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The series romance: the changing representation of gender relationships within a popular genre

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THE SERIES ROMANCE: THE CHANGING REPRESENTATION OF GENDER RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN A POPULAR GENRE.

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Introduction.
The continued popularity of series romances, read privately for pleasure, poses a problem for those who study such texts in the public, institutional world of the university. Feminists, students of cultural studies, and theorists of popular culture, attempt to map the ideologies, discourses, psychoanalytic readings, and spaces for resistance within the romance. Other researchers and scholars use ethnography to discover what private pleasures readers say they get from the texts.

Always there is this tension between the public and the private, both in who says what about the popular romance, and in what the romance says about the social practices of males and females under patriarchal capitalism. It is very clear, however, that in such public spheres as the university, the media, the school and the library, series romances are generally considered to be badly written, predictable, female fantasies, associated with the private world of women's culture. Furthermore, the Harlequin reader becomes a metonym for a socially constructed stereotype of female passivity and empty fantasy. In spite of this shameful condemnation and in spite of the fact that women's lives involve them in the public milieu more than ever, Harlequin readership continues to grow. This thesis sets out to find out why women readers continue to gravitate to the colour-coded series romance shelves in supermarkets in spite of the fact that they themselves have moved out into the public world of paid work, have a more public voice, and exercise more freedom of choice in relationships.
This paper will deal only with contemporary series romances which are bought at the supermarket or newsagency. These texts are not sold by author's name, but rather by the series logo, which reveals to the potential reader the type of romance which she may expect to read.

The "Harlequin reader" outranks bingo player, soap watcher, prostitute and housewife as a negative stereotype totally defining a woman by one activity or aspect of her life. Readers of westerns are not commonly supposed to live in expectation of a stage coach at the door, but Harlequin readers are presumed to believe in the Harlequin world and to live in daily expectation of the hero's arrival (Angela Miles, 1986: 122).

The idea put forward by Miles calls to account the way in which members of society, including feminists, have frowned upon the social practice of romance reading. The general idea is that women who read romances are in some way more deluded by their fantasy world than are readers of westerns or of thrillers. In their condemnation of women readers of romance, both men and women alike see the practice of romance reading as evidence of women's lack of rationality and silly obsession with fantasy. In their condemnation of popular romance readers, feminists, coming from the public world of academia, often suggest that these women are either unconscious victims of patriarchal culture, or that they are in some way masochistic, enjoying the chains of patriarchy.

In The Female Gaze (1988: 1) Gamman and Marshment suggest that popular culture is a site of struggle and cannot be dismissed as merely serving the complementary systems of capitalism and patriarchy. They also suggest that
feminists cannot afford to dismiss popular culture by always positioning themselves outside it. Feminists are part of popular culture and will often find, if they are honest, that they too enjoy popular culture in some form. According to Kim Clancy:

All women, whether readers of popular romances or not, are implicated in, positioned by, the derision which is poured upon these texts and their audiences. It is a 'feminine' pursuit. Until the late 1970s there seemed to be only two options available to women: either associate oneself with an objectionable practice, or denounce it, from whatever political position one chose to occupy (1992: 120).

Although Kim Clancy goes on to state that Modleski and others have presented a positive view of the romance, it seems to me that most feminist positions on the romance, whether Marxist feminist, psychoanalytic feminist, radical feminist, or even liberal feminist, will tend to be more condemnatory than positive, because, in Fiske's words (1989: 105), 'they focus on the deep structure of the text', revealing how insistently and insidiously the ideological forces of domination are at work. Such scholars as Modleski (1982), Cranny-Francis (1990) and Rabine (1985), though admitting the genre offers opportunities for resistance, have concentrated on the way in which the romance reinforces patriarchal capitalism. Much has been done on the romance by feminist scholars, using psychoanalytic theories, Marxist theories, and theories about women's erotica. However, it is in the area of poststructuralism, that feminist cultural studies best comes to terms with the romance, by exposing contradictions, meanings that escape control, and pleasures of resistance.
Thus, I come to this investigation of the popular series romance as a feminist student of cultural studies. I intend to deal with the series romance from a feminist point of view, as well as from the point of view of a student of popular culture. I will examine feminist theoretical positions, some of which do take account of subversive pleasures and readings. I will then take up a theoretical position which is poststructural, to show how patriarchy is being subverted in the tactical readings which are available to female readers who are not feminists. It is my desire as a feminist, and a woman, to reclaim these romance texts as valuable and valid expressions of women’s desire.
Chapter One:  
The Series Romance and its Readers.  

The double condemnation of the series romance  
To return to the quotation from Angela Miles, used earlier in this thesis, one has to ask why the Harlequin reader is so reviled in our society by all kinds of people, both male and female. There seems to be a double condemnation of the popular series romance. Firstly, it is condemned because it is popular culture. Then it is condemned because it is women's culture.  

Condemnation of the series romance because it is popular culture is quite common. In this it shares a place with comic books, westerns, detective stories, tabloid newspapers, women's magazines, soap operas and other products of the mass media. There is a residue of the old "culturalist tradition" behind such criticism, suggesting that industrialisation and capitalism have imposed pernicious, banal ideas upon the masses who are now, because of mass education, able to read such texts. The "culturalist tradition" is concerned with maintaining "standards" and an elitist cultural tradition in the face of industrialisation and mass education.  

Marxist critics of popular culture or "the culture industry" tend to see it as providing a false consciousness, leaving no space for a critique of materialism. Most critics of popular culture see it as doing little to elevate the ideas and liberate the minds of those who enjoy it, either because it represents another form of hegemonic control or because it represents bad art and bad literature.
These ideas about popular culture are being challenged, due to the influence of such theorists as Lacan, Althusser, Derrida and Foucault. Each of these theorists calls into question the fixed nature of subjectivity and consequently the idea of fixed meanings, imposed on the masses, must be interrogated. Thus, John Fiske writes in *Understanding Popular Culture*:

The fears of the mass culture theorists have not been borne out in practice because mass culture is such a contradiction in terms that it cannot exist. A homogeneous, externally produced culture cannot be sold ready-made to the masses: culture simply doesn't work like that. Nor do the people behave or live like the masses, an aggregation of alienated, one-dimensional persons whose only consciousness is false, whose only relationship to the system that enslaves them is one of unwitting (if not willing) dupes (1989 A: 23).

Fiske provides a critique of the old mass culture theorists. He suggests that individuals negotiate popular culture, making their own meanings of the texts, and in so doing, resist the hegemonic discourses so much feared by critics of popular culture. Thus, theorists like Fiske, working in the field of cultural studies, ask us to reassess popular culture and to renegotiate our view of such texts. This may encourage scholars to attend to popular texts, or yet, because the series romance is women's popular culture, it may still be neglected critically and condemned.
As cultural studies opens up areas of popular culture for reassessment, we see popular male genres coming in for critical attention. As Modleski points out, the *Journal of Popular Culture* is filled with 'inflated claims made for...the detective novel' (1984: 11) and thus, as popular culture is reassessed by the scholars and theorists, it is *male* popular culture which is being redeemed by *male* scholars. But, there are still reservations about *female* popular culture. Women's popular culture is generally regarded as even more pernicious than male popular culture, by those who criticise it. Thus, the double critical standard, which feminists claim biases literary studies, is operative in the realm of cultural studies as well.

Until the appearance of such critical assessments as those of Ann Rosalind Jones (1986), Angela Miles (1991), Tania Modleski (1982), Kay Mussell (1984), Janice Radway (1987), Carol Thurston (1987), Leslie Rabine (1985) and others, little attention was given to the popular series romance. These scholars, coming from various theoretical positions, have attempted to explain why, in spite of liberal reforms in the public world, the often regressive series romance continues to be very popular in the private world. In fact, the series romances do take into account such reforms, resulting in some very subversive discourses. ¹

According to Chris Weedon, patriarchy's central project is to maintain woman's primary role as wife and mother. Whatever else we do, we should be attractive and desirable to men, and ideally, our sexual and emotional energy should be given to one man and the children of that marriage (1987:3). The romance, even in its more recent, sexually liberated, workforce-oriented form,
reinforces this patriarchal ideology. Many males and females in our society endorse this conservative discourse of patriarchy. Why then, is it despised so much, by many of those who uphold its values?

Some ideas come to mind. Perhaps males associate the romance with the, unfathomable, irrational, "other", woman, as described in Freudian terms. They may also fear that the stereotype of the strong, attractive, tender hero is a threat to their own self-image. Or they may feel their own "lack" as lovers, since they sense that the hero in the romance is the perfect lover. They may also feel threatened by the amount of time a female partner may devote to her "disappearing act", as she dives between the covers of the series romance.

For women, the negative attitude towards those who read the romance, could stem from a pragmatic recognition that gender relations must be unsatisfactory under patriarchy, and that to long for something better is self-delusion. Interestingly enough, women who read fairly banal women's magazines, and admit to this practice, will openly denigrate romance reading. It seems that it is not the lack of literary content, but rather the genre, which elicits such disgust.

A popular and flexible genre.
In spite of this general distaste for the series romance, as well as criticism from feminists, the series romance has grown in its market share in the 1980s. According to John Markert the popular series romance is experiencing unprecedented popularity in the United States. An estimated 25 million women regularly read these books in which the predominant theme is the
attainment of love and marriage. In terms of volume and sales, romantic fiction accounts for between 40-50% of all mass market paperback books published and sold in the United States. The 1984 output was double the 1980 output, and a six-fold increase on the 1970 output (1985: 69). Peter Mann uses statistics from a 1984 book readership survey in Britain to show that amongst women, 31% of all current reading, fiction or non-fiction, was accounted for by romantic fiction (1985: 96).

According to Rosemary Guiley an estimated 20 million or more female romance readers in the United States alone look over more than 150 new romance titles that hit the shelves each month. In 1983, there were twenty different brand-name lines on the market (1983:2). There is no reason to suppose that the popularity of the romances in the eighties has declined in the nineties.

The phenomenal growth in the market for series romances cannot be completely accounted for by the culture industry's power over so-called passive women readers. People can and do resist products of the culture industry and there have been many monumental failures of products which the people did not endorse (Fiske, 1989 A: 23). It is quite clear that the growth in demand for popular, erotic series romances was a consumer response to a changed product which reflected the concerns of more liberated and publicly-oriented women. According to Margaret Ann Jensen in 1971 Harlequin began an extensive research program on their product and their consumers (1984: 37). From that time on Harlequin has always used market research to establish the needs of its readers. It would seem that most of the publishers of series romances respond
to reader surveys in their texts. What is difficult to explain, is why such texts should be so popular at a time when women readers are better educated, more aware of their "rights", and less confined to the private sphere, the sphere which triumphs ultimately, even in the newer series romances.

At the outset, it must be claimed that popular series romances have indeed changed in the last ten years. At the same time as they have embraced new sexual modes, placed heroines firmly in the workforce, and created sensitive new male heroes, the genre convention has prevented too much movement away from the formula. Narrative closure is still achieved with the commitment of the hero and heroine to a monogamous relationship.

Perhaps the series romance has changed sufficiently to satisfy the more liberated woman in areas of workforce participation, personal autonomy, sexual freedom and characterisation of the hero, while retaining its basic anachronistic formula of love between a man and a woman culminating in marriage. This, of course, suggests that the more liberated woman of the 80s and 90s is still caught up in the genre convention of the romance, which must culminate in a monogamous commitment between a man and a woman who love each other. The irony of this is explained by Ann Rosalind Jones as a problem of conflict between the emergent ideology of feminism and the residual genre of the romance. Some of the strains which this conflict puts upon the text are evident in a reading of any modern romance. Jones suggests that the conflict results in narrative discontinuity, irreconcilable settings and inconsistency in realist dialogue (1986: 204). To illustrate this, I can give an example of the use of irreconcilable settings, discovered in my own reading of
Breathless Dawn (1983). Juliana Blair, a rational and professional woman, finds herself unaccountably drawn to the homestead of her ancestors. At the closure of the narrative she marries a red-headed rancher and leaves her Los Angeles practice to practise in the quiet rural valley in which her family ranch is set.

While Jones sees these contradictions as signs that the romance genre is under a great deal of stress, a poststructuralist reading may see these very fractures as opportunities for women readers to resist patriarchal, capitalist discourses, through other discourses. A working woman who is tired of the rat race may see Juliana's choice of the homely, family ranch as a satisfying fantasy of escape, through which the reader can temporarily avoid her patriarchal capitalist oppression. The discourse of female as bearer of sentiment, holding instinctual links with the past, though it may be seen as placing women firmly within the private sphere, may also be shown as valorising women's desire for relatedness to others, and superiority to male remoteness. A poststructural feminist would find no quarrel with Juliana's position here. For every reading which locates cracks and fissures in the romance, there are opportunities for multiple readings as the text "opens up."

Defining the series romance
Before examining various theories and ideas about why the series romance is maintaining its popularity, it is necessary to come to terms with what romantic fiction is, and how it has changed in recent times. Peter Mann, in 'The Romantic Novel and its Readers' suggested that the formula for romantic fiction is disarmingly simple and derives from Cinderella or any of a dozen
other fairy stories (Mann, 1981). By this he means that the act of falling in love is at the heart of every text. He fails to see the implications for class relations in the fairy tale.  

Peter Mann in a later study, states that the successful romantic novel is a story, having a beginning, a middle and an end. It is also concerned with the developing relationship between a man and a woman who have not yet met on page one, but who will declare their love for each other by about page 190. The heroine meets the handsome, dominant hero and dislikes him. Tension is created between the two protagonists. The tensions are resolved, the problems solved and the two are able to legitimise love and physical attraction by marriage (1985: 97,98). Mann takes no account of the bourgeois nature of the romance, concentrating on the tensions between the protagonists and how these tensions are resolved.

According to the "Smithton" women who took part in Janice Radway's (1984) research, a romance is first and foremost a story about a woman. Radway qualifies this by stating that:

That woman, however, may not figure in a larger plot simply as the hero's prize... To qualify as a romance the story must chronicle, not merely the events of a courtship, but what it feels like to be the object of one (64).

Thus, for Radway's readers of romance there had to be an identification with a structure of feeling, centred on the body of the heroine.  

Rosalind Coward suggests that heterosexual and lesbian women alike secretly admit that *Pride and Prejudice* exemplifies all the necessary elements of a good romance. Coward claims that 'the heroes of popular romances are not unlike Mr. Darcy':

They are powerful in social position, scathing in conversation, distant in emotions and satanic in appearance (1984:189).

She also claims that any popular romance has the following elements: a powerful hero, a heroine who is usually decent (though sometimes misled), and a number of difficult circumstances to be overcome before the happy resolution of the affair. Coward's description of the popular romance concentrates on the way in which the hero and heroine are kept apart by misjudgments, obstacles and enigmas. These only become resolved in the last few pages. She claims that *Pride and Prejudice* progresses through similar obstacles, preconceptions, misconceptions and embarrassments, (1984: 189) in spite of its superior position in the literary canon.

Coward's view of the popular contemporary romance sold under the genre designation of "romance" is that it is a frozen form with its origins in the nineteenth century (1984: 178). However, no genre form is frozen. There are always influences from the social world on a form, as well as spaces within the form for oppositional and pleasurable readings. Feminism is certainly impacting on the series romance. It can be firmly shown that some of the ideas expressed in contemporary women's novels: the dissatisfactions with patriarchy; the desire for female autonomy; the need to have meaningful work; are also explored in the series romance. The sense of satisfaction which
heroines find in their work is the same sense of satisfaction which might be found in a feminist text. Carly, in Magic in the Night defends her work to Patrick:

I have worked damn hard to create a life for myself, and at the moment, that life revolves around Capitol Airlines. The fact that you have some say in the outcome of that is, admittedly, a given. But you can't expect the same privilege outside the office. There'll be no affair, Patrick. I don't believe in mixing my personal life with my business (1986: 45).

In fact, what one sees, more and more, in these popular texts, is the need for the female heroine to confront what were typically male problems in the past. This need to keep private and public areas of social practice apart contributes to the tensions in the genre. The need to be treated as an equal in the workplace; the double standard whereby behaviour in the workplace is labelled as typically female; the desire to keep emotional and sexual matters out of the workplace; the need to have one's professionalism respected; all of these problems are explored in the genre.

From the ideas put forward by Mann (1985), Cranny-Francis (1990) and Coward (1984), we can see the importance of the genre convention as regards plot. It is possible to come up with all kinds of Proppian narrative models for the various subgenres of the romance as a literary form, but basically, because of the changes effected by the women's liberation movement, and the impact of
feminisms of all kinds on the texts, one has to come up with a fairly broad definition. Thus my definition is as follows:

The romance plot is about the emotional/physical attraction between a man and a woman, which is thwarted by certain circumstances, but is realised at the end in a proposal of marriage, or a declaration of commitment and undying love. This declaration may, in the case of some non-series romances or classical romances, occur after one of the parties has died or departed, which means an unhappy ending (e.g. *Wuthering Heights*, *Gone With The Wind*). However, in the case of the series romance, the ending is always happy.

My definition is based on narrative structure, and certainly fits all romances from literary classics to the latest Harlequin Temptation. However, any definition of a genre must take in discourses and ideologies, methods of production and techniques. After much careful consideration of the features of the genre it is possible to identify some particular features of series romance texts, which hold true for the texts being produced at the moment:

- They are concerned with female desire as opposed to preoccupation with male desire in the romances of the past. Although these texts are almost always written by female authors, the manner in which they present female desire may sometimes fall within a phallocentric construction of female desire. However, within the spaces which evade phallocentrism, these romances may in fact be exploring areas of female
desire which have nothing to do with heterosexual gender relationships at all.

- They speak to women of female power over the male protagonist, which may also be tied to psychoanalytic needs of women.

- They present heroes and heroines who are quite androgynous in characterisation, showing the influence of the women's movement on gender relations and gender subjectivity.

- They offer a utopian solution to the readers, through an idealised resolution of gender relationships.

- They are escapist, allowing readers to disappear from the objectifying eye of the phallocentric male gaze. They also provide opportunities for the female gaze to operate, objectifying male characters.

- They reproduce the social practices of the society which writes them and may encode ideologies and discourses from that society. Hence, they are often condemned for patriarchal, conservative discourses and for fetishizing gender relationships at the expense of other social relationships between classes, ethnic groups etc. Therefore,
they contain the forces of domination and are patriarchal, classist, racist, and avowedly heterosexual. On the other hand they offer opportunities to resist such discourses, through gaps and contradictions in the narrative.

- They are mass-marketed products, cheaply obtainable, with little concern for the author and are sold by logo and sub-genre. Such popular texts are examples of the 'death of the author', in that they make no claim for specific unique and individual authorship. This, of course, frees them up for tactical reading by the female readers.

- Because of the genre conventions, they are still easily recognised and understood by readers, and are reflexive, in that they play with textual conventions in a self-conscious way.

- Because they are popular cultural texts, they tend to use the language of excess, of cliche and of sentiment. As noted in Chapter Three, the language is self-consciously reflexive, is recognised by the readers as such, and for this reason is pleasurable.

**Historical overview of the romance.**

To understand the way in which these features of the modern series romance have developed, it may be necessary to examine briefly the development of the romance into the mass marketed product which it is today. Any history of the popular romance must take into account its antecedents in such Greek
romances as *Chaereas and Callirhoe* written by Chariton about 50 A.D. (McNeil, 1981: 5), fairy tales, peasant novellas, the literature of courtly love, eighteenth century realist novels, such as *Pamela* by Samuel Richardson, nineteenth century classics, and women's domestic fiction.

The theoretical position taken will determine the historical overview. Marxist interpretations will ignore the aristocratic romances and attempt to make a case for the romance as a hegemonic tale for the oppressed, in the form of peasant novellas and fairy tales and later, with the advent of capitalism, women's domestic fiction (Fowler, 1991: 7-19). Feminist accounts will tend to concentrate on the passive woman at the centre of the genre, and usually will commence with *Pamela* by Samuel Richardson (Modleski, 1982, Cranny-Francis, 1990). The gradual change of focus from the medieval male phallic quest, to the equally phallocentric woman's quest for a suitable partner who can provide for her emotionally, sexually and economically, could be seen as an accompaniment to the advent of the capitalist mode of production (Fowler, 1991: 11). Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* is an antecedent to the contemporary romance. The virtuous Pamela, retains her virginity which is continually under attack from her master. The constant threat of rape in the text has been replicated in some modern romances. The resolution of the romance means that the hero has fallen in love with the heroine, no longer wishes to rape her, and is now able to combine sexual tenderness with emotional attachment. One of the changes that I have observed in my reading has been the disappearance of the rape threat in the last five years. This could well be an effect of feminism and the women's movement. Women certainly did not like the violent sex
scenes in the "bodice rippers" of the seventies, and showed this by non-purchase of the genre (Mann, 1985: 101).

**Contemporary series romances**

The roots of the contemporary series romance go back to Mills & Boon which was established in 1908. Mills & Boon was the first to publish the late Georgette Heyer in 1920, with her first regency romance, *The Black Moth*.. From rather humble beginnings, originally publishing in hard cover, Mills and Boon amalgamated with Harlequin, moved into paperback and by the seventies were imitated by other lines, put out by other publishers. By the eighties these texts had incorporated the ideas of liberal feminism and a more open sexual discourse was available to readers (For a more complete account of the development of the series romance see Appendix A).

The question of genre subversion is one occupying the minds of feminists at present. In July 1982, Ballantine launched its Love and Life line, which was the closest thing to subversion that the series romance had known. These were obviously more like the traditional feminist novels, showing the heroine emerging as an individual, shedding the man who would not let her grow, and entering a relationship with a representative of the "New Man". These romances only lasted a year before they were dropped. According to Thurston, they were unsuccessful because they were marketed among the rows and racks of Harlequins, Ecstasies and Desires. They were not noticed by the very women for whom they were intended (Thurston,1987: 56). In *Feminist Fiction* Cranny-Francis puts forward some very good examples of the way in which genres are being subverted by woman writers. Though she seems dubious about how to
do this within such a straight-jacketed formula (1990: 184), other writers are engaging with the problem in different ways. As Ann Rosalind Jones states:

Rather than dismissing Mills and Boon for the ossification of its formula however, we might pose the issue the other way around: what questions does the success of the genre raise to proponents of a more progressive women's fiction? Simply put, what's wrong with a happy ending? What kind might a genuinely feminist novel offer? Slammed doors, or doors opened tentatively onto uncertain futures seem to be the pattern for feminist endings; is a more utopian mode imaginable in 1986? If it were, would 250 million women want to read it? How successful might a hybrid novel, combining feminist depth of analysis with a plausibly positive ending be? Is a hybrid possible? How important is it for feminists to set up alternatives to popular publishing - or is the best strategy now one of genre subversion, of stealing into mass markets via temporary literary camouflage? (1986: 215)

It would seem that marketing books under a series logo and identifiable appearance is a mark of the importance of genre in the reception of texts. To be subversive of a genre, it is necessary for the text to be marketed as an obvious contender for inclusion in a genre. The subversion takes place within the text. For the Love and Life series to be subversive, it was necessary for the books to be mistaken for typical romances. Because of their subversive nature, these books were not taken up by enough women to make a profit for Ballantine. This is one of the problems with feminist subversion of a genre. Because it does not satisfy the expectations of the reader, the text may not be read at all, may not sell, and may not be reprinted, except under the auspices of feminist publishing house. In my textual analysis in Chapter Three, I will deal with a
Changes within the series romance.

According to Thurston, the erotic contemporary series romances which began appearing in 1981 reflect many of the ways sex roles have been redefined during this time, and the ways American women have begun to challenge the power structure of patriarchal society, both economically and sexually (1987: 92). She cites a publisher's tip sheet for Jove/Second Chance at Love:

Aged 26-40...she should have either a profession, a great interest (sports, the arts, etc.), or a demanding job in or out of business. She should not be a typing-pool secretary, but executive/administrative assistant positions are definitely acceptable (1987: 92).

Thurston outlines several of the ways in which the new erotic series romances, such as Loveswept, undercut the conventions of the older style romances:

1. The story told from the hero's point of view as well as the heroine's.

2. The roles of hero and heroine have become less sex-differentiated.

3. A consummated sexual relationship between the heroine and hero is a predictable convention.

It is in the area of sexual explicitness that the new romances are most demanding of the attention of researchers. However, this sexual explicitness is seldom presented outside the one-man-one-woman relationship. Thurston feels that 'woman romance readers seem to derive a sustained level of sexual awareness and pleasure built into the development of this loving relationship over time' (154) and that it is the process of conflict and resolution within a relationship which makes the romance so exciting.

**Readership of the series romance.**

Finally, it is important to establish who reads these texts. In his 1985 research, using Euromonitor surveys, Peter Mann detected evidence that the series romance is read by the lower middle class and working class woman, more than it is read by the upper middle class and upper class woman (1985: 103). This finding seems to support ideas put forward by Fowler (199: 130) and Rabine (1985: 169) suggesting a link between the working class woman and the reading of romances. However, from all accounts there is no clear association of romance reading with one class of reader, as shown by research done by Harlequin itself.

Consumer research surveys conducted by Harlequin Enterprises show that in North America, as in England, romance readers are scattered throughout the population. The company has constructed profiles of the North American English-speaking female population, the Harlequin reading population and the
Harlequin buying population. According to Harlequin's sales manager the profiles of these three groups are identical in characteristics like age, family income, employment status and geographical location (Jensen, 1984: 141).

It is obvious that this research does not take into account ethnicity, and one of the questions posed about the romance is, why, when it is so firmly located in European, bourgeois culture, does it appeal to women of the working class, and women of other ethnicities, as well women in countries in the developing world? Marxist feminists deal with the problem of class in the romance, by showing that the fetishizing of the gender relations makes the reader class blind. How can we explain the attraction of such romances for non-Anglo-Celtic women?

The romances are read by women spread across the whole spectrum of class, ethnicity, age, education level. Each of the readers obviously brings her own tactical reading to bear on the text. One must ask, when a non-European woman reads the text, which is ideologically middle class, euro-centric and patriarchal, what resistant readings does she make which give her pleasure? One can only assume that Cranny-Francis's theory is certainly a partial explanation of this. The fetishizing of the love relationship not only makes the reader class blind, but blind to the ethnicity of the protagonists.  

Having established where the series romance stands within the general genre designation and having traced its development and readership, it is necessary to examine critically the theories put forward to explain its appeal to women. Generally, the theoretical material available falls into four groups,
these being psychoanalytic theories, theories based on the romance as erotica, which also suggest a psychoanalytic reading, Marxist-feminist theories, and poststructuralist theories which examine contradictions and cracks which are appearing in the genre.
Chapter Two:  
A Theoretical Framework for Analysis of the Series Romance.

Most theorists see the analytical project simply as a need to account for regressive behaviour in women who read series romances at a time when enormous progressive strides have been taken by women in the public world. However, Marxist feminists would hardly see women's public lives as progressive. Consequently they are less likely to see the romance as offering some kind of empowerment for women who they see as still disempowered in all areas of life. Psychoanalytic theories depend on identifying deep satisfactions in the formula which may account for women's continued reading of such texts. Poststructuralist theories offer real opportunities to identify possible ways in which readers gain pleasure from romance reading. Poststructuralist methodologies, as suggested by Fiske, allow one to approach the romance using the methods of deconstruction (1989 A). Irigaray's poststructuralism allows the feminist scholar to look for pleasures centred in the body of the reader (1991 A).

Psychoanalytic theories applied to the genre.
Psychoanalytic theories on the romance are based on Freud's development of the Oedipal triangle. The Oedipal triangle is seen by Freud to be universal and to exist in all cultures. Feminist criticism of this model focuses on the patriarchal bourgeois family which is at the heart of the theory, as well as the privileging of sexual relations above other forms of social relationship in
construction of identity. Feminist criticism of Freud's phallologocentric view of female sexuality and its formation has been consistent and theoretically powerful.

Although feminists such as Dinnerstein (1976) and Chodorow (1978) have used Freud's theories to explain the way in which female subjectivity is constructed, other feminists have criticised both Freud and Lacan for their phallologocentric account of women's sexuality and women's place in the symbolic order. It is in the work of Luce Irigaray that criticism of Freud and Lacan has most to offer. She argues in 'This Sex which is Not One' that the Freudian definition of female sexuality caused women to lose touch with their femininity which is located in the female body (1991: 350-356). Freudian theory, building on patriarchal assumptions about women's sexuality, discouraged women from discovering the body's capacity for multiple and heterogeneous pleasure. According to Irigaray, both in sexual pleasure and in discourse, women can no longer be defined as 'lack', but as rich and plural (353). Thus, Irigaray offers a critique of Freud and of universalising theories about female sexuality and pleasure. Her suggestion that woman 'finds pleasure almost anywhere...the geography of her pleasure is far more diversified, more multiple in its differences, more complex, more subtle, than is commonly imagined ...' is important for a poststructural reading of the series romance (1991: 353). Though the series romance, even in its more recent form, appears to uphold the 'woman as lack' idea of patriarchy, it offers other evasive pleasures which may account for its continued popularity.
Building on Freud's theories, some theorists tend to see the romance as providing for the female reader, at a subconscious level, a pre-Oedipal erotic fusion with the mother. Angela Miles in 'Confessions of a Harlequin Reader: Romance and the Myth of Male Mothers', states that the emotional power of the romance fantasy in general and the Harlequin formula in particular, comes largely because the hero is in fact a mother figure for women who are re-enacting the emotionally demanding ambivalence of a pre-Oedipal relationship with an unpredictable, tender, threatening, all-powerful mother (1991:101). The theory put forward by Miles is based very much on the more old-fashioned romances which infantilise the heroine far more than the recent romances.

An example of such a text is The Hostage Bride (1981) by Janet Dailey. This text uses all of the old genre conventions, such as a mercurial hero, love with undertones of violence, the forced marriage, and continued cruelty from the hero who cannot believe that the heroine's love is genuine. All is finally forgiven and forgotten when the hero/mother expresses unconditional love:

Because...I had to figure out why I was trying to hang on to all those doubts, why I didn't want to believe you. When I was in California, I realized that it was because I was so much in love with you, it scared the hell out of me. One person who could make me so happy - or torture me with endless pain(189).

In this text the heroine has been treated like a child by the rich and powerful hero who makes her give up her job, doles out pocket money to her, and
thoroughly degrades her. This is typical of the regressive romances constantly given as examples by the theorists.

It has to be acknowledged that romances have moved a long way from this scenario. Though I am able to find examples of childlike behaviour in the heroines of those texts I have chosen for analysis, these almost appear as residual genre conventions, and are undercut by examples of autonomous, adult behaviour (For more information about the "Hero as Mother" see Appendix B).

This idea of the "Hero as Mother" put forward by other theorists as well as Miles, is based on Chodorow's *The Reproduction of Mothering* (1978). The desire for fusion with the mother is erotic, but is made more acceptable by disguising the mother as the hero of the romance. Here, Chodorow is concerned mainly with the question of how it is that women continue to take on the mothering role with children and whether this is explicable through biology, psychoanalysis or through or role-training theory. Chodorow is interested in the question of why, given that males and females both experience the mother as primary carer and form a pre-Oedipal attachment which is dyadic, that it is females who end up repeating the whole process in the role of primary care giver. In other words, in many females, mothering is reproduced, often in spite of definite resistance to the idea of being a mother.

It is almost a by-product of Chodorow's theorising, which leads to the idea of the hero of the romance as a replacement for the mother-figure. After
demonstrating that the female remains in the pre-Oedipal stage longer than the male child, and does not attain the same degree of separation from the mother that is possible for the male, she points out that fathers do not become the same kind of emotionally exclusive Oedipal object for girls that mothers do for boys (1978: 129).

She points out that most women emerge from the Oedipus complex oriented to their father and men as primary erotic objects, but it is clear that men tend to remain emotionally secondary, or at the most emotionally equal, compared to the primacy and exclusivity of an Oedipal boy's emotional tie to his mother and women (Chodorow, 1978: 193). In other words, because both boys and girls experience the mother as primary love object, the resolution of the Oedipal complex is more difficult for the girl who retains an ambivalent relationship with her mother and an erotic relationship with the father, which lacks emotional involvement.

According to Chodorow, for a male, in coitus, the woman provides a return to oneness experienced with the mother. For the female who is heterosexual there can never be this oneness with a male. Men cannot provide the kind of return to oneness that women can for males. Women's participation here is dual. First, a woman identifies with the man penetrating her and thus experiences through identification refusion with a woman (mother). Second, she becomes the mother to the male penetrating her. But she never feels as a man does, the sense of merging with her mother that returns her to oneness (1978: 194). The suggestion of Miles (1991) and Radway (1987) is that she gets
this feeling through the resolution of the gender relationships in the romance, not through the sexual act but through the feeling of unconditional love which comes in the resolution of the romance. This theory seems to be a rejection of patriarchy, in that it claims that romance readers are blissfully reuniting with the pre-Oedipal mother. But, in Freudian terms this relationship with the mother is explained as an emotional see-saw of fear of separation and loss and rejection, as can be seen in The Hostage Bride, where the heroine, Tamara is constantly in pain:

He was always doubting her, mistrusting her, questioning her motives...It was always a tangible thing between them, except when they made love. (1982: 143)

This is a typical conservative text, which plays out the Oedipal scenario perfectly. Because of the hero's mercurial behaviour, Tamara oscillates between pain in everyday life and pleasure in the act of making love. An examination of heroes in many traditional romances shows them to be mysterious, unpredictable creatures, showing tenderness and then distancing themselves from the heroine. This is the experience of the female child in the pre-Oedipal stage as regards the mother. When the hero takes the heroine in his arms and declares his love, she is reunited with the loving mother of the pre-Oedipal stage where there is no boundary between the self and the mother. One cannot help asking how long this moment of resolution will last? Could this explain why the reader needs to repeat the whole process? This theory is also a way of explaining why the heroine in the romance is so masochistic,
finding pleasure in painful separation, because of the promise of loving union.

This theoretical position can be criticised because it assumes that there is only one way of coming to terms with female subjectivity and that this is through woman as "lack". Taking into account the ideas of Chodorow, woman's lack is double, because she can never be "filled" by the penis, nor can she ever be reunited with the mother, except in fantasy. Chodorow, and by association with her, Radway and Miles, become trapped in a kind of phallocentric discourse whereby everything is still being explained in dualities, with the phallus as prime signifier.

Another genre convention which seems to reinforce this interpretation of the pleasures of the romance, is the lack of mother-figures in the romance. As Jensen remarks, one third of Harlequin heroines are orphans (1984: 88). In my own reading experience I have found few romances where the heroine's mother is included in the narrative. Thus, there is rarely an exploration of a mother/daughter relationship in the series romance. This leaves the way clear for the heroine to be sexually active, and to be completely absorbed in the relationship with the hero/mother.

Thus, the erotica of the romance can be seen as pre-Oedipal eroticism, the bliss of total merging with the mother in moments of intimacy. This whole scenario depends on the hero recreating the uncertainty and mystery of the baby's relationship with the mother. 2 In my analysis of modern texts, I have found evidence of this kind of movement between intimacy and anger. An
example can be found in *Magic in the Night* when Carly examines her attitude to Patrick:

> Her feelings had been swinging back and forth like an out of control pendulum ever since their first meeting (Ross, 1986: 128).

The newer romances, however, show the male to be much more vulnerable and feminine in his behaviour than heroes used to be. In a regressive text, like *The Hostage Bride*, the hero only expresses his fears at the end, when he holds the heroine in his arms and confesses his unconditional love. In a more subversive text, *Remember Me*, the male point of view is used as a technique, and hesitation and confusion are felt by the male hero:

> Worst of all, he was haunted by the sick feeling that he was losing the woman he loved.

> There was now a subtle but disturbing difference in Annie. He felt as if she were watching, waiting for something inevitable and final to befall them. She was withdrawing from their relationship. And although he knew it was happening, there didn't seem to be anything he could do to stop it. He didn't have any energy to stop it. he felt as if he were moving through his days in a slippery thick fog, barely avoiding disaster in every area (Hutchinson, 1989: 248).

David Roswell, is under a lot of psychological stress as he is haunted by a powerful nightmare. The sense of passivity and loss of autonomy is very strong in this extract. In Elda Minger's *Nothing in Common*, Burt is experiencing stress and burn-out, trying to cope with full time parenting and working:
I feel...like I'm in the middle of a midlife crisis or something. I think about changing my life completely, quitting the writing and working at something else. And I know that would be crazy, because I used to love to write. I don't know what the hell's wrong with me. this sounds so damn self-indulgent (1988:131).

The 'New Man' is much closer to the feminine in the ebb and flow of his emotions. His vulnerability, rather than being masked in anger and cruelty, as in the past, is shared openly with the heroine and the reader in the confessional mode.

Thus, it seems that the psychoanalytic theories, which depend on a mercurial, alternatively cruel and caring hero, as representative of the mystical pre-Oedipal mother, are difficult to sustain in the face of the more feminised heroes, who are shown to be sensitive, uncertain and impulsive. According to Freud, Chodorow (1978) and Dinnerstein (1976) the mother is the most powerful figure in the pre-Oedipal world for both male and female children. This powerful mother, after the resolution of the Oedipus complex, becomes a secondary figure in the patriarchal hierarchy. In order to achieve the feeling of blissful completion and oneness with the powerful pre-Oedipal mother, it is necessary to substitute the only powerful figure in the post-Oedipal scenario, a patriarchal male hero. Only a male has the power to replace the pre-Oedipal mother. My criticism of this theory is that the male heroes are becoming increasingly feminised, and thus can no longer hold the terror and awe of the
pre-Oedipal mother. They can no longer stand-in for the pre-Oedipal mother in the way in which Freudian theorists have seen her.

Angela Miles asks whether the arousal and emotional intensity 'might not come from the dynamics of the fraught hero/heroine relationship itself rather than from the "diffused" sex?' and also... 'Does the sex and sexual excitement perhaps stand for, mirror, and heighten an emotional intensity that is not about heterosexual sex at all?' (1991:114) Thus, Miles is implying that the erotica of the romance is not about sexual activity but about the resurfacing of powerful infant desires for the mother, the first woman in the life of the reader. This leads one to ask whether perhaps the romance might be about the multiple pleasures associated with women relating to women? Is the increasingly feminised hero a psychoanalytic stand-in for other women, those from whom patriarchy has perhaps separated us? Indeed, that is a much more satisfying reading, concurring with Irigaray's ideas and even borne out by Miles' own statement at the end of her article that we need to admit that our best support structures are those which women provide. She points out that, although the hero in the romance may provide "mothering" at times, in the actual world we get very little support from males (1991: 124). It may well be that the best test of the "Hero as Mother" theory would be to examine how lesbian readers read both lesbian and heterosexual romances. 3.

Carol Thurston, in her study *The Romance Revolution* (1987) puts forward the idea that in the newer erotic romances, the male heroes are quite similar to the female heroines in expressive and instrumental qualities. She
undertook a survey of romance readers in the U.S. in 1982 and then in 1985, finding that the readers' perceptions of character traits for males and females in 1985 showed little sex differentiation compared to their perceptions in 1982 (99).

Thurston's findings show that as well as the male hero conforming to a more feminine role in the resolution of the romance, he is becoming more feminine and flexible throughout the narrative. Thurston claims that romance writers appear to have created their fantasy heroes in their own image (1987: 101). Thus, the new erotic series romances such as Loveswept and Second Chance at Love may be creating "New Heroes", partially as a response to what is really happening in society, but also as a further attempt to conform male heroes to female desire.

Psychoanalytic theories which suggest that the male heroes are really our lost mothers seem to be inappropriate in the light of current romances, where males are very feminised and may well cry or fall apart in times of stress. The new male heroes do not have the kind of power of a Heathcliff or a Max de Winter, the kind of power which could represent the pre-Oedipal mother. The feminising of the male hero suggests another discourse at work, that of the "New Man" which is also open to a lot of criticism, mainly by feminists such as Rowena Chapman who suggest that the "New Man" is a patriarchal mutation, reinforcing male power over women (1988: 235).
Another reason for rejecting the psychoanalytic theories based on Chodorow, or, in fact, any one universalising theory for female behaviour, is the way in which this kind of explanation is rather deterministic, suggesting that psychic patterning precedes and explains social conditions, and is indeed fixed, at least until males share in the early care of babies. The question still remains, how do women who do not read the romance fill the aching void for the lost mother in their social practices?

One of the reasons why theorists tend to bring out psychoanalytic reasons for the continued popularity of romance reading is the very anachronistic nature of such narratives in a world which has changed completely since the first Mills and Boon went on the market. If women are still reading romances, there must be some deep psychoanalytic reason for this. Rosalind Coward suggests that the reading of series romances is evidence of a very powerful and common fantasy (1984: 190). Coward believes this fantasy embodies the pre-conscious adoration of the father figure (For More Information on the Hero as Oedipal Father see Appendix C).

Psychoanalytic theories rely fairly heavily on the more old-fashioned romances, with very patriarchal heroes and fairly submissive heroines. They do not work as well when applied to the texts which I am using. All of this seems to suggest that there are complex reasons, multiple reasons, why women continue to read the genre. The idea of the romance as female erotica or pornography, is worthy of some attention. There are two approaches to this. The first is psychoanalytic, and not unconnected with the idea of "The Hero as
Lost Mother” in the sense that the romance allows the female reader to lose identity and regress to the infant desire for erotic gratification. The second is connected with social practices and the influence of sexual liberation on women's lives and sexual practices.

**The series romance as erotica**

For the first approach Ann Barr Snitow (1983), who appears to adopt a feminist poststructuralist view, puts forward the idea that the series romance may be a kind of women's pornography. The article, 'Mass Market Romance: Pornography for Women is Different' relies fairly heavily on the old-fashioned romances where the hero’s point of view is never explored, and the heroine keeps her virginity. Thus, Snitow’s interesting assertion that these texts are pornography for women, relies on the fact that the sexual tension in the texts is never resolved through intercourse. The texts which I am using for this study all have sexual intercourse before the declaration of commitment takes place at the end. Because she conflates pornography and erotica into one term, it is clear that she would stand with the libertarian feminists on the pornography debate. She sees pornography for men and for women as “reliving” the infant sexualisation of everything. The joys of passivity, of helpless abandon, or response without responsibility all echo the child’s early sexual state:

...Pornography for men enacts this abandonment on women as objects...How different is the pornography for women, in which sex is bathed in romance, diffused, always implied rather than enacted at all? This pornography is the Harlequin romance (1983: 269).
This is a very strange and paternalistic definition of pornography. She seems to be saying that pornography for men shows men's power over women, which she does not actually condemn, while pornography for women, has no actual sexual intercourse, but is implied, because, even in fantasy, women are marginalised from active participation in sex, therefore substituting the romance fantasy for their secret sexual fantasies. Angela Miles is critical of this view, because 'there is a deep flaw in an analytical approach which defines women's experience in terms of men's, even in its difference' (1991: 113). What Miles is implying is that even to talk about women's pornography is to use the discourse of patriarchy.

Feminists see erotica as showing sexual relationships between fully consenting and equal partners who identify emotionally with each other (Tong, 1989:113). The romances which I am using for this paper would be far more likely to fit into this category. Thurston claims that the new erotic romances are so explicit that psychoanalytic readings can no longer apply. She states that:

...the erotic heterosexual romance by the early 1980s was portraying a female sexuality that was no longer repressed or made obtuse and mysterious through psychoanalytic symbolism and innuendo, forbidden to the heroine by the double standard (1987: 140).

Thus, one of the arguments against psychoanalytic theories for explaining the attraction of the romance is that there is no hidden agenda in the current romances, for they deal with sexual intercourse openly. Thurston is suggesting that whereas in the sweet romances it was through disguised psychoanalytic
devices that the reader was given pleasure, now, with the newer erotic romances pleasure is achieved directly through the narrative of sexuality.

In *Taboo* by Olivia Rupprecht when the hero and heroine make love there is sexual description which pays some attention to female sexuality from the point of view of a woman:

Finally, naked, entwined, they sought the secrets of each other's skin, nothing hidden or left untouched. She stroked him as he caressed her, marvelling in the length and breadth of his body, delighting in his whispers of encouragement and groans of delight (1991: 126).

and later,

Sliding his hand between their bodies, he stimulated her with slow, sensitive caresses, while he eased himself inside, just the smallest bit. She panted his name and quivered, while he whispered sex words, love words, to stoke her spiralling hunger (1991: 127).

The idea of the hero being the lost mother becomes a little difficult to sustain in the light of such explicit detail. Actual penetration seems to drive away any thought of polymorphous erotica of the pre-Oedipal child. The romances with which I am dealing tend to have two kinds of sexual activity. Firstly, there is a lot of erotic foreplay, in which all areas of the heroine's body are given pleasure. Then, there is the actual entry of the male into the female, accompanied by orgasm. The first is given far more attention than the second.
But, the fact that the second is there, denies a reading which suggests the polymorphous, sensory delight of the pre-Oedipal child with the mother. The fact that attention is given to penetration and ejaculation leads me to reject the "Hero as Mother" theory in favour of Irigaray's idea of women's bodies as multiple sites of pleasure (1991: 353). Perhaps the erotica of the romance is not the erotica of the baby's return to oneness with the mother, but the erotica of grown up women, with the male hero as a kind of decoy to legitimise auto-eroticism.

According to Thurston, the erotic romances which appeared in the 1980s represented the first 'large and autonomous body of sexual writing by women addressed to the feminine experience' (1987: 10). Thurston sees this erotic writing, sold under the label of "romance" as subversive, because it is able to present women with an erotic discourse, while masquerading as "romance" which, though reviled, is not seen as a threat to patriarchy (1987: 9).

This erotic discourse which gives new legitimacy to female sexuality may be seen as feminist, or may be seen as patriarchal, depending on the theoretical frame of the feminist scholar. This question seems to hinge on a definition of erotica and a definition of pornography. If the romance is pornography it is about power and sex-as-weapon (Steinem, 1980: 38). One must admit that many of the historical romances, called "bodice-rippers", fall into this category. However, the newer romances, such as Taboo, (Bantam, 1991) with women taking the initiative in sexual relations, may well be seen as erotica, because there is mutuality and reciprocity in the pleasures of love making.
It is important to examine the theoretical perspective of feminists towards pornography/erotica in order to establish a position on the new series romances. It is clear that some feminist see the romance as verging on, or as pornography, whereas others see the erotica of the romance as subversive resistance to patriarchy. My own position is ambivalent. I am critical of the romances where violence is enacted or implied. In romances where attention is given to the female body, even with male agency, I am prepared to identify women's erotica. Here I see two levels of subversive activity. The first is allowing women to speak to women about sexuality, even when the discourse may appear to be phallocentric. The second is the subversive nature of the sexual description which centres on the female body, and perhaps suggests auto-eroticism, even though it appears that the hero is giving the pleasure (For further information on feminism and pornography see Appendix D).

To further examine the sexual relationships within series romances it may be necessary to look at the work of Kay Mussell, who identifies the three stages of development in the social mythology of sexuality:

In Stage 1, sex is done by the male to the female. In Stage 11, it is done by the male for the female. In Stage 111, their ideal if elusive goal, it is performed by the male with the female. These stages have historical roots, and they chart changes in the ideology of sexuality as it affects the social consequences of sexual practice (1984: 139).

It is interesting that even the above description of the developments in lovemaking is centred on the male doing it to, for, and with the female. The
idea of a woman doing it for herself, though covered in Masters and Johnson, is not a consideration when it comes to a phallocentric ideology of sexuality. Stage 111, according to Masters and Johnson, obtains among only a minority of couples (Mussell, 1984: 140). According to Mussell the treatment of sex in most romances embodies the Stage 11 assumption that men give and women respond. She points out also that romantic heroines are conventionally unresponsive to sex without love (140). This inability of the heroines of the romance to respond to sexuality without love, is best explained by looking at the work of Dinnerstein (1976) which examines the way in which women, even in the liberated seventies, continued to cling to monogamous relationships and sex with love (For more information on the ideas of Dinnerstein see Appendix E).

According to Thurston (1987: 158) considerable evolution into Stage 111 has taken place in the modern erotic romances. However, in my textual analysis I have found that although some heroines are quite aggressive lovers, the discourse of women's sexuality in the romance seems to be more anchored in Stage 11. Male lovers are paying attention to her anatomy, her needs for the achievement of orgasm, her desire for foreplay and tenderness, with cunnilingus and multiple orgasms being featured. Interestingly, the most obvious omission from this sexual discourse is the use of fellatio, which means the woman doing something for the man, and features in male sexual fantasy. The new discourse of women's sexuality in the romance is definitely aimed at women's bodies and women's sexual fantasy (Thurston, 1987: 141). Perhaps it is
also a very pleasurable way of opening up the kinds of possibilities of which Irigaray is writing in 'This Sex Which is Not One' (1991).

What does this new eroticism do for women who read it? According to Thurston's research, women get ideas about how to enhance their sexual relationships, or enjoy the sexual fantasies vicariously (1987: 142). Certainly, Thurston's readers were more interested in the sexual discourse in the romance, than were Radway's. Radway's readers were interviewed in 1980, while Thurston's were interviewed in 1985. Thurston's interviewees were drawn from all over the United States, while Radway's were from a small mid-western town.

It seems that the whole idea of the new erotic discourse in the romances is problematic. If women are finding pleasure in the erotic descriptions and this pleasure is not based on psychoanalytic longings for the mother, but on the pleasure of the text itself, then perhaps woman readers are trapped in a phallocentric sexuality which is still portrayed from the point of view of a male. After all, although there is much more creative foreplay and heroines do initiate lovemaking, there is still the old heterosexual culmination in penetration. I have noticed that the heroes are more feminised, but are still "thrusting" and "plunging" into the heroines' bodies. However, what I have also noticed is that there is much more attention to the many sites of pleasure within women's bodies. These texts may be suggesting that pleasure for women is a man's penis, but they are also evoking the pleasures of touch, which Irigaray suggests are the foundation of women's eroticism (1991: 351).
For example, the following passage from *Remember Me*, is particularly erotic, and does not depend on the phallus:

He knelt over her, cupping her face in his palms, and the tip of his tongue closed each eyelid in turn with a soft, exotic caress that then traveled down the length of her nose, and outlined her lips with careful, erotic attention to the deep indentations that bracketed her mouth. He nuzzled her chin, trailed his mouth, hot and wet, down her throat, and made her writhe and sigh with impatience before his mouth again captured hers, tongue promising...He knew exactly when her nipples began an agonized throbbing, linked in some invisible fashion to the burning pulse hammering at the core of her body, and he slid his hand down to the soft nest of her thighs, his fingers parting her with gentle intent and finding the bud that at first seemed too sensitive for even his sure touch...He released her wetness and stroked it up over her, making the movement of his fingers like satin slipping over velvet. He knew the exact pressure she needed at all the right moments, slow, soft, indistinct; then firmer, more direct, faster...and all the time his mouth rehearsed the movement of his fingers, drawing the hardened tips of her nipples one by one, deep into his mouth, flicking with his tongue (149)...

Readers are very aware of the abundant, reflexive use of cliches and euphemisms in such writing and because of this awareness, can never be accused of mistaking such erotic texts for unmediated "realism". Attention is being paid to many erogenous areas of the female body. Readers can identify with an eroticism which is very like that described by Irigaray (1991 A). However, there are certain words which betray the way in which male power reasserts itself. The use of 'his mouth captured hers' suggests implied
dominance. 'He knew exactly when her nipples began an agonized throbbing' suggests that males really know about women's bodies. Such a mythological claim for male knowledge of women's bodies is at once exposed as ridiculous, while at the same time seen as a utopian ideal for women who have never met a man with such knowledge. The idea of a man who knows exactly what to do to satisfy a woman is both a joke and a utopian dream. As Fiske points out, the excess of popular culture usually holds the underlying myths up for ridicule (1989 A: 114). The myth encoded in this text, Remember Me, is that of male knowledge of women's sexuality. Although it is "naturalised" as the kind of knowledge that sexually experienced men would have, this is the kind of knowledge a woman would have of her own body, or of another woman's body. One could almost say that these male heroes become legitimate decoys, acting out female fantasies which centre on the pleasures of the body, and are more autoerotic than heterosexual.

In Chapter Three, in textual analysis it will be possible to concentrate on the multiple, diverse pleasures of the body evoked in the newer romances. This is the erotica which is subversive, because it is not dependent on the phallus.

The pleasures of escape.
According to Radway's research, readers escape into their texts, and in so doing, compensate themselves for much that is lacking in their daily lives. As well as this, the romance is combative, in that the heroine wins the hero over from the public world into the private world, vindicating the fact that love is more important than the public world of materialism (1987: 211-214). The idea of
escape, is picked up by Tania Modleski (1984) in *Loving with a Vengeance*, where she asserts that the reader escapes into the romance, and the heroine performs a 'disappearing act' as well, by becoming subservient to the hero, having her anger neutralised and foregoing her true rebelliousness (47). This process, displaces the heroine's psychic conflicts onto the reader, who must then repeat the process again in another romance reading (57). Unfortunately, Modleski's interpretation of the romance relies on the old fashioned Mills and Boon, with the young and innocent heroine and the enigmatic and dark hero, who has an edge of violence in his behaviour. She tends to use classic romances and very conservative sweet Harlequin romances to explore her theory that 'the desire to perform a disappearing act suggests women's suppressed wish to stop being seen in the old ways and to begin looking at their lives in ways that are perhaps yet to be envisioned' (58). It is possible that it is this breakthrough that is being made in the newer romances, especially in the light of Fiske's ideas about evasive pleasures, centred on the body (1989 A: 50).

**Marxist feminists and the series romance**

The above analysis of psychoanalytic theoretical frameworks concentrates on women's pleasures and the possible subjectivities constructed by the romance for women. The psychoanalytic approach tends to disregard the way in which women's subjectivity is also governed by class and ethnicity. To examine the way in which the romance encodes discourses about class, it is important to look at the ideas of Marxist feminists and their critiques of the romance. My attempt to define features of the popular romance takes into account the fact that it is in fact classist and patriarchal. As Fiske points out the popular text
contains 'both the forces of domination and the opportunities to speak against them' (1989: A: 25). According to Cranny-Francis, in Feminist Fictions, the popular romance, like the literary romance, is characterised by a strong male figure, the hero, and the romance and marriage of this protagonist and the heroine (1990: 178). Cranny-Francis agrees with Coward (1984) that the ideological function of the modern romance is the same as that of the nineteenth century romance, with an experienced, patriarchal, middle class, European hero subjugating a younger heroine, who eventually learns that the arrogance and male chauvinism of the hero is a cover for his true sensitivity (1990: 181). Agreeing with Jones and with my own reading, Cranny-Francis admits that arguments for feminism are put forward in these texts, but she sees them as quite ineffectual.

She does point out one of the contradictions in the romance. The fear of men, often evoked by feminism is shown to be hysterical, as by the end of the text, the heroine realises the "true" reasons for the hero's behaviour. While eventually setting to rest the heroine's fears, throughout the text real fear is evoked, by descriptions of the strength of the hero, and by allusions to his barely suppressed violence (1990: 182). One of the theories put forward about this presentation of male violence is that it inoculates women against what happens in everyday life, where male violence is a present fear (Cranny-Francis, 1990: 191).

Cranny-Francis clearly comes out on the side of bourgeois patriarchy as the predominant ideology of the romance (183). She claims that modern romances
are not love stories so much as economic stories displaced into love story terms (183). Feminist Fictions is concerned with the problem of feminist subversion of genre. Cranny-Francis feels that a feminist rewriting of the romance is hampered by the way in which it elides the ideologies of gender, race and class, so that it fetishises gender relationships at the expense of others, thereby naturalising the class and race discourses encoded in the text (190). She feels that the bourgeois ideology is at work in the way in which young, poor women can marry powerful, wealthy men in series romances, thus constructing women solely in terms of gender, and as class-less and race-less. Yet, many contemporary series romances are equalising the relationship between the sexes. Often the female protagonist will be a professional, who is drawn towards a less powerful man, or drawn towards a colleague. In Breathless Dawn (1983) Juliana Blair chooses the less successful son, Scotty, rather than his successful father, as her husband. There is also a very strong sense in the narrative that Juliana must have her research work and her autonomy as well the man she loves.

The shift is to heroines who want to have it all - love and self-fulfilment in work. The public and the private are fused far more in contemporary romances. No longer is the heroine completely absorbed in the private world. Often she falls in love at work, and the work she does is not the traditional work assigned to women, such as secretarial work, nannying or nursing. Thus, the ideas of Cranny-Francis and Coward, that the romance is still anchored in nineteenth century ideology of female passivity and the private sphere, do not hold true for the contemporary series romance.
Bridget Fowler, in *The Alienated Reader* (1991) takes a Marxist cultural perspective on the romance, using the ideas of Pierre Bourdieu, to show that popular culture is a way in which class inequalities are perpetuated. This universalising theory suggests that a mass culture is imposed upon the powerless and passive members of society, allowing no resistant readings of that mass culture.

Fowler's approach to the romance is grounded in Marxist cultural theory, showing the romance first as a narrative of class, second as a narrative of gender. She traces the development of the popular romance as an accompaniment to the rise of capitalism and the patriarchal mode of production, continually reinforcing the hegemony of the bourgeoisie over the working class. Fowler relies on the old romance formula in which it was usual for the heroine of the series romance to be attracted to a man who was more powerful and more successful than she was. This convention has changed in the past decade.

However, this is not deny the classist discourse at work in the romance. Rather than through the inequalities existing between heroine and hero, it is in the way in which servants and ephemeral characters are presented in series romances that a classist discourse be seen. I am quite prepared to admit to this kind of classist discourse existing in many of the romances I have read.
Marxist feminists, though admitting that there are opportunities for resistance in the romance, tend to see it as another example of false consciousness at work, whereby love is seen to conquer all, thereby disguising the inequalities between men and women which rest of gender and class.

It seems to me that many modern series romances are introducing public discourses such as trade unionism, worker participation, affirmative action, equal opportunity, into the narrative. This means that, although they are in no way revolutionary, they are taking such discourses into account. 6. The entry of the heroines into the public world of work makes this inevitable.

The genre and women's work
Leslie Rabine in Reading the Romantic Heroine (1985) suggests that newer romances eroticise the workplace and attempt to end the division between the domestic world of love and sentiment and the public world of work and business (1985: 166). The book itself is an attempt to build a theory that finds connections between an unconscious feminine personality structure, the culture that shapes women's consciousness, and women's social situation. (For more information on the ideas of Leslie Rabine see Appendix E)

In her final chapter, 'Sex and the working woman in the age of electronics' Rabine takes an interesting view of the way in which sexual liberation and women entering the workforce have changed the romance formula. The main point made in this chapter is that Harlequin romances have become more popular as more women enter the workforce, often in low paid jobs in
multinational companies. Because the new romances combine the struggle for love and the struggle for autonomy in the workplace they are extremely attractive to women who see the heroines gaining love and respect and having satisfying work (164-167). Rabine suggests that the utopian project present in the Harlequin romance is the changing of the world of work so that there is an end to the division between the domestic world of love and sentiment and the public world of work and business (166). According to Rabine these romance narratives present oppositional views to patriarchy which suggest that real change is possible (167). These new romances are extremely attractive to women because they eroticise work, in an age where, for the ordinary woman worker, it is a place of boredom and mechanical activity. She points out that the glamorous career women in the new Harlequins are the readers' alter ego (169). She suggests that 'Although readers are well aware that the romances are unreal fantasies, their passionate attachment to the genre could not be explained without an intense identification with the heroine on the level of ego ideal' (169).

By drawing together the lover and boss figure, contemporary romances draw attention to the specific way in which contemporary women face patriarchy (170). The heroine struggles with her lover/boss figure for control over her work, and for autonomy in her romantic relationship. A textual analysis of *Magic In the Night* (1986) reveals the kinds of pleasures associated with work and love, of which Rabine wrote. This text is about the relationship between the hero, a consultant who comes in to save the airline and the heroine who is
a partner in that airline. In *Magic in the Night* the male hero attempts to separate the personal from the workplace. He says:

The logical solution was for us to get the sexual part of our relationship out of the way before we have to get down to business on Monday morning (42).

He feels that once he has privately satisfied his desire for her, he will be able to work with her on a public level. She knows that to submit to him privately will mean a loss of bargaining power in the workplace (45). If he has power over her in private, he will also have this power at work. The reader realises how vulnerable professional women are and identifies with Carly's resistance to Patrick. This man must learn to respect her professionally as well as personally, before she can have a relationship with him. Early in the text, when Patrick is outlining his plans for saving Capitol, and Carly disagrees with them, there is an eroticised argument. Carly thinks:

One minute they had been discussing Capitol Airlines like two professionals, and the next minute all pretence had dropped away and they were once more engaged in that age-old battle of the sexes (63).

The battle over the future of Capitol Airlines becomes a sexual battle between Patrick and Carly. The working woman's romance shows the hero and heroine both oscillating between intimacy and anger as they attempt to solve problems of power in the workplace and power in a relationship.
Reader pleasure comes from the bargaining power of the heroine, which, though based on her attractiveness for the boss/hero, also has its basis in her intelligence and quick-wittedness. The reader's experience of work and bosses is totally different to this, as Rabine points out. Thus, the pleasure of resistance is identification with the heroine's struggle with the boss, both as a woman and as an employee.

When Patrick tells Carly he is getting rid of her partner Bill, she feels confident enough to say 'If Bill goes, I go' (80). Because of his growing respect and obvious attraction to her, he agrees to let Bill stay. By the end of the text, the battle is won in the workplace and the bedroom. Patrick agrees to move his consultancy to Washington, so that Carly can go on running Capitol airlines.

It is in the romance fantasy of an eroticised workplace, that alienated and marginalised working women can escape the oppression which the workplace offers them. Thus Rabine is offering the paradigm of a new kind of reader, and a new kind of romance, based on this development of late capitalism, the entry of large numbers of women into the workforce. The women who read romances today are women who experience both patriarchy, oppression and alienation in the workplace. It is very hard to separate patriarchy and capitalism as dual causes of women's oppression today. It is very easy, then, to see why Harlequin romances, which now show women overcoming patriarchy and marginalisation by winning the gender war in the workplace, are very popular.
Rabine points out the compensatory resistances offered in the romance, ranging from identification with women who have exciting jobs, to the triumph of women's value systems. She herself admits that cracks are beginning to break through in the formula, as popular romances allow for more freedom and creativity within the texts (184). This brings us back to the problem of subversion of the romance by feminist writers. Rabine seems to be suggesting that there is a way to do this, but does not go into any detail about possible strategies (190).

**Strains on the genre**
The genre is obviously changing. Evidence that other discourses are taking up more of the narrative is clear from readings of the romance. The theories put forward by psychoanalytic readings are difficult to sustain in the light of recent erotic developments where there is no longer an all over feeling of blissful reunion, but explicit heterosexual coitus. The genre is accommodating discourses critical of patriarchal capitalism as it moves heroines into the public world of work. The genre is providing erotica for women whose interest in sexual satisfaction and exercise of the female gaze has been encouraged by popular culture. The genre is being subverted by liberal feminist ideas. However, is the romance itself, caught in the genre trap, eroded by competing discourses, starting to fracture? Is it in this fracturing and splitting that it achieves its high readership, in that it offers positions of pleasure and resistance to its readers?
Ann Rosalind Jones, in 'Mills and Boon meets Feminism', taking a poststructuralist position, suggests that though few writers of romances can ignore feminism, there is a tension between 'feminism as emergent ideology and romance as residual genre' (1986: 204). She gives examples of the way in which contradictions are occurring in what was once a fairly seamless genre. As mentioned before, she sees narrative discontinuity, irreconcilable settings and inconsistency in realist dialogue as three examples of inconsistency (1986: 204).

These examples are obvious in any reading of the newer romances. The heroine may be capable and autonomous, a fine example of liberal feminism, but then may suddenly be reduced to blind confusion. She may be an intelligent professional research scientist, as is Juliana Blair in Breathless Dawn (1983), but also be presented as one of a long line of passionate, emotional women:

Around the room, generations of Cardonas seemed to be heartily applauding her capitulation to the flaming-haired rogue. The Cardonas were a hot-blooded clan that acted on emotion. Anona had left her Chumash tribe, embarking on an utterly unknown life to live with the Spanish soldier she loved. The first Juliana had defied everyone out of passion for a handsome musician. Her daughter, Maria had shocked even her headstrong mother by throwing herself shamelessly at a notorious, dashing pirate (65).
This passage is riddled with contradictions. The use of the phrase "The Cardonas" suggests the males and females of the family. The examples given, however, are only of her female ancestors. The implication is that the matriarchal line of the family is passionate and strong, showing little regard for safe bourgeois husbands. A pleasurable female resistance to the boring hum-drum of marriage to an appropriate provider is presented. This is nothing new for the genre as heroes in romances have been traditionally anti-establishment figures, right from Heathcliff to Rhett Butler. On the other hand, although the text shows that Cardona women choose husbands who are exciting and romantic, passion and romance are shown to be prime contributors to female identity, signifying a pre-feminist view of women's role in social terms. Juliana, the cool, efficient doctor is shown to be regressive in her sentimentality and her attachment to passionate commitment.

The contradictions inherent in such attempts to accommodate feminism suggest that the genre is under strain. As Jones states:

The narrative interest accorded to women's work outside the household, the critique of male supremacy in the office and the bedroom, some notion that masculine and feminine desire may not be light years apart, or fixed for eternity - these are certainly signs of life stirring in (up) an ancient literary mode. The politics of gender have already become a politics of genre (1986: 216).

The contradictions, as well as putting a strain on the genre, make possible tactical readings which may well empower the women who read. A
poststructuralist reading of the texts may locate areas of resistance to patriarchy which subvert the hegemonic discourses of consumer capitalism. It is my intention, following the ideas of Ann Rosalind Jones, to show how resistance may take place within this fractured genre. My theoretical position will be based on Fiske (1989), who takes the ideas of de Certeau to suggest that popular culture contains both the forces of domination and the opportunities to speak against them. I will also continue to use the ideas of Irigaray, which do not conflict with Fiske's theoretical position.
Chapter Three:  
Spaces for Resistance to Patriarchy within texts: Evasive and Productive Pleasures.

After identifying two sources of pleasure in the consumption of popular culture, the evasive and the productive, Fiske builds on the work of earlier theorists to show that the pleasures of the body can be empowering. Interestingly, as regards the subject of this thesis, he uses the example of the housewife who reads the romance, to show how such a practice may be evasive. He meticulously builds on Radway’s (1987) ethnographic work to explore the idea of strategic reading. He suggests that evasive pleasure is located in the body, and for the reader of the romance this pleasure is the act of losing herself in the book, which in itself is an evasion of the hegemonic ideology of femininity which is based on serving others and denial of self-indulgent bodily pleasures (55). The pleasure of evasion is linked to productive pleasure of making new meanings. He suggests that the pleasure of making these resistive meanings of femininity and gender relations is a socially produced pleasure, but is connected with the extra-social jouissance which provides energy and empowerment (56). Thus Fiske suggests that the romance is subverted, not by the author of the romance, but by the reader, who uses the text as evasion, a way of rejecting certain ideologies, while at the same time recognising other ideologies at work in the text. Though he uses examples of more old-fashioned romances, where the hero’s cruelty is exaggerated, Fiske is pointing out the fact that the readers know that they are reading a text which
exaggerates the relationship between the genders. Knowing that one is reading something which is cliche -ridden and very obvious in its hegemonic ideology is in itself a form of resistance.  

It is my intention to use the two ideas put forward by Fiske, that of evasive pleasure and that of productive pleasure, to show that the female reader may make satisfying and counter-hegemonic readings of the texts which are offered to her.

According to Fiske (1989 A: 50) the pleasure of evasion is in jouissance, which is a concept put forward by Barthes in The Pleasure of the Text (1975). A translation of this term would approximate to "bliss", "ecstasy", or "orgasm". Fiske sees it as a loss of self and of the subjectivity that controls the self. Therefore it is an evasion of ideology. It is an escape from meaning.

According to Fiske, plaisir is the more everyday pleasure of relating to, or opposing, dominant ideology (1989 A: 54). Productive pleasure is to be found in the popular romance through readings which resist patriarchy. These are connected with women's autonomy in the workforce; anger and resistance to male power; the female gaze; the feminising of the hero who becomes a "New Man" in terms of popular culture; the validation of such female values as intuition and sensitivity to others; sisterhood and female solidarity; women who defy female stereotypes (often secondary characters).
It is important to note that these sites of resistance are often contradictory to other patriarchal discourses within the texts. In fact, some texts are so contradictory that it is a wonder that they still make any sense as narrative. Just when it seems as if these romances are quite subversive, phallocentric binary structures reassert their power over the narrative, causing the feminist reader to despair, then take heart again as the narrative stages a critique of patriarchy. However, the women who read them are not deconstructing these texts in order to expose patriarchy. They are reading them for pleasure. Some of the pleasures women construct from the texts will be linked to evasion of femininity as it is constructed by patriarchy. Such evasions are, as Fiske suggests, centred on the body. The female body as constructed by patriarchy is not allowed to be self-indulgent and pleasure seeking. It is there to serve others, both physically and visually. Its femininity is the measure of female worth, as femininity is defined by patriarchy. It is my intention to use the ideas of Irigaray to suggest that one of the attractions of the romance may be something to do with rediscovering the pleasures of the body in an almost autoerotic way.

After extensive reading of series romances, I have chosen to use two texts to explore evasive and productive pleasures for women readers. I will move from a heavily eroticised text, *Silken Threads* (1989) by Connie Rinehold to a very subversive text, *Nothing in Common* (1988) by Elda Minger. I will use the first text, *Silken Threads*, to demonstrate the way in which, even in the most heterosexual, eroticised narrative, the evasive pleasures centre on the female body. Also, in such a text, there are still productive pleasures available to the
reader. The second text, *Nothing in Common*, will be used to show that the series romance is actually being subverted by feminist ideas as the hero, Burt, actually reassesses the harm that patriarchy has done to him.

There is less focus on lovemaking in the texts which are more concerned with reassessing patriarchy. These two texts represent the two extremes of the spectrum as regards modern series romances. *Silken Threads* has all of the elements of a narrative which *should* explore the problems women encounter in today's world. The heroine has a sixteen year old daughter who was adopted out as a baby. The heroine has gone on to make a successful career for herself. She is suddenly confronted with a daughter, with whom she must forge a relationship. Unfortunately, she falls in love with her daughter's widowed, adoptive father, and he falls in love with her. What follows is a highly erotic concentration on the illicit love between Ramsey Jordan and Sabrina Haddon. The love affair is forbidden and illicit because the sixteen year old daughter must not find out about it. One of the evasive pleasures of this text is that of illicit love, forbidden by patriarchy. In fact, it is Ramsey himself, the adoptive father of Tess, who resists the relationship most, because of such feelings. Attempts to explore the growing mother and daughter relationship are sacrificed for the eroticising of the relationship.

On the other hand, *Nothing in Common* (1988) is concerned with the psychological problems of the sensitive man. Here the male is working out his childhood fear of his father, and attempting to deal with his own children in a
more loving and sensitive way, all while suffering the threat of the loss of his children, through a custody battle. The developing relationship between the hero and the heroine, who comes to the house to train his dog, is quite subdued and linked to the healing of the male protagonist and his family. This text is actually quite subversive of patriarchy, in that the hero himself is reconstructing his own ideology within the text.

Evasive pleasures centring on the body.
The discourse of the body can be pleasurable and can also be a way of controlling women, who, according to Irigaray, and other feminist writers, are marked by patriarchy. According to Irigaray, in order for women to rediscover the pleasures of the body they need to analyse the systems of oppression which mark the body (1991 A: 355).

The evasive body - subverting patriarchal constructs of femininity.
One of these systems of oppression is the patriarchal concept of femininity, which tends to favour passivity, compliance and small stature. The discourse of the female body in the newer romances shows the influence of feminism on perceptions of femininity. Tall and statuesque women are appearing more frequently in the texts. This association of the increasing size of the heroines with the influence of feminism can be seen as equating size with power, falling into the phallocentric trap. However, it seems very clear from women's magazines and the audio visual media that women in Western society are
encouraged to reduce their size by dieting and working-out. Feminism has drawn attention to this oppression in literature and in the popular press. Thus, the way in which the body is presented in the romance can be subversive of the patriarchal concept of femininity. In *Silken Threads*, the heroine, Sabrina has developed her own fashion label for tall and well-built women. Her daughter, Tess, says:

> When you're built like me, it's hard to find what you want in the stores. Either the buttons gape on the blouses, or the skirts are too short. (1989: 37)

Sabrina admits to Tess that she is the owner of Cachet Fashions. We read that she 'glanced down at her own tall, voluptuous figure' and replied 'That's why I'm in this business' (37). The pleasure of the text, lies in the heroine's acceptance of her body, and the admiration of the hero for Sabrina's very womanly figure:

> Ramsey had expected a slim fashion plate, with a full complement of cosmetics and not a hair out of place. The woman before him wore no make-up that he could see, and her hair was loose and natural around her face...She stood straight and tall, radiating confidence and success (45).

This woman is described as large. Some readers will certainly enjoy identifying with a woman of generous proportions, while others will appreciate the fact that she radiates confidence. Feminist readers will be aware that the idea of
"natural" beauty is another patriarchal construction, which is not fixed and continually shifts its signification. The concept "natural" may be used to oppress women as much as "femininity". However, in the series romance "natural" often means lacking in artifice, and at home with one's body. It is through the representation of the heroine’s body in the new romances that woman readers may gain the pleasure of identification with subversive constructs of femininity, which are oppositional to the stereotypes put forward by patriarchy. In many of the texts I have examined the heroine is often portrayed in a way which would allow women readers to resist conventional patriarchal images of femininity. The heroine of _The Phoenix Heart_ is 'the serious, chignoned representative of the Spencer Foundation's Committee Against Violence (Osborne, 1985: 3)' The heroine of _Silver Bracelets_ is described thus:

...wearing faded jeans, a T-shirt that said "Locksmiths have the Key," and a baseball cap on her head...she smelled fresh and natural, like newly mown grass, or a watermelon right after it was cut (Chastain, 1991:13).

Heroines are often involved in work which means that they must dress in an androgynous manner, paying little attention to the "male gaze". They often have physical attributes which do not conform to the patriarchal model. One of the conventions appearing in the series romance is that the chauvinist hero has to reassess his ideas about femininity, as shown in _Magic in the Night_ , by
JoAnn Ross. In this text, Patrick, the consultant brought in to save the airline of which Carly is an executive assesses her body:

She was too tall...his tastes ran more to petite women, women who had to tilt their heads back enchantingly to look up at him, their gazes adoring and seductive...She was too skinny. He preferred soft curves in his bed, not boyish angles. The usual women of his acquaintance were complaisant, their only wish to please him (22).

Patrick is here revealed as a male chauvinist who equates curves with complaisance. He has a view of femininity which is constructed around male pleasure and female passivity. The skinny, angular body of Carly implies resistance and independence.

The pleasure of the text comes from the gradual humbling of Patrick so that he falls in love with Carly, a spunky, independent heroine, who does not match his male ideal. The discursive effect of this is to challenge stereotypes of femininity as well as to show the hero being educated, through the process of love, to accept a different kind of femininity. However, it is the man who has the final say. Heroines may initially detest heroes, but they are never critical of their bodies. The patriarchal double standard applies in this challenging of feminine stereotypes, because it is the hero who eventually has to approve of her, rather than she who has the final say.

Carly herself reflects on her own body, showing that she too, has been influenced by the patriarchal stereotype of femininity:
While her slender figure tended towards angles rather than the voluptuous curves she would have preferred, her small breasts were firm and her long legs were well shaped, thanks in part to her weekly dance classes (28).

The discursive effect of this is complicated. Readers may wonder why she would want "voluptuous curves" which seem to be associated with patriarchy's view of femininity. There is an opportunity here for the reader to critique patriarchal stereotypes of femininity. The reader may well feel anger at the right of men like Patrick to define femininity. The treating of the female body as an object to be assessed and measured, is doubly critiqued. First, it is critiqued by the reader's annoyance at Patrick's early arrogant patriarchal assessment of Carly's body. Then it is critiqued through Patrick's own realisation that, in spite of his fixed ideas about femininity, it is Carly's body that he loves:

Patrick's eyes drank in her slender body, her small, uplifted breasts, her lips that were darkly pink from a night of being thoroughly kissed (157).

On the other hand, readers may also see that even though the description of Carly's body seems to the reader to be extremely attractive, she still has dissatisfaction. Thus readers may experience the "inoculation effect" whereby a criticism of patriarchy is re-absorbed within patriarchy by seeming to be "natural." The reader may find herself accepting that under patriarchy, all
women, even the most attractive, are doomed to be dissatisfied with their physical appearance, which reasserts the right of patriarchy continually to define femininity. However, there is some pleasure in this realisation that "femininity" is such an elusive and unobtainable quality, that even the self-contained, confidant, attractive Carly cannot be completely satisfied with her body. Jen Ang, in 'Melodramatic Identifications: Television Fiction and Women's Fantasy' suggests that for women readers there is a real satisfaction in surrender to the fact that one can never have everything under control all of the time and that identity is shaped under circumstances not of one's own making (1990: 86). There is pleasure in giving up the struggle and admitting that no matter how hard one tries, one will fail to conform to the ever-changing template of femininity. Thus, there are spaces for pleasurable resistance to patriarchy within the discourse of "the feminine body".

**Evasive pleasures - the pleasures of touching and being touched.**

An important aspect of women's erotica, according to Irigaray, is the sense of touch. She states:

> Woman's desire would not be expected to speak the same language as man's; woman's desire has doubtless been submerged by the logic that has dominated the West since the time of the Greeks. Within this logic, the predominance of the visual, and of the discrimination and individualization of form, is particularly foreign to female eroticism. Woman takes pleasure more from touching than from looking, and her entry into a dominant scopic economy signifies, again, her consignment to passivity ...(1991 A: 351).
Irigaray suggests that for woman to re-discover herself and her pleasures would result in:

A sort of expanding universe to which no limits could be fixed and which would not be incoherence nonetheless - nor that polymorphous perversion of the child in which the erogenous zones would lie waiting to be regrouped under the primacy of the phallus (1991 A: 354).

Here Irigaray is not at all interested in the pre-Oedipal pleasures of the childish union with the mother, on which "Hero as lost Mother" is based. She is writing about "grown-up" pleasures, autoerotic pleasures and bodily pleasures. Obviously, Irigaray is also suggesting lesbian pleasures, as she does not wish to limit the possibilities. However, in An Ethics of Sexual Difference she speaks of the importance of the touch, in heterosexual relationships:

As he caresses me, he bids me neither to disappear nor to forget but rather to remember the place where, for me, the most intimate life is held in reserve. Searching for what has not yet come into being for himself, he invites me to become what I have not yet become. To realize a birth that is still in the future. Plunging me back into the maternal womb and beyond that conception, awakening me to another birth - as a loving woman (1984: 187).

In her rejection of the dominance of the phallus and the patriarchal scopic economy, she takes a liberating view of the importance of the caress. Irigaray
speaks of a heterosexual sensuality that is often presented in the newer series romances, and perhaps is very pleasurable to the reader because it does concentrate on the female body, rather than the thrusting penis and the male gaze.

A Critique of the 'Female Gaze'.

Thus, the sense of touch, evoked in the romance is particularly pleasurable to the reader, perhaps far more pleasurable than the use of the female gaze. Much has been made of the opportunity for the female gaze to operate in popular culture. In the romance texts, these descriptions often appear to be forced and mechanical, perhaps because this is not a feature of female eroticism. Another problem with the use of the female gaze, is that associated with the reversal of polarities. The reversal retains the phallic economy, as shown by the attempt to find a 'women's pornography' in Chapter Two. An example of the forced nature of the female gaze can be found in Silken Threads where Sabrina’s gaze leads her to thoughts which, though subversive, are almost comic:

She stared at the wisps of curling brown hair at the base of his neck. Those hairs invited speculation about more personal territory. Her nerve endings took over...(55).

The response of Sabrina to Ramsey is also described in terms of forbidden food:

He didn't look like a father, husband, or any domestic breed of man she’d ever seen. He made her think of a sinfully rich dessert, guaranteed to satisfy any woman’s fancy (45).
This comparing of the male body to a sinful dessert is evasive pleasure, in that it eroticises his body and has connotations of the woman devouring and consuming the male. However, in a way, it is an image of reversal of polarities, which is still complying with a phallic economy. The reader's response to such examples of the female gaze would perhaps be one of amusement.

The Textual pleasures of the body.

One of Barthes' ideas is that of the text as body and the body as text. The text of bliss is the text of 'edges and seams' which can provide the reader with erotic pleasure (Wasserman, 1981: 106). The pleasure of the text is the pleasure of the reader in the text, and the 'textual Body' is the reader's body (107). To make a pun, the pleasure of the reader is in the texture of the text - the feel of the text on the reader's body, as she consumes and plays with the text.

This text, *Silken Threads*, continually brings the hero and heroine to the brink of coitus and then breaks the movement. This is a variation on the movement towards intimacy and anger in more traditional texts. In this text there is a continual deferral of consummation, because of the fear of how the daughter of both hero and heroine will react. In such a heavily eroticised text it becomes for the reader a kind of "coitus interruptus". During the lead up to actual coitus much is made of the touching of the heroine's body as well as the heroine's exploration of the hero's body:

Parting her lips to meet his kiss, she moved her hands to his head, and ran her fingers through his hair. Her tongue smoothed the inner
textures of his mouth before joining his in a sweet mingling. Trailing down, her hands caressed his hair, coarse and soft all at once, making her palms tingle...Her abdomen contracted and quivered as he ran his finger down from her navel to her curly black hair...There was comfort in the gentleness of his mouth as he kissed the length of the (Caesarean) scar, accepting the role she had played in his life, long before their hearts had become acquainted. And she knew his hunger as his tongue trailed down her stomach, then lowered to taste the heat between her thighs. His hands molded her hips and skimmed her sides to circle her breasts as he rose to taste her mouth (Rinehold, 1985: 204, 205).

This passage is very textured, almost to the point of deliberate, self-conscious playfulness. The heroine's ability to identify the 'inner-textures of his mouth' suggests that the hero has become a space to be explored, experienced, not exploited, as in the usual male dominant sexual mode. The use of the phrase 'inner-textures' also commences a series of self-reflexive puns which play on the very textually constructed nature of these erotic scenes. Sabrina actually contributes to the pleasure of the hero's response by enjoying his body, through her touch:

Feathering her hands down his torso, Sabrina worked his pyjama trousers free and they, too, dropped to the floor. Her fingers savored the firm, hair-roughened flesh of his legs, and she placed small, biting kisses along his thighs and the hard length of his desire that was straining for release (205).
The text's excessive use of cliches and over-blown images, suggests that in Barthes' terms it is the 'intertext of all other texts' (1979: 77). Here we have fragments of all of the other texts of popular erotic/romantic culture included within a few pages of narrative. The reader's pleasure is facilitated by the use of euphemisms and cliches, because the reader is able to make her own reading much more freely than in a text where language attempts to focus on specific and particular insights. Also, the abundant, reflexive use of cliches and puns disrupts any pretence to unmediated "realism". The reader knows she is reading a text which is not about the world she inhabits. Yet, as she reads the text, it is sufficiently related to her world for her to connect the textual to the social world she inhabits. This particular text is one whose meanings exceed its own power to discipline them (Fiske, 1989 A: 104). Sabrina at first seems to be playing the passive "fill my lack" role. However, beyond this, she seems to be orchestrating her own pleasure, by using the phallus to her own advantage.

"More, Ramsey...please" Her hand enclosed his arousal, inciting his body to riot.
Forcing his restraint, he shuddered, "Sabrina, take it easy, sweetheart. It's too soon...too fast."
"No". In one fluid motion, she opened herself to him, her hand bringing him inside her, to know her wanting, was as hot and demanding as his (222).

The reference to the 'hand' in this section of narrative suggests, however, that in fact, the male organ is not as important as the hand of the heroine who can in fact use the phallus as an instrument, orchestrating her own pleasure. This
also relates to Irigaray's ideas on the importance of the caress in women's sexuality. She tells him 'You're so pleasing to the eye and to the hand and-

Again she responds to his texture:

...He was texture - hair-roughened skin, calloused hands, hard muscle - and he was color - warm brandy eyes, rich bronze flesh, luxurious sable hair. He was beautiful in endless variations of light and shadow. (206)

This playful use of 'He was texture' suggests again Barthes' idea that the body is the text, and textual pleasure is the pleasure of the body. This description of Ramsey as 'texture' also suggests the non-linear nature of women's desire which refuses 'polarization toward a single pleasure' (Irigaray, 1991 A: 354). Ramsey is the textual body that pleases the reader, the kind of hero women might imagine for themselves, combining feminine and masculine elements.

This actual description of lovemaking goes on for a whole chapter. This is definitely Stage 111 lovemaking as outlined by Mussell (1984), and a move away from the penetrative, violent type of sexual encounter to a subversive, erotic style of lovemaking, allowing female agency in the orchestration of pleasure, as well as focusing on nuances and pleasures of the caress. The evasive pleasures of the body are the focus of this text, leaving little room for the development of other discourses and ideas.
Food - another form of bodily pleasure.

Another way in which the body is the focus of female pleasure is in the appeal to food and taste. In *Silken Threads* there is an ongoing motif of chocolate ice cream, which is an accompaniment to their lovemaking (211). The feminine stereotype is connected with a small appetite. Women readers are accustomed to patriarchy controlling female appetites, and the discourse of dieting is often accompanied by guilty pleasure in eating. In the romance text, quite often the heroine is able to enjoy food to the fullest, without experiencing guilt. In *Magic in the Night* at the Washington party given by Patrick's father we read that Carly 'added a poppy-seed roll to the mountain of food accumulating on her plate.' The description of her piling up her plate takes in each choice at the buffet, and affords the reader quite a bit of vicarious pleasure (177).

Kate Elliott in *A Taste for Loving* (1983) is courted by Giulio Fraser, both professionally and personally by means of a succession of meals. They shop for ingredients together and Giulio prepares a very special meal for her. He serves her fettuccine Gorgonzola, sliced veal with fried cubed potatoes and sweet and sour onions, followed by apples poached in brandy and layered with creme fraiche between whisper thin leaves of pastry (83). The well-written text combines images of food and love in a most pleasurable way. An interesting description is given of Giulio:

Kate began to feel she had been caught up in an ancient ritual, eating the food so lovingly prepared by this fiery man who spread before her the fruits of the earth. He seemed to be in touch with the seasons,
so attuned to the sheltering bosom of the earth, that Kate felt they could have been eating in a farmhouse (Davies, 1983: 93).

In this text, the hero is feminised by his association with loving preparation of food and his contact with the natural world. The evasive pleasure in this text will come from the descriptions of meals and the fact that the heroine does not have to cook any of them. In fact, like many heroines of modern romances, who have "New Men" to do the cooking, she can cheerfully claim to being a hopeless cook.

**Productive Pleasures - opportunities to resist patriarchy.**

Neither of the texts chosen for this detailed analysis fit into the sub-genre of the workplace romance as described by Rabine. These texts, because they are at extreme ends of the spectrum, remove the narrative from the public arena. *Silken Threads* brings the heroine, a successful fashion designer, into the hero's home, to look after his/her daughter. Because the hero of *Nothing In Common* is a single parent, he works at home. The heroine, a dog trainer, comes to his home to undertake her professional duties. The eroticised workplace is not a feature of these texts.

**Feminised heroes.**

One thing both texts have in common is that the male heroes are single parents, bringing up children alone. This in itself is feminising, and causes the heroes to be introspective, self-doubting and more concerned about relating to
others. Ramsey Jordan's concern about his daughter's welfare, when she runs away to Sabrina, after her grandfather's death, shows that Chodorow's ideas may not be far off the mark. Male parenting does have a feminising affect on the male character:

Why hadn't he seen that she was keeping her grief inside, where it could hammer away at her without disturbing anyone but herself?..He and Tess should have held each other, shared their sorrows and their strengths, grown closer. Instead he'd pursued work as if it were all he had to live for (Silken Threads, 1989:13).

Of course, the fairly subversive text, Nothing in Common, has a similarly feminised hero, who is capable of tenderness towards his mixed-up son, Michael. He goes to Michael's room to comfort him when his mother fails to arrive for a visit. When Michael tells Burt to leave him alone, he is reminded of his own behaviour as a small child. He remembers that his father told him 'A man doesn't cry'. Burt thinks:

His father had believed it, and it had killed him. (1988: 166)

At the end of this episode, Burt holds his crying son in his arms and weeps with him (166). Patriarchy comes in for solid criticism through Burt's attempt to redefine masculinity away from the hard, unbending definition his father had given him.
The Subversive Romance - The reformed hero.

Patriarchal stereotypes of masculinity are critiqued more and more in the new series romances. In *Magic In the Night* Patrick, the hero, criticises his upbringing, which was rigidly masculist. When he discovers that Carly is a tap-dancer he says:

> When I was a kid, I tried to talk my parents into letting me take (tap dancing) lessons, but the senator insisted I play football instead. He said tap-dancing was for sissies (1986: 35).

*Nothing in Common* (1988) actually traces the change in the male hero, Burt Thomson, a writer of male action adventure genre, as he grapples with his relationship with his father and his oldest son. The romance is integral to the plot, as it is through the healing relationship with Sandy, that Burt finds the release necessary for change to take place. Burt Thomson wants to be a different, more sensitive father to his son than his father was to him. In *Nothing in Common* the reconstruction of the patriarchal hero is the closest thing I have observed to a feminist subversion of the romance.

The impact of liberal feminism on presentation of female characters.

The text opens with Burt suffering from writer's block as he attempts to complete one of his adventure stories. Burt has custody of his two boys, Ryan and Michael. He is concerned about the effect the separation is having on Michael. We read that his ex-wife, Anne 'hadn't wanted any encumbrances in her life's master plan' (8) Since reader subjectivity is identifying with poor Burt,
the single father, bringing up two boys, Anne is made to appear as a the "bad mother" who deserts her children. However, for the female reader, at this point there can be a strong identification with a female character who is obviously without guilt and pursuing her own agenda. Often, subversive pleasures depend on ambivalence, due to the strains in the genre. Later in the text, Anne is shown to be a pathetic and weak character, who cannot cope with responsibility. The ambivalence of her presentation is typical of the way narrative continuity is feeling the strain of the pressures on the genre.

In the light of changes in attitudes to women, Anne cannot be typecast as the bad woman. Her characterisation is quite crazy, starting with a misleading image of the career woman, then on to the threatening and powerful woman who is planning to take away Burt's custody, and finally to a kind of alcoholic 'more-to-be-pitied than feared' creature. She is presented almost as characters in Soaps are presented, ever-changing according to the needs of the plot.

Sandy Hensley like the tall skinny heroine of Magic in the Night, Carly Ashton, is an example of a new heroine. She is a dog trainer who comes to help Burt out with his disobedient sheepdog. She rides a motorbike, wears loose, tomboyish clothing and she is as tall as the hero. She senses, that Burt and his children are suffering:

The same instincts that helped her with dog training were often effortlessly put into play with people...She had sensed an air of...of sadness. As if all three of them were silently hurting (1989: 19).
This of course can be seen as 'having it both ways' since a woman who rides a motorbike and is the opposite to a feminine stereotype, relies on instinct and intuition. This can be seen as a decentring of the conventional presentation of femininity, redefining the concept to include tomboyish qualities which are signs of independence. Readers may find productive pleasure in delight at her breaking of the feminine stereotype, as well as her female ability to sense things that men cannot.

Another influence on the genre, used in Nothing in Common, is the use of a female friend, who is a confidante and support to the heroine. In this text, Sandy has a good friend, Elaine, while Burt has a very supportive female friend who helps him with the boys. The more that texts are influenced by feminism the more they allow for other friendships within the narrative.

It seems that the more discourses there are competing within a text, the less concentration on the erotic there is. Although Sandy and Burt make love, it is not heavily eroticised, and both of them produce contraceptives before the event. Interestingly, this is the first of the series romances I have read, that introduces the discourse of safe sex.

The growth of the hero in the subversive text.
The main focus of the text Nothing in Common is the growth of the hero from weakness to maturity through his own psychological development and
the healing goodness of the relationship with Sandy. This unusual focus on the growth of the male protagonist is the reverse of the usual romance formula. As Kay Mussell has pointed out, the traditional romance concentrates on the heroine's transition from childhood to adulthood, through the agency of the hero, who teaches her how to be an adult (1984: 117). In *Nothing in Common* the reverse happens, as Sandy helps Burt to leave his patriarchal past and move to a more feminised subjectivity. Burt's suffering is based on his relationship with his father, who was never there for him (120). He wants to be a different kind of father to his son, Michael. The confessional mode is used in this text:

I used to wait for my father to come home at night. I just wanted to play catch. I'd wait and I'd wait, and I'd watch the sun get lower in the sky. If I was lucky he made it home before sunset (154).

The whole focus of this text is on resistance to patriarchy. It is not really necessary for the female reader to make a resistant reading to gain pleasure from the text. This text comes quite close to subverting patriarchy, allowing the woman reader to take up a feminist subject position. Of course, there are lapses and slippages associated with the genre. Sandy's flatmate, Elaine, plays a trick on her, substituting a skimpy bathing costume for her sensible speedo. The ex-wife, Anne, is a pastiche of all of the binary stereotypes. She must be made to appear negative, in order to evoke sympathy for Burt, but not too negative.
Gender and Genre.

The psychological dilemma which Burt experiences is tied up with his writing. He has to come to terms with the fact that he has outgrown it:

The genre he wrote in was clearly defined. Men were men and men were tough. Only the strongest survived, and Savage was certainly a prime specimen of machismo (1988: 177).

He has a recurring dream that his adventure series hero, John Savage, is explaining machine guns to his young son, Michael. In the dream he attempts to intervene, but cannot. Sandy explains to him that it is to do with his feelings about his father:

I think you're fighting against the idea of a man being a machine, like the worst aspects of your father. And you don't want Michael to be hurt by that way of thinking and acting, so you're trying to do it differently with your life and his. And John Savage gets thrown in there because I think you might have been drawn to him in the first place in order to work out some of your feelings (179).

Popular psychology, perhaps, but very relevant to the work done by Dinnerstein. Many female readers will find this discourse satisfactory because it deconstructs patriarchy, openly, within the romance genre. Burt gives away his macho adventure stories and embarks on a new writing career, using the confessional mode, writing about his childhood and his relationship with his father. Within this text, to quote Ann Rosalind Jones, 'The politics of gender have already become a politics of genre' (1986:216).
Conclusion

The series romance has generated many public discourses relating to what attracts women readers to such texts. I am positioned in the public, institutionalised system as a feminist student of cultural studies. To assess the continued popularity of a doubly-damned genre has led me through various theoretical frameworks. Although it is obvious that some theories are based on older, regressive forms of the genre, each of the frameworks has provided me with insights which are valuable. One of the problems with this whole project, is that of the difficulty of actually finding out what readings women do make, privately, of the romances. Extensive ethnographic work by such scholars as Radway, Fowler and Thurston is still limited by the problems of research techniques.

In the newer texts the influence of feminism has meant that the narrative has moved from the private to the public domain. The genre is changing to include the working woman, the sexually active woman, the "New Man", and incorporates some of the discourses of liberal feminism. Poststructuralism has allowed me to take up a variety of subject positions in my analysis, searching for counter-hegemonic readings, while admitting to patriarchal readings. Two pleasures are identifiable in making resistant readings. One is associated with the public world, and is termed "productive" by Fiske, the other is associated with the private pleasure of the body, and is "evasive".
In my reading of romances I have found that the more romances are influenced by feminist ideas, the more discourses compete with the central one of heterosexual love. These discourses which compete with the central idea of love and marriage introduce elements which put a strain on the genre. They also introduce opportunities for productive pleasures. Subversion is taking place, as shown by the way in which more and more romances resemble feminist texts in their use of humour, criticism of patriarchy and the confessional mode.

These texts have been taken too seriously by feminist theorists. The genre is playfully inter-textual and reflexive. For instance, in Nothing in Common, Sandy finds out that her glamorous rival, a blonde widow called Cici, has been arrested for poisoning all three husbands with her home-made muffins. Burt writes a script, based on this incident for Murder, She Wrote. (1988: 248,249) In Magic in the Night (1986) the heroine, Carly lives in an historic house in the middle of a shopping centre carpark. The female members of the Jacksonville Women's League for Architectural Preservation tour the house, surprising the hero in the old-fashioned bathtub, where his "architecture" is appraised. (214)

Nothing in Common (1988), which deals with a male identity crisis revealed through the confessional mode, definitely encourages female readers to identify macho socialisation as a very damaging process for males.
Using the ideas of Irigaray, I have been more and more led to see the way in which the new erotic romances allow the reader to enjoy multiple sensory pleasures, which are subversive, especially under patriarchy. I must take into account the fact that I cannot substitute my readings for those of all women who read. In my own private readings I have found the erotic descriptions, centering on the body to be pleasurable. These pleasures may be termed erotica, in that they take place in a situation where both partners are consenting, equal, and emotionally involved, or they may be termed auto-erotic, in that perhaps for the reader, the hero/lover's identity is not important.

In future analyses of the erotic series romances, Irigaray's ideas on female sexuality and women's language need to be explored more fully. Having critically examined the idea of "Hero as Nurturer", "Hero as Mother", the erotica of merging with the mother's body, it seems that the appeal of the romance for women of the 90s may be something even more. As well as providing evasive bodily pleasures in other areas, the romance may allow women to explore erotic pleasures which, in heterosexist, patriarchal culture, can only be represented when a male hand, lips, tongue, is doing the work. Auto-eroticism is discouraged within patriarchal culture. By imagining a lover who may do for a woman all the things she is not allowed to do for herself, there is a sense of pleasure without guilt. These new romances have thrown up heroes who are sensitive, tender and capable of paying real attention to women's needs. They are imagined heroes who can provide an imaginary situation wherein a woman's body can be given real pleasure. The "New Men"
in romances may well be fictional stand-ins for the lost mother, the lost father, other women, or the reader herself, giving herself the kind of pleasure that patriarchy forbids.

In order to chart the evasive and productive pleasures available in such texts feminists and students of popular culture need to keep reading the genre. Many of the feminist theorists and researchers who have worked on the romance as a genre, have actually helped perpetrate puritanical and repressive readings which disallow for the multiple pleasures available to the woman reader. The genre is changing. Subversion is taking place. The series romance is providing evasive and productive pleasures for its readers. These texts may be opening up possibilities for a female sexuality which is not contained by patriarchy, but which is multiple, subversive and satisfying.
Notes to Chapter One.

1. An interesting point which must be made here, is that the new series romances embody most of the liberal feminist reforms mentioned in the text. I must admit that, in my reading experience, they do stop short of dealing with abortion and contraception, except in the case of one text, Nothing in Common (1988) by Elda Minger, in which both hero and heroine have prepared themselves with condoms. It is not surprising, given the nature of the genre, that the actual mechanics of contraception should be avoided. In the series romance, realism was always modified by the genre conventions. Perhaps the genre is still popular because it has modified itself to contain all of the liberal feminist reforms, while holding fast to the monogamous, heterosexual happy ending.

2. Tania Modleski's (1982) chapter on Harlequin readers is called 'The Disappearing Act: Harlequin Romances.' It deals with the way in which readers disappear into their Harlequins. She points out that heroines tend to disappear as well, because the genre forces them to be submissive.

3. Chodorow, in The Reproduction of Mothering (1978: 197) points out that in a patriarchal capitalist society many women actually choose partners rationally because they realise their dependence on males. The development of a romantic sensibility is a way of coping with a very practical decision, glossing it over with appropriate emotional connotations. For some women, it is possible that this method of coping with gender relationships is seen as weakness, and refusal to face the truth. Thus, they are critical of other women who read romantic fiction.

4. Rosalind Coward's (1992) Our Treacherous Hearts: Why Women Let Men Get Their Way, draws attention to the way in which many women are opting out of careers and refusing to
climb the career ladder. She uses empirical research to show that many women are finding that the difficulties of combining work and mothering are very stressful, leading to feelings of guilt. Consequently the idea of giving it all up to become a full time mother, is becoming more appealing. For working class women, who can’t afford this luxury, the romance which shows a career woman settling for a compromise, with some time for herself, may be very attractive.

5. The link between fairy tales and romances has been made by Marxist feminists who see the gender relationships as secondary to the class relationships expressed in both texts. Cranny-Francis states that ‘romantic fiction, and the fairy tale it encodes, might be seen as one of the foremost propaganda tools of bourgeois ideology, mystifying the nature of both interpersonal relations and individual subject formation’ (1990:187). Note, that Cranny-Francis tends to see the romance as structured by two central ideas; the characterisation of a strong, male figure, the hero, and the romance and marriage between him and the heroine (1990: 178). She concentrates on the hero as a powerful, patriarchal figure who subjugates the inexperienced heroine. The desire which these texts enact, according to Cranny-Francis, is economic desire for solid middle or upper-class status (186).

6. Radway’s definition has a strong identification with the heroine’s point of view: However, all of the women I spoke to, regardless of their taste in narratives, admitted that they want to identify with the heroine as she attempts to comprehend, anticipate, and deal with the ambiguous attentions of a man who inevitably cannot understand her feelings at all. The point of the experience is the sense of exquisite tension, anticipation and excitement created within the reader as she imagines the possible resolutions and consequences for a woman of an encounter with a member of the opposite sex (64).
Radway's definition of the romance relies on identification of the reader with the narrative far more than the more structural approaches taken by others such as Cranny-Francis (1990) and Peter Mann (1985).

7. Vladimir Propp developed a narrative theory based on Russian Fairy Tales, which assigned certain functions to the typical characters:

   While there is an enormous proliferation of details, the whole corpus of tales is constructed upon the same basic set of thirty-one 'functions'. A function is the basic unit of the narrative 'language' and refers to the significant actions which form the narrative (Selden, 1989: 56).

This kind of structural analysis tends to ignore the way in which ideologies and discourses are constructed by narratives.

8. Cranny-Francis cites *Wuthering Heights* as creating the archetypal hero, who is mercurial, an outsider, violent and uncivilised. The love of Cathy and Heathcliff is the archetypal passion, elemental, natural, outside of social law (1990: 178). Elements of Heathcliff's character and this kind of irresistible, natural love are found in modern series romances. Cranny Francis also cites *Jane Eyre* as an example of the patriarchal capitalist ideology underpinning the modern romance (1990: 180). Jane is Rochester's inferior. He is powerful and ugly, yet attractive to Jane. Cranny Francis makes an interesting composite of the two texts to show that the modern text shows the development of Heathcliff, with undertones of violence, into a Rochester, who is disabled by his sensitivity (1990: 182). The heroine is rewarded for her femininity, just as Jane Eyre was. Cranny-Francis, of course, takes a Marxist view of the romance, by insisting that these stories are more concerned with economic issues than they are with gender issues (1990: 184).
The term "bodice ripper" is used generically to describe the erotic historical paperbacks published in the 1970s. Starting with Avon's publication of *The Flame and the Flower* by Kathleen Woodiwiss in 1972, there was a spate of such offerings. Usually the cover featured a woman with large breasts in a low-cut dress. The heroines were sexually active and independent adventuresses. These were the precursors of the modern series romance in their development of strong heroines and introduction of erotic material. According to Thurston, this term is 'a tongue-in-cheek sobriquet said to derive either from the bodice-ripping sexual encounters described in these stories or the hyperventilation women suffered while reading them '(1987:19).

It is interesting to note that Joanna Russ's *The Female Man*, a subversive feminist science fiction text, was first published by Bantam in 1975, but later by the Women's Press in 1985. Perhaps the Love and Life line may not have been subversive enough to be taken up by the Women's Press, yet it was too subversive to maintain its position among the racks of formula romances.

To elaborate on Thurston's four suggestions on ways in which the new erotic romances undercut the conventions of the older style romances:

1. The change from total heroine point-of-view to a split point of view happened because of consumer demand. Readers are no longer satisfied with seeing only how the New Hero responds, but want to look inside his head to discover his motivations (Thurston, 1987:99).

2. Thurston's surveys in 1982 and 1985 showed a shift in characterisation. Heroines are more serious, reserved, and cool, while heroes have become less assertive and more outspoken, impulsive and flexible. Changes in heroes are at least in part a reflection of change in the women who read romances, because it is these readers who have suggested such changes to the publishers. According to Thurston, some of the changes appear to be traits that readers have
admired for some time (e.g. humour, playfulness) Only in recent years have they been able to convince publishers of the qualities which they admire in male heroes (101).

3. Sexual satisfaction for both parties is guaranteed in most of the "realistic" contemporary stories examined in Thurston's content analysis. In almost 90 per cent of the texts she examined, the heroines initiate and take control, or share equally in orchestrating the sex act (103).

4. Exploring the double standard is mostly centred on the conflict of the heroine's public aspirations with her desire for a relationship with the hero. It may also focus on issues such as abortion, contraception and pregnancy. Heroines may ask the hero to give up his job for her (105). Heroines may have had illegitimate children (106). The "Abortion Misunderstanding" is a new plot device in which the hero believes that a miscarriage is an abortion (107). This has replaced the old forced marriage, as a plot device. It does, however, show a very conservative attitude on the part of the male hero, who sees abortion as a moral failure and is relieved when the heroine is shown to have merely miscarried. Publishers, editors and authors generally have opted for the conservative view in the abortion debate.

12. It is not within the scope of this thesis to explore the ways in which women of other ethnicities read the romance, other than to admit that they do. This requires a question similar to the one I am asking about the continued popularity of the genre for Western Anglo-American women. Why would women of other ethnicities continue to read such a genre in the light of recent discourses on ethnicity and subjectivity? Awareness of prejudice and disadvantage under Euro-centric hegemony has led to a recovery and reassessment of ethnic cultures, together with a proliferation of writings from various ethnic groups in Western societies. Yet, women from such marginalised groups are still reading Harlequin romances, which bear little relationship to their culture or ethnicity.
Notes to Chapter Two.

1. Freud's explanation of the acquisition of gender subjectivity relies heavily on the castration and Oedipus complexes. These processes are resolved in different ways in the case of girls and boys. Prior to the acquisition of gender, both boys and girls are strongly sexually oriented towards the mother in a polymorphous way. Boys resolve their Oedipus complex by submitting to the father's superiority and rejecting the mother as a sexual being. Girls, on the other hand, seeing that they are castrated like their mothers, transfer their desire from the mother to the father and to males. (Tong, 1989: 140-143).

2. Angela Miles in 'Confessions of a Harlequin Reader: Romance and the Myth of Male Mothers' explains this pre-Oedipal eroticism:

Nevertheless it is security, belonging and comfort that is the aim of it all, and is, paradoxically, exciting, emotional and erotic. The resolution of the separation from the mother, the rediscovery of original, sensual and complete fusion is the climax of the romance. The heroine will live happily ever after in the womb provided by the hero. In romantic fantasy, loving is mothering; to be loved is to find a mother. The powerful presence of the lover evokes the mother who is everything to the child and the reader’s regression to this emotional state is what gives the image of the hero power (1991: 116).

3. In a footnote to 'Confessions of a Harlequin Reader', Angela Miles asks whether it would be interesting to see if romance fantasy generally plays a different role for lesbian than for heterosexual women. She suggests that it may be that romance fantasies play a less important role for lesbian women both because, paradoxically, a female 'hero' is a less convincing representative of the powerful mother, and because more lesbian than heterosexual women may have mutually nurturing relationships. She also points out that she has lesbian friends who read Harlequins, which is in itself an interesting indication that
they are about something more than heterosexual love and sex. She suggests that further research on lesbian women's relationship to romance is necessary (1991: 130). Having read Adrienne Rich's 'Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence' in *Signs*, Summer, 1980, it is clear to me that 'feminist scholars have not taken the pains to acknowledge the societal forces which wrench women's emotional and erotic energies from themselves and other women and from woman-identified values' (638). Feminist scholars have tended to fall into line with "compulsory heterosexuality" in all branches of research, which may explain why the romance's feminised hero has never been seen as a possible substitute for a female lover, but rather as a father or mother substitute. In my humble opinion, the kind of attention to detail in foreplay in some of the newer erotic romances is far beyond the capacity of most male lovers.

4. Ann Rosalind Jones, in 'Mills & Boon Meets Feminism' (1986:203) discusses the fact that the feminist ideas put forward in the series romances are illustrative of Barthes' "inoculation effect" in that they are critical of patriarchy, 'but the allusion to the critique actually functions to reinforce the status quo.' In my own reading, I have found that often the feminist ideas are incorporated in the way in which secondary characters are presented, for instance the female aeronautical mechanic in *Silken Threads*. (1989). She is presented as being 50 years old, good at her job, yet motherly. The texts are not critical of these characters, but often use these characters to show that they are "progressive".

5. In Second Chance at Love's *A Taste for Loving* (1983) the heroine, Frances, a freelance designer, meets a professional photographer couple who have a Chinese housekeeper who makes it possible for them to combine work and parenthood. Later, when she goes to her boss's apartment she asks 'How do you keep it up?' He says that 'that is Serefina's department' (85). These silent, working class women of ethnic minority groups do the housework and
cooking for the successful, dynamic protagonists in the series romance. If low-paid domestic workers read the romance, as we are told they do, we must assume that they are either unaware of the classist discourse working against them, or, though aware of it, construct for themselves different pleasures which may well be counter-hegemonic to patriarchy. In other words, they may be empowered by the evasive pleasures of reading, of self-forgetfulness. The act of reading itself, can be for women a kind of resistance to patriarchal demands. Janice Radway (1987) and Tana Modleski (1980) bring out the idea of reading as a way of resisting demands made on women by the family. It can further be seen as one of Fiske’s evasive pleasures, as readers resist patriarchy through the act of reading (1989:50).

6. For instance, in JoAnn Ross’s *Magic in the Night* (1986) from the Harlequin Temptation series, the hero is Patrick Ryan, a troubleshooting financier, who buys and restructures failing companies. What is different about Patrick Ryan is that he believes in "worker capitalism" whereby the workers themselves purchase a half interest in the company in exchange for a reduction in wages (15). The discourse of alternative medicine, which opposes phallocentric scientific discourse, is introduced in *Remember Me* (1989). The sweet romances of the past tended to place the heroine in a job which was just a stepping stone to marriage. Because of the influences of liberal feminism the newer romances place the heroine more firmly in the public domain, where oppositional discourses may compete with patriarchal capitalism.

7. Rabine (1985) suggests four compensatory resistances available in the working woman’s romance. First, the reader is able to identify with heroines who have meaningful, challenging work (171). Thus there is the resistance of identifying with women who do control their own work practices. Secondly, the workplace is the very opposite to the depersonalised workplace in which many women work. Most women’s work is controlled by men who they never see. In the Harlequin romance the boss descends from the executive suite
and comes to her. This intimacy between boss and heroine, experienced in a work atmosphere allows the reader to experience an eroticised workplace, in fantasy (172). From my reading of the newer romances, it is clear that in these texts, the boss does not descend to her level, but meets her on her own level. She is valued both for her creativity and ability, and for her personality and sexual attractiveness for this particular man.

Another form of resistance available in the Harlequin is its exploration of the different way in which men and women think about others. As Rabine points out, often the heroine is confused about whether the boss values her for her work, or for her self. He is often cold and mechanical in his treatment of her at work. He has to come to value both her professionalism and her identity before the romance can be satisfactorily concluded (172). This is a direct exploration and resolution of Chodorow's object-relations theory which suggests that males relate to the world as autonomous, closed-off individuals, while women have much more fluidity in relationships.

A fourth and still more complex compensation for readers is found in the theme of power. In the romances the heroine fights ardently against the power the hero has over her. The power figure is both her lover and her boss. Thus the power relation between one man and one woman reverberates on a larger network of social relations, all structured according to inequality of power. Thus the boss/lover can become an analogy for other men in the reader's life, such as her husband or male partner (172).

Notes to Chapter Three

1. It is Roland Barthes in The Pleasure of the Text (1973) who came up with the idea of the text as containing pleasure as well as the reader taking pleasure in the reading of the text. Barthes points out that it is a friable pleasure, crumbled by mood, habit, circumstance (83).
2. According to Fiske in popular culture texts:

Excessiveness and obviousness are central features of the producerly text. They provide fertile raw resources out of which popular culture can be made. Excessiveness is meaning out to control, meaning that exceeds the norms of ideological control or the requirements of any specific text. Excess is overflowing semiosis, the excessive sign performs the work of the dominant ideology, but then exceeds and overspills it, leaving excess meaning that escapes ideological control and is free to be used to resist or evade it. The excessive victimization of the heroine of a romance novel exceeds the "normal" victimization and suffering of women under patriarchy. Norms that are exceeded lose their invisibility, lose their status as natural common sense and are brought out into the open agenda. Excess involves elements of the parodic, and parody allows us to mock the conventional (1989 A: 114).

3. I am aware that Fiske's theoretical position has been criticised by McGuigan (1992) who suggests that Fiske's inversion of the mass culture critique tends to applaud popular readings with no reservations at all, 'never countenancing the possibility that a popular reading could be anything other than "progressive"'. McGuigan also suggests that Fiske, by removing his theoretical position from macro-politics and economics, denies the influences of 'white patriarchal bourgeois capitalism'. In McGuigan's view, Fiske is not unlike the advertising guru who talks about 'consumer sovereignty', except that Fiske endorses a kind of 'semiotic democracy' (1992: 72). Taking all of this into account, I continue to use Fiske's ideas to show the way in which resistant readings may be made, while presenting readings which reveal patriarchal capitalism as well.
4. Miles states:

The heroine, for one reason or another, usually lives in the hero's beautiful and luxurious home. This, of course, provides lots of opportunity for contretemps, misunderstandings, tension, mutual awareness, and excitement. It also dramatizes the homelessness of the heroine, who unfailingly finds herself strongly, even violently attached to this place (1991: 112).

5. Dinnerstein (1976) points out in *The Mermaid and the Minotaur* that a way in which men deal with the threat of the all-consuming reunion with the mother, is to mute all feeling for other people, thus limiting themselves in the affective domain. (70) Men are maimed by their inability to be emotional and to feel. (72) In this text, we see a man attempting to change this, by rejecting the mechanical for the spontaneous.

6. I am aware that Irigaray's work is riven with contradictions To quote Maggie Berg:

...she is a poststructuralist and a Lacanian insofar as she believes that the subject is a discursive construct, making identity unstable; but, in order to rescue women from what she sees as the repressive effects of phallocentrism, she apparently proposes an alternative feminine discourse modeled on the female genitals. Irigaray's 'lips' have become the basis of debate: those critics...who regard her work as naive and dangerously essentialist...have occasioned widespread feminist suspicion of poststructuralism as ultimately leading to a reactionary essentialism (1991:50) .
APPENDICES

Appendix A  The Development of the Series Romance

In the 1950s Mills and Boon made a deal with Harlequin, a fledgling paperback firm in Canada. Mills & Boon provided the hardback books and imported Harlequin's paperback reprints for distribution. Mills & Boon merged with Harlequin in 1971. Mills & Boon romances, which are still in print, have been influenced by the changes in sexual mores, but are a little less steamy than the American counterpart (Guiley, 1983: 183,186).

Harlequin was established in Ontario in 1949. It was not until the deal with Mills and Boon that it began publishing romances. In 1970 Harlequin moved into the United States in a big way, by establishing a distributorship with Pocket Books, the mass market paperback division of Simon and Schuster (Guiley: 155). New programs and product lines were rapidly initiated - A Harlequin Reader Service, and a new major line called Harlequin Presents. In 1976 it broke with the tradition of publishing Mills and Boon and published the first American romance, by Janet Dailey. Harlequin used mass marketing principles for its product. National television advertising began in 1975. The brand-name reliability of Harlequin was emphasised, rather than individual authors or titles. According to Rosemary Guiley:

...the consumer knew exactly what she was getting every time she bought one, regardless of title or author: a romance with a happy
ending (marriage), without explicit sex or offensive language (156).

In 1975 Harlequin expanded into Europe, Mexico and Brazil and by the beginning to the eighties had experienced a ten fold growth in readership. By 1979 Harlequin decided to go it alone in the U.S.A. Pocket Books brought out its own series to compete with Harlequin, Silhouette Books. Not surprisingly, the early Silhouette Romances resembled the format of Harlequin romances which had ruled the industry for so long. Very soon, after market research, Silhouette decided to change the formula. According to Kate Duffy, the first editor,

Traditional romances have been around in the same format since the 1950s. But a lot of changes have taken place in society and in day-to-day living, and we tried to incorporate some of those changes and issues into our next line, Special Edition. Special Editions had less of a category feel and also touched upon topics previously taboo in contemporary romances (Guiley, 1983: 163).

Silhouette positioned itself in the marketplace in such a way that the particular preferences of readers were catered for. Short and Sweet (Silhouette Romance); Short and Sexy (Desire); Long and Sexy (Special Edition); Long, Sexy and adventurous (Intimate Moments) or young adult (First Love) (Guiley: 166) Silhouette was recognising the differences between woman readers and signalling them as to what to expect in the particular series.
The change from sweet to sexy narratives had taken place in the 70s, with the advent of the 'bodice-ripper' romances of the historical genre. Avon began publishing its sexy historicals in 1972 with Kathleen Woodiwiss's *The Flame and the Flower*. According to Carol Thurston, it was the mixing of pain and pleasure and cruelty with love which was the hallmark of these 'bodice rippers' (1987: 50). By the late seventies, readers were beginning to object to the rape and violence in these "bodice rippers". One has to ask whether this was the influence of the women's movement or just the jaded nature of the genre.

However, the erotic content which began with the "bodice rippers" was modified and introduced to the new erotic contemporary romances brought out by Dell and Richard Gallen's Pocket Books. According to Thurston these new romances incorporated the erotic element found previously only in the single-title erotic historical romances. Heroines were now working in the public sphere, and quite capable of passionate arousal (Thurston, 1987: 53).

In June 1981 Jove introduced its Second Chance at Love series, featuring mature heroines, who had loved before. The Second Chance at Love theme was the idea of Carolyn Nichols, the line's first senior editor. The books feature heroines who are more realistic than the inexperienced girls who populated so many traditional romances. Heroes are not macho men, but strong and sensitive men who may even cry at intimate moments. In these texts the characters may make love several times during the narrative. (Guiley, 1983: 175). Two of the texts which I have mentioned in this thesis are from the Second Chance at Love Series, *A Taste for Loving* (1983) by
Frances Davies and *Breathless Dawn* (1983) by Susanna Collins. The market was changing in the early eighties to accommodate more sensual, female initiated love, with softer heroes, more inclined to see the sexual relationship as equal. By 1982, the new spicy contemporary romances were the hottest thing going in the genre. Sweet traditional texts were still around, but the sexier books had opened up a whole new market. In the face of this trend, Bantam launched a brand-name line early in 1982 that was strictly traditional and sweet. The series, Circle of Love, met with strong consumer rejection. Some customers returned the books and booksellers began dropping the line (Guiley, 1983: 177). Circle of Love was discontinued and replaced by Loveswept. Loveswept romances are not as formulaic as other series romances. They also do not provide writers' guidelines.

In July 1982 Ballantine launched its Love and Life line. These 185 page novels were an attempt to expand the boundaries of sex-role portrayals even further than the new erotic romances had up to this time. These were obviously more like the traditional feminist novels, showing the heroine emerging as an individual, shedding the man who would not let her grow, and entering a relationship with a representative of the "New Man". (Thurston, 1987:56).

These romances only lasted a year before they were dropped. According to Thurston, because they were marketed among the rows and racks of Harlequins, Ecstasies, and Desires, they were not noticed by the very women for whom they were tailored (59). These women were not seen by Ballantine as typical romance readers. It is not surprising that they were not read by the
women for whom they were intended if they were marketed with other romance series in Super Markets. I have been unable to locate one of these, though I have combed second hand book stores.

**Appendix B The Hero as Mother**

Miles suggests that the emotional power of the 'Harlequin experience' requires that the reader regress to childhood in order to relive the vicissitudes of the intense fear and love relationship with the mother (1991: 103). According to Miles, the sharp swings between love and hate, the pain and jealousy, the physical closeness and the pulling apart, relive the pre-Oedipal stage of uncertainty in the female reader.

Miles suggests that the erotic appeal of the romance is not in its portrayal of sexuality but in the tension and arousal associated with the fraught relationship between the hero and heroine. She suggests that perhaps the emotional intensity is not about heterosexual sex at all, but about the kind of pleasure and pain experienced by the pre-Oedipal infant (114).

According to Miles it is the nurture/security and emotional excitement of the resolution of the romance which is its erotica. She goes along with the idea of the hero as mother, providing erotic intensity to mundane activity. According to Miles it is security, belonging and comfort that is the aim of the
romance, and is paradoxically, exciting, emotional and erotic:

The heroine will live happily ever after in the womb provided by 
the hero.(116)

Thus Angela Miles takes the view that the hero is mother, and that the 
eroticism of the romance comes from the desire to be reunited with the 
mother as in the pre-Oedipal state (118). Miles suggests that in lectures to 
women, she has put forward the idea of the Harlequin hero as a mother 
figure and has seen instant recognition in women readers (121). This leaves 
the complex question of why women would fantasise a mother figure as 
male. According to Miles in a patriarchy only men have enough social 
power to represent the powerful mother figure. Paradoxically, female figures 
other than mythical ones, do not have the necessary power and resources to 
stand for the mother (121).

Appendix C

The Hero as the Oedipal Father

The psychoanalytic grounds for Coward's (1984) theory are rather hazy, since 
at this stage of a child's life it is usually the mother who is the strong, adored 
and feared, object of desire. She believes that romances play out the female 
child's abandonment of active sexuality, and taking up of a passive 
subjectivity. They also play out the daughter's seduction by her father. The 
patriarchal hero, thus, resembles the omnipotent father, and the heroine, 
without active sexuality, captures the hero/father and will be cared for 
 henceforth (195). She finally suggests that against all evidence in the actual 
world about heterosexual happiness, the romantic narrative restores the
childhood world of sexual relations, firmly grounded in patriarchy. Though very interesting and entertaining, Coward's (1984) 'An Overwhelming Desire' is very much based on Mills and Boon romances and fails to take into account the new romances, with their "New Men" as heroes, and their actively sexual heroines, who are no longer passive.

Appendix D

Feminism and Pornography

Ann Ferguson (1984) in 'Sex War: The Debate between Radical and Libertarian Feminists' attempted to explain the two sides of the sexuality debates in the United States. She saw the radical feminists who aligned themselves with fundamentalist Christians and anti-abortionists over pornography, as holding that most sexual practices in a male-dominant society involve violence towards women (106). She sees the "libertarian feminists" as believing that sexual practices between consenting partners can be liberating, even if these practices involve certain sado-masochistic pleasures. The attitude of feminists to the romance can be seen in a similar light. Radical feminists tend to see the romance as reinforcing women's oppression, even when the new erotic material involves women initiating pleasure. "Libertarian" feminists, coming from a cultural studies perspective, may see the erotica of the romance as liberating and pleasurable for women.

Referring to the pornography debates, Ferguson suggests that the problem with the debate between radical and libertarian feminists is that 'their opposing positions do not exhaust the possible feminist perspectives on sexual pleasure, sexual freedom and danger'(1984: 107). She suggests that
we should be developing feminist erotica and sex education that aims to make people conscious of the contradictions in sexual behaviour. She suggests that we need new forms of feminist fantasy (111). She states that this erotica and education should emerge in a variety of contexts including high school courses, soap operas, Harlequin novels and avant-garde art (111). In other words, she suggests a deconstruction of the polarities which have been imposed by patriarchy, the suggestion that sexual activity for women must be exploitation or pleasure. She suggests that the polarities be dissolved and replaced by a transitional feminist sexual morality that distinguishes between basic, risky and forbidden sexual practices (111). She points out that forbidden sexual practices are those which all feminists would agree upon as illegal. "Risky" practices could lead to dominant/subordinate relationships. Basic practices would be those agreed upon by all feminists as acceptable. A feminist morality should be free to choose between basic and "risky" practices, without fear of condemnation from other feminists (112).

Using these criteria, it is possible to see the romance as falling into the "risky" area. Some romances may be seen by some feminists and indeed, by some women readers as pornographic in that they present dominant/subordinate relations. Many of the newer erotic romances, however, provide liberating fantasies for women, and may be seen as subversive of patriarchy. I tend to agree with Carol Thurston that the new erotic series romances do in fact present a discourse of female erotica which is liberating for women, even though its ultimate expression is connected to heterosexual monogamy.
Appendix E

The Theories of Dorothy Dinnerstein regarding Women's Consent to
Patriarchy.

Dinnerstein (1976) in The Mermaid and the Minotaur, offers a
psychoanalytic account of why the status quo is still so readily consented to
by men and women. She suggests that women's consent to patriarchy is far
less simple to withdraw than many feminists, like Faludi (1992), would like
to believe (7). She states that the law, custom, economic pressure,
educational practice and such social barriers to women's freedom are the
symptoms, not the causes of the disorder which must be cured (7).

Many feminists have grappled with this problem of why, in spite of the
removal of legal and social barriers to women's autonomy, there continues
to be a commitment on the part of women to marriage and relationships
which are based on inequality. This is often put down to female masochism,
and indeed masochism is often seen as one of the negative features of the
romance. Dinnerstein suggests that the prevailing symbiosis between men
and women is more than a product of social coercion, but is part of the
neurotic overall posture by means of which humans, male and female,
attempt to cope with massive psychological problems which lie at the heart
of our species' situation (7).

She suggests that the limitations to changes in power structures which
maintain patriarchy are tied up very securely with our early psychological
development (13). Here she accords with Chodorow’s findings that the mothering of women tends to recreate mothers and thus the ongoing symbiosis between men and women. Dinnerstein, like Chodorow (1978) sees the need for intimate male and female figures in the early lives of infants, in order to break the current pattern of adult male female relationships.

Dinnerstein is more concerned with the way in which early mothering turns men and women into semi-human, monstrous creatures. She takes the images of the mermaid and the Minotaur to reinforce this fact of our half-human status. She writes of 'the treacherous mermaid, seductive and impenetrable female representative of the dark and magic underwater world from which our life comes and in which we cannot live' and 'the fearsome Minotaur, gigantic and eternally infantile offspring of a mother’s unnatural lust, male representative of mindless, greedy power, (who) insatiably devours live human flesh (5).'

In her chapter, *Higamous-Hogamous* (37-75), which is based on an old folk rhyme, she explores the double standard in sexual arrangements which denies the female real pleasure in the sexual relationship. The words of the folk rhyme have a specific bearing on the romance:

*Higamous hogamous, woman’s monogamous,*

*Hogamous, higamous, man is polygamous (41).*

Dinnerstein examines the way in which sexual relationships between men and women are affected by the early Oedipal stage, resulting in this need in
the woman for emotional and sexual attachment to one man. She points out that male jealousy and possessiveness towards the female is based on his strong evocation of reunion with his mother's body in coitus. Any infidelity on the part of his partner re-evokes the pain of his original separation from his mother (41). On the other hand, the woman never actually experiences this total oneness with the lost mother in coitus, and thus, is less affected by his infidelity (44).

Dinnerstein suggests that the girl's resolution of the Oedipal problem is done by splitting off positive feelings towards the mother and projecting them onto the father. She leaves the negative feelings with her mother. She, like the boy, starts to reach out to the public world, but finds herself unwelcome. She then blames this on her omnipotent mother. She then over-idealises her father, who has access to the wider world (52).

Dinnerstein suggests that in lovemaking both men and women make a direct attempt to repair the old loss of the mother. The man can relive his infant experience more fully than the woman. She comes closest to it by vicarious reliving of the mother's role - giving pleasure. If the woman unleashes her sexual passion she brings up the dreadful reminder, to herself and to the male, of the mother's separate uncontrollable existence (61). As Dinnerstein points out, women modify their lust, in order not to re-evoke the frightening side of the mother. As well as this, women are not assured of satisfaction in the sexual act because of anatomy. And also a woman brings to love making a sense of guilt about the fact that she had to
give up a relationship with her mother and transfer her erotic feelings to the father (64).

According to Dinnerstein the woman tends to feel more preoccupied than the man while making love, with the opportunity to achieve vicarious homoerotic contact, thus stealing back some of what life has taken away from her. She is apt to be busier than he is imagining herself in the other person's access to her own body and thus less engrossed in her own access to the other person's body (65).

Dinnerstein suggests that she gives up the right to use her body's sensuous capacities as directly, concretely, immediately as she did in the original embrace. Women feel guilt at revoking the mother very intensely. To assuage this guilt women find themselves unable to give way to sensual delight except when romantic love - love shot through with the flavour of the original blissful mother-infant-union - has flooded her being. Thus the importance of the romance to women readers may be hinged to this need for carnal delight which is suffused with romantic love. Dinnerstein's point is that women melt into a feeling of emotional closeness with men who excite them sexually. This is because the girl baby melted more easily into the mother in the pre-Oedipal stage, and thus finds this side of eroticism very important in her relationship with the male who now replaces her mother, though imperfectly (68).

Of relevance to the male hero of the romance is Dinnerstein's theory on male behaviour. The enormous vulnerability of the male during coitus as
he reunites with his mother is very threatening for him. For this vulnerability men need safeguards. One way to safeguard their vulnerability is to keep heterosexual love superficial, emotionally and physically. Another is to dissociate its physical from its emotional possibilities. The male may keep tender and sensual love separate in his life by expressing them towards different women, or towards the same woman in different situations or moods. The moodiness of the romantic hero and its appeal for the romance reader may be best explained by the fact that this is how men do cope in their lives with the threat of emotional commitment.

Another way that men deal with the threat of all-consuming reunion with the mother, is to mute all feeling for other people, thus limiting themselves in the affective domain (70). In the typical romance, the hero eventually expresses tenderness and care for the heroine as well as sexual desire. Thus for many women, the romantic hero in the series romance text may provide an affective dimension not present in their relationship with a partner.

The mother-dominated childhood of both men and women maims them, according to Dinnerstein. She sees men as maimed in their inability to be emotional and to feel, while women are maimed by the inability to disassociate feeling from physical sexuality. They find it difficult to pursue sex for its own sake (72).

How does this maiming relate to the typical romance? In the typical traditional romance, the male hero, who is cold and distant (typically male
according to Dinnerstein), learns to combine his physical desire with affection and tenderness, thus taking an almost female position in gender relationships. Meanwhile, the heroine, who is attracted to the hero, holds out for affection and tenderness and commitment, before succumbing to the physical side of sex. Thus, the male is adjusted in the typical romance, to fit a more female role in the gender relationship. It is as if the romance writer is remaking the hero in her own image, the image of a female. This view of the romance hero as eventually being reduced to a female figure, fits in well with the idea of him being the lost mother, put forward by Miles, and Radway.

Appendix F
The Theories of Leslie Rabine (1985) - The Progress of the Romance from the classic to the series romance.

Leslie Rabine in *Reading the Romantic Heroine: Text, History, Ideology* (1985) suggests that the romance genre has elements of strong resistance to the structures of society, while being contained by the structure of the text, so that rational order contains chaotic passions (2). She maintains that romantic love narrative encodes two of our most cherished myths. The first is the changing, yet stable myth of romantic love, which underpins and shapes our culture's bonds of interdependence and antagonism between the sexes. The second is the myth of history itself, which grows out of the quest form of the romance (2).
Though admitting that any identification between text and historical/social text has to take into account the multiple and conflicting discourses within texts and within history, she feels that texts mask their own multiplicity by textual codes (4). Textual codes determine the coherence which the reader finds in the polysemic, non-homogeneous narrative. She suggests that deeply rooted literary forms like that of the romantic love narrative give us the models for such a coherent reading (4). Any narrative will thus, appear much more coherent than it in fact is. This seems to agree with Fiske's ideas about the quite complex nature of popular texts, which appear to be very simple encodings of genre. The main purpose of Rabine's work is to show how the feminine 'other' in the romance is silenced and repressed, in order to ensure the unified ordered forms of the hero's history.

In discussing *Shirley* by Charlotte Bronte, Rabine uses the theory of Nancy Chodorow to explain why romantic heroines cannot simply reverse the traditional romantic gender roles so that the hero would be for the heroine the 'other' who completes for her a static and closed identity. Rabine points out that both Chodorow and Irigaray see female subjectivity as virtually ignored in the Freudian model. Women are seen as already castrated and defined as a 'lack', a 'nothing to be seen' (110).

According to Rabine, when an analysis shifts its focus away from phallocentrism, as in the writings of Bronte, it no longer centres on the object of vision (the imaginary phallus) but instead revolves around relations as dynamic movement between the self and other. It is in this relational perspective that woman no longer appears as a lack. She points
out that this is difficult for female writers since language and culture have a phallocentric structure (110). One way in which Bronte differs from male writers is in her multiplication of the narrative line and in her treatment of love. According to Rabine, in *Shirley*, sexual relations develop not so much through images as through the conversation between two sets of lovers, modelled on the feminine bonds which women forge with each other (120). Thus, taking Chodorow's ideas of the way in which males and females resolve their Oedipal stages, Rabine is able to show that for females, love is more about interaction than about taking the male as object.

Rabine, in the last chapter of *Reading the Romantic Heroine* (1985), 'Sex and the Working Woman', has a lot to say about the way in which series romances bring the world of work and the personal together, by combining the persona of boss and lover. In the struggle between heroine and hero, both work practices and gender relationships are worked out. According to Rabine the heroines of the Harlequins want the world of work to change so that women can find happiness there and also want men to change so that men will find *their* happiness with women. There is a strange mingling of protest and acquiescence to the situation of many contemporary women. This makes the Harlequin Romances so seductive and so contradictory (174). As Rabine points out, the heroine has an impossible choice between humiliation if she succumbs to his power, and pride, accompanied by loneliness, if she resists. Here Rabine elaborates on Chodorow's theory that men develop very closed off ego boundaries, while women in our society develop more fluid ego boundaries (1978: 175). The Harlequin heroine finds herself alternating between two forms of
behaviour. If she gives in to the hero/boss she is humiliated. If she adopts a closed, controlled attitude to the hero/boss, she experiences the loneliness of separation from relationships (1985: 175). According to Rabine, to resolve this problem, which cannot be overcome by a middle position because of women's Oedipal resolution, 'the hero must in the end adopt the feminine form of the self, recognize it as valid, and give the heroine the same tender devotion she gives to him ' (178).

Rabine certainly sees the Harlequin romance as demanding profound structural transformations of the total social world we inhabit. Yet she agrees with Modleski(1982) that though the Harlequin romance provides opportunities for readers to question patriarchy, it also works to neutralise the criticisms and anxieties readers may feel. According to Rabine the Harlequin romance neutralises its resistance to patriarchy and a depersonalised workplace by its own narrow, rational formula (182). Rabine's thesis is that just as the romantic heroines of the past were a protest against the rationalising forces of the Industrial Revolution, and were contained by the rational discourse which shaped the narrative, so the resistance in the series romance is contained by the stringent formula put forward by the publishers. She seems to be saying that, although there is much opportunity for resistance to patriarchy and the depersonalised workplace, through the heroine's struggle, and though the resolution of the heroine's problem means a feminisation of the hero, the whole text is carefully contained within a rational formula which undercuts the oppositional readings.
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