

The Promiscuous Carter Brown

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In Franco Moretti's *The Novel*, "The Circle Widens" contains a series of essays that explore the transmission of literary forms using quasi-geographic frameworks (402-530). The seven essays use quantitative data to investigate the novel in Britain, the United States of America, Italy, Spain, Japan and Nigeria. Each essay tracks the spread and/or influence of the novel using statistical data. This essay adapts such "literary historiography" to a biological rather than geographical framework to chart the exportation of one of Australia's most successful literary exports, The Carter Brown Mystery Series (CBMS). The CBMS yields well to statistical analysis because of its large sample size (nearly 3000 titles) and its longevity (thirty years).¹

The series presents problems common to the study of any popular literature by prolific authors—lack of comprehensive bibliographic detail, limited library holdings, diversity of languages and incorrect biographical information. The data for this study, therefore, was mined from national libraries, the *Index Translationum*, archival correspondence, collectors' libraries, online fansites, and online auction sites. Data from these disparate but equally important sources was divided into two main categories, English and non-English titles, which were sub-divided into four broad geo-political areas: North America, Europe, Asia and the British Commonwealth. These "locations" were further examined in order to ascertain how the books were imported and/or published, and what changes were effected for the different markets. Finally, a summary of the worldwide appearance of the CMBS provided an overall picture of the extent of the series's promiscuity.

The CBMS is an exported generic template. Its defining characteristic as a literary object is its promiscuity, in the sense of indiscriminate mingling or association. Used scientifically, "promiscuity" describes the selectivity of a biological molecule that reacts with a wide variety of substrates under a wide set of conditions. In an evolutionary context, nature starts with generic promiscuous molecules that are common to many species of organism, and then slowly introduces specificity in response to evolutionary pressures within an individual species. Although a promiscuous molecule will react non-specifically with many targets, it does not function efficiently. Higher

specificity brings greater efficiency, fine-tuning the molecule to the specific biological environment. The CBMS is a promiscuous global literary form because it is marketable in just about any cultural context worldwide and in any language. Importantly, however, the CBMS does *not* export Australia to the world. It is not Australian-specific, and therefore it is a poor vehicle for communicating Australian culture. By comparison, a novel such as Marcus Clarke's *For the Term of His Natural Life* elegantly conveys aspects of Australian culture but fails to resonate as well in other countries. Clarke's novel is not promiscuous enough to fit comfortably into most foreign cultures. On the other hand, the CBMS embodies promiscuity in that the stories are bland and formulaic. No story of the series is particularly appealing or particularly offensive to any one group of readers. But it is not entirely boring either, or it would not sell at all. The CBMS competes successfully in multiple cultural markets because of its uniformly bland appeal and its ability to fit benignly into multiple book markets throughout the world.

It is common for a book that is popular in one country to spread virulently to other countries, ultimately becoming an international best-seller. The vector for transmission is the ambitious publisher who migrates the book from country to country, often selling the country of origin's culture. Such exogenous material appeals to readers in foreign markets because it is perceived as exotic. But what happens when an ongoing *series* of books sells millions of copies domestically and is then exported overseas? I propose that the CBMS phenomenon can be seen, in terms of an epidemiological metaphor, as a literary pandemic.

HISTORY OF CARTER BROWN

Alan Geoffrey Yates was a publicist for QANTAS when Horwitz Publications of Sydney offered him a publishing contract in 1951. Yates wrote for Horwitz for several years before the Horwitz editorial team developed the idea of a one-author crime fiction series to cash in on the popularity of writers such as Mickey Spillane. They approached Yates, whose contributions to their Scientific Thriller series resembled crime rather than science fiction. The first "Peter Carter Brown" story, *The Lady is Murder*, appeared in September 1951.² Four years and seventy one novels later, the cover of *Swan Song for a Siren* (1955) claimed sales of ten million (Figure 1). Horwitz sent sample titles to American publishing giant New American Library (NAL). NAL was impressed enough to sign a licensing agreement in 1957, and the following year *The Blonde* was launched in the USA under the Signet imprint. Under the auspices of NAL, the CBMS became arguably Australia's biggest cultural

export of the 1950s and 1960s. In total, over 300 books appeared between 1951 and 1985, and the series was translated into nearly 30 languages.

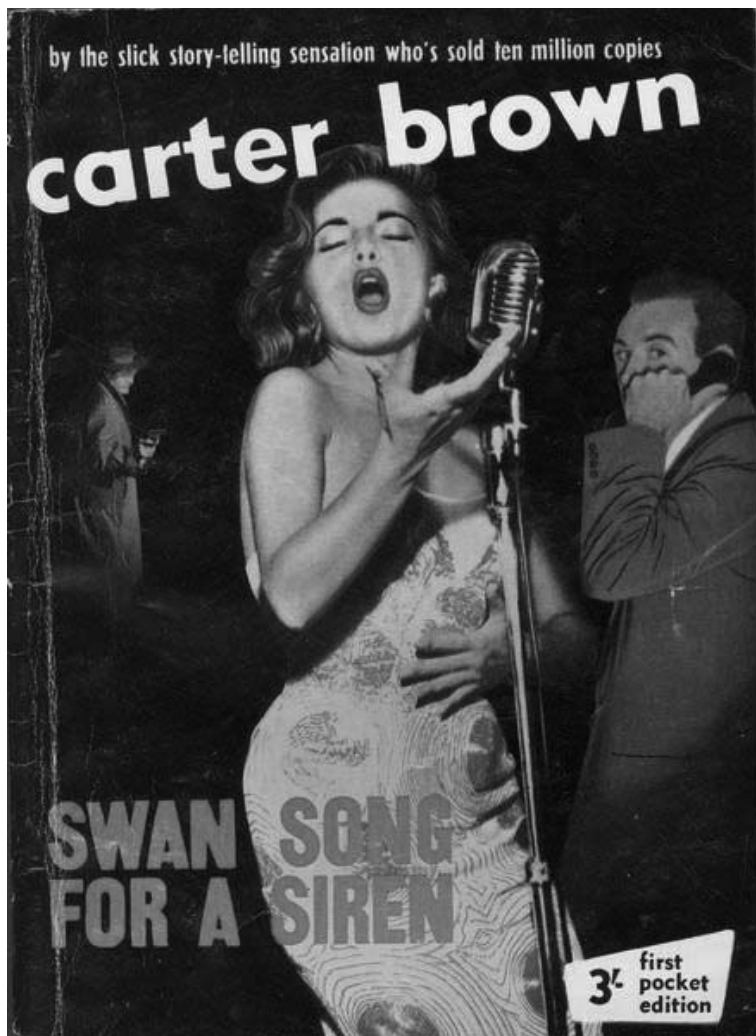


Figure 1: The 1955 cover of *Swan Song for a Siren*.

DATA COLLECTION APOLOGIA

Tracing the CBMS pandemic in non-English languages is complicated because many of the titles slipped past the editors of the *Index Translationum*. Because national libraries tend to be conservative and mass-market fiction is not always collected, it is not surprising that CBMS holdings are uneven. Germany (174 titles), France (158 titles) and Norway (157 titles) apparently have complete holdings, but Italy and Spain have less than a handful;

Argentina and Brazil have no titles. Furthermore, not all libraries list the original English title, so it is difficult to ascertain the exact number of *original* titles;³ for example, *W.H.O.R.E.* (1971) was printed as both *Ah, Les Garces!* and *P.U.T.E.S* in France. Because not all titles were translated literally, in Portuguese *The Dame* became *The Jealous Woman (A Ciumenta)*. A few titles remain a mystery; for example, *Murder is So Gay* is listed as the original English title in several translations, but I have been unable to trace such a title. Without reading the texts, it is impossible to be sure if titles are new ones or reprints of old ones. Converting from Cyrillic script was particularly challenging as translation yielded multiple versions of “Carter Brown”, such as “Karmer Braun”, “Kapmep Braun” and “Brown Quarter”. Given these complications, it was impossible to ascertain the exact number of “original” titles. Fortunately for this study, the number of original titles was of limited value, as promiscuity—how much rather than how many—was central.

English-language catalogues presented another set of problems. The National Library of Canada holds a mixture of British, Australian and US editions; these had to be organised in subsets of “place of publication”. Identifying the place of publication was not straightforward, as in the mid-1960s Horwitz Publications started listing London, Melbourne and Sydney on title pages even though the books were printed and distributed in Australia. Publication dates are often incorrect or missing; this is not always the fault of the cataloguer because Signet books often retained the original printing date on later reprintings. Sighting the covers is the only way to assign correct publication dates. To further complicate matters, different titles were adopted by different countries, and sometimes titles varied within countries. For example, Australia’s *Walk Softly Witch* (1959) appeared in the USA as *The Victim* (1959); Australia’s *So Deadly Sinner* (1959) was published as *Walk Softly Witch* (1959) in the USA and later as *Walk Softly Witch* in Australia (1965). In effect, Australia published the same story under two different titles, and two different stories had the same title. Identifying translated versions of *So Deadly Sinner* (1959) and *Walk Softly Witch* (1959) becomes a nightmare if the original title is not included in a catalogue. Such indiscriminate title changes reinforce the hypothesis that content was secondary to the marketing of a “new” title. However, it does not matter to this study if a book is an original title or a reprinting; the amount of CBMS books that infected each country is of primary importance.

The British Library (BL) holds three “sets” of CBMS books: about half of the numbered digests published between 1955 and 1957, some double volumes, and a collection of later Four Square/New English Library prints.

Furthermore, Peter Carter Brown books are not catalogued under separate titles and are not cross-referenced to Carter Brown. (In fairness, the BL also lacks complete holdings of Britain's own pulp industry authors such as Hank Janson.) The disdain of the BL for the CBMS doubly condemned the series as both colonial and popular.

When Carter Brown was first released in the USA, one enterprising critic, James Sandoe, approached the National Library of Australia (NLA) to find out more about the new writing sensation. He wrote about Carter Brown in his weekly column:

“Carter Brown” is, of course, a proprietary allegation owned by Horwitz Publications, Sydney, Australia and written on an electric typewriter by a young man identified as Allen C Yates [sic] [. . .] But the Library of Congress, thus far and curiously not cognizant of the pseudonym as such describes the books as by “Brown, Carter” while in British publication he seems apparent as “Peter Carter Brown”. . . But at that point [1958] the official Australian bibliography, compiled at the National Library, Canberra, seemed unaware of him. (“Mystery and Suspense” NALA Clipping 18 December 1960)

Carter Brown's Signet editor, Brad Cumings, responded to James Sandoe:

We did not invent the figure of 17,000,000 nor did we invent the two hundred or so novelettes, which exist despite the National Library, Canberra. It is my impression that they do not list paperbound originals. (Folder 219, 19 December 1960)

Since 1960, however, the cultural value of popular fiction has shifted, and NLA has responded by amassing one of the largest collections of Carter Browns in Australia (over 500). It also holds German, Dutch, French, Japanese, Danish, Finnish, Norwegian, Swedish and US editions. Still, the collection is incomplete—titles are missing (*Dimples Died Deluxe* [1953] for example) and dates are not accurate (*Honey, Here's Your Hearse* is listed as 196?, though it was published in 1955 and 1957).

In summary, the creation of a complete CMBS bibliography is unlikely. The problems encountered during the course of this project are common in literary historiography and not unique to Carter Brown. However, the data-mining process reinforces the hypothesis that the success of CBMS was not about the content but the marketing.

SIGNET AND THE BRITISH COMMONWEALTH

Because of Australia's long ties with the British publishing industry (Nile 71-91), Horwitz's British publishing program is worthy of further exploration.

From 1955 onwards, Australian title pages included a note that Horwitz material was distributed in Great Britain, Ireland, Europe and Africa, and in 1960 Horwitz claimed that 21 titles had appeared.⁴ However, few of these titles appear in the British Library. The BL holds 1963 New English Library (NEL) versions of *The Body*, *The Corpse*, *The Lover*, and *The Mistress*; these were reissued when Signet brokered a deal in 1962. NEL started with the latest novels, and the earlier ones followed the next year. For reasons unknown, publication stopped after 1967;⁵ new publisher Corgi began publishing the series in 1979 and printed five of the final fourteen CBMS stories.

It was inevitable that Signet would examine Horwitz's publication arrangements in the United Kingdom, given co-founder Victor Weybright's relationship with the British publishing industry.⁶ During a trip to the United Kingdom, Weybright had noted the absence of the "older books" in London (presumably the 1954–1958 digests), and this prompted him to ask Horwitz if Atlas was "going all-out" (NALA Folder 217, 30 September 1958). Weybright suggested that Horwitz consider another British publisher, Arthur Barker, who had been successful in launching controversial US crime writer Mickey Spillane.

Weybright was quick to point out to Barker that Carter Brown "is now [. . .] an international book author" (30 September, 1958). Weybright's comments galvanised Horwitz. Two weeks later, Horwitz asked Signet about bidding for titles in London. Weybright's reply is worth quoting at some length because of its insights into the reprint etiquette of the time:

You have a splendid idea that is utterly impracticable. Not once in a thousand times is it possible for reprinters to combine forces in bidding for major fiction titles. The control of such titles, through agents and New York and London publishers, respectively, makes it impossible to combine. For example, we recently got the new *Auntie Mame* book through Harcourt, Brace, but it is not certain how Frederick Muller will cope with the reprint rights, which they control in London [. . .] The only way to line up British Empire rights efficiently is to have a representative, or an office, in London, prepared to deal promptly with agents and publishers as they acquire control of big book properties [. . .] The London publishers and agents would take a dim view of the acquisition of world rights on these major properties by NAL or any other reprinter, alone or in combination with a British associate . . .

I can assure you that even if you had a London office it would very very seldom be possible to undertake a combined bid, simply because of the nature of the control and conveyance of big publishing properties. It is practically never possible in either the United States or

the United Kingdom to arrange such total control of a series of books as you have managed to do with Carter Brown [. . .] Major books today are bringing up to \$100,000 advance in the USA, and up to £3000 in London. The big bidders are not only Four Square but also Panther, Pan Corgi, and, more recently, Penguin. Actually, Penguin's fiction has slipped in the face of competition to the point where they have to make high bids to regain big properties and maintain their volume. (NALA Folder 217, 14 October 1958)

Horwitz's response is not in the Signet archives, but Weybright's comments about the UK must have struck a nerve, because one year later Horwitz wrote expressing his concern that their UK publishing program was not as "profitable" as he had hoped: Horwitz received "only" 47% of cover price from their distributors and he posited that it might be more "profitable to sell the Carter Brown rights to an established British publisher, either on a minimum guarantee plus royalty basis or on a deal similar to the one we have with you" (NALA Folder 219, 27 January 1960). Horwitz asked Signet if they would be prepared to undertake some "discreet" negotiations on his behalf (Horwitz 27 January, 1960). Weybright responded that Signet would help find a "regular" British publisher "provided that they did not cut into *our* selling territory" (NALA Folder 219, 21 March 1960).⁷ An agreement was reached with NEL, a subsidiary of New American Library, and in 1962 British editions started to reappear.

FINLAND: CASE STUDY 1

Because the Finnish library has a large collection of CBMS books,⁸ and a Finnish fan maintains a website that contains copies of the covers (Palonen), Finland was selected as a case study to track the migration of the CBMS into a non-English European country.

It appears that the UK was the most likely supplier of Carter Browns for Finland because the Finnish adopted UK titles and not Australian ones (for example *Lipstick Larceny* and not *Kiss Me Deadly*). The earliest books sport the same cover art as the British and Australian versions, for example *The Wench is Wicked* (Figures 2, 3, 4).⁹ However, after the first 22 covers, the issue becomes more complicated. British/Australian and American ones are used until 1960;¹⁰ after this, covers from Signet (supplied for a fee) and another source, most likely local artists, were used (Figures 5, 6, 7).

Table 1

Denmark

Publication Date	Title	Original Date	Original Title
1961, 1971	<i>Mord med mantilla</i>	1957	<i>Murder Wears a Mantilla</i>
1965	<i>Den store kanon</i>	1954	<i>Strip Without Tease</i>
1966	<i>Mord I maneskin</i>	1954	<i>The Frame is Beautiful</i>
1979	<i>En krans til Rebecca</i>	1954	<i>Wreath for Rebecca</i>
1972	<i>Mavis og orkanen</i>	1955	<i>A Bullet for My Baby</i>

France

1961, 1972	<i>La tournée du patron</i>	1957	<i>Strip Without Tease</i>
1961, 1974	<i>Mavis se devise</i>	1955	<i>A Bullet For My Baby</i>
1962, 1974	<i>Le glas pour Rebecca</i>	1954	<i>Wreath for Rebecca</i>
1966	<i>Homicide Blues</i>	1956	<i>Death of a Doll</i>

Germany

1964, 1977	<i>Morderischer Blues</i>	1956	<i>Death of a Doll</i>
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Norway

1965, 1983	<i>Dod mann banker pa</i>	1954	<i>The Frame is Beautiful</i>
1965	<i>Pa et hengende har</i>	1954	<i>Strip Without Tease</i>
1965	<i>Sim-sala-bim</i>	1954	<i>Wreath for Rebecca</i>
1961, 1976	<i>Rodtopp</i>	1956	<i>Death of a Doll</i>
1963	<i>Beinharde Tider</i>	1957	<i>Wreath for a Redhead</i>

Sweden

1961	<i>Inga Vittnen—Inga Spar</i>	1956	<i>Death of a Doll</i>
1963	<i>Aldrig En Dod Minut</i>	1955	<i>A Bullet For My Baby</i>
1963	<i>Kusligt Pa Karneval</i>	1957	<i>Good Mourning Mavis</i>
1965	<i>Slutet Pa Visan</i>	1954	<i>Strip Without Tease</i>
1965	<i>En Krans At Rebecca</i>	1954	<i>Wreath for Rebecca</i>
1965	<i>Det Viskas Om Mord</i>	1954	<i>The Frame is Beautiful</i>

It is reasonable to assume that a drop in supply, that is, fewer titles, would be matched by a drop in titles worldwide.¹¹ However, this is not the case. Figure 9 shows the number of titles released between 1960 and 1980:

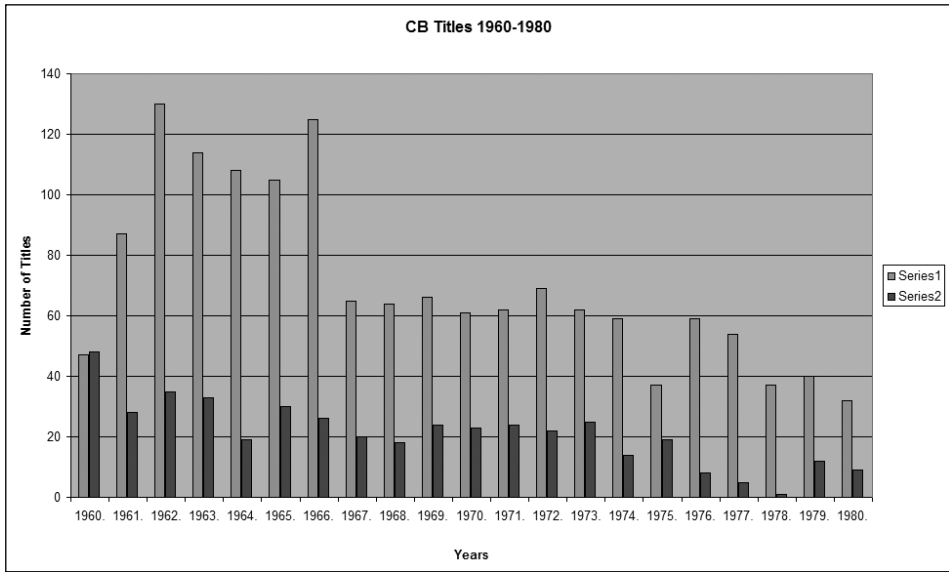


Figure 9: The darker blocks represent titles printed by the “supplier” of fiction (Australia and the USA); the lighter blocks show the number of titles exported to countries, including Canada, the UK and other nations.

During the 1960s, the series remained fairly steady except for an unexplained spike in 1966. In 1962 it enjoyed its highest circulation worldwide; a synchronic examination of 1962 reveals that 107 old and new titles appeared in 11 countries (for example, 28 in the Netherlands, 18 in Norway, 19 in Japan and 19 in Sweden). This blending of old and new titles occurred across time; for example, in France, of the 116 titles printed in the 1970s, 35% (41) were reprints from earlier periods. Thus it appears that it did not matter if the books were new titles or reprints—just as long as they were CBMS books. It is important to remember that CBMS stories were not marketed as “Australian” products, indeed probably few readers realised that the Americanesque stories were written by an Australian author. The indiscriminate publishing of titles indicates the publishers’ determination to maintain the CBMS’s presence even if it meant using decade-old titles.¹²

From the outset, Yates was directed to supply a benign product—one which had the comfort of conformity (Johnson-Woods 80-82). Signet’s insistence on only titles that featured Al Wheeler¹³ for the first American books demonstrates an awareness of the need to create a standardised product which would, in turn, establish a loyal readership who would return monthly to buy the latest title. This is particularly evident in Germany,¹⁴ where Al Wheeler’s name was added to the titles: *Burden Of Guilt* (1970) was issued as *Al Wheeler und das Callgirl* (1971), *The Dream Merchant* (1976) as *Al Wheeler*

und das flotte Madchen (1977), and *The Desired* (1959) as *Al Wheeler und das Komplott* (1961). After translating the titles, Irmtraud Petersson speculates:

I think the reason why so many names appear in the German titles is simply a commercial/promotional one: if you've read one Al Wheeler story and liked it, you might want to read others, and it's easier to identify from the title. (Petersson)

The material was predictable, bland and formulaic; the covers, titles and contents were constructed to attract maximum readership. However, in Japan the Signet formula of cheap entertainment for the millions was repackaged for a totally different audience.

CASE STUDY 2 JAPAN

In October 1959, Horwitz wrote to Signet asking for additional copies to send the copies to Hayakawa Shobo, who were to start publishing Carter Browns in Japanese (Benjamin). According to a Horwitz pamphlet produced two years later, Japan had already published three titles—*The Blonde*, *The Body*, and *The Corpse*—and was contracted to publish at least 50 000 copies of ten more titles. In fact, Hayakawa went on to publish 64 titles and reprints for a total of 77 books. While I have argued elsewhere that Carter Browns were ephemeral, pocket-sized books meant to be carried, read and then disposed of, this was not the case in Japan.

Hayakawa Pocket Mystery Series is arguably Japan's most prestigious crime series. It publishes the best mystery fiction, in Japanese, from around the world. The first title was Mickey Spillane's *The Big Kill* (1953), then Dashiell Hammett's *Red Harvest* (1929), followed by Cornell Woolrich's *The Bride Wore Black* (1940). These elegant books bespeak a reverence for crime fiction, and even though the series did not make money at first, today it is still being published and has over 2000 titles. In 1985 it paid tribute to the recently deceased Carter Brown and printed *Girl in a Shroud*, hitherto unpublished in Japan, in the monthly *Hayakawa's Mystery Magazine*. This is Japan's leading mystery magazine, and contains short stories, book reviews, news, columns and essays by Japanese writers.

The titles and the physical format of the Hayakawa Pocket Mystery books might be familiar, but these were no ordinary pulp publications. The cost (around 600 yen) and distribution (bookshops rather than newsstands or railways stations) placed Hayakawa titles mainly in the hands of educated, wealthy Japanese (Hoida). Furthermore, they look and feel different to other CBMS books; the high production values include fine quality paper and

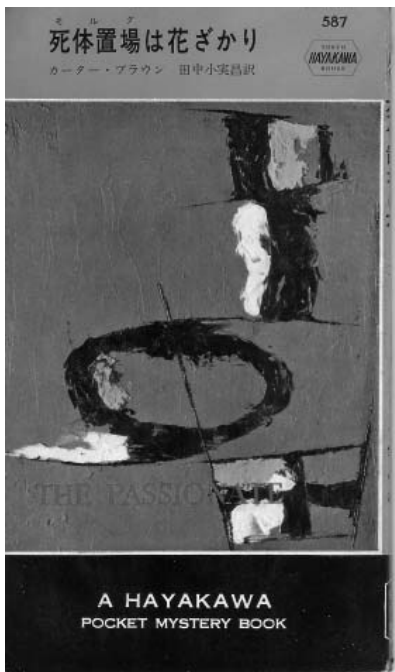


Figure 10: *The Passionate* 1960

superb cover art. The Japanese covers are the only ones not to parade half-naked women or collapsed corpses; instead, abstract art covers give each title an elegant if not enigmatic appeal. The mystery books are mysterious from the outset. From crass cultural commodity, crime, in the hand of the Japanese publishers, became a thing of beauty.

SIGNET AND THE REST OF THE WORLD

The first mention of European distribution is in July 1958, when Horwitz sent a telegram to Signet: “Europe approved on non-exclusive basis” (NALA Folder 217, 16 July 1958). One month later, Signet editor Brad Cumings wrote to Horwitz’s Lyall Moore and asked if a deal with French publisher Gallimard “has been finalised”, for two reasons. First, *Presses de la Cite* had “repeatedly expressed interest” (NALA Folder 217, 19 August 1958)—clearly Signet had been speaking about their new property with French publishers and was keen to extend their control into Europe. Second, Signet wanted to know if the proposed deal was on a one-per-month basis because Gallimard might want Signet to supply galleys of each book. Horwitz replied:

A contract with Gallimard has been signed and provides for one title in December, either *The Blonde* or *The Body* . . . The second one in February, the third one in April and thereafter one each month. The slow start is merely to enable them to get their translation machinery working properly. (NALA Folder 217, 29 August 1958)¹⁵

Horwitz boasted that the six-year contract was “probably one of the biggest ever given by a French publisher” (NALA Folder 217, 29 August 1958).¹⁶ Even though Signet exerted control over the content, Horwitz retained control over overseas rights, even the Signet-first titles (Johnson-Woods). After all, Signet had signed a licensing agreement only, and a licensing agreement does not transfer ownership. However, Signet became increasingly implicated in overseas rights.

Throughout 1960, Signet-Horwitz correspondence contains short references to other overseas publishers. Weybright informed Horwitz that “Sven-

Erik Bergh arrived at office and tells that he is publishing Carter Brown in Sweden” (NALA Folder 217, 13 May 1960). Signet also gave Sweden the rights to their cover art work at \$50 per cover plus “costs of transportation, insurance etc [. . .]” (Interoffice Memo, NALA Folder 219, 17 May 1960). Signet forwarded CBMS materials to Bergh and charged Horwitz for the “cost of the books and for our out-of-pocket expenses in mailing these materials to Sweden” (Interoffice Memo, NALA Folder 219, 17 May 1960). Austrian publisher Desch was also mentioned in dispatches to Sydney:

I know that Gallimard is given as the French publisher on your copyright page, and I also know that Desch [Austrian] publishes at least one title because Dagmar Henne has been in touch with us about cover art work for them. (NALA Folder 219, 10 June 1960)

Likewise, when Horwitz wrote to Editorial Diana welcoming them to the “International Carter Brown publishing programme”, he sent a copy of the letter to Signet (NALA Folder 219, 24 November 1960). How Horwitz coordinated the international spread of CBMS stories is unknown; the Mexican contract had been organised through Transworld Feature Syndicate of New York City, and probably Horwitz had made contact with them during one of his New York visits.

In June 1960 Horwitz sent a list of twelve overseas publishers’ addresses to Signet’s Foreign Rights and Permissions Manager. Why the list was wanted is not recorded, but presumably it had to do with international sales.¹⁷ Five months later, Horwitz was trying to entice Weybright into an extensive publicity campaign for a “new kind” of Carter Brown (the new kind of CB book was *Zelda*, 1962). In December 1960, Horwitz sent Signet a 15-page pamphlet entitled “Carter Brown World Wide Operation”. In his letter accompanying the pamphlet, Horwitz predicted “by Christmas, total world sales in the two years since first Signet edition will reach 10,000,000 and 18 countries will be publishing CB stories [. . .] By June, 1961, this figure should be 13,000,000” (NALA Folder 219, 21 December 1960). Furthermore, Horwitz suggested that Signet “co-ordinate the worldwide promotion and publicity campaign” (NALA Folder 219, 21 December 1960). In essence, Horwitz flattered Signet by insinuating that they were far more adept at handling the subtleties and complexities of international publishing (which they no doubt were). It was a complicated relationship. Even though Horwitz had been handling overseas sales of Australian titles, he realised that Signet would “boost sales of the Signet editions in foreign countries” because it had the cultural clout to orchestrate a much more sophisticated and effective publicity campaign. Since signing the licensing agreement, Horwitz had increasingly sought help from Signet. He had listened when Weybright

suggested an alternative British publisher, he had asked for advice about international publishing issues, and he had requested that Signet approach certain publishers on his behalf.¹⁸ In effect, Horwitz believed that Signet could more effectively take the series to the next level.

The Horwitz pamphlet lists the titles published pre-1961 and those to appear in the immediate future. The information in the pamphlet helps to fill some of the overseas publication gaps. The summary below is taken from the page entitled “Seventeen Countries Agree” (NALA Folder 219):¹⁹

Argentina: contracted to publish a minimum of 180,000—12 titles²⁰

Australia and New Zealand: publishing average 1,250,000 per year

Brazil: contracted to published a minimum of 100,000—6 titles

Denmark: contracted to publish a minimum of 250,000—12 titles

Finland: over 100,000 published of 12 titles and contracted to published a minimum of 250,000—11 titles

France: publishing an average 500,000 per year

Germany: negotiating contracts to publish a minimum of 250,000—12 titles

Holland: 7 titles and contracted to publish over 150,000 of 17 more titles

Japan: 3 published already published and contracted to publish a minimum of 50,000—10 titles

Mexico: contracted to publish a minimum of 50,000—10 titles

Norway: 7 titles and contracted for 8 [no numbers given]

Sweden: contracted to publish a minimum of 250,000—13 titles

Portugal: contracted to publish a minimum of 250,000—12 titles

South Africa & UK: 250,000 published yearly; 21 titles (5 in 1959 and 16 in 1960)

Sweden: contracted to published a minimum of 250,000—12 titles

USA & Canada: around 3,000,000 per year (Seventeen Countries, Dec 1960)

As titles from some of the countries, Argentina and Brazil in particular, were not located, I treated the list with some scepticism at first; however, subsequent research supported Horwitz's claims. In the absence of print run data, the Horwitz pamphlet provides insight into how much CBMS material was available in any one country. When combined with population figures, Horwitz's figures gives *some* indication of the series' penetration in 1960:²¹

Table 2

Country	1960 Pop. in millions	Copies	%
Japan	94	50 000	0.0005
Mexico	37	50 000	0.0013
German	72	250 000	0.0034
UK	52	250 000	0.0048
Argentina	20	180 000	0.009
France	45	500 000	0.011
Brazil	72	100 000	0.013
Netherlands	11	150 000	0.013
North America (USA+Canada)	202 (185+17)	3 000 000	0.014
Finland	4.4	100 000	0.022
Portugal	8	250 000	0.031
Sweden	7	250 000	0.035
Denmark	4.5	250 000	0.05
Australia	12	1 250 000	0.10

As expected, Australia has the highest penetration. Surprising is the high penetration in Denmark, Sweden and Portugal. It must be borne in mind that the pamphlet was ambiguous in that it quoted the *minimum* number of copies per year, and Horwitz could have meant the number of copies per title. If it was the latter, then this would significantly change the percentage of penetration.

TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

At the time of Yates's death in 1985, covers boasted "over 70 million Carter Brown mysteries in print". The statement suggests that 70 million copies have been sold—however, it is clearly ambiguous and a marketing device in the same way "best-selling lists" are (Miller 286-304). Still, Carter Brown is one of Australia's most reprinted authors, and the series is still making inroads in new markets. Below is a list of countries and the number of CBMS titles taken from my database:

Table 3

Country	Number of Titles
Australia	284
German	174
France	158
Norway	157
USA	146
Sweden	145
Denmark	140
Finland	126
Canada	120
UK	101
Mexico	91
Japanese	67
Netherlands	45
Switzerland	34
Russia	30
Portugal	24
Austria Estonia	21
Argentina Greek	12
Brazil	9
Poland	6
Italy	5
Thailand, Turkey	4
Israel, Spain	3
Iceland, Vietnam	2
Bulgaria, Croatia, Lithuania, Myanmar, Romania	1

Australia has the highest number of titles because of the pre-1957 novelettes, but it did not print all of the CBMS stories. Why nine US titles have not been published in Australia remains unknown.²² What is surprising is that Germany, France and Norway have more original titles than the USA—largely because of their uptake of the earlier Carter Browns. The table does not include reprints and reissues (in doubles and anthologies). To include reprints increases some countries' number considerably. In Australia the 284 titles become 513. *The Corpse*, for example, was issued six times:

Signet 1606, December 1958

Horwitz NA24, March 1960

Signet D2714, third printing, 1965

Signet Q6468, 1975

International Edition IE62, September 1969

Long Story Magazine #13, UK, August 1960. (Flanagan)

The Corpse is also the most reprinted title, reissued at least 35 times in sixteen languages: French (four times), Danish, Dutch, English (eight times in total—three in the USA, once in Canada, twice in the UK and twice in Australia), Estonian, Finnish, German (three times), Icelandic, Japanese, Portuguese (Brazil and Portugal), Spanish (three times—twice in Mexico), Norwegian, Russian (three times—twice in anthologies of the same year), Swedish, Thai, and Myanmar.²³

Bracketed out of the data set mapping the CBMS pandemic are the stories anthologised in magazines. In the mid-1960s, abridged versions of titles appeared in a variety of men's magazines, for instance the October 1966 issue of US magazine *Men* ran "The Nymph Swappers", really *Play Now—Kill Later!* (1966). At this stage, CBMS penetration into the magazine market is unknown. As complete runs of these magazines do not appear to exist, it is unlikely that a complete listing will be compiled in the foreseeable future.

Two recent trends have seen an increasing diversity in CBMS material. During the 1990s CBMS material spread to newer territories such as Thailand, Vietnam, and Russia and its satellite nations: Estonia, Lithuania, Belarus, and Latvia. An accurate assessment of the Russian editions is complicated because many CBMS Russian stories are collected in anthologies,²⁴ according to the online *Index Translationum*.²⁴ Vladimir Matuschenko, a Russian Carter Brown fan, chronicles 85 "volumes" published in Russia between 1991 and 2001:

- 1991. Leningrad, edition Vasilievskii Ostrov (3 volumes)
- 1991-2. Novosibirsk, edition AIA (3 volumes)
- 1992. Minsk, edition Eridan (26 volumes)
- 1992-1996. St. Petersburg & Moscow: Kometa & Centrpoligraph (17 volumes)
- 1993. Olimp (8 volumes)
- 1997-2001. Centrpoligraph (29 volumes). (Matuschenko)

According to Matuschenko, Carter Brown and James Hadley Chase were the most popular foreign detective writers "during Perestroika. But the boom has passed. In Russia now Brown is published a little" (Matuschenko). The most recent trend has been the translation of the CBMS into non-traditional material; today CBMS books appear in Large Print (by Melbourne publisher Bolinda) and on audio tape.

CONCLUSION

The Carter Brown Mystery Series was acceptable but not remarkable in foreign markets because of its broad general appeal. The series, as a literary entity, was unlikely to reach maximum penetration in any given market because of its lack of cultural specificity.

On a final note, the evolutionary analogy of Carter Brown leads to another hypothesis. The spread of “infection” requires not only transmission from one host to another, but also replication and adaptation within the host that has acquired it. In other words, it is not sufficient that the new country accept material as a one-off curiosity; it must conceptually internalise the idea, which then replicates and mutates in response to localised evolutionary pressures. To use the promiscuous enzyme analogy, the introduction of Carter Brown into a foreign culture should have triggered the evolution of culture-specific products. Readers in that culture would want to “fine-tune” Carter Brown to fit their particular culture and sensibilities. In other words, the series could act as a catalyst for delivering the crime fiction genre, and local authors influenced by Carter Brown may begin to write using similar styles and formulas, but introduce local details, local settings and local customs and culture. Once the genre has been adapted in this way, the result could become locally more popular than the original import, but would lack Carter Brown’s ability to cross cultural boundaries. In Japan, for example, did the introduction of Carter Brown and other pulps from the West trigger the development of characteristically Japanese spin-off products? The next research step, in this project, will be to ascertain the influence of CBMS on locally produced material.

At the end of 2007, the CBMS bibliography contained approximately 3000 editions in 29 languages; the list is constantly being updated and is available through AustLit. In January 2008 two Carter Brown titles not available in Australian libraries were sold for over \$150 USD each on eBay; both went to American collectors. Losses such as these make it unlikely that an exhaustive descriptive bibliography of CMBS will eventuate. Today it is virtually impossible to know how many copies of Carter Brown novels have been printed.

While literary scholars may scorn the literary merit of Carter Brown, one cannot deny that he remains one of Australia’s most published and translated authors. Tracing the spread of the series throughout the world adds to our understanding of the Australian publishing industry of the 1950s.

NOTES

- ¹ Thanks to Joanne Sawyers for her diligent and exhaustive research work, Dr William Lott for his biological information, and translators Dr Irmtraud Petersson (University of Queensland), Vladimir Matuschenko (Russia), Birgit Culloty (University of Queensland), Dr David Callahan (University of Aveiro, Portugal), Dr Soraya Garcia-Sanchez (Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria), Kari Elkelä and Juri Nummelin (Finland), Kees Buis (Netherlands), and Enea Saric (University of Queensland).
- ² “Peter” was dropped from the series after several years.
- ³ Approximately 3000 titles were translated into English.
- ⁴ BL holds only 16. The Horwitz pamphlet’s British publication dates show that the British books appeared approximately four to five months after their US appearance.
- ⁵ Forty novels are missing from this period.
- ⁶ Signet founders Enoch and Weybright worked for Penguin before they left the company and formed New American Library.
- ⁷ In the original licensing agreement, Signet had been granted exclusive licensing rights in “the United States, its territories and possessions, and Canada” and nonexclusive rights in “the rest of the world excluding the British Commonwealth”. British Commonwealth rights did not extend to Canada, Hong Kong, India, New Zealand. Only Canada and South Africa have CBMS books in their libraries; South Africa has German, French, Swedish, British and American books but no locally produced titles on its online catalogue. Seventy-two titles are marked “banned”—South Africa is the only library to have such a label appended to these books, though it is not the only country; by 1965 Ireland had banned 30 of the novels (“Legion of the Banned in Ireland”, *Sydney Morning Herald* 6 Nov 1965: 19).
- ⁸ Starting with *The Wench is Wicked* (1957).
- ⁹ All effort has been made to contact the copyright holders of the images reproduced in this article.
- ¹⁰ The Finnish website has some gaps (Palonen).
- ¹¹ Yates’s productivity varied from year to year.
- ¹² If the Finnish Library’s collection is complete, there was a fifteen-year hiatus between 1970 and 1985. It is tempting to consider this gap indicative of a decline in popularity; however, more likely the gap resulted from a change in publishers in both countries, especially as Denmark, France, Germany, Norway and Sweden kept issuing titles throughout this period.
- ¹³ Al Wheeler was the protagonist of nearly 60 CB titles.
- ¹⁴ Finland also features Al Wheeler and Mavis in titles.
- ¹⁵ In fact no titles appeared in 1958; however, ten titles appeared in 1959: *The*

- Blonde, The Body, Walk Softly Witch, The Loving and the Dead, The Passionate, The Corpse, The Mistress, The Unorthodox Corpse, The Victim and The Lover.*
- 16 When Marlene Dietrich's apartment was cleared after her death, she had a collection of Carter Browns (Baxter).
- 17 London (two addresses, one literary agent and one distribution company), France, German, Japan, Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Italy, Argentina, Holland, Norway and Mexico.
- 18 Horwitz had asked Kurt Enoch to approach Italian *giallo* publisher Arnoldo Mondadori about the CBMS (10 May, 1960). Enoch talked with Mondadori at a reception for Nobel Prize author and learned that Mondadori was "favourably disposed towards Carter Brown [and] has indicated that he would like to try out one or two stories" (13 May, 1960). It is uncertain if Mondadori followed through, because though Italy is included in a list of twelve overseas publishers' addresses Horwitz sent to Signet in June, it does not appear in a list of overseas publishers sent in December. However, half a dozen 1972 titles are lodged with the National Library of Italy, and many (undated) issues have appeared on e-Bay.
- 19 Actually 19 countries and 11 different languages (English, Spanish, Dutch, German, France, Japanese, Portuguese, Sweden, Norway, Finnish, Denmark).
- 20 *The Body, The Blonde, The Corpse, The Lover, The Mistress, The Victim, The Passionate, The Wanton, The Loving and the Dead, Walk Softy Witch, None but the Lethal Heart and Suddenly By Violence.* From here on only the number of titles are noted.
- 21 In the absence of national library holdings, calculations were based upon the number of titles predicted in the Horwitz pamphlet as if the books were to be published in the following year. Of course, literacy may be a factor in some countries, Mexico for example.
- 22 *Wheeler Fortune* (1974), *And the Undead Sing* (1974), *The Star-Crossed Lover* (1974), *Sex Trap* (1975), *Wheeler, Dealer!* (1975), *Ride the Roller Coaster* (1975), *The Savage Sisters* (1976), *Remember Maybelle?* (1976), and *The Pipes Are Calling* (1976).
- 23 I have included the British and Portuguese versions claimed by Horwitz.
- 24 John Austin notes the high instance of anthologies in early American publishing and includes them even though Lyle Wright excluded them from his "Statistical Survey of American Fiction" of the same period. Austin finds that including the anthologies that featured original "novels" significantly altered the literary landscape and "demands that we rethink conventional claim[s]" (461).

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