Q.D. Leavis, *Fiction and the Reading Public (1932)* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1979), 39-40. While elitist cultural critics of the midcentury decades bemoaned an apparent lack of independent judgment on the part of readers, these lamentations tend to be self-interested and speak to the diminishing influence of such cultivated figures to shape public taste. The source of mediation situated between authors and readers had transferred from the refined critic to institutions like the Book-of-the-Month Club. See the entirety of Dwight Macdonald’s ‘Masscult & Midcult’ for a prolonged instance of this change.
In this chapter, I want to stress that Highsmith’s abridgements demonstrate the mechanics of the postwar literary marketplace in motion. Similar to the approach of the Condensed Books, Highsmith’s abridgements were timed perfectly to synchronise with the release of the source novels: Doubleday & Co. published Those Who Walk Away simultaneously with Cosmopolitan’s abridgement of Highsmith’s novel in April 1967. For writers of Cosmopolitan’s ‘complete mystery novels,’ the condensations abbreviated their source text so as to lure readers into the appeal of a contemporary novel. As Highsmith’s readership in the US was abysmal, there was relatively little risk of the condensations in Cosmopolitan negatively affecting the sales of the novels themselves, something American publishers in the twentieth-century kept a close eye on. Indeed, during her lifetime, Highsmith was consistently more popular in European countries, specifically France and Germany, where her brand of highly psychological fiction slotted in rather nicely with the market for existential novels on the continent. Highsmith’s agent, Patricia Schartle Myrer, broke it to Highsmith in 1967 that her American paperbacks were failing in the states because the author’s characters were not ‘likeable’; moreover, the overall tone of Highsmith’s work was, for the American market, ‘too subtle.’ Thus, in contrast to the Condensed Books, Highsmith’s abridgements were commercial pitches aimed at Cosmopolitan readers to stave off a distinct lack of American readers rather than to capitalise on an already sizeable pre-existing audience.

24 Likewise, Cosmopolitan published the condensation of Highsmith’s third novel The Blunderer to coincide with Harper & Brothers book release in September 1954. The same process follows for Highsmith’s second condensation for the magazine, simultaneously released by Harper & Brothers and Cosmopolitan in March 1957.

25 ‘It was possible that publication of condensations in bound volumes might kill the sale of new books in their complete and original form.’ Wood, Of Lasting Interest, 186. Furthermore, Those Who Walk Away was serialised twice for the German newspapers Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung and Neue Zürcher Zeitung, suggesting that if an author is clever in negotiating their subsidiary rights with publishers, there is no either/or choice between abridgements of a novel on the one hand and serialisations on the other. See Schenkar, The Talented Miss Highsmith, 374.

26 Schenkar, The Talented Miss Highsmith, 24.
And yet while uninterested in using her abridgements to indulge ‘feminine readers’ impatience’ with tedious narrative digressions, Highsmith nevertheless employed her condensed texts to critique Cosmopolitan’s predominantly female audience.27 In her distinctively subversive style, Highsmith was not beyond vilifying the readers she so desperately needed, all the while working within a form traditionally outsourced to editorial middlemen. Highsmith’s abridgements indicate the peculiar alchemy of professionalisation and commercial compromise that struggling authors wrestled with in the postwar literary marketplace. The bind between what I have called self-posturing and self-sacrifice is nicely illustrated here by thinking of Highsmith’s abridgements as gambles played out in the commercial traffic of literary production.

By the 1950s, Cosmopolitan was likewise making a wager of its own. It has long been acknowledged by periodical scholars and cultural historians that the early postwar years (approximately 1945-1970) produced a series of sweeping changes in the media ecology. The staggering appeal and popularity of television lured readers and advertisers away from general-interest magazines and newspapers.28 As James Landers correctly notes, ‘Advertisers liked the cost efficiency of commercials purchased during prime-time network programs because the expense to reach each thousand viewers was lower than many magazines could


28 Drawing on accountancy and auditing records from the early postwar years, Theodore Peterson nuances this point by stating that ‘there is little convincing evidence that television seriously diverted revenues from magazines generally, although individual publications may have suffered from its competition.’ See his Magazines in the Twentieth Century (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1964), 24-25. As I outline below, however, the rise of magazines targeted at distinct audiences was produced by the threat of television, leaving general-interest periodicals like Cosmopolitan beset by both forms of media for consumers’ attentions. While magazines with niche readerships attracted lucrative advertising revenues, thus bearing out Peterson’s point that there can be no general argument which links television to a decline in the commercial fortunes of magazines, many magazines did in fact suffer.
match and no magazine could compete with the sheer number of people who watched an episode of *I Love Lucy* or *The Honeymooners*.29 Meanwhile, cheap paperbacks from Bantam and Pocket Books, which sold for roughly the same price as magazines, dramatically increased the competition for reading material. One example will suffice here: in the 1950s Bantam paperbacks of Highsmith’s fiction cost US25¢, while throughout the 1950s *Cosmopolitan* sold for US35¢.30 This presented a paradox for writers, particularly struggling writers like Highsmith eager to reach larger audiences. If paperback reissues of authors’ fictions failed to sell highly enough to generate adequate returns, writers would try to reach a wider readership through other mediums like magazines. Yet the decline in magazine sales in the 1950s and 1960s (outside of irregular successes like *The New Yorker*) and the equivalence in price between books and magazines meant that potential readers were economically pulled toward cheap paperbacks.

The only way out of this vicious cycle for magazines was to specialise. Magazines themselves did not disappear, but those that survived, and those that came into existence during the 1950s and 1960s, all managed to locate and identify a specific audience. Older publications like *Harper’s Bazaar* and *Vogue* maintained a sophisticated readership interested in high fashion; *Partisan Review* held appeal for cultural highbrows; and *Ellery Queen’s Mystery Magazine* had a strong reputation for producing classy mysteries and stories of detection. Many magazines were created in the postwar years, too, mainly with the intent of identifying new and untapped demographics.31 *Ms.* was founded by Gloria Steinem and Dorothy Pitman Hughes to appeal to liberal feminists; *Seventeen* sprung up for a newly

30 Landers, *The Improbable First*, 216.
conscious ‘teenaged subculture’; and Mademoiselle attracted reasonably wealthy female college students.32

In the 1950s and well into the 1960s, Landers states that ‘Cosmopolitan was a magazine that had no specific readership demographic desirable to advertisers and no editorial focus attractive to speciality advertisers.’ The results were humbling. ‘By the late 1950s, total circulation plummeted by half to 866,700 copies in five years. Cosmopolitan subscriptions withered from approximately 900,000 to only 136,900.’33 The abridgements of The Blunderer (1954) and Deep Water (1957) Highsmith wrote for Cosmopolitan should be seen in light of the identity problem plaguing the magazine during these years of crisis. Nowhere is Cosmopolitan’s identity crisis in the 1950s more apparent than in its inability to attract advertising revenue. Browsing through issues of Cosmopolitan from the decade, one is struck by how few advertisements there are in comparison to rival ‘quality magazines’ from the era like The New Yorker and Good Housekeeping.34 Page after page of text in the triple column format goes by unimpeded by advertisements. Every so often pages are dotted with small advertisements that are too general to be aimed at any specific demographic group. There are advertisements recommending polio shots from The National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis; advertisements for Anacin, a pain relief tablet that ‘3 out of 4 Doctors Recommend to Relieve Pain’; and advertisements for Bank of America Travelers’ Cheques, as ‘good as money—anywhere!’35 The indecision resulting from Cosmopolitan’s inability to find a distinctive identity is interesting, because midcentury periodicals without advertisements tend

32 The demographic information for Seventeen and Mademoiselle is drawn from Walker, Shaping Our Mothers’ World, 3, 11.
33 Landers, The Improbable First, 214, 216.
34 Soon after the end of World War II, William Randolph Hearst, the owner of Cosmopolitan, articulated a desire for the magazine to become ‘a very great quality magazine,’ thus indexing his aspirations for Cosmopolitan to cater to a middlebrow audience. See Landers, The Improbable First, 211.
35 This sampling is culled from the pages before, within, and after Highsmith’s abridgement of Deep Water. See ‘A Mask of Innocence,’ Cosmopolitan 142:3 (March 1957).
to fall into two divergent categories. Highbrow ‘little magazines’ like *Partisan Review* rejected advertisements on principle, while widely-circulated pulps such as *Ellery Queen’s Mystery Magazine* did not need advertising revenue due to their large readership. *Cosmopolitan* therefore looks (if not reads) more like a little magazine or one of the pulps, though it craved both more advertising and a larger audience.

Periodical studies has spent a significant amount of energy demonstrating the degree to which unintentional juxtapositions in page layouts steers the meaning critics derive from the analysis of individual magazines and newspapers.\(^{36}\) Given this critical tendency of periodical studies, it is incumbent upon the field to bring to the fore examples of periodicals in decline, magazines and newspapers whose identities are made fragile by an inability to target select audiences combined with a failure to effectively coordinate their editorial and business branches. *Cosmopolitan*’s lack of a fixed identity throughout the 1950s exacerbates the kinds of ironic contingencies and awkward juxtapositions so characteristic of the texture of periodical scholarship, yet untapped by a field predominantly concerned with the study of periodicals in their glory years.\(^{37}\)

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36 There are numerous examples of this critical practice. Perhaps the best, however, is Fiona Green’s recent discussion of a near disaster spotted by *New Yorker* editor Harold Ross before the November 27, 1943 issue of the magazine went to press. ‘One error involved the placement of two advertisements featuring drawings by prominent New Yorker cartoonists – the kind of juxtaposition, Ross thought, that ‘should be avoided’. ‘In the other instance’, he wrote, ‘an ad of the Boston & Maine Railroad was run, featuring a railroad train, and on the opposite page, which was a full page of text, was a drawing which also prominently featured a railroad train. It was a very bad conflict.’ In both cases, as in the numerous other ill-tempered exchanges preserved and recalled in New Yorker memos and memoirs, Ross’s complaint is that advertisements might be mistaken for editorial, or that editorial could be misread as endorsement: two trains on facing pages, and heading, as it happened, in the same direction, might well have looked to be running on parallel lines.’ See ‘Introduction,’ *Writing for the New Yorker: Critical Essays on an American Periodical* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 1-2.

37 Aside from histories of individual periodicals that follow their object of study through good times and bad, periodical scholarship has largely avoided the study of magazines and newspapers in decline. One excellent analysis of a periodical past its creative peak is David M. Earle’s and Georgia Clarkson Smith’s examination of the post-Mencken *Smart Set*. See “‘True Stories From Real Life’: Hearst’s *Smart Set*, MacFadden’s Confessional Form, and Selective Reading’ *Journal of Modern Periodical Studies* 4:1 (2013), 30-54. In a certain irony, what Patrick Leary calls the ‘offline penumbra’ is pertinent here. The ‘offline penumbra’ refers to the ‘increasingly remote and unvisited shadowland’ of periodicals which have yet to be digitised by scholars. The most important movement in current
Mainly by a series of inadvertent editorial decisions enacted during the 1950s, *Cosmopolitan* stumbled into ambiguous territory as a general women’s magazine. Landers’ cataloguing of articles that featured in the magazine from 1951 to 1953 sets the context for the manner in which Highsmith entered the pages of *Cosmopolitan*. Articles during this period included ‘Fatigue And Your Husband’s Success,’ ‘What To Tell Your Teen-Age Daughter About Sex,’ ‘When Should Your Husband Change His Job?’ ‘Are Nice Girls Safe In The Service?’, ‘Secretaries Can Be Choosy, Too’ and ‘Hollywood’s Four-Week Beauty and Charm Course.’

What is curious about Highsmith’s abridgement of *The Blunderer* is that, given the opportunity to cut or at least tone down her critique of upper-middle and lower-middle class women to correspond with *Cosmopolitan*’s new editorial focus, Highsmith persisted in her acerbic disparagement of the second sex. Highsmith used the abridgement form not to bowdlerise her own work or to excise some of its more unsavoury elements. Rather, the author mathematically compressed her novels, cutting the word count without altering either tone or substance. If highbrows thought of the abridgement in terms of self-sacrifice in the midcentury literary marketplace, then Highsmith’s abbreviated version of *The Blunderer* speaks to her own unwillingness to compromise.

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scholarship concerning the study of magazines and newspapers is undoubtedly the flourishing of the *Journal of Modern Periodical Studies (JMPS)*. Its subtle dictation of the terms of the bulk of periodical scholarship, however, has left later time-periods in dark, offline territory. While the *JMPS* has served as a platform for rigorous and erudite scholarship since its founding in 2010, its rubric, as outlined on the journal’s website, of sampling work from approximately 1880-1950, limits its ability to describe the profound changes in the media ecology in the postwar world. Though it would be wrong to state that current and future scholars will only venture as far as the digital archive, unwilling to analyse hard-copies of periodicals, the pedagogical consequences seem rather obvious, mainly that incorporating the study of magazines and newspapers in the classroom will necessarily be limited to those that have in fact been digitised. See Leary, ‘Googling The Victorians’ *Journal of Victorian Culture* 10:1 (2005), 13, quoted in Patrick Collier, ‘What Is Modern Periodical Studies?’ *JMPS* 6:2 (2015), 97.

To make sense of Highsmith’s inflexibility here, it is vital to consider the traffic between writers of prestigious crime novels and the quality magazines of the postwar years. Like nearly all of Highsmith’s novels of the 1950s, *The Blunderer* was released under the Harper Novels of Suspense imprint for those who penned ‘superior mysteries.’\(^{39}\) That Highsmith’s abridgement of the novel found a home in *Cosmopolitan*’s monthly ‘condensed mystery’ suggests that the magazine saw a potential crossover in readership with the more upscale crime fiction being written during the 1950s. A small indicator of this shared traffic in readership is Highsmith’s ‘Camera Finish,’ a short story published by *Cosmopolitan* in September 1960 which was later republished as ‘Camera Fiend’ in an *Ellery Queen’s Anthology* of 1972. (As a side note, by far the most popular magazine for Harper Novels of Suspense authors looking to publish their short fiction was *Ellery Queen’s Mystery Magazine.*)\(^{40}\) The possibility of a shared audience between Highsmith’s suspense fiction and *Cosmopolitan*’s postwar readers simultaneously indicates the upward ambitions of crime writers and the uncertain fate of the magazine as a ‘quality’ publication in the ecosystem of postwar periodicals. The fragile position of *Cosmopolitan* in the periodical marketplace speaks to notions of the middlebrow’s suspected ‘miscegenation’ and ‘hybridity’ of high and low cultures so often bewailed by highbrow critics in the postwar years.\(^{41}\) Consistent with the image of its general decline in this period, *Cosmopolitan*’s sometime fiction editor from the mid-1950s through the late 1960s, Harriet La Barre, has detailed how the magazine usually took manuscripts that had been rejected elsewhere.\(^{42}\) Into this relationship of Highsmith and


\(^{40}\) Julian Symons for instance, one of the most critically acclaimed and well-known novelists for the Harper Novels of Suspense series, published dozens of short stories with *Ellery Queen’s Mystery Magazine*.


\(^{42}\) ‘Literary agents for established authors usually submitted fiction to larger magazines and often would try to place a manuscript with *Cosmopolitan* only when better magazines had rejected it.’ See Landers, *The Improbable First*, 221.
Cosmopolitan, each flirting with potentially new readerships though keen to maintain their respective statuses, came Highsmith’s first abridgement for the magazine.

‘The Blunderer’ concerns the failed attempts of wife-killer Melchior Kimmel to avoid the dogged inquiries of a sadistic detective, Lieutenant Corby, who is intent on linking an eerily similar bungled murder to help unravel the Kimmel case. A petit-bourgeois owner of a small bookstore, Kimmel resents the wealthy lawyer Walter Stackhouse’s botched attempt to commit a copycat murder of his own wife. Combining a latent misogyny with anxieties regarding the coordinates of cultural capital in the postwar period, Kimmel kills his wife because she aesthetically disgusts him, ridicules his impotence, and has affairs with other men. Meanwhile, Stackhouse’s wife (who in fact commits suicide) is a nagging neurotic, a real-estate agent obsessed with the possibility that her husband is having an affair. Failing to convict the bookshop owner of the murder of his wife, whom Kimmel looked down on as a trashy magazine-reading dolt, Corby successfully mobilises a similar aesthetic disgust directed upwards at Stackhouse by activating Kimmel’s own status anxieties. Playing the two men off against each other, Corby mercilessly tries to solve the two cases simultaneously.

‘The Blunderer’ features several advertisements marketing Blu White laundry flakes and Sweetheart Beauty Soap. Despite the influx of women workers who sustained the economy during the second world war, a critical consensus has emerged that advertisers nevertheless constructed a powerful image of women as ‘happy home-makers’ during the postwar years. Cultural historian Juliann Sivulka has stated that in the 1950s a plethora of advertisements depicted ‘wives overjoyed to own products and appliances for the kitchen, which was the center of their world,’ while others ‘glorified the role of the homeowner.’ At the same time as recognising the newfound purchasing power of women of the emerging white middle

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class, these advertisements also socialised women into restrictive, traditional gender roles. An instance of this cultural process surrounds one of the climactic scenes in ‘The Blunderer.’ Occupying approximately one-fifth of the page and sitting beneath Highsmith’s abridgement, one advertisement for Blu White laundry flakes depicts a beaming woman with lustrous teeth holding up a box of the product. The headline for the advertisement reads, ‘Remember—there’s a MIRACLE BLUING in BLU-WHITE…NOT just a TINT!’ The accompanying text compels the reader to purchase the product by detailing the superiority of Blu White flakes and gesturing to the masses of other women who have already come on board. ‘Think twice about any washing product that is merely TINTED blue: Can such a product by itself give you the dazzling white, sparkling bright washes you want? Women everywhere say “NO!” That’s why they now insist on the NEW, thin flakes that contain a Miracle Bluing – Blu-White Flakes.’

Directly next to the advertisement for Blu White, detective Corby in ‘The Blunderer’ attempts to humiliate Kimmel into a confession by uncovering mortifying details of the suspect’s relationship with his former wife, a scene which is necessary to quote at length:

‘I’ve also heard about the time Helen was manicuring her friends’ fingernails for pin money,’ Corby went on, bouncing on his heels triumphantly. ‘You must have loved that—women coming in and out of the house all day, sitting around gabbing. That’s when you decided you never could educate Helen up to your level.’

The manicuring had lasted only a month, Kimmel thought. He had put a stop to it. But the social embarrassment had caused Kimmel to move from Philadelphia to Newark.

‘Even before that,’ Corby continued, walking slowly around Kimmel, stopping behind

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45 Advertisement for Blu White, *Cosmopolitan* (italics and capitalisations in the original). With some moderate permutations, advertisements for the product are repeated on two other pages of ‘The Blunderer’ (99, 105).
him, ‘you had reached a point where you couldn’t touch Helen. Then the loathing transferred itself to other women, too—all other women… Little could she know—a simple girl out of the Philadelphia slums—that you’d kill her fourteen years later just because she was stupid!’

Kimmel turned around. ‘I didn’t—’ The image of Ed Kinnaird’s face was before his eyes. It enraged him. His fat fists rose a little, shaking, impotent. The image of Ed Kinnaird’s face was superimposed upon the blur of Corby’s face, but Ed Kinnaird’s face was not blurred at all.

‘Were you going to say you killed her not because she was stupid but because her affair with Ed Kinnaird disgusted you, shamed you before your friends, threatened your standing as a bookdealer, a scholar, and a gentleman?’ Corby asked sarcastically.⁴⁶

Despite Kimmel’s misogyny, it is difficult to tell whether the advertisements for Blu White laundry flakes and Sweetheart Beauty Soap speak to his desire for the ideal womanly figure of the 1950s or rather coalesce with Highsmith’s misogyny to indict the vacuous caricatures they portray. Kimmel’s performance of upward social mobility is thwarted by a ‘simple girl’ who manages to fall far short of the conservative ideals of femininity depicted by the Blu White advertisement. An unintelligent adulteress who causes her husband ‘social embarrassment,’ Helen ruptures the foundations of the Blu White commercial. It is even more pointed that Kimmel is not financially stable enough to support a stay at home wife who accomplishes routine feminine tasks like cooking and doing the laundry.

Though Corby calls Kimmel ‘a fat eunuch,’ Highsmith cuts Kimmel’s masochistic pleasure in the torture scene and correspondingly foregrounds Helen’s failure to fulfil the ideal of staid housewife. During his interrogation in The Blunderer, Kimmel is ‘aware that he felt intensely feminine, more intensely than when he spied upon his own sensuous curves in the bathroom mirror.’ Indeed, after being ‘struck’ by Corby, Kimmel ‘releas[es] in one shrill

blast a frantic shame that had been warring with his pleasure.’\(^{47}\) While abridging one’s own work is a tricky undertaking, it is difficult to see Highsmith’s choice here outside the scope of authorial intention. ‘The Blunderer’ may have been Highsmith’s first appearance in *Cosmopolitan*, but like many up-and-coming writers of the 1940s and 1950s, she was well attuned to the rhythms and stylistic conventions of the major periodicals. After graduating from Barnard College in 1942, Highsmith unsuccessfully interviewed with many of the leading magazines of the time: *Vogue, Harper’s Bazaar, Time, Fortune, Mademoiselle, The New Yorker* and *Good Housekeeping*.\(^ {48}\) Additionally, from Marijane Meaker’s memoir we learn that Highsmith avidly read (and kept hold of) copies of *Mademoiselle*, the women’s fashion magazine.\(^ {49}\) Highsmith’s trade-off—spotlighting Helen’s flaws and erasing Kimmel’s own sadomasochistic femininity—dovetails nicely with the awareness that midcentury writers often hypocritically critiqued the kinds of magazines they very often appeared in.\(^ {50}\) Critiquing women’s magazines while taking a pay check from them is part and parcel of the compromises of postwar periodical culture and the literary marketplace, a position between self-posturing and self-sacrifice that lies at the forefront of this dissertation. The scene described in ‘The Blunderer’ above so clearly illuminates how the cuckold Kimmel’s disgust registers degrees of social shame and aesthetic distaste that the proximate placing of a laundry advertisement promising ‘whiter, brighter washes!’ is rather apposite. As if to clean Kimmel’s wife of the dirt of her ‘slum’ background and all her failings as a woman, the Blu White advertisement admonishingly watches over Highsmith’s abridgement.

\(^{47}\) Highsmith, *The Blunderer*, 212.

\(^{48}\) Schenkar, *The Talented Miss Highsmith*, 130.

\(^{49}\) Meaker, *Highsmith: A Romance of the 1950s*, 78.

\(^{50}\) See Carol Polsgrove, ‘Magazines and the Making of Authors,’ *A History of the Book in America: Volume 5: The Enduring Book: Print Culture in Postwar America*, edited by David Paul Nord, Joan Shelley Rubin and Michael Schudson (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009). Polsgrove’s example is Dwight Macdonald, the prominent critic of the middlebrow who pillaged *The New Yorker* and *Esquire* while nevertheless writing for them. ‘The very process he lamented supplied his income’ (258).
Bearing out this last aspect is the fact that there are eight other advertisements within ‘The Blunderer’ for Sweetheart Soap, all but one bearing the image of a cover girl touting the message that ‘beauty is my business.’ The cover girls are all placed in either the left, centre-left, or centre of the advertisements for Sweetheart Soap, the product itself rather small and inconspicuous by comparison. Adorned in glistening jewellery, each girl features a popular ‘50s hairstyle, smiling happily while revealing an alluring neckline. Promising ‘softer, smoother, [and] younger’ skin after just one week, the Sweetheart models seem to call out to Kimmel and Stackhouse with invitations of an uncomplicated beauty. One ‘lovely cover girl,’ Hope Lange, ‘earn[s]’ her ‘living as a model,’ while just above and earlier in ‘The Blunderer,’ Stackhouse comes to the realisation that he had left his house so as to let his wife ‘Clara kill herself without his intervention.’ Leaving the house and a comatose Clara, Stackhouse’s ‘tired mind reasoned that he had known all along she would take the [sleeping] pills.’

A significant part of Highsmith’s canonical status has been formed around a conception of her as a subversive critic of the postwar American suburbs, particularly in novels like The Blunderer and Deep Water. Clara, a successful career woman and the owner of a beautiful home in Long Island, is simultaneously a rebuke to the one-dimensional persona of the models for Sweetheart Soap and a caricaturish figure herself, rendered as a virago hidden behind a suburban façade.

Another cover girl, Roxanne, says that her ‘skin must be lovely all over—because I often pose in revealing evening gowns,’ yet the sex-appeal of the Sweetheart Soap advertisements should be understood within codes of feminised labour specific to the patriarchal tone of 1950s advertisements. In one sense a prelude for the increasingly sexualised tone of the mid-1960s Cosmopolitan that, coinciding with and participating in the nascent rumblings of second-wave feminism, broke free from the male gaze associated with 1950s advertisements.

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by taking a sex-positive approach to female sexuality, Roxanne nevertheless demonstrates how a ‘conservative domestic ideology weirdly combines with the glamorization of female display.’

It is true that magazines have little control over how advertisers design their material, particularly periodicals like *Cosmopolitan* that in the 1950s were grabbing hold of any advertising revenue they could possibly get their hands on. Yet as in the pieces of a mosaic, it rests with the editors of *Cosmopolitan* to arrange the advertisements accordingly throughout each monthly edition. Do such juxtapositions serve to bear out Steven Dillon’s assertion regarding the ‘web of contradictions that structure women’s magazines,’ or do they indicate editorial laziness? Any tentative answer to this question is perhaps less important to this chapter’s immediate aims than an awareness of *Cosmopolitan*’s lack of distinct identity during the 1950s when other magazines sought safety in specialisation. Periodical scholars Faye Hammill, Paul Hjartarson and Hannah McGregor have lucidly theorised that ‘periodicals are print media characterized by both seriality—single titles are instantiated across multiple issues—and periodicity—titles strive for, if they don’t always achieve, a regular circulation cycle that structures reader engagement.’ Taking a cue from this definition of periodicals as a distinctive form of media, it is compelling to consider *Cosmopolitan* during the 1950s as a magazine that had ruptured its relationship to seriality. Not only was *Cosmopolitan* still living in the shadow of its reputation as a publisher of premier fiction in the 1920s, but its half-hearted voyage into ‘general women’s’ territory in

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54 *Wolf Women and Phantom Ladies*, 147. One theory implicitly advanced to tackle this question is that ‘magazines often feature short stories precisely as a highbrow element juxtaposed with elements of low culture [advertisements, cartoons, illustrations], thus blurring easy lines of demarcation.’ See Christoph Ehland and Cornelia Wächter, ‘Introduction: “…All Granite, Fog and Female Fiction,”’ in *Middlebrow and Gender, 1890-1945*, edited by Christoph Ehland and Cornelia Wächter (Leiden & Boston: Brill Rodopi, 2016), 10.
the 1950s had landed it squarely in the editorial purview of a fellow Hearst publication, *Good Housekeeping*. While it would be short-sighted to depart from Hammill’s, Hjartarson’s and McGregor’s supple definition, it is constructive for the field to consider that ‘the kind of unpredictable and exciting juxtapositions that occur within and across’ the pages of periodicals are often exacerbated precisely at the moment when the notion of seriality breaks down. If repetition structures the lives of periodicals—as weeklies, monthlies, and quarterlies—then it seems an urgent task for scholars charting shifts in the broader ecology of media production to reconcile these two differing elements: order and regularity in the short term combined with long term changes in the media ecology that necessarily alters the cultural significance of periodicals. The appearance of ‘The Blunderer’ in the September 1954 edition of *Cosmopolitan* is symptomatic of the kinds of contradiction endemic to a magazine in decline.

Yet the arrival of Helen Gurley Brown to *Cosmopolitan* in mid-1965 allowed *Cosmopolitan* to rise again. The magazine’s current reputation as a trashy publisher of risqué material began with Gurley Brown’s ambition to provide ‘young working women with information about living alone, being fashionable on a budget, enjoying inexpensive vacations, attracting men, handling or initiating office romances, coping with office politics, and having sex on their own terms.’ The negative backlash began almost immediately. No more scornful a commentator could be found than Highsmith herself, who in her 1960 novel *This Sweet Sickness* included a short digression about ‘women’s magazines.’ In equal parts foreshadowing her later inclusion in the April 1967 issue of *Cosmopolitan* and recalling her

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57 Hammill, Hjartarson and McGregor, ‘Introducing Magazines and/as Media,’ 11. At a more literal level, the name of ‘Hearst’s International’ adorned the cover of *Cosmopolitan* as an ambiguous rival title (the result of a business merger) from March 1925-April 1952, further altering the conception of the magazine as a uniform entity. See Landers, *The Improbable First*, 213.
58 Landers, *The Improbable First*, 229.
earlier appearances in the magazine, the novel features a critique of a young secretary, Effie Brennan, which dovetails into a speculation about the broader pitfalls of periodicals like *Cosmopolitan*. The protagonist, David Kelsey, unfairly describes Effie as having

only the pseudo-decorousness of the basically coarse young female who reads the women’s magazines and the etiquette columns in cheap newspapers that tell a girl how to behave when she is out with men. They focused a girl’s mind on sex by harping on “how far” a nice girl should go. They assumed every man was a lecher. But on the other hand, was there much more to most girls than their biological urges? The only objective of most of them was to get married before twenty-five and begin a cycle of child-bearing.\(^{59}\)

It is not a utopian dream for the editorial staff of periodicals to be relatively up-to-date on a prospective author’s fiction to limit or forestall the kinds of paradoxes which resulted from this Highsmith-*Cosmopolitan* mismatch. Equipped with a larger staff of readers and editors and more explicitly focused on fiction, *The New Yorker* in the midcentury decades, for instance, was well positioned to spot such disparities.

What is less well-known, however, is that *Cosmopolitan* throughout its transition to a sex magazine continued to make a pitch for a middlebrow audience. Beginning in the early 1960s and continuing until the early 1970s, *Cosmopolitan* ran double-page advertisements at the beginning of every issue for the Book-of-the-Month Club, the prototypical middlebrow institution. Seen from a different angle, the Book-of-the-Month Club recognised in the pink-collared women who read *Cosmopolitan* an overlap with their pre-existing customers, in addition to the potential to locate new readers. It is likely that Highsmith’s presence in the

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\(^{59}\) Patricia Highsmith, *This Sweet Sickness* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2002), 51.
April 1967 *Cosmopolitan* marked one of the author’s heretofore largest acquaintances with a specifically American middlebrow readership. Under the editorship of Gurley Brown, in the period from 1965 to 1968 *Cosmopolitan* ‘had increased its average monthly circulation from 782,000 copies to 1.05 million copies.’ Without wishing to succumb to a narrative of economic determinism, it is vital to see here how Highsmith’s misgivings about the kinds of readers who came to her fiction was outweighed by a relatively simple numbers game.

In what was to be Highsmith’s final association with *Cosmopolitan*, traces of what became her posthumous status as a canonical women’s author are already noticeable. In the personable tone she adopted with readers, Gurley Brown’s monthly column ‘Step Into My Parlor’ introduces Highsmith as a highly-accomplished woman perfect for *Cosmopolitan*’s new audience:

Patricia Highsmith, author of this month’s mystery novel, *Those Who Walk Away*, thinks women bosses—and nearly everybody else in America are too bloody busy. “I don’t know when you have time to think,” says Patricia, who lives in a workmen’s cottage in Suffolk, England, heats all her water on a paraffin stove and makes her own coffee tables and bookcases. (Don’t you feel like a dolt?!) … You’ll love her new one (page 154).

Highsmith’s satirical tone seems to have gone unnoticed by Gurley Brown. For Highsmith, the kinds of women readers attracted to *Cosmopolitan* did not ‘think’ about anything at all. While the editor attempts to frame Highsmith as just the kind of woman boss that is the focus of the April issue, Highsmith, whose workmanlike handiness is glossed in some detail, undercuts Gurley Brown’s latent feminism. And yet despite her limited opinion of women,

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60 Landers, *The Improbable First*, 225.  
61 Although *Cosmopolitan* had been running abridgements of crime novels since the 1940s, it is rather apt that Highsmith’s final appearance in the magazine reaffirms the historical links between female readers and mystery fiction.  
Highsmith did want American women to ‘think’ for themselves rather than look to the women’s magazines for advice on sex and “how far” a nice girl should go’ with a man.

Emblematic of the divided accounts that have assessed the feminist leanings of the post-1965 Cosmopolitan, two of Gurley Brown’s other women bosses, both staff at the magazine, provide comments relating to women in positions of power. ‘It’s fine to work for a woman but I wish there were more men around here!’ Eileen Jaffe says in ‘Step Into My Parlor,’ while Nancy Hanff states that ‘Women are more temperamental but there are some exceptions.’63 Provided there are occasional acts of misreading and misrecognition of Highsmith’s distinctive views, her presence in the April 1967 Cosmopolitan sits surprisingly well with a magazine working out its own ambivalent relationship to second-wave feminism. What remains abundantly clear, however, is that Highsmith’s capability and adeptness are reworked by Gurley Brown for a growing pink-collar audience of American women looking for examples of skilled leaders and managers.

‘Those Who Walk Away’ was Highsmith’s first abridgement in Cosmopolitan to be published in the jigsaw format, meaning that the text was split across the magazine rather than running in consecutive pages. If the latter method operates by partially (and arguably) segregating fiction from the other components (for example, advertisements) that constitute

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63 Brown, ‘Step Into My Parlor,’ 4. Cosmopolitan’s connections to an anti-feminist ethos can be seen in the assortment of advertisements surrounding ‘Those Who Walk Away.’ A company called ‘Slim Mint’ promotes its weight loss gum with the caption, ‘Don’t Be Fat… Lose Pounds and Inches’, complete with a slim model in a swimsuit, while just a few pages earlier, another advertisement for ‘Wate-On’ tablets screams ‘Don’t Be Skinny.’ This policing of the female body is carried out through contradictory advice so as to acclimate Cosmopolitan’s readers to the male gaze. Whether putting weight on or taking it off, readers are disciplined to consider the views of the men in their life. As such, a brand called ‘Femicin’ promises relief from menstrual pain by employing the unique viewpoint of a woman’s husband: ‘Cramps, headaches and body aches used to make my wife so depressed, so irritable that I suffered through those bad days each month, too.’ Highsmith, ‘Those Who Walk Away,’ Cosmopolitan 162:4 (April 1967), 167, 163, 159, accessed via the Swiss Literary Archives, see SLA-PH A-01-c-2/100, Berne, Switzerland. For accounts of the legacy of Cosmopolitan and the magazine’s vexed relation to feminism, see Jennifer Scanlon, Bad Girls Go Everywhere: The Life of Helen Gurley Brown (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) and Gerri Hershey, Not Pretty Enough: The Unlikely Triumph of Helen Gurley Brown (New York: Sarah Crichton Books & Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2016).
periodicals, then it follows that Highsmith’s presence throughout the April 1967 issue *Cosmopolitan* immerses her more completely in the editorial content of the magazine. The jigsaw format produces an equivalence between Gurley Brown’s column ‘Step Into My Parlor’ and the month’s abridged mystery novel, between articles about women bosses and advertisements for shampoo, producing a reader who necessarily flicks from one piece to another rather than pores sequentially through the magazine.

This correspondence between editorial content, fiction and advertising is curiously fitting given that ‘Those Who Walk Away’ can be read as a *Cosmopolitan* morality play. Like many other instances of Highsmith’s fiction, *Those Who Walk Away* follows the dogged pursuits of two men curiously attached yet also fearful of one another. After art dealer Ray Garrett’s wife, Peggy, commits suicide in Majorca, her father, Edward Coleman, makes multiple attempts on Garrett’s life. Blaming his son-in-law for Peggy’s death, Coleman stalks him through the winding streets of Venice to exact revenge. In typical Highsmith fashion, over the course of the tale, Garrett’s apparent guilt begins to take on qualities more existential than plainly criminal. The cat-and-mouse game in Venice Highsmith’s characters engage in serves as Highsmith’s backdrop for exploring philosophical questions resonating with a postwar American society fascinated by Sartrean existentialism. Yet in ‘Those Who Walk Away,’ the pages upon pages of flat prose detailing Ray’s and Coleman’s feverish chases, detections, and escapes are muted; the philosophical undertones of ‘pursuit’ fade into a formula for a generic crime story, a *Cosmopolitan* ‘complete mystery novel.’ As a result, what Mark Seltzer brilliantly reads as the influence of ‘game theory’ on *Those Who Walk Away*.

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64 It also gives readers the chance to either stop reading fiction when the text is ‘interrupted’ by other articles, or engages readers in the parity between fiction and the magazine’s juxtaposed editorial content.

65 This reading would certainly surprise the philosopher Slavoj Zizek, who once described *Those Who Walk Away* as Highsmith’s ‘masterpiece.’ See his review of Wilson’s biography, ‘Not A Desire To Have Him, But To Be Like Him,’ *London Review of Books* 25:16 (21 August, 2003), 13-14, accessed at https://www.lrb.co.uk/v25/n16/slavoj-zizek/not-a-desire-to-have-him-but-to-be-like-him.
Away is largely missing from ‘Those Who Walk Away,’ an example that the institutional consecration of Highsmith has overlooked the manner in which the author tried to communicate with contemporary women readers.66 Rather, Gurley Brown and the magazine’s fiction editor, William Carrington Guy, market ‘Those Who Walk Away’ through a redemptive figure, Elisabetta, a young Italian café-worker and potential love interest of Garrett. The teaser quotation, written by Gurley Brown and Guy, reads thus: ‘Someone was out to kill Ray Garrett, stalking him through the streets and canals of Venice… In his hour of need, Ray turned to Elisabetta.’67

Much more heavy-handed is the previous month’s edition of Cosmopolitan, where a ‘puff,’ brief information set in a rectangular pattern, builds interest in the contents of the magazine’s next issue, tantalisingly marketing Highsmith’s abridgement as a love story with a criminal twist. Set amidst the ending pages of the March mystery novel, ‘Mortissimo’ by P.E.H. Durston (with a similar Venice setting), the description of Highsmith’s condensed text foregrounds Cosmopolitan’s new editorial focus:

There is a certain kind of girl who just naturally seems to attract men in trouble… Elisabetta was one of these. And when Ray Garrett told her his story of being shot in Rome and tossed into a canal in Venice, she didn’t necessarily believe him, but she was ready to give him a hideout—and lots of sympathy and understanding. Soon, however, Ray’s would-be killer is stalking him again. Don’t miss THOSE WHO WALK ALONE by Patricia Highsmith, a chilling and suspenseful mystery novel, complete in next month’s COSMOPOLITAN.68

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While discarding the temporary title ‘Those Who Walk Alone’ for Highsmith’s ‘Those Who Walk Away’ so as to minimise the solitude of Ray, the abridgement features only minor overlaps with *Cosmopolitan*’s skewed description of the plot. Elisabetta is not the heroine/protagonist as the magazine suggests she is—on the whole, she is rather insignificant. In fact, Garrett’s initial description of Elisabetta recalls the brutal account David Kelsey gives in *This Sweet Sickness* concerning the pathetic biological destinies of those who read the women’s magazines. ‘There was only one thing to suggest to such girls, he thought, and that was to get married, to exchange one kind of boredom for another, perhaps, but at least with different props,’ Ray muses chauvinistically.69

What Highsmith does do, however, is cast the shadow of Peggy across the abridgement much more explicitly than she does in the novel. Playing to *Cosmopolitan* readers’ newfound sexual liberation (who found an unlikely ally in the growing counterculture movement in the late 1960s), Ray remembers how ‘Peggy had been so enthusiastic about lovemaking.’ Yet what led to her suicide, as Ray tentatively explains to Coleman, was that Peggy ‘thought marriage was another world—instead of a continuation of this one.’ Later, in a letter to Coleman, Ray even states to Peggy’s father that she ‘was frightened by her pleasure in sex,’ not in spite but because she was so ‘enthusiastic’ about it.70 In closing, I want to suggest that Highsmith’s abridgement sheds the philosophical infrastructure of *Those Who Walk Away* and contrarily functions as a moral warning to *Cosmopolitan*’s female readership. ‘Those Who Walk Away’ communicates to readers that marriage does not have to be an end in and of itself, as it so disastrously turns out for Peggy. *Cosmopolitan* readers in the early tenure of Gurley Brown were tutored on ‘sexual topics usually avoided by mainstream magazines—adultery, premarital sex, one-night stands.’71 Independently wealthy and of a different social

class than *Cosmopolitan*’s audience, Peggy nevertheless taps into the continuing legacy of women’s magazines as vehicles of instruction. There is a parity between *Cosmopolitan* articles easing single or married women into unexplored sexual territory and Peggy’s largely instructional function as a woman unable or unwilling to circumvent her wedded binds.

Ever the pragmatist in business matters, one wonders if ‘Those Who Walk Away’ was written with its target audience in mind, or whether such productive crossovers between Highsmith’s fiction and *Cosmopolitan*’s editorial content were the result of pure contingency. Certainly, Highsmith was constantly looking for new ways to ‘advertise’ her talent when the ‘publicity efforts’ of agents and publishers failed her. In either case, Peggy’s death is not a preliminary catalyst to the hide-and-seek games of Ray and Coleman which are to follow, but a message coded specifically for *Cosmopolitan* readers. By cutting and sculpting her source novel, Highsmith effectively reached a middlebrow women’s readership with ‘a complete mystery novel.’

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73 Highsmith, *Plotting and Writing*, 49.
Chapter 3: Marketing Canonicity

In his ‘Masscult and Midcult,’ Dwight Macdonald’s polemic against the midcentury middlebrow, there is no clearer sign of prevailing New Critical aesthetic priorities than Macdonald’s selection and examination of middlebrow targets. While a portion of the essay is devoted to a close-reading of Thornton Wilder’s Our Town, Ernest Hemingway’s The Old Man and The Sea, Archibald MacLeish’s J.B., and Vincent Benét’s John Brown’s Body, Macdonald is also strongly aware that the middlebrow is the domain of a marketing putsch in response to American middle-class desires for self-improvement.1 Thus ‘a full year six hard-cover lavishly illustrated’ set of ‘Horizon: A Magazine of the Arts’ can be obtained for $16.70, while of course ‘Midcult is the Book-of-the-Month Club.’ In a display of unwitting self-reflexivity, Macdonald indexes this split by documenting in a footnote how his essay was written for the ‘Adventures of the Mind’ series of the decidedly middlebrow newspaper The Saturday Evening Post, though in an apt contingency, ended up being published at Partisan Review, a highbrow ‘little magazine.’2 Yet costumed in New Critical attire, Macdonald’s formal excavation of the middlebrow obscures rather than clarifies the links between literary content and the publishing apparatus that seeks to market the literary middlebrow.

Aside from brief commentary on Hemingway’s fall from literary grace with the middling Old Man and the Sea, Macdonald likewise fails to distinguish how canonisation affects his selection of middlebrow victims. For Macdonald, the middlebrow is ‘High Culture when it has been stamped PRIME QUALITY by the proper authorities,’ which implies that there are aspects of middlebrowism embedded in the process of canonisation itself, particularly in the practice of reissuing an author’s fiction. Following from Macdonald’s intimation, this chapter

1 See Driscoll, ‘The Middlebrow Family Resemblance,’ Post45, no pagination.
explores the fruitful, unanalysed space between canonisation and circulation vis-à-vis the literary middlebrow. Up till the present moment, Macdonald’s narrower definition of the middlebrow as simply the dissemination of high culture to the masses has gained the lion’s share of attention in the field of middlebrow scholarship.\(^3\) Consistent with the strong vein of snobbish distaste for mass culture prominent in the postwar era, Macdonald’s conflation of marketing and the process of canonisation confuses the precise relation between these interlocking aspects of literary culture. If, as John Guillory asserts, the primary method of canonisation is the reproduction of literary texts in the classroom over time, then the manner in which fiction is marketed as a canonised product becomes crucial to a broader view of the literary middlebrow.\(^4\)

After Highsmith’s death in 1995, the reissuing of her works began en masse. Spurred by the worldwide success of Anthony Minghella’s 1999 film adaptation of *The Talented Mr Ripley*, Vintage, Norton, Dover, Library of America, Virago and Everyman’s Library have all reissued Highsmith’s novels and short stories. As a result, the Highsmith’s market has become oversaturated with predominantly paperback reissues of her work, a rather apt irony considering Highsmith’s rather dim view of paperbacks as a respectable publishing form. (In 1967, Highsmith confided to a representative from her new Swiss publisher, Diogenes Verlag, that she was stuck in a paperback ‘ghetto.’\(^5\)) How do these publishers—Vintage, 3 See the entirety of Janice A. Radway, *A Feeling for Books: The Book-of-the-Month Club, Literary Taste, and Middle-Class Desire* and also Beth Driscoll, ‘Book Clubs, Oprah, Women and the Middlebrow,’ *The New Literary Middlebrow*, 45-82.
5 Schenkar, *The Talented Miss Highsmith*, 382. For more on Highsmith’s non-‘serious’ view of paperbacks, see Meaker, *Highsmith*, 76. Given Highsmith’s disparaging view of paperbacks, it is interesting to note that Virago ‘was founded in 1973 as “the first mass-market publisher for 52 per cent of the population – women.”’ Furthermore, Virago’s ‘mission has been to champion women’s voices and bring them to the widest possible readership around the world.’ See chapter 2 of this dissertation for the contradictions inherent in pro-women publishers and periodicals printing Highsmith’s misogynistic fiction. ‘The History of Virago,’ sourced from the publisher’s website at: https://www.virago.co.uk/about/. Stretching back into the early twentieth-century, Sharon O’Brien has scrupulously detailed Willa Cather’s attempts to ‘save’ *My Antonia* from the stigma attached to the
Norton, and so on—distinguish themselves from one another? Book jackets, biographical notices, blurbs, and inside reviews—what Gerard Genette calls the paratext, those features that ‘surround’ and ‘extend’ the text, ‘precisely in order to present it’—are for esteemed publishers the visual means of conveying canonicity in the competitive arena of the literary marketplace. How do students and the general-reading public recognise canonicity through the paratext? Moreover, how do certain markers of prestige and visual signposts of canonicity lure the potential customer into buying one publisher’s Highsmith novel over another? To begin, it is necessary to dispense with the essentialist fiction that certain publishers and presses (Norton and Library of America, for example) are the bearers of an innate and unchallenged prestige in the economy of cultural goods. For the perceived cultural credentials of Norton not to be brought into question, a certain propriety and unwillingness to use sensationalist book jackets must balance the practical demands of the market. The largescale reissuing of Highsmith’s body of work therefore raises interesting questions concerning the relationship of pragmatic marketing strategy and cultural prestige.

Reissues and up-to-date editions of a newly canonised author’s works provide a stimulating area of inquiry for gauging the practice of marketing canonicity amongst publishers. The reason is that in the early years of a writer’s canonisation the safety of historical distance or the ‘timelessness’ of a classic author is not a fait accompli. Though not an iron law, reissuing tends to follow the logic of bringing the newly canonised author’s works from smaller publishers with lower-print runs to more mainstream publishing houses that can cater to larger audiences; or, from one rival publisher to another who share roughly equal print runs and compete for market share of the author. With the topic of reissuing in

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6 See Genette, Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation, 1.

7 This chapter conceptualises time in much short periods, concerning itself only with the first 15 to 20 years after canonisation has begun.
mind, Guillory’s remarks on institutional transmission are rather apt: ‘Canonicity is not a property of the work itself but of its transmission.’ Canonicity resides in the constant reissuing of an author’s fiction, a material plenitude of the text, as mentioned in the introduction to this dissertation. Moving between Guillory’s contention of canonisation as institutional reproduction and Macdonald’s inference that reissuing texts to mass audiences is part and parcel of middlebrow culture, in this chapter I seek to explore the shape of newly-canonical literary products in the early twenty-first century publishing market. Using Highsmith as a guide, I argue that a reconsideration of the paratextual devices used by publishers allows for a fresh understanding of the ambivalent process of early canon-formation. More specifically, taking its cue from the vacillations of Macdonald’s ‘Masscult & Midcult,’ this chapter maintains that marketing canonicity shares certain key features with the literary middlebrow, particularly the self-conscious performances of erudition common to cultural blunderers.9

Highsmith serves as a remarkably useful figure for these enquiries, not only due to widespread scholarly agreement on her newly-canonical status, but also because the question of how to market Highsmith is not a new one, and has plagued the author since the publication of her first major work, Strangers on a Train (1950). In the ‘Afterword’ Highsmith wrote for The Price of Salt in 1989, the author recounts that ‘Strangers on a Train had been published as ‘A Harper Novel of Suspense’ by Harper and Bros., as the house was then called, so overnight I had become a ‘suspense’ writer, though Strangers in my mind was

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8 Guillory, Cultural Capital, 55.
9 See Bourdieu, Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste, translated by Richard Nice (London & New York: Routledge, 2010), 27. Canonisation nevertheless adheres to the fluctuating critical dice-game of prevailing political climates. A simple example suffices here. In the 1940s D.H. Lawrence may have seemed like a literary titan to F.R. Leavis, though as the story goes, with the rise of second wave feminism in the 1970s, Lawrence’s critical future looked quite bleak, his perceived misogyny jarring with the women’s liberation movement. The fringe benefit of such an argument is that it avoids the trap described by Guillory of the literary historian who simply tracks an author’s journey into and out of the canon.
not categorized, and was simply a novel with an interesting story.’ She then concludes later in the ‘Afterword,’ ‘I like to avoid labels. It is American publishers who love them.’

The author’s manifesto, *Plotting and Writing Suspense Fiction* (1966), a generic tag Highsmith seems to have chosen despite her reservations, contains an inverse lament of canonical longing: ‘I think most of Dostoevsky’s books would be called suspense books, were they being published today for the first time.’ In 1963 in *The New Statesman*, Francis Wyndham opined that it was reductive and short-sighted for critics to review Highsmith’s fiction under labels such as ‘Crime Corner’ or ‘Murder Ration,’ noting such reviewers ‘concede[d] that her books are good novels as well as effective thrillers.’ Indeed, to Highsmith’s ‘barely suppressed embarrassment, *Ellery Queen’s Mystery Magazine* would become the most frequent publisher of her short fictions.’ In publishing circles as well as recent scholarly and mainstream criticism, Highsmith has been described as operating within ‘American Noir’ (Schenkar, *Library of America*), the lesbian pulp tradition for her novel *The Price of Salt* (Perrin, Esteve), hard-boiled literature (Cassuto) and more generally, crime fiction (*The Times*).

The recent critical upsurge in Highsmith since the early 2000s is notable so much not for its frustration directed at those who try to generically pin down the author’s fiction, but for

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12 Wyndham, ‘Miss Highsmith,’ 833.
the evidence put forth to describe Highsmith’s nascent canonicity. Terry Castle’s seminal article for *The New Republic* in 2003 began this trend, with the pronouncement that ‘[t]he canonization of Patricia Highsmith… has officially begun,’ supplying as the highest proof of the author’s canonical status the fact that ‘W.W. Norton is in the process of re-issuing all of Highsmith’s major fiction.’\(^{15}\) Joan Schenkar opened her 2012 piece on Highsmith in *The Cambridge Companion to American Novelists* at a feverishly Highsmithian pace: ‘Let’s not waste a moment. Miss Highsmith has been waiting a long time.’\(^{16}\) In the same year, Tom Perrin called the canonisation of Highsmith ‘complete,’ and usefully summarised the mounting evidence for her canonicity, pointing to Castle’s and Schenkar’s critical efforts as well as Norton’s recent reissues.\(^{17}\) It is not to be doubted that soon Perrin’s own work on Highsmith will be used to substantiate the critical case for the author. This web-like procession of scholarly proofs advanced for Highsmith’s canonical status is held together by the common denominator of Norton, the unquestioned vessel of prestige. It is vital to recall that Norton has long been the architect of a politics of inclusion/exclusion via their famed anthology series, used by generations of university students taking introductory literature courses. Though not included in any anthology, Norton’s publication of Highsmith functions as an *inclusionary measure* in the process of early-canon formation. Moreover, while edited by respected professors across the globe, the publisher resides outside the academy. Without the identity of a secluded university press, Norton’s links to the market are more explicit. In a paradoxical fashion then, Norton provides scholars needed relief from the self-justifying feedback loop of scholarly discourse that is invoked to mount cases for further monographs

\(^{15}\) Terry Castle, ‘The Ick Factor,’ 28.
\(^{16}\) Schenkar, ‘Patricia Highsmith,’ 199.
\(^{17}\) Tom Perrin, ‘On Patricia Highsmith,’ *Post45*, 2012. Other evidence Perrin provides includes Schenkar’s 2009 biography of Highsmith; the 2011 release of a ‘second scholarly monograph’ on Highsmith; Fiona Peters’ *Anxiety and Evil in the Work of Patricia Highsmith*; Anthony Minghella’s successful 1999 film adaptation of *The Talented Mr Ripley* (referred to by Castle previously) as well as that novel’s publication by the Library of America; and the 2003 publication of Terry Castle’s article ‘The Ick Factor.’
and articles on a particular author. A holder of quasi-extramural capital, Norton occupies the important role in canon-formation outlined by Guillery of the respected publisher who physically reproduces the texts studied by future students.

The question then becomes, how does Norton paratextually present Highsmith, an author resistant to generic categorisation? I want to suggest that Norton’s posthumous reissues of Highsmith’s fiction subjects the author to a canonical makeover that intersects with specific cultural anxieties usually described as key markers of the middlebrow. In effect, two images of Norton collide: the cultural authority of Norton referenced by Castle and Perrin comes into contact with the publisher’s own paratextual blundering, Norton effectively misreading the cultural script of which they are meant to be originators.

An excellent example of this blundering presents itself in a simple compare and contrast exercise of the two biographical notices given by Vintage’s and Norton’s reissues of Highsmith’s novels. See the following columns on the left (Vintage) and right (Norton).\(^{18}\)

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<td>Patricia Highsmith spent much of her adult life in Switzerland and France.</td>
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Norton profits off Highsmith’s notorious subversiveness while prettifying her for certain implicit codes of canonicity. The publisher highlights Highsmith’s expatriation and partakes of a certain Europeanisation of the author that has a long lineage in American literary history, particularly in the legacy of canonical modernists (Gertrude Stein, Henry James, and so on). It is possible here that Norton are picking up on Gore Vidal’s famous blurb that appears on the front and back covers of multiple publishers’ reissues of Highsmith’s fiction, including Norton’s Strangers on a Train, bizarrely describing Highsmith as “[o]ne of our greatest modernist writers.” Norton’s mislabelling of Highsmith via the Vidal blurb suggests the potential of the ‘modernist’ moniker as a marketing strategy for American publishers looking to dress up their authors in self-consciously literary garb.\textsuperscript{19} Norton also points up the classical liberal education of Highsmith (at Barnard ‘she studied English, Latin, and Greek’) common to future scholars and statesmen, while passing over the fact that Highsmith was a terrible student.\textsuperscript{20} Perhaps most interesting however, is the divergence between Vintage’s and Norton’s approaches to Highsmith’s canonical credentials, specifically her relationship to prize culture or what James F. English has named ‘the economy of prestige.’\textsuperscript{21} Vintage’s biographical gloss simply states that “The Talented Mr Ripley, published in 1955, was awarded the Edgar Allan Poe Scroll by the Mystery Writers of America and introduced the

\textsuperscript{19} See below (95) for a discussion of Genette’s idea of the ‘peremptory potential of the paratext’ and how it productively causes misreadings of the text proper. Also, see Perrin, ‘Rebuilding Bildung,’ The Aesthetics of Middlebrow Fiction, for a similar sense of confusion regarding Vidal’s labelling of Highsmith as an important American modernist (87). Despite the ever-expanding spatiotemporal coordinates of literary modernism (late modernism, long modernism, metamodernism, and so forth), Highsmith’s fictional output simply does not fit the bill. Vidal’s oft-quoted blurb, written in the late 1980s, signifies the confused understanding the famed New York intellectual had of the diverse enterprise of literary modernism. More to my purposes, it demonstrates precisely how the blurb is the bearer of paradoxically unequal exchange-values. By this I mean that the reproduction of Vidal’s blurb offers little clarification as to which of Highsmith’s works are more or less modernist in style than their counterparts, thus further suggesting the confused relationship Norton have with literary modernism.

\textsuperscript{20} Schenkar does an admirable job of unearthing Highsmith’s terrible grades at Barnard College. See The Talented Miss Highsmith, 141.

fascinating anti-hero Tom Ripley.” Norton, conversely, takes its time with Highsmith’s recalibrated resume, stressing her prolific output (‘[t]he author of more than twenty books’), her sacrosanct paper grave (her ‘literary archives are maintained in Berne’) and most notably her penchant for attracting and winning numerous prizes (‘Highsmith has won the O. Henry Memorial Award, the Edgar Allan Poe Award, Le Grand Prix de Littérature Policière, and the Award of the Crime Writers Association of Great Britain’). It is not that Norton are telling falsehoods—all their information is, technically speaking, correct—but rather that their biographical description plays into a stereotypically dry and outmoded image of the canonical author: accomplished, expatriated/well-travelled, recipient of a liberal-arts education at a respected university.

It is worth noting how other lesser-known publishers and magazines that printed Highsmith’s fiction during her lifetime took vastly different approaches to the issue of biographical briefs. *The Saint Mystery Magazine*, which ran a handful of her stories until it folded in 1967, took a rather mischievous approach by running Highsmith’s own self-characterisation: ‘*Patricia Highsmith is the author of the forthcoming novel, A GAME FOR THE LIVING* (Harper), *and of the recent DEEP WATER, THE TALENTED MR. RIPLEY, STRANGERS ON A TRAIN, etc. A cat fancier, Miss Highsmith lives in a lovely country home, over a hundred years old, within driving distance of New York.*’

Although likely due to word-count restraints, the ‘*etc.*’ in Highsmith’s account reads as symbolic fatigue with the biographical imperative to list and recount in rote-fashion one’s professional achievements. This aversion to self-marketing then turns to whimsical parody of the biographical brief in the bizarre note that Highsmith is ‘*within driving distance of New York,*’ an odd detail to include in a paragraph that Highsmith otherwise uses to paint herself as a hermetic, Gothic figure.

22 Highsmith, ‘Nightwalker,’ 97 (italicisation and capitalisation in original).
Hamlyn Paperbacks, a British publisher of Highsmith’s in the 1970s, dispensed entirely with the matter of short biographical sketches, instead preferring to fill the first page of their reissues with particularly suspenseful excerpts from the book-in-hand. From Hamlyn’s copy of *The Blunderer* comes this gripping passage: ‘He looked around in the dark, listening. He heard no sound except the chanting whir of insects, the quick purr of a car speeding by on the highway… He was quite sure she was dead.’ While it may be easy to link and thus discard this effacement of Highsmith’s biographical information with the pulpy, low-quality editions of Hamlyn, it is more interesting to view the publisher’s paratext here as vindicating Highsmith from biographical readings of her fiction. Hamlyn present the novel as speaking for itself, not in need of biographical flourishes (list of prizes won, education) to create the aura of prestige for the text that lies within. The link to *The Price of Salt* is instructive here because, unwittingly, Hamlyn partially recreates a pseudonymous environment for Highsmith that the author adopted when publishing her lesbian pulp classic in 1952 (*The Price of Salt* was initially published under the nom de plume Claire Morgan). At the risk of reductively wishing for the Barthesian dream of a post-author critical practice, I have paused to explore how *The Saint Mystery Magazine* and Hamlyn variously biographised and de-biographised Highsmith because it offers a new way for literary scholars to conceive of this overlooked aspect of the paratext.

Casting these paratexts into stark relief, Norton’s performance of prestige is a reversal of the tacit Bourdieuvian rules of the game: the quality of effortless cultivation is entirely absent, thus landing the publisher in firm middlebrow territory. I want to suggest that Norton’s role as culture arbiter in compiling revered anthologies of literary production clashes with their paratextual presentation of a ‘canonical’ Highsmith. Part of the liberal pluralist critique of the canon since the culture wars of the 1980s and 1990s, a key feature of

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Norton’s revered anthologies has been to act an inclusionary agent for writers who fall outside the dry parameters of canonicity, indexed by the publisher’s biographical gloss of Highsmith. Or at least, that is the kind of damaging and passé narrative of the stereotypical (read: white, male, educated) canonical author that Norton’s anthologies work against.

Norton’s capacity for misrepresentation is ironically part of the publisher’s canonical project to present the definitive Highsmith, biographically and textually. Given that the very idea of reissues/reprints and updated editions of texts serves to disrupt the rationale of a publisher claiming to offer a singular, unique Highsmith, I want to stress how this latent ambivalence acts as a core part of the newly canonised. Of all Highsmith’s fictional efforts, by far the novel with the most interesting publication history is *The Price of Salt*. While carefully documented by others, the key points of this history are worth repeating briefly. Originally published in hardcover by Coward McCann in 1952 under the pseudonym Claire Morgan, the novel sold poorly, before it was reissued as a lesbian pulp paperback by Bantam the following year where it was distributed in drugstores, bus terminals, and magazine stands and sold an estimated million copies. Out of print for a few decades, *The Price of Salt* was then reissued by Naiad Press, a company dedicated to publishing lesbian literature, in 1984, before it was printed by the English publisher Bloomsbury as *Carol* in 1990 under Highsmith’s own name.24 If one reflects that there had been a four-decades long mystery as to who the author of the novel was, and that Virago and Bloomsbury among others have published the text as *Carol*, it may come as some relief to see in the top left hand corner of Norton’s 2004 paperback of *The Price of Salt* the sacred notice that reads, in caps-lock, ‘THE AUTHORIZED EDITION.’ Biographer Andrew Wilson has tracked how Highsmith made agonising corrections (small punctuation changes and word swaps) to the various Naiad Press

reissues dating from 1984.\textsuperscript{25} Norton, however, do not provide any supplementary information that could be used to verify such a grandiose claim. Indeed, Norton’s edition claims that \textit{The Price of Salt} was ‘[f]irst published in the USA by The Naiad Press, Tallahassee, FL, in 1952,’ which is blatantly false, and obscures the fact that, to Highsmith’s pleasure, the novel was originally released by one of the ‘traditional hardback publishers,’ Coward McCann, of the midcentury period.\textsuperscript{26}

It must be said that Norton have been relatively late to the table in printing Highsmith’s fiction. This fact, when thought of in conjunction with the academy’s craving for up-to-date, scholarly issues of texts, and the perceived prestige of Norton, allows the publisher to act as the grantor of definitiveness to Highsmith’s novels and short stories.\textsuperscript{27} There is also the ethical matter of whether to issue Highsmith’s novel under the title of \textit{The Price of Salt} or alternatively \textit{Carol}. Placing the text’s dual titles in historical context make this matter more legible. The novel’s initial publication in 1952 during the ‘lavender scare’ meant that Highsmith, to avoid a career-ending scandal, had to assume a pseudonym to release \textit{The Price of Salt}. In 1990, in a post-Stonewall world though at the height of the AIDS epidemic, Highsmith simultaneously chose the new title, \textit{Carol}, for Bloomsbury and revealed herself, after much speculation, as the author of the lesbian pulp, revered by book critics as a ‘forgotten’ Highsmith classic.\textsuperscript{28} The problem for publishers, then, rather than a mere

\textsuperscript{25} Wilson, \textit{Beautiful Shadow}, 396-97.
\textsuperscript{27} Norton first published a Highsmith text in 2001, pipped by both Bloomsbury (1990) and Vintage (1999).
\textsuperscript{28} Wilson notes how mainstream reviews of \textit{Carol} emphasised (and partly romanticised) the ‘forgotten’ status of Highsmith’s lesbian pulp novel. See \textit{Beautiful Shadow}, 442. The lesbian foundation that underpins a significant part of Highsmith’s canonisation is largely due to the work of Harrison, \textit{Patricia Highsmith, ‘The Gay and Lesbian Novels,’} 97-116. As the 1990 Bloomsbury ‘reveal’ of Highsmith as the author of \textit{The Price of Salt} suggests (a textual ‘coming out’ for Highsmith), however, discussion in newspapers and magazines about Highsmith’s sexual identity sparked what became the later, mostly posthumous, lesbian scholarship that officially canonized the author. Indeed, it could be argued that the political urgency of this queer reclamation of Highsmith
technical matter, becomes a difficult question that fuses the paratextual, the ideological, the historical, and the canonical: to opt for the redemptive narrative of Carol and its contours of queer ownership in the public sphere, or instead to present the text as a lesbian cult classic in its original guise as The Price of Salt, ‘the novel of a love society forbids’?29

Genette’s classificatory skill provides the basic tools for a conversation about how paratexts inform ‘the complex mediation between book, author, publisher, and reader,’ though it does comparatively little to broker a broader debate about authority and power struggles amongst publishing houses in their paratextual gambits.30 Norton are not just presenting their edition of The Price of Salt as authoritative but granting themselves the power to perform the authorising function, a troubling, self-fulfilling cycle that requires examination.31 Taking a glance at the ostensibly slight changes to the front cover of The Price of Salt Norton effected in 2015 makes this matter more legible. Norton’s reissue of the novel was published in 2004, and the changes do not technically qualify as a new reissue of The Price of Salt, though the paratextual alterations in the reprint are revealing (see images 2 and 3 below).

during the harshest years of the AIDS epidemic, rather than simply the fact of her death, laid the groundwork for the canonisation of Highsmith as a specifically ‘queer’ author, a process that has culminated with Todd Haynes’ film adaptation of Carol (2015).
29 This last quote is on the top part of the front cover of Bantam’s pulp reissue.
30 Genette, Paratexts, unnumbered first page.
31 The power to grant the authorising function is what Genette, following philosophers of language, calls ‘the illocutionary force’ of a paratextual element. See Paratexts, 8, 12.
The appearance in the top-left hand corner of image 3 of the aforementioned ‘AUTHORIZED EDITION’ tag serves as a perfect example of what Genette describes as paratextual intermittency. As he writes: ‘If… a paratextual element may appear at any time, it may also disappear, definitively or not, by authorial decision or outside intervention… The duration of the paratext is often intermittent, therefore, and this intermittence, which I will speak of again, is very closely linked to the basically functional nature of the paratext.’

Given that Diogenes Verlag, the Swiss publisher who own the worldwide rights to Highsmith’s fiction, do not have a commercial relationship with Norton, and there is absolutely no discernible textual difference between the publisher’s 2004 and 2015 copies of

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32 Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation. (6-7; italics added).
The Price of Salt, a bitter dose of cynicism is required here. What changed between 2004 and 2015 to explain Norton’s claim to producing an authoritative Highsmith? The answer is that the Highsmith market has become oversaturated, with a variety of publishers picking up on the author’s burgeoning canonicity; and relatedly, in 2015 Todd Haynes released a critically acclaimed film adaptation of Carol that has ramped up the competition between Highsmith’s reissuers, hence the bright pink text bubble that appears in the middle of the jacket, ‘NOW A MAJOR MOTION PICTURE.’33 One suspects that the intended effect is to cast explicit film tie-ins—like Bloomsbury’s reissue, which features close-ups of the actors Cate Blanchett (Carol) and Rooney Mara (Therese)—as bowdlerisations, a type of pseudo-currency in the Highsmith market.34

Built into the logic of presenting The Price of Salt as the ‘AUTHORIZED EDITION,’ therefore, is a paratextual strategy of devaluation. Thinking intertextually, what does this do to the broadly comparable editions recently brought out by Penguin, Bloomsbury, and Dover on the one hand, and the scarcity-value of Bantam’s 1952 ‘classic’ lesbian pulp paperback on the other hand? If Norton’s copy is hallowed as the official text, then the publisher’s competitors who have likewise reissued the novel—whose Highsmith books sit in competition with Norton’s in bookstores—are in a concurrent act deauthorised. Indeed, the publisher’s claim of producing ‘THE AUTHORIZED EDITION’ of The Price of Salt belies the contradiction between what Genette terms ‘the peremptory potential of the paratext’ and his assertion that ‘the paratextual element is always subordinate to “its” text.’35 Reorganising Genette’s cluttered thoughts, I want to highlight here how Genette maintains an essentially

34 The historical irony of this is apparent when one considers that the publisher of Highsmith’s Strangers on a Train, Harper & Brothers, rejected the novel in 1951, precisely because its racy subject matter had not been subjected to expurgation.
35 Gérard Genette, Paratexts, 11-12. This contradiction is all the more glaring when one considers that Genette begins Paratexts by referencing French theorist Phillipe Lejeune, for whom the paratext is “a fringe of the printed text which in reality controls one’s whole reading of the text” (2).
agnostic viewpoint on the nature of the paratext. For Genette, the paratext is ‘subordinate to “its” text’ to the extent that the paratext provides the foundation for a reading of the text.\textsuperscript{36} The paratext does the benign, preparatory work for the real task ahead: making conducive a reading of the text itself. It would be far more accurate to say, rather, that ‘the peremptory potential of the paratext’ organises a basis for a reading of the text that privileges—or coheres with—the paratext itself, principally the marketing information displayed on book jackets. In effect, one reads authority into the text: Norton’s typeface, cover photograph, typology, running heads, and so on, become authoritative textual properties of the book we call \textit{The Price of Salt}.

It is useful to view this power struggle between competing publishing houses as the next episode in the historical practice of ‘dressing the rack,’ where mid-century publishers ensured that their products featured all relevant, eye-catching material in the top half of the book cover, because the wooden devices used to present texts in bookstores cut off the lower half of the text from view.\textsuperscript{37} Significantly, many midcentury paperback publishers—including

\textsuperscript{36} Genette does not go into specifics on the type of reading that paratexts produce; that is, he does not historicise his reader. The question of what type of paratexts mould certain kinds of reading experiences is dialectically linked to the question of what kinds of readers buy which editions of a text. This is very much to fuse Genette in the first instance with Bourdieu in the second. Perhaps, as in the case of Norton’s \textit{The Price of Salt}, a paratext is marketed to professors because of its authoritative status. The undergraduate student then owns or has borrowed a copy of Norton’s Highsmith. Yet this narrative is complicated by the fact that specific acts of consumption of books are not entirely hemmed in by the usefulness or even the authority of the text. While the authoritative nature of Norton’s \textit{Price of Salt} is a potential selling point, with Bourdieu in mind we can assert that the varying scales of cultural capital afforded to each reissue of the novel are also a key factor in which Highsmith text will be bought and which will not. The compact and glossy orange Penguin Classics are a case in point here. Originally perceived as rather low-quality editions of great works, the orange Penguin Classics now afford cultural capital to students and those culturally-passing as well-read.

\textsuperscript{37} Schreuders, \textit{Paperbacks, U.S.A}, 103-04. While bookshops often carry many publishers’ copies of the same novel, it is worth noting that this push for legitimacy by Norton perhaps works best for consumers on sites like Amazon or bookdepository, mainly because the search results these companies offer for \textit{The Price of Salt} or \textit{Carol} present multiple editions and reissues of the novel. While this breadth offers greater consumer choice, it also puts publishers in greater competition with one another. It would be a worthwhile, though somewhat unwieldy, investigation to chart how the paratextual apparatus has altered with the advent of online booksellers, specifically those that host a broad range of editions, rather than single-company online stores (such as Norton’s online shopping section).
Bantam, and their famous reissue of *The Price of Salt*—largely contained the label ‘Complete and Unabridged’ on the lower part of the front or back cover, an attempt to ward off the threat from hardcover publishers of their unauthoritative status. ‘Complete and Unabridged,’ the muted battle cry of Avon Books, Pocket Books, and Bantam, among others, serves as the historical precursor to Norton’s ‘AUTHORIZED EDITION.’ The reason is that *The Price of Salt*’s publishing journey has been so untraditional, weaving its way from hardcover at Coward-McCann, to lesbian pulp at Bantam, through numerous reissuers at the borders of prestige (Vintage, Virago, Bloomsbury), and back to paperback at Norton. This liminal quality of *The Price of Salt*, a bane to Highsmith from the beginning of her career, persists, like the practice of ‘dressing the rack,’ to contemporary anthologies. Katherine V. Forrest’s 2005 anthology, *Lesbian Pulp Fiction* contains the following lament, which is worth quoting in full:

Since the intent (and title) of the collection is *Lesbian Pulp Fiction*, the decision to do it justice by confining the selections to books published as *original paperbacks* seemed obvious. *Hardcover fiction could be its own separately rewarding venture*, at another time. To my dismay, the decision immediately led to the first major omission, the beloved classic novel *The Price of Salt* by Patricia Highsmith, written under the pseudonym Claire Morgan. Some of us (including myself) first found and read it in paperback; but its initial 1952 publication was in hardcover from Coward-McCann.38

Given the difficult task of demarcating the boundaries of an anthology, Forrest’s decision is understandable, though it does point to how the current, rather blurry apportionments of

cultural value to hardcovers and paperbacks can inform a discussion of publishers’ relative vies for cultural authority in the early twenty-first century publishing market. Genette saw this matter quite clearly, recognising that while ‘the pocket edition will long be synonymous with canonization,’ the paperback is ‘capable of connoting equally well a work’s “popular” nature or its admission into the pantheon of classics.’ While one might be cautious about establishing a false dichotomy between the popular and the canonical, it is worth recalling that the paperback revolution began in the midcentury years with the aim of ‘republish[ing] ancient or modern classics at low prices for use by a basically “university” public – that is, undergraduates.’

It is critical then to view Dwight Macdonald’s diagnosis of the middlebrow as ‘High Culture when it has been stamped PRIME QUALITY by the proper authorities’ as implicitly registering the massive expansion in university education in the postwar years by way of the paperbacking of American literature. Depending on one’s point of view, Highsmith had the misfortune, or the blessing, of writing into this climate when the phenomenon of paperbacks caused a shockwave to conservative cultural critics like Macdonald, eliciting the kind of fanatical responses common to an era that produced McCarthyism and the lavender scare. Forrest’s anthology of Lesbian Pulp Fiction suggests how being caught between the hardcover and the paperback has posthumously impacted Highsmith. Indeed, Forrest’s decision to exclude The Price of Salt from the anthology indicates the residual power of narratives of textual purity.

And yet, conversely, the hardcover itself now no longer functions as the guarantor of unquestioned cultural status. Consistent with the continued growth of university education in the early twenty-first century, the costs associated with producing hardcover editions and

40 Anna Creadick, ‘Gendered Terrain,’ *Post45*. 
then asking students to foot the bill in order to acquire the texts on undergraduate course lists is financially and logistically impractical, as it was in the early postwar era.\textsuperscript{41} Paperbacking, and now ebooks, are de rigueur; hardcovers are durable but unwieldy, and in the fiction market have assumed a quaint, collector’s vibe, as indexed by the following statement from Penguin regarding one of their new Clothbound Classics series:

\begin{quote}
2012 is the two-hundredth anniversary of the birth of one of our greatest and most important novelists, Charles Dickens. To celebrate we’re publishing six of his works in this exclusive and sumptuous boxed set of lavish, clothbound editions, designed by Penguin's own award-winning Coralie Bickford-Smith. Part of Penguin's beautiful hardback Clothbound Classics series, designed by the award-winning Coralie Bickford-Smith, these delectable and collectible editions are bound in high-quality colourful, tactile cloth with foil stamped into the design.\textsuperscript{42}
\end{quote}

‘Sumptuous’ and ‘lavish’ are not quite the right adjectives one would use to describe the lurid and racy covers of postwar pulps like \textit{The Price of Salt}, though it is interesting to note how the beautification of hardcovers functions as a key selling point in the contemporary publishing market. The purportedly shocking cover images of postwar pulps can be seen as visually inducing similar consumer desires to ‘delectable’ twenty-first century hardcovers, though for different reasons. It is vital to recognise that while conservative fears of the overzealous consumption of paperbacks and pulps took hold at midcentury, the middleclass practice of purchasing hardcovers as mere status objects likewise caused much concern.\textsuperscript{43}


\textsuperscript{42} Sourced at https://www.penguin.co.uk/books/182961/major-works-of-charles-dickens-boxed-set/.

\textsuperscript{43} One recalls the ‘stout, middle-aged man with enormous owl-eyed spectacles’ in \textit{The Great Gatsby}, who reacts with surprise that the books on James Gatz’s shelves are ‘absolutely real’ and not ‘a nice
Voraciously devoured pulps and unread hardbacks register the poverty of taste and the performance of culture, respectively.

Hitherto unrecognised by scholars, Highsmith’s 1950s fiction registers these concerns with postwar reading and publishing practices. While her work was always first published in hardcover, the pulpy associations of the suspense/thriller genre Highsmith wrote within gave her a unique vantage point to comment on the postwar publishing industry and anxieties surrounding middle-class cultural pretensions. Caught in the middle of the shifts caused by the paperback revolution, Highsmith jostled with the paratextual label of her ‘Harper Novels of Suspense’ and subversively worked into her fiction a conservative defence of the hardcover form. In *The Price of Salt*, slightly before the events of the novel proper, Therese recalls with shame her short stint at the Pelican Press, an imprint of Penguin Books that published non-fiction paperbacks.

Therese remembered being fired from the Pelican Press a month ago, and she winced. They hadn’t even given her notice, and the only reason she had been fired, she supposed, was that her particular research assignment had been finished. When she had gone in to speak to Mr. Nussbaum, the president, about not being given notice, he had not known, or had pretended not to know, what the term meant. “Notiz?—Wuss?” he had said indifferently, and she had turned and fled, afraid of bursting into tears in his office.44

The cruelty of the president and Pelican’s ability to induce in Therese a sense of corporate alienation is implicitly played off against the company’s aim to, in their own words, ‘satisfy durable cardboard.’ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, ebook accessed at http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks02/0200041h.html.

specific American requirements through the publication of books of an authoritative kind by the best-qualified authors.'

In *Deep Water* (see image 4), Highsmith mischievously ties her protagonist’s ability to avoid incrimination for the perpetration of multiple murders to the respectability of his prestigious hardcover publishing company. Vic Van Allen, the murderer of one of his wife’s multiple suitors, manages to sidestep suspicion for the horrific crime, despite the valid protestations of his grieving spouse, when the coroner cheerfully notes the existence of the Greenspur Press.

There was a friendly warmth in the coroner’s eyes as he looked at Vic. “Mr. Van Allen, I believe you’re the owner of the Greenspur Press in Little Wesley, aren’t you?”

“Yes,” Vic said.

“A very fine press. I’ve heard of it,” he said, smiling, as if it were a foregone conclusion that every literate person in that section of Massachusetts had heard of the Greenspur Press… “I declare this inquest closed with a verdict of death due to accidental circumstances.”

In opposition to the rapid production pace of paperback publishers, Vic is meticulous and ‘proud of the fact that it usually took the Greenspur Press five days to set ten pages.’

Printing just four books a year, Highsmith links Vic’s extreme selectivity to the craftsmanship and prestige of the embattled hardcover industry. While his small company is losing money, Vic relishes the fact that ‘[i]n a distinguished publisher’s annual that came out in June, the Greenspur Press of Little Wesley, Massachusetts, was cited for “typography, fine

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45 Cited in Schreuders, *Paperbacks*, 45. Early paperback titles from Pelican included a reissue of Sigmund Freud’s *Totem and Taboo* and Walter Lippman’s *Public Opinion*.


workmanship, and general excellence,” a tribute Vic valued more than any material success that could have come to him.\textsuperscript{48} It is no coincidence that Vic’s arch-nemesis in \textit{Deep Water}, Don Wilson, is ‘a hack,’ the undiscriminating author of a prolific number of ‘western stories, detective stories, [and] love stories’—thinly disguised postwar code for pulp trash.\textsuperscript{49} Most telling of all, Vic’s eventual murder of his wife, Melissa, is due in equal parts to her adultery and complete lack of interest in the beautiful designs Vic contemplates for his limited print run (100 copies) of Xenophon’s \textit{Country Life and Economics}, which it is necessary to quote at length:

Vic had tried to interest Melinda in two designs he had brought with him one afternoon, both Blair Peabody’s, for the cover of Xenophon’s \textit{Country Life and Economics}. Blair Peabody, a leather worker whose shop was in a barn in Connecticut, had done the tooling on all the leather-bound books that Vic had published. These two designs of Blair’s were based on Greek architectural motifs, one somewhat more decorative and less masculine than the other, both beautiful in Vic’s opinion, and he had thought Melinda would enjoy choosing between the two, but he had hardly been able to make her look at them for five seconds. For politeness’ sake, which was really to insult him by its carelessness, she had expressed a preference for one over the other. Vic had been crushed and wordless for several moments. It surprised him sometimes to find how much Melinda could hurt him when she wanted to.\textsuperscript{50}

Likewise, in \textit{The Blunderer} (1954), the cuckold Melchior Kimmel loathes his wife because ‘out of sheer malice’ she bins his expensive, second-hand set of the \textit{Encyclopaedia Britannica}.\textsuperscript{51} Highsmith takes the generic material afforded her by the suspense genre—

\textsuperscript{48} Highsmith, \textit{Deep Water}, 53.
\textsuperscript{49} Highsmith, \textit{Deep Water}, 56.
\textsuperscript{50} Highsmith, \textit{Deep Water}, 49-50.
\textsuperscript{51} Highsmith, \textit{The Blunderer}, 212.
murder, psychological tug-of-wars, sociopathy—and fashions it into plots that speak to cultural fears concerning the growth of pulp fiction and turn on the traditional respectability of the hardcover.

It is crucial to recognise, however, that Highsmith’s anti-paperback defence of the hardcover is not simple middle- or upper-middle class posturing, the display of beautiful volumes as status objects that remain unread. Highsmith’s characters are avid, intelligent readers. In The Price of Salt, Therese decides not to buy Carol a ‘leather-bound book’ costing ‘twenty-five dollars’ because she doubts that her lover will read ‘a book of love poems of the Middle Ages.’ The usefulness of the book, the knowledge it contains and enfolds, trumps the beauty of ‘the edges of the pages that were like a concave bar of gold.’ As Highsmith’s most famous creation, Tom Ripley, muses, her characters are after ‘[n]ot ostentation but quality, and the love that cherished the quality.’

Given Highsmith’s poor sales in the US throughout her lifetime, her fiction’s self-reflexive commenting on the book’s means of production—cover art, leather bindings, paper quality—functions as a form of indirect self-marketing, pushing the value of her texts as hardcovers in spite of her associations with the pulpy suspense genre. This reading coheres with what Evan Brier has called midcentury authors’ role as ‘cocreators of a promotional pitch’ in marketing the cultural value of the novel itself, beset by the television age and other competing products of mass culture. What does it mean when a novel specifically asks to be read as a hardcover, particularly given Highsmith’s self-posturing investment in the format? Furthermore, it is one thing for Highsmith’s 1950s fictions to ask to be read as hardcovers at the time of their release, in a publishing culture adapting to the benefits of paper backing, but

52 Highsmith, The Price of Salt, 76.
54 For Highsmith’s lack of sales in the USA during her lifetime, see Schenkar, The Talented Miss Highsmith, 24.
it is another to read her novels today, when the hardcover is a rarer object and the
instantaneous paperback release is standard operating procedure for publishers. Reading
Deep Water or The Price of Salt in hardcover editions offers a reading experience that
coheres with Highsmith’s self-fashioning as a serious novelist—that is, a writer whose work
is literally bound by the hardcover and its aura of respectability. Reading these same 1950s
novels in paperback means that the texts are at odds with themselves, battling their own
paperback covers.

Norton have hedged their bets in their reissues of Highsmith, choosing to publish most of
the author’s fiction in paperback, while releasing a select few books in demure hardcover
editions.36 This same in-betweenness is to be found in the size of Norton’s Highsmith
paperbacks, 5.6 × 8.3 inches, slightly larger than most paperbacks and thus not able to
actually fit in one’s pocket—the idea of the ‘pocket edition.’ It is reasonable to assume that
Highsmith would have found the Norton paperback of The Price of Salt and its self-
fashioning as ‘THE AUTHORIZED EDITION’ as a contradiction in terms. Yet at the same
time, Norton’s flawed push for authoritative status is rather Highsmithian. Norton’s
recognised capital in the market of university textbooks likewise clashes with an author who
craved more readers (particularly American ones, because of the market potential), yet in her
novels viewed prestige as the domain of the limited print run, the rare copy. From Guillory’s
perspective, re-issuing Highsmith’s fiction in paperback for twenty-first century
undergraduates is essential to the process of early canon-formation, yet canonicity itself

36 Norton’s hardcover Highsmith texts are Nothing That Meets the Eye: The Uncollected Stories of
Patricia Highsmith; Patricia Highsmith: Selected Novels and Short Stories; The Selected Stories of
Patricia Highsmith, and; The Complete Ripley Novels. The Library of America have recently included
a couple of Highsmith novels in two clothbound compilations, featuring The Talented Mr. Ripley in
Crime Novels: American Noir of the 1950s (2014) and The Blunderer in Women Crime Writers: Eight
Suspense Novels of the 1940s and 1950s (2015). Also notable is Modern Library’s slightly odd trilogy
of Ripley novels (the Ripley series is a quintet) issued as a hardcover.
clashes with Macdonald’s idea of the middlebrow as ‘High Culture when it has been stamped PRIME QUALITY by the proper authorities.’

At a critical moment when several prominent scholars of the middlebrow are engaged in ‘construct[ing] a tentative “canon of the middlebrow,”’ expanding the definition of the middlebrow to the site of paratextual dynamics is a necessary task. It would be a mistake, however for this canon to merely catalogue certain key middlebrow authors, resorting to the game of inclusion and exclusion, who is on the list and who is off it. (A cursory look at recent middlebrow scholarship indicates that Grace Metalious, author of the notorious mid-century bestseller Peyton Place, would be at the top of any list purporting to represent canonical middlebrow authors. Other notable figures include James Michener, Jonathan Franzen, and Harper Lee.) A preliminary task in constructing a canon of the middlebrow is inherently self-reflexive: it consists in investigating aspects of middlebrow-ism in the process of canonicity itself. Not only might this produce authors not automatically tied in the scholarly imagination to middlebrow fiction (for example, Highsmith), it offers scholars a more flexible approach to the issue of periodisation. Important scholarly work on the middlebrow has tended to situate the middlebrow into discrete historical periods, and for important reasons. Monographs on ‘the battle of the brows’ track the emergence and development of the middlebrow in the middle decades of twentieth-century, while Beth Driscoll has honed in on the specific qualities of the twenty-first century middlebrow. As the case of Highsmith and Norton demonstrates, however, the middlebrow might be productively found in the tensions between these two periods, the 1950s and the 2000s, comparing and contrasting the

58 Cite multiple articles here. Note as well that Perrin has argued Macdonald himself is quintessentially middlebrow.
author’s and publisher’s respective posturings for cultural authority. The process of early-canon formation Highsmith has undergone in the last two decades, re-issued en masse and reproduced in university seminars, draws out how two historical versions of the middlebrow clash with each other. What Highsmith conceived of as proof of her status as a serious novelist, being read in and understood through the hardcover format, does not quite gel with early twenty-first-century respectability, when the division between the paperback and the hardcover has lost its ability to function as a litmus test for cultural prestige.

Lifting the middlebrow from discrete historical periods allows scholars to conceive of the middlebrow as a supple aspect of cultural production. Indeed, tracing the cross-traffic between one historical version of the middlebrow and another’s highlights each era’s specific conceptions of cultural prestige. This analysis provides one answer to what has been called the ‘false dichotomy’ erected by middlebrow scholars: is the middlebrow an ‘aesthetic’ or essentialist quality, unvarying across time, or is it rather ‘a position in the cultural field that could be filled by any work of art, depending on the cultural politics of the time’? The middlebrow (or perhaps we should say middlebrows) is least useful when limited to such either/or logic. The benefit of recalibrating the middlebrow as the communication breakdown between one historical version of prestige and another is a more nuanced image of the relationship linking canonicity and the middlebrow.

It is telling how keenly aware Highsmith was of the method in which prestige and canonicity are conveyed to readers. It is unfortunate, though not surprising, that Macdonald cordoned off the middlebrow from the texts of the so-called culture industry. The middlebrow ‘is not, as might appear at first, a raising of the level of Masscult [mass

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60 The task is aided by the fact that Highsmith was absent from the academy for decades, thus the publishers re-issuing the author can be said to recover Highsmith from critical neglect.
Consistent with New Critical snootiness and the postwar love affair with hierarchisation, Macdonald was keen on relegating to the sphere of mass culture as many cultural products as possible (including genre fiction) from the category of the middlebrow. Yet the nascent canonicity of Highsmith proves that there is potential for suspense fiction to be conceptualised in the terrain of the middlebrow.

An indirect part of the project of ‘opening the canon’ to neglected and excluded writers, Highsmith’s critical fortunes have benefitted from the culture wars of the 1980s and 1990s. The mission of cultural studies to include as curricular objects instances of mass culture has meant Highsmith’s suspense fiction has found a scholarly audience. Macdonald’s disdain for academicism, however, has been superseded by the astonishing growth in the academy and its capacity to canonise texts, specifically those at which Macdonald would have cringed. As a way of rounding out this chapter on marketing canonicity, it is worth noting that this historical reversal in prevailing critical outlooks has not eradicated certain prejudices in the wider literary marketplace. Eschewing the traditional few blank pages of most books, Norton’s reissues of Highsmith feature a series of short critical comments (or blurbs) in praise of the author, excerpted from longer reviews. Thus, Joan Smith of the Los Angeles Times, “[Highsmith] is no more a practitioner of the murder mystery genre… than are Dostoevsky, Faulkner and Camus.” Similarly, the Cleveland Plain Dealer states that “Patricia Highsmith is often called a mystery or crime writer, which is a bit like calling Picasso a draftsman.” The paradox is that these critical judgements revivify the New Critical aspersion to pulp forms and crime fiction that Highsmith experienced in the publishing climate of the postwar period in the very act of trying to strip Highsmith of such generic associations. Simultaneous with the scholarly act of expanding definitions of the literary to writers working within popular genres, Highsmith is carefully clipped of her lowly crime

fiction roots by these reviews. We might also see here the real-time lag between the scholarly consensus on the importance of including as curricular objects slices of popular culture, and extramural publishing venues and book reviewers whose critical outlook views mystery fiction and crime writing as residing outside the domain of serious literary speculation. The residual force of New Critical aesthetic priorities and Dwight Macdonald is still felt in modern publishing culture, then.

Norton are caught between these two forces, a fact which has remained veiled up till this point because the publisher both physically represents Highsmith’s canonical status and is complicit in forging it. We arrive then at a view of the middlebrow that focuses on misdirected performances of authority in the literary marketplace, a view that is capable of holding different eras’ conceptions of cultural prestige in its grasp.
Postscript

What have we learned? And what are some productive directions for future scholarship? For one, a recuperation of material artefacts that lie outside the traditional ‘linguistic codes’ of the text reveals the middlebrow ambitions of Highsmith.¹ Claims that Highsmith’s fiction demonstrates a ‘disavowal’ of ‘middlebrow values’ are therefore out of keeping with the reinvigorated material turn of the humanities in recent years, and neglect the visible traces of her fight to gain a middlebrow audience in midcentury periodicals.²

Highsmith’s repeated attempts to grace the pages of The New York revealed her hidden investment in the liberal doctrine of persistence, while the fiction she wrote subversively undercut the liberal ideals of the magazine’s postwar readership. Highsmith’s desire to locate a middlebrow readership in the US for her subversive suspense fiction then took us to the abridgements she wrote for Cosmopolitan. In her three abridgements for Cosmopolitan, Highsmith had a second chance to connect with the magazine’s shifting women’s audience across the 1950s and 1960s. Nevertheless, ‘The Blunderer,’ ‘A Mask of Innocence,’ and ‘Those Who Walk Away’ variously managed to both speak to and vilify Cosmopolitan’s postwar women’s readership. Finally, we analysed Norton’s posthumous reissues of Highsmith’s fiction, specifically the way in which the publisher has given Highsmith a canonical makeover via the deceptive use of paratexts. Norton’s awkward attempts to elevate Highsmith’s suspense fiction into ‘literary’ territory demonstrated a curious kind of

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middlebrowism. Norton’s posthumous reissues of Highsmith’s novels provided a space to explore the precise relations between circulation and canonicity apropos of the middlebrow.

Woven throughout the dissertation have been ongoing concerns with materiality and canonicity. The hitherto unrecognised material traces of Highsmith’s presence in the postwar literary marketplace sharply illustrate her middlebrow ambitions. Yet these material traces—rejection slips, abridgements, and book covers—provide both clues and red herrings as to the narratives surrounding Highsmith’s canonical status. If on the one hand Highsmith’s fiction printed in Cosmopolitan provides the initial seed for her current standing as a classic woman writer, then Highsmith’s legendary subversiveness is belied by her ongoing efforts to grace the pages of the relatively staid postwar New Yorker. The study of materiality, then, both coheres with and disrupts firmly embedded canonical accounts of Highsmith.

If, as per Peters, this dissertation has attempted a certain ‘dislocation of Highsmith vis-à-vis the crime fiction genre,’ it has also tried to explore the fruitful space between suspense writing and the middlebrow.\(^3\) The other crime-fiction authors mentioned in the introduction to this dissertation—Elisabeth Sanxay Holding, Helen Eustis, and Vera Caspary—provide a starting point for a broader examination of the relationship of pulp and prestige, suspense and the middlebrow. How might the materials brought to bear on the present study, namely rejection slips, abridgements, and book covers, aid in a reconceptualised perspective of these midcentury crime authors? What were the marketplace strategies, networks of influence, authorial intransigencies and compromises that variously kept these writers in the pulps or allowed them to ascend to more respected publishing outlets? How might the conversation concerning gender and the middlebrow be reoriented via the study of these women suspense authors? I leave such work to future scholars.

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Certainly, the methodological resources marshalled for this dissertation provide new tools for a more expansive view of the middlebrow. Salvaging rejection slips—whether culled from the publishers of periodicals and books, authors’ diaries, literary agents’ papers, or all three—allows literary critics and cultural historians the opportunity to see the market intentions and vivid failures of authors more clearly. At a basic level, rejection slips connect with new and exciting scholarship on the processes of the midcentury literary marketplace. If this dissertation has gone some way in exploring the alternate trajectories of rejected manuscripts, it has not attempted to analyse how matters of oversupply shape the critical language currently used to articulate categories of taste, like highbrow, middlebrow, and lowbrow. Abridgements, born centuries earlier though undergoing a boom in demand in the midcentury decades, likewise provide a fruitful resource for middlebrow scholars. A reaction to the glut of reading material occasioned by the paperback revolution, abridgements held a particularly strong appeal for the middlebrow public, condensing pertinent material for the time-pressed reader. While for more famous authors in the midcentury years abridgements confirmed rather than coined middlebrow status, lesser-known figures like Highsmith resorted to practices of cutting and condensing to reach a middlebrow audience. There is much work to be done on the midcentury publishing outlets that regularly featured abridgements, particularly Cosmopolitan, Omnibook magazine, and The Reader’s Digest Condensed Book Club. The readers, editors, abridgers, and marketers of novel condensations remain relatively invisible in literary studies.


5 Often texts were rejected by publishers and editors simply because of the economic mechanics of supply and demand: a rejection slip for James Salter’s ‘The Cowboys’ from The New Yorker praises the short story before lamenting that ‘our reluctant decision to turn it down was really determined by the fact that we have far too many stories in hand at present.’ See rejection slip from C.M. Newman to Salter for ‘The Cowboys,’ June 11, 1970, New Yorker archives, box 851, folder 16.
The relatively new canonisation of Highsmith, indexed by book covers, reissues, and film adaptations, combined with her appearance on popular podcasts and university syllabi, has had the effect of simplifying, and therefore, distorting, her manoeuvres in the postwar literary marketplace. Rather than an egregiously neglected author miraculously resurrected by canonical authorities, a writer entirely absent from the literary scene, Highsmith tirelessly immersed herself in the postwar literary marketplace. Future Highsmith scholars would do well to remember it.
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