CHAPTER FOUR

Advertising Novels as Cultural Critique: Dry Martinis, Rare Steaks, and Willing Women

Best-Selling Criticism

Between 1946 and 1960, advertising industry insiders wrote and published at least twenty-three novels set in advertising agencies and eight others that took up allied institutions like television stations and public relations firms.[1] These novels presented a sustained critique of mass culture written by the forward scouts of the culture of consumption, those who worked in advertising, broadcasting, marketing, and public relations. *Time* magazine conflated the conformist ad agency employees, and their seeming opposites, when it headlined one review "The Drumbeatniks."[2] Like their beatnik brethren, the advertising men who wrote and starred in these novels criticized a culture that promised salvation through consumption and individuality through conformity. The novels, and the films made from them, influenced society's acceptance of advertising and consumption and how individuals thought about their mass cultural lives.

As "apostles of modernity," in Roland Marchand's wonderful description of advertising professionals, the novelists felt keenly what Daniel Horowitz has named the "anxiety of affluence."[3] They had seen a fully commodified future and disliked it intensely. Working to expand the realm of consumption, advertising professionals saw, before most people, the drawbacks to a consumer culture. Their novels outlined the dishonesty of the advertising business and the meaninglessness of advertising as a profession; bemoaned the

conformity of commodified life; and decried the emptiness of consumption. Repeatedly, the novelists questioned the place of the individual in a mass culture, referring to their lives as intellectuals, advertising professionals, and consumers. Their firsthand experience made the admen's descriptions of the dangers ahead more harrowing than that of any scholarly screed.

The advertising novels presented a deeply ambivalent and politically unstable middle-class critique of mass culture. These fictions prove that mass culture had arrived by the 1950s and that even quite skilled cultural producers found opportunities for resistance limited. As managers of the culture of consumption, the ad novelists lived the life constructed by amateur minstrel shows, nylon stocking advertisements, and the government-supported Hollywood film industry. After World II, middle-class Americans recognized an increasingly ubiquitous mass culture, worried about its implications, and began to accept a quite restricted role in its production, becoming primarily consumers.

No one remembers men in gray flannel suits (using the title of one of the most famous novels) as intellectuals. The serious authors of the time, including the members of the Frankfurt School, the New York Intellectuals, social scientists like David Riesman, David Potter, and Vance Packard, as well as the Beat writers, mounted sustained attacks on mass culture, and their work proved important to later critics. Lacking the theoretical and analytical background, particularly in Marxism, of some of the critics whose ideas they shared, the ad novelists worked in a popular fiction form. At least six of the novels appeared on the *New York Times* best-seller list; several became Book-of-the-Month Club selections; Frederic Wakeman's *The Hucksters* was the 1946 number four best-selling novel with total sales of 712,434; Sloan Wilson's *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* was the fifth best-selling novel of 1955 and sold just under 100,000 copies.[4] The popularity and genre of the books may have caused their critique to be overlooked, but the novels explored the impact of mass culture on individuals in personal and moving terms, presenting the same ideas as nonfiction writers to larger audiences.

Neither the well-known social critics nor these lesser-known novelists found either individual or societal solutions to the problems posed by mass culture. All the postwar mass culture critiques remain unsatisfying for their lack of prescriptive answers to the questions they raise. Each of the genres, fiction and nonfiction, had drawbacks as political and economic theories. A comparison of the two helps pinpoint the analytical obstacles each faced as the authors grappled with the new mass culture. Considering the novels as

serious critiques, despite their formulaic aspects, also pinpoints one way popular culture expressed an oppositional ideology. The ideologies previously described upheld the status quo—racial, gender, and national identities constructed through commodified and capitalist goods and entertainment—but the advertising novelists questioned, within limits, the world in which they found themselves and the world they could see coming.

Postwar America, with its increased emphasis on domesticity, a consumption frenzy spurred by the gratification delayed during the Depression and World War II, hypernationalism, and the introduction of new forms of advertising, particularly television, became the incubator of the critique presented by the advertising novelists. The novels themselves proceeded via a number of set pieces with few unusual plot twists or characters. The *Time* review noted in 1958:

> The salient feature of this season's supply of advertising and public-relations fiction, all written more or less from the inside, is that people, plots, and other parts are virtually interchangeable. If ad fiction can become plentiful and anesthetic enough, it may yet rival science fiction; the bug-eyed monsters will be replaced by tyrannical clients, the clean-cut spacemen by bright eyed space-buyers, and the half-dressed blondes by half-dressed blondes.[5]

The novels featured a wide range of fictional genres including melodrama, science fiction, mystery, humorous satire, and paperback original thrillers. Yet each fabricated its plot and characters from a few basic building blocks common to all. Their intertextuality seemingly resulted from authorial awareness of advertising conventions, familiarity with the other novels, and their common critique.

The popular novelistic form brought with it a series of problems for social critics. Novels traditionally focused on the tribulations or journey of an individual and so seemed well suited to take up the important postwar issue of the role of the individual in a mass culture. But, beginning before World War II, novelists who examined the problems of consumption and advertising proposed individual solutions to social problems. The novels' heroes founded their own firms to do advertising "right," moved to smaller cities to open agencies away from the corruption of Madison Avenue, or left advertising altogether for the love of a good woman and the appeal of running a Western ranch or a private school. If the novel's hero changed, the

authors had satisfied the fictional form and had no incentive to propose additional social reform. Although employing the conventions of realism and a repeated set of plots and characters, the advertising novelists complicated their own formula. They addressed issues around individuality by referencing the traditional doubled consciousness of advertising men, who sold to both consumers and clients, and their own double positions as novelists and subjects. Yet citing their realism and the formulaic nature of the novels, book reviewers, as well many within the advertising industry, refused to read these fictions as social critiques and dismissed them as literature.

In addition to the intellectual ferment of the time, Thomas Frank has shown how the corporate community's dissatisfaction with business life and practice in the 1950s contributed to the counterculture of the 1960s.[6] Restlessness on the part of corporate employees, when added to the new rigidity in advertising practice brought on by a reliance on statistical research, paved the way for the so-called Creative Revolution in advertising. These novels also documented the professional unrest of the 1950s and clearly pointed to the ways advertising agencies changed in the 1960s. In fact, the Creative Revolution marked the end of advertising novels. There were virtually none published in the 1960s, and they returned in the 1970s and later primarily in order to have women and people of color take up the roles of the previously white male heroes. Presumably, the Creative Revolution's expansion of the possibilities for how advertising men could behave and work, as well as a growing cultural acceptance of the very mass culture they critiqued, made the novels' form and content less relevant.

None of the critics of mass culture, whether nonfiction writer or novelist, outlined solutions that seemed possible in the 1950s. Despite their lack of a systematic program for change, the social critics had influence. Daniel Horowitz wrote of the nonfiction authors that "popular books spoke to audiences in ways that established the terms of the debates, generated social momentum, and helped define oppositional identities," and the novels performed all those tasks, and reached more people.[7]

A new group of social scientists actually measured the influence of one of the advertising novels. The Rockefeller Foundation funded the Bureau of Applied Social Research (BASR, begun as the Office of Radio Research), headed by Austrian immigrant sociologist Paul Lazarsfeld, to conduct media surveys in the 1940s and 1950s. BASR, with close ties to the Frankfurt intellectuals, served as a base for communications studies scholars whom Kathy Newman has named "audience intellectuals."[8] Lazarsfeld included Frederic

Wakeman's novel *The Hucksters* (1946), as well as the 1947 movie made of the book, in one of his first surveys.[9] Lazarsfeld examined how the novel, which offered a sustained criticism of broadcasting, affected "attitudes toward radio, and especially toward radio advertising."[10] The survey, itself part of the new reliance on numbers in the advertising business, consisted of 3,529 personal interviews with a cross section of the U.S. adult population, and was accurate "within 2 per cent of true opinion." Lazarsfeld found that "those who were exposed to Wakeman's satire on radio advertising are considerably more critical of commercials, even when education is held constant" explaining that "this relationship undoubtedly comes about in a variety of ways: Some people were made more critical by seeing or reading *The Hucksters*; others exposed themselves just because they were more critical." Lazarsfeld concluded that

> The critic who reads *The Hucksters* does not become a critic as a result of this experience, but he most probably becomes more critical. He finds new arguments to bolster his position; he finds new criticism which he had not thought of before; and so on. In other words, his criticism is strengthened and reinforced by his exposure.[11]

Lazarsfeld believed that Wakeman functioned as an intellectual working, within a commodified framework, to reinforce the critique of advertising shared by radio listeners. Lazarsfeld sought the same position for himself, of course, desperately hoping that his work in explaining audience psychology to advertisers had a social purpose beyond expediting the growth of capitalism. The novelists who set their stories in advertising agencies in order to criticize the growing culture of consumption faced the same contradictions as other anticapitalist intellectuals while having at least some influence on the thought of a large number of readers.

Written in a comic tone, Herman Wouk's first novel, completed while he was still in the navy, *Aurora Dawn* (1947), mounted the same critique as Wakeman's *The Hucksters*. Wouk noted in his Preface, "the recent publication of more than one novel intended to expose the inner workings of the advertising industry, which this story may be said to resemble in setting and certain points of detail, though not, surely, in matter or manner."[12] *Aurora Dawn*, a satire in the style of a Fielding romp, featured an advertising agency called Leach and Grovill and a multipage "Oration Against Advertising" delivered by an artist. The plot of *Aurora Dawn* contained points that became

familiar in later advertising novels: the sincere young advertising man, the beautiful model with whom he falls in love, the capricious and cruel client (here the manufacturer of Aurora Dawn soap), and the honest man chosen to help sell the soap who proves incorruptible. The novel excoriated advertising and broadcasting as attempts to commercialize all life, enforce consumption conformity, and sell products curing every problem, real and imagined. The happy ending has everyone paired off in couples, far from Madison Avenue.

In many ways, Wakeman's *The Hucksters* and Wouk's *Aurora Dawn* set the stage for the novels that followed in genre, tone, content, plot, and the role of the author as a cultural critic. But these novels, written just after the war, had roots in earlier fiction that explored the relationship between commerce and personal identity.

Precursors

Many of the attributes of the advertising novels published after World War II can be seen in earlier popular fiction. Five novels published between 1914 and 1941 took up advertising, publicity, and publishing and treated these subjects in ways that would become more familiar in the late 1940s and 1950s. Written in a range of genres, these books portrayed the advertising business as a creative lifestyle in contrast to a staid business world inhabited by wealthy conformists. Relying on the early history of advertising, particularly as part of the newspaper business, the novels framed a critique that mirrored that of Progressive muckrakers. The authors, all of whom had experience in advertising or publishing, created a formula that both allowed and contained cultural criticism of the important and newly emerging social, cultural, and economic forces of advertising and consumption.

Early novels presented careers in advertising as a creative lifestyle, often in contrast to the staid life of the businessmen who surrounded the admen. John P. Marquand's *H. M. Pulham, Esquire* (1941) told the story of a wealthy New England man who prepped at a boarding school, went to Harvard, entered a bond firm, and married a woman he had known since childhood. Taking his place in a rigid social routine, Harry's dull life, revealed as an interior monologue, had only three breaks in routine: his friendship with Bill King, a creative guy from outside his social circle at Harvard; his service in World War I; and his one year at an advertising agency as an assistant to

King. For the rest of his life he measured everything that happened against the liberating year he spent in New York City with the sometimes silly, but never boring, advertising professionals. In *H. M. Pulham, Esquire*, Marquand examined wealthy Boston society and its effect on individuals, but also began to consider the role of advertising as a profession and as a social force.[13]

The creativity of the advertising profession, its freedom from routine, and its colorful language and characters made it a perfect setting for fiction in several genres. Dorothy Sayers, the British scholar, advertising copywriter, and mystery writer, set one of her Lord Peter Wimsey novels in an advertising agency. In *Murder Must Advertise* (1933) Wimsey went undercover as a copywriter, a job that allowed him even more latitude for mischievous and creative behavior than his usual Jekyll and Hyde roles as lord of the manor and detective. Sayers used Wimsey's detective work to comment on the shallow dullness of British society life, and pushed the idea farther in using the advertising agency, in which she had once worked, as the setting for this novel. The last twist of the mystery has Wimsey disguised as a harlequin in Sayers's final comment on the role of advertising in society.[14]

Like Marquand and Sayers, Edwin Lefevre, in his 1915 novel *H. R.*, skewered upper-class manners and morals, while satirizing a new form of advertising—the sandwich board—in a highly stylized story of a clerk who organized the sandwich board men into a union. Lefevre's description of sandwich boards as a new medium put the novel into the category of "alternative present" science fiction as well as satire. The "perambulating publicity" of the sandwich boards as well as the attempts at mobilizing and manipulating public desires eerily presaged the introduction of radio broadcasting. The marriage between the hero and the daughter of the leading opponent of advertising proved an early example of how the novels suggested personal solutions to the problems posed by advertising.[15]

Daniel Pope, in *The Making of Modern Advertising*, noted that early advertising smelled of printer's ink.[16] Like the 1950s authors who would tell the story of the Creative Revolution in the advertising industry, several early writers contextualized their fiction in advertising history by writing of the uneasy alliance between advertising and newspaper publishing. In the process they, like those who followed, used their novels to extend current political critiques into popular fiction. Nathaniel C. Fowler, Jr.'s *Gumption: The Progressions of Newson New* (1905) featured a young newspaper publisher's attempts to run an honest paper and reform his community. In the end, aided by his childhood sweetheart, he settles in his Midwestern birthplace to work

out the central question of the novel: "Was it right for me to allow the *Lamp* to shed subsidized rays, to take pay for saying good things of those who were willing to pay for printed praise?" by finding both the perfect community and the perfect wife.[17]

In *The Clarion* (1914), Samuel Hopkins Adams, a muckraking newspaper reporter, explored the importance of patent medicines as one of the first advertised products and of newspapers as one of the first media to depend on advertising revenues).[18] The novel's hero, the idealistic son of a patent medicine mogul, returns from Europe to run the local newspaper. The crusading young editor unmasks the hypocrisy of the town business leaders in his paper and then faces their refusal to advertise. Confronting the fact that his father's advertising lied about products, the editor asks: Was newspaper advertising honest or dishonest? The hero decides, "this is a question fraught with financial portent of the honorable journalist."[19] The climax, featuring a typhus epidemic and a worker attack on the newspaper, finds the father switching from selling tonics and "relief" pills that promise abortions to selling health food. The hero solves the problem of advertising by making sure no one influences the newspaper's content and ensuring that the advertised products are good for people. His engagement to the town's beautiful heiress. who tore down her tenement house, scuttled an expensive libel suit against her fiancé, and persuaded the town's leading citizens to advertise in the newspaper at an even higher rate than before, provides a personal solution to his problems and a happy ending. One reviewer wrote of *The Clarion* that there was "nothing distressing about the book," since Adams, "makes us . . . realize that after all it is more a matter of conscience that will set things right and he is explicit in his faith that it is human nature's desire to be honest."[20] Built on newspapers as the first advertising medium and with the critique of advertising solved through a series of personal and professional decisions that left the institution standing, these books presaged later advertising fictions.[21]

The novels highlighted the power of advertising to deceive, but the honest hero never (in the end) profited from the deception. In this way, the novels drew on the structure of the advertising industry itself. Advertising men worked for the good of clients but never profited directly from their efforts—bigger sales brought greater profits for manufacturers, not for the copywriters, who simply went on to sell the next product. In other ways, the lack of individual profitability helped the novels propose individual solutions to larger problems. Once the honest adman (or publisher or public relations

specialist) realized that he, personally, was untainted and thus could change, all was right with the world.

One of the best examples of an advertising executive's inability to profit from his efforts came in an early novel that had an advertising copywriter at its center. The satirical novel *The Virgin Queene* (1928), written by former adman Harford Powel, revealed the advertising man's classic dream—to quit the business and write literature.[22] Once freed of advertising, the hero, Barnum Dunn (referring to both P. T. Barnum and Bruce Barton) writes a play that everyone believes is a lost classic by Shakespeare. Because he can't explain that he wrote the play without exposing himself as a trickster, Dunn never profits from his literary masterpiece. The novel posited advertising men as creative and talented—they wrote as well as Shakespeare—and, while Dunn made no money from his play, he suffered no consequences for the hoax. Beating even the advertising industry insiders of the 1950s who quit to write the great American novel, and whose characters do the same, Powel's hero wrote the great Elizabethan drama.

In her insightful reading of *The Virgin Queene* (and other advertising fictions of the 1920s), in *Living Up to the Ads*, Simone Weil Davis noted that Powel's hero, Barnum Dunn, although believing that advertising was full of lies, accepted it in the end as "the finest hoax in the world." Davis wrote that, despite never profiting from their efforts, admen underwent a continuing "crisis of faith."[23] Personal solutions didn't solve the problems with consumption and advertising in the 1920s and, after World War II, novelists took up these issues again.

Advertising Fictions, Advertising Lives

The novel's hero, newly returned from the war, wisecracks about advertising as he undertakes an exciting job in a top agency (or public relations firm or broadcasting network). The hero shows his underlying but genuine sincerity (symbolized by his war service) only to readers and possible lovers. His picaresque journey connects him with a range of sniveling agency executives, sexy secretaries, hack copywriters, insanely demanding clients, and a single honest man. At first he betrays his true nature by deceiving the honest man in the interests of his client, sleeping with a woman not his wife or intended wife, and/or thinking he must practice advertising in a boring or soul-destroying way. Eventually the hero sees the light and is converted to honesty and sincerity by the love of a good woman and the faith of colleagues. The conversion brings with it new domestic and professional beginnings.

These familiar characters and formulaic plot recurred often in postwar advertising novels. The Wouk and Wakeman novels—in their plots, characters, and settings—began the cycle that the novels that followed repeated. Introduced by Wouk (as comedy) and Wakeman (as tragedy), these formulaic elements of plot, character, and realism proved more than coincidence or simply a clever writer's ploy to sell books. In part, the authors shared ideas on how to achieve huge book sales. They sought popularity both reflexively, as former copywriters who tried to reach the largest audience, and democratically, as writers who entered advertising to communicate with ordinary people. In addition, their writing styles, derived from their work in advertising, resembled each other, and their careful reviewing of other advertising novels contributed to the similarity of plots and characters. The similarities among the advertising novels also arose from the authors' overriding interest in the same issue—the role of the individual in a mass society. The distillation of the critique into the story of a particular individual kept the critique itself easily contained while the realism and other formulaic elements made the novels easy to dismiss.

In *The Social Construction of American Realism*, Amy Kaplan brilliantly outlined how critics, from the turn of the century to the present, denigrated realist writers. Much of what Kaplan wrote about the earlier novels also applied to the advertising novels of the 1950s. The two eras, both periods of great social change, shared concerns about mass culture and middle-class status. Kaplan described realism as a dialectical process of reporting and constructing American social life. William Dean Howells, Edith Wharton, and Theodore Dreiser moved beyond passively recording "the world outside" to creating and criticizing "the meanings, representations, and ideologies of their own changing culture."[24] Kaplan noted that this earlier realism represented "not a seamless package of triumphant bourgeois mythology but an anxious and contradictory mode" that articulated and fought against "the growing sense of unreality at the heart of middle class life."[25] The unreality resulted from the developing mass culture, and Kaplan wrote that realistic novels argued with "emergent forms of mass media" from which they gained their power and against which they asserted themselves. In many ways, Kaplan concluded, realism became "a strategy for defining the social position of the author" in a changing world.[26]

Kaplan ended her book with a useful exploration of the unsatisfying

conclusions to realist novels. Kaplan wrote that readers see the endings of the novels as retreats into "nostalgia and sentimental or genteel rhetoric which undermine their realistic premises." She concluded her book, "realistic novels have trouble ending because they pose problems they cannot solve, problems that stem from their attempts to imagine and contain social change."[27] The earlier novels and the advertising novels have much in common. Both respond to middle-class status anxieties over the rise of mass culture. The novelists worked to shape reality and used the novels to define their own social positions. And both sets of novels have unsatisfying endings as the authors outlined the necessity for social change without fully understanding how to achieve it.

The conventions of realism became part of the advertising novels' formula for the reasons Kaplan outlined. The novelists counted on their position as insiders for their authority to write about advertising, and their insider status reinforced their right to criticize mass culture. But realism brought a number of problems. By portraying themselves as authentic reporters of what happened in advertising agencies, the authors painted themselves into narrative corners and left themselves open to criticism. An unsophisticated view of realism brought easy dismissal of their social concerns when critics pointed out that the fiction did not faithfully represent the experiences of all those who worked in advertising.[28] Despite the criticisms of inaccuracy from within advertising, many of those working in the industry came to think of themselves, either positively or negatively, in reference to the language, plot, and characters of the novels. And they weren't the only ones so influenced. Just as had the novels of Howells, Wharton, and Dreiser in an earlier moment, the advertising novels changed the way the culture thought about advertising and consumption.

The authors of the advertising novels moved well beyond the simplistic realism of which their critics accused them. The cultural critiques presented by the novels drew complexity from the doubled subject positions held by the authors and their characters. Advertising professionals had always sold to both clients and consumers. In addition, the writers were at once author and object of their own fiction, both intellectuals and cultural workers, the most individualized of artists and cogs in the mass culture industry. The novelists also led double lives with their own stories matching those of their protagonists. A *Saturday Review* discussion of six of the novels noted: "since many of these books are first novels—there is often an almost embarrassing parallel between the authors' careers and those of their protagonists."[29] The novels

told the story of an advertising guy who quit to write the great American novel, and they were written by men who had done just that. The contradictions raised by such doubled consciousness remained the subject of their fiction, as they considered their own "social positions."

In *Living Up to the Ads*, Simone Weil Davis described 1920s novels about advertising noting the doubleness of the author's position "marketing themselves and their work to a predominantly middle-class consumer culture, addressing and simultaneously participating in it," and describing how the novels she read set out new "metaphors for personhood" in a consumer culture. Davis wrote of the realism used by the novelists as "an engagement with the mode of the advertisement," because the novelists "use the metaphoric figures of advertisement, display, and consumption to develop the personae and plots they are creating."[30] Kaplan described how the earlier realistic novelists participated in the process whereby "commodification makes all forms of the quotidian perform in what Guy Debord has called the 'society of the spectacle.'" Kaplan wrote that "realism is similarly related to the culture of surveillance, in which the realist participates in the panoptic forces which both control and produce the real world by seeing it without being seen in turn."[31] In the advertising novels of the 1950s, doubleness, surveillance, and spectacle operate as intertwined modes of realism.

The novelists often recreated their own double consciousness, and their feelings of being watched, by pairing the characters of a wavering hero and an honest man of whom the mass culture made a spectacle. Prewar novels presented the advertising (or newspaper) man hero as the honest keeper of the truth. After the war, authors heightened the plots' tension by dividing this character into an uncertain hero and an honest man who resisted advertising's blandishments. The honest man showed the individual's importance in the face of mass culture and, in so doing, influenced the hero to change his life. Wouk's *Aurora Dawn* provided the first conversion narrative of this type when broadcasting moguls dispatched Andrew Reale, the young radio advertising executive (with a name that represented his true nature), to convince a country evangelist to star on a sponsored radio program. The preacher served as the perfect foil for the demanding (and insane) client and joined a painter as the novel's only truthful characters. In the end, the preacher broadcast a sermon against advertising and, inspired by his honesty, Andrew married his true love and moved to New Mexico.

One comic novel and one tragic novel, written in the mid-1950s, took up the same story of the advertising executive changed by contact with a

single honest man. Robert Alan Aurthur, in *The Glorification of Al Toolum* (1953), and Gerald Green, in *The Last Angry Man* (1956), used this device as the centerpiece of their novels. In addition, four novels set in the world of public relations—Charles Yale Harrison, *Nobody's Fool* (1948), Jeremy Kirk, *The Build Up Boys* (1951), Al Morgan, *The Great Man* (1955), and Middleton Kieffer, *Pax* (1958)—told variants of the tale, while several others turned the plot upside down by featuring evil heroes. In the simplest version of the story, the mass culture juggernaut met the average man and lost—the honest man didn't change in any way. Advertising, which claimed to affect consumer decisions, was shown as ineffective in altering a particular consumer's behavior. The only change was in the advertising man's personal life.

In *The Glorification of Al Toolum*, an advertising agency chooses a working-class husband and father as the most average man in the country. The young advertising executive offers Al Toolum publicity and new products in exchange for his endorsements.[32] In every possible way Al Toolum would be under constant surveillance as a spectacle. One adman explains:

> You'll be known throughout the whole country as a result of this campaign. . . . Once you're known, once you've been built as a figure of trust, you'll be—I won't say the word used, but rather employed—employed as a combination guinea pig for new products and endorser of old. . . . You see, the manufacturer in this country depends mainly on the average man—the mass market. . . . You as the *most* average man will carry a lot of weight. People will believe you.[33]

The novel proved most compelling when describing the particularity of the Toolum family. The young adman in charge of the campaign becomes disillusioned with the advertising business as he observes Al Toolum's interesting family and Toolum's stubborn refusal to change, despite national attention.

In *The Last Angry Man*, Gerald Green's portrait of a Jewish doctor practicing in a poor New York City neighborhood overwhelms the story of the advertising and broadcasting business. In the novel, a cynical advertising executive, facing a plot against him within the agency and in order to please a difficult client, designs a television show spotlighting a "real" person. He becomes involved with a septuagenarian Jewish doctor, slated to be the subject of the first program, who teaches him the meaning of life.[34] The doctor's lessons are difficult to understand, but the comparison of a "real" life to one led in, and through, the mass media is palpable as the doctor explains:

> Every year I live it seems to me there are less and less useful things to do in the world. Everything seems to be getting pallid, conformed, stereotyped, people as alike each other as one epithelial cell to another. Medicine is one of the few places where nothing you do is ever a waste, a drain, a bore.[35]

Green presented a detailed picture of the an advertising career with its instability, sterile suburban life, bored suburban wife, career girl mistress, shallow businessmen, and the dress, manners, mores, and homes of advertising professionals. Yet the doctor, as a complex and finally inexplicable character, takes over most of the book. The author described the novel as an "autobiographical but not photographic" portrait of his own father. Himself a journalist and television producer, Green struggled to make a statement about mass communications and its relation to individual lives.[36] He wrote that "the most overwhelming fact of the twentieth century is the assault on the public ear and eye, the incessant, relentless avalanche of useless information."[37] The doctor dies before being broadcast "live" from his home. The novel ends with the advertising executive going back to his wife and his suburban life with the belief that creative work, done well, honors the doctor's memory.

The plot of an honest man allowed authors to explore advertising's basic dishonesty, while also considering how to maintain an unobserved individuality in the face of mass culture. The *New York Times* review of *The Glorification of Al Toolum* wrote of its honest man that "the real average American would, indeed must, fight to save himself from the mold into which the machines and the mathematics seek alternately to cozen and to force him," while the *Saturday Review* noted that the honest man "was not a statistic, not a page out of the 'World Almanac,' but a man."[38] The idea of manliness as expressed through individuality, of manliness as the opposite of conformity, became one of the most important of the novels' critiques of mass culture.

Unmanly conformity came to stand for all the other problems with mass culture and the culture of consumption. The novelists often used the intertwined issues of individuality and masculinity as shorthand for the crisis presented by mass culture. The selfishness of an atomistic world with its lack of communal or family life, where everyone is out for him- or herself, remained

a big issue, in part because selfishness brought loneliness. In pondering a business decision, one of the heroes muses:

> But the whole idea somehow made him feel a little cheap, and uneasy. He did not understand this, nor why he felt so suddenly alone. And now, for just an instant, he wondered whether it really was worth it, any of it, all of it—down through the years from the very beginning. He wondered this because he had never before felt such acute aloneness.[39]

Life outside the observation of the media, as part of the mass, brings loneliness.

Another hero calls the postwar the "chameleon years," describing his actions as, "Find what they're drinking and drink it. Find what they're thinking and think it. Find what they're wanting and want it."[40] The white male advertising heroes of these novels hate the conformity of always having to agree with their clients and their bosses, agreements that wear on a "real" man. The novels are filled with "yes-men" who agree with their clients and bosses despite their better judgment and to the disgust of the heroes. Wolcott Gibbs noted in his review of *The Hucksters* that "the yes-man motif" had "been established far beyond the strict necessities of satire, if not up to the limit of reader endurance."[41] With the war over, how could men make satisfying lives for themselves and prove their worth?

One book's title came to symbolize postwar worries about conformity and mass culture. Sloan Wilson's *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* (1955) represented public fears over the loss of individuality and masculinity. Despite the fact that the hero worked in public relations, the public remembered him as an advertising executive. In an introduction, written twenty-eight years after the novel's publication, Wilson wrote that mistaking his hero for an advertising man was not the only misreading of his first novel. The hero, "attacked as a proponent of materialism, bad thinking or no thinking at all, a guy who would never go on the road with Jack Kerouac or rock around the clock with anybody," really had a different problem. Wilson felt that "the main problem which concerned Tom Rath, the usually forgotten name of the man in gray flannel, was that he felt the world was driving him to become a workaholic in order to succeed at business enough to support his family well."[42] Despite Wilson's protestations, Tom Rath also had to understand

how to please his boss, the head of a broadcasting company, who sought favorable publicity. Rath thought of himself as a "yes man":

> I should quit if I don't like what he does, but I want to eat, and so, like a half million other guys in gray flannel suits, I'll always pretend to agree, until I get big enough to be honest without being hurt. That's not being crooked, it's just being smart. . . . How smoothly one becomes, not a cheat, exactly, not really a liar, just a man who'll say anything for pay.[43]

One reviewer noted that the author of *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* "probably imagined that there was a deal of moral fiber in this story of the faceless man who, as it turns out, is faceless, not because he is Everyman, but because he is no man at all."[44] Mass culture brought frightening anonymity, a kind of conformity in itself. At the end of the novel, Tom Rath tells his boss the truth about his reservations, gets a less demanding job so he can spend more time with his family, and begins a construction company where he can be his own boss. He becomes more of a man than when he worked for someone else.

For the novelists and the critics, individuality remained intimately tied to the issue of masculinity. The honest characters exuded not only individuality but maleness. One character explains of Al Toolum, Aurthur's "average man," that "he's a man, a real man with all the complexities of a man. When you come in contact with him, he surprises you by showing that the so-called average standards are a minor part of his make-up."[45] The novels often featured emasculating women who sought to make men either conform to boring business or domestic strictures or serve their evil ends. The presence of a number of evil heroines among the advertising novels also highlighted the identification of individuality and honesty with masculinity.[46]

The novels asked how a man can retain his individuality in an age of mass consumption. These novelists believed the advertising presented an instructive and important case study that would help answer that question. In *The Hot Half Hour* (1958), Robert L. Foreman wrote that Madison Avenue was "a lot of different people who come from all sorts of different places and make widely different salaries and drink very different brands of liquor. But often in their lives—many times a day in fact—they all act exactly alike" because "they're beset by the same worries and fears and maybes, all of which are set in motion by the same thing—the Ad Game."[47] The authors compul-

sively replayed the same situations, tinkering with details, to find a way out of the conundrum that they, as advertising professionals, had been first to observe. Mass culture, along with its benefits, brought fearful consequences.

Despite, or perhaps because of, the important questions raised, the advertising industry as well as literary critics dismissed this critique by focusing on a simplistic view of realism and by ignoring the doubleness built into the novels' structures and context. The criticism of the novels when they were published dismissed any possibility that the authors presented a coherent critique of mass culture and instead focused on the novels' sameness and therefore lack of imagination, and whether they accurately portrayed or were unfair to the advertising industry. To discredit the authors' concerns, critics explained that "real" advertising men were not like those in the novels but were, in fact, nice, ordinary guys doing an honest job. Writings by and about advertising professionals, as well as book reviews, focused on the veracity of the details or the novels' tendency to exaggerate, rather than the overall truth of the portrait, as the mass culture industry worked to protect itself from criticism. One of the authors, Al Morgan, who penned *The Great Man* (1955), wrote in a review of James Kelly's *The Insider* (1958):

> Along with Abraham Lincoln's boyhood, infantry life in the South Pacific, and the last days of Pompeii, the expense-account, charcoal-gray world of Madison Avenue has been completely documented by a long succession of good, bad, and indifferent writers. It's been open season on the admen, "sincere" has become a dirty word, and working for an advertising agency is a close second to playing piano in a bawdy house.[48]

Morgan criticized the repetitive and formulaic quality of the novels, made fun of their lack of realism, and attacked their negative view of advertising but he never took up the novels' ideas about mass culture or the problems with advertising.

Despite rejecting the ad novels' view, many in the industry came to think of themselves in terms, characters, and dialogue from the novels. With advertising newly entrenched as the "language" of capitalism in the postwar period, and the advertising industry as the teacher of consumption and mass culture, career guides suggested that bright young men, and a few women, found advertising an interesting and creative profession.[49] One of the textbooks my mother used in her advertising courses at Pennsylvania State University between 1949 and 1952 explained that

> Although motion pictures, short stories, and books often portray the modern advertising agency or department as something of a glamorous madhouse, where sudden inspiration is all that is needed to evolve a million-dollar idea and where a day's work is likely to be no more laborious than dashing off a piece of copy or passing judgment on some artwork, actual investigation seldom reveals such dramatic elements. Advertising is a business, just as any other trade or profession is a business.[50]

In describing itself to job seekers, the industry presented advertising in novelistic and filmic terms and also rejected that view. Life in advertising agencies in the postwar period showed an intensification of the uncertainty and bustle of the 1920s agencies Marquand described, and presaged the anxiety of those advertising executives whom sociologist Michael Schudson visited in the 1970s.[51] The novels reflected the tensions involved in advertising as a profession and, in turn, supplied a way to think about the cultural service advertising workers undertook.

The job application essays and internal publications of the J. Walter Thompson agency (JWT), a large shop headquartered in New York City, illustrate the insecurity of a creative person's job with many firings (and subsequent hirings to refill positions). The personnel files show that those who went to work in the creative side of advertising had an interest in people, a love of New York City, and a yearning to be writers.[52] Internal publications reinforced the stereotypes the novelists drew on: advertising men sailed, renovated their houses, and smoked cigarettes. Research and sales departments remained important, to the despair of the "creatives," and television loomed as an important new player adding complexity to already difficult lives. And many of the copywriters included novel writing among their pastimes, in both their application essays and their interviews with the company newsletter.[53]

The J. Walter Thompson newsletters both captured and directly refuted the advertising novels' portrait of advertising agencies and their employees. Despite the clear similarities between the lives reported in the company newsletter and those depicted in the novels, one short bio noted:

> If the world of advertising bore a passing resemblance to that gilded jungle smoked up by current novels and columns, Storrs Haynes would shortly find himself on the Rules Committee's blood-stained carpet. The charges would be devastating: "Not a cliché all week, Haynes!" . . . "Where's your gold Dunhill lighter?" . . . "You never shout!" . . . Where's that attaché case?" . . . "Haynes, *turn in your gray flannel suit*!" . . . Storrs manages . . . without the celebrated techniques of fictional advertising men.[54]

The newsletter, and other commentators, most often took on the cliché that all thwarted advertising copywriters worked on novels in their spare time. The *New York Herald Tribune* described one JWT copywriter as different: "You know the popular conception: He's writing about Frabjous Krispies for his pocketbook but here are tears in his beard. His heart, you see, is with that novel in his desk drawer—or in his den in that fifteen-room modern Colonial in Westport." This copywriter, the article told readers, found that writing advertising "gives him the overwhelming satisfaction that came to Thomas Wolfe when he filled an orange crate with part of one of his novels," and that he described his slogans "with the reverence of a poet who has just been advised that his works will be included in the 'Oxford Book of English Verse.'"[55] So the article proclaimed that advertising men weren't novelists, but then described the rewards of an advertising career in terms used by fiction writers.

Critics often compared copywriters to characters in the advertising novels or to the novelists themselves. While the comparisons began negatively—the characters were very different from "real" admen—they often ended by pointing out that the advertising men behaved exactly as the novelists depicted them. Perhaps the best example of denying the stereotype while simultaneously applying it appeared in 1948, when the newsletter called one executive "a shining refutation of 'The Hucksters'" who "occupies his leisure time writing novels."[56]

Critics found Wakeman's title, *The Hucksters*, the most troubling aspect of the novel, and the least realistic. A 1958 *Advertising Age* article, "Novels of Past Decade Paint Lurid Ad World," noted the similarity of characters and plots across the novels and that "however admirable the adman hero was or became, from this book on, admen have been known as hucksters, a label with dubious connotations."[57] A later article in *Advertising Age*, "Is It True What They Say About Admen?" claimed the problems started with Wakeman because his novel "set the tone for the advertising novel." The problem was that "Mr. Wakeman, an ex-adman, not only coined a word that has stuck to the industry," but a "flock of advertising novels written and published in the last 10 years" followed Wakeman in portraying advertising as "cut-throat, high-pressure, amoral."[58] The article continued that "while there may be likeable admen in novels, there is never any question about the advertising business itself being anything but a debasing and basically dishonest way to make a living," and noted that "advertising industry leaders who are dismayed at this representation of their trade" should realize that the novels were written, not by "by outsiders with an axe to grind" but by "former tillers of the Madison Avenue soil—or even by current members of the industry."[59]

In 1956, James Kelly, later author of *The Insider* (1958), a novel that presented one of the most evil of the advertising antiheroes, defended his business (he was a vice president of Compton Advertising) in an article in the *New York Times*. Kelly wrote that many critics indicted advertising as "America's pagan religion," but noted that "advertising is not a hungry predator on the prowl nor is it a fey branch of show business; it is an integral part of society and should be judged as such."[60] At once, Kelly showed his belief in the basic goodness of advertising and illustrated the industry's growing concern about criticism from outside, particularly from the social scientists who wrote in the popular press. The novelists worried about the advertising industry while attempting to set the terms for how they saw themselves. But the advertising industry believed that a simplistic attack on the realism and repetition of the novels could contain the critique expressed by the novelists. When eminent social scientists and other intellectuals took up the same critiques, the industry became more anxious.

Novelists as Intellectuals

Why were so many novels set in advertising agencies published between 1946 and 1960? The reinvigorated culture of consumption and the growth of mass media, both brought by postwar prosperity, surely served as the main impetus. These novelists joined a range of commentators who reconsidered the impact of mass culture on American life after the war. The authors participated in at least four often related intellectual streams that flowed through the 1950s. A radical critique of mass culture came from an increasingly splintered Left, principally the Frankfurt School and a loosely tied group of fol-

lowers who came to be called the New York Intellectuals. Another allied group of best-selling social scientists, whose work has been best explored by Daniel Horowitz in *The Anxieties of Affluence*, denounced an increased emphasis on consumption. The Beats mounted a cultural critique of conformity through art, literature, and lifestyle. Finally, businessmen (according to Thomas Frank in *The Conquest of Cool*) criticized the stifling atmosphere of American corporations as antithetical to the creativity needed to revitalize the economy. The authors of popular advertising novels combined the concerns expressed in the other critiques with their own firsthand knowledge of the advertising industry to produce accessible fictional appraisals of culture and society.

On the surface, the novelists shared the least with the New York Intellectuals. Neil Jumonville, in his excellent analysis of the group, *Critical Crossings: The New York Intellectuals in Postwar America*, described them as "the mid-century's most prominent group of generalist cultural critics" noting that they advocated a "highbrow socialism divorced from the common people, a radicalism for intellectuals" and concluded that "the group's constant hostility to populist politics and mass culture is hardly unusual: by nature, most intellectuals are antipopulists, especially in the realm of culture."[61] Appearing in a popular, mass-cultural form—several of the advertising novels were best-sellers and even more were Book-of-the-Month Club selections—at first glance, the advertising novels seemed a likely target of the New York Intellectuals, not companion critiques. Yet, while no one at the time thought of them as "intellectuals," advertising novelists took up two of the New York Intellectuals' main concerns, the totalizing and negative effect of mass culture and the contested definition of an intellectual, and presented them in a popular form.

Dwight MacDonald, the writer of the time who most directly addressed mass culture, saw it, as historian Alan Wald wrote, as "a one way, monolithic medium of indoctrination."[62] MacDonald's most important statement of his thinking appeared in an essay, "A Theory of Mass Culture," published in the 1957 anthology *Mass Culture: The Popular Arts in America*,. For this essay, MacDonald reworked a 1944 article in *Politics* and changed the title (from Popular Culture to Mass Culture). According to his biographer, the changes reflected a changed political message as well. Michael Wreszin noted that MacDonald began reworking the essay in 1952, "removing its explicit and provocative radical message and making it into a piece of cultural criticism with decidedly conservative implications."[63]

Agreeing with the intellectuals of the Frankfurt School, MacDonald wrote that "Mass Culture is imposed from above. It is fabricated by technicians hired by businessmen; its audiences are passive consumers, their participation limited to the choice between buying and not buying."[64] Using the example of *Life* magazine, with its jumble of articles and advertising on a range of subjects from serious to silly, MacDonald concluded that mass culture, "mixes and scrambles everything together, producing what might be called homogenized culture. . . . Mass Culture is very, very democratic: it absolutely refuses to discriminate against, or between, anything or anybody. All is grist to its mill, and all comes out finely ground indeed."[65] MacDonald found mass culture a "manufactured commodity," which "tends always downward, toward cheapness—and so standardization—of production."[66] The essay presented mass culture as all-encompassing, routinized, tied to consumption, and manipulative, with MacDonald's critique located politically somewhere between his 1940s radicalism and the neoconservatism of his later views. In almost every particular, the novels set in advertising agencies had the same perspective.[67]

Because they made the most exaggerated claims, comic science fiction novels best presented advertising, and consumption, as totalizing tools of control. Fiction with more literary pretensions may have made these points more subtly, but the work of Frederik Pohl and C. M. Kornbluth simultaneously depicted and satirized the idea of advertising and consumption as all-encompassing, thus showing Pohl and Kornbluth as complex thinkers about the current moment. The *Herald Tribune* reviewer of Pohl and Kornbluth's science fiction novel *The Space Merchants* wrote that "Whether you want entertainment or sharp social criticism, don't miss this!"[68] Pohl and Kornbluth's *The Space Merchants* (1952) and Pohl's *The Merchants' War* (1984) illustrated worlds in which advertising became a religion, a way of seeing the world. Through overdrawn plots and situations, the authors ridiculed the concerns of other intellectuals as they explored them. In the end, Pohl and Kornbluth presented the only radical alternative to advertising that appeared in the 1950s.

Part of the same radical political groups and activities as the New York Intellectuals, Pohl and Kornbluth (beginning writers working at the edges of publishing) retained a Left-leaning political critique that made the ending of their novel unlike any of the others. They collaborated on *The Space Merchants*, the story of a "copysmith, star class" assigned to the Venus account. Because of his interest in the "conscies" (radical resistors, "Conservationists"

who objected to the hegemony of the advertising agencies), the hero gets busted to lowly consumer status. Pohl and Kornbluth made advertised products physically addictive to underline the impossibility of escaping advertising's thrall and to satirize those, like MacDonald, who felt ordinary consumers had no choices. They explained that each product sample contained a habit-forming chemical so that "after ten weeks the customer is hooked for life." The costliness of the cure for the addiction made it easier for the consumer to drink the coffee substitute, "three cups with every meal and a pot beside his bed at night, just as it says on the jar," than be cured of his addiction to it.[69] The copywriter hero, forced to take his turn as a consumer, thinks:

> I was becoming the kind of consumer we used to love. Think about smoking, think about Starrs, light a Starr. Light a Starr, think about Popsie, get a squirt. Get a squirt, think about Crunchies, buy a box. Buy a box, think about smoking, light a Starr. And at every step roll out the words of praise that had been dinned into you through your eyes and ears and pores.[70]

In the future, advertising agencies controlled not only individual consumers but entire economies. When taking over Venus, the agency "hoped to repeat on an enormously magnified scale" their success organizing "all of India into a single giant cartel, with every last woven basket and iridium ingot and caddy of opium it produced sold through Fowler Schocken advertising."[71] Yet Pohl and Kornbluth presented the only political solution to the problems of mass consumption among the intellectuals of the 1950s or the advertising novelists. Their novel ends with the hero on his way to Venus to help lead the Conscie Revolution. In the 1984 sequel, *The Merchants' War*, another copywriter hero falls in love with a Venutian revolutionary and helps bring the revolution back to earth, using advertising techniques for good rather than evil.[72]

What's an intellectual to do? Is an intellectual critique possible in a totalizing culture of consumption? Historians have noted that the New York Intellectuals found the role of the intellectual in society one of the most pressing they addressed.[73] The novelists shared an interest in the role of the culture broker, the intellectual, from inside mass culture. If the New York Intellectuals took an "outsider" position, the advertising professionals found themselves "insiders" with each position holding its own contradictions. The New York Intellectuals concluded that only outsiders could be intellectuals, at least

in part because they never could break into the mass culture industry they critiqued. But the roads that brought both intellectuals and novelists to an interest in the roles they played were very similar.[74]

Reviewing three books about the New York Intellectuals, Michael Denning focused on the idea of how those working during the 1950s, and the historians who wrote about them, defined intellectual work. Denning found both definitions too narrow. Referring to Alan Wald's *The New York Intellectuals* (1987), Denning wrote that to follow Wald in redeeming "the promise of socialist intellectuals first augured in the writings of Marx and Engels," what was needed was not only "to reconstruct the political legacy of the anti-Stalinist left intellectuals, but to map the political terrain of that vast culture industry in which they, and we, find ourselves."[75] Denning urged, in advance of his own book, *The Culture Front* (1997), a move from intellectual history to cultural history, for the inclusion of workers in the mass culture industry as taking part in the radical critiques offered by more conventional, leftist "intellectuals."[76] The self-reflectivity of the advertising novels, where the main task of heroes and authors becomes to understand their intellectual place, is mirrored in the work of the more traditional intellectuals of the time and those who wrote about them later.

Like Michael Denning, historian Daniel Horowitz, in *The Anxieties of Affluence: Critiques of American Consumer Culture, 1939–1979*, sought to expand the ways historians thought about the postwar intellectual sphere. For example, in his analysis of postwar intellectual history, Horowitz included popular nonfiction writers, many taking up the same issues as the advertising novelists and New York Intellectuals. Horowitz wrote that David Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd* (1950), David Potter's *People of Plenty* (1954), Vance Packard's *The Hidden Persuaders* (1957), John Kenneth Galbraith's *Affluent Society* (1958), and Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) identified "problems that connected affluence with a series of larger issues" including "the spread of mass culture" and "the implications for politics of a world that seemed increasingly privatized and controlled."[77] The limitations of the critique outlined in these popular books also interested Horowitz. He wrote that, while talking about affluence, the authors ignored or downplayed poverty, in part because they focused on the middle class and in part because they ignored race. The advertising novelists shared the concerns and blind spots of these "critiques from within" as Horowitz termed them.

The ad novelists displayed a generalized anxiety over the affluence of postwar America in a subset of novels featuring evil antiheroes. Less successful

as fiction than the novels with likeable heroes—who served as sympathetic reader-surrogates thrust into the belly of the consumption beast—these anti-heroes represented fears about the effects of advertising and consumption on individual lives. Many of the novels contrasted the self-sacrifice of World War II culture with the selfishness of postwar consumption. The evil heroes directly rejected the wartime experience rather than, as the sympathetic heroes did, remembering it nostalgically.

Two of the earliest novels in this sample featured nasty main characters and also emphasized the importance of the war to both plot and ideology. Both published in 1946, Arkady Leokum's *Please Send Me, Absolutely Free* and Fielden Farrington's *The Big Noise* used characters' negative reactions to the war as markers of their insincerity.[78] Leokum's novel, set during the war, ends with an advertising executive refusing an ad campaign that is too hard on the Germans, Italians, and Japanese because they were future clients. The hero's disgust with this cold-blooded approach shows his conversion to sincerity. Despite his late in the novel reconsideration, Leokum's vain, self-centered hero may have been, according to the *New Yorker*, "much more of a heel than the author apparently suspects."[79] The *Saturday Review* noted the book's "basically negative quality" and concluded, "it is difficult for a reader to like a subject or a set of characters when the author obviously has contempt for them."[80] In contrast, the evil hero of *The Big Noise* begins by regarding the war as no more than a radio play and ends with that conceit being broadcast. The author presented the hero as irredeemably loathsome from his introduction as someone who rejoiced in his 4F designation as psychologically unfit to serve.[81] The comparison between the sacrifice of war and the self-indulgence of consumption, exemplified by the radio and advertising businesses, could not be clearer. One character accosted the radio director:

> I've come to the conclusion that you're the most complete heel I've ever seen and I've spent my life in a racket that breeds heels. There isn't really anything a man can call you. A son of a bitch? Hell, I've heard reasonably decent people called that. I don't like to put you in their class. It's a sad commentary on the state of the world that, with all the shooting and killing that goes on today, it's still illegal to take a shot at a guy like you.[82]

Like Leokum, Farrington, a radio writer, used the nastiness of the people involved in advertising and their selfishness in wartime to comment on the

industry. One of Leokum's characters sums up the attitude of both novels by saying, "The trouble with working in advertising . . . is that it keeps body and soul apart."[83]

A later novel, *A Twist of Lemon* (1958) by Edward Stephens, presents an unsympathetic hero who turns out to be a nice guy misled by the glitter of Madison Avenue and the lure of competition and consumption. The novel painstakingly details an education in advertising and the various dirty tricks on what the dust jacket called a "young man's desperate scramble up the cold and treacherous plate-glass cliffs of Madison Avenue." The surprise ending shows the top-level advertising executives as having been caring and interested mentors, long ignored by the hero. One of them explains: "I think I am helping our clients, which is what I am getting paid for, and I think I am helping the people whom I help to persuade to use our clients' products."[84] Saved by the boss and his secretary/lover, the hero decides that "advertising was his life" because "he loved the thought of finding a good product and advertising it properly and conscientiously to people who had never before heard of it or who had never before heard of it properly, so they felt they should buy it." The problem was "the trapped, imprisoned, unnatural feeling of living out his life seventeen stories above Madison Avenue."[85] Willoughby, his lover, and their child born without his knowledge leave the city to go to Phoenix where he will work in a smaller agency.[86] In an ending reminiscent of the prewar advertising novels, *A Twist of Lemon* implied that advertising, like its hero, is basically good-hearted but often led astray by the bright lights of the big city. The problems faced by the advertising men, the forces that made them evil, could be fought by appealing to their innate morality, and even the nastiest hero, representing the affluence and conformity of mass culture, could be redeemed.

Among the best-selling nonfiction authors, Vance Packard most directly addressed advertising as dishonest and manipulative in his *The Hidden Persuaders* (1957). Packard raised concerns about new forms of psychological insight into consumer desires—so-called motivational research—as an unfair weapon taken up by the powerful advertising industry. He concluded that "the most serious offense many of the depth manipulators commit . . . is that they try to invade the privacy of our minds."[87] But Packard showed a grudging respect for his advertising adversaries, writing "the persuaders themselves, in their soul-searching, are at times exceptionally articulate in expressing their apprehensions and in admitting some of their practices are a 'little cold-blooded.'"[88]

In many ways, Packard's ideas resembled those of the New York Intellectuals, with advertising and consumption totalizing and inescapable evils. In a similar way, science fiction presented the best counterpart to Packard's work, just as *The Space Merchants* expressed many of Dwight MacDonald's ideas. Shepherd Mead's *The Big Ball of Wax* clearly shared Packard's worries about the insidious new motivational research, which borrowed its methodology from psychology. Mead depicted advertising as maintaining societal control, with the help of techniques borrowed from religion, while the small resistance was nutty, and the future was more of the same. An advertising executive and recent best-selling author of *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying* (1952), Mead's novel told the story of the ultimate advertising technique, discovered by a religious group, that gave consumers virtual experiences through neurological links. Churchgoers plugged into headsets that provided them with a pleasurable, and addicting, experience. The advertising executive hero wrestles the technique from the church and brings it to his advertising agency to create "the best of all possible worlds," where "we never have to worry about *selling* anything any more."[89] Mead recapitulated the history of advertising, as Packard explained it in *The Hidden Persuaders*. In *The Big Ball of Wax*, marketing began by giving consumers what they wanted, as determined by extensive surveying:

> Haven't we got guys walkin' around with surveys . . . all over the whole country, seven days a week? What flavor pudding do they want? What color washing powder? What kinda television programs, what kinda commercials? Is there a single thing we don't check with 'em?[90]

And moved to creating demand for particular products through brainwashing consumers.

Mead's satire put the ideas about the problems of such hidden persuasion in the mouths of "dangerous crackpots" who challenged advertising's power over all aspects of life in this future world. The radicals worried that "notch by notch . . . thinking was decreasing, self-expression dying out. Year by year we've become more passive . . . the individual is dying, the mass is rising. And freedom of thought is going."[91] In his science fiction novel, Mead presented advertising as destined to get worse with no possibility of escape, using words and ideas similar to those of both Dwight MacDonald and Vance Packard.

Like their nonfiction counterparts, the novelists thought warnings about

the excesses of consumers and advertisers could lead to what Horowitz named a "new moralism" that could save the nation from the dangers of consumption and mass culture. David Potter, in *People of Plenty: Economic Abundance and the American Character* (1954), found abundance a defining characteristic of the "American character" and at once a blessing and a curse. The novelists shared Potter's almost moralistic aversion to advertising and consumption and portrayed advertising as out of control and threatening to individuality, at the same time as they appreciated affluence after wartime hardships.[92]

Potter tied advertising and consumption together. He remained interested in how a citizen was "educated to perform his role as a consumer, especially as a consumer of goods for which he feels no impulse or need," and believed that advertising became the institution "for instilling new needs, for training people to act as consumers, for altering men's values, and thus for hastening their adjustment to potential abundance" so that advertising was "distinctively the institution of abundance."[93] Advertising enabled the culture "to exalt the materialistic virtues of consumption."[94] He dismissed the advertising novels themselves as a form of criticism, writing:

> The excesses of advertising and of advertising men have been a favorite theme for a full quorum of modern satirists, cynics, and Jeremiahs. From the patent-medicine exposes in the early years of the century to the latest version of *The Hucksters*, advertising men have incurred fairly constant attack—their unscrupulous natures and their stomach ulcers being equally celebrated.[95]

Potter maintained that an examination of "advertising as an institution" comparable to school and church, rather than attacks on advertising men themselves, had been ignored by social scientists, historians, and other critics. But several of the advertising novels took up Potter's interest in the connection between abundance and advertising.

Despite his dismissal of them as critiques, the advertising novels went farther than Potter in condemning consumption as ultimately empty. Eric Hodgins, who had a career at Time-Life, notably as the publisher of *Fortune* magazine, wrote two satirical novels that critiqued the middle-class obsession with consumption. *Mr. Blandings Builds His Dream House* (1946) and *Blandings' Way* (1950) describe an advertising executive who builds a house in Connecticut and leaves advertising for a more meaningful life in the country but, in the end, gives up and moves back to the city.

The novels detail the domestic life of an advertising man, one who is preternaturally attuned to the status implications of consumption. In one long passage from the beginning of *Mr. Blandings Builds His Dream House*, Hodgins details the meaning of a suburban home to an advertising executive.

> When Mr. Blandings, fresh out of Yale, landed his first job with an advertising agency . . . he had taken a little one-room-and-bath apartment for himself in the East Thirties. When, after a few years of menial writing . . . he had permitted himself to expand to two rooms, and moved to the East Forties. He had married not long after that; as newlyweds, Mr. and Mrs. Blandings took up quarters in the East Fifties. When their first baby arrived, they skipped fifteen blocks in one bold leap and moved to the East Seventies. There they stayed.

Mr. Blandings succeeds in advertising, being "lucky enough to hit upon a three-word slogan for a laxative account" and "the happy agency" rewards him "with several handsome bonuses," and raises "since the three portentous words had first occurred to him." Mr. Blandings "loathed his calling with a deep, passionate intensity, but . . . if a business of his own did not tempt him, something that he and his friends called "the good life" did." As Hodgins notes, "Mr. and Mrs. Blandings realized that not only could they now afford to expand their modest horizons, but that, in the eyes of their professional colleagues, they could not afford not to."[96]

The rest of the novel outlines exactly how Mr. Blandings bought a tumbledown farmhouse and precisely how much he spends in renovations. The humor in the novel comes from the minute descriptions of products and services he purchases and in his inability ever to succeed in his plans. Mr. Blandings, like the advertising men on whom he is based, desperately seeks to understand living with what Potter called "abundance" and how to make that abundance meaningful. The review in *Atlantic Monthly* noted that the novel was "funny and you laugh and laugh, but all the while your pocketbook bleeds in sympathy with theirs. It is most horribly true."[97] In fact, many of the advertising men whose lives are detailed in the J. Walter Thompson Archives remodeled old houses. In 1950, in the company newsletter, one copywriter said he "ran Mr. Blandings a close second," while another, in 1957, wrote that he lived in a "'it-keeps-me-doing-it-myself' Westport ranch house."[98]

In *Blandings' Way*, Hodgins "turned serious" and explored his hero's attempt to find meaning in his life.[99] Blandings seeks "something to do in my personal life that's going to help me compensate for what I have to do in my professional life" and so left advertising to run a country newspaper. Blandings's boss notes:

> the terrible restlessness that was likely to strike a writer of advertising copy in his late thirties or early forties; a restlessness that made him yearn to snap the gold cords of salaries and bonuses and profit-sharings and stock dividends and find, by some means, in some obscure place or bizarre fashion, something he thought would be simpler and more rewarding.[100]

One reviewer noted that the novel "puts a crucial personal (and social) question out where some people may trip over it, and think about it, and probably despair over it in a business-like way, as does Mr. Blandings."[101] But most reviews ridiculed Blandings's attempt to find a more meaningful life, perhaps because the humor of the novel overwhelms its attempt to explore what had become the familiar effort of the advertising novel hero to escape advertising and a life based on consumption. The *New Yorker* wrote that the novel ended with Blandings's "resignation to becoming middle-aged and making lots more money."[102]

The New York Intellectuals, nonfiction popular writers, and advertising novelists agreed that conformity was one of the main dangers of mass culture.[103] The advertising industry became known as a stronghold of conformity, and even more as home to the "other-directed" personalities described by David Riesman in *The Lonely Crowd*. As the ultimate salesmen, advertising men had to please not only difficult clients and demanding bosses, but also finicky consumers. Consumers had similar problems. Blandings, as well as the brainwashed consumers depicted in *The Space Merchants* and *The Big Ball of Wax*, couldn't express themselves as individuals in a world defined by artificial and identical products. Advertising created consumers who eagerly bought the same products, who embraced conformity as an identity. One other group also critiqued conformity. Historian Lizabeth Cohen identified the Beat writers as making a cultural critique of consumption, as serving as "cultural rebels" in the 1950s.[104] The Beats believed that mass consumption, as aided by advertising, threatened individuality.

While Riesman scientifically outlined a personality type that conformed,

the Beat writers laid out an emotional and cultural critique of conformity. Advocating a spontaneous and improvised individualism, the Beats rebelled against a "conformist, bourgeois society."[105] In his provocative *Countering the Counterculture: Rereading Postwar American Dissent from Jack Kerouac to Tomás Rivera*, Manuel Luis Martínez showed that the kind of individualism advocated by the Beats became "reactionary" by the 1960s and identified the fear of conformity as related to white masculine fears of the incipient feminist and civil rights movements.[106]

The advertising novels also presented white masculine hysteria about difference as a foundation of the advertising world. The idea that advertising and public relations men wore gray flannel suits highlighted a particular form of conformity called for by advertising. Bosses and clients wanted to work with those who looked and thought like them. Historians have traced this industry attitude back to at least the 1920s.[107] George Panetta's 1957 comic novel *Viva Madison Avenue!* illustrated the clash between WASPs and the few Italian Americans then working in advertising. Panetta, himself an advertising executive, wrote this tongue-in-cheek account of two Italian American advertising men as if his heroes embodied all the stereotypes Anglo-Saxons (as the Italian Americans called them in the novel) had of them. In return, the heroes skewer the conformity—in ideas, dress, lives, and backgrounds—of the advertising industry. The ethnicities represented also have class inflections since the heroes' humor comes from maintaining working-class sensibilities in a determinedly upper-middle-class milieu. The heroes describe themselves:

> Me and Joe worked in a big advertising agency, and after we worked there a couple of years, they find out we were worse than Italians: we were Italians who were never going to move to Westchester or Connecticut no matter what happened and from that time on it was us against the Anglo-Saxons. . . . We were small and dark, and even though we changed our socks and underwear every day (a concession to our wives, not the Anglo-Saxons) . . . at Lowell & Lynch everybody noticed us, looking like we looked and being what we were, and it annoyed them because they couldn't believe what they saw.[108]

Viva Madison Avenue! had no plot, but proceeded through a series of episodes based on the contrast between the heroes and everyone else who worked at the agency. At the end of the book, Panetta returned to the issue of masculinity with a final comparison:

> The Anglo-Saxons have very little blood, and when they don't go to bed with their wives, they make up for it by going to musical comedies, or, if there's snow in Vermont, by going skiing. But not me and Joe. When we don't go to bed with our wives (for one reason or another: sometimes by accident Joe goes to sleep under the bed, sometimes his wife is scared; sometimes my wife is reading *Good Housekeeping*, sometimes I'm scared), we go all over town looking at girls and hoping that one of them will look back at us and do with us what our wives didn't do.[109]

One review noted that a "would-be reader" might expect "another expose of the Grey Flannel Suited, Exurbanite Great Man who has become almost as universal a target today as, say, the Nazi of the 1940s. Nothing could be farther from the truth."[110] Another review compared *Viva Madison Avenue!* with other advertising novels: "From deep in the heart of Advertising-land comes this tale of liquor and lubricity which, intertwined, have become the insigne of the advertising novel. But this time there is a kicker."[111] Panetta's critique of the advertising industry and the conformity of business culture became more pointed through the use of humor.

The critique of conformity came not only from outside but from within the business community. In *The Conquest of Cool: Business Culture, Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism*, Thomas Frank described the movement within the advertising industry that came to be called the Creative Revolution. Frank contended that creativity and the hip attitude adopted by advertising in the 1960s was not a reaction to or cooptation of the counterculture, but was a preceding, overlapping, and continuing criticism from within advertising and business of 1950s conformity and consumption. The advertising novelists proved Frank's point that, by the late 1950s, advertising and business leaders criticized their own industries for "creative dullness," a critique "that had much in common with the critique of mass society which gave rise to the counterculture." Frank noted that, by the 1960s, the counterculture and the corporate world both "deplored conformity, distrusted routine, and encouraged resistance to established power."[112]

In his second novel about advertising, *The Admen* (1958), Shepherd Mead detailed the conformist form of advertising to which Frank alluded and the

creative possibilities that lay ahead as part of the Creative Revolution. The young hero wanders through the world of advertising, testing his ideas against those of other characters. In an interior monologue, the hero muses that his boss "stood for all the things he hoped advertising had outgrown, the old-line hard sell, the big block-letter headlines, the heavy hand." He thinks his own approach is "crisp and frank," using "good and striking art, to delight and intrigue as far as possible, to establish a position for a product by the quality of its advertising" noting finally that "this was as far from [the boss's] approach as you could get."[113]

The Admen also showed that the advertising industry sought its own solutions to this crisis of conformity. As Mead put it, everyone in advertising had "an escape plan," including those who "had bought islands, studied farming, learned about fish liver oil, started direct-mail advertising companies, begun novels, plays and children's books, learned metal working and gone to postgraduate night school for teaching degrees." The narrator noted that "not one in fifty would escape; most didn't really want to, but they had to believe that the door was real. A room with a door was always better than a room without one, even if you never used it."[114] The advertising men, as canaries in the mineshaft, had seen the stultifying nature of the conformist business culture and wanted out. Some of the ad novels showed advertising executives escaping by running away, but others became creative and fought the old-fashioned guardians of boring advertising to do interesting and fulfilling ads.

Many historians have traced the beginnings of the so-called Creative Revolution to William Bernbach, whom Frank called "at once a hard-headed adman and one of postwar consumerism's most trenchant critics, Madison Avenue's answer to Vance Packard."[115] A Jewish immigrant, whose father was a designer of women's clothes, as well as a graduate of public school and New York University, Bernbach was the ultimate Madison Avenue outsider. Bernbach's advertisements—created within the agency he founded in 1949 (Doyle, Dane, Bernbach; DDB)—featured flashes of brilliance, simplicity, and photographs, with the most famous being the Volkswagen campaign begun in 1959.[116] The creative revolution affected not only the advertising itself but also the agency's relationship with clients. In an interview, Bernbach asserted that "we don't permit any client to give us ground rules. We think it's bad for the client," and went on to say:

> I can tell you that a very, very big prospect once said to me, "What would you say, Bill, if you were told exactly where to put the logo and what size it would be." I had over $10,000,000 riding on my answer, and I said, "I would say we are the wrong agency for you." Now, in the long run I think this makes for a very healthy agency because we preserve our point of view. It lets us do the kind of creative work we really believe in and not prostitute that talent for that 15%.[117]

So, when advertising novelists looked for a way out for their heroes, they had the model of a creative agency, like DDB, where the advertising men ruled the clients and did interesting work.

Frank carefully outlined the limitations of the critique offered by the Creative Revolution and, by extension, that by the advertising novels. Frank pointed out that "for the new Madison Avenue, the solution to the problems of consumer society was—more consuming."[118] Indeed, just as Frank might have predicted, the endings of the advertising novels remained unsatisfying as critiques. Despite their misgivings, the advertising guys often chose to do advertising "the right way," so the solution to their problems was more advertising. With the exception of *The Space Merchants*, no novel offered a criticism of the larger system of which advertising was a part.

In the novels, the heroes must find a way to be creative within the boundaries offered by advertising.[119] Harold Livingston, in *The Detroiters* (1958), set a familiar advertising novel scenario in the automobile industry. A returned veteran takes a job with a Detroit agency tyrannized by its biggest client, the head of Coronado Motors Corporation. In a telling passage, the client expresses his inflexibility, "We in the advertising business . . . must be extremely cautious. Each word of Coronado copy must be chiseled in stone. It must convey the meaning *we* wish, no other."[120]

The hero, David Manning, a cynical heel at the beginning of the book, by the end finds redemption in creative advertising. Manning works, throughout, within the demands of the automobile industry, where "success was not measured by whimsical sales graphs, or vague figures of factory production. Automobile sales could be seen, heard, touched," and where ad agencies needed to remember that "we're trying to sell cars, not originality. This is an advertising agency, not a creative arts course."[121] The novel made fun of advertising writers who wrote novels, with one copywriter wisecracking that he is writing a novel titled "*Son of the Hucksters*" and the hero noting:

> I know too many dedicated souls, talented people who've broken themselves fighting the system. Spent their whole lives searching for

> causes and social battlegrounds. They believe their only purpose for existence is to influence the course of events. Writers, for instance. Good writers who look down their noses at advertising. They'd rather starve. So what does it get them? Self-respect? Integrity? Try paying your bills with integrity.[122]

Along the way, the hero receives a lot of advice and the novel privileges two advisors, a grizzled copywriter and a younger protégé, representing the voices of creativity before and after the conformist 1950s. The copywriter emphasized that "because you're a huckster, you don't have to be a whore. This business can be worthwhile, and gratifying. Even selling automobiles. But only if you maintain your creative integrity"; the protégé explains, "I believe the business can be creative, and a man can be independent, and you can have all that and still make good money."[123]

The novel concludes with a discussion of how the story could end, an exchange between the hero and his unhappy wife, who constantly worries that advertising is changing her husband. The hero begins, "But as sure as I'm sitting here, I know there's a cleaner way of operating. More honorable." His wife agrees and presents a way out, 'You chuck the dirty old advertising business, and walk off into the sunset—on your way to Tahiti to write a novel exposing the dirty old advertising business." But the hero decides leaving advertising would show he is "beaten," and instead asks his copywriter friend to form a new agency, "a creative agency. An advertising agency, not a convalescent home for no-talent slobs."[124]

A 1981 novel, *Women's Work* by Anne Tolstoi Wallach, uses much the same story about the automobile industry and a young advertising woman trying to do good work and make her way to the top in what *Newsweek* called "a new pop-fiction genre, the co-ed corporate cliffhanger." While the author, an advertising veteran, received the biggest author's advance ever given up to that time, *Newsweek* noted "as fiction, it's good journalism" and other reviews agreed. The ending mimicks that of *The Detroiters* with the heroine and her boyfriend (her former competitor in the advertising business) starting their own agency where they can be more creative and open to women and African Americans.[125] The author, Wallach, taking the other route, makes money selling her novel. In many ways, the advertising novels published after 1960 retold the same stories with new main characters; the authors had the same relationship to the advertising industry as their predecessors had in the 1950s.

The advertising novelists joined others who critiqued the mass consumption culture after World War II. They brought a deep understanding of consumption to their analysis of mass culture that allowed them to see, perhaps even more clearly than the nonfiction and scholarly writers, the ways in which mass consumption, as both sold and expressed by advertising, threatened individuality and creativity while reinforcing conformity. But their position as insiders hobbled their ability to frame a radical or even useful critique. Like the nonfiction writers Horowitz described, their work, lives, and writing focused on white, middle-class consumers with money—those to whom they directed their advertising.

Furthermore, facing the issues of consumption and operating in an advertising model, the advertising novelists couldn't see collective solutions. They took an individual approach, just as did advertising. Advertising addressed consumers individually, as someone who made individual decisions despite, or to mask, the fact that advertising urged consumers to join large groups, all of whom made the same decisions. The novels' heroes also came to individualized solutions, but they came to them together, with novel after novel ending the same way. As novelists, working in a form from its beginning based on the journey of a single person, these writers were the ultimate individualists. But the advertising novelists weren't alone in this blind spot. They joined a diverse group of thinkers from Dwight MacDonald to Vance Packard to Jack Kerouac who also came up with individual solutions. The business critique of the conformity of mass culture provided the only alternative to an individual reaction. This response became the Creative Revolution in advertising and several of the novels ended with the heroes becoming more "creative."

Both critiques of advertising and mass culture—the one that resulted in a different kind of advertising and the one that ended in individual solutions—showed how mass culture operated after World War II. Advertising interpellates critiques. In many ways, advertising has always used critiques of itself to validate its goals and approaches. The acceptance of critiques by advertising, and mass culture, institutionally and in content, made their existence less sinister. So the Truth in Advertising campaign of the Progressive movement allowed advertisers to contend that their advertisements were "true" without further questioning an institution that lied regularly. By defining "truth" narrowly, the industry escaped further scrutiny. When advertising declared itself "creative" and the heroes of novels found redemption in this new kind of advertising, no one needed to worry about the excesses of

consumption promoted by advertising. When individual advertisements, like Bernbach's for the Volkswagen Beetle, joked about conformity, how big a problem could it be?

In 1972, a Doyle Dane Bernbach vice president published an advertising novel that showed a greater acceptance of advertising and mass culture than novels published immediately after the war, such as *Aurora Dawn* and *The Hucksters*. Jack Dillon's *The Advertising Man* takes place in a creative advertising agency where the president has just died and been replaced by a more conventional packaged goods man. The novel follows ten days in the life of the chief copywriter, at the end of which he is fired and divorced with no resolution to any of his problems. Unlike Wouk or Wakeman, Dillon doesn't worry about the nature of advertising or mass culture, but cares only about the creativity of the advertising agency at which his hero works. An older and revered copywriter tells clients:

> I think advertising's had it. I don't think people believe it any more. I think it's a waste of money. I'm not even sure it's moral. Anyway, we don't have any formulas here. There's no book we go by. I don't even know what to tell you. Half the time, I don't even know what I'm doing.[126]

Interesting advertising professionals embrace that uncertainty, and the creativity it represents. The hero's estranged wife finds his life "phony," but he rejects that viewpoint and her—in earlier novels, she would have persuaded him to quit and leave town. In Wouk's and Wakeman's novels, the women represented the "real" life chosen by the heroes. Dillon's hero walks away from his wife and the possibility of a more meaningful life. In the book's last sentence, the hero muses, "Well, that's life, right? No skyrockets. No parades. You just wind up drunk on somebody's lawn."[127] Martin Levin wrote in the *New York Times* that the novel was "entirely believable" and "minus the hokum writers have confected since Frederic Wakeman laid the facts of Ad Alley life on the line, back in 1946."[128] The general critiques that had been possible in earlier novels now seemed unrealistic. Jack Dillon wrote that creative advertising connected Madison Avenue with the "people." Creative advertising was fun, democratic, and nothing to worry about.[129]

Again, the critiques mounted by the advertising novels mirrored the critiques of the New York Intellectuals, nonfiction writers, and Beats. Because

of their multiple subjectivity, as salesmen, advertisers, cultural workers, and consumers, the advertising novelists, working in a popular form, explored the role of the individual in mass culture with an intensity and practicality that other critics lacked. By bringing a wavering heroic everyman into contact with the one person who had held out against the blandishments of a consumer culture, for example, the novels showed how ordinary people might individually resolve the contradictions they faced in the commodified, and newly entrenched, mass culture.

Neither the nonfiction nor the fiction writers thought the situation hopeless. They proposed solutions, including strong individuality, to resist mass culture. In addition, like earlier American reformers, both sets of authors believed that bringing the problem to light would help solve it. While it is tempting to dismiss the advertising novelists as neither radical nor intellectual because they failed to present a coherent or successful alternative to mass culture, other critiques written at the same time demonstrated the same problem. The novels proved that a wide readership knew of the mass culture critiques beyond those who read nonfiction and small magazines. The critique presented in the novels also influenced advertising's form and the culture in which it operated, as evidenced by how the advertising industry and society took up the novels' phrases and formulas to talk about advertising. The ways advertising and the culture of consumption contained the critiques of the advertising novels illustrate the mechanisms by which capitalism worked to maintain itself at a particular cultural and micro- level. Mass culture proved particularly resistant to all forms of critique, in part because it was able to incorporate all the criticisms into new and improved cultural forms.

With other intellectuals of the time, the postwar advertising novelists worried about mass culture. By 1972, advertising had changed and mass culture had become familiar and accepted, in just the way the novels had predicted. All was advertising: some types better than other types, and the only protest had Jack Dillon's hero on a drunken bender. The critiques presented by the novelists had most often been dismissed because they occurred in popular novels, or because they weren't realistic enough, or because they were formulaic. When compared with a novel published twenty-five years later, Herman Wouk's and Frederic Wakeman's novels stand as trenchant social protests of an individual's place in mass culture.

Appendix: Novels Examined in This Chapter

Advertising

Samuel Hopkins Adams, *The Clarion* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1914).
Harford Powel, Jr., *The Virgin Queene* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1928).
John P. Marquand, *H. M. Pulham, Esquire* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1941).
Fielden Farrington, *The Big Noise* (New York: Crown, 1946).
Eric Hodgins, *Mr. Blandings Builds His Dream House* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1946).
Arkady Leokum, *Please Send Me Absolutely Free* (New York: Harper, 1946).
Frederic Wakeman, *The Hucksters* (New York: Rinehart, 1946).
Herman Wouk, *Aurora Dawn* (New York: Doubleday, 1947).
Eric Hodgins, *Blandings' Way* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1950).
Jeremy Kirk, *The Build-Up Boys* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951).
Frederik Pohl and C. M. Kornbluth, *The Space Merchants* (New York: Ballantine, 1952).
Robert Alan Aurthur, *The Glorification of Al Toolum* (New York: Rinehart, 1953).
Howard Browne, *Thin Air* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1954).
Robert Bruce, *Tina: The Story of a Hellcat* (New York: Lion Book, 1954).
Alfred Eichler, *Death of an Ad Man* (New York: Abelard-Shuman, , 1954).
Ian Gordon, *The Whip Hand* (New York: Crown, 1954).
Matthew Peters, *The Joys She Chose* (New York: Dell, 1954).
Samm Sinclair Baker, *One Touch of Blood* (Hasbrouck Heights, N.J.: Graphic Publishing Company, 1955).
Gerald Green, *The Last Angry Man* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1956).
Samm Sinclair Baker, *Murder—Most Dry* (New York: Graphic Publishing Company, , 1956).
George Panetta, *Viva Madison Avenue!* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1957).
Robert L. Foreman, *The Hot Half Hour* (New York: Criterion, 1958).
James Kelly, *The Insider* (New York: Henry Holt, 1958).
Harold Livingston, *The Detroiters* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1958).

Shepherd Mead, *The Admen* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1958).
Edward Stephens, *A Twist of Lemon* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1958).
Edward Hannibal, *Chocolate Days, Popsicle Weeks* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1970).
Jack Dillon, *The Advertising Man* (New York: Harper's Magazine Press, 1972).
Jane Trahey, *Thursdays 'til 9* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980).
Anne Tolstoi Wallach, *Women's Work* (New York: New American Library, 1981).

Public Relations/ Marketing/ Broadcasting Novels

Shepherd Mead, *The Big Ball of Wax: A Story of Tomorrow's Happy World* (New York: Avon Book Division, Hearst Corporation, 1954).
Al Morgan, *The Great Man* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1955).
Sloan Wilson, *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* (New York: Arbor House, 1955).
Robin Moore, *Pitchman* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1956).
J. Harvey Howells, *The Big Company Look* (New York: J. Harvey Howells, 1958).
Middleton Kiefer, *Pax* (New York: Random House, 1958).
Sterling Quinlan, *The Merger* (New York: Doubleday, 1958).
Robert Van Riper, *A Really Sincere Guy* (New York: David McKay, 1958).

CHAPTER 4. ADVERTISING NOVELS AS CULTURAL CRITIQUE: DRY MARTINIS, RARE STEAKS, AND WILLING WOMEN

1. I first became aware of these novels when reading Stephen Fox, *The Mirrormakers: A History of American Advertising and Its Creators* (New York: Vintage Books, 1985), 200–210. Fox does interesting readings of about half the novels that he sees as formulaic, as well as reflective of both life on Madison Avenue and 1950s life in general. For a list of novels examined here, see the Appendix at end of the chapter.

2. "The Drumbeatniks," *Time* 72 (10 November 1958): 104; see also Milton Moskowitz, "Novels of Past Decade Paint Lurid Ad World," *Advertising Age* (8 October 1956): 2, 96; William Hogan, "Glamor Novels—Some Faces in the Crowd," *San Francisco Chronicle* (14 October 1958): 33; Al Morgan, "Unhorsing a Heel," *Saturday Review* 41 (1 November 1958): 20; A.C. Spectorsky, "SR Runs Six Up the Flagpole," *Saturday Review* 41 (8 November 1958): 14–15; Ralph Vines, "Is It True What They Say About Admen?" *Advertising Age* 31 (11 July 1960): 104.

3. Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920–1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985); Daniel Horowitz, *The Anxieties of Affluence: Critiques of American Consumer Culture, 1939–1979* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004).

4. On the best-seller list see Alice Payne Hackett, *Sixty Years of Best Sellers: 1895–1955* (New York: Bowker, 1956); on the total number of copies sold see Keith L. Justice, *Best-seller Index: All Books, Publisher's Weekly, and the New York Times Through 1990* (London: McFarland, 1998); the six books that appeared on the *New York Times* best-seller list were Frederic Wakeman, *The Hucksters* (New York: Rinehart, 1946), 58 weeks; Eric Hodgins, *Mr. Blandings Builds His Dream House* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1946), 8 weeks; Herman Wouk, *Aurora Dawn* (New York: Doubleday, 1947), 4 weeks; Gerald Green, *The Last Angry Man* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1956), 52 weeks; Sloan Wilson, *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* (New York: Arbor House, 1955); Al Morgan, *The Great Man* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1955), 6 weeks; on the use of best-seller lists to gauge popularity, see Laura J. Miller, "The Best-Seller List as Marketing Tool and Historical Fiction," *Book History* 3 (2000): 286–304.

5. "The Drumbeatniks," 104.

6. Thomas Frank, *The Conquest of Cool: Business Culture, Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

7. Horowitz, *The Anxieties of Affluence*, 4.

8. Kathy M. Newman, *Radio Active: Advertising and Consumer Activism, 1935–1947* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

9. Wakeman, *The Hucksters*, Jack Conway, dir., 1947.

10. Paul Lazarsfeld and Patricia Kendall, *Radio Listening in America* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1948), 75.

11. Lazarsfeld and Kendall, *Radio Listening in America*, 77–79.

12. Herman Wouk, *Aurora Dawn* (1947; New York: Pocket Books, 1983), Preface. All references are to this reprint edition, which is still easily available.

13. John P. Marquand, *H. M. Pulham, Esquire* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1941). See also "Harvard '15," *Time* 37 (3 March 1941): 87–88 and Malcolm Cowley, "The Boston Story," *New Republic* 104 (3 March 1941): 314–15; Dorothy Hillyer, "Boston Legend and *The Right People*: Brilliant Novel That Explains Some Myths and Prejudices," *New York Herald Tribune Books* (23 February 1941): 1; "Boston and Maine—Light on Asia," *New Yorker* 17 (22 February 1941): 68, 70; J. Donald Adams, "The Portrait of a Bostonian," *New York Times Book Review* (23 February 1941): 1; Howard Mumford Jones, "Think Fast, Mr. Marquand," *Saturday Review of Literature* 23 (22 February 1941): 5; Mason Wade, "Three Novels," *Commonweal* 34 (2 May 1941): 39–40.

14. Dorothy Sayers, *Murder Must Advertise* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1933); Janet Hitchman, *Such a Strange Lady: A Biography of Dorothy L. Sayers* (New York: Avon Books, 1975).

15. Edwin Lefevre, *H. R.* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1915).

16. Daniel Pope, *The Making of Modern Advertising* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), 119.

17. Nathaniel C. Fowler, Jr., *Gumption: The Progressions of Newson New* (Boston: Small, Maynard, 1905), 242.

18. "Recent Fiction," *Dial* 57 (16 October 1914): 299–300; for other reviews see *Literary Digest* 50 (16 January 1915): 107; "The Clarion," *New York Times* 19 (11 October 1914): 431; Samuel Hopkins Adams, *The Clarion* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1914).

19. Adams, *The Clarion*, 258.

20. W. S. B., "A Battle for Principle," *Boston Evening Transcript* (23 September 1914): 20.

21. I take the term "advertising fictions" from the work of Jennifer Wicke, *Advertising Fictions: Literature, Advertisement, and Social Reading* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), although my use of it is much narrower than Wicke's wide-ranging exploration.

22. Harford Powel, Jr., *The Virgin Queene* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1928); for reviews see "The Virgin Queene," *Saturday Review of Literature* 4 (19 May 1928): 896; "Tongues in Cheeks," *New Republic* 55 (13 June 1928): 102; and "High-Hearted Spoofing," *New York Times Book Review* (22 April 1928): 8.

23. Simone Weil Davis, *Living Up to the Ads: Gender Fictions of the 1920s* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2000), 69–70.

24. Amy Kaplan, *The Social Construction of American Realism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 7.

25. Kaplan, *Social Construction of American Realism*, 9.

26. Kaplan, *Social Construction of American Realism*, 13.

27. Kaplan, *Social Construction of American Realism*, 159–60.

28. For a different view of "reality" versus media image in the advertising novels, see Lynda M. Maddox and Eric J. Zanot, "The Image of the Advertising Practitioner as Presented in the Mass Media, 1900–1972," *American Journalism* 2, 2 (Spring 1985): 117–29.

29. Spectorsky, "SR Runs Six Up the Flagpole," 14–15; for a brief note about the

advertising careers of James Kelly, Edward Stephens, Shepherd Mead, and Harold Livingston see "Books—Authors," *New York Times* (23 September 1958): 30.

30. Davis, *Living Up to the Ads*, 2, 14.

31. Kaplan, *Social Construction of American Realism*, 13.

32. *Nobody's Fool* had the same plot; a public relations firm found the most "common" man who would then endorse ideas and products. See Charles Yale Harrison, *Nobody's Fool* (New York: Henry Holt, 1948).

33. Robert Alan Aurthur, *The Glorification of Al Toolum* (New York: Rinehart, 1953), 77.

34. Green, *Last Angry Man*. In *Pax*, a PR firm uses a war hero to sell drugs and learns a lesson; Middleton Kiefer, *Pax* (New York: Random House, 1958). In *The Build Up Boys*, the chosen spokesman turns out to be evil and so teaches the young executive about life; Jeremy Kirk, *The Build-Up Boys* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951). Morgan's *The Great Man* is told from the viewpoint of the honest man chosen to replace a beloved television host.

35. Green, *Last Angry Man*, 217. I dedicate this quote to my father, who agrees with the ideology it expresses.

36. James Kelly, "SR's Book of the Week: The Last Angry Man" *Saturday Review* 40 (2 February 1957): 12; for other reviews see Granville Hicks, "The Doctor Was Tough," *New York Times* (3 February 1957): 4; Fred Marsh, "TV and M.D. in a Big Novel" *New York Herald Tribune Book Review* (3 February 1957): 1, 8.

37. Green, *Last Angry Man*, 401.

38. Don Mankiewicz, "Average American," *New York Times* (19 April 1953): 25; Lee Rogow, "Offspring of the Big-Ad Men," *Saturday Review* 36 (13 June 1953): 20, 43.

39. Harold Livingston, *The Detroiters* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1958), 258.

40. James Kelly, *The Insider* (New York: Henry Holt, 1958), 252.

41. Wolcott Gibbs, "The Big Boffola," *New Yorker* 22 (1 June 1946): 88.

42. Wilson, *Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*, Introduction.

43. Wilson, *Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*, 183.

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50. Harry P. Bridges, *Practical Advertising: A Comprehensive Guide to the Planning and Preparation of Modern Advertising in All of Its Phases* (New York: Rinehart, 1949), 775.

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CONCLUSION. STORIES OF *OTAKU* AND *DESIS*

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3. For an example of a small, fan-run anime importer, see http://www.animeigo.com/ (accessed 3 August 2006).

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6. For similar studies see the excellent books by Sunaina Maira, *Desis in the House: Indian American Youth Culture in New York City* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002) and Sunita Mukhi, *Doing the Desi Thing: Performing Indianness in New York City* (New York: Garland, 2000).