

**The Literary Representation of Glamour and Sex in Harold Robbins's
The Carpetbaggers and other Novels**

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Abstract

Glamour is a popular subject. The books on glamour emphasise the romance and the illusion. Many of the title announce the books themselves give more of a mixed message than their titles do. Like glamour and romance sex is a staple of contemporary fiction. It won't surprise that the subject is indeed very popular. *The Carpetbaggers* is bestselling novel by Harold Robbins, which was adapted into a 1964 film of the same title. Robbins is known for his vigorous style which varies from place to place and character to character.

Key Words: Fiction, Sex, Glamour, Beauty, Best-seller

Many people choose their reading by topic or genre. So, it is useful to provide these categories if only to give more information as to what the book is about. The books are classified by the standard fictional genres: mystery, horror, saga, science fiction, spy, historical novel, western short stories and books for young readers. They are also classified by topic if the main action involves one of the subjects found so frequently among the best sellers: namely glamour and sex and international intrigue without the spies. Where additional information is needed, their broader categories and used suspense, adventure and drama- paralleling the kind of classification often found in movie listening.

Well as in those glamorous figures are familiar characters in American best-seller fiction. Books about glamour, like so many of the best sellers, offer authentic "inside" accounts. Readers are shown the secrets beneath the surface: the drags, alcoholism and extramarital affairs. However, like other books, too, these vary widely in their inside information, as the

author's background show. The books on glamour deal with the personalities and places of the entertainment industry. We thus include all novels about film and theatre people, models and media celebrities and cult figure. The word glamour suggests a romantic, often illusionary, attraction; it was originally used to mean a kind of magic spell. It means the attractive and exciting quality that makes a person, a job or a place seem special, often because of wealth or status and even physical beauty that also suggests wealth or success¹.

Glamour is a popular subject. The books on glamour emphasise the romance and the illusion. Many of the title announce the books themselves give more of a mixed message than their titles do. They show the problems beneath the surface of celebrities' lives even while they use the glamour for all it is worth in the story. The books have become less critical and more frequent and the number of novels about glamour has increased. In this regard Harold Robbins' novels about glamour are *The Adventurers*², *The Inheritors*³, *The*

Lonely Lady⁴, Goodbye, Janette⁵. These novels of Harold Robbins emphasise both the glamour and romance. These novels have become less critical and more frequent.

Like glamour and romance sex is a staple of contemporary fiction. It won't surprise that the subject is indeed very popular. In fact, novels about sex are no more difficult to classify than those of any other topic. It was D.H. Lawrence who discussed sex openly in his novels as 'Sons and Lovers'⁶ and Lady Chatterley's lover⁷. Federico Fellini in the course of an interview granted at the premier of his film Fellini's Satyricon, said "....Sex is not such a big problem as Christianity has made it. Sex is only the lure of sexes; sex is just sex."⁸

Harold Robbins was such a writer whose opinion about glamour and sex made him the best-selling authors of his age. The Adventurers, The Inheritors, The Betsy⁹, The Pirate¹⁰, The Lonely Lady, Dream Die First¹¹, Goodbye, Janette, were the novels, in which Robbins always offered a mystery of sorts and always seemed to be interminable, much to the delight of readers. His novels deal with social and psychological themes, hunger of money, poverty, conflict between illusion and reality, gap between profession and practice, human frailties and inconsistencies, drawing his most haunting characters mainly from the upper class. The fictional genre allows him greater elbowroom to portray different or conflicting characters situations, points of view, Structures and patterns of experience. His The Carpetbaggers¹² widely acclaimed as a powerful but concretization of the cross currents and counter points between the death wish and the resurreктив power of human faith and

love.

The Carpetbaggers is bestselling novel by Harold Robbins, which was adapted into a 1964 film of the same title. The term "carpetbagger" has the generic meaning of a presumptuous newcomer who enters a new territory seeking success. It derived from ambitious Northerners who flocked to the post-Civil-War South (carrying their clothes and possessions in a handbag made of carpet material), seeking opportunities to help newly-enfranchised black citizens run for political office in return for various flavours. In this novel, the territory is the movie industry, and the newcomer is a wealthy heir to an industrial fortune who, like Howard Hughes, simultaneously pursued aviation and Movie-making avocations.

Ian Parker described the book as:

"a roman a clef-it was generally thought to have been-

*Inspired by the life of Howard Hughes."*¹³

In an interview with Dick Lochte, Robbins said "The airplane manufacturer in the Carpetbaggers was Bill Lear, not Howard Hughes, by the way." TV Guide Online's capsule summary of the movie says, however, "Deny it though he might, Harold Robbins obviously used parts of the life of Howard Hughes as the basis for his major character, Jonas Cord." One must agree with Parker and TV Guide, since Lear, developer of the Lear jet and the 8-track tape player, was more famous as an engineer than as an aviator, and had no connection with Hollywood.

In the Carpetbaggers the young Nevada Smith returns to find his parents tortured with branding irons, the mother raped and skinned alive. In later life he discovers one

of the torturers still using her tanned breast as a tobacco pouch. Smith's revenges are typically violent and genital. The first of the murderers he catches up with he leaves to have his pubis (an oddly favorite Robbins term) eaten by ants, after slitting his eyelids and staking him in the sun. The second he judicially shoots twice in the belly and once in the balls so he can watch him die at the proper leisurely rate. The other Hughes inspired, hero Jonas starts his adult life with the motto mi padre ha metro my father is dead. The most extravagant of Robbins fantasies The Pirate, the hero is ripped from the belly of his dying mother. Memories of Another Day starts with the young hero's father's death:

'The last time I saw my father, he was lying quietly on

His back in his coffin', his eyes closed, an unaccustomed

blandness on his strong features, his thick white hair

and heavy eyebrows neatly brushed, I stood there in the

silence of the funeral chapel staring down at him. There

was something wrong. All wrong. After a moment I

realized what it was. My father had never slept on his

*back. Not once in all the years I knew him.'*¹⁴

Further confusing the situation the names of real people whom Robbins' fictional characters resemble are often mentioned briefly within the novel, as if they inhabited the fictional world alongside their fictional doubles. The character

Nevada Smith is a cowboy who breaks into the movies by volunteering to perform a risky stunt, becomes fabulously wealthy as a movie cowboy star, and becomes proprietor of a Wild West show. In these details he bears a vague resemblance to Tom Mix, who was a star performer in the 101 Wild West Show and became in turn a movie extra, stunt man, and major star. Some also see a resemblance between Nevada Smith and William Boyd, Who became famous as Hop along Cassidy. Odaensay that Smith was based on cowboy actor Ken Maynard. A 1966 movie entitled Nevada Smith starring Steve McQueen was based on his role in this book. The role of Billy the kid in Hughes The Outlaw was played by Jack Betel, who, prior to his movie career was neither an outlaw nor a cowboy, but an insurance clerk.

The Carpetbaggers resembles the novels of the Marquis de Sade, which interleave philosophical disquisitions, sex scenes, shocking violence and fiendish torture, all repeated ad limited and-to some-ad nauseam. The most successful of Robbins's many successful books, it was eventually to sell, as of 2004, over eight million copies. The profile of Robbins" in Gale's Contemporary Authors Online makes the startling claim that *The Carpetbaggers* is estimated to be the fourth most-read book in history." Published at the onset of the sexual revolution, *The Carpetbaggers* demonstrates Robbins's skill at judging the exact boundaries of permissibility. Only two years earlier, the U.S. Postmaster General had banned D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* from the mails as obscene. In 1960, publisher Grove Press won the Supreme Court case contesting the ban, but even in 1962 booksellers all over the country were sued for selling

The Carpetbaggers never landed in court. It did not extend the boundaries of what was acceptable. But it vigorously (and profitably) exploited the territory that Grove Press had opened up. *The Carpetbaggers* was also perhaps the first New York Times bestseller to include scenes of fellatio.

The Carpetbaggers is full of sharply drawn characters who search endlessly for power and love, and seek to dominate other even at the expenses of self-destruction. Their sins are as great as their successes and Harold Robbins leaves nothing of their lives uncovered.¹⁵

In spite of Robbins's extraordinary use of the word 'dignity' here, and the invocation of the bra-burning stereotype here, peps O women s liberation, we recognize the phallic defiance of the child, still selfishly obsessed with its own genitals. There is something very similar in *Dreams Die First*, where the hero's main Hefner-style innovation in his magazine is a centerfold which features nothing but the model's pubis 'Supercuts of the month', as it is called.

Sex is the main element in the *roman a clef* and in it sexual gratification is always achieved by domination or captivation. Thus in the *roman a clef* subplot to *The God father* we are told as part of his character build-up that Johnny Fontane :

"Italian, New York-born crooner, gangster, guess who has maybe a thousand pubic scalps dangling from his belt?"¹⁶

The grotesquely large number, as well as the notion of sex as a predatory game of cowboys and Indians, is typical of the genre. The most appropriate and salesworthy authors of *romans a clef* are

those who are themselves members of the written about club. Itwas not unknown for works to be written under aristocratic noms de plume, by whichcommon hacks were promoted to brevet marquises, duchesses or ladies, so as to suggest spurious membership. Harold Robbins, who can write, has been given the 'Lady' treatment. That is tosay, we are led to take him not as some sordid key-hole peeper, but as someone actually on the inside, one of the set. Thus the *Daily Mail* confirms Robbins's credentials for writing about Khashoggi: 'Robbins, a millionaire many times himself, flits around in such a world.'The same assurance is given, implicitly, by the NEL back cover for *Dreams Die First* : Gareth Brendan, young, power-hungry and ambitious, dramas of expressing his personal vision of liberated sexuality in a magazine that will deal openly and honestly with sex. So Macbo in scorn, to shock and fascinate with its outspoken views.

But for Gareth success also bring threats and obstruction from the underworld, form the law, from rivals. Violent confrontations follow one after another as Gareth converts his dream into a flamboyant private empire of total pleasure and shedonism, in which money and sex go hand in hand in a world so rich it becomes almost too enormous for Gareth to control.

Conclusion:

Thus, Harold Robbins, the insightful novelist was a confirmed believer of glamour and sex. In his novels, he has recorded his yearning for an exploration of life in all its variety and infinity. He has experimented with form and style and achieved remarkable success. Robbins is

known for his vigorous style which varies from place to place and character to character.

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