

**Daniel White**

**“To Fathom Hell, or Soar Angelic”: The Drug Novel  
in the Postmodern World**

**Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of:  
Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in English Literature & Film Studies**

**University of Southampton  
School of Humanities**

**April 2016**

## **Contents**

1. Introduction 3
2. Grey Flannel Trousers and The Hipster Jesus: The Hippy Aesthetic in Early American Drug Literature 7
3. “Not Even Kesey Can Help Me Now”: Hunter S. Thompson and The Bad Trip 14
4. “Million Ay Mugs In Thatcher’s Army”: Heroin and Thatcherism In The Work of Irvine Welsh 21
5. Conclusion 28
6. Filmography 31
7. Bibliography 31

## **Introduction**

Drug culture has always been some way linked to the ideals of postmodern thought.

Frederic Jameson in the introduction to the re-release of his 1984 work, *Postmodernism or The Cultural Logic Of Late Capitalism*, notes that:

One of the more striking features of the postmodern is the way in which, in it, a whole range of tendential analyses of hitherto very different kinds — economic forecasts, marketing studies, culture critiques, new therapies, the (generally official) jeremiad about drugs or permissiveness, reviews of art shows or national film festivals, religious “revivals” or cults — have all coalesced into a new discursive genre, which we might as well call post-modern theory.<sup>1</sup>

Jameson positions the societal response to drug consumption, “the generally official jeremiad” in his own words, as a key part of cultural postmodernism. Significantly, Jameson focuses largely upon the “official” response to drug culture — with official in this case meaning the narratives stemming from either the government, or authors who lament drug culture as the harbinger of death and destruction to capitalist society. However, what about the “unofficial” discourses on drugs and permissiveness? Do the works of literature that arose out of countercultural movements, like the Hippy subculture of the 1960s, not also contribute to postmodern theory? After all, the drug trip experience is an example of an empty signifier; the disconnection between signifier and signified is “clearest in texts which foreground the act and form of expression and undermine any sense of a natural connection between a signifier and a referent” and the drug novel, with its form of expression stemming from an undermining of natural perception, clearly meets this

---

<sup>1</sup> Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1992), p. x.

definition.<sup>2</sup> To use a literary example: the reader could sit on the same sofa as Aldous Huxley on the third of May 1953, and take the same amount of mescaline, but fail to find the same meaning as he does with his grey flannel trousers. Whilst an author can present a subjective value for the use of drugs, there is no cultural purpose to be derived from the experience. Therefore I am not only arguing that counter-cultural drug discourses have been largely ignored by postmodern thought, but that these discourses may be one of the most effective forms of postmodernism: the drug novel often explicitly deals with the absence of meaning within a late capitalist society, but also the very form is somewhat meaningless due to the subjective nature of the drug trip.

In 1954, Huxley first published his essay *The Doors of Perception*, based on his experience having taken four tenths of a gram of mescaline the year before. He found meaning in his experience with psychedelia, believing he had once again opened his mind to “the perceptual innocence of childhood”.<sup>3</sup> A decade later in the spring of 1964 Ken Kesey, struggling to write a followup to the wildly successful *One Flew Over The Cuckoo’s Nest*, bought himself a bus to travel across the United States engaging in his own experiments with psychedelia. Both Huxley and Kesey acknowledge the schizophrenic “bad trips” that accompany drug use, but it fails to detract from their respective arguments because, as Andrew Weatherall notes, culturally “we imbue with superior magic the work of those who have incurred psychic injury having banged their heads on the way through the doors of perception”.<sup>4</sup> Even within the 1950s and ‘60s, the limitations of representing the hallucinogenic experience was apparent and this called for a “new aesthetic that fully embraces temporality and the ephemeral”.<sup>5</sup> This hippy aesthetic, with its focus on bright

---

<sup>2</sup> Daniel Chandler, *Semiotics: The Basics*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge 2007), p. 78.

<sup>3</sup> Aldous Huxley, *The Doors of Perception and Heaven and Hell* (London: Vintage, 2004), p. 12.

<sup>4</sup> Andrew Weatherall, ‘Foreword’, in *Psychedelia and Other Colours*, ed. by Rob Chapman (London: Faber and Faber, 2015) pp. 9-10 (p. 10).

<sup>5</sup> Rob Chapman, *Psychedelia and Other Colours* (London: Faber and Faber, 2015), p. 44.

colours and patterns, is conveyed within text form in Tom Wolfe's text *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*. The book is not only a biography of Ken Kesey and his journey on his magic bus, Wolfe intended it to be the ultimate guide to this subculture with insight into: the drug experimentation; the good trips; the bad trips; new cultural aesthetics; experimental art and "free love". Wolfe tries to form the complete picture of the LSD movement but fails. His book is the story of a small group of people who all share the same ideals about psychedelia and perception, and never accounts for either a dissenting opinion or the inadequacy of language to represent such an experience. Huxley and Kesey can be seen reaching for a purpose within drug use, but the answers they find are ultimately meaningless.

This emptiness within Huxley/Kesey's arguments leads to a new form of drug novel post the 1960s. In 1971, Hunter S. Thompson released *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* via serialisation in *Rolling Stone*, a roman à clef based on Thompson's own experience as a journalist. The novel is a criticism on the counter-cultural movements of the 1960s, seen through open rumination about the failure of men like Kesey as well as the different form the drug trip takes. At the opening of the text, Raoul Duke and his attorney possess: "two bags of grass, seventy-five pellets of mescaline, five sheets of high-powered blotter acid, a salt shaker half full of cocaine, and a whole galaxy of multi-coloured uppers, downers, screamers and laughers".<sup>6</sup> However, Duke never uses drugs as a way to expand his mind or improve upon human consciousness; drugs are used within this text as a means of non-conformity and as a way to explicitly feel small and weak. Unlike Huxley and Wolfe before him, Thompson knowingly plays with the failure of literature to convey the drug trip because within this novel drugs themselves have no meaning; here the "trip" is just a reaction to the death of the American dream and the new post-modern society in its place.

---

<sup>6</sup> Hunter S. Thompson, *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (London: Flamingo, 1993), p. 4.

The work of Thompson allowed Irvine Welsh to similarly explore a meaningless post-modern world. Writing in the 1980s and '90s, Welsh focuses his work largely on how the capitalist system is failing a disadvantaged youth, even within a first world country. Writing in a time period where the failings of a capitalist society are perhaps more apparent, the primary drugs being explored are not hallucinogens but different forms of opiates such as heroin; here the aim is to not change your perception but rather retard the central nervous system. Welsh circumvents the problem of conveying the drug trip within language by allowing his characters to reflect on why they take drugs instead. This can particularly be seen in the trilogy of texts — *Trainspotting*, *Porno* and *Skagboys* — where Mark Renton reflects on his choosing of heroin over “choosing life”. Yet again, there is openly no real meaning to drug use. Renton decides that within this society “we fill up our lives with shite [...] to delude ourselves that it is not all totally pointless. Smack’s an honest drug because it strips away these delusions”.<sup>7</sup> In a simulated world, Welsh show’s that there is some comfort to be found in choosing a deliberate emptiness through heroin.

---

<sup>7</sup> Irvine Welsh, *Trainspotting* (London: Vintage, 2013), p. 116.

## **Grey Flannel Trousers and The Hipster Jesus: The Hippy Aesthetic in Early American Drug Literature**

It is believed that ancient civilisations used hallucinogens not for recreational purposes but as a way to induce higher levels of consciousness in religious ceremonies. In North America, this took the form of the Aztec civilisation in Mexico with their ceremonial use of “teotlagualli, a paste made from the hallucinogenic flower ololiuqui” and peyote buttons, the stem of a cactus native to Mexico and Texas.<sup>8</sup> In this ancient culture, the express purpose of hallucinogens was to transcend the limitations of human perception in order to be closer to the gods. By 1919 the active ingredient in peyote, mescaline, was able to be synthesised and purified and this prompted a new resurgence in the popular use of hallucinogenic drugs over the next few decades. Indeed, after two world wars many thinkers turned to the spirituality of drugs as a way of fixing America’s broken psyche. One such thinker was Aldous Huxley who wrote an essay, *The Doors of Perception*, based on his experience taking 400mg of pure mescaline. Huxley’s work is written in a pseudo-scientific style, with the author not only transcribing his perceptual experience on the drug but also the scientific and medical implications he believed could stem from its widespread use. So taken with the drug was Huxley, that in correspondence with his friend Humphrey Fortescue Osmond, the two coined the word “psychedelic” as existing language was not enough to fully encompass the whole experience.<sup>9</sup> Mescaline was not the only hallucinogenic being used in this time period; lysergic acid diethylamide-25 (more commonly known as LSD) was first biosynthesised in 1938 by Albert Hoffman and was first marketed to the general public in 1948 as a psychotherapy tool.<sup>10</sup> Although the medical uses of LSD are heavily disputed today, during the 1950s and ‘60s there was significant

---

<sup>8</sup> Brooke S. Parish, ‘Hallucinogen Use’, *Medscape*, (2015), <<http://emedicine.medscape.com/article/293752-overview#a4>> [accessed 29th February].

<sup>9</sup> *Psychedelia and Other Colours*, p. 16.

<sup>10</sup> ‘Hallucinogen Use’.

experimentation on human case studies to fully understand this new psychedelic experience. Arguably the most wide reaching of these experiments was Project MKULTRA, a covert CIA operation testing the use of LSD “as an interrogation tool and as a mind-control agent”.<sup>11</sup> Ken Kesey’s first introduction with psychedelics was as a volunteer in one of these experiments. Like Huxley before him, Kesey was so in awe of the experience that he saw the need of a new aesthetic to better represent, what he believed, was a higher state of consciousness. Kesey’s attempt to create a new form of performance art lead to him becoming one of the figureheads of the new psychedelic, counter-cultural movement of 1960s America as is documented by Tom Wolfe in *The Electric Acid Kool Aid Test*. Both Huxley and Wolfe position became forbearers of a new spiritual awakening within American culture; they present psychedelia as both a new, subversive counter-cultural movement and as a call back to ancient religious customs. However, this argument of a “new” all encompassing experience falls flat due to the limitations of language to fully represent the psychedelic; Huxley, and particularly Wolfe, believe themselves to be on the precipice of a new quasi-religious social movement but this chapter will explore how this belief is let down by the inadequacies of text.

In his book *Psychedelia and Other Colours*, Rob Chapmen argues that after “the military, the medical establishment and the mystical establishment” abandoned hallucinogenic drugs, “it was left to the creatives and hedonists to take up the challenge” of fully exploring the depths of the psychedelic experience.<sup>12</sup> Huxley’s position therefore is that of the creative who tries to conceptualise the function of a hallucinogenic experience within society, based upon his own experience with a large dose of mescaline; in other words, Huxley is immediately placed as a radical outsider, bravely exploring a world the

---

<sup>11</sup> ‘Hallucinogen Use’.

<sup>12</sup> *Psychedelia and Other Colours*, p. 33.

establishment has chosen to ignore. He defines the drug trip as changing his perception in such a way that “the manifest glory of things left no room for the ordinary”, and that his “mind was perceiving the world in terms of other than spatial categories”.<sup>13</sup> Throughout his trip, Huxley is presented with many objects and images, such as flowers, a book of classical art, as well as taken outside to look at natural vistas; with each new image, Huxley finds himself re-appreciating each object separate from either its spatial or social value. The most enduring reappraised image in the text is the grey flannel trousers he wears, which mescaline has turned into “a labyrinth of endlessly significant complexity”.<sup>14</sup> The function of psychedelia therefore is to take the perceptually mundane, such as grey flannel trousers, and make its hidden complexity apparent. The overriding argument that Huxley gains from his experience is that human perception has evolved to be limited. His experience with mescaline has caused him to believe that the true “function of the human brain and nervous system is to protect us from being overwhelmed” with useless information; therefore suggesting that we have evolved to perceive things in their simplest terms.<sup>15</sup> To Huxley, mescaline is a way to revert the inherent limitations within human perception. This suggests that Huxley derives some truth from the psychedelic experience; mescaline allows the user to take the mundane, for example grey flannel trousers, and perceive its actual complexity.

But Huxley was not wearing grey flannel trousers on the day he took mescaline. It was later revealed that fabric that fascinated him was in fact blue jeans and he changed his trousers in writing *The Doors of Perception* as he was unable to escape the linguistic connotations given to denim; i.e. Huxley and his wife thought the argument would be more

---

<sup>13</sup> *The Doors of Perception*, p. 19; *The Doors of Perception*, p. 9.

<sup>14</sup> *The Doors of Perception*, p. 16.

<sup>15</sup> *The Doors of Perception*, p. 11.

compelling if he was dressed smartly for his readership.<sup>16</sup> Immediately, the adequacy of the textual form to account for the drug trip is questioned. In semiotic terms, within *The Doors of Perception*, Huxley offers a sign of flannel trousers consisting of the relationship between the complex fabric (the signifier) and a perceptual awakening (the signified). Yet we know that during Huxley's psychedelic experience, this exact signifier and signified were attributed to the sign of blue jeans. The essay is unable to present the mescaline experience as verbatim because denim also signifies a politicised notion of class — blue jeans are considered the uniform of the working classes, not the scholar.

The crux of Huxley's argument is that whilst on mescaline the signifier stays the same but the concept it calls to is reimagined therefore changing the value of the sign. However, language is not able to account for this change in what is signified within the reader and therefore Huxley's work is constrained by the sociopolitical discourses that form a sign within culture. At the same time, this false sign pokes a hole within Huxley's argument. If mescaline returned him to "the perceptual innocence of childhood", forcing him to appreciate everything anew without its spatial relationships, why when writing the essay does he still define jeans by their value in classist terms?<sup>17</sup> This presents the drug trip not as an all encompassing spiritual awakening, but rather a temporary lapse before returning to the normal socioeconomic discourse of society. Huxley wishes to present psychedelia as a way of experiencing the "true meaning" of a meaningless world, but ultimately never truly escapes the overriding capitalist discourse which defines society in the first place.

Tom Wolfe in *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* faces a similar struggle between the representation of a new social movement and the existing discourses within American

---

<sup>16</sup> Sybille Bedford, *Aldous Huxley: A Biography, Volume Two: 1939-1963* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1974), p. 163.

<sup>17</sup> *The Doors of Perception*, p. 12.

society of the time. Unlike Huxley, who writes from the privileged perspective of a drug taker, Wolfe chronicles the psychedelic experience as told to him by the Merry Pranksters. It is very clear that Wolfe himself has a profound respect for not only the group, but Kesey as a person. The social philosophy of the Merry Pranksters was one of equality, with each member allowed to choose their own name and role within the group with no one prankster ever really senior to another. Yet Wolfe refers to “the unspoken thing” amongst the group, that being “Kesey’s role and the whole direction the pranksters were taking”.<sup>18</sup> The spiritual power of drugs is called to, with Kesey being a “kind of hipster Christ, a modern mystic” who “appears as a renewer of lost contracts with the hidden powers of life”.<sup>19</sup> In one longer passage Wolfe specifically calls to potential critics of the movement stating: “There was no theology to it, no philosophy, at least in the sense of an -ism [sic] [...] I remember puzzling over this. There was something so religious in the air”.<sup>20</sup> The Pranksters are therefore not activists in the usual sense of the word, rather they are positioned as being led by Kesey over the precipice of a new age of American spirituality.

However, *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* never truly reconciles the tension between the hippy notion of “free love” and the actual power dynamic of the Pranksters. As critic Jay Cantor noted in his 1968 review of the text “the christ-like robes Wolfe fashioned for Kesey are much too large”.<sup>21</sup> The image of a “hipster jesus” is intended to be a sign of spirituality, presenting Kesey as the kindly saviour of a lost generation; yet at the same time, the Christian imagery calls to traditional power structures. Unlike *The Doors of Perception*, within this text the spirituality of the psychedelic experience stems not from the drug itself but rather directly from Kesey. The language Wolfe uses to describe the new subversive

---

<sup>18</sup> Tom Wolfe, *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* (London: Black Swan, 1989), p. 116.

<sup>19</sup> *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*, p. 139; *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*, p. 118.

<sup>20</sup> *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*, p. 116.

<sup>21</sup> Jay Cantor, ‘The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test’, *The Harvard Crimson*, (1968), <<http://www.thecrimson.com/article/1968/10/19/the-electric-kool-aid-acid-test/?page=3>> [accessed 29th February 2016] (p. 3).

aesthetic is at the same time inherently linked to the existing dominant power structures within American society. The inadequacy of the text undoes the image of the Pranksters as counter-cultural icons, instead revealing “another acid-head and a bunch of kooky kids [sic]” who never truly transcend existing cultural structures.<sup>22</sup>

Significantly, Kesey was not the only self-styled “hipster Christ” experimenting with LSD within ‘60s America. Charles Manson was also a feature on the psychedelic landscape in Haight-Ashbury during the late 1960s and, like Kesey, he had a following at the time (the Manson Family). Similarly still, Manson also had a spiritual response whilst on LSD, believing the group to be reincarnated Christians, and the Hollywood establishment to be the Romans — with Manson standing between the two as the second coming of Christ. In the summer of 1969, the inhabitants of “10050 Cielo Drive were slaughtered by members of the Manson family”; in total 7 people were murdered by the group on the specific instruction of Manson himself.<sup>23</sup> Although *The Electric Acid Kool-Aid Test* was released in 1968, a year before the murders were committed, Wolfe’s text is still marred by association in the cultural landscape of the 1960s. In other words, the phrase “hipster Jesus” takes on new connotations once those murders enter the zeitgeist. Wolfe clearly intends to present Kesey as a noble figure but to any reader post 1969 the description of the Merry Pranksters in a quasi-religious style calls reference to the other culturally significant religious hippy group of the ‘60s — the Manson family. In the years after writing the book, what is signified by the signifier “hipster Jesus” has changed; rather than present the psychedelic movement in a positive light, the sign causes the reader to question whether Kesey was the great man that Wolfe suggests, or just another “dishevelled hippie manipulator in his mid-thirties with a harem of young cuties [sic]” with sinister intentions.<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> Cantor, *The Electric Acid Kool-Aid Test*.

<sup>23</sup> *Psychedelia and Other Colours*, p. 254.

<sup>24</sup> *Psychedelia and Other Colours*, p. 255.

Both Huxley and Wolfe would have you believe that the psychedelic experience is an awakening of human perception to see objects beyond their spatial and social values. But the problem with representing this in text is, although the subjective value of the object may have changed, the objective value of language has not. Neither Huxley nor Wolfe's attempts to represent the drug trip are ever truly able to escape the socially constrained values of capitalism, or the limitations of the counter-cultural landscape to truly present something new. Their arguments are ultimately undone by the paradoxical attempt to describe an image free of all spatial association within text, which itself consists entirely of signs never existing in isolation. Simultaneously, this works to suggest that the drug trip does not remove perception from association, as Huxley and Wolfe both represent themselves within the framework of a capitalist, post-modern society. *The Doors of Perception* and *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* are ultimately meaningless because the very description of a new spiritual and perceptual meaning at the same time reinforces the values of the existing cultural establishment.

## **“Not Even Kesey Can Help Me Now”: Hunter S. Thompson and The Bad Trip**

The meaninglessness at the heart of the psychedelic movement ultimately led to the failure of the hippy counter-cultural discourses of the 1960s. Rather than awaken a new age of American spirituality and perceptual innocence, the work of men like Huxley and Kesey was resisted and absorbed by the cultural establishment. In June of 1971 Richard Nixon, then president of the United States, declared a “war on drugs” as part of his “administration’s ongoing efforts to stem the tide of drug abuse which has swept America in the last decade”.<sup>25</sup> Drug use was presented as the single biggest cultural issue facing the United States at the time; the psychedelic cultural revolution was marginalised, and Kesey and his contemporaries became defined not as spiritual leaders but rather “dirty-hippies” or junkies. Within the early 1970s, the American political discourse moved to explicitly end the “swinging-sixties” and re-define the cultural value of drugs to something significantly more sinister.

The value Hunter S. Thompson finds in the hallucinogenic experience is not entirely dissimilar to the values found by his 1960s forbearers. Writing in his Gonzo autobiography *Kingdom of Fear*, Thompson states “drugs usually enhance or strengthen [his] perception and reactions, for good or ill” — suggesting that there is something of perceptual value to be found within the hallucinogenic experience.<sup>26</sup> Unlike Huxley and Wolfe, Thompson does not write a polemic for the cultural value of drugs, but uses drugs as part of his critique of the political discourse at the time. Released in 1971, the same year Nixon declared war on drug culture, Thompson’s novel *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas: A Savage Journey to the Heart of the American Dream* tells the semi-fictionalised account of a drug-fuelled bender

---

<sup>25</sup> Richard Nixon, ‘Special Message To The Congress on Drug Abuse Prevention and Control’, *The American Presidency Project*, 203 (1971) <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=3048>> [Accessed 9th April 2016].

<sup>26</sup> Hunter S. Thompson, *Kingdom of Fear* (London: Penguin Classics, 2015) p. 182.

across the state of Nevada. The roman à clef features Roaul Duke (based upon Thompson himself) and his attorney, Dr. Gonzo being sent to cover the Mint 400 motorcycle race in the Nevada desert. However, this intention is quickly lost to hedonism, and the pair instead decide to go searching for the new American Dream left in the wake of the death of 1960s counter-culture. The text may explicitly be about the use of various narcotics but implicitly it is a lament of “how the hippie ideal had become corrupted by the Nixon-era version of the American Dream”.<sup>27</sup> Within *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* “the drug trip” is not a way of improving oneself, but rather a comforting tool that allows the user to comprehend and cope with the absence of any meaning within American society.

A year later, Thompson was sent to cover the election of the Democratic Party’s candidate to run against Nixon in the 1972 election. Collected into a book in 1973, *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail '72* takes a similar form to Thompson’s earlier novel in that the primary focus quickly gives way to an exploration of something larger; his role as a political reporter focusing on the Democratic primaries quickly transforms into a scathing criticism of American politics and the political journalists who help to create and protect this system. Thompson’s ingrained position as the outsider, the hedonist self-destructing under the influence of various narcotics, allowed him to recognise the inherent irony of the 1972 Presidential election: the political elite courted the vote of the remnants of 1960s counter-culture, “America’s Niggers [...] the young, the black, the brown, the women, the poor”, whilst simultaneously moving to systematically condemn and marginalise these groups in mainstream cultural discourse.<sup>28</sup> Thompson would later be proven right in his assertion, with John Ehrlichman, the aide to Richard Nixon when he launched the “war on drugs”, stating:

---

<sup>27</sup> Noel Murray, ‘Fear and Loathing In Las Vegas is a bleary indictment of society’s ills’, *A.V. Club*, (2013) <<http://www.avclub.com/article/fear-and-loathing-in-las-vegasi-is-a-bleary-indic-95866>> [Accessed 9th April 2016].

<sup>28</sup> Hunter S. Thompson, *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail '72* (London: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2005), p. 69.

We knew we couldn't make it illegal to be either against the war or black, but by getting the public to associate the hippies with marijuana and blacks with heroin, and then criminalising both heavily, we could disrupt those communities.<sup>29</sup>

Unlike Huxley and Kesey, Thompson never sets out to find a meaning in his drug use. He aims to find “meaning” full stop; he seeks a sense of purpose, an “affirmation of everything right and true and decent in the [American] character”.<sup>30</sup> Written in the shadow of the “swinging sixties”, the *Fear and Loathing...* titles are an exploration of the empty void left after psychedelia failed.

The hallucinogenic experience takes a wildly different form in Thompson’s work when compared to similar experiences from the preceding decade. Immediately in *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* the LSD trip is defined not by its consciousness expanding power but rather in terms of paranoia. The novel begins within a drug trip, with Duke and Dr. Gonzo “somewhere on the edge of the desert when the drugs began to take hold”.<sup>31</sup> But rather than reappraise this space, à la Huxley, Duke finds “the sky full of what looked like huge bats, all swooping and screeching and diving around the car, which was going about a hundred miles an hour with the top down to Las Vegas”.<sup>32</sup> The psychedelic experience clearly reflects Duke’s paranoia and fear by manifesting itself as a figurative attack; LSD has worked to make Duke’s subconscious concerns be perceived as a physical violence.

---

<sup>29</sup> ‘A Former Nixon Aide Admitted the War on Drugs Was Designed to Screw Over Black People and Hippies’, *Vice News: The VICE Guide to Right Now*, (2016) <[https://www.vice.com/en\\_uk/read/a-former-nixon-aide-admitted-the-war-on-drugs-was-designed-to-screw-over-blacks-and-hippies-vgtrn](https://www.vice.com/en_uk/read/a-former-nixon-aide-admitted-the-war-on-drugs-was-designed-to-screw-over-blacks-and-hippies-vgtrn)> [Accessed 9th April 2016].

<sup>30</sup> *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, p. 18.

<sup>31</sup> *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, p. 3.

<sup>32</sup> *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, p. 3.

Thompson reinforces the significance of place within this short passage, repeatedly mentioning the desert and “Barstow” — the town in between California and Las Vegas. It is clear therefore that Duke’s “bad trip” started as the pair enter the physical space of Las Vegas, indicating to the reader Duke’s belief that Las Vegas is not a safe space for him.

The bad trip continues as the pair enters into the city of Las Vegas proper. Arriving at the Mint Hotel under the influence of various “uppers, downers” and alcohol, the duo struggle to check in. Whilst talking to the receptionist, Duke describes her face “changing: swelling, pulsing ... horrible green jowls and fangs jutting out, the face of a moray eel”.<sup>33</sup> Suddenly Duke begins to perceive all of the hotel as a nightmare hellscape; in the bar he sees a “huge reptile gnawing on a woman’s neck” with the red carpet being perceived as “a blood-soaked sponge — impossible to walk on”.<sup>34</sup> Much like the bats, the various Lizard peoples are representative of Duke’s paranoia, but unlike the bats they have a basis in the real world; i.e. the hallucinogenic has not fabricated them, they are real denizens of Las Vegas just perceived differently. Thompson uses the LSD trip to dehumanise those involved with the Las Vegas machine. The undermining of natural perception inherent to the hallucinogenic system allows him to literally present the establishment as monsters, “huge reptiles”, who kill the innocents who visit the town. Significantly, this position in turn works to define Duke/Thompson as not just the radical outsider, but also as “human” in the face of monsters. The value of the psychedelic experience offered by *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* is not only the ability to improve your perception, and see new meaning, but also to resist the existing establishment. Rob Chapman suggests that “LSD was in the end a metaphor for what we might at any time choose to, or not choose to, define as reality, a simulacrum for all seasons”.<sup>35</sup> He suggests that LSD derives no value in the experience in

---

<sup>33</sup> *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, p. 24.

<sup>34</sup> *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, p. 24.

<sup>35</sup> *Psychedelia and Other Colours*, p. 592.

of itself, but rather reveals something about the social political context in which the user is situated. For Huxley and Kesey, writing in a period of renewed hope and faith in counter-cultural movements, the hallucinogenic experience could be perceived as a true expansion of human perception and consciousness. However Hunter S. Thompson, writing three years after *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* was published, is only able to reflect upon the inherent paranoia and fear at the heart of Nixon's America. LSD in *Fear and Loathing* is not about improving one's perception but rather nonconformity; Thompson presents drugs, empty and paranoia inducing as they are, as an explicit refusal to conform to the capitalist establishment of 1970s America.

Much of the paranoia Duke experiences whilst tripping stems from Las Vegas, as both a physical place and also a concept within the American zeitgeist. Indeed Thompson not only presents Duke as subconsciously rebelling against Vegas but also openly reflecting on the deep flaws of the city. Duke's "face-eating reptile" trip in the hotel lobby is ignored because "in a town full of crazies, nobody even notices an acid freak".<sup>36</sup> This view is expanded upon towards the end of the novel, after Duke fails to find the American Dream, because ultimately "psychedelics are almost irrelevant in a town where you can wander into a casino any time of day or night and witness the crucifixion of a gorilla on a flaming neon cross".<sup>37</sup> Thompson therefore presents Vegas as the quintessential post-modern city; there is no value of hallucinogens within a town where the architecture and entertainment work so explicitly to remove the individual from any point of reference to reality. Las Vegas is a city in which the vast majority of its capitalist enterprise stems through an obfuscation of reality akin to a drug trip. As Warren H. Skea notes "It is well known that casinos do not have clocks. This creates a situation in which time becomes inconsequential".<sup>38</sup> There is

---

<sup>36</sup> *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, p. 24.

<sup>37</sup> *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, p. 190.

<sup>38</sup> Warren H. Skea, "Postmodern" Las Vegas and its effect on gambling", *Journal of Gambling Studies*, 11.2 (1995), 231-235 (p.234).

an inherent irony in *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*' situating of a drug trip narrative, with its focus on a hyper-reality outside of temporal categories, within a city specifically designed to elicit such a response.<sup>39</sup>

Thompson uses this irony to attack Las Vegas' position within the American zeitgeist. After all, it is no accident that Duke goes to find the American Dream in a city like Vegas. On one hand, Las Vegas seems to affirm the concept of the American Dream within the public sphere. It is a space that cultivates the idea that anyone, regardless of social standing or background, can strike it big and become rich; the casino system sells the idea that within Vegas anyone can, if they're lucky, become wealthy. Yet this flies in the face of everything the American Dream traditionally represented — hard work, and capitalist enterprise. American society was built on values that any man or woman who worked hard enough would be able to increase their social standing, but in 1970s Vegas all it takes is dumb luck. Moreover, “for a loser, Vegas is the meanest town on Earth”.<sup>40</sup> The city sells the belief that anyone can strike it lucky, but in reality there are far more losers than there are winners; to quote Victoria Coren Mitchell, for a gambler the “casinos are - and always will be - the enemy.”<sup>41</sup> Thompson has his protagonist search for the American Dream within Las Vegas because the city had become a metonym of this dream within 1970s America. He presents an America in which the “American Dream” has become a marketing tool for a capitalist system which rewards blind luck and punishes those who fail.

There is a billboard on the outskirts of the city in *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* that reads “Don't gamble with Marijuana. In Nevada: possession — 20 years. Sale — life”.<sup>42</sup> In

<sup>39</sup> *The Doors of Perception*, p. 9.

<sup>40</sup> *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, p.42.

<sup>41</sup> Victoria Coren Mitchell, 'Casino Rule 1: The House Always Wins', *The Guardian*, (2014), <<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/oct/12/poker-casino-phil-ivey-gambling>> [Accessed April 9th 2016].

<sup>42</sup> *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, p. 42.

many ways this encapsulates the ironies within the 1970s cultural establishment that Hunter S. Thompson seeks to explore within his work. Even in a space like Las Vegas, with its explicit purpose of selling gambling as the American Dream, the only real “risk” is the use of drugs. Unlike Huxley and Kesey, who found answers (however empty they may have been) at the end of their drug trips, Duke only finds paranoia, fear and a cheapened, commercialised form of the American Dream. In the early 1970s, the Nixon Administration made the use of drugs to be the biggest cultural issue facing contemporary America but Thompson presents this argument as a smokescreen for the true problems facing the country — the loss of American societal values and meanings. In *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* and *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail '72* American society and politics are presented as simulacra; the narrator, whether fictionalised or Thompson himself, tries to understand the meanings and values inherent to the sociopolitical establishment of America but quickly finds that said establishment has warped to the point that it no longer refers back to anything. Unlike *The Doors of Perception* or *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* it is no longer the use of drugs which is devoid of meaning, but rather society as a whole.

## **”Million Ay Mugs In Thatcher’s Army”: Heroin and Thatcherism In The Work of Irvine Welsh**

Following the work of Thompson, other writers began to feature drugs as a symbolic reaction to capitalist discourses. *Trainspotting*, written by Irvine Welsh in 1993, emerges from the ‘Cool Britannia’ movement of the 1990s. Partly a reaction to the Thatcher government of the 1980s, the movement was inherently postmodern with “the concern for style continu[ing] to saturate and dominate popular consciousness”.<sup>43</sup> Yet as Tim Woods notes it is also an era that grapples with “the postmodern rhetoric of finality and integrity, of the desperate need for authenticity or sincerity in the face of wholesale simulation”.<sup>44</sup> The movement can therefore not only be categorised as postmodern in style but also in content, with mainstream culture moving to deal with the lack of purpose within society. *Trainspotting* meets this definition by not only being heavily stylised — with vivid description of intravenous drug use, and its use of phonetic Scots — but by using this style to present a Scottish underclass who had been abandoned by the state. Set in late-1980s Leith, the novel follows a group of largely unemployed young men who struggle to find a place for themselves within Thatcher’s Britain. Three of the four main characters within the novel — Renton, Simon and Spud — are regular drug users, but unlike the works of Wolfe and Thompson the *au fait* contemporary drug was not a hallucinogenic, but rather heroin. Rather than heighten the sensory experience, heroin inhibits neurones from firing, thus limiting the ability of the central nervous system to communicate sensory information; in 1990s Britain, drug use is less about expanding perceptual horizons and more about numbing pain.<sup>45</sup> One of the most culturally significant passages of the novel is Mark Renton’s justification for the use of heroin, stating that society expects you to:

---

<sup>43</sup> Tim Woods, *Beginning Postmodernism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p. 256.

<sup>44</sup> *Beginning Postmodernism*, p. 257.

<sup>45</sup> ‘Heroin In The Brain: Its Chemistry and Effects’, *PBS: Frontline*, (1998), <<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/heroin/brain/>> [Accessed 9th April 2016].

Choose life. Choose mortgage payments; choose washing machines; choose cars; choose sitting oan a couch watching mind-numbing and spirit-crushing game shows, stuffing fuckin junk food intae yir mooth. Choose rotting away, pishing and shiteing yersel in a home, a total fuckin embarrassment tae the selfish, fucked-up brats ye've produced.<sup>46</sup>

Renton concludes this speech by saying that he “choose[s] not tae choose life”.<sup>47</sup>

Therefore within *Trainspotting*, and its prequel *Skagboys*, Welsh positions the use of heroin as an active choice away from the capitalist discourses of Thatcher's Britain. Drug use is a conscious opting-out of the empty commercialisation prevalent within a post-modern society. *Trainspotting* does not present a *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* style trip, with a protagonist who uses illegal drugs to go and search for the meaning of society and instead finds nothing but meaninglessness, but rather presents a youth who turn to drugs because for them society holds no purpose in the first place.

The use of heroin is always seemingly linked to the socioeconomic situation of the characters within *Trainspotting* and *Skagboys*. In the first heroin trip featured within *Trainspotting*, Renton describes how his “dry, cracking bones are soothed and liquified by ma beautiful heroine's tender caresses”.<sup>48</sup> Welsh plays on the dichotomy of heroin/heroine to present the drug as an old lover; this initial trip is presented as wholly positive, with its soft language such as “soothe” and “caresses” and its literal romanticisation of the drug. Yet this initial high eventually devolves into something much more sinister throughout the rest of the text. When Renton tries, and fails, to overcome his heroin addiction he states:

---

<sup>46</sup> *Trainspotting*, p. 237.

<sup>47</sup> *Trainspotting*, p. 237.

<sup>48</sup> *Trainspotting*, p. 13.

“ah love nothing (except junk), ah hate nothing (except the forces that prevent me getting any) and ah fear nothing (except not scoring)”.<sup>49</sup> This presents Renton’s life as devoid of both purpose and emotion; he has no space for love, hate or fear in his life, he only seeks his next fix. Welsh immediately undercuts the idea that the drug trip is in any way comforting, instead presenting it as a necessity. Renton doesn’t choose life, he chooses “nothing (except junk)”.

Welsh intertwines the heroin narrative of his work with frequent references to the unemployment problem facing not only his characters, but Scotland as a whole. This is prevalent in *Skagboys* where Welsh breaks up the novel with several “notes on an epidemic” discussing the social circumstances that lead to the prevalence of both heroin and HIV in 1980s Edinburgh. Welsh states that after Margaret Thatcher was elected in 1979 “unemployment levels tripled from 1.2 million to 3.6 million in 1982” meaning that “hundreds of thousands of young working-class people in the UK had a lot less money in their pockets and a lot more time on their hands”.<sup>50</sup> Welsh uses these statistics to present the working class youth of the 1980s as restless, devoid of any real purpose or opportunity; official statistics from the Scottish Government somewhat corroborate this argument, with unemployment rates in Scotland “consistently above that of the UK in the 1980s and 1990s.”<sup>51</sup> This is also reflected within the focalised point of view of the characters themselves. In both *Trainspotting* and *Skagboys* all four main characters are in receipt of unemployment benefit. As Renton declares, in a society where “everything is temporary” then “ripping off the state is a noble act.”<sup>52</sup> Yet again, Renton adopts the position of the outsider, choosing a path separate from normal societal discourse. Welsh

---

<sup>49</sup> *Trainspotting*, p. 27.

<sup>50</sup> Irvine Welsh, *Skagboys* (London: Vintage, 2013), p. 139.

<sup>51</sup> ‘Scottish Economic Statistics 2003’, *The Scottish Government*, (2006) <<http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2003/04/17042/21542>> [Accessed 9th April 2016].

<sup>52</sup> *Skagboys*, p. 254.

allows Renton to present himself as a pseudo Robin Hood figure; his criminal abuse of the benefit system is justified as a lashing out towards a government, which has created a system of structural unemployment in the first place.

There is an underlying tension between Renton's lack of employment and his recreational use of heroin that suggests that it is perhaps a lack of employment opportunity which turned a generation onto drugs. In other words, is it the case that Renton chooses "nothing (except junk)", because the opportunities available to the youth of 1980s Scotland amounts to "nothing (except junk)"? This is another argument backed up by statistical analysis. A 2014 Home Office report into the heroin epidemic of the 1980s suggests "that during periods in which epidemics are taking hold, employment can act as a preventative factor, deterring opiate initiation or descent into daily use".<sup>53</sup> This tension resolves itself within Welsh's work during *Skagboys* where, beginning to feel the physical deterioration inherent with heroin addiction, Renton proudly proclaims: "Ah've done this tae masel. Naebody else has fucked me; neither God nor Thatcher. Ah've done it; destroyed the sovereign state ay Mark Renton before those cunts could get anywhere near it."<sup>54</sup> Welsh therefore shows that the use of heroin is ultimately self-destructive but a triumphant form of self-destruction in response to Thatcherite Britain. It's true that Scotland bore the significant brunt of Thatcher's spending cuts, losing "nearly a third of its manufacturing capacity" between 1976 and 1987, reaching unemployments levels of over 14%.<sup>55</sup> In a system so harshly stacked against the Scottish youth, there is an almost poetic form of justice in Renton's choice to self-destruct. Rather than submit to a capitalist system inherently unfair to the working-classes, the characters of *Trainspotting* reclaim the ability

---

<sup>53</sup> Nick Morgan, 'The heroin epidemic of the 1980s and 1990s and its effect on crime trends - then and now', *Home Office Research Report*, 79 (2014) <[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/332952/horr79.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/332952/horr79.pdf)> [Accessed 9th April 2016] (pp. 44-45).

<sup>54</sup> *Skagboys*, p. 379.

<sup>55</sup> Tom Devine, 'How History Turned Against Tory-Voting Scotland', *The Guardian*, (2014) <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/sep/14/history-turned-on-tory-voting-scotland-thatcher-1980s> [Accessed 9th April 2016].

to damn themselves from both “God and Thatcher” through their use of heroin. Huxley, Wolfe and Thompson all use drugs within their work as part of an intended journey of self-discovery, but in Welsh’s work drugs are more nihilistic; with the overriding mantra of his *Trainspotting* series — “I choose not to choose life” — Welsh presents heroin use as a way to consciously opt out of mainstream capitalist society, but also as a way for a disenfranchised youth to consciously self-destruct, thus reclaiming their agency.

Yet this definition Renton gives himself is somewhat challenged by the response of others to his use of heroin. One such reaction belongs to Hazel, Renton’s girlfriend, who dumps him by saying “you just want tae fuck up on drugs so that everyone’ll think how deep and fucking complex you are.”<sup>56</sup> Hazel is one of the few characters within this world who has survived a physical trauma, experiencing incestuous rape as a child, so to her the social trauma Renton uses to justify his self-destruction is just a sham. In her mind, Renton uses heroin as a fashion statement; a way to construct an image of himself as a great thinker, akin to Huxley or Kesey. An argument can be made that Welsh intends for Renton to exist as a simulacra of these cultural drug icons. Baudrillard states “the simulacrum is never that which conceals the truth — it is the truth which conceals that there is none.”<sup>57</sup> In this example, it is not Renton’s appropriation of Kesey’s style that conceals his self-destruction, rather his attempt to appear “deep and complex” masks the inherent meaningless of his drug use. Renton’s definition of himself as a great thinker, choosing to self-destruct as a grandiose response to Thatcher, is undone by Hazel calling attention to the nature of this image as performative. As discussed in previous chapters, the arguments of these cultural drug scholars, such as Kesey and Huxley, failed to cause a cultural revolution. Therefore in Renton, Welsh constructs a hyperreal character who exists on a meta-textual level;

---

<sup>56</sup> *Trainspotting*, p. 236.

<sup>57</sup> Jean Baudrillard, ‘The Precession of Simulacra’ in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, 2nd edn, ed. by Vincent B. Leitch (London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010) pp.1556-1566 (p.1556).

Renton masks the emptiness of his drug use, by stylising himself upon zeitgeist figures, who themselves used drugs for meaningless reasons. It is unclear whether Renton's justification for the use of heroin is a genuine reaction to Thatcherite politics or stems from a hyperreal succession of images of the "deep and complex" drug taker within mainstream culture; in this interpretation, Renton's very own definition of himself is postmodern, derived largely from the existing canon of drug literature.

A hyperreal vision of Renton is again offered during the character's stay in rehab. In one of his last days in the facility, his councillor suggests that Renton doesn't "know why [he's] a junky' and this 'offends [his] intellectual vanity and [his] sense of self".<sup>58</sup> In this, Welsh offers a professional opinion that attacks Renton's anti-Thatcher, anti-capitalist rhetoric. Paul Manning argues that in a post-modern society "mass media and cultural institutions have simultaneously fragmented and yet grown more embedded in peoples' lives" therefore "making possible an intensified incorporation and commodification of leisure experiences".<sup>59</sup> Is it not possible that the reason Mark Renton doesn't truly understand his addiction is because ultimately his use of heroin is just a "commodification" of another form of "leisure experience"? Unlike LSD or mescaline, heroin is a physically addictive drug — it demands the user continue to supply the body with more. In a sense addiction forces the user to commodify the drug. There are even examples of heroin being fetishised, in a Marxist sense, as seen by Mark referring to a drug as a "heroine". Welsh never acknowledges the similarities between addiction and commodification within his work; this tension resolves itself by making addiction to heroin and the commodification of heroin one and the same thing within this fictional world. Therefore, there is an irony in Renton defining himself as the anti-capitalist through his use of heroin as his relationship with the

---

<sup>58</sup> *Skagboys*, p. 471.

<sup>59</sup> Paul Manning, 'An Introduction To The Theoretical Approaches And Research Traditions', in *Drugs and Popular Culture: Drugs, Media and Identity in Contemporary Society*, ed. by Paul Manning (Devon, Willan Publishing, 2007), pp. 7-28 (p. 21).

drug is almost capitalist in nature. Within the character of Mark Renton, Welsh presents the reader with a figure so obsessed with his definition of himself as the “cultural outsider” that he ignores the capitalist discourses at the heart of the addiction; the lost generation of *Trainspotting/Skagboys* largely choose to define themselves through black-market drugs, but Renton refuses to acknowledge that this is a market nonetheless.

The use of drugs within the work of Irvine Welsh is always marked by an absence of meaning. On one hand this refers to the characters, particularly Renton’s, belief that they use drugs in response to a meaningless, capitalist society. During Thatcherite Britain, spending cuts and mass unemployment meant that the youth, but particularly the Scottish working-class, found themselves lacking opportunity and social-mobility. For Renton, heroin is a means to “opt out” of this situation; he finds comfort in being able to self-destruct rather than be punished by a society stacked against him. Yet at the same time, Welsh shows that the means of understanding that allow Renton to define himself this way are also postmodern in nature. His justification for his use of heroin is arguably less of a response to his social conditions, and part of his desire to be defined as “deep and complex” akin to the canonised drug authors like Huxley, Kesey and Thompson. Within *Trainspotting* and *Skagboys* Welsh offers an unclear image about whether Renton is genuinely self-destructing in response to the staunchly capitalist 1980s Thatcherite society, or whether his use of heroin is merely a way to adopt a cultural position of outsider — with drug culture being absorbed by the postmodern machine, devoid of any real meaning or values outside of stylistic convention.

## **Conclusion**

When Jameson spoke of the importance of the “generally official jeremiad about drugs and permissiveness” to post-modern discourse, he largely referred to the legal and cultural structures that marginalise those who use, or write under the influence of, drugs. Yet what he failed to account for was a canon of work that exists within said margin which also offers much in the way of postmodern thought.

There is a clear continuum within this canon. In the post-war era of the ‘50s and ‘60s, the availability of mescaline and LSD caused men like Huxley and Wolfe to use hallucinogenics as part of a counter-cultural discourse, re-appraising the traditional values of American society through psychedelia. Thompson, writing in 1971, agrees that these drugs hold a perceptual value and seeks to reappraise the American tradition of the “American Dream” by pushing his trip further; Thompson wants to take it to the point where “not even Kesey can help” him.<sup>60</sup> Similarly, writing about the mid 1980s, Irvine Welsh agrees with Thompson that there’s a value in using drugs as a reactionary tool within a right-wing political framework. Yet at the same time a character in *Skagboys* rejects Thompson as a “bullshitter” who “made most of that up”.<sup>61</sup>

Along this continuum the meaning, or lack thereof, in drugs on a social level is continually challenged. For Kesey and Huxley, psychedelia was a genuine means of understanding the world around them. For them, drug culture offers a discourse where society can be comprehended in its own right, free from the discourses of a capitalist society. Yet their argument falls flat as language itself is never fully able to break free from this overriding discourse. Their texts are unable to reconcile the subjective psychedelic society

---

<sup>60</sup> *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, p. 89.

<sup>61</sup> *Skagboys*, p. 454.

envisioned whilst hallucinating within the lingual framework of the objective reader, and therefore their counter-cultural movements failed. Thus, in *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* when Duke, inspired by the work of the preceding decade, goes on his hedonistic trip to better understand the American Dream all he finds are the “grim meat-hook realities that were lying in wait for all the people who took” psychedelia too seriously.<sup>62</sup> For Thompson, the counter-cultural drug discourses of the 1960s were a smokescreen — a means of distraction from the loss of traditional American values. By the 1970s, drug culture is not a way of finding value in the world around you, but rather understanding that it is valueless. Irvine Welsh draws upon this in his own body of work, but further conflicts the image. Mark Renton, much like Duke, is motivated to take drugs as a reaction to a simulated reality, masking a lack of societal value or opportunity within a rightwing capitalist society. Yet at the same time, Welsh suggests that the “junkie” personality is by this point a simulacra in itself. Renton’s desire to present himself as “deep” through drug use hides the fact that his addiction holds no inherent meaning; Welsh suggests that by the late 1980s, drug discourses have become so ingrained within postmodern thought that ultimately drugs exist as another means of masking the absence of reality within a hyperreal world.

---

<sup>62</sup> *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, p. 178.

## **Filmography**

*Magic Trip*, dir. by Alison Ellwood and Alex Gibney (Magnolia Pictures, 2011)

*Trainspotting*, dir. by Danny Boyle (Polygram Pictures, 1996)

## **Bibliography**

Baudrillard, Jean, 'The Precession of Simulacra' in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, 2nd edn, ed. by Vincent B. Leitch (London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010) pp. 1556-1566

Bedford, Sybille, *Aldous Huxley: A Biography, Volume Two: 1939-1963* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1974)

Bradbury, Malcolm and Ruland, Richard, *From Puritanism to Postmodernism* (United States of America: Penguin Books, 1992)

Cantor, Jay, 'The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test', *The Harvard Crimson*, (1968), <<http://www.thecrimson.com/article/1968/10/19/the-electric-kool-aid-acid-test/?page=3>> [accessed 29th February 2016]

Chandler, Daniel, *Semiotics: The Basics*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge 2007)

Chapman, Rob, *Psychedelia and Other Colours* (London: Faber and Faber, 2015)

Coren Mitchell, Victoria, 'Casino Rule 1: The House Always Wins', *The Guardian*, (2014), <<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/oct/12/poker-casino-phil-ivey-gambling>> [Accessed April 9th 2016]

Devine, Tom, 'How History Turned Against Tory-Voting Scotland', *The Guardian*, (2014) <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/sep/14/history-turned-on-tory-voting-scotland-thatcher-1980s> [Accessed 9th April 2016]

Edermaria, Aida, and Scott, Kirsty, 'What Happened To The Trainspotting Generation?', *The Guardian*, (2009), <<http://www.theguardian.com/society/2009/aug/15/scotland-trainspotting-generation-dying-fact>> [Accessed 9th April 2016]

Goldacre, Ben, *I Think You'll Find It's A Bit More Complicated Than That* (London: HarperCollins 2014)

Hannigan, John, *Fantasy City* (London: Routledge, 1998)

Huxley, Aldous, *The Doors of Perception and Heaven and Hell* (London: Vintage, 2004)

Jameson, Frederic, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1992)

Manning, Paul, 'An Introduction To The Theoretical Approaches And Research Traditions', in *Drugs and Popular Culture: Drugs, Media and Identity in Contemporary Society*, ed. by Paul Manning (Devon, Willan Publishing, 2007), pp. 7-28

Morgan, Nick, 'The heroin epidemic of the 1980s and 1990s and its effect on crime trends - then and now', *Home Office Research Report*, 79 (2014) <[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/332952/horr79.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/332952/horr79.pdf)> [Accessed 9th April 2016]

Murray, Noel, 'Fear and Loathing In Las Vegas is a bleary indictment of society's ills', *A. V. Club*, (2013) <<http://www.avclub.com/article/ifear-and-loathing-in-las-vegasi-is-a-bleary-indic-95866>> [Accessed 9th April 2016]

Nixon, Richard, 'Special Message To The Congress on Drug Abuse Prevention and Control', *The American Presidency Project*, 203 (1971) <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=3048>> [Accessed 9th April 2016]

Parish, Brooke S., 'Hallucinogen Use', *Medscape*, (2015), <<http://emedicine.medscape.com/article/293752-overview#a4>> [accessed 29th February]

Skea, Warren H., "Postmodern" Las Vegas and its effect on gambling", *Journal of Gambling Studies*, 11.2 (1995), 231-235

Thompson, Hunter S., *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (London: Flamingo, 1993)

Thompson, Hunter S., *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail '72* (London: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2005)

Thompson, Hunter S., *Kingdom of Fear* (London: Penguin Classics, 2015)

Welsh, Irvine, *The Blade Artist* (London, Vintage 2016)

Welsh, Irvine, *Porno* (London: Vintage, 2008)

Welsh, Irvine, *Skagboys* (London: Vintage, 2013)

Welsh, Irvine, *Trainspotting* (London: Vintage, 2013)

Wolfe, Tom, *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* (London: Black Swan, 1989)

Woods, Tim, *Beginning Postmodernism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999)

'A Former Nixon Aide Admitted the War on Drugs Was Designed to Screw Over Black People and Hippies', *Vice News: The VICE Guide to Right Now*, (2016) <[https://www.vice.com/en\\_uk/read/a-former-nixon-aide-admitted-the-war-on-drugs-was-designed-to-screw-over-blacks-and-hippies-vgtrn](https://www.vice.com/en_uk/read/a-former-nixon-aide-admitted-the-war-on-drugs-was-designed-to-screw-over-blacks-and-hippies-vgtrn)> [Accessed 9th April 2016]

'Heroin In The Brain: Its Chemistry and Effects', *PBS: Frontline*, (1998), <<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/heroin/brain/>> [Accessed 9th April 2016]

'Scottish Economic Statistics 2003', *The Scottish Government*, (2006) <<http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2003/04/17042/21542>> [Accessed 9th April 2016]