Chick lit is a genre that usually depicts what life is like for young women in big cities, or occasionally—for the sake of variety—on fashionable country estates. They pursue their careers, go to parties, gossip with their girlfriends, and shop, while dating a series of men in their hunt for the right one. They contemplate their identity and their life, and they want everything at once so that their life will be perfect. Being slim and fit, having flawless nails and well-coiffed hair, enjoying success at work, and having a beautiful, well-kept home is a must for these women who aim for perfectionism and long for happiness. Chick lit is usually associated with the present day, and tends to be regarded as a humorous and ironic commentary on contemporary ideals and expectations. Most of the books classified in this genre take place in our own time. There are, however, several novels very close to chick lit that take place in a historical setting. These novels include many of the ingredients that we find in chick lit, but here it is grand balls instead of clubbing, muddy streets instead of asphalt, horse-drawn coaches instead of sports cars, rustling silk and bobbing tulle from dressmakers in Paris instead of famous designer brands, and visits to the confectioner instead of a latte at the sidewalk café. The important questions that the young female protagonists have to confront are not very different from those occupying Bridget Jones and her sisters, and it is not difficult for the reader to recognize herself and identify with them (Ehriander).

"Chick lit in corsets" is written by women, read by women, has female heroes, and conveys a picture of women as being basically the same throughout the ages, so that much is still as it was in the past. The readers, moreover, are often young, and this is the type of book that attracts teenage girls and their mothers. In this article I discuss Swedish “chick lit in corsets” with examples from two novels by the Swedish author Frida Skybäck (born 1980):

Lady (Den vita frun) (2012). I am particularly interested in these narratives as adolescent literature and adolescent reading. Frida Skybäck's novels are marketed by the publisher Frank Förlag as adult literature, but Skybäck deliberately writes primarily for teenage girls, and Charlotte Hassel has been offered to teenage readers in the children's book club Barnens Bokklubb (Skybäck, interview).

"Chick lit in corsets" is written by women, read by women, has female heroes, and conveys a picture of women as being basically the same throughout the ages, so that much is still as it was in the past. The readers, moreover, are often young, and this is the type of book that attracts teenage girls and their mothers. In this article I discuss Swedish “chick lit in corsets” with examples from two novels by the Swedish author Frida Skybäck (born 2012). I am particularly interested in these narratives as adolescent literature and adolescent reading.

Chick lit in historical settings

According to Rocío Montoro, “Chick Lit is sometimes seen as a revamped version, a rebranding, or (for some) simply a

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renaming, of other more traditional forms of popular writing, namely romance or romantic fiction" (7). “Chick lit in corsets” can be regarded as a genre hybrid with some of its roots in older “feel-good” novels, a designation that comes from the emotions they are designed to invoke. This genre has something to gain from being influenced by chick lit has also been considered to have higher status and is treated with greater respect than romance, and authors and publishers alike believe that the romance genre has something to gain from being influenced by chick lit as regards, for example, the portrayal of better-educated, more ambitious heroines (Mitchell 134). Chick lit has also challenged the old boundaries between popular culture and more highly esteemed literature, and publishers tend to advertise romance together with chick lit so that the two genres will attract readers from each other (Harzewski 2011, 32, 41). That genres in today’s literature cross-fertilize each other is the rule rather than the exception, and there are many reasons for this. Authors who write in a particular genre are often regarded as innovative if they break one or more of the traditional structures. They can also profile themselves and express their personal authorial style by relating to the set framework of the genre, and by going against the conventions they can criticize the accepted norms and values of the genre.

Maria Ehrenberg, in a book about present-day romance from Maeve Binchy to Marcia Willett, divides light historical novels into four categories:

1. The unique person. In this category we meet historical personages and read about historical periods and events from the perspective of one person’s actions.
2. Laborious everyday work. These books describe the misery and toil of everyday life.
3. Recent history. The Second World War is a common topic here, and the narrative often continues down to the present day.
4. The Miss Novel, also known as the governess novel or the manor-house novel. Here we find mystery and elements of thriller, as well as issues of class, money, and wealth. The historical backdrop is often sketchy and stereotyped, and the stories end with the by tradition dictated kiss (39-40).

Frida Skybäck’s novels do not fit into any of these four categories, although they share some elements with them. Maria Nilson writes that it may seem strange to call historical portrayals “chick lit,” and she cites as an example Anna Godbersen’s four-part suite *The Luxe*, which takes place in Manhattan in 1899–1900, of which at least the first part is close to chick lit (40). Nilson writes that it is fairly unproblematic to call the first book, for young readers: “There are parties and clothes and shopping and intrigues in an upper-class milieu. Then the series develops in a different direction, turning much darker, and it also becomes more difficult to identify the genre” (40, author’s own translation). Chick lit jr. is characterized by the inclusion of typical chick lit ingredients while simultaneously considering matters such as reaching adulthood, identity, awakening sexuality, the future, and relations to friends, customary elements in stories for adolescents and young adults (Johnson 141 ff.).

The action of Frida Skybäck’s debut book *Charlotte Hassel* (2011) takes place in 1771, with flashbacks to 1758. In 1758 Charlotte is a young woman from a well-off family who falls in love with a man of her own age. After a party she walks the short distance to her home, waiting for her parents, when an older man, influential and wealthy, follows her closely in order to assault her. Charlotte puts up a fight when he finds his way into her bedroom and tries to rape her, and she kills him with her letter opener in self-defense. When her parents arrive they help her get rid of the body and they send her to safety in England, where she finds a good life with a male friend, to whom she becomes engaged. Her parents and sister suffer fraud and extortion, and after thirteen years Charlotte decides to come back to Stockholm incognito to try to put things right. She also understands that a coup d’état is in the making. She meets once again the man she loved in her youth and breaks off the engagement in England; it turns out that her fiancé is homosexual and that they can only ever be good friends, which they remain even after Charlotte marries someone else. The kind, thoughtful man who is interested in fashion and interior decoration, is a common character in chick lit. The female characters in the novel are complex, and Skybäck plays with the stereotypes of the whore and the Madonna when she allows room for young women’s thoughts and feelings.

In this novel there is plenty of female culture and feminine attributes: Charlotte buys mineral makeup, enjoys delicious...
pastries, and has exquisite dresses made for her. However, there is also a feminist intention in that Charlotte takes control over her life and her situation. She gets involved in the game of politics, she averts the planned coup d’état. The reader follows Charlotte from the time she is a young and somewhat insecure girl, which makes it easier for younger readers to identify with her, up to the grown-up woman who takes her share of what life has to offer.

**Romance**

The term “romance” is one that embraces a wide variety of literature on the theme of romantic love. The analyses range from ancient Greece, through medieval tales of chivalry, Shakespeare and the Renaissance, to end with Harlequin romances. Fuchs also underlines how many sub-genres there are, and how popular contemporary romance literature is (124 ff.). Romances in the sense of romantic literature usually have a similar construction, consisting of a number of set narrative structures that are varied in a more or less predictable way up to the happy ending when the heroine receives a kiss, an offer of marriage, or both. Frida Skybäck’s second novel, *The White Lady* (2012), contains less chick lit and more romance in the narrative, but it is powerful in its feminist message when it comes to emphasizing women’s right to shape their own lives and to be respected even if they are neither beautiful nor rich. This novel combines several literary motifs and patterns from romance, chick lit and books for young adults: for example, the “ugly duckling”, “Cinderella”, and the orphan child (Harzewski 2006, 38).

Most of the action takes place in the castle of Borgeby in Skåne. The story is about the fates of individual women, insolvency, and love across class boundaries: “love across the classes [is] an extremely common theme in historical romance,” Jerome de Groot writes in his survey in *The Historical Novel* (58).

Janice A. Radway, who has written a study of female readings of romance, claims, albeit in a rather limited study, that the reading women display different strategies and that their reading serves a number of different purposes. This is interesting given that romance literature has many quarters for being conservative, presenting a distorted picture of society into addicts and slaves since their real problems are never solved; instead they find relief through illusory solutions. This outlook on the reading of romantic literature has a long history. Gustave Flaubert’s novel *Madame Bovary* (1856–57) has achieved great significance with its portrayal of a reading girl who through time loses contact with reality and as a young woman falls into a destructive pattern with reading, eroticism, fashion, and shimmering pink dreams of romantic rendezvous, while she cheats on her husband, runs up huge debts, and ends up seeing suicide by arsenic as the only way out. Perhaps some romance literature over the years could be called escapist, and can justifiably be accused of building on stereotyped gender roles, with protagonists that are poor role models for young readers. But there are interesting exceptions which actually use the genre and the form to communicate feminist messages to their readers through playful, knowing hints and examples of energetic heroines who shape their own lives. It is also infrequent that the genre comments on itself in its portrayal of literature as a subversively and to read against the text; instead of passivizing the reader, the female protagonists to be interested in literature, and using the wisdom it provides. *The White Lady* enjoys the castle library and immerses herself not only in contemporary female poetry.

Diana Wallace, who has written a study titled *The Woman’s Historical Novel* and *The Woman’s Historical Novel*, testifies to how she herself and many of the women she knows have read women’s historical novels avidly, as early as childhood: “From an early age I read women’s historical novels avidly, as did my mother and sister. The same was true, I later discovered, of many of my female friends and colleagues, and of many...
have been central to the development of feminist literary criticism” (ix). There has been a tendency to associate female authors’ historical novels with romance and label them as escapist: “Associated with the ‘popular’, women writers have thus been doubly excluded from the established canon” (Wallace 10). What I think becomes clear when one studies what has been written about the different genres is that romance is perceived as a female genre while historical novels are masculine (and “serious”).

### Historical novels

*Då som nu* (“Then As Now”) by Hans O. Granlid from 1964 is still the standard Swedish work about the historical novel. Granlid does not write anything about children’s and young people’s literature; the novels he analyses, only one is by a female author. The situation is another remarkable thing is that, when the origin of the historical novel is described, only male authors are highlighted, with Walter Scott taking pride of place. Female authors and the genres they have taken a back seat as male authors set the pattern for how historical novels should be written.

In his introduction Granlid poses interesting and fundamental questions about what a historical novel is and what characterizes it. He is interested in the problems of analogy and archaization in the literary work, how the matter is presented and placed in a particular time, how it is related to the present, and what specifically is archaized in content and style. Closely linked to the problems of analogy and archaization is the problem of anachronism: that is, what happens when writing about something from the past that is to be read in the present, made comprehensible to contemporary readers (Granlid 16 ff.). Archaization is “old-fashioned”: anachronisms are things or expressions that are out of place in the period, and analogies are agreements between our time and the historical time.

Historical books often incorporate a large amount of fact in the narrative, dividing line between fact and fiction runs. A historical novel can never be called historical. From the perspective of a reader in the 1990s, *Tom Sawyer*, *Little Women*, *Nils Holgersson*, and *Elvis Karlsson* all depict a bygone time, but they were written as contemporary accounts. This may seem unimportant, but it is crucial when we judge values in the text.

Maria Nikolajeva, in her book *Barnbokens byggklossar* (“Building Blocks of the Children’s Book”), discusses what a historical portrayal is, with examples from Louisa May Alcott’s *Little Women* author’s experiences in a domestic setting during the America Civil War, and it is partly or mostly autobiographical. The book has been read by many generations of girls and has also been filmed:

> Historical novels are set in the past. It is important to remember, however, that it is the author’s past, not the reader’s, that determines whether a novel can be called historical. From *Tom Sawyer*, *Little Women*, *Nils Holgersson*, and *Elvis Karlsson* all depict contemporary accounts. This may seem unimportant, but it is crucial when we judge values in the text. Women expressed its period’s view of the role of women in society. A modern young people’s novel set in the same historical period as *Little Women* would perhaps express our modern view of the same issue. (Nikolajeva 49)

With regard to values, which Nikolajeva finds important, a story thus cannot lie maturing and subsequently become historical (49).

Ying Toijer-Nilsson writes that most historical novels for young readers have doubt has something to do with the conventions of historical books for your topic, and girls have traditionally stayed at home while boys have been at the center of the exciting events. Moreover, girls and women learned early on to read texts where boys and men have prominent roles, whereas boys and men tend to read only about their own gender, since they are brought up to view anything
important. However, Maria Nikolajeva writes in *Children’s Literature Comes of Age: Toward a New Aesthetic*

discern a change in historical narrative as regards the leading characters: “In particular, the masculine viewpoint of the
earlier historical novel has been challenged by contemporary writers in favor of the ‘her-story’” (131). To attract all readers

it has often been considered important that the protagonist should be a boy or a young man and that there is excitement

enough to keep the reader’s interest to the very end. It has also been common for the author to choose to have both a girl

and a boy, often siblings, so that readers of both sexes can identify with written about the significance of the historical novel both for our percept people:

Ever since the middle of the nineteenth century, the historical novel has children and young people take in [End Page 6] history. Novelists have perspectives. Women, children, minorities, and war victims of bygone ti

literature, long before they were included in school history books.

It has even happened often that authors of young people’s books have t historians have tackled it. There is nothing strange about that: both histo conviction that knowledge of the past can help us in our lives here and i

Both use knowledge and imagination to explore people and phenomena: always reaches a limit where he or she must stop, and dividing lines bet and what we have no idea about. The author has the freedom—or perhaps that line, to give life to persons who never existed, to forge links, to inve

Hägglund goes on to say: “Of course there are novelists who use a historic could just as well have been enacted in the present.” The concept of the l aspect but also a quality aspect. In research on literature and history there l are closely related since all attempts to depict our past take some form of responsible ways. There are and have been authors who have endeavored those who have written what are somewhat condescendingly called “costum a historical setting. In costume novels the historical period is just a backdrop the people and relationships are not put into any factual historical context.

There are thus many levels to take into consideration as a reader when rel and “correct”. The details must be accurate in that the clothes, for example, should be no cars in a period before the car was invented. In Frida Skybäck’s time where genuine historical figures are named and possible historical ev history and English, faithfully uses the vocabulary of the period and she is al During the time she was working on *Charlotte Hassel*, one of the books she (Årstafruns dagbok 1793-1839), and she learned how modern that lady wa thoughts did not differ noticeably from the way we think today. In both of how much of the narrative is fact and how much is fiction.

Historical events must be correctly depicted, but as a reader one also has to a particular angle, perhaps with a specific intention, and that it is often accounts women, poor people, and children are portrayed less frequently this is slowly changing (Brown and St. Clair 186). It is even more probl different people have thought and felt [End Page 7] through the ages. The comes to men, but the material for women and children is very limited.
People are the same through the ages

“The problem for historians,” Karin Norman writes, “is that we have so little access to the way people perceived their own situation and justified their actions. It is easy to resort to ascribing our own thoughts and values and emotions to other people. It takes a balancing act between generalizing and relativizing: how similar or different were people in the past from us today? Similar or different in what way?” (51, author’s own translation). A historians do. John Stephens, in his study *Language and Ideology in Children's Fiction* to be described through love stories and human relations in this kind of fiction (206). On several levels, as Stephens also points out, there lies a contradiction within historical fiction. While the text lures the illusion of an older literary discourse. The discourse constantly balances be perspective this is a matter of a transhistorical outlook versus cultural relativism question of either/or, but of where the discourse is positioned on different levels of portrayals of the past there must be more similarities than differences to readers. A text that is placed too far on the scale towards “difference” perceived as plausible, and may even be incomprehensible. It is also a matter of interpretation. If you go straight into the text and look at the details, you tend to perceive the text as showing a high degree of cultural relativism and raise the relations and emotions to a higher level, there is a grand common to all mankind. The foundation is similar but the constituent time in which they exist and the culture and social class they reflect. Their wishes, and needs are the same through the ages, but that they find different say that people are alike through the ages and that it is the stage on which they are bar: exterior, the human core is constant. By emphasizing the similarities and that understanding of both past and present.

This understanding is also used by Frida Skybäck. The distance from the historical period allows readers to see their own lives and their own problems in perspective, and it offers an opportunity to get an idea of what it means to be a woman here and now in comparison with women read about women and the things that have occupied women’s time a historical community. Family sagas tend to be popular, and by reading them would not otherwise be visible. Women get their share of history and of their experiences. Frida Skybäck’s *The White Lady* depicts two generations of women: a daughter, and since she is growing increasingly weak from a terrible illness for her newborn daughter. The novel ends with the daughter reaching adulthood, and having a daughter of her own, for whom she starts writing a diary. Through her own mother’s notes she has found out who she is and has got to know the mother who drowned herself to save her newborn daughter when she was just a few months old. Diana Wallace writes: “As a genre, the historical novel has allowed women writers a license which they have not been allowed in other forms. This is most obviously true of sexuality where it has allowed coverage of normally taboo subjects, not just active female sexuality but also contraception, abortion, childbirth and homosexuality” (6).

In Frida Skybäck’s two books we find, beside the portrayal of the young woman who does not understand that she has contracted syphilis from her husband, accounts of pregnancy before marriage, attempted rapes, a sexual relationship with a man who is not a potential future husband but a tender lover who teaches the young woman “the art of love”, and sexual relations across class boundaries. History is written here from a female perspective, and female concerns are visibly in focus. At the same time, this can be viewed as a comment on life today, an explanation for why we relate to these parts of life in a particular way: exclusion and marginalization, and the author has the liberty here to write that is depicted as universal human experience in a historical account can mean
our image of present-day reality (202 ff.). In Frida Skybäck’s books this is ent
treader to reflect on herself and her own life as she reads.

Role play in a historical setting

Diana Wallace writes in her preface how history lessons in school disappoint she sees this as one reason why so many girls and women have read an allowed to be central figures (ix). Wallace goes on to write:

The “woman’s historical novel”, then, encompasses both the “popular” spectrum, but one of my arguments here is that the two are intimately l and “popular” historical novels together and against each other if we wi:\nmeansings that history and the historical novel have held for women rea

Eva Queckfeldt has written about “the historical novel without history” in

To restrict the discussion solely to historical novels, these have been co knowledge and as an educational aid, not least by history teachers. The among other things, that they let the reader experience the past in a diff example, the reader meets figures from the past and it is, probably right familiar with the people of bygone times, their context, their everyday li concerns the “good” historical novels: Per Anders Fogelström’s novels : emigration epic, Väinö Linna’s crofter trilogy, to name just a few examp who took pains to give as correct a picture as possible of the past. Often professional historians could object to.

The problem is that these good novels are just a small proportion of all also a whole undergrowth of novels that call themselves “historical.” (6:

The good historical novels mentioned by Queckfeldt are also all by male au novels” in which reality is doctored for the reader and the novels’ “conflicts the individual persons’ actions.” The plot “circles around LOVE for the fer These novels have such great defects in their language, the anachronism historical details are so vague that they could be used almost anywhere. thrown together and trivial in content, are “without history.” Frida Skybä female perspective, how history repeats itself and how today’s women are ; where they refuse to “take shit from anybody.” [2]

Frida Skybäck plays with historical depiction, with romance and chick li and the Madonna, in order to give scope to women’s thoughts and feeling for readers to read subversively, to try out new roles and lines, and to find t Skybäck, who works as a teacher at an international high school in Lund, is historical material is used than in the Swedish school. In Sweden, history as she thinks that it is important to arouse an interest in the source of power th move people. Diana Wallace writes about how women in Mussolini’s It university: “A knowledge of history, this suggests, has the potential to be d that in women’s hands the historical novel has often become a political to
fate, this is the reverse way to view women’s reading: either girls and women read with emotion and can then be affected to the point of madness, or else they are able to read with the brain connected and the result can be a threat to the prevailing society.

Janice A. Radway has exposed the narrative structures in romances in the same way that Vladimir Propp in the 1920s identified the set narrative features of Russian folktales. Radway has found thirteen recurrent features, which she calls functions, in romances:

1. The heroine’s social identity is destroyed.
2. The heroine reacts antagonistically to an aristocratic male.
3. The aristocratic male responds ambiguously to the heroine.
4. The heroine interprets the hero’s behavior as evidence of a purely sexual interest in her.
5. The heroine responds to the hero’s behavior with anger or coldness.
6. The hero retaliates by punishing the heroine.
7. The heroine and hero are physically and/or emotionally separated.
8. The hero treats the heroine tenderly.
9. The heroine responds warmly to the hero’s act of tenderness.
10. The heroine reinterprets the hero’s ambiguous behavior as the product of previous hurt.
11. The hero proposes/openly declares his love for/demonstrates his unwavering commitment to the heroine with a supreme act of tenderness.
12. The heroine responds sexually and emotionally.
13. The heroine’s identity is restored. (134)

It is important to have knowledge of how narratives are built up, since this is also the foundation for our interpretation of them. When we recognize the set form, we know what type of story we are reading, and when we have read several of them we soon detect when an author is going against the familiar pattern. In these deviations an author’s ideological intentions can be obvious: for example, when an author with feminist ambitions breaks the pattern in a traditional romantic narrative. This also opens up for questions about how historical literature functions, namely, that it brings our history to life and invites the reader to take the step into an alternative time, a kind of role play where one can learn something about our history, about our own time, and about ourselves and the contexts to which

[1] “The term romance derives from the French and was first used exclusively to refer to medieval romances (sometimes called ‘chivalric romances’) written in French and composed in verse. These narratives were concerned with knightly adventure, courtly love, and chivalric ideals, often set at the court of King . medieval romance, whether in verse or prose, and regardless of country of origin” (Harzewski 31).

[2] This idiomatic expression is often used by young women in Sweden today to indicate that they do not accept infringements of their integrity, outdated values, stupid comments, or lack of respect.

References


Introduction

In this article, I investigate romantic love in American film as a site for everyday experiences of love, marriage and family (Williams, *Dante* 6, 8, 40; this theme I focus on the “kiss” in romantic love scenes in American films. A theological event where divine grace may infuse itself on the lovers, making the kiss offer theological insight into how romantic love transforms into a window of grace, beauty and glory through which a divine light shines through the sacrament of love (Williams, *Outlines* 17, 29).

I shall draw theoretically upon several intellectual threads, including courtly and theological aesthetics, and postmodern theory. Then, rather than look at different genres and film series, the action-adventure Matrix trilogy, and the one at these films because I am interested in popular films of different genre: Furthermore, the kiss is central to the love plot in both film series and the functions romantically and theologically. I shall finally briefly visit two romantic comedy films *Past* and *Something's Gotta Give*, to see how religious discourse plays out in these films.

Before I begin, I note two qualifications. First, this article presupposes a religious framework, though not adopting or espousing a Christian worldview; framework has left its legacy on modern and postmodern Western culture while also treating other religious traditions and other international films. Unfortunately my own lack of expertise in either field limits me to a discussion of love in American film. I hope, however, that this article may spur others to take on similar investigations.

Courtly Love, Christian mysticism, and romantic theology

In his now dated work *The Allegory of Love*, C.S. Lewis writes of a “religion of love” as one aspect present in the European medieval genre then called courtly love literature, which, according to Lewis (18).[2] He notes that this religion of love, as well as other aspects of the inform our conceptions of love and romance, particularly in art and literature and present, would seem to validate Lewis’ idea. Not only is romantic love seems to play its part in many American films. The search for true love, a search for the telos and summum bonum of life, seems to be an idea which dominates preoccupation of many films. Moreover, this experience of love, in popular salvific quality. [End Page 2]

According to Lewis and other noted scholars, courtly love literature, and the Western Christian tradition nor the mystical tradition, where mystics experiences of human, romantic love to describe divine encounters and the Lewis 18, 40). Courtly love and romantic literature from the medieval and modern and sentiments of Christian discourse for use in a completely different and The two literatures are not analogous, partly because they differ in the object other which is divine, and infinite (Boase 83-83, 109-11). Moreover, the promoting passion or romance within or outside marriage, while a staple of desire (Lewis 13-17). Indeed, sometimes courtly love literature could be and erotic or sexual delight while mocking religious chastity and ascetic
courtly love or the religion of love and the Christian religion run counter to each other. No doubt there is truth to this thesis. We need only to glance at the plethora of romantic comedy films to recognize this. A good majority of them do seem to worship and venerate this ideal of romantic love, particularly as the acme of human experience and fulfillment. Nevertheless, it would also do us good to question if that is all there is to it, or if there is some connection and relevance to experiences and discourses that have taken place within the Christian tradition, and even more so, if they might not bear some theological meaning and value.

For example, there are striking similarities between courtly love and early modern love poetry and Christian mystical discourse (Perella 85, 268-69). In Christian mystical discourse, as stated above, mystics often not only use erotic language and imagery, but also the sentiments and experience of human, sensual love to describe their experiences of God, from the biblical Song of Songs to the ecstasies of Saint Theresa (Perella 38-40). There is talk of love, sensual delight, passion, and ecstatic union with the beloved, which is here God or Christ (Perella 34-36). Moreover, in figurative art there is the same ambiguity, where representations of divine love or the soul’s relation to God or Christ are depicted in human amatory fashion (Perella 33). Since the two discourses existed side-by-side, and scholars acknowledge that the courtly love tradition may have borrowed language and sentiments from Christian discourse, is it not possible that when these sentiments are “secularized” within a human, romantic framework, that they might not bear a remnant or a surplus of meaning of the tradition from which they have borrowed? Likewise, could Christian mystical discourse not also bear a remnant of human erotic experience as well, insomuch as the two might appear more similar than believed in both cases? Why could the influence not flow in both directions? Why could courtly and romantic love literature not have influenced religious thinking, and why could it not become a bearer of actual religious meaning and value?

Within the romantic love tradition itself some Christian writers do correlate human and divine experiences of love. One may help to lead to or understand the other, and they are inseparable in meaning (41; Perella 86-90, 261). In the works of medieval authors such as Andreas Capellanus, for example, courtly love was a chaste and ennobling discipline, whose end was grace bestowed by the lady, grace that elevated the knight to blessedness (Lewis 33; Perella 100). But this blessedness was not just in a secular sphere, or for secular delights or ends, but was a complement to Christianity: without Christian virtue and practice one could not attain the lady’s benediction. Service to the lady was also thought to develop Christian virtues, such as humility, faith, and devotion (Perella 116-20).

The exemplum of the fusion of human romantic and divine love, however, is present in poets and artists, of which Dante is the greatest figure (Williams, due to the Incarnation of Christ in the world and in the flesh, all human experiences bear a spiritual significance; through Christ’s presence, they become possibilities of divine manifestation and an infusion of grace (Williams, 7-9). The experience of this love-feeling has a sacred aura to it that leads to with the human beloved that facilitates not only divine encounter, transcendence and grace, but also spiritual growth, devotion, and holiness. Williams writes:

The heart is often so shaken by the mere contemplation of the beloved its own delight. The whole person of the lover is possessed by a new state: he sees and contemplates the beloved as bestowed by her smile; she is its source and its mother. She appears to him...But in this state of love he sees and contemplates the beloved as the first-created of God. (Williams, Outlines 16)

Moving from Dante’s experience of Beatrice and the medieval experience of romantic love, feeling, can be ennobled to a spiritual vision of beauty, the profane here loves meld and mix into one.
Moreover, this vision has the capacity to see the human transformed to the divine, while remaining as it is. Williams continues:

Not certainly of herself is she anything but as being glorious in the delight taken in her by the Divine Presence that accompanies her, and yet is born of her; which created her and is helpless as a child in her power. However in all other ways she may be full of error or deliberate evil, in the eyes of the lover, were it but for a moment, she recovers her glory, which is the glory that Love had with the Father before the world was. (Williams, 17)

Just as in the Eucharist the material bread and wine come to bear the flesh and blood of Christ, so the beloved through love becomes a theophany or window to the divine, remaining what she is yet also being more than this. She becomes sanctified and becomes the locus of sanctification through an experience of divine beauty. He finally explains this romantic theology:

This experience does at once, as it were, establish itself as the centre of life in relation to it; they take on a dignity and seem to be worthy which appears to be inherent in life itself—life being the medium by which his own body and its functions as beautiful and hallowed by contact with love renewed and quickened in the same way. And—if Romantic Theology is new state, becoming conscious of that grace of God which is otherwise, (Williams, Outlines 17)

As in the Incarnation or God coming to the world and flesh through Christ marriage are the very site through which life can be experienced as having religious spirit in love, to which poets, especially Dante, have born witness in their writings, particularly The New Life and The Comedy, through the lens of possibility of romantic love experience as a means of Christian grace. He not a caritas and agape or Christian charity and love in him, and inspire a Comedy, she leads him not only to divine contemplation, but also to redemption and quickened in the same way. And—if Romantic Theology is new state, becoming conscious of that grace of God which is otherwise, (Williams, Outlines 17)

The important things to note about Williams' romantic theology is that experience, here of romantic love, and finds this also to be a means of sanctification. He writes that “holiness may be reached by the obvious ways as well as by neglect the spiritual meaning of these experiences, then according to him, w Furthermore, since according to Christian tradition marriage is a sacrament bestowing grace, and of experiencing other sacraments, including the Eucharist, a couple may experience not only Christ’s manifestation and grace, but through their marriage (Williams, Outlines 14). However, while they experience also remains human and immanent. It is not an allegory, or means of two human beings living together, as well as something more (Williams, Dante)

This theme of romantic love and the intertwining of sacred and profane can 19th and early 20th century British literature in his work Erotic Faith: Being in Love from Jane Austen to D.H. Lawrence. Though I would disagree with Polhemus' thesis that erotic faith in the British love” at odds with and supplanting traditional Christian faith, Polhemus' romantic love strain in literature, and also the inextricable links in this literature religious experience, and religious language (1-6, 22-24). For Polhemus the r
faith (3). Though Polhemus characterizes this erotic faith in love as tenser, more complex, more uncertain, and less positive than the “happily ever after” trajectory of romantic love in American film, redemption, nevertheless Polhemus’ work also attests to the power of theological ideals such as salvation and martyrdom (1-6, 47, 169). Whether erotic in Jane Austen (ch.2), the romantic passionate desire for ecstasy as melding of the romantic, erotic and Christian in Charlotte Brontë (ch.5), novelists such as Dickens (ch.6), the intertwining of the erotic with Christia interconnection of the vulgar and holy in Joyce (ch.10), or the proclamations of Lawrence (ch.11), Polhemus underlines the importance of erotic love and d and salvific (and sometimes dangerous) potential, particularly for the male, 10-12, 15, 47, 128, 249). Thus Polhemus’ work further supports and attests to romantic and discourse, which carries over into romance in film.

We may ask at this point what all this has to do with romantic film. I draw upon these authors and traditions simply to assert that there also has existed a Christian tradition from Dante onwards that did not see human romantic love and divine love as contradictory, but as part of the same continuum, or that may have fused imagery and love sentiments to describe divine encounters, but saw in the the divine and a means of grace. This tradition, instead of disavowing passion, eroticism, and devotion or sublimating it to divine being, exalts this passion and eroticism within human relationships and also a part of the Christian way to salvation (Williams, Dante 111). Indeed, his work Christ and Culture, within Christian history and tradition, the relationship between Christ and human culture and society. In these views, goodness, where one sees within the human something of the divine, and meaning and significance.

This deeper meaning to romantic love still exists as a remnant and poss-romantic film. Though we exist in a secular or post-secular era, Christian literature. This deeper religious meaning in romantic literature is one legacy. Moreover, I think this becomes even more relevant in our (Western) postmodern era, where a focus on and an exaltation of everyday life and experience, sometimes to a sacred level, becomes pos Christian, transcendent God), Western religious discourse has to be displaced of this courtly love tradition and its connection with Christian discourse, at through it, romantic love in our postmodern era, particularly in film, has been displaced. In reverse of the original situation, human, secular describe religious experience and to engage in religious discourse.

A Theological Aesthetics of Popular Culture and Romantic Love

Theological explorations of religion and film often treat issues such as alienation; or they often explore themes of larger relevance such as oppi Treatments often deal with alienation and religious or spiritual experien (Coates 17-18). Often scholars hold the view that theologically relevant complacency and force us to confront the complexities, i.e. evils, in human Films that provide entertainment and pleasure, or make us happy, are fantasies, considered too “trivial,” escapist and illusory to warrant theologica 31).

Yet, as is the case with the courtly love tradition, Christian mystical discou
side to Christian theology, one that explores goodness and beauty, and expression of the divine in the human. According to this theology, to dismiss the beautiful, or here joyous, as something unimportant is to make life miserable, mean, and barren (Häring 338). This love in His relation to human beings and the universe.

Christian theological aesthetics delves more into this theme. It concerns beauty, and with God as perceived and experienced through beauty and art is inseparable from God’s beauty, and joy; glory is beautiful, the beauty impossible (Barth 316-19). Beauty points to fact that being is in essence joy and also experienced with God’s beauty (Moltmann 334). To believe in any Absolute, or God; otherwise, joy becomes groundless and illusory (Viladesaú), which makes us miss God’s glory here and now (Chittister 366). Indeed we beauty brings out that the best in life really possible (Chittister 367). Likewise, Theologically speaking, divine beauty is often linked with truth and goodness.

Gratitude is likewise integral to the enjoyment of this presence of beauty, which manifests God’s glory (Moltmann 334). Gratitude for beauty and openness to its message are of utmost importance. Anyone who allows the beautiful in knows that life is a meaningful, wonder gifts of grace transform and enable us to see all things in light of beauty (Navone 357). Eros, a more intimate passionate love of God, religious life, and religious commitment, and also integral to God’s will which is God’s love (Navone 357). Without this passion and intimacy, love, human and divine, becomes cold and sterile (McFague 347).

Christian theological aesthetics often link art as the locus for experiences of beauty and pleasure (in the work of art) with the divine where the divine manifests itself, the art form thus remains itself yet be manifests as an event, an encounter in which the divine presence reveals itself in its finitude thus becomes a sign and symbol of something more beautiful and divine, expressed humanly through art (Balthasar 320). The real and original experience of beauty and joy in the work of art becomes analogous to a higher and more comprehensive experience of divine beauty and joy (Rahner 220-21).

Film can also be a very good medium for manifesting the divine. Experiencing beauty and openness to its message are of utmost importance. Anyone who allows the beautiful in knows that life is a meaningful, wonder gifts of grace transform and enable us to see all things in light of beauty (Navone 357). Eros, a more intimate passionate love of God, religious life, and religious commitment, and also integral to God’s will which is God’s love (Navone 357). Without this passion and intimacy, love, human and divine, becomes cold and sterile (McFague 347).

When film becomes a site for divine manifestation, it shows us the divine possibilities for God’s manifestation anywhere and everywhere in a world-affirming way, including in everyday life (Greeley 92, 93, 95). Popular culture can be important theologically because it shows us how people may be experiencing the holy post-post), popular culture in embodied life is the medium with which most as Generation X are having religious experiences (Lynch, After 96-102, 112 images which a postmodern audience may perceive and understand as theological aesthetics of popular culture that relates it to everyday life in or
enable transcendent experiences of encounter and also beauty, pleasure, and joy (Lynch, “Sociology” n. pag.).

Furthermore, in the postmodern era, the divine encounter may be displaced, represented and manifested differently through popular culture, in secular or human forms that bespeak the comprehensible and authentic to a postmodern, secular audience (Eliade, “Artist” 179-80; Deacy n. pag). On personal experience of the self and the aesthetic inner life in postmodernity, theophanies that flow through human forms and narratives in film may be more effective art forms (Lynch, “Sociology” n. pag.).

Popular films are an extension of the theological value of popular culture. Most importantly, exploring divine manifestation through forms of everyday life allows us to view this life sacramentally, to see it possibly in a higher light as a manifestation of God’s beauty, joy, love, and glory infused with grace (Greeley 17, 92, 93, 95).

Popular films are an extension of the theological value of popular culture. Hollywood and popular film also can provoke religious experience of the sacred (Graham, “Theology” 36, 41; Johnston, “Theological” n. pag.). Romantic love, because of its history with the courtly love tradition, Christian mystical discourse, and romantic theology, seems to be one bearer of this remnant of Christian theology perceived to manifest itself in the forms of everyday life in film. The love represented itself through love of a human other. Indeed, as in romantic temptations of marriage and family in The Last Temptation of Christ and romantic love, marriage, family, even sex, are not perceived as antithetical presence in film. Moreover, discourse on love in film sometimes may stand the love story in modernity can sometimes bear the remnants of redemption.

The Sacramental Kiss in Romantic Films: The Matrix and Shrek

According to early Christian scholars, the kiss did hold meaning in Greco-Roman culture. Often erotic and shared privately within the family, public kissing for reasons of friendship and reconciliation (Phillips 5-6). But with early Christianity the kiss took on new meaning, discussed in the writings of Church Fathers such as Tertullian, Clement, passim). From New Testament origins in St. Paul’s writings, the kiss finds its second century. Begun as a greeting among Christian brethren at church, the Eucharist and into Christian baptism (Perella 17-18; Phillips 7, 16-17, 30). The kiss was also known as the kiss of communion, reconciliation, and forgiveness; the kiss of peace established concord and unity. Moreover, from Greco-Roman times the kiss was thought to contain a magical-mystical meaning, thought of as a means of spiritual exchange; in Christianity it signified an exchange of souls (Penn 13-19; Phillips 5). The kiss must also arise from the heart in true affection; if it did not then it could become the Judas kiss of betrayal, instead of the kiss of peace (Penn 65, 112-18; Perella 28). Though Christian authorities attempted to regulate the kiss’s erotic possibilities, at one time banning the kiss between members of the opposite sex (Penn 13, 80, 110-12; Phillips 24), a certain eroticism may have remained, particularly evidenced through the use of the dove as the symbol of the kiss of peace and the Holy Spirit transferred thereby, since the dove also held erotic connotations in Greco-Roman culture (Penn 48-49; Perella 253-57).

In the Christian mystical tradition and in courtly love and romantic literature could symbolize the kiss of God to the human, or the embrace of the soul represent the completion of mystical experience, or illumination and an in the idea of a union of hearts or souls, and exchange of spirits (Perella, 90-9
of the devotion, and could signify a bestowal of grace or benediction, this time by the lady (Perella 101, 116). This idea of an exchange of hearts or souls in the kiss, and the kiss as an ecstatic moment, continues into love poetry during the Renaissance and Baroque periods (Perella 181, 184, 189).

**The Matrix trilogy**

The kiss is central to the Matrix films. This kiss theme is more than just romantic; it is salvific, having a resurrecting power. In the first movie of the trilogy, when it appears as if agent Smith has killed Neo, Trinity tells Neo:

I'm not afraid anymore. The oracle told me that I would fall in love and that that man, the man that I loved, would be the one. So you see, you can't be dead, you can't be, because I love you.

Then Trinity gives him a kiss, and his heart revives. Getting up again, Neo suddenly is able to fight the agents without effort. He can stop bullets; as Morpheus says, “He's beginning to believe” that he is the One, and acts accordingly. He is able to defeat the agent by going into his body and causing the agent to implode.

It is love that gives Neo the power to be the One, love as expressed through the kiss. This kiss thus is more than just a kiss; it confers a supernatural power. Moreover, Trinity’s name, as a representation of the Christian Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, must be significant here, as it is Trinity’s love that repeatedly through which this resurrecting power of love occurs. The kiss is thus salvific.

This romantic love through the kiss develops further in the next film, *The Matrix Reloaded*. Love has already proven salvific, the erotic love scene between them shows us the importance of eros, intimate passion and desire, in romantic love, but also perhaps in something deeper, in our religious devotion and experience. It shows eros as a necessary aspect of human and divine love (McFague 346, 347; Greeley 165). This passion, since it is expressed by Neo the Savior, is not just a human passion but perhaps also a divine one (Balthasar 323).

In *The Matrix Reloaded*, the Merovingian, the dastardly Frenchmen, also acts as one foil to Neo. He explains his philosophy of life thus:

Causality—there is no escape from it. We are forever slaves to it. Our only hope, our only peace is to understand it, to understand the why... why is the only real source of power. Without it you are powerless and this is how you come to me...another link in the chain.

What the Merovingian represents is a mechanistic universe of necessity, manipulation. It is not only without eros, but without joy, truth. Neo, contrariwise, acts out of love and passion, here exemplified by Persephone, the Merovingian’s wife, and symbolic in her namesake, the Greek goddess who inhabits the underworld, is willing to help Neo if he gives her a kiss, that is, if he brings that passion, love and beauty back into her life and resurrects her. She explains:

You love her [Trinity]; she loves you. It’s all over you both. A long time ago I knew what that felt like. I want to remember it, I want to sample it. That’s all.

She also tells Neo that he has “to make me believe I am her.” The first kiss is terrible, but then Neo gives Persephone a long kiss as if she were Trinity, and she agrees to help them.

Neo then enters the Matrix and meets the architect. The architect also tells Neo that all the previous five anomalies were
created to be attached to humanity, but declares that “while the others experience this in a very general way, your experience is far more specific vis-à-vis love.” The architect refers to love as an emotion, designed specifically to overwhelm logic and reason, an emotion that is already blinding you from the simple and obvious truth—she is going to die and there is nothing you can do to stop it.

He also calls hope “the quintessential human delusion.” Yet Neo chooses the door back to the Matrix, rushes to Trinity, and catches her just in time. Though she appears to die, Neo says, “I’m not letting go. I can’t. I love you too damn much.” This time, he resurrects her. She says, “I guess this makes us even,” and they kiss.

The architect, similar to the Merovingian, is interested in logic and reason, control and balance, not in love, joy or desire. What is missing in this technological means-end world is beauty and joy; here we value efficiency instead (Chittister 366). But Neo, as the sixth anomaly, is different, because he does love, and in a passionate, intimate way, exemplifying this love and passion in a way that shows how grace and love transcend this world of efficiency and utility, filling it with delight and lifting spirits (Häring 338, 341). Moreover, this love is once again salvific: contrary to the architect’s predictions, Neo is able to resurrect Trinity from death through the power of love, this time again consuming the kiss.

In the last film of the trilogy, The Matrix Revolutions, the kiss does not play as central a role, but we do find a religious discourse taking place in the name of romantic love, where this love bestows a semi-sacredness to everyday life and the human sphere, bestowing (Christian) religious virtues. Rama-Kandra, whom Neo meets in the nether-subway world at the beginning of the film, explains why he is trying to save his daughter Sati:

I love my daughter very much. I find her to be the most beautiful thing I have ever seen. But where we are from that is not enough. Every program that is created must have a purpose. If it does not, it is deleted.

Neo remarks that he has never heard a program speak of love, and thinks of it as a human emotion. Sati’s father answers:

It is a word. What matters is the connection the word implies. I see that you are in love. Can you tell me what you would give to hold on to that connection?

Neo replies: “Anything.” Sati’s father also remarks that he is grateful for his is interested here is the ability to appreciate everyday life and its beauty and in an almost sacrosanct way which almost seems to appreciate them as gift in the technological, mechanical world of the Matrix.

Likewise, when Trinity is dying, she is grateful for the love Neo and she shared, without regret and fear. As she is dying, Trinity explains how much she loved him, and says:

How grateful I was for every moment I was with you, but by the time I knew how to say what I wanted to it was too late, but you brought me back, you gave me my wish, one more chance to say what I really wanted to say. She asks Neo to kiss her one last time, and dies. Gratitude, often an integral part of divine grace, helps Trinity see the nature of life in an almost sacramental way, infused with (divine) goodness. Thus, discourse that bears the remnants of a religious discourse, of salvation, of most clearly through the motif of the kiss.
At first glance, the Shrek quadrilogy does not seem to merit theological relevance. Yet these animated tales do play with love, romance and the kiss in such a way that also evidences remnants of religious discourse and experience within the romantic love story. In the first movie, *Shrek*, princess Fiona is waiting for “true love’s first kiss” which will release her from a spell that turns her into an ogre at night, and then she will take true love’s form. Fiona is lifted down again in ogre form. She does not understand why she is not in love supposed to be beautiful,” but Shrek tells her: “But you are beautiful.” Then

Of course, this tale cleverly plays upon the fairy-tale ideal of romantic love. Yet, at the same time, “true love’s kiss” not only shows the influence of the romantic love ideal and literature derived from the courtly love tradition, but also evidences the importance of the kiss. The kiss is not only the completion and attainment of “true love,” but also bestows a grace, and inspiration, and gives a sanctity and blessedness to Shrek and Fiona’s love. The kiss takes place as the consummation of the marriage ceremony, which can be taken as sacramental. Yet, Fiona and Shrek remain the same; what this signifies is that the grace and blessedness bestowed on them, while transfigurative, is also something that can be found within their human lives.

In Shrek the music often helps to convey the mood and experience of falling in love.

> I thought love was
> Only true in fairy tales
> Meant for someone else
> But not for me
> Love was out to get me
> That’s the way it seems
> Disappointment haunted
> All my dreams
>
> And then I saw her face
> Now I’m a believer
> Not a trace
> Of doubt in my mind
> I’m in love
> I’m a believer
> I couldn’t leave her
> If I tried.

We need only to think of Williams and Dante and their romantic theology experience and makes ready an acceptation of the good. The language also "believer” or begins to have faith after this vision.

These themes, and the kiss motif, continue through the next three Shrek films. In trying to replace Shrek as Fiona’s rightful husband. In order to compete with "Happily Ever After” which promises “beauty divine” to whoever drinks changed back into human form and Prince Charming pretends he is Shrek.
Charming’s kiss to wed himself to Fiona is not effective. When Shrek finds Fiona and offers her his new and improved human form if they kiss before midnight, Fiona prefers the old Shrek. After midnight is their true love’s kiss as ogres with light, magic, and sparks. Fiona’s parents also accept Shrek now and again we end in a happily ever after.

Going back to the Christian theology of the kiss, we should remember that a kiss not from the heart, not with true affection, and not full of faith cannot have effect, cannot bestow the holy spirit or confer unity and peace, cannot knit the souls of the kissers; it becomes a Judas kiss instead. That is why Charming’s kiss cannot work. But since Shrek and Fiona are “soul-mates,” that kiss will always be effective in bestowing love and grace, and in transforming the lovers.

*Shrek 2* continues a postmodern religious discourse through this legacy of a Christian theological remnant and hyper-meaning within this romantic love tradition. For example, Shrek’s potion “happily ever after” promises him “beauty divine.” But in the end it does not really work. The theological significance that discourse. Mystics cannot make a divine encounter happen, cannot transform divine union. God must “kiss” them, must do the initiating. The same hold bestows, not something we can attain by our effort. Romantic love often happens and that we cannot control, and which transforms us unexpectedly. Here one cannot make love happen, or truth happen. The theme song of *Shrek 2* is the Counting Crows’ “Accidentally in Love.” Some of the lyrics read: “Well I didn’t mean to do it; but there’s no escaping your love.” It is thus not for happen to one as a gift of grace.

The religious discourse through the romantic love story also continues in *Shrek the Third*. Prince Charming gathers an army of disgruntled fairy-tale villains who unsuccessfully try to make them happen. Yet here a young King Arthur convinces these fairy-tale villains to repent and reform, while Shrek tells Charming to seek his own happily ever after, after which Charming is killed by a tower prop. Arthur tells them:

A: You’re telling me you just want to be villains your whole lives?
V: But we are villains; it’s the only thing we know
A: Didn’t you ever wish you could be something else?

When they reply discouragingly, Arthur quotes Shrek’s speech to him:

Just because people treat you like a villain, or an ogre, or just some loser that matters most is what you think of yourself. If there’s something you really want to be, then the only person standing in your way is you.

The villains lay down their weapons and ponder other professions, such as growing daisies or opening spas. In other words, they have seen the error of their ways, have repented, and are redeemed and reformed of their wickedness.

We also see in *Shrek the Third* the repeated theme of “happily ever after,” film as a motif and desire. The “happily ever after” scenario in romantic theology, it could signify (Christian) hope in life and in divine redemption to be experienced on a human as well as divine level. Bringing back Williams and his romantic theology again, it helps us link the good, or even wondrous, in human experience with a divine goodness. That is constantly lost and must constantly be regained; read theological marriage, which constantly bestows a grace that renews the
or experience of love (Williams, *Outlines* 53). It is likewise salvific or redemptive; it constantly rescues Fiona and Shrek from evils and tribulations, and is sealed by the kiss (Williams, *Outlines* 47).

The last film, *Shrek Forever After*, ties everything together. Though Shrek is life dull and monotonous. Because he cannot be grateful for his life, he nears Fiona, he ends up in a dystopia. Yet again the answer is “true love’s kiss,” with this dystopia Fiona has no interest in love and dislikes Shrek, Shrek slowly restores her faith in love again. Though true love’s kiss does not work the first time, it works in normal. Shrek goes back to his children’s birthday celebration, grateful for all that he has.

What stands out to me in this last movie as regards romantic discourse as a bearer of theological meaning and religious experience is the romantic theology of love, marriage and family as sacramental, holy experiences that can lead to redemption. Shrek lives in a state of ingratitude at the beginning of the film. After he has lost it all, Shrek realizes this. He states that “my life was perfect and there’s no way to get it back. I didn’t know what I had until it was gone.” He now sees all the good to be had in his everyday life, and is grateful for it. He tells Fiona: “You’ve already done everything for me Fiona. You gave me a home and a family.” Upon their true love’s kiss, Shrek tells Fiona: “You know what the best part of today was? I got the chance to fall in love with you all over again.” At the end of the story, he likewise remarks to Fiona: “I always thought that I rescued you from the dragon’s keep.” Fiona replies: “You did.” Shrek then answers: “No, it was you that rescued me.” He thus has seen his life in a new sacramental way, which has bestowed beauty and light upon it and has redeemed it and redeemed himself.

In this dystopia, we also see Fiona’s redemption from skepticism, and restoration of her faith. Fiona is cynical, faithless, and loveless. After Shrek kisses her and nothing happens, Shrek remarks:

S: I don’t understand. This doesn’t make any sense. True love’s kiss doesn’t work.

F: Yeah, you know that’s what they told me too. True love didn’t get me out of that tower. I did. I saved myself. Don’t you get it? It’s all just a big fairy tale.

S: Fiona don’t say that. It does exist.

F: And how would you know? Did you grow up locked away in a dragon’s keep? Did you live all alone in a miserable tower? Did you cry yourself to sleep every night waiting for a true love that never came?

S: But, but I’m your true love.

F: Then where were you when I needed you?

She has lost faith not just in love, but in the good and beautiful in life, especially on her own human effort and will against a cruel world. That is why the kiss does not work.

Yet even here, there is still a ray of hope. After one of Shrek’s failed attempts to connect with Fiona, Puss remarks:

I am not believing what I have just witnessed. Back there—you and Fiona, there was a spark. A spark inside her heart I thought was long extinguished. It was as if for one moment Fiona had actually found her true love.

It is thus up to Shrek to restore her belief and faith in love through love. Through the sacrifices Shrek makes to save Fiona, Fiona comes to believe in Shrek and the power of love again: in the power of goodness, in beauty and happiness. When Shrek apologizes for not having been there for her, Fiona says that it does not matter, that he is here now. Her life and her past are beginning to be redeemed through this experience of love, and he
love’s kiss, in which both Shrek and Fiona find redemption, and a renewal of love. Moreover, here true love’s kiss transforms the world and restores it to a state of joy and renewal of grace upon their love. In the last movie, we see clearly the analogous relation of romantic love and religious faith, and how this romantic love narrative and discourse could stand in for that of religious faith, showing how theological themes into romantic discourse. We can read the love story as a religious discourse on religion, God, and faith take place, albeit in a secularized, human form.

### Love as Religious Discourse in Romantic Comedy

In postmodernity the genre of romantic comedy also becomes a site in which religious discourse takes place, where discourse about love can be read as discourse about religion. What these above films show is how the love story in film acts as a foil to the modern secular story of hedonism, value-neutrality, scientific rationality, skepticism, cynicism, and disbelief. Romantic love acts by allowing for an experience of love which contains the possibility of a deeper significance as a divine, religious experience. For example, in the 2009 comedy *Ghosts of Girlfriends Past*, Connor Mead is a New York City playboy, cynical about love and marriage. When refusing to give the toast at his brother’s wedding, he states:

> To me marriage is an archaic and oppressive institution that should have been abolished years ago.

He goes on to say about love:

> Love, it’s magical comfort food for the weak and uneducated. Yeah, it makes you feel all warm and relevant but in the end love leaves you weak, dependent, and fat.

Continuing on a little later, he says:

> I wish I could believe in all this crap. I do. I also wish I could believe in the Easter Bunny….I am condemned to see the world as it really is, and love, love is a myth.

We could substitute religion, faith, or God very easily here for the word love, and probably recognize this speech as the modern, secular, skeptical view of the world as it really is, and love, love is a myth.

Likewise, in the 2003 movie *Something’s Gotta Give*, Harry Sanborn is a sixty-three year old New York City bachelor also enjoying the hedonistic single life. He meets Erica Barry, the divorced mother of his girlfriend, and while he is convalescing in her home from a heart attack, they develop a special romantic relationship which turns into love. When they first make love, it is as if they have both experienced something new and wondrous in their lives, an openness and vulnerability but also passion and elation. That was the first night either of them had ever slept eight hours.
desire, but something happens that also transforms their lives. Erica, repressed, uptight, and unemotional, can then not stop weeping, which finally helps her overcome her writer’s block and enables her to a relationship with another younger man. She appears happier than ever, let love in, even if it did not work out. Meanwhile Harry attempts to go back unhappy, and every time he sees Erica he has an anxiety attack which he feels change, he goes back, tries to find every woman he has ever wronged, and finds her with another man. Yet she returns to him. When Erica tells him sh my life just got made.” Harry then remarks: “I finally get what it’s all about time in my life.” And we have a happily ever after.

Erica and Harry’s first night together was a transformative experience, akin or not, it brought something missing from their lives into it, love, passion, or They had to change their lives for the better: in Erica’s case learning to let g moral reformation and responsibility. Harry’s comment that he is in love as the possibility of redemption at any age and stage, which has been a part o

**Conclusion**

The kiss and romantic love in film can operate religiously and theologically, but to offer an opportunity for divine encounter possibility of a religious discourse. This is due to the origins of medieval theological discourse, where medieval courtly love borrowed the sentiments and language of Christian discourse, particularly mystical discourse. Moreover, something of the humanly erodiscourse, fusing the two experiences and making it more difficult to disting romantic love, the descendent of courtly love, to contain the possibility of experience within it. In postmodernity, where God is dead, and where tran and the divine onto the human, this dormant religious and theological pos sometimes be activated, and can become pregnant with meaning. This postmodernity romantic love in films can sometimes stand in for and repres discourse. Therefore, I contend that romantic love in film can be one style, f experience and reflection are taking place in postmodernity. It thus show popular culture and popular cultural manifestations.

Finally, I hope looking at romantic love in film in this light, in relation to theological aesthetics and freeing theology and film studies, which seldom treats the theme of romantic love as theologically or religiously pertinent. Theology and film studies should welcome more often these positive engagements with film and religious studies and popular culture. To quote the Iranian filmmaker Mohsen Makhmalbaf:

> I see happiness as a right. I think that it is a human right to be joyful. The India is wasting his time….Many things must yet change in India before should the people be depressed by movies like that? They must be allow person who has had to sell his body for a morsel of food – you want to What is he supposed to do after seeing that film? (92)

Going on to speak about his profession, he says that “we filmmakers are her is that, after seeing a film of mine, a person feels a little happier, and acts wi Makhbalhaf, we can aim to take seriously those filmmakers who by treat happiness and joy to life and to the world, and consider such a goal a leg
appreciate films (and scholarly work) that reveal and point us toward this joyous side to life, and realize their value.

I close with a discussion of the ending of *Cinema Paradiso*. At the end of the story Salvatore/Toto, who is now a famous filmmaker in Rome, watches the film his old friend and father-figure Alfredo left for him upon Alfredo’s recent death. The film is a composite of all the love and kissing scenes that Toto’s hometown’s Catholic priest had censored out of the movies. The film brings tears to Toto’s eyes, perhaps for memories of his youth and the love for film that has made him rich and famous, perhaps for memories of Alfredo and how he changed his life, perhaps for remembering the past that he left behind. But it signifies something else as well: the kisses signal passion, wonder, beauty, ecstasy and joy, treated in courtly love and romantic literature, but also having origins in Christian mystical discourse and the Christian sacrament of the kiss. I hope this kiss can begin to be understood as that which sometimes graces life, not just in romantic love, but in all our everyday moments, and which may be read and understood as a symbol of hope, faith and belief in the good, the beautiful and the true, and perhaps Christian redemption. Let us hope that we, unlike the priest, do not censor this out of life.

[1] Though Williams, as an Anglican, more clearly identifies the romantic love in the sacrament of marriage with the Incarnation and the life of Christ, I translate that here also to mean a divine marriage.

[2] For readers not familiar with it, the courtly love literature and tradition was thought to have arisen in the Provence region of France, and was popular during the high Middle Ages. It concerned a knight’s love for and devotion to a lady of superior social standing, usually married, and consisted not only of a description of the knight’s passionate devotion, but also his service and humiliation to the lady. There existed also a system of rules and observances which must govern this service.


[4] The idea of a hierophany stems from religion scholar Mircea Eliade; a hierophany is an eruption of the sacred into the mundane or profane realm, where the sacred manifests itself into something and something more. A theophany is the same idea only with the eruption of God or the divine into the mundane. For more information see Eliade, *Sacred*.

[5] French philosopher of religion Jean-Luc Marion has written extensively about the event of God’s manifestation, sometimes called the saturated phenomenon, a revelation that gives itself to human beings cannot control but are controlled by. The revelation can also be an encounter; it entails the revelation through the work of art to a passive subjectivity. Most of the writings of Marion are a proposal to this phenomenon, but in particular *Being Given* may be of use in explaining this idea.

[6] This is a Kindle edition of the book without pagination, but the citation can be found in paragraphs 2 and 3 of section 2, entitled “Seeing life.”


[8] This is a Kindle edition of the book without pagination, but the citation can be found in paragraphs 5, 8, 12 and 14 of section 3, entitled “Cupitt and Bonhoeffer meet the Kranks.”

[9] Again this is a Kindle edition of the book without pagination, but the relevant passages can be found in paragraphs 7-14 of section 2, entitled “The Subjective Turn in Modern Spirituality,” and in paragraphs 2-3 of section 3, entitled “Reading Film in the Context of the Subjective Turn.”


[11] This is a Kindle edition of the book without pagination, but the citation
entitled “Finding God in the movies.”

[12] Though I reference the film, I actually have not seen *The Last Temptation of Christ*.


[14] Ben-Ze'ev and Goussinsky consider the “ideology of romantic love” as unattainable, unrealistic transcendental ideal that under certain circumstances can lead to fanaticism and violence, much in the way many modern intellectuals view religion, particularly fundamentalism (xii-xiv).

[End Page 20]

**Movies Cited**


*The Da Vinci Code*. Dir. Ron Howard. Perf. Tom Hanks, Audrey Tautou, Ian


**Music Cited**

Counting Crows. “Accidentally in Love.” *Shrek 2: Motion Picture Soundtrack*


Duritz, Adam, Dan Vickrey, David Bryson, Matt Malley, David Immergluck. ‘
Smash Mouth. “I’m a Believer.” Shrek: Music From the Original Motion Picture.

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— — —. “The Uses of Film in Theology.” Explorations in Theology and Film.


[End Page 22]


Marsh, Clive. *Cinema and Sentiment: Film’s Challenge to Theology.* Milton K


O’Meara, Thomas Franklin. “The Aesthetic Dimension in Theology.” *Art,* C


Phillips, L. Edward. The Ritual Kiss in Early Christian Worship. Cambridge,

Plate, S Brent. Religion and Film: Cinema and the Recreation of the World. I.


[End Page 24]
Introduction

“Who will we be studying in 100 years?”

– question from the audience at the opening keynote panel presentation at the 2013 Popular Romance Author Symposium (Princeton University, October 24, 2013)

Over the past few decades, there has been a growing critical mass of scholarly interest in the study of popular romance as a literary form in its own right. Scholars such as Pamela Regis, Laura Vivanco, Sarah S. G. Frantz, and Eric Selinger, among many others, have begun to publish scholarly and/or literary criticism of popular romance novels in the last two decades. Other indications include the establishment of the *Journal of Popular Romance Studies* Romance Project, and the fact that schools and universities such as the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee, DePaul University, and George Mason University have begun offering courses that focus and/or incorporate popular romance novels (“Teaching Popular Romance”).

As Crystal Goldman argues in her 2012 article “Love in the Stacks: Popular Romance Collection Development in Academic Libraries,” access to research materials is vital for romance scholars and students:

With no cohesive vision for which materials to collect and little justification for fiscally supporting popular romance studies materials, vital monographs, papers, and articles are not preserved by libraries for future researchers’ use and may, indeed be lost from the record entirely (2).

Although Goldman does mention primary sources, her main focus is on secondary materials, i.e. materials about romance and related fields, and the issues that have previously prevented many academic libraries from systematically collecting them. Goldman also identified a list of 37 core secondary sources for popular romance scholarship (17-18). Secondary materials are definitely important, but the systematic collection of primary sources, the actual popular romance novels and short stories themselves, is vital.

Identification of Need

Academic libraries have long had an uneven record of collecting so-called popular contemporary literature. Although historical collections of items such as dime novels are not uncommon, collected until it is, so to speak, no longer contemporary. Academic libraries have often done so as part of so-called “leisure reading collections.” As Pauline Dewan notes, leisure reading collections are often leased from companies such as McNaughton. Based on the library’s desired profile, McNaughton sends a selection of books that the library may choose to purchase at the end of the recent years: [End Page 2]

Three recent trends in university and college libraries have prompted academic libraries to rethink their ideas about popular literature collections. Trend towards user-focused libraries and promotion of literacy and lifelong reading.

These are all worthy goals and purposes, but they do not necessarily align with the systematic collection and preservation of primary source materials. Leisure reading collections are often leased from library's desired profile, McNaughton sends a selection of books that the library's desired profile, McNaughton sends a selection of books that the library's desired profile, McNaughton sends a selection of books that the library's desired profile, McNaughton sends a selection of books that the library's desired profile, McNaughton sends a selection of books that
lease period. Materials retained from such collections can be a source for University Libraries’ case, this often results in spotty collections – a title for forth. Moreover, materials that might work best for a leisure reading collection necessarily be those desired by future researchers.

As more colleges and universities begin to offer popular literature courses, libraries are starting to change or adapt their practices. In a 2007 exploratory study, Justine Alsop found that a majority of her literature librarian survey respondents did collect some popular contemporary literature. In addition to student “need” for light reading, her respondents cited reasons such as supporting the curriculum (offered courses in popular fiction), faculty requests, and preserving primary sources (Alsop 583). However, there were still many barriers, including “budgetary constraints, the collection, and lack of demand,” as well as an expectation that public libraries should collect contemporary fiction (Alsop 583).

Lack of space and money are very real issues for many academic libraries when collecting contemporary fiction that is published. According to the Romance Writers of America, the romance genre alone generates 1.08 billion dollars in sales from over 9,000 titles in 2013 (“Industry Statistics”; Bosman). Charles W. Brownson suggested one way of dealing with the mass influx of popular contemporary fiction for those collecting at a “Research Support” level:

Selection criteria are seldom based on the quality of the literature, so that statistical methods can be used. Wanting a sample of romances, for example, which the industry produces at the rate of about four a day, one might decide to buy those published on the first day of every month. They are alike, after all (or rather, their differences are statistical) (105).

Leaving aside the question of whether romance novels really are all alike, buying materials in this fashion, while it might result in good representation of the romance genre as a whole, would make it very difficult for researchers to study individual authors or even subgenres such as paranormal romance since there would be little continuity aside from date of publication.

However, leaving popular romance collecting to public libraries is not necessarily the best alternative. Public libraries have very different missions than do academic libraries. Aside from public library the New York Public Library, most public libraries do not collect for the long term needs of researchers and students, but instead, focus on the present reading interests of the populations that they serve. Collection development policies of public libraries should be guided by local reading tastes that may favor certain authors and sub-genres versus others. In Amy Funderburk’s 2004 Masters’ paper reviewing the number of award winning popular romance novels in North Carolina public libraries, she found that the relatively small number of reviews in standard library review sources of award winning popular romance novels resulted in a smaller number of titles being collected compared to the other popular fiction genres (19). Many standard library review sources, such as Library Journal, collect romance genre fiction on a quarterly basis. In 2008, the American Library Association publication Reference and User Services collecting romance genre fiction in public libraries, but it only listed five titles on a year round basis.

In public libraries, as titles become less popular or simply wear out, they are withdrawn in order to make room for newer titles. Again, the role of most public libraries is not to preserve items, but rather, focus on current patron needs. In fact, the growing adoption of ebook databases such as Overdrive makes it very likely that long term preservation of romance fiction since those e-book databases adopted in the early 1990s, collection development in public libraries underwent a philosophy of “give them what they want,” as articulated by Charles Rob Library system. Robinson’s philosophy encouraged public libraries to purchase non-fiction, to meet the current reading needs of the county library’s patrons.
they wore out or the library needed the space for the “next” hot titles. Research-worthy collections of popular romance novels just is not realistic in these days of shrinking budgets, public demand, and a now longstanding collection development philosophy (Baltimore County Public Library).

There are a few academic libraries that do systematically collect popular romance collections. A prime example is the Browne Popular Culture Library at Bowling Green State University, which currently holds over 10,000 volumes of category romance series. Another is the University of Melbourne Library in Australia, which began collecting romance novels as early as 1997, with an emphasis on authors from Australia and New Zealand. One of the arguments used for establishing the collection at the University of Melbourne Library was that other Australian libraries were already collecting other genres of popular fiction (Flesch 120). Other schools, such as the University of Wisconsin, have focused on specific sub-genres such as nurse romances. These collections are set apart from the “main” circulating literature and literary criticism collections.

Circulating collections provide greater physical access for faculty and students as well as researchers and students at other institutions who have Interlibrary Loan access. They can also enhance access to related secondary materials since most academic libraries in the United States use the LC (Library of Congress) classification system, which results in books both by and about a given author being shelved together.

The authors of this article would argue that there is value in systematically collecting popular romance fiction for circulating academic library collections. As no established collection development model existed specifically for this type of collection, the authors created a strategy using other genre collections such as science fiction as a model, and their skills as established liaison librarians in crafting the collection. Stevens’ long term experience with the popular romance genre as both a reader and researcher (she had previously published a Research Guide), which focused on primary and secondary sources for popular romance writers, was a unique combination that allowed this collection to be created in a relatively short time. In this article, the authors will describe how they established a popular romance collection at George Mason University Libraries, as well as discuss various issues that were encountered.

**Process of Creating the Collection**

George Mason University is a highly diverse, state-funded, growing institution of universities in the state of Virginia. The University Libraries encompass four Law Library. Two of the libraries are on the large Fairfax Campus while the other two libraries serve the research and service needs of our distributed campuses. The Fenwick Library is the largest library and is generally considered the main research library of the University. The majority of the 1.27 million volume literary criticism books, is located in Fenwick Library.

Like many academic libraries, the University Libraries had sporadically collected romance novels, mostly through a leased McNaughton collection, gifts, and faculty requests. It had also collected secondary sources to support the courses in the English Department and other programs, and had 78 per cent of the core popular romance scholarship titles identified by Goldman (Goldman 17-18).

Sheehan and Stevens decided to begin systematically collecting popular romance novels in response to several campus developments. The first was an English department class: “Why Women Read Romance Novels,” created by Professor Jessica Matthews. Matthews created the course partly in response to the degree and depth of engagement that she observed on web-based forums devoted to reader discussion of popular romance novels (Ramage). First offered in 2011, it was successful enough to be offered again in 2013, with 38 students registered (George Mason University). In addition, Professor Matthews regularly teaches a “Marriage Plots” class that also incorporates several...
popular romance novels as part of the class’ required readings.

The second was the creation of the Popular Romance Project web portal, hosted by the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media at George Mason University with funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Part of the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media’s mission is to “encourage popular participation in presenting and preserving the past” in a digital environment (Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media). In addition to the documentary film *Love Between the Covers*, the Popular Romance Project included a symposium hosted by the Library of Congress Center for the Book. Given that the Library of Congress is ready to highlight popular romance novels, academic libraries now have an opportunity to acquire resources that may have been previously considered fringe or not appropriate for scholarly study.

After learning about the Popular Romance Project, Sheehan contacted the coordinators and arranged to become a blogger for the site. One of the faculty members involved with the Popular Romance Project turned out to be Jessica Matthews. Over the summer of 2013, Sheehan met with Professor Matthews to discuss ways the University Libraries could support her research and teaching and whether there were specific popular romance titles that the University Libraries should acquire. As a result Sheehan asked Stevens to order several titles by Diana Gabaldon.

Based on these developments, Sheehan and Stevens began discussing how to acquire a representative sample of additional popular romance titles, with the goal of creating a comprehensive collection. They decided early on that they wanted it to be a collection that students and faculty could readily access and check out. Because of the way that Library of Congress Classification (the schema used by most academic libraries) treats literary materials, both the primary and secondary sources for a given author (e.g., books by and about Georgette Heyer) would be shelved together, which would facilitate browsing for secondary sources. Although anthologies with items by multiple authors may be shelved separately, libraries using Library of Congress Classification generally shelve literary works by single authors by language, historical period, and then alphabetically by the author’s name, with the aim of keeping all of the literary works by a given author together, regardless of their genre (Library of Congress Classification).

The Library of Congress classification does have a specific subject heading, Love Stories, for any titles that involve romantic themes or stories, but that subject heading does not determine the shelving position – it facilitates finding the information in the catalog.

Sheehan and Stevens also decided that the materials should be accessible via Interlibrary Loan to facilitate access to students and researchers at other institutions. Libraries can choose to limit access to materials in order to prevent loss; few if any Special Collection materials tend to be accessible via Interlibrary Loan.

After Sheehan and Stevens had a preliminary discussion with the Head of Collection Development, Sheehan wrote and submitted a formal proposal (see Appendix 1). This proposal included the following elements:

- rationale (the academic programs, curricula, and faculty that would benefit)
- parameters (types of materials that would be collected)
- who would make the selections and have control of the funds
- the criteria used to select materials
- materials and formats that would be excluded.

The proposal was accepted and a temporary fund was created that would allow both Sheehan and Stevens to purchase popular romance novels for fiscal year 2013/2014. Although Stevens had signing authority after the first year, selections would continue to be made by both librarians. The growth of the collection would not be dependent on one librarian. Instead, it would become a standard part of the collection development process for literature. Once the proposal was approved by the University Libraries administration and Sheehan and Stevens were given a budget, they began the selection process.

As with literature as a whole, the question of canon is a vexed one for popular romance novels, as evidenced by the flurry of blogs and twitter posts in response to Noah Berlatsky’s *Salon* article about the need for a popular romance “canon.” Although this discussion occurred well after the authors’ initial proposal, it exemplifies the difficulty of establishing a one-size fits all collection of popular romance novels.
Sheehan and Stevens determined a “single” group of “best” authors for researchers and students, and research, they wanted a collection that would reflect the historical context of the genre. Judging the quality of writing or story can be very subjective. By using their established knowledge of collection development skills, they anticipated creating a collection that, while not answering the question of canon, will contribute to the ongoing discussion. Sheehan and Stevens also knew this was a long term project, and that purchasing the foundation or historical collection would take many years to accomplish.

Sheehan and Stevens were fortunate, however, to have something of a head start. Since Sheehan’s work on *Authors: A Research Guide* had itself involved selecting a group of authors research in the area. Updating the resources was easily accomplished and cases identified works that would help demonstrate the variety and range. An important source was Jessica Matthews’ “Why Women Read Romance.” Sheehan and Stevens had determined that the initial purchases for the first few years would focus on the “classics,” which they defined as winners of the RWA Nora Roberts Lifetime Achievement Award. These “classic” novels represent authors and works that made a long term impact on the genre and continue to be highly regarded by readers and writers. These are the authors that helped define the genre for the last 30 years. Likewise, authors who produced current works that made “notable lists” such as the *New York Times* Best Sellers list or *Library Journal* collected. In November 2013, the website All About Romance released a Top 100 Romances Poll which also helped identify popular titles and specific authors to purchase (Top 100 Romances).

A number of authors overlapped on all the collecting criteria, which suggested places to start. Sheehan and Stevens also decided to focus the collection on individual authors rather than publisher series (i.e. the Harlequin Intrigue or Silhouette Special Edition series), which would help set Mason’s collection apart from what the Bowling Green Browne Popular Culture Library was already doing.

As with almost all other collection development done by academic librarians, reviews from trusted sources played a large role in the decision making process of what to buy. Often times the reviews are written by specialists in the field, such as RWA’s Librarian of the Year winners, Kristin Ramsdell reviewing for her own blog, The Misadventures of Super Librarian. Additionally, online resources such as the well regarded Smart Bitches, Trashy Books, Read-A-Romance Month, and the long running All About Romance websites provide non-traditional (for the academic librarian) resources for identifying upcoming authors and reviews.

Diversity of characters is an ongoing concern in what has historically been the white, heteronormative nature of much of the popular romance genre. Recently, there have been several efforts, such as the Love in the Margins and the Queer Romance Month websites, that strive to publicize diverse authors and works. As they move forward with the collection, Sheehan and Stevens will continue to monitor the changing nature of the romance genre, including new sub-genres, and will adapt the collection appropriately. Faculty and students research interests at Mason will also help in crafting the collection based on what diverse authors are being studied.

Considering the prolific nature of many popular romance novelists, Sheehan and Stevens decided to vary the collecting levels for various authors – for some authors, collecting would be limited to a well curated selection, while in the case of other authors, their entire body of work, as available, would be included. A pragmatic basis. For instance, authors such as Jayne Ann Krentz and Julia Quinn from a series of connected books, so Sheehan and Stevens decided to purchase Krentz’s *Arcane Society* and *Harmony* series titles have the added benefit of encompassing the three current pseudonyms used by Krentz – Jayne Ann Krentz, Amanda Quick, and Jayne Castle. This allows the works across a wide variety of romance genres, i.e. romantic suspense, historical, contemporary, futuristic, and paranormal, within one author’s body of work.

Format is an ongoing issue. For the foreseeable future, Sheehan and Stevens...
of e-books. This decision may seem counterintuitive for a 21st century library, but in the case of popular romance novels, few academic e-book vendors actually include romance in their collections of larger databases; libraries may purchase or subscribe to individual titles most of the e-book vendors that include fiction, such as Overdrive, are actually often lease rather than sell their collections. While some academic libraries experimented with using e-book readers for their circulating collections, this was a project. That means that popular romance novels available via Kindle, Nook cannot be collected at this time by the University Libraries. The decision to use technology changes and the University Libraries updates its collection development policies. Sheehan and Stevens also decided to acquire hardbacks instead of paperbacks may be less expensive to purchase initially, they often ultimately cost more in the long run.

These decisions, especially the print-only decision, do have larger ramifications for the University Libraries' ability to collect popular romance genre novels. Many authors and publishers have begun to issue e-books. Some authors, such as Eileen Dreyer, have even issued titles in e-book format only (i.e. Dreyer's "Begins with a Kiss"). In turn, hardbacks can often be more difficult to find than paperbacks, especially once they are out of print. Fortunately, many publishers are reissuing major authors' books in hardback. Informed serendipity also played a role in what authors' works were collected in the first year. In a recent "Romance Reviews" column by Kristin Ramsdell, Sheehan noted in the "Second Time Around" section that Carla Kelly's "Reforming Lord Ragsdale" was being reissued (Ramsdell). A quick look in the online ordering tool GOBI from YBP Publishing Services identified several titles by Kelly, long out of print, that had been reissued. This allowed the University Libraries to then collect those popular romance titles far more easily. While Carla Kelly was not originally on their "short list" for the first year, Sheehan and Stevens decided that her "classic Regencies" would be a worthy and welcome addition to the collection.

Serendipity also played a role in what titles were purchased by specific authors. If a specific title by a given author was available as a hardcover in the online ordering system GOBI, that title was selected for purchase. For author Loretta Chase, the obvious title collected is the number one ranked book on the All About Romance website, "Scoundrels" is part of a series of connected books, the titles "Lion's Daughter," "Captives of the Night," were also identified as available. While that latest series had not initially been a high priority for purchase, it upgraded its position. The fact that they could be ordered as part of the regular ordering process also meant less work for the Acquisitions department. As the semester unfolded, authors who met the criteria and had released new titles, especially in hardcover, were purchased, including Elizabeth Lowell, Jayne Ann Krentz, Debbie Macomber, and Sandra Brown.

The final way that serendipity played a role in building the popular romance novel collection was through gift books. The remainder shelves at local book stores became very useful collecting tools as well. Many popular authors' current but not latest releases can be found on these remainder shelves for under $5.00 for a hardback book. While this might not be a consistent long-term collection development strategy, it did provide an initial cost effective way to add books to the collection. The books were purchased and then donated to the University Libraries as a gift. Jayne Ann Krentz, J.R. Ward, and Suzanne Brockman's recent but not latest titles were purchased and then added to the collection as gifts. Several Susan Elizabeth Phillips titles were obtained at thrift stores for $1.00 each in hardcover and then added to the collection as well. Although remainder shelves and thrift stores are non-traditional sources for an academic library collection, they will likely continue to be utilized in the future as a cost-effective way to add new titles to the collection.
collection. Nine Kathleen Woodiwiss titles, all hardback, were donated as gift books to the University Libraries by a fellow librarian.

During the period that Sheehan and Stevens were selecting these initial titles also building a popular romance collection, the Hoover Library at McDaniel University received funding to build a collection of popular romance novels. As part of the establishment of the Nora Roberts Center for American Romance the Hoover Library Director Jessame Ferguson, the authors decided to try to avoid duplication. Thus, during the first year of the project, they chose not to purchase material focus in collecting Roberts' works. Although they do plan to eventually collect Roberts' works, they probably leave the more exhaustive Roberts collecting to McDaniel. As between the Hoover Library at McDaniel College and the George Mason University academic libraries choose to collect romance novels, broader collaborative efforts and allowing libraries to collectively acquire a greater number of author collected by the George Mason University Libraries during the first year is a valuable resource.

One issue that Sheehan and Stevens also wanted to address was bibliographic access. As mentioned earlier, the Library of Congress classification can enhance “browsable” access to related secondary materials. However, since authors are generally shelved by nationality and chronological time period rather than genre, they can be difficult to browse for, especially in larger collections. Unlike public libraries, there is no “romance” or even “popular genre” section – instead, romance authors may be scattered throughout the literature collection. In order to make it easier for students and faculty to at least find items in the catalog, Sheehan and Stevens requested that their colleagues in Cataloging add the phrase “Popular Romance Novel Collection” as part of the MARC field record, field 710, so that students and faculty would be able to use it as a keyword search string in the catalog.

**Future Considerations**

Although it is too early to assess the results of the first year efforts via means of reactions have been positive. Sheehan and Stevens also plan to monitor Interlibrary Loan activity. In 2009, while writing *Romance Authors: A Research Guide* consult Laura London’s 1984 *The Windflower*, a title that had long since been out of print. Since it was not available via Interlibrary Loan, Stevens ordered the title for the University Libraries collection. In 2013, *The Windflower* was requested 14 times through Interlibrary Loan, with five of the requests coming from college and university libraries. The University Libraries was actually unable to fulfill five of the Interlibrary Loan requests because the title was already checked out. Demand for *The Windflower* may go down in the future since it was re-released in 2014 (RT Book Reviews). However, the large number of Interlibrary Loan requests for *The Windflower* suggest interest in the popular romance collection outside of the boundaries of the George Mason University community.

Future steps for the collection include:

- Developing a formal collection development policy for the romance collection and preferred formats as part of the overall literature collection development policy. This is important partly for the sake of continuity for future selectors.
- Outreach to faculty and students. This could include an InfoGuide, similar to ones that the Mason Libraries already has for the Juvenile Collection.
- Usage assessment via circulation records and Interlibrary Loan requests. Since this collection is intended to serve the long term needs of future researchers and students, it may take some time to see results.
- Discussion with the University Libraries’ Special Collections regarding the possibility of pursuing primary source materials from popular romance authors (i.e. manuscripts, correspondence, and other materials).

For those who would like to start (or help their librarians start) an academic romance collection:

- Look at your curriculum and programs. What classes and programs might benefit from having access to these materials? What authors are needed?
- Develop a collection development plan that includes author selection criteria and preferred formats as part of the overall literature collection development plan.
- Conduct a survey of faculty and students to identify gaps in the collection and prioritize materials for acquisition.
- Establish long-term relationships with publishers and authors to ensure that materials are acquired as they are released.

[End Page 10]
Conclusion

Many academic libraries are already starting to collect literary scholarship on popular romance novels. This is a significant development. However, only purchasing the scholarship and not the primary texts themselves does a disservice to the researchers and students studying the genre. Imagine a library, for instance, that collected literary scholarship written about Eugene O’Neill, but not *The Iceman Cometh*. Such a situation is currently the case for popular romance at many academic libraries. Although there is a vital place for popular romance Special Collections (just as there is for Eugene O’Neill Special Collections), circulating popular romance collections can also play a vital role in promoting scholarship. In effect, it would mean treating popular romance novels like any other literary genre currently in circulating collections. Popular romance would not be the first popular genre to be treated in this way, and other popular genres have slowly become more readily available in libraries. The same should be true for popular romance.

Although it is unlikely that any one research library would have the funds, let alone the space, to comprehensively collect all of the popular romance authors that might be needed by future researchers, libraries can at least collect a limited number of authors based on their own curricular and faculty needs. Alternately, they could choose a few local authors to focus on. Groups of libraries could also work together in a complementary fashion. Doing so will ensure future researchers access and enable future scholarship. [End Page 12]

Appendix 1: Popular Romance Novels Collection Development Proposal

To: Head, Collection Development & Preservation

From: Sarah E. Sheehan
Liaison Librarian, College of Health & Human Services

Re: Popular Romance Novels Collection Development Proposal

Date: October 30th, 2013

I propose that the University Libraries collect popular romance novels in a considered and systematic way. As with all genre fiction, the study of popular romance novels has been increasingly recognized as a serious scholarly pursuit. Examples of this include classes taught at multiple universities, consistent and ongoing programing at the Popular Culture Association conference, a scholarly, peer reviewed, open access journal (*Journal of Popular Romance Studies*) and scholarly symposia held in the last four years.

The English Department currently offers several classes on popular genre fiction, the study of popular romance novels has been increasingly recognized as a vital area of research. This includes classes taught at multiple universities, consistent and ongoing conference, a scholarly, peer reviewed, open access journal (*Journal of Popular Romance Studies*) and scholarly symposia held in the last four years.

The English Department currently offers several classes on popular genre fiction, the study of popular romance novels has been increasingly recognized as a vital area of research. This includes classes taught at multiple universities, consistent and ongoing conference, a scholarly, peer reviewed, open access journal (*Journal of Popular Romance Studies*) and scholarly symposia held in the last four years.
In addition, the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History & New Media in partnership with the American Library Association and others is sponsoring the Popular Romance Project (http://popularromanceproject.org/). The Popular Romance Project will include a feature length film funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, Brandeis University and others, as well as a website supported by the Center for History & New Media. In 2015, the Library of Congress Center for the Book will host an academic symposium on the past and future of the popular romance novel. Moreover, the American Library Association series of programs about the popular romance novel in conjunction with the Popular Romance Project.

Scholarship on the popular romance genre is a growing field and providing important in moving the scholarship forward. The English Department, the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History & New Media, the Cultural Studies Department, and the Women & Gender Studies Department could all use this collection for faculty and student research.

There is an overwhelming amount of popular romance novels published every year, and some of the most popular authors are highly prolific. Using a well-established criteria and focusing on faculty research is a step that can be taken to establish a collection that provides a good representation of the genre. I would like to propose that I work with Jen Stevens, Humanities Liaison Librarian, in creating collection development criteria in order to build a research appropriate collection of popular romance novels.

Elements of the criteria will include,

- Novels published by American and International romance novel authors.
- Select novels from all the RWA Nora Roberts Lifetime Achievement Award winners.
- Collecting influential novels listed on the All About Romance and The Romance Reader.
- A limited number of category novels. Category novels are the short novels that are written for a specific book line. An example is the Harlequin Romantic Suspense novels will focus much more on mystery and adventure than other Harlequin lines.
- Hardback or trade paper formats are preferred, but novels that are only available in mass market paperback may also be added to the collection.

Appendix 2: Popular Romance Novels Purchased for 2013/2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amanda Quick</td>
<td>Second Sight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jayne Ann Krentz</td>
<td>White Lies</td>
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Christmas Wishes
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Love in the Digital Library: A Search for Racial Heterogeneity in E-Books by Renee Bennett-Kapusniak and Adriana McCleer

August 29th, 2015

Introduction and Background

The romance genre is one of the bestselling genres in the United States (electronic book) format in the consumer market (RWA). An e-book format such as Adobe PDF, Mobipocket, Adobe EPUB, OverDrive Read and Kindle library downloads (OverDrive) is rapidly increasing as more materials become available online and accessible on different technological devices. With this growth in e-reading, the demand for a diverse range of titles in e-book format is increasing. OverDrive, a global digital system that distributes e-books and other multimedia, offers the primary source for...
e-book library downloads. The Wisconsin Public Library Consortium (WPLC) currently has an OverDrive digital library (DL) of electronic materials for Wisconsin residents.

This exploratory case study examines how Wisconsin public libraries’ digital collections and reflect the racial and ethnic demographics of their service communities by reviewing multicultural romance genre e-book title records in the WPLC digital library. Within this context, the study addresses the following questions: Do public libraries’ digital collections present a diversity of racial and ethnic perspectives and reflect the racial and ethnic demographics of their distinct service communities? What is the accessibility of these e-books within the digital system? This study analyzes the availability (number of titles, copies, and holds) within the WPLC digital library system, determining whether the DL is supplying racially and ethnically diverse romance titles in e-book format and whether the e-books were accessible to potential users. The study also examines whether the DL is increasing the amount of these e-books in the collection to assist in the demand for the popular romance genre.

**Romance Fiction and Multicultural Romance Fiction**

Romance fiction has developed and expanded as a genre since its early beginnings. It is, by definition, a genre of literature that presents a fictional or legendary love story, tale, or prose narrative, which may include heroism, chivalry, adventure, and mysterious and/or supernatural elements (Merriam-Webster). Romance fiction writing and leisure reading has been a popular activity for centuries. Subgenres include historical, contemporary, paranormal, suspense, westerns, inspirational/religious, fantasy, and young adult romance (RWA). Romance novels specifically focus on relationships. They may contain varying sensuality degrees, from sweet to extremely hot (Bouricius 3-11). Readers can become involved on an emotional level with the story’s characters, experiencing a journey to a “Happily Ever After” that makes them feel satisfied at the end (Radway 61; Wendell 8).

Romance fiction has traditionally presented homogeneous representations of White, non-Hispanic characters, cultural traditions, and social values. Multicultural romance fiction includes works written by authors who identify as Hispanic or Latina/o, Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska native, and/or Asian. It also includes works or indigenous characters and culturally diverse narratives, either by authors (Bostic 214). The representations of characters of color or indigenous characters vary within romance fiction (and among other genre fiction), ranging from one-dimensional, stereotypical characters to characters with three-dimensional depth and realistic characteristics. The range contains problematic stereotyping of women of color and indigenous women as hypersexual, sexually aggressive, violent, or submissive sex objects in contemporary fiction (White 1-3; Gregor xiv). Characteristics of less educated people or those from lower socioeconomic classes have often been used to add “ethnic flavor” to stories (Forster paragraph 10). Narratives that interrupt and challenge such stories introduce more positive, relevant representations, highlighting culture, empowerment of families and communities, and a range of realities (White 7). Multicultural romance encompasses a variety of cultures, with the most frequent emphasis on African American romance (Ramsdell 290).

Authors of color and indigenous authors have been writing and publishing within the past twenty years that they have benefited professionally and financially from such publications (White). Publishing companies did not publish African American authors’ romance fiction until the 1980s and only began introducing publications representing African American characters in the 1990s (White 6). Before this time, publications with African American and American Indian characters were rare (Osborne; Gregor 175-176). The early 1990s brought a boom in multicultural romance publications, with major publishing companies establishing specific multicultural imprints. In 1991, Ballantine was the first major publishing company to establish an imprint “African-American, Asian, Latin, and Native American interest” (One World). In 1994, Kensington established “Arabesque Books,” an imprint focusing on African American romances (Osborne; Whitman 59). The “Arabesque” imprint was sold to B.E.T. in 1998, which prohibited Kensington from...
Encounters with literature that reflects one's own experience, familiar settings, or recognizable themes can be empowering and validating. Encounters with literature that portrays a diverse range of representations and narratives can expand individuals' worldviews. Librarians have the opportunity and the responsibility to facilitate such encounters by developing collections that portray diverse perspectives and representations, regardless of the local community (Bostic 216). Van Fleet in 2003 addressed the lack of diversity in popular fiction library collections by recognizing the failure to understand popular literature's impact on social and personal validation (70). Library materials need to reflect the diversity of their service communities and present a diversity of ideas. These goals can be fulfilled through the development and maintenance of an e-book DL.

E-Books in Public Libraries

E-books range in format variety and are downloaded on an e-reader or other technological device (Pawlowski 58). While the first e-book became available in 1971 via the Internet DL Project Gutenberg, e-book commercialization in the late 1990s was a turning point for their current ubiquity and popularity (Galbraith). E-books are now available in e-book lending platforms for libraries, such as NetLibrary (Blackwell et al. “ReadersFirst” 4). OverDrive is the highest ranked vendor for e-books as developed by the International Digital Publishing Forum. Adobe EPUB, or “electronic publication,” is the current industry standard for e-books (Pawlowski 58-59). These e-books are accessible via e-readers, computers, handheld mobile devices, and tablets.

E-book popularity has been increasing in the last few years. There was triple digit growth in 2011 of e-book discovery and online readers due to the expanding use of digital devices and consumers' overall demand have stabilized, yet a 2013 public library survey reported a rise (Enis, “Library E-book Usage,” 3). Keeping note of item usage can show how popular the item has been among users over a period of time (Wolfram 169). A 2012 Pew study of e-book usage population has read an e-book (Rainie et al.). The most popular genre read in e-book downloads is romance (Veros 303). In 2011, OverDrive's data from over five million users indicated romance was one of the top four genres searched in a DL (Reid). Libraries need to understand user habits to connect them to digital content (Menchaca 109).

Library development and maintenance of digital and print collections provides a diverse range of materials and formats for all users. Results from a 2013 PEW study indicates more than half of American participants definitely want more e-books offered as a library service (Zickuhr, Rainie and Purcell). With the increase in e-book availability and popularity, public library collection practices have changed to include print and digital...
e-book circulation to increase within the next year (Enis, “E-book Usage” 3). A study tracking e-book circulation from 2004-2010 at the New York Public Library (NYPL) depicts an increase disproportionately higher. A 2009-2010 NYPL e-book study showed that users read digital content repeatedly (Platt 252). Libraries need to accommodate users’ interests and needs. Public libraries provide collections of popular digital materials rather than through a direct relationship with publishers (Pawlowski 56), which can present a cumbersome user experience (Blackwell et al. “ReadersFirst” 3). A PEW survey comparing e-book and print titles revealed 50 percent of library e-book borrowers feel there are long waiting lists and a lack of novel titles in e-book format (Rainie and Duggan). While few studies have examined public libraries’ e-book services (Platt; Rainie and Duggan; Zickuhr, Rainie and Purcell), none specifically analyze racial and ethnic diversity within a public library’s e-book collection.

**Library Policies and Philosophies**

The Wisconsin state legislature’s policy for libraries states that libraries need to provide free access to information, a diversity of ideas, and knowledge, as well as providing electronic delivery of information, in order to maintain eligibility for state aid (Wisconsin Public Library Legislation and Funding Task Force; Wisconsin Statutes 43.00(a-b); Wisconsin Statutes 43.24(f-m)). Local policies and professional ethics drive public librarians’ commitment to providing materials that respond to community interests and needs, including racial, ethnic, and linguistic relevance and format interests.

The American Library Association Code of Ethics provides normative ethical guidelines for library and information professionals, beginning with, “We provide the highest level of service to all users through appropriate and usefully organized resources; equitable service policies; equitable access; and accurate, unbiased, and courteous responses to all requests” (“Code of Ethics”). This principle recognizes the profession’s ethical obligation to provide equitable access, without distinction based on race or ethnicity. Librarians have the opportunity as well as the obligation to provide encounters with e-books that reflect their diverse communities’ experiences and portray a diverse range of narratives with the potential to expand their worldviews.

**E-book collection development**

The WPLC mission is to provide Wisconsin residents with access to a broad, robust collection of electronically published materials in a wide range of subjects and formats (Gold et al. “Collection Development Policy” 2). The Digital Library Steering Committee manages the WPLC digital library, including development of policy and budget recommendations approved by the Board, decision-making for daily operations of the DL, and the establishment and management of a Selection Committee tasked with selecting materials for the DL. It is led by a member-selected Chair and membership is comprised of one Board representative and one or more representatives from each partner group, based on annual investment (Gold et al., “Members,” 2012).

The WPLC has a Digital Media Vendor/Product Selection Committee of eight members representing public library systems, individual libraries, the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, and Wisconsin Interlibrary Services. This committee surveys the marketplace for products to support digital media material distribution in public libraries, develops criteria for WPLC vendor selection and contracts, and recommends a purchasing strategy for digital media to the WPLC Board (Bend et al. “Digital Media Vendor”). In 2011, the Vendor Selection Committee reported an “awareness of the inadequacy of the WPLC E-Book collection to cope with current demand” and a commitment to focus on offering “a rich collection of E-Books to public library patrons” (Bend et al. “Vendor Selection Committee”). The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction Division for Libraries, Technology, and Community Learning organized an E-book Summit in 2012, which spurred WPLC organization of a statewide initiative to pool funds and purchase $1 million of e-books and audiobooks (Gold et al. “Collection Development Policy” 2). As of 26 April 2014, the WPLC digital library collection contains 9,433 romance e-books.
book items, which has steadily increased by 505 items over the past two mor

Methods

The researchers in this study investigated how the WPLC digital library
perspectives and reflects the racial and ethnic demographics of their serv
case study with targeted searches for multicultural romance e-book autho
case study method was chosen to examine and better understand (Stake “C
first phase of a longitudinal examination (Glesne 22). Future phases will incl
validate findings (Stake “The Art of Case Study Research” 45).

Wisconsin Demographics

Out of the 5.6 million residents of Wisconsin, 878,000, or 15.5 perce
Hispanic or Latina/o (of any race), Asian, and/or American Indian or Alas
Within this group, 6.3 percent of Wisconsin Census respondents identifi
identified as Hispanic or Latina/o (of any race), 2.3 percent identified as Asi
or Alaska Native (see Fig.1). Additionally, 2.4 percent self-identified as som
more races. [End Page 6]
Wisconsin Public Library Consortium

The WPLC was formed in 2000 as a partnership of eight library systems and almost all public libraries within the state (Gold et al. “For Patrons”; “Membership” to information technology and digital materials through research, development, and public library cooperation (Gold et al. “About”). Advantages of consortium membership include a larger breadth of titles, and less local spending on bestsellers that may quickly lose interest (Wisconsin Public Library Legislation and Funding Task Force; Schwartz, “OverDrive Data,” 6). The WPLC’s Collection Development Policy states its intention to “portray different viewpoints, values, philosophies, cultures, and religions in order to serve the varied statewide community” (Gold et al. “Collection Development Policy” 2).

Selection Process
The general descriptors for race and ethnicity by the US Census Bureau that are used as categories for exploration of multicultural romance e-books within the WPLC digital library are Black or and/or American Indian or Alaska native. The researchers use the term multicultural ethnic groups throughout this paper. The researchers explored a range of racially and ethnically diverse authors and book titles to select a range of racially and ethnically diverse authors and book titles. The researchers explored a range of racially and ethnically diverse authors and book titles.

The Reader’s Advisor Online website is based on the “Genreflecting Advisor Series,” a print book series published by Linworth Libraries Unlimited which is designed to help library staff with readers’ advisory, reference, and collection development in various fiction genres (Maas et al. “About”). The modular website is based on the RT Book Reviews Magazine that feature reviews of romance publishing and provides detailed information about various romance publishing and provides detailed information about various romance publishers. The Reader’s Advisor Online website is designed to help library staff with readers’ advisory, reference, and collection development in various fiction genres (Maas et al. “About”). The modular website is based on the RT Book Reviews Magazine that feature reviews of romance publishing and provides detailed information about various romance publishers.

Results

Study results were analyzed by examining the history (Huberman and Miles 436) of the collection, including availability and accessibility of titles within the WPLC. Data was then scrutinized for underlying themes or patterns and clustered into meaningful groups (Creswell 101).

Availability

A total of 151 individual authors in the study identified as Black or African American, Hispanic or Latina/o, Asian, and/or American Indian or Alaska native; or as authors who write multicultural romance fiction. A total of 153 individual book titles were identified as Black or African American romance book titles, Hispanic or Latina/o romance book titles, Asian romance book titles with settings in China, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam, or historical and contemporary American Indian romance book titles. The researchers searched for each author and title individually in the WPLC digital library between 12 February 2014 and 26 April 2014. Keyword searches were conducted for authors’ names and book titles. Search results were limited to e-books, excluding some available audiobooks by selected authors.
The results of these searches returned records for individual author titles in some cases, the catalog had multiple records of the same title, such as when WPLC partner libraries purchased additional copies of the same title for exclusive use by their local library cardholders. Additionally, 29.8 percent of the authors had e-book titles (see Fig. 2) and 15.7 percent of the individual book titles were available in e-book format within the WPLC digital library (see Fig. 3).
Data for each search includes the number of e-book titles present in the WPLC digital library; the number of copies of each title, the number of holds on each title, and the number of available copies of each title (e.g., romance, fiction, African American fiction, historical fiction, urban fiction) and e-book format (e.g., Kindle, Overdrive, Adobe EPUB, Adobe PDF).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Racial or ethnic group</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Number of titles</th>
<th>Number of copies of each title</th>
<th>Number of holds on each title</th>
<th>Number each title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>Alers, Rochelle</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 4: Example of monthly data collection.*

Additionally, the researchers found that in February 2014, at least 10.3 percent of the WPLC romance e-book collection was multicultural romance e-books, and in April 2014, 10.2 percent of the total romance collection was multicultural romance e-books. The total of multicultural romance e-book records (i.e., individual authors) in the collection in February 2014 was 430 items and 926 copies, which increased by 19 items and 41 copies over the two-month study period. There were likely additional multicultural romance e-books within the WPLC digital library that were not found in this study because of the limited selection of multicultural romance authors and book titles.

The WPLC digital library provides a range of formats for the multicultural romance e-books. The e-books are available in four different formats, Kindle, Overdrive READ, Adobe EPUB, and Adobe PDF. The findings reveal the first three formats presented balanced numbers, while the lowest availability was in Adobe PDF format. The Library of Congress states that a PDF format is widely used among individuals, so e-books presented in Adobe PDF might be accessible to a greater population. However, there can be limitations with Adobe PDF because the fixed layout can make it difficult to adjust text size. The WPLC digital library provides a balanced number of options, facilitating access to the multicultural romance e-books for current and potential users.

The researchers found that there were an adequate number of copies of multicultural romance e-books available to respond to user interest and appeal to potential users. Most of the multicultural romance e-books were available for at least seven days and Kindle, Adobe EPUB, and Adobe PDF were available for either seven, fourteen, or twenty-one days (WPLC). If an item is not available, users may place a hold on the item that prompts the system to send an alert when the item is returned by the previous user and available for checkout. Using NVivo data analysis software, the researchers conducted a text query for all holds and found that 82.6 percent had zero holds on the item, while the next highest holds were one (6.2 percent) and two (2.1 percent). The highest hold was eighty-one, but that was on a single item in one month. This outlier might have affected the results, which show that 78 percent of the holds are on American Indian titles (see Fig. 5).
Data in February 2014 (see Fig. 5) depicted that the majority of the multicultural romance e-books. This aligns with Ramsdell’s point that there is a current emphasis on African American romances over other racial or ethnic representations (290) book titles are Black or African American, which is not proportionate to the Wisconsin. Further, each racial/ethnic category is diverse (e.g., nationality may not be represented within the findings. For example, the majority of Wisconsin residents who identify as Hispanic or Latina/o also identify as Mexican (72.8 percent), followed by Puerto Rican. These findings do not reveal the specific representation of distinct racial and ethnic groups in Wisconsin.

Item availability and holds influence the other, meaning if there are holds on the items, their availability decreases. Within the WPLC, the availability and hold status for each item is quite fluid and can change at any given time because the DL is a consortium of 17 libraries with library cardholders accessing the system 24/7. For example, this study shows a significant difference between the relatively low number and availability of American Indian books and the high number of holds for this category. This may be because of the mainstream popularity of authors who primarily write about White, non-Hispanic characters, and happen to have one or more books with characters who are American Indian. This may also simply be because American Indian stories were particularly popular at the time of the study. Romance readers can be loyal and may want to read everything by their favorite author (Bouricius 29) or might pick up a certain book because it is what they want to read at that particular time. This data is a snapshot of the multicultural romantic e-books from February to April 2014.

When comparing the three total data sets with the same totals compiled over the following two months, the researchers found there was not a significant increase or decrease in the percentage of total number of copies, item availability, or the number of holds with the percentage range of 5 percent or less for all of the racial and ethnic categories. More research needs to be undertaken to explore the data sets over a longer period to determine if the data remains constant within each racial and ethnic category.

**Accessibility**

Digital library materials need to be accessible to users with a range of information needs, interests, and information seeking behavior can vary due to cultural experiences, language, level of literacy, socioeconomic status, education, level of acculturation and value. The availability of multicultural romance e-books, the researchers conducted a
of multicultural romance e-books. These searches were for all romance e-books and all romance e-books under the subject headings, “Multi-Cultural” and “African American Fiction.” Search results were limited to e-books, excluding some available audiobooks.

The WPLC digital library collection offers a minimal selection of romance e-books in languages other than English and the DL interface does not accommodate users that speak languages other than English. In February 2014, the collection contained 11 Spanish romance e-book title records, which increased by four items over the following two months. A German language romance e-book was added in March. While the WPLC digital library also contains materials in Arabic, Chinese, Czech, French, Greek, Hebrew, Italian, Japanese, Romanian, Russian, Swahili, and Swedish, there were no romance e-book titles found in those respective languages. The DL interface is in English and does not offer any options to change the interface to any other language. The advanced search tools provide access to the limited number of materials in languages other than English, yet access to this search tool is restricted by the tools’ exclusive English accessibility. The records that contain words or names in languages other than English are not consistently precise in their presentation. For example, the Latina author Caridad Piñeiro, a.k.a. Caridad Piñeiro Scordato, is listed as “Caridad Pineiro” and “Caridad Piñeiro,” neither record accurately representing the ñ in her name. These factors limit the accessibility for users that speak languages other than English or records for materials containing words or names in languages other than English.

At the February 2014 WPLC Digital Library Steering Committee Meeting, members agreed on the future discussion item “Multi language interface: Selecting titles in languages other than English” (Gold et al. “Steering Committee Minutes”). Improvement in this area might make the multilingual materials accessible to users that speak and read languages other than English.

The limited subject headings to classify materials within the WPLC digital library present barriers to accessing racially and ethnically diverse romance e-books. The researchers found an advanced search limited to subject headings “Multi-Cultural” and “Romance” returned zero titles between February and April 2014. The subject heading “Multi-Cultural” was not attached to any of the romance e-books within a particular section of the library, while digital materials such as e-books do not have such limitations. Additional subject headings might increase the accessibility of digital materials. For example, classifications of the Latina/o romance e-books subject headings were limited to Fiction, Romance, Suspense, Short Stories, Erotic Literature, Fantasy, and Western.

There is an invisibility of the range of racial and ethnic diversity represented within the DL collection that is a barrier to the accessibility of multicultural romance e-books.

**Implications**

**Access and general issues**

System usability is important in the discovery of and access to e-books. If a user is discouraged or disappointed with a search, it can lead to unsuccessful interactions with the system, leaving users unsatisfied (Xie 140). As stated earlier, accessing information from a DL can be challenging for users since some users are familiar with a traditional library of print books on shelves to browse titles (Lesk 204). This poses challenges for libraries to design an accessible system interface since there are many complexities to making digital items available and readily accessible for the online user (Van Riel, Fowler and Downes 244). Further research is needed to examine if the design of the WPLC digital library is a factor in current and potential users’ barriers to e-book access.

There can be additional accessibility issues that hinder users’ interactions with a system. These issues are not covered in the scope of this study, but are explained briefly here. Being a novice or expert user can determine the success a user experiences when searching in an online system. Users can have more difficulty finding or retrieving desired information if they have less experience with the system. In addition, a user’s information literacy or digital literacy skills can determine how well the user accesses materials within an online system. The fewer skills users have in understanding how to...
use a system, the less successful the interaction. Another possible issue is access at home due to lack of infrastructure or affordability. Internet access to online systems. If users have limited access to the Internet at home, they might rely on institutions, such as public libraries, to provide the access they need to find information.

Relationships between libraries and vendors

Publishers’ licensing agreements and commercial vendors’ policies limit the availability of e-books. In 2013, “half of the big six publishers did not allow their e-books to be licensed by public libraries” (Enis, “Library E-book Usage,” 5). This means that publishers' limitations on digital editions of titles might unexpectedly pull other titles from the collection. There are also limitations on the DL collection from commercial vendors. OverDrive allows independent authors to submit titles for inclusion in DLs only if they have at least ten titles available. If authors have fewer books, it is recommended they work with an aggregator who can represent the independent authors as a collective. WPLC digital library contracts with OverDrive to follow these policies. If a local author wishes to add an e-book to the collection, it must be made available to all OverDrive DLs in the US. This can be beneficial to authors since Zickuhr et al. explained that 41 percent of users who read a library e-book are more likely to purchase their most recent e-book. However, OverDrive's policies present independent authors barriers to making their works available.

Commercial vendors hold the control over DL interface design and subject heading maintenance, which limits libraries' system management. The vendors determine the options for e-book content and management systems for necessary or optional adoption by the contracted libraries. For example, in 2013, OverDrive announced its multilingual interface options in French Canadian, Simplified Chinese, and Spanish with plans to develop Japanese, Traditional Chinese, and additional language options. It was not possible for individual libraries to provide a multilingual interface before it was available through OverDrive. Additionally, libraries cannot customize the subject headings of their own DL collection records. The option to add or remove subject headings for specific titles through OverDrive is not possible, yet it is necessary for OverDrive to receive multiple recommendations for subject heading changes before making global changes to the record (OverDrive Partners). Collective groups of librarians, like ReadersFirst, work to improve users' e-book access and public library services by addressing barriers to access to e-books because of external issues related to publishing companies and commercial vendors.

Barriers

The greatest barrier to developing or expanding e-book collections has been lack of interest in some cases (Enis, “E-book Usage Survey” 3). Ashcroft mentioned how licensing and costs are issues that continue to be a problem in regards to library e-books (405). While financial constraints can leave libraries in a dilemma, multicultural fiction might not be considered a “special” acquisition, since these might be the first items omitted during budget cuts (Bostic 210). Multicultural fiction might be a constant component of libraries' offerings that requires careful selection and maintenance. A 2013 survey of public libraries reports 42 percent of Midwest libraries state they might purchase e-books, but it was not a priority (Enis, “E-book Usage Survey” 23). This data might foretell future barriers in regards to e-book collection development.

Selecting materials for a library collection involves the library, the library patrons, and an understanding of the literature available (Van Fleet 78). The WPLC Selection Committee is comprised of
libraries, divided into 24 selectors for adult materials and 10 selectors for young adult and children's materials (Gold et al. "Selection Committee"). According to the 2014 collection development policy, selectors refer to reviews in professional journals, lists of recommended or award-winning titles, and other selection resources to inform their decisions (Gold et al. "Collection Development Policy" 3). Similar to recommending books to library patrons, a librarian needs to have knowledge of the literature and know what appeals to the patrons. Talking to the patrons guides the policy and procedures in acquiring the content for the collection (Gold et al. "Collection Development Policy" 73). George Watson Cole points out that “the library is in existence by the grace of the public, and it is a duty to cater to all the classes that go towards making up the community in which it is original). Community interest, anticipated interest, individual requests and reports of satisfaction related to authors, titles, or subjects, are considered important to the WPLC selectors (Gold et al. “Collection Development Policy" 2). Libraries need to focus more attention on collaborative community assessments rather than library use studies alone, particularly to improve library services for racially and ethnically diverse communities (Bostic 217; Liu 131; McCleer 271). It is challenging for libraries to make an informed choice about collection development without knowing the interests, needs or concerns of the users (Ashcroft 399). Continued research needs to explore how the WPLC digital library conducts community assessment and analyses to inform their collection development.

With the popularity of the romance genre, more attention needs to be given to multicultural romance e-books. According to PEW in 2012, 56 percent of patrons specified that their library did not carry the e-book they wanted to borrow, which might be because the library (Zickuhr et al. “Libraries, Patrons and E-books.”). Moyer states libraries need to acquire different types of novels to give options to readers’ varied interests (230). Most romance readers enjoy (Bouricius 47), so varieties of romance novels are important. Authors’ availability and limited funds for multicultural romance fiction, acquisitions that present accurate representations of the diverse realities of individual readers taking care to recognize materials with subtle and overtly racist or discriminatory limitations relate to users and systems that are compounded by external barriers.

Future Research

This study reveals the current multicultural romance e-book titles' availability library. Some of the challenges to diminishing availability and accessibility can be addressed by the WPLC digital library. However, there are challenges presented by external sources: for example, the limited availability for the African American independent publishing house Genesis Press, Inc. can be a barrier for all romance e-books and for e-books from external sources for such challenges as well as opportunities for improvement. Interviews with WPLC librarians, particularly Selection Committee members, might provide further insight to the barriers to selecting and purchasing multicultural romance e-books for the DL.

The racially and ethnically diverse authors and book titles selected for this study were gleaned from a variety of romance websites, wikis, and books. Data analysis illustrates that some of the included authors might have only one or two titles that include characters of color or indigenous representations, which is why they are listed in the various websites, wikis, and book resources for multicultural romances. Further research methods need to refine this selection process by removing these outliers from the data sets. The book titles need to be explored, rather than the individual authors' comprehensive offerings in the DL. Selection in this study includes predominantly female authors. Future studies need to add male authors, such as African American authors Timmothy B. McCann, Colin Channer, Omar Tyree, Eric Jerome Dickey, Jervey Tervalon, E. Lynn Harris, Franklin White, and Van Whitfield (Cook 1; Rosen 38). Gay and Lesbian romance novels appeal not only to the homosexual reader but can also be of interest to heterosexual readers (Maas...
et al. “Gay and Lesbian Romance”). A search for “Gay/Lesbian” and “Romance” limited to e-books returns one title in the WPLC collection. Future studies need to specifically include the accessibility in romance e-books. Another search refinement needs to focus on how we (e.g., Brenda Jackson’s “Bachelors in Demand” series contains three out of t

An advanced search limited to the subject heading “Urban Fiction” resulted in 116 titles in February and increased by 13 titles over the following two months. Urban Fiction, also known as “Street Lit”, plots delving into the realities and culture of the characters. It is traditionally though there are also urban Latino fiction novels and it is branching out into for urban fiction narrowed by the [End Page 16] subject heading “Romance”. While some of these 20 titles were Black or African American romantic novels, not all urban fiction romance can be categorized as multicultural romance. Further research needs to focus on the...

Further studies of multicultural romance e-book accessibility needs to focus on browsing. In 2012, OverDrive reported that nearly 60 percent of readers read e-books instead of searching for specific titles, and romance is the most popular genre for browsing. Several items were added to the data sets because of the researchers' browsing, not an intentional research method. A study designed around browsing multicultural romance e-book availability and accessibility.

This exploratory study provides a snapshot of the multicultural romance e-book collection. Expanding studies in this DL can give area libraries a more comprehensive understanding of the WPLC multicultural romance e-book collection and identify specific areas that need attention. This exploratory study to include data over an entire year will establish a record of increases or decreases of multicultural romance e-books over a significant period. This data will be beneficial to other libraries and distinct racial and ethnic groups.

Conclusion

This exploratory study finds that the WPLC digital library provides a foundational collection of multicultural romance e-books, which presents a range of racial and ethnic perspectives and provides a general representation of the racial and ethnic demographics of Wisconsin. In 2010, a total of 15.5 percent of Wisconsin residents identified as Black or African American, Hispanic or Latina/o, Asian, and/or American Indian or Alaska Native, and 10.3 percent of the entire WPLC romance e-book collection were multicultural romance e-books. The findings do not precisely align with the specific racial and ethnic demographics of Wisconsin. The multicultural romance e-books in the WPLC digital library present an adequate number and range of formats, which is beneficial to users. The barriers to the accessibility of these items are related to language, subject headings, and system interface. Further research will explore the source of these barriers and opportunities for refinement. Overall, the WPLC has developed a solid foundation for fulfilling their mission to provide Wisconsin residents with access to a broad, current, and popular collection of electronically published materials in a wide range of subjects and formats. Continued development of the multicultural romance e-book collection will enhance their public library services to all of the 5.6 million Wisconsin residents with an interest in romance fiction. [End Page 17]

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Authors of romance fiction create vast economic capital but this does not necessarily lead to cultural capital. Libraries are collectors and endorsers of cultural capital evident through the selection of materials for library collections and the creation of metadata and metatexts to connect the cultural product to their user.

In this article, I will be focusing on print/physical book collections and I will examine how the practice of applying a generic “Romance” or “Mills & Boon” as the catalogue title for books on paperback display stands in libraries creates an absence of metadata which in turn prevents the interplay between cultural capital and economic capital. I explore this interplay by examining Australian cultural institutions, the readers’ advisory process and the way paratext and metadata are used as tools in cataloguing processes so as to facilitate the reader.

Matching a reader to a book is recognised as a core practice of public library work. In library practice this is referred to as readers’ advisory. “Every book has its reader” (Ranganathan 75) is the idea at the heart of Readers’ Advisory services which are user-centered. Joyce Saricks defines readers’ advisory as “patron-oriented library service for adult fiction readers. A successful readers’ advisory service is one in which knowledgeable, nonjudgmental staff help fiction readers with their reading needs” (Saricks and ebrary 2005, 1). Readers’ advisory staff work directly with their readers in delivering reading services.
suggestions but also in developing programs and marketing collateral such as posters and displays as well as taking part in staff training in understanding current reading trends, genre studies and service delivery. Amongst the various tools that readers’ advisory staff use to deliver the fiction that will deliver a satisfying service to the reader requesting assistance with their seeking of reading material. The catalogue, more so than any other reading aggregation tool, connects the user with the loan item that is held within the collection. If a book does not have a record in the catalogue, it is placed outside the resources that readers’ advisors can use. E-books remain outside of the scope of this paper as this is not a practice that extends to digital collections.

**Conceptual Framework**

Bourdieu explores the interrelationship between social, economic and cultural capital within fields and explores them in relation to the influence of power (Bourdieu 126). Cultural capital can be objectified, embodied and institutional. Objectified cultural capital is found in cultural objects and goods such as art, music and literature. Embodied cultural capital is knowledge, tastes and dispositions that are acquired through experiences in the context of home and family, work, community and society. Institutional capital is the capital that is recognised through official structures such as educational institutions. The bestowing of meaning on cultural objects is embodied through cultural capital—that is, the cultural capital that is created and promoted through educational and cultural institutions. Librarians engage in the creation of cultural capital through their practices of selection, cataloguing and promotion of texts deemed suitable for library collections. The authors of romance fiction create economic capital through the sales of their books. It is well documented that sales of romance fiction surpass all other fiction genres (Romance Writers of America; Ramsdell 2012, 15).

Bourdieu writes about the interdependency between the capitals: economic capital should lead to cultural capital and cultural capital to economic capital, but they are not fixed, rather they shift and are influenced by one another (Bourdieu 80). For example, “literary” fiction is bestowed cultural capital through institutional and library collections, thus leading to economic capital. Romance fiction can be commercially successful, yet it lacks cultural capital evidenced through the lack of collection (Curthoys and Docker 35; Flesch 12; Selinger 308; Ramsdell 1994, 64). Libraries are cultural intermediaries and library use “is accepted as a sign of cultural participation and an indicator of the production, dissemination and appropriation of various roles in society and are institutions of cultural capital. I will explore how cultural, social and economic capital co-exists and intersects in relation to libraries and romance fiction.

**Romance fiction and libraries**

Despite the significance of romance fiction in contemporary culture, as evidenced by sales figures that make it the most popular of all genres, writers and readers alike are routinely marginalized (Flesch 109; Brackett 347; Vivanco 114). This extends to public libraries, with incomplete catalogue records and unplanned acquisition practices.

In this paper, romance fiction refers specifically to category romance fiction defined as “works of the Mills & Boon type” (Vivanco 11). Juliet Flesch in *From Australia with Love* also limits her research to the books referred to as category fiction, that is, books published under a series imprint. In Australia, this has predominantly been Mills & Boon. She states that “a problem with the study of Australian popular romance, even if one excludes from consideration – as I have done – historical romances and longer contemporary novels, is the sheer volume of material” (Flesch 43).

Romance novels have yet to receive critical acceptance, which perhaps will extend to public libraries, with incomplete catalogue records and unplanned acquisition practices. There have been positive changes in the perception of romance writing, as well as the emergence of dedicated librarians who develop romance readers’ advisory tools and guides to reading, programs, selection guides and scholarship, through to the establishment of romance fiction review sections in.
In libraries, as Kristin Ramsdell has noted,

Romances tend to be haphazardly acquired (often through gifts), minimally catalogued and processed (if at all), randomly tossed onto revolving paperback racks, and weeded without thought of replacement (2012, 34).

This suggests that these books are not considered to possess cultural capital. Other examples of this bias abound. For example, in 2012 on the blog of Library Journal, a leading industry publication in the US, the blog’s Annoyed Librarian commented about readers, stating, “it’s also hard to feel sorry for customers who were duped into buying a ‘bad’ romance novel by a good review. After all, they’re all bad books. It’s not like people are reading romances for their literary quality” (Annoyed Librarian). To be clear, there was substantial backlash from practitioners in the comments on this blog post, but the authority remains with the industry-endorsed blogger regarding their Mills & Boon legal deposit collection is headed with “Who Library,” carrying a tone of incredulity rather than a tone of “here is an interesting collection” that other special collections are afforded in their description on the Behind the Scenes blog (Maguire). Richard Maker, in discussing the genre-centric approach, states that,

Most readers who like literary fiction are not primarily concerned with their tastes, therefore, the first category, ‘Literary Fiction’, overrides the selection of books by the reader the converse is also largely true. By definition the patron who prefers only Romance novels usually has a narrower reading range (175).

In libraries, cultural capital is recognized through practices such as cataloguing involves the description of a book or other item by its author and title and can include the assigning of subject headings. In Bourdieu’s terms (471) these practices have become “doxa”. In other instances these practices within the field of librarianship. Joyce Saricks identifies and discusses this library practice for paperbacks that are not catalogued other than with an accession date and barcode item. She states:

Why would you have a collection that you have no access to? The cost of adding them to the database must be far less than the staff time spent trying to find them, day after day, for patrons which may or may not be on the shelf, is exceedingly frustrating for both staff and patrons and the collection becomes less useful. Unfortunately, many administrators fail to calculate this on-going staff time when they decide not to put items in the database (Saricks 422).

Paperback romance fiction in the past was commonly added to library collections only through donations (Flesch 59), not through a thoughtful, deliberated selection process. Though this is no longer the case for all libraries, it is a practice that is still in place. Romance fiction is not afforded full catalogue records through budgetary constraints at the detriment of the library service to the reader yet romance fiction should be afforded the same treatment as other genres (Ramsdell, 2012 37).

Cataloguing and the Interplay between Paratexts and Metadata

To understand the basis of library cataloguing practices and the creation of catalogue records conceptually, it is important to explore the levels of access to a cultural object, in particular, paratext. Gerard Genette in Thresholds of Interpretation describes paratext as the material that is at the threshold of the text (2): that is, all the art, acknowledgements, prefaces, covers, advertising, distribution and intertexts
team (publisher, author, designer) of a text. Genette says that without the paratext, the reader cannot access any of the text (Genette and Maclean 261). Paratext has two elements. Epitext are the items that are attached to the actual codex, such as the cover art, blurbs, title, author and publisher information, index and contents pages. Peritext are the collateral that promotes the text, that is, author interviews, marketing and publicity materials. Genette shows how liminal devices and conventions, both within and outside the book, form part of the complex mediation between book, author, publisher, and reader.

A text also has metatextualities: that is, the metatext, which is the data and text by users outside of the text’s creative team. “All literary critics, for centuries, have been producing metatext without knowing” (Genette xix). Metatext is created by people such as literary critics, for example, is metatext; it cannot be controlled by the creative team threshold. This is not to say that there is no communication between the paratextual team and the developers of metatext. Publishers send information to national libraries to consult on the Cataloguing-in-Publication (CIP) record and publishers send reviewers and critics copies of their books. CIP is a catalogue record that receive title pages, author names, blurbs and a synopsis of the book sent by the publisher can be hard to disregard as it carries authority (Genette 339). All part of a novel’s metatext as is a library catalogue record which is a Metadata is structured data that supports the function of its object or text (Greenberg 1876).

Here, the concern is with the creation of a cataloguing record as metatext. Database administrators make high-level decisions on the information that is made available for both the end users (readers) and the intermediary (librarian), helping the reader access the text upon by third parties (cataloguers), unlike metadata that is generated by the creator. Cataloguers tags their work with subject headings that are either preset or chosen. Metadata is an instrumental part of a reader and a librarian accessing the text in catalogues, which subsequently are used in readers’ advisory and reference services. Paratextuality and Classification, describes the cataloguing process as belonging to the paratext. Librarians, and more precisely, cataloguers, are not part of the creative process. Instead they are third parties in the selection of descriptors to be assigned to a book (Paling 134). In this process, they create access to the cultural object, thus enhancing its cultural capital. Cataloguers are professional metadata creators because they make “sophisticated interpretative metadata-related decisions” so as to classify and give value laden attributions to content created by others (Greenberg 1882). Raymond Williams in his discussion of culture notes that, “we need to consider every attachment, every value, with our whole attention; for we do not know the future, we can never be certain of what may enrich it” (363). This is particularly true for cataloguers who are creating the attachments that bring the reader to the text. The guiding ideology for cataloguing since the late nineteenth century has been based on Cutter’s principle of user convenience in which “the convenience of the user must be put before the ease of the cataloguer” (Caplan and ebrary 54). Cataloguers are attributed with the ability to decide upon interests and values that need to be attached to a text they have received, whether through legal deposit requirements or through the CIP scheme available to authors.

Third-party metadata is also created for items that have been selected for a library collection through outsourcing, for example, by library suppliers and not by the library staff themselves—though they would have been responsible for giving cataloguing instructions to the supplier (Edmonds 125). This metadata needs to be enriched so as to enable other library service provisions, particularly in reference and readers’ advisory services. The cataloguing decisions of a public library, whether it is in a local council, district, county or shire, differ greatly from the role of a cataloguer in a national or state library, which may indeed have a more open line of communication with the publisher. Using CIP data, cataloguers select suitable subject headings to add to the book’s paratext, i.e., the verso of the title page. Occasionally, a publisher may request for a change of subject headings but this depends on the awareness of the author and/or publisher.
Catalogue records exist on national bibliographic databases for published books due to a number of accepted practices between publishers and national libraries including CIP, legal deposit requirements, and International Standard Book Number requests which assign a unique number to books. This core level metadata is made available for public and local libraries to download through copy cataloguing practices and for readers to search, either through their own national libraries or through WorldCat—a collaborative database allowing a federated search of subscribing libraries and booksellers across the world through the one portal. Many libraries rely heavily on copy cataloguing and preexisting catalogue records can be obtained and local modifications can then be made to the record (Caplan and ebrary 57).

The catalogue record not only contributes to the creation of cultural capital; in Australia it contributes to the development of economic capital. The metadata entered into a local library management system is not only utilised for connecting a reader to a text and for staff to create resource lists, displays and programs but, just as importantly, it is used as a system for administering and managing resources including copyright, digitisation schemes and payment schemes such as the public lending right. The Australian Ministry for the Arts describes Public Lending Rights (and Educational Lending Rights) as:

Cultural programs which make payments to eligible Australian creators is lost through the free multiple use of their books in public and educational libraries. PLR and ELR also support the enrichment of Australian culture by encouraging the growth of cultural programs (Public Lending Right Committee).

Public Lending Right is a program with which authors receive economic support by cultural institutions. That endorsement comes from the borrowings of that item. Thus, it can be seen that it is not just the cultural and economic capitals. As Pecoskie states, although the book itself is central to what she calls “the informational sphere”, following Genette and Bourdieu, it is other elements including the cataloguing record that create the links between writers and “cultural agents (including libraries)” and consequently between cultural and economic capitals (Pecoskie and Desrochers 232).

It is the metadata connected to books that is instrumental in connecting institutionalised economic capital. The catalogue record is the form of metaendorse the text that is waiting to be discovered. In the absence of any But that text cannot be discovered if the metadata does not exist. Paratextual conventions serve a functional and informational purpose as they are the access point for information (Pecoskie and Desrochers 236). These are reader appeal factors (Saricks and ebrary 2009, 40) that connect works across genres. Pecoskie writes, “Libraries can capitalize on the documented information regarding award nominations and prizes won […] in order to bring together titles that may have similar characteristics – or, to speak in cultural terms, have been deemed worthy by the application of similar criteria” (236). If there is no cataloguing record for romance fiction, there is no starting point for adding other elements of paratext, such as award status or best seller listings. If libraries do not produce metadata for romance fiction, books cannot be found as the result of a catalogue search, and they remain invisible to the readers’ advisory team and to readers. Thus, within the cultural institution of the library, their cultural capital does not increase through borrowing. And even if the books are borrowed, the lack of cataloguing records means that the borrowing of the particular book is not recorded. The loan is recorded only as a generic item. This in turn, through Public Lending Right, affects the creation of economic capital, because there is no evidence on which to base payments to these authors whose works are held in the public library.

Evidence of practice
Cataloguing records are used as the basis for recording loans of books. As all paperbacks are often not catalogued with a full author and title entry. Instead “Paperbacks” and then an accession number is given for each item that is attached in every public library, has grown out of the resistance to paperbacks (Mosher 3). Paperbacks were seen as quick reads, disposable and many libraries choose to keep them physically separated from their hardback fiction collections as well as giving them base level accessioning.

This practice, then, identifies each book only by a number. It is no longer seen as having been created by an author; the book becomes detached from its creator. It is also detached from its title. By removing not only the author but the title and all other paratextual and metatextual elements that connect the book with its creator and its title, it is no longer seen to have been created by an author; the book becomes detached from its creator (Barthes 55). Romance fiction is a genre where name recognition is very important (Proctor 16) as readers often read an author’s oeuvre rather than a single title. In the library context, an author has to be acknowledged as it is often the most authoritative and effective way of accessing their body of work. In creative practice, Australian authors of romance fiction are aware that this practice is impacting their visibility (Veros 302).

Evidenced below are library catalogue records which show this practice. Each title has listed the number of copies attached:

![Fig 1. 'Mills and Boon 2013': Catalogue record/retrieved 13 April, 2014](image)

A detailed display of the items in this record shows only the collection, shelf number and availability status of the copies:
This practice is not confined simply to romance fiction, but to other paperbacks such as thrillers, westerns and Science Fiction as well, as the following example shows:

These collections are rendered even more unsearchable through the use of unnatural language for their titles. xxGeneral, xxRomance, xxPaperbacks are terms that readers will not search for when they are accessing the library catalogue. This practice, however, sometimes leads to unexpected consequences. Public library collection management systems are being updated to include features which promote the most popular items in the library catalogue. A letter received recently shows how the practices which were intended to show that an item was no longer an integral part of a library collection actually led unintentionally to the creation of cultural capital in a different way.
When we installed a new LMS in 2010 it had a few new features that we didn't have in our old system. Most obvious was the box on the main catalogue search screen called 'What are others are reading' this box displayed the Hottest Title, Hottest Author and Hottest Subject as a teaser for readers. Our library's hottest title was established – Mills & Boon. It made the list and stayed there for months. This upset certain staff, including our manager, as they would have preferred to see ‘real’ books listed (personal communication).

The letter went on to explain that the IT team discovered that the one title kept showing up as there were large numbers of items attached to the one record.

Since they weren’t ‘real’ books that also meant they didn’t need a title, a single Mills & Boon we received was added to that single record – for decades. You could borrow them but you certainly couldn’t search for them as we had no idea what titles we actually had. And people did – Mills & Boon books are one of our highest turnover items and was a clear winner in terms of loans (personal communication).

The concern of the manager and other staff was that they didn’t want their library web page to show that “Mills & Boon” was their highest loaned item as they wanted a variety of titles showing up on the “Hottest Title” lists. The issue was finally resolved by ‘blocking’ that record from the display list so ‘real’ book titles could be displayed. There was (and still is) great resistance to actually cataloguing individual Mills & Boon titles (personal communication).

This example shows clearly that library practices are intended to minimise cultural capital from category romance fiction. The consequent impact on economic capital for the authors does not seem to have been considered.

**Conclusion and implications**

This paper has shown that the cataloguing practices in some Australian public libraries do hinder the interplay between cultural capital and economic capital. The impacts of cataloguing practices, which may in the first instance appear to be a cost-saving measure within the library, can be costly in terms of lack of opportunity for the reader. Further, the practices can diminish the case that public libraries can make for the use of the services they provide. Circulation figures are often used as a justification for funding from their parent organisations and collections of paperback category romance fiction are highly borrowed and even a partial author/title entry into a library catalogue remain invisible accesses collections by being physically present in the library and discovery may have been suitable in the twentieth century when the only access to collections was through the internet. People make their reading choices from browsing the catalogue thus necessitating the Library of Congress to expand subject headings to allow for fiction titles (Saricks and ebrary 2005, 8).

As Intner and Weihs indicate, when a library makes a decision to diverge from standard practices, “no visit from the Catalog Police to the agency will ensue” (Intner and Weihs 11). However, changes to cataloguing practices tend to be formulated through a mixture of “peer pressure, institutional culture and what is acceptable within that institutional culture” (Adkins et al. 65). While peer pressure is slowly bringing about change, it is still the case that the very common form of catalogue entry, which is one record with many attached items, lacks meaningful metadata. Thus it is that category romance is rendered unsearchable through the library catalogue. Non-existent metadata leaves no cultural imprint.
in institutional collections for scholars and archivists and the public to Australian society. [End Page 10] Cataloguing of literary fiction, which is comprehensive, yet romance fiction is not catalogued to the same level (Veros 301). This has consequences for systems of institutional payments such as Public Lending Rights: books that remain un catalogued results in libraries inadvertently withhold payment from eligible authors. In other words, these items do not have institutional recognition from libraries for their institutional role as publishers.

“[A] group’s presence or absence in the official classification depends on whether it is noticed and admitted, and so to win a place in the social order” (Bourdieu 483). Category romance fiction do not yet have a place in the social order regarding implications for practice and suggests the need for further research. From a practice perspective, the lack of recorded metadata for certain types of cultural objects in a public library borders on censorship. The lack of cataloguing record leads to those cultural objects becoming invisible within the constraints of the institution. This can be seen as a form of censorship, because readers’ advisors are unable to meet the reading need use alternative places to find the reading they enjoy, for in their use of the catalogue, the books they would like to read are hidden from them. Further, the lack of metadata for paperbacks in general may be assigned to the same cultural objects now available in electronic form.

This analysis of the role of cataloguing records in the interplay between cultural capital and economic capital has shown that there is a need for further research, at least in two areas. The first is the significance for metadata and paratext in the creation of cultural capital in other forms of popular fiction, including user-generated content such as fan fiction. The second is the importance in economic and cultural terms of the inadvertent withholding of Public Lending Right payments to authors of category romance and other categories of cultural objects within libraries. [End Page 11]

Works Cited


Annoyed Librarian. “Rage, Rage Against the Amazon Reviewers.” Library Journal


Teaching an Old Dog New Tricks?: Romance, Ethics and Human-Dog Relationships in a Rural Australian Novel by Lauren O’Mahony

October 24th, 2014 |

If he is not to stifle his human feelings, he must practise kindness towards animals, for he who is cruel to animals becomes hard also in his dealings with men. We can judge the heart of a man by his treatment of animals.

-Immanuel Kant

In the Australian cultural imagination, men have been the dominant participants in the cultural representations of rural or remote life. While men have “battled” against the land “as an object to be mastered and controlled” (Schaffer xiv), women have often slid into the recesses of country life and its representation; either they have been absent from depictions of rural life or boxed into stereotypical roles such as that of “farm wife”. [1] A short story by acclaimed Australian poet Henry Lawson goes so far as to state, “They blamed me, but I didn’t want her to come; [the bush] was no place for a woman” (As quoted in Schaffer 194). [2] While Lawson may be read as being glib for trying to rhyme “I didn’t want her to come” with “no place for a woman”, his quote reflects a common historical assumption that women are incompatible with or in need of protection from Australia’s rural environment. [3] Although such a sentiment stains the reality and depictions of rural Australian life, a recent flurry of representations of women as active participants and contributors in rural settings has appeared on screen and in print. The television program McLeod’s Daughters (2001-2009) is perhaps the best known contemporary depiction of women running farming properties and working the land, however the genre of mainstream Australian rural romantic fiction is where some of the most exciting and progressive representations of rural women are emerging.

The contemporary rural romance is a publishing phenomenon of the new millennium. As reviewer Carol George notes, the appeal of the genre is strong enough for some readers that, “By the end of them you yearn for a ute, a pair of boots and wide open spaces” (As quoted in Dunbabin 4). The genre arguably emerged...
Jillaroo (2002) which has reportedly sold more than 100,000 copies (“Steamed Up” 39). Treasure is now regarded as the “queen” of Australian rural romance,[6] a genre that now includes authors such as Nicole Alexander, Karly Lane, Fiona Palmer and Fleur McDonald. The genre’s success is evidenced in the dramatic growth in book sales from 56,609 in 2004 to 138,261 in 2010 (“Steamed Up”39). The rural romance’s appeal to readers must be partly attributed to the fact that it is at times gritty and others romanticised. While other sub-genres of romance are bound to its context where animals appear as products for meat, fleece and breeding or to assist in the day to day workings of farms and stations, the rural romance is bound to its context where animals and the environment are vital to financial success and survival and contentment. As this paper argues, rural romances are also interesting in their use of romance plots to represent heroines battling for their “place” in rural life.

This essay textually analyses Rachael Treasure’s novel Jillaroo (2002) with a focus on the interconnectivity between the romance narrative, human-dog relationships (especially between heroine Rebecca Saunders and her kelpies) and understandings of ethical behaviour. I argue that dogs play an intrinsic role in the heroine’s life and work, in the development and delay of the romance with her hero, Charlie Lewis, and ultimately in the resolution. Firstly, I apply Pamela Regis’s theory of the romance novel including her definition, three social trends that shape the construction of romance heroines and the essential romantic elements. I do so to understand Jillaroo’s freedom. More than just the heroine’s freedom is at stake because the community and environment, including the animal stakeholders, depend on the heroine overcoming impediments to her quest and her romance so that all can share the happy ending. Secondly, I examine the role of kelpies in the construction of Rebecca’s gender identity. Her dogs enable her to navigate highly masculine spaces in the rural setting and subsequently transmit her specialised knowledge of kelpie breeding and training to men. Rebecca and her dogs challenge the hermetic seal of these spaces as closed to women and as sites where hegemonic masculinity is cultivated and reinforced. Thirdly, I describe the relationships between the central male characters and dogs. Symbolically, dogs are employed to indicate the mental health and “interspecies competence” (Fudge 11) of central male characters, namely the hero Charlie and Rebecca’s father Harry Saunders. These male-dog relationships reflect Kant’s admonition that how a man treats animals determines the health of his heart. Overall, I argue that Jillaroo emphasises certain ethical behaviours to readers via its romance plots to represent intraspecies competence between rural men and women and reflects on “interspecies competence” between humans and animals, particularly through the heroine’s quest and her relationship with working dogs.

Dogs, Romance, Ethics and the Rural

In Jillaroo, the elements of romance, the presence of dogs and notions of what constitutes ethical behaviour are firmly bound together. Jillaroo, the quintessential Australian contemporary rural romance, spans ten years in the life of its heroine, her family and their farm, Waters Meeting. Eighteen year old Rebecca Saunders wishes to take control of the property from her father and restore it to its former glory via sustainable practices and natural husbandry methods, including those she has used to train her dogs. However her father, Harry, believes that a woman’s place in rural Australia is as a wife, mother and worker in an off-farm occupation such as nursing or teaching. For Harry, farms are controlled by men through patrilineal inheritance from father to son representing a narrow, though terrifyingly common, view of rural women.[8] However, Rebecca grew up with a superwoman mother who raised three children while working full-time as a vet and a grandfather who taught her how to farm by reading the landscape and working with animals rather than only working them. Thus, Rebecca grew farming abilities or in developing her ‘natural’ instinct with animals and the land, the family and himself, the hubristic patriarch. Determined to succeed her father, Rebecca realises she needs experience and qualifications to convince Harry of her capabilities and prepare for the immense task of restoring the farm. The narrative spans her quest to restore Waters Meeting alongside her romantic relationship with the likable hero,
Charlie Lewis. Through her quest, Rebecca, with the help of her kelpies, challenges traditional expectations of rural women, subsequently becoming a heroine for every country girl who dreamed of doing more than standing on the fence watching the men.

*Jillaroo* is a novel primarily about the pursuit of freedom at a narrative and representational level. At the narrative level, in following Pamela Regis’s approach to romance in *A Natural History of the Romance Novel* over eight elements (the society defined, meeting, declaration, attraction, barriers, point of ritual death, recognition, betrothal) which eventually enable their union. Regis defines romance as “a work of prose fiction that tells the story of the courtship and betrothal of one or more heroines” (Regis 19). She asserts that eight elements are essential to all romances: society defined, meeting, declaration, attraction, barriers, point of ritual death, recognition, betrothal. The eight elements form part of Regis’s defence of the genre against critics, including feminists, who argue that romance prolongs the enslavement and bondage of women (Regis 3-4). Instead, Regis conveys the pain, uplift, and joy that freedom brings” (Regis xiii). To demonstrate how readers experience joy, Regis proposes the eight essential elements which together span the entirety of a work. While it is impossible to analyse every narrative detail, Regis’s key elements support the notion that heroines change and grow, often for the better, by novel’s end. Her theory enables a reading position that accounts for the complex transformations of heroines and issues over a narrative rather than isolated in single scenes. In *Charlie’s* romance is central to the story, three key elements, the society defined, point of ritual death and barriers reveal much about the gender, animal and environmental rights in this context. As I argue, Regis’s first romantic element, the “society defined”, indicates the “flawed”, “incomplete”, “superannuated” or “corrupt” attributes of the context in which the courtship occurs (Regis 31). The relationship between humans and dogs symbolically assists in defining this society, one dominated by hegemonic masculinity. In *Charlie’s* first chapter, dogs establish a binary between Rebecca and her father, Harry. Rebecca is introduced as she musters a herd of working dogs, her father advises her to “do a teaching or nursing course, then...marry a nice farmer who isn’t up to his neck in debt or paying his way out of a bloody divorce” (Treasure 7). While no legal impediment prevents her running or owning the farm, she is impeded by social and cultural mores. For the third social trend, Rebecca believes in companionate marriage, particularly that she will find a partner who shares her love for the land, animals, community involvement and is willing to work equally alongside her. While a contemporary heroine should automatically have the right to property, Australian rural society, particularly represented by her patriarchal father, restricts her appropriation of this right. The tension over Rebecca’s desire to run Waters Meeting and the outdated understandings of women’s “place” in rural life clearly colours the romantic elements and their progression towards freedom.

The relationship between the heroine and her dogs plays a key role in both her romance, her construction as a rural heroine and the novel’s wider meditation on the ethical treatment of others. I now wish to read the novel through Regis’s elements of romance to determine the role her “crew” of dogs play in the progression towards freedom. Regis’s first romantic element, the “society defined”, indicates the “flawed”, “incomplete”, “superannuated” or “corrupt” attributes of the context in which the courtship occurs (Regis 31). The relationship between humans and dogs symbolically assists in defining this society, one dominated by hegemonic masculinity. In *Charlie’s* first chapter, dogs establish a binary between Rebecca and her father, Harry. I now wish to read the novel through Regis’s elements of romance to determine the role her “crew” of dogs play in the progression towards freedom.
sheep with her “little kelpie”, Mossy (3). To manoeuvre Mossy, Rebecca “whistled to her dog” and told her to “go way back” almost “motionless” (3). Even a reader with little first-hand experience of ke and working dog results from extensive training and a strong mutual rapport a pen, this scene is broken by an “outburst of barking and the rush of hoove” “[h]is crew of motley dogs [who] were working in a pack, singling out a single went” (5). Rebecca’s Mossy struggles to keep the sheep together while Harr up one of his dogs by the collar to discipline him where, “The young pup lollled to the side of his mouth as he panted. So keen to work, Mardy was ob] action indicates Harry’s excessive force alongside the dog’s inadequate trait sheep it is ignorant of being strangled. These initial human-dog relationship is clearly more capable and knowledgeable in this context and disidentify w Michel Foucault’s understanding of governance in The Hermeneutics of the Subject the “exercise of power” where, “One cannot govern others, one cannot g privileges into political action on others, in rational action, if one is not c] ability to control his dogs or his own actions suggests t knowledge while implying his inability to govern or run the farm effectively.

The narrative further demonstrates the “flawed” and “corrupt” aspects of t and human-human interactions. The scene with the dogs foreshadows a where she expresses her wish to devote herself to sorting out the “m mismanagement. Flashbacks from Rebecca’s point of view reveal that she had taught her about “the world around her, about the animals and the tr dog” (9). The memory contrasts her relationships with her father and grand being there” (9) or teaching her farming practices. She traces his withdraw: the land that he never seemed to grasp even after years of farming” (10). E “world of her dogs”:

She trained them, loved them, talked to them, studied them. She peered their souls. Her dogs were a way of escaping her father’s seething under her love” (10-11).

This play on presence and absence in her relationships with male authority of the land and dogs assists in positioning the reader’s sympathies while em to stem from historically entrenched gender inequality represented t immediately rejects Rebecca’s offer to help restore the land telling her ther injury, he cruelly tells her he never wanted her as a child, particularly as a g (10) dogs unless she immediately leaves. Rebecca warns him that he risks “I against her dogs can be read as a metaphor for the status of women in this construction of a history of animals, links discussions of animal rights to tl who think about animal welfare can be seen as considering “their own d representation of the human; it is not, paradoxically, a dog” (7). Fudge’s o prevent Harry physically hurting Rebecca, the close relationship she has v almost a part or extension of her, means that the threat to the dogs is literal her swag, clip her three dogs to her ute and leave in a self-imposed exile. Th Rebecca faces locally as well as the context’s larger structural inequalities, m Although Rebecca’s dogs are pivotal in constructing the problems of the romantic relationship with Charlie Lewis. Once Rebecca departs from Water
a jillaroo and she later meets Charlie. It is important to note that dogs are absent from the initial scene where Charlie and Rebecca meet. Jillaroo's meeting, attraction and declaration scenes extract Rebecca and Charlie from their daily lives through Regis's optional romantic element, the wedding celebration, “inclusion” and community engagement (Regis 38) removing boys and sometimes feral, event. They meet late that evening after Rebecca has consumed numerous drinks. She stumbles across a naked Charlie Lewis who is performing a daring, drunken stunt. The narrator describes the meeting from Rebecca's viewpoint:

Bec looked up and saw in a halo of light against the night sky a naked young man. He was wearing a red plastic bucket on his head and standing on top of the guttering. The light cast s had been there, Bec thought, she would’ve said out loud, ‘He’s got a big through her. He had a damn good body (80).

Charlie then launches himself from the roof in a shopping trolley, crashing think I love you” (81) before introducing himself. Charlie’s friends carry him speak properly. In this single scene, Rebecca and Charlie meet, express their and Charlie drunkenly declares his love. The next day they have a fleeting intense combination of these three romantic elements (meeting, attraction) before they must return to their normal lives. The absence of Rebecca’s do only, allowing Rebecca to experience her attraction to Charlie alone, untaint

While her dogs are absent from the initial meeting scene, they play a much. The narrator reinforces the couple’s mutual attraction once they separate barrier as Rebecca returns to jillarooing on Blue Plains station and Charlie t intensity, progress towards a longer term relationship is slow and complicate view reveals Rebecca’s fantasies where she “dreamed of the river kiss” (9: a big John Deere [tractor]. Naked” (92) or how Charlie remembers Rebecca their attraction occurs when Rebecca believes herself to be “in lerv” (origin a girl with blonde hair, the bluest of eyes and a cheeky grin” (209). The simila mutual and companionate. Rebecca’s work on Blue Plains sees her travelling; These trips enable Rebecca to enter her young kelpie “Dags” in dog tri instructed by its owner via voice and body language to herd sheep into a p dog trialling requires a dog with “keenness tempered with pliability [and] while still retaining the desire to work” (Parsons 74-75). Similar to the novel herd the sheep, Rebecca’s participation in the dog trials demonstrates the many dog trials, Rebecca’s first trophy win happens the day Charlie Leon congratulatory comments to Rebecca reinforce their mutual attraction as while simultaneously enabling Dags to meet and respond to Charlie. Althou will “make a good dunny-roll holder” (154), Dags “relishes the attention” frc his ears, leading the dog to “lean…his body against Charlie’s leg, wagging hi and her own attraction to Charlie by saying, “He likes you. He only c enthusiastic interaction with Dags serves as a foil to Harry’s earlier treat encounter between Rebecca and Charlie is brief, it indicates his suitability as together in the future. Because dogs are so important in Rebecca’s life, it i non-violent relationship to them also.

As Rebecca and Charlie’s relationship develops, dogs play a more central rc depart from Blue Plains to attend agricultural college. She manages to arr
Dogs become a point of conflict and a comfort as new barriers emerge to they are together mid-way through the novel, of course Rebecca still has no Meeting from Harry, start the much needed restoration and exert an ethical change their behaviour for the better. Charlie and Rebecca’s fairly carefree and external barriers emerge that stymie their romance. When college fins an external barrier to their relationship. Although Rebecca now has the exp Waters Meeting, her father still blocks her return. With no other choice, cropping farm. Rebecca is horrified to discover it is flat, animalless, river sinister” artificial waterways (340). There the romantic relationship frays un parents. Charlie’s father refuses to employ Rebecca, believing similarly to her own father than she should be a homemaker and machines first (328). During the time on the Lewis farm, Charlie and R inability to build the dogs a serious home or obtain sheep for Rebecca to dogs become a confidante (310) and a comfort, Dags, “push[ing] a wet n barrier becomes her need to be honest about her relationship with Charlie a kissed in the river not the muted man incapable of speaking up around his f Waters Meeting also build against the relationship. Until they are resolved, together, the society cannot be reformed and the reader cannot feel the reli

The internal and external barriers eventually accumulate in “the point moment...when the union between the heroine and hero, the hoped-for 35). This element includes mainly figurative or symbolic death, but can provide loyal companionship and reliable working partners to numerous c ritual death scene. Symbolic and actual deaths build from the beginning Rebecca’s parents Harry and Frankie, Rebecca’s exile from her home and envelopes Waters Meeting. The farm’s ongoing failure and increasingly stra Mick and his wife Trudy also flee the property. Like Rebecca and Frankie be away from the “now-stooping” (231) Harry. The day they leave, Har
emotionally onto Tom (Rebecca’s brother), the only human member of the family homestead with his horse and dog Bessie. Tom only has sparse communication with Tom at this time, telling him she has a message. The sense of death intensifies as Harry turns to alcohol and suffers depression that “settle[d] over [him] like a black cloud” (254). The family’s departure and Harry’s alcoholism sees Tom “in the outside world” (254). Tom journeys from hut to farmhouse leaving food for Harry, feeding the remaining animals and paying the bills; the narrator observes that the farm, “now in the dry, […] looked barren and heartless” (253). When Tom attends his mother’s city wedding, another optional romantic element according to Regis, which should be a happy occasion, Rebecca observes, “how his shoulders sloped downwards and frame” (278). Drunkenly, Tom creates a scene, telling Rebecca:

The waters haven’t met in over a year—both rivers have run dry! There’s my lonely old horse, and Dad’s shot all the dogs. Didn’t even bury the bastards to rot (281).

In Tom’s desperate words, readers sense the encirclement of death around the farm. Tom’s words reveal the life ebbing from the river juxtaposed with the more disturbing images of “starving stock”, the animals bearing the burden of human and natural folly. Tom’s words act as a circuit breaker for Harry to transform himself and his world view. He swears off alcohol and starts restoring the farm (315),

While Regis argues that symbolic or literal representations of death are essential to romance, existentially real death is perhaps best explained by the rural setting where death is a reality of daily life. Christoph Armbruster notes how some Australian literature turns to the morbid realities of contemporary rural life linked to existential realities such as death, despair, meaninglessness, denial of agency and belonging (Armbruster 128-150). Armbruster’s comments particularly resonate with Tom and Harry’s situation on Waters Meeting. Powerless to stop the farm’s deterioration, his father’s alcoholism and his own mental decline, Tom leaves groceries on his father’s car bonnet and scrawls a message in “red raddle” (287): “Will this make you see, dad?” (287) before hanging himself as one might hang a meat carcass. Tom’s dog Bessie alerts Harry to Tom’s suicide by first whining at the homestead’s back door, “leap[ing] over the gate [and] disappearing into the garage” (286). Bessie then sits noticing that Tom has left him a box of groceries, a last desperate gesture of care towards his father, and hung a side of lamb from the beams. Criticising Tom in a drunken slur for not using the “killing shed” (287), Harry’s closer inspection reveals it is not a side of lamb, but Tom’s body. Harry cannot contain his shock and fear of the situation, screaming and fleeing the garage into the house. Yet, it is Tom’s loyal animal companions that stay with him even in death; Bessie sits at Tom’s feet and his horse Hank strolls into the garage then also rests near the body. While Harry cannot fathom the immediate horrors of Tom’s death, Bessie and Hank stay nearby, mourning in their own animalistic way, unperturbed by the inert body. Tom’s death is the extreme point of ritual death where a happy ending is jeopardised because although Rebecca is strong, she, like most romance heroines, as Regis suggests, Rebecca’s grief creates uncertainty that she can ever be free to complete her quest or establish a permanent relationship with Charlie.

While Tom’s death sends Rebecca into a deep depression initially, it also ignites a chain of recognitions towards the romantic resolution. Although Regis argues that heroines are central to recognition scenes (Regis 36-37) in [jillaroo], Harry begins the series of recognitions that ultimately lead to the resolution for Harry to transform himself and his world view. He swears
seeking help from Landcare to better manage the river vegetation and reallocate cattle (335) thereby indicating a changed attitude to the environment, the animal even recognises Rebecca for who she really is: someone capable of healing. Before he has a chance to ask her, he loses an arm in a machinery accident, chance to speak to her when she visits him in hospital. Harry apologises an Harry’s accident and changed attitude is perfectly timed for Rebecca who do of the mountains” at Waters Meeting (340). When she and Charlie arrive b immediately apparent. From Rebecca’s perspective the whole farm appears determined to stay and put her new experience and knowledge into e pessimistically telling her “It’ll take a lifetime to fix this mess” (393). Rebecca he dismisses the idea of helping her because he refuses to “drop everyth “Charlie, you don’t have anything at home. Your dad controls it all and you Rebecca defends her decision to stay at Waters Meeting and never leave again saying: 

You’re just like all the other bastards! You think I don’t have a right to w you do! You’re entitled to your bit of flat, chemical-and-salt-infected di destocked bit of mountain country. Don’t you stand there and tell me that chance to fight for this place…I’m entitled to it! (396).

Rebecca’s determination to stay at Waters Meeting is threatened by Cha singlehandedly and accuses her of choosing her father and farm over him. It his intention to ask her to marry him; yet the cost of his love is that he wa Rebecca rejects his proposal which subsequently causes Charlie’s departure momentarily end, an elongation of the ritual death element. Her dogs are face” (397) in her moment of devastated rage. Furious at the situation she de pines that surround the Waters Meeting homestead. The dogs, normally c away and sat at the back door looking fearful” (398). The romance and happ Rebecca and her crew of dogs have returned home.

The novel delays the full romantic resolution by first emphasising Rebecca's some help from her family, Rebecca exerts most of the effort needed to re bank...would crush her” (439) until eventually she turns the farm’s debt i turn, to be a romance, the narrative must resolve her tumultuous relations “betrothal.” As Rebecca repairs the farm through sustainable managem view remains with her revealing her and Charlie’s mutual longing for each o and then suddenly stopped” (440). Rebecca assumes he has met someone e her rural advisor urges her to hire an irrigation and plant-cropping mana take time to rest. Coincidently, Charlie has become desperate to leave his miss[ing] her dogs” (461). He sees an article about Rebecca in a glossy m dogs. After absorbing the article and pictures recounting her successes, he Meeting. When he applies for the job, it creates the opportunity for a roman Rebecca in a cropping and irrigation role creates the recognition that C Meeting.

The presence of animals is sustained into the final idyllic images of the no and Charlie are swimming in the Rebecca River, playing and splashing toget into the paddock with its new irrigator and lucerne crop. Charlie turns the image of them together, “[t]hen Rebecca pulled Charlie down into a soft f foot of the mountains. Waters Meeting. Their place” (468). While dogs
unwavering presence throughout the novel leads readers to assume their involvement in the final scene. Their absence may indicate, like Rebecca and Charlie’s original meeting, the sense that a focus on the couple only is needed in this final scene.

Although Rebecca and Charlie do not marry, readers are positioned to believe they have an enduring love, providing the certainties of resolution.

What is important in this final chapter is the ethical positioning of the characters and reader. Through the successful completion of her quest and her “betrothal”, the narrative explores the relationships between humans, animals and the environment, particularly those that are non-violent, organic and companionate. The endorsement of such values and the positioning of the reader to identify with the heroine who displays them imparts a powerful lesson about the ethical treatment of others.

**Gender, Dogs and “The Health of Man’s Heart”**

While dogs are integral to Rebecca and Charlie’s romantic story, the relationship between dogs and the heroine plays an important part in allowing her to navigate the patriarchal rural context and challenge stereotypes about what rural women can do and where they can go.

Before I describe how Rebecca’s toughness, with the help of her working dogs, enables her to disrupt the patriarchal spaces in the setting, it is worth outlining Sherrie Inness’s theory of tough women and girls.

Inness argues that toughness is usually associated with men and masculinity where the historical connection between men and toughness encourages the perception of men as the ‘real’ heroes and leaders in our culture. Popular culture, Inness asserts, that lacks tough heroines continues the stereotypes of what constitutes acceptable feminine and masculine behaviour while leaving stereotypes and domains of male privilege unchallenged.

Because they adopt some characteristics that are coded as masculine in our culture, tough women challenge this division, which is central to how members of society think about gender and the differences, whether real or imaginary between men and women (Inness 15).

While Inness resists confining toughness to a single definition, she suggests that women express toughness through the body, attitude, action and authority. In *Jillaroo*, Rebecca’s toughness, helps to challenge and transgress gender stereotypes in each of these characteristics thereby seeing her transgress gender stereotypes.

The narrative demonstrates Rebecca’s toughness via descriptions of what her body looks like, what it does and where it goes. According to Inness, the body houses obvious signs of toughness through muscles or athleticism. Muscles, as Inness suggests, are symbolic of “overcoming even the most overwhelming odds” and “physical and mental discipline” (Inness 24).

Rebecca shows her toughness through her body and her muscles where her “golden brown” (71) arms, shoulders with “lean muscles” (72) and “cracked” dirt-encrusted skin testify to her ability to undertake dirty physical work such as mustering sheep, chainsaw hulking trees or lifting heavy mineral blocks. Indeed, the first scene of the novel, mustering sheep, demonstrates her ability to economically use her body to direct the working dog whereas other moments show her working strenuously alongside men. Rebecca’s muscularity and physical ability invite the reader’s trust that she can surmount any obstacles including those to her romance and her quest to restore the farm.

Rebecca’s dogs enable her to demonstrate toughness especially in her actions: women show their intelligence through what they do, particularly using their judgement to know when and how to act and when to wait (Inness 26). In relation to attitude, Rebecca, is similar to tough women who, as Inness describes, “display little
or no fear, even in the most dangerous circumstances; if she does show fear, it must not stop her from acting” (Inness 25).

Inness’ tough woman also “appear[s] competent and in control” (Inness 25). Rebecca’s tough actions and attitude are striking when she retreats from Waters Meeting after fighting with her father. She drives northwest and after three days, with only fifty dollars in the bank, encounters a stock sale knowing it is her best chance of finding work. She observes men struggling to move a herd of sheep with a tired dog. Although she knows they are thinking how young and female she is (46), she offers to use her own dog to help move their mob. The men are wary, sheep, she must pay for it, telling her “I hope you’ve got some cash on you” (46). A true tough heroine, Rebecca coolly replies, “Well. Actually I don’t…I’m flat broke, unemployed and homeless. Confident in her ability and in her dog, she easily moves the sheep and is later offered a job as a jillaroo on Blue Plains Station. Even in the thick of a “male” space and under enormous pressure, she remains level headed and fearless, placing trust in herself and her dog.

Rebecca demonstrates her toughness in action and attitude by also not acting in particular situations. Inness emphasises that tough women must know when to act, when to wait and when reflection is required before acting (Inness 26). Rebecca shows her tough action and attitude when she rejects her father’s farming methods including questioning his purchase of a reproductively challenged ram (8), pitying his untrained dogs and declaring her desire to help run Waters Meeting (6). Although she argues with her father, Rebecca realises the futility of confronting a man prone to physical and emotional violence. She also knows the time is not right for her to assume control of the farm to gain knowledge and skills so when the right time comes, she is ready. For Inness in Pastoral, not acting or retreating have positive implications; however, Diane Negra criticises the tendency towards the narrative trope of “retreatism” in postfeminist media texts, where heroines return to their home towns to fulfil stereotypical feminine roles (Negra). In jillaroo, Rebecca retreats away from her home and the stereotypical expectations of women in the rural context. Her retreat demonstrates that there are different kinds of retreat, not just the postfeminist kind; for the tough woman she retreats because of bad timing or the need to prepare properly for the task ahead. Rebecca also retreats because of her father’s threat to murder her dogs. Later when Harry loses his arm and asks her to return, his threat of violence has dissolved and she has the experience and knowledge to ensure the farm’s restoration and financial success. Rebecca’s journey back to Waters Meeting therefore shifts her initial retreat to a “return” (Gifford) in turn demonstrating her good judgement.

Rebecca constantly demonstrates the fourth main characteristic of tough women, her dogs. Inness, quoting Richard Sennett, argues that authority relates to qualities such as “assurance, superior judgement, the ability to impose discipline, the capacity to inspire fear” (Sennett as quoted in Inness 26). Inness further states, “[t]he tough woman must have authority because she often acts as a leader, and a leader with no authority is not capable of leading, especially in times of great stress” (Inness 26). Rebecca develops and maintains her authority around men by being capable in ways they understand and by performing tasks they respect. For example on Blue Plains Station, she works as hard, if not harder, than the jackaroos, which goes against the expectation of women in this context. During her time on Blue Plains, readers learn about the reluctance to hire women in this traditionally male dominated context. Bob, the station manager, had reservations about hiring Rebecca because he worried about her romantic notions of rural life, however she gradually earns respect. She was “expected to do everything Dave [her roommate] did. From lifting heavy mineral lick-blocks for the sheep onto the ute, to banging steel droppers into the rocky ground” (72). The narrator also explains that Rebecca “Never once [leaned] on a broom. The shearers noticed this and liked her for it” (92). Her ability to match the strength and tasks of the men, as well as the advantage her well trained dogs provide in this context, garners authority and respect. On at least two occasions, Rebecca “talks dogs” (95, 327) with men in contexts usually dominated by men and masculinity. Through such discussions, she demonstrates her authority on dog breeding and training, one based on human-canine partnerships and communion, and transmits that knowledge to men. These scenes are invested with hope that her gentle but disciplined approach to dog training will reach a greater audience and the violent treatment of dogs, such as that enacted by Harry, will become a thing of the past. The examples of Rebecca’s toughness, helped by her canine off-siders, disrupt gender certainty and the binaries traditionally associated with masculinity and femininity. Her character shows that gender is not determined by sex; indeed women can have stereotypically masculine characteristics such as those...
associated with toughness. While Rebecca’s toughness is enhanced by her partnership with her dogs in conjunction with her interest in dogs. Like her toughness, which disrupts spaces traditionally dominated by men, symbolically her dogs are repeatedly called upon to disrupt her femininity. For example, in preparation for the B and S ball, Rebecca engages in a rare evening of feminine adornment including painting her nails and donning a “short red dress” (72). The narrator pre-empts all this by stating that, “Rebecca wasn’t the kind of girl who usually had time to paint her nails, or would even bother. But she had the feeling tonight would be special” (63). Even her male room mate Dave notices her effort, making fun of her nail polish, suggesting, “You’re keen to get a bit, judging by those nails…You planning on breaking the drought tonight?” (71). These markers of femininity are disturbed by Rebecca completing her station chores, allusion to the fairytale Cinderella. Rebecca’s chores include riding a four-wheel bike to kill a sheep, give offal to the pigs then feed her dogs, all of which must be completed before she departs for the ball. To nail polish yet juxtaposes it against the reality of Rebecca’s jillaroo work and

Bec’s nails looked so out of place on the handlebars…They reminded her that she’d ever bothered to read one [preferring] kelpie training manual guide to building better sheep yards (67).

The narrative interplay between Rebecca’s dressing up with her Jackie Collin retrospective revelation that she prefers reading about dog training over gender certainty, showing the fluidity of gender as she moves in and out performances.[14] Just as the narrative establishes one gender stereotype, so quick shift to the reality of farm life. In another related example, when Rel whistles (72). This example reinforces Rebecca’s ability to “dress up” and does not leave this image unchallenged, undercutting her attractiveness by saying, “Cheers, buddy,” as she opens a can of beer to drink (72). Both her with men. In another scene Rebecca travels to the city to attend her mother’s wedding and decides to stop into a town to shop for an outfit to wear to the ceremony. The narrative reveals her “look the shoppers as though she wasn’t there at all” (129). The shop assistant as however [End Page 15] Rebecca has two issues here. Firstly, the omniscient secondly, she is distracted by her worry for her “good-looking” dogs chain stolen easily” (129). Through the fluid narrative movement between gender Rebecca’s character, “reveal[s] the artificiality of femininity as the “norm interest in dog training and breeding, stereotypically the domain of men, rituals such as shopping, reinforces the fluidity and unfixed movement of ge

Rebecca’s gender qualities challenge stereotypical understandings of what “male” spaces and engages in processes and practices normally associated “Gender Perspectives in Australian Rural Community Life” 141). While suspicious of her presence, Rebecca’s toughness enables her to enter sites stocked livestock saleyards, pubs, and farm organisations. According to Alston (200 knowledge is constructed, particular truths “become privileged” and in domi

Rebecca’s comp appropriation of masculine and feminine characteristics depending on the Rebecca shows that these sites as domains of male hegemony are in chal challenged and changed. Indeed the partnership between Rebecca and he stockyards, but to remain there and demonstrate her ethical behaviour to
knowledge. The representation of a heroine capable of entering these locations and performing equally, in some cases better than men, challenges the conventional understanding of women in these contexts but also offers the hope that her treatment and knowledge of working dogs as well as her adherence to sustainable and organic farming will inspire or motivate others.

The relationship between Rebecca and her kelpies, a sign of impressive “interspecies competence” (Fudge 11) clearly mediates any reading of her as a romantic and tough heroine. However, development of human-animal relationships in other characters. Dogs in assessing the “health of a man’s heart” as Kant suggests. Indeed, Charlie has they approve of him as a romantic suitor to their owner. Harry however has where he clearly enacts his vitriol on his untrained dogs for much of the no already, part of the novel’s romantic resolution is another of Regis’s romantic converted”. Regis describes this as “a scene or scenes [where] one or more acceptance of it and incorporated into the society formed by the union at death and Harry’s accident, Rebecca is invited to return to Waters Meeting with Charlie. More importantly, Tom’s suicide causes Harry to change so much despite his disability, and they begin to build their father-daughter

Conclusion

In Regis’s defence of the romance novel, she emphasises the way that heroines overcome impediments to their relationship through the ‘barriers’ and point of ritual death. In overcoming the barriers, “she chooses the hero” (Regis 16). Regis names the freedom of heroines as “two great liberations” (Regis 15) where surmounting barriers enables them to unite with their hero and through (Regis 15). In Jillaroo, Rebecca prevails against the literal and symbolic rendering of death including the death of her brother Tom, the disintegration of her relationship with Charlie and the decline in the land due to drought and mismanagement by her father. Choosing to be with Charlie is therefore or concludes; having survived everything else, she is now “free” to “choose her hero.” However, her freedom also springs from overcoming the external family barriers, such as Harry not allowing her to run the farm, and the wider traditional expectations of rural women that attempt to block her quest to acquire experience and knowledge. In contesting the expectations of women in rural culture by entering these “men’s spaces” and succeeding in tasks they usually perform with the help of her kelpies, Rebecca challenges the gender inequality around her and models ethical non-violent behaviour towards others (humans, animals and the environment) to run her farm and subsequently the reader “rejoices.” This is a metaphor for the treatment of women, as Erica Fudge states, we can “learn new things about the humans if we look at the animals” (Fudge 8). While it is no secret in contemporary sociological research that significant gender issues shape life in rural Australia, Jillaroo assists in communicating those issues to a wider audience and providing fictional role models for rural women.
Dogs play a vital role at various textual levels of *Jillaroo*. While references to dog phrases such as "deserting bitch" (282), "been on my tail" (450) and "dog eared" (459) frequently appear in this novel maintaining the presence of dogs even when they are not active participants in a scene, it is through their active participation that the most important ideas of communion between humans, dogs and ultimately non-human life are realised. In particular, Rebecca's depiction as a breeder and trainer of working kelpies is unique in representing a woman working with dogs in this way. This representation of a human-dog relationship disrupts any dominant discourse that suggests that men are the main dog masters in rural life and reflects Rachael Treasure's own life as a dog breeder and trainer.

Rural romance, with its focus on agriculture and farm life, cannot escape the presence of animals, especially those who toil for our food and wares. The representation of these animals and the wider environment can be a touchstone for gender and ecological issues in a time when there is much work to be done in terms of humans ethically engaging with each other, the world and other species.

[1] Margaret Alston argues that "it appears that women's work is being discounted and devalued, and certainly not recorded. Economic historians still appear to see men as the norm and women as the 'other’" (Alston *Heart of Rural Australia* 4-6).

[2] In her study of national character in relation to women and rural Australia, she suggests is also a ‘common refrain’) to the title of a short story of acclaimed Australian poet Henry Lawson from his collection *Short Stories and Sketches: 1888-1922* (Schaffer 194).


[4] Juliet Flesch in *From Australia with Love: A History of Modern Australia* of rural romances by Lucy Walker published during the 1950s and 1960s which transgressed the gender expectations of the day. They include women who run large properties or work as rouseabouts, shearers and even loggers (Flesch).

[5] An overview of ‘chook lit’ novels by the Library News journal notes that there are many "suntanned, laconic Australians and huge outback stations" of rural romance. See “Chook Lit”.


[8] Margaret Alston uses the term “patrilineal inheritance” to describe the practice of sons inheriting farms from their fathers, a practice she describes as “ensuring that farms are owned and controlled by men.” See Alston, *Women: The Hidden Heart of Rural Australia* 7.


[10] This refrain of “losing the lot” in the novel parallels Harry's futile attempt to retain control. According to Mayer, "losing a farm is more than losing a job. It is a way of life or a vocation…for a farmer all is lost, job, home, and perhaps that of many previous generations livelihood and very sense of self.” (Mayer as cited in Davies.)

[11] The B and S ball (otherwise known as the Bachelor and Spinster's Ball) women gather to dance, drink and socialise away from the sometimes stressful life on the land. Such balls are also geared for community benefit as they bring income to host towns. Most important.
meet a potential partner. See “Balls in the Bush” and “Bachelor and Spinsters Ball.”

[12] It is important to note that in 2013, Rachael Treasure released The Farmer’s Wife, got her fairytale ending—but life had other plans…” (book cover). The Farmer’s Wife

[13] Rebecca stands in contrast to other contemporary romance heroines that Michele Hammers has noted in television show Ally McBeal as a “barrier to women’s full effective participation in professional spheres.” See Hammers for a more detailed discussion of contemporary television heroines and the body.

[14] See Taylor for a more detailed discussion of gendered performances in relation to femininity and the “discourse of the new.”

[15] Treasure has written a non-fiction e-book about dog training called Dog Speak. She was named Rural Woman of the Year in December 2006 which included a $10,000 bursa DVD (See Brennan). [End Page 19]

Works Cited


After Happy Ever: Tender Extremities and Tangled Selves in Three Australasian Bluebeard Tales

by Lucy Butler

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Introduction: Tending the Bluebeard Tale

“We must tend the myths [...] only in that way shall we survive.” Janet Frame (2007, 109)

The Bluebeard tales of Margaret Mahy, Sarah Quigley and Marion Campbell actively, if not often critically or consciously enough, to negotiate our relati

This is what makes reprising the familiar romantic scripts, particularly the fairy tale, a vital undertaking. Narrative is not the bearer of ideology in an meanings of even so seemingly transparent a text as the fairy tale prove relatively recent works by female writers in Australasia, Bluebeard’s key trc are remobilised to challenge the fiction of romantic sufficiency and to con love as a site of self-realisation. These writers are not working in a purely cr
partake of the pleasures and seductions of narrative and visual representation even as they challenge popular romantic mythology. If these postmodern Bluebeard tales are riddled with unresolved tensions, then this reflects the conflicted, often contradictory, and yet still central position of romantic love in an apparently post-romantic age.

The Bluebeard fairy tale, written by Charles Perrault in 1697,[1] has many affinities with Gothic romance novels, yet it also lends itself to a critique of popular romance. As several commentators have observed (Warner; Tatar), Bluebeard is an anomaly in the fairy tale canon in that it begins where most tales end: with marriage. Bluebeard's secret chamber can be seen as a repository of “the detritus of his failed romances” (Haslem 2003), and reprising the tale, in the texts considered here, amounts to prising open the paradoxes in popular representations of romantic love. Beginning where romance narratives tend to finish, unlocking the door of “happily ever after” to examine the complications concealed behind the rather glib final phrase of the classic fairy tale romance.

Bluebeard is a story that female characters in contemporary film and fiction narrative were submerged in contemporary culture. The mute adolescent heroine of New Zealand author Margaret Mahy's *The Other Side of Silence* (1995), for instance, suddenly realises that she has been caught in the cage of a certain story: “It was the tale of a bride who was allowed to go anywhere in a house except for one forbidden room…[“] (110). Similarly, in Francesca Lia Block's Bluebeard story, “Bones” (2000), the diminutive narrator is in danger of falling prey to the infamous photographer Derrick Blue: “He took a key from his pocket. I wasn't afraid. I couldn't quite remember the story” (162).

With this forgetting in mind, I will briefly summarise the plot of Perrault's Bluebeard tale. Bluebeard is a very wealthy, mysterious nobleman who wants a wife but his suspect past and repellent blue beard make it difficult for him to find a bride despite his great fortune. He finally convinces a peasant girl to marry him. Shortly after the wedding, Bluebeard announces that he has business to attend to elsewhere. He gives his new bride the keys to every room in his castle and tells her that she can roam freely as long as she doesn't enter one particular small room. Once alone, however, the young wife cannot contain her curiosity and soon finds herself opening the door to the forbidden chamber, where she makes the grisly discovery of the mutilated corpses of Bluebeard's seven previous wives. She drops the key to the chamber in shock, and it becomes stained by the blood and gore on the chamber floor. Bluebeard returns and demands to see the key that betrays his wife's disobedience. As punishment, she must join the other brides in the bloody chamber. Bluebeard prepares to decapitate his wife but her brothers appear with swords drawn, just in the nick of time, and kill the tyrant. The heroine inherits her husband's riches and marries a more worthy man.

Bluebeard is a fundamentally ambivalent tale; it cannot be summed up by Perrault with a single moral like his other tales, but requires two: the first warns wives not to pry, while the second tells husbands that times have changed and they can no longer assume quite the same authority. Fairy tale scholar Marina Warner, in *porousness of stories to their tellers' temper and beliefs* (1995, 255), Bluebeard proves to be highly malleable in the hands of contemporary writers, open to different and even contradictory moral slants.

In her recent study of the Bluebeard tale in the English tradition, Casie Hermansson (2009) points out that references to the Grimms' Bluebeard variants "Fitcher's Bird" and "The Robber Bridegroom" have become much more prevalent in feminist revisions of the tale (170). In “Fitcher’s Bird” the wily heroine rescues herself through her own cunning, reassembling the corpses of her sisters in the process. Poetically, she leaves a grinning skull bedecked in bridal finery in her place as she flees the castle disguised as a bird. It is not surprising that this version of the tale has held particular appeal for feminist-oriented writers and artists challenging the classic fairy tale tropes of feminine passivity and victimhood. Though it is Perrault’s better-known tale that is explicitly referenced in the works in this article, their female protagonists clearly have a defiant spirit and, like the Grimms’ heroine, enact various rescues and “re-memberings.”

With its vivid images of domestic violence and relative lack of magical elements, Bluebeard is hardly a bedtime story by modern standards, and it is not surprising that Disney has yet to animate it. But while it may be less immediately visible than more comfortable or comforting tales, Bluebeard remains a powerful narrative with the dark past and the compulsively curious woman determined to get to the bottom of it is an enduringly popular theme. While the early tale had little to do with love and romance in its current conception, concerned instead with material...
gain and physical survival, Bluebeard has been used to signify the rede
blindness, and contemporary authors are putting yet another spin on the
revelation. The qualities of secrecy and curiosity, while they continue to be
to male or female per se, but are instead used to investigate broader prol
knowledge and self-definition.

Postmodern Bluebeard tales foreground the act of storytelling and its ro
conscious in their storydom and acutely aware of the power at stak
(anti)heroines are unable to slip seamlessly into the romance narratives
nonetheless. Instead, they must negotiate a constant tension between comp
love. Genuine empathy and embodied compassion grow in the cracks of i
most often found in moments of collision with sister selves, the other w
protagonists inevitably share aspects of their stories and identities. The revel
key to breaking with romantic delusion in the works considered here. In
experienced as a succession of monogamous relationships, the Bluebeard t
Lurie suggests (129). The substitutions of love unsettle a romantic my
Confronting the other girls and women who have occupied the same place i
of [End Page 3] perfect romantic sufficiency, fracturing the self-enclosed w

Several commentators have pointed to the prevalence of a doubled, ironic
tales. Warner, for instance, notes the tendency for narrators of contempora
naiveté, employing “the voice of a child who is not a child, whose voice is al
(1995,193). Voice is at the fore in the works of Mahy, Quigley and Camp
Margaret Atwood and Joyce Carol Oates, all of whom return to Bluebeard
Australasian tales are highly artful accounts disguised as first-person cc
intimacy with the reader that questions the power inherent in any act of ap
Bluebeard tale turns on “the quest for intimacy through knowledge” (2004,
these authors to play the fine line between knowledge and disavowal
submerged tension between the supposedly private, unmediated emotional
cultural nature of the love story.

Much has been written on Australasian Filmmaker Jane Campion’s accla
following section will focus on another mute protagonist of New Zealand fi
silent heroine of New Zealand writer Margaret Mahy’s young adult novel Th
in the course of her passage through the Bluebeard tale. As in The Piano, H
of competing stories and truth claims; its surfacing requires learning to bal
in the pursuit of love and self-definition. Like Campion, the late Mahy is one
creative practitioners but her work, written for children and young adul
portrayal of the power of story to shape human relations is rich and nuance-

Refusing to sing in the cage of story: Margaret Mahy’s T

As in many postmodern Bluebeard tales, voice (and voicelessness) is at the
who died in 2012, produced some of New Zealand’s most popular and in
Silence is a Bluebeard story dealing with the problematic nexus of love, st
first-person narrative voice characteristic of contemporary fairy tales. It is a
the thicket of love and family life, amidst a disorienting swirl of competing st
Hero, the third child in a large family of loud talkers and powerful thinkers,
of the novel begins. Electively mute, Hero wields the power of withholdin
eloquence and endless argument. Hermansson points out that now, “[e]ven in juvenile literature, postmodern self-reflexivity is the norm” (159); Hero’s very name suggests the novel’s self-consciousness to shape identity. The novel celebrates the power of stories, from the transform even as it warns that this power can equally circumscribe and redefine the self. Hero chooses to withhold her words; yet she remains, in the heart of her silence, “a word child” (4), living out private stories on her own terms. These terms change abruptly, however, when she falls from her fantastical flights in the tree tops into a tale so twisted that only her schooling in Old Fairy Tales could have prepared her for its unfolding.

Eva Illouz asserts that the postmodern romantic condition is characterised by “real and its representation” (1997, 15, emphasis in original). This blurring, key to the three Bluebeard tales examined in this article, is treated most explicitly in Mahy’s novel. Hero imagines being turned into a book, and while she would prefer Jungle Book, “I would probably have been turned into Old Fairy Tales, which was the book everyone read me when I was small” (8). She uses this book for “divination” and her familiarity with it lends a sense of inevitability to the novel’s unfolding. She remarks of the Credence house and garden into which she tumbles: “it seemed as if I had been working my way towards it from the very first time anyone ever told me a story” (14).

All of the female characters in this tale are intoxicated by the power of story. “Real life is what you are supposed to watch out for, but an invented life, lived truly, can be just as dangerous” (3), Hero observes at the beginning of the novel. Hero’s mother Annie is a successful academic and best-selling author of books on how to raise brilliant children. Hero’s older sister Ginerva, for many years a poster-girl for her mother’s theories, ran away from home, returning during the course of the novel battered almost beyond recognition by her new career as a stunt car driver. The main Bluebeard figure in this tale is Miss Credence, the “deeply strange” neighbour into whose story Hero falls. Miss Credence lives as her father’s ghost, haunting his huge, decrepit estate. Like all Bluebeard figures, Miss Credence is deeply private, and she is so enthralled by Hero’s silence that she offers her a job clearing her neglected house and garden. Miss Credence is the daughter of a former Vice Chancellor of the University, “a world figure in the field of symbolic logic” (85), whose influence she cannot escape but whose power she can never inhabit, though she wears his academic gown, smokes his cigarettes and stalks cats with his old hunting rifle.

Under the spell of her dead father’s disdain for anything but the highest order of abstract thought, and desperate to protect his reputation, Miss Credence has secretly locked her “substandard” illegitimate daughter in a chamber in the tower. Chained to her bed, the unspeakable secret at the heart of her mother’s tale Hero’s abject symbolic sister. Incarcerated for all of her eighteen years, Rinda Credence is Hero’s dreadfully silent twin. It is only by passing through Bluebeard’s chamber and bringing this “terrible twin” (141) to light that Hero can rescue herself (assisted by Sam, her love interest) and reclaim her voice.

Hero immediately recognises the inevitability of what she finds in the forbidden chamber (protected, in this contemporary tale, by a security system rather than a key): “As soon as I actually saw Rinda I wondered why I had not known all along that it was she who was up there, waiting for me like a terrible kind of twin” (141). In contemporary female-penned Bluebeard tales, as noted, recognising the suffering of one’s sisters is critical to breaking with abuse and finding one’s own power. It enables the heroine to view her predicament in broader, cultural terms, the first step in empowering her to change these terms. Rinda Credence has been rendered silent and invisible because she doesn’t fit her mother’s story of intellectual brilliance. Underlining this sisterly doubling, Miss Credence has painted a picture of her damaged daughter as Ginerva, Hero’s sister, from a photograph in a newspaper article lauding Ginerva’s childhood genius, before Ginerva broke free from her mother’s story of intellectual brilliance. It is this painting that reveals Miss Credence as a Bluebeard figure to Hero, well-versed as she is in the old tales, and sends her on the search for the forbidden chamber.

Acutely and ambivalently aware of the shaping power of story, the sisters in this tale go to extreme lengths to avoid being circumscribed by the stories of those around them. Hero opts for self-imposed silence, while Ginerva embraces dangerous physical extremes that keep her in the body and the moment, free from her mother’s “prodigy” mythology. Story is powerful, but it is not monolithic, Hero discovers. Crucial to her survival of the Bluebeard tale is Hero’s belated realisation that the bars on the windows where she and Rinda are held are not steel but flimsy painted wood: “I had been looking at the
idea of a cage, rather than a real one” (156). It is a symbolic cage, a cage of such conceptual prisons can be real enough.

Hermansson observes of contemporary Bluebeard: “the story is not only and in Mahy’s novel, the trap is the tale itself. When Hero falls into Miss C Hero a new fairy tale name, which is also her daughter’s: Jorinda, from the C leash that could be used to twitch me into place,” Hero realizes (23). Hero turned against her: “I don’t belong in this story, I kept thinking over and over later: “my secret story had somehow broken free, and was twisting back or control her story, then nor can her captor: “Miss Credence was still a story the story any more. The story was in charge of her” (85). Stories are never suggests, and they can turn from comfortingly familiar to oppressive in th Mahy suggests, “tend the myths” (as Frame puts it), pay attention to the old especially, if they are operating just beneath the surface of our consciousnes: that have been handed down from her parents through her siblings to he would say to me over and over again. Make me true” (30). But if narrative lies opportunity, Hero discovers. Once she gets her fictional bearings and compulsion in classic Bluebeard fashion, becomes an assertive call to action passively[3]: “it wasn’t enough just to be something magical. I must do some

Houses in Bluebeard tales are often symbolic extensions of their occupant forest-shrouded Credence mansion is in stark contrast to the transparency under renovation and wide open to the world. The Credence mansion is: intuits the way his intellectual arrogance undermined his relationships. She now by his daughter, as a kind of defence against the uncertainty of intir fence of long, black [End Page 6] folds” (89). In typical Bluebeard fashion, tl his wife—despised as an intellectual inferior—dies, the house becomes lifeless.

On first entering Credence mansion, Hero encounters a photograph of “I which was stretched out at his feet” (82). His daughter copies his posturing Miss Credence’s expression more closely resembles the stag’s. Mahy critiqu messy aliveness of the world to something dead certain, something pinned very often seeks a kind of fixing rationality that oppresses the other. Ameri instance, kills because the unruly bodies of his wives debase the romanti puritan, an aesthete, a collector, or an obsessive in popular culture, as Warn this in the serial killer genre, most famously perhaps The Silence of the Lam other can be fixed only in death in these contemporary takes on the Bluebe in the name of love is figured in images of physical suffering and psychic frag

In The Other Side of Silence, Miss Credence is so deeply entrenched in her f all else that she can escape only by shooting herself in the head. And the hea Mahy depicts the attachment to rigid categorical knowledge or excissivev relationships. If, as Tatar suggests, the Bluebeard tale turns on “the quest fo Mahy’s fictional world some ways of knowing are more apt for intimacy that

In true fairy tale fashion, Hero falls in love with the teenager who helps to remain the hero of the story rather than Sam. There is more power in though, as Hero recognises. The majority of the novel is told in the first per Hero doesn’t say to the people around her. But the novel’s brief fifth part t the main action of the novel. The now fifteen year old Hero has just comp Bluebeard’s chamber. In the continuing tussle between concealment and
Hero’s hidden novel draft is discovered and read by her parents against her wishes. Her mother delightedly declares Hero “a writer” and prepares to send the book to a publisher. Hero is not so sure. She decides to take the advice of Tales once more: “Tell your sorrows to the old stove in the corner” (181). She burns the manuscript, deletes the electronic copies, and goes running with Sam, who reminds her gently that there’s more to life than thinking. Sam shows her that she can transform herself not only through flights of fantasy and intellectual brilliance, but through flights of physical action. Like the wily third sister of “Fitcher’s Bird,” Hero finds freedom in a winning combination of cunning, imagination and daring physical action.

Hero is suitably ambivalent about the power she assumes in authoring Rinda’s story (her symbolic sister is slowly being rehabilitated to speak, under the fascinated academic eye of Hero’s moth keeping with the disingenuous narrative style Warner cites, the tale we have supposedly destroyed. And so the irresistible lure of story wins out, but only with empathy, compassionate engagement and critical awareness.

*The Other Side of Silence* explores the need to balance privacy with transparency, solitude with connectedness, and to reconcile inner and outer worlds. The power of stories to shape relationships is profound. Opening these relationships to transformation is imaginative knowledge for empirical or vice versa. The Bluebeard trope of repression and disclosure bring to light the hidden stories at the hearts of the characters’ various identities, breaking them up that they may be better “re-membered” in respect of the physical world.

**Love’s double-trouble: substitution and successive selves in Sarah Quigley’s ‘North of the Lights’**

In New Zealand author Sarah Quigley’s Bluebeard story “North of the Lights,” the doubling of husband and wife in pursuit of knowledge, and a playful, seductive wisdom of staking one’s sense of self in fairy tale romance plots.

‘He kept his ex-wife in a teapot above the stove’ (8). The opening line of *having words with you*, signals its play on the Bluebeard tale. It is a photograph the female narrator Greta from the imagined certainties of her marital life as an illustrator of children’s books who spends her days in the world of fairy tale, while her journalist husband Alec prides himself on his hard-nosed rationality. Alec is arrogant and indifferent, but with his first wife Isobel, nor has a horrific fate befallen her. In fact, the photograph confronts Greta with the fraudulent nature of her own identity, the aspects of herself that she has repressed in order to marry her husband:

The past that I had buried ten fathoms deep, hastily, furtively, wiping my hands clean: or so I thought. But Isobel saw the remains of clay beneath my fingernails: she, with her sharp and shining eyes. (11)

In this Bluebeard tale, both husband and wife have a “secret” past, and each constructs the other in terms of deceptive surface and secretive interior. Cristina Bacchilega emphasises the double *Postmodern Fairy Tales* (111). Bluebeard seeks to test his wife’s loyalty by giving her the key that she is forbidden to use, and reveals her to be the treacherous creature he suspects her of being. She betrays him to penetrate the secret chamber because she likewise suspects him of concealing his true identity. Both are rewarded, in a sense, by having their worst suspicions confirmed. Postmodern Bluebeard tales such as Quigley’s depict a romantic mythology that diminishes the other to a prop in a personal tale to assuage an imagined lack, or an aspect of the anticipated fulfilment of the self.

Hermansson notes that in contemporary renditions, “Bluebeard’s wife insists on her rights to access patriarchal institutions, to the doubling of husband and wife in pursuit of knowledge, and a playful, seductive wisdom of staking one’s sense of self in fairy tale romance plots. She is in a sensealpha-female in her determination to enter the male domain with her knowledge and her independence, not only as a partner, but as a co-active force in her own life.” In this Bluebeard tale, both husband and wife have a “secret” past, and each constructs the other in terms of deceptive surface and secretive interior. Cristina Bacchilega emphasises the double *Postmodern Fairy Tales* (111). Bluebeard seeks to test his wife’s loyalty by giving her the key that she is forbidden to use, and reveals her to be the treacherous creature he suspects her of being. She betrays him to penetrate the secret chamber because she likewise suspects him of concealing his true identity. Both are rewarded, in a sense, by having their worst suspicions confirmed. Postmodern Bluebeard tales such as Quigley’s depict a romantic mythology that diminishes the other to a prop in a personal tale to assuage an imagined lack, or an aspect of the anticipated fulfilment of the self.
now to include her husband’s own mind” (158). In Quigley’s story, the probing on one level a valid and vital curiosity, a pragmatic approach to love and marriage. The other’s inner world, as the compulsion to investigate and scrutinise the other completely is driven by the need to shore up one’s own identity, rely on a fiction of perfect romantic sufficiency. In “North of the Lights”, Greta has attempted to entice after the revelation of Isobel, Greta can no longer pretend that either she or her husband is a clean slate.

I was a fraud. My partnership with Alec was one in which my weaknesses were rigorously ignored in the hope that they would vanish. And for a time it worked. Even I believed I was one of life’s predators, one of those red-lipped girls with reckless eyes. I pruned my past without compassion, severed my bleeding toes to cram them into my chosen slipper. (12).

Ann Snitow (1979/1996) observed in her seminal study of popular romance narrative, and indeed of the fairy tale, that the privileged couple be removed from the social bonds, existing in pristine isolation (195-7). There are only two characters in this story: Greta and Alec. And Isobel, but she exists primarily as a symbol in their relationship. Greta’s “happy ever after” can be sustained only in the total absence of history and social context. When Isobel finally appears in person late in the piece, dropping in to pick up some papers, the game is finally up for Greta, who is forced to confront the fact that the problem is Greta, and all the relationships she has “negated” in order to marry her husband: “sister, daughter, friend. And self” (12). Isobel, bearer of history, context and materiality, ruins the romantic plot and inadvertently sends Greta back to herself.

In another aspect of the doubling of Bluebeard and his wife, the revelation of Alec’s secret is equivalent to the revelation of Greta’s own. “Isobel” unleashes all the messiness and complication that are turning on her, undermining her romantic assumptions. Like fairy tale images that are her bread-and-butter are volatile, open to different and even contradictory messages. These tales are never entirely contained by the intentions of their creator, but may speak much more than she would like to hear. Alec, for his part, seeks control, or “absolute mastery,” as Greta puts it, of a framework of rigid rationality that is untouched by his wife’s increasingly bizarre and opaque and impenetrable, much like Ed in Atwood’s “Bluebeard’s Egg” (1986), to both the reader and his wife.

The destabilizing effect that the discovery of Isobel has on Greta’s identity is greatly exacerbated by the fact that she has staked her identity entirely in her marriage, severing anything that doesn’t fit. Alec’s relentless rationality renders him opaque and impenetrable, much like Ed in Atwood’s “Bluebeard’s Egg” (1986), to both the reader and his wife.

Through the mating of our possessions, my new identity had been born myself, with fragments chipped from my lover’s side.

Biblical overtones? Perhaps. My trade, as I have said, is with legends, myths, fairytales. Alec’s lay in facts: a warning in itself, had I stopped for one moment in my brave new directionless stride. A journalist and a children’s illustrator, a gingerbread villa in Thorndon: highly suitable, happy ever after. But stories today demand more sophisticated endings. (9)

Along with a self-reflexive nod to the reader, whose complicity is foregrounded in contemporary Bluebeard, as Hermansson notes (160), in the marriage of Greta and Alec we again see staged the contest of knowledge that marks the Bluebeard tale. Greta’s husband, like most postmodern Bluebeards, deals
indeed his own marriage to his will, wilfully blind to anything that doesn’t fit his rationalist paradigm. Lying awake at night, worrying about Isobel and what she means, Greta observes of Alec:

In sleep he lost the absolute mastery he had over the physical world. His fingers, so deft in the daylight hours and in the long slow evenings when they wielded a pen with the ruthlessness of a surgeon – these fingers would now twitch loosely on my skin. (8)

The image of a surgeon ruthlessly cutting resonates with images used by Mahy and others to evoke the perceived aggression of definitive truth claims and the violence of categorical language. Hero observes of her brother working on his MA thesis:

“I came to imagine the poor fact lying there, panting and helpless, and Athol ruthlessly fixing it in his notebook, not so much with the point of his pen as with a skewer of words” (27). Quigley’s “ruthless opaque heart surgeon husband of “Bluebeard’s Egg”, and the famously opaque heart surgeon husband of Barthes[4] and Angela Carter[5] both also depict a lover performing a figurative dissection of the other in the name of love and knowledge.

As noted, in contemporary Bluebeard tales, the lover’s quest for knowledge seek not to discover the other but to confirm pre-existing romantic expectations. An inquisitional approach to romantic relations is both necessitated and thwarted by the fact that the other is so central to one’s own identity, as is clearly the case for Quigley’s narrator. The attempt to catalogue and fix the other in the service of one’s own desire or identity is Bluebeard’s death-dealing quest and a trap the heroine must evade, even while she is prone to doubling her husband by demanding the assurances on which her self-identity rests. Again, Greta and Alec are doubled in their attempts to lay definitive claim to one another. If Alec could I plant my stake in his heart without seeming insecure, possessive, a grasping imperialist? (12).

Contemporary Bluebeard tales such as Quigley’s playfully expose the epistemological unease that frequently underlies and undermines romantic aspirations of unity and transparency. They may use different tools, but both Greta and Alec cut, reduce, contain the potential complexities of their relationship, and so their union is very fragile. It takes no more than a photo of an ex-wife to render it untenable. The story ends with Greta and Alec returning to the muddy roots of her own history. Greta “confesses” to the reader that she is not Greta at all, but “Margaret McArdle from Palmerston North. […] There, I’ve said it. My secret is out” (12). These little asides to the reader create a disingenuous intimacy that mocks our expectations of transparency and disclosure, while Alec himself remains “in the dark”. In keeping with the theme of confounding certainty, Quigley complicates our identification with, and our access to, her protagonist, just as Greta herself is denied access to her husband’s inner world.

Bluebeard’s wife doubles not only her husband’s secret past and his aggressive approach to love-through-knowledge, she also impersonates his impenetrability. “I was equally pleased at the conviction of my own disguise. Spiky, glittering, I caught and reflected back his self-sufficiency” (10). This “hardness” is a performance Greta finds impossible to sustain, but it doesn’t matter much to Alec, as long as she remains installed in his “gingerbread villa”. He taunts her, knowingly or not, with her structural secondness:

“Isobel used to say that too. Old Isobel. Christ, we had some fights.” His gaze raked the dim room like the beam of a lighthouse, picked out the golden teapot. I wonder now why I had no premonition of my fate as his lean fingers extracted the curling photo. Curiosity was all I felt as I stood at Bluebeard’s door. (10)

At this moment of revelation, Greta’s marriage, her very sense of self, is circular prison and my own incarceration began” (1998:10). Like “the Second Mrs de Winter” in Daphne du Maurier’s Rebecca (1938), whose earnest efforts to create a loving marriage are mocked by the ghost of the first wife whose irreverence and unruliness represents all that has been repressed to create such a union, Greta is haunted by Isobel. “Now that Isobel had seen the outside world, she was no longer content to stay in the darkness” (11).
In his seminal treatise on romantic love, *A Lover's Discourse* (1978/2002), Barthes notes: “The lover painfully identifies himself with some person (or character) who occupies the same position as himself in the amorous structure” (129). The power of a mere photograph of the first wife to undermine Greta’s own identity speaks to a problem at the intersection of the dominant humanist model of integral selfhood and current romantic address. Cultural theorist Dominic Pettman calls this problem “the trauma of the second love” (29). Through its repeated destruction and reformulation of the romantic couple, Bluebeard renders the loved object infinitely substitutable, challenging the romantic ideal of the singular merging of souls. The sheer number of bodies in Bluebeard’s chamber, as much as their dismembered state, threatens the sense of a unique and indivisible self. As Warner notes: “the seriality of the dead wives also marks their anonymity, their interchangeability, the failure of stable subjectivity” (27).

We are confronted with this fact more frequently than ever in contemporary culture, where we are very rarely the first love, even if we are lucky enough to be the last, and a culture of successive monogamous relationships may be one reason for the renewed interest in the Bluebeard tale in recent decades (Lurie 129).

In Quigley’s story, Greta lacks the necessary “power of denial” to sustain the fiction of her marital identity: “Once Isobel had exposed me there didn’t seem much point in going on with my life” (12). Confronted with the fraudulence of her romantic persona and the losses she has sustained to maintain the fiction, Greta is cut off from her creative life, unable to create the characters for her illustrations: “How could they live when their identities depended on mine, and I no longer had one?” (12). She is also divorced from her embodied self: “Invalid in both senses of the word” (13). In true Bluebeard fashion, Alec grows strong in inverse proportion to his wife’s languishing. She feels his “casual kisses” (13) robbing her last vestige of strength.

As observed, in Bluebeard tales both old and contemporary, a traumatic encounter with Bluebeard’s former wives is key to breaking the spell of a suspect marriage or ending a period of romantic delusion. In Quigley’s tale it is indeed Isobel herself who breaks the stasis and sets Greta free, sends her back in search of Margaret. The abrupt fall of romantic idealisation into material reality that Isobel’s visit represents turns out to be exactly what Greta needs. If Isobel’s symbolic presence was incapacitating, her physical presence has precisely the opposite effect, bringing Greta back to her “senses”, in both senses of the word. Isobel’s “thick ankles” humorously suggest both the end of idealisation and Isobel’s groundedness, a refreshing contrast to the narrator’s capacity for fantasy. Isobel’s ankles anchor and to her own body; as she watches Isobel leave she feels “the hot boards scorch [her] feet” (15).

The substitutions of love, particularly unsettling in the context of a contemporary romantic mythology predicated on subjective uniqueness, helps to explain how the Bluebeard tale retains its currency, and why it cuts so deep. In contemporary versions of the tale the trope of repetition undermines the ability of romantic union both to complete the self and to guarantee the self’s uniqueness. Confronting Isobel, Greta has to relinquish the fantasy of her marital identity, her perfect romantic sufficiency, and recognise that she is, quite literally, an “other woman.”

**Tender Extremities: unravelling romantic love as self-identity in Marion Campbell’s *Being Miriam***

Slipping between first and third person narration, between genuine disclosures and disingenuous confessions, and indeed
between different versions of the self, Mahy and Quigley challenge romantic aspirations of transparency and unity. They problematize the search for definitive knowledge in the name of love by presenting identity as an unstable construct created by many overlapping and competing stories. Australian writer Marion Campbell takes the Bluebeard themes of fragmentation, repetition and revelation played short story and adds further layers of complexity, crafting a compelling exploration of the damage done in the struggle for subjective affirmation in and through romantic union.

As in “North of the Lights,” a photograph of an idealised first wife is pivotal of the doubling of Bluebeard and his wife, Elsie dismembers a huge photograph of Miriam, the beloved first wife, which her abusive and sentimental husband keeps in the closet. She wraps the strips making literal the way she has been brutalised by the image of an idealise overlapping lives and identities of Bess, Lydia and Elsie, three Australian women of different ages, ethnicities and socio-economic situations. It charts their struggles for distinction, recognition and entrenched mythologies of their romantic relationships, relationships that considerable talents and desires, continue to be their main point of reference.

Campbell’s quite radical and political novel suggests, even more strongly than the preceding works, that roles in romantic plots, while they are always gendered, have a complex and unstable relation to the biological sexes of the participants. Bess, whom we first encounter as a young girl in Campbell’s novel, initially passionate relationship with her younger sister Cassandra. Bess wants to be in the supporting roles her older sister assigns her. While Cass grows up to teaching drama. But she is always acting, and her identity is self-consciously

Throughout the novel, Bess’s, Lydia’s and Elsie’s identities shift and merge, with the fictional, mythological and historical women with whom they identify. Bess discovers the Classical Adriadne at a young age, in a rage at her romantic abandonment by her childhood crush Peter, who prefers the blonde, pretty Cass. “This is who Bess can be. Ariadne who learnt the plan, drugged the guards and gave the thread. Who knew” (15). But if Ariadne knows, then Cassandra does too. And it is Cass that Bess guards jealously, not Peter, who is peripheral, an object traded between sisters. Cass is self-contained and Bess experiences Cass’s opacity as a threat to her own identity. Expressing the constant tension between disclosure and secrecy that marks the Bluebeard tale, Bess wants to dissect Cass, to “ransack her sister for her secret” (23).

It is Cass, and later Lydia and Elsie, who have the crucial relation to Bess’s wives and sister selves are key in Quigley’s and Mahy’s stories. Yet it is the relationship and a ubiquitous romantic mythology that turns the wheels of story. Whi deeper in Not Being Miriam, it is the love relation that is the lynch pin of ide her identification with Ariadne, who is in the Dictionary of Classical Mythology abandonment by Theseus, and so she barely exists.

Bess’s identity is informed by the feminist politics of her era and education, obsessive iteration of one particular classic love story. This is the story of many every day after school for years. This story turns out to be a fabrication, a flattered into a Bluebeard marriage with a very wealthy, controlling and s story is enduring, and the end of the novel finds her re-enacting it in her r through the lines she used to assign to her nieces. But, unlike Bess, Mamie k

Highlighting the fact of one’s contingent place in the love story, the charac chairs within the romantic narrative. And, as Bess, Elsie and Lydia in their d left standing when the music stops. Bess’s identification with her role as th young Aunt Mamie off her feet in Florence is intensely passionate; “sick,” h abandons her and takes their son, and so Bess switches places within the ro
with Ariadne. Bess is also the Other Woman: for Lydia, with whose husband’s beloved first wife she uncannily resembles. Structurally speaking, the next door neighbour whose pain she inhabits through a radically destabilising form of empathy, a transformational self-becoming-other that she has never achieved in her romantic relationships. which we encounter first as child’s play in *Not Being Miriam*, becor consequences.

In Bess’s connection to Elsie, empathy is a kind of contagion. Bess comes to inhabit Elsie’s conflicted place in the romantic narrative: “Sliding back toward sleep, Bess finds Elsie anyhow, embodies her. Her veins become knotted, tumescent” (88). Bess both fears and desires this loss of self.

Lying on her couch next door, she feels her loss of boundaries mirrored in her surroundings: “Like a bad cosmetics job on a burns victim, she feels the house as if it’s her own tissue stretched almost beyond endurance” (85). Domestic space is charged with significance in Bluebeard tales. Like Quigley’s Greta and Mahy’s Miss Credence, Bess shuts herself away in a house that was once a place of pride and union but falls into sickly stasis, out of the flow of love and life.

Bess becomes Elsie becomes Miriam. Bess becomes Miriam through Elsie’s painfully ambivalent gaze:

The poster-sized photo of his Poor Late Beautiful Wife is still there all right. Bess rocks with Elsie’s shame. She winces with recognition. She hasn’t refused from Elsie the mixture of awe and worship she offers. Miriam in that foggy enlargement could be Bess. Spitting or bloody splitting image do they say? Elsie asked. […] Bess loses herself tracing out these features. Hers. The Other Woman’s. Bess loses herself finding Elsie’s pleasure, Elsie’s pain. She contracts back to something like a reclining hologram of Miriam, the Late. (89)

If Ariadne is Bess’s mythological forebear, it is the second Mrs de Winter with whom Elsie identifies. Semi-literate, Elsie hasn’t read the novel, but she watched the film again and again as a girl. Raised in poverty, Elsie knows that economic and romantic dependence are intertwined: in Hitchcock’s film, as in Aunt Mamie’s story, the great wealth of the Bluebeard figure and the material security he offers propels the romantic plot and drives his wife’s compulsion to make the marriage work despite so many misgivings.[8] But even as a girl, Elsie intuits that material dependence is only part of the picture.

Married to a man who abuses her children, Elsie’s mother pleads:

Else, for all our sakes, I’ve got ter make a go of it this time. Otherwise where would we… what would we…

Else could have said it for her. She can answer it too. What you do is you get a job. Else will get a job. They needn’t be trapped. She’s not going to be forced to stick with a man if he turns nasty? He was young and happy in the marriage photo. (95)

*You get a job.* And Elsie does. But Elsie’s mother is dependent on Stan for her sense of self, and it is this subjective dependence that her mother cannot relinquish and that compels her to make shocking sacrifices to “make a go of it.” Elsie, despite her youthful insight and defiance, ends up playing out her mother’s familiar script. Love songs go around and around in Elsie’s head – “Love was just a glance away. A warm embracing dance away” (132) – alternating with self-loathing: “Slut, she says to the dressing-table mirror. Bleedin fat cow” (132).

Elsie’s husband Roger, like Stan, cruelly disregards both Elsie and her children. But this, it seems, she can tolerate. What is intolerable is his continued romantic devotion to his first wife, so jarringly at odds with his treatment of Elsie. She endures daily reminders that she is not the “real” wife of Roger Miller, and in a world where identity is vested in the marriage plot, this means she is nothing at all. Elsie lives in the shadow of the idealised former love, Miriam’s poster-sized image ill-concealed in the closet behind Roger’s trousers. Like all of Bluebeard’s wives, Elsie is looking at Miriam.
Miriam had the finest skin, not a flaw, not a single flaw. Always says even the notice in the In Memoriam column every year [...] [End Page 15]

And I've made a home with another,
Deep at heart, I'm still your lover.

[...]
How suddenly, that's what she was: another. And I've made my home with another himself like that too. Well. Now the scissor traces out loops on the skin of the photo, on the skin of how she looked.
[...] As an old woman she probably would've got a profile like Punch, nose jutting down to the chin (105-106).

But Roger’s romantic idealisation is perfectly maintained by Miriam’s absence. Miriam robs Elsie of her rightful place in the romantic narrative, and thus tries the famous line from Rebecca on her husband – “I’m Mrs Miller now” (133) – with effect. “My bloody arsehole you are!” Roger rages (133).

Elsie’s lack of identity, a fact published by Roger in the newspaper every year, inhabits her pain, which is also of course Bess’s own. To stop Roger beating Eiffel tower, a relic from his first marriage that he keeps on the dresser his hypocritical romanticism. Despite the myriad material problems in their rel... Miriam, and Roger’s consequent rage, that destroys their marriage and ends...

In this penultimate scene the three women finally come together. Lydia sits in a taxi on the street, hearing the screams at Elsie’s house and seeing Bess run next door to intervene. Imaginatively, Lydia inhabits Bess as these strange unbidden sisters haunt each other in and through their unhappy marriages. Their complex interconnectedness grows like an invasive vine through the romantic framework, disturbing the love story, the meaning to their lives. In a final slippage of identity, after Bess goes to prison for manslaughter her sister Cass moves into her house and resumes the (condescending but quite successful) project of Elsie’s “liberation”.

If Mahy and Quigley critique a grasping, fixing knowledge of the other, implying the oppressiveness of this search for certainty, then Campbell questions “the quest for intimacy” through knowledge of another kind. Critic Toril Moi notes, and Bess discovers, that the empathetic, merging knowledge sought as perfect union “is not knowledge at all but confusion” (432).[9] The failure of perfect knowledge or communion is not the failure Emmanuel Levinas asserts, “precisely what nurtures love” (103). A gifted physicist, Lydia knows “the danger of certainty” (115), and that there is “no matter only tendencies” (113). The increasingly punning, poetic and fragmented language as the novel progresses evokes more open, multivalent and fluid ways of approaching love relations: “I'll underpun their purpose, sound the lisp as a way of saying, whisper monstrosities [...]

The punning on “tender”, in particular, playfully critiques demands for relations. “Tender” insists on meaning more than one thing at once, in a complex deconstruction of romantic mythology. Love is legal tender in Not Being Miriam taxi, things are “only tending to happen” (113), Elsie knows that the body is worth something: “Somewhere the things she knows will count. [...] She can pick what’s fake. And she can trust her hands. Her fingers practically think” (96). A certain kind of love is associated with death, in this multivalent tenderness.

Elsie asks the butcher if his meat is tender. “Tender love? he says. Tender, you’re asking if it’s tender. Why it’s tender as a woman’s heart. On pay day” (131).

Bess like/as Ariadne is stranded at the novel’s end, “beached in the sway of uncertainty and several selves is preferable to being “mythaken, fixed in categorical knowledge is associated with sight, while tentative and truly touching connection that respects difference and distance and leaves space for
extremities are the feet of Quigley’s Greta, anchoring her to the earth and to of muddy history and connectedness. They are the “blind fingers” (181) c
sense of sight and its association with unequivocal truth. Not Being Miriam her body and her roots: “I found the fissures with my fingers, I was sightless conventional romantic coupling, self-realisation in these tales is never a solo-sisters and shadow selves.

Conclusion

There is an opera written by Maurice Maeterlinck (Ariane et Barbe-bleue, 1901) which Ariadne attempts to rescue Bluebeard’s wives. The rescue fails beca
ost of mythology, but the story suggests the malleability of myth and the of Mahy, Quigley and Campbell propose not a rejection of fictionalised run
mediated embodied experience of love, but rather recognise the limiti (although never entirely condition or contain) our expectations and exper-stories up to both critical scrutiny and creative reconfiguration.

New Zealand writer Janet Frame observes: “we must tend the myths, […] or these renewed Bluebeard tales, however, the less-than-tender myths o
tenderised. The relentless repetition that marks both romance and violence this tale’s perpetual retelling, implies the importance of re-entering and experience. These Australasian writers treat romantic myth and fairy tale as many possible re-entry points into the labyrinth of human intimacy.


[3] In Stephen Benson’s terms: ‘narrative itself is always a remembering or a the repetition is passive. It is only by drawing out other submerged, partially the conflict and tension that lie beneath the surface, to repeat actively ra (1996:109).

[4] ‘To scrutinize means to search: I am searching the other’s body, as i mechanical cause of my desire were in the adverse body (I am like those chi what time is). This operation is conducted in a cold and astonished fashion; strange insect of which I am suddenly no longer afraid’ (2002:71).

[5] ‘When I’d first loved him, I wanted to take him apart, as a child dism
scrutable mechanics of its interior. I wanted to see him far more naked enough to strip him bare and then I picked up my scalpel and set to work dissection, I only discovered what I was able to recognise already, from past new to me, I steadfastly ignored it. I was so absorbed in this work that it (1996:72).

[6] Like other fairy tales, Bluebeard’s fortunes wax and wane depend circumstances. Tatar identifies a spate of Bluebeard-themed films in the 19-era, she suggests, to play out the anxieties provoked by husbands returnin and unspeakable pasts in the course of their war service which made them s

[7] The Bluebeard tale, Tatar notes, is particularly apt for showing us how

[9] ‘In the very moment the knower merges with that which is known, both entities are abolished as such. In this way imaginary knowledge undercuts all other forms of knowledge, blurring all boundaries and dissolving all definitions in its way’ (Moi, 1999:432). [End Page 18]

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 Marriage, Romance and Mourning Movement  

God He Met Lizzie  
by Mark Nicholls  

October 24th, 2014 |  

Thank God He Met Lizzie (1997) stands out as an extremely rare example of most romantic comedies, this film is really about the negotiation of an obstacle to union and marital happiness. What is generically atypical about the film, and the source of its drama, is that this obstacle emerges only once the marriage is solemnized and in the form of nothing more concrete than what we might call the ghost of a girlfriend past. The last few shots of the film present the eponymous “He”, Guy (Richard Roxburgh), and Lizzie (Cate Blanchett) with their children, “slip, slop, slapping” (an eighties promotional slogan for liberal sunscreen application) beside a Mercedes station-wagon in a Sydney beachside car park. Within the span of less than a minute, the camera moves in, very slightly, before tilting up and left, fractionally, framing the actors in a medium shot that will hold them for the last ten seconds before the credit sequence rolls. This final shot is a freeze-frame, the highpoint of a slowing of their motion which began, almost imperceptibly at first, ten seconds into the sequence and continues, seemingly unhindered by two slow dissolves, before reaching its final point of stasis. The image presented is picture-perfect and is the sort of snapshot of domestic bliss that will probably end up on the family piano. Whatever substantial doubts over the question of Guy’s current state of happiness, raised both by his voiced-over letter to his sponsor-child and Martin Armiger’s stingingly melancholic score, the picture itself is one that many spectators understandably associate with desire. The sun, the beach, signs of material comfort and the blessings of children and family togetherness all add up to an idea that many aspire to. This is also an idea that lies beneath and relies upon the expression of divine gratitude explicit in the film’s albeit ironical title. Like this apparent irony, the crushing feelings of domestic ambivalence implied by this final image make a telling impression on us. This image and the marriage that led to it have such an impact on us because they are so dear to us, over the question of desire and its relationship to romantic love, marriage, children and family life. The film does not tell us about this ambivalence – it reminds us.

Given what we know about the ups and downs of marriage and divorce rate, as Irving Singer have highlighted in the vast historiography of romantic love and marriage should be a truism of modern life. At the very least we considered it in its paradoxical postmodern form, as “ceaselessly suspected” by Catherine Belsey we understand love in postmodernity as “naïve”, defined by opposite transformations, commodification and social surveillance. The fundamental desire’s fragility. The interventions of Law are the mark of its absurdity. Through the media and cultural expression. Love is considered silent in its essence. Through the media, however, as Roland Barthes has pointed out, (what it packaged up as) love is endlessly loquacious, even enduringly citational in its banal expression of nightly paraded clichés. Stories and narratives thus place
uncharacteristic behaviour, thus becoming victims of this very fundamen-
Thank God He Met Lizzie as just such a banal expression. But the terms of 
practicality and a sense of inevitable doom linked to a relentlessly durin 

Page 2 [melancholia as highly useful in reading the film, but I do not w 
advocate the exclusion of others. Accordingly, I find it extremely useful 
Campbell, if only briefly, to provide a summary position on romantic love. 
have found enduringly communicative of romantic love’s essential dis 
love/marriage divide at the beginnings of romantic love in the troubadou 
context was about the power of the family, the church and the state. Rom 
in radical distinction to that power. A personal expression, romantic love si 
to one’s own pattern. Jealously opposed by established authorities, howeve 
damnation. As a prime example, Campbell looks to the romance of Triste 
reaction to the news that he and Isolde have drunk the love potion that will 
dilemma. Once Isolde’s nurse tells him, “You have drunk your death.” Tristi 

By my death, do you mean this pain of love? . . . If by my death, you me 
my death, you mean the punishment that we are to suffer if discovered, 
mean eternal punishment in the fires of hell, I accept that, too. (Campb 

The ever-increasing commodification of what used to be called “court 
possible material expectations of middle-class lifestyles after marriage 
contemporary mono-myth of romance – nice boy meets nice girl and they 
keep the whole thing going. The simplicity of Thank God He Met Lizzie’s e 
The romance/marriage disconnect obvious. Even in its most practical and c 
companionship, the viability of love and the prospects for intimacy in rela 
chillingly impossible. In Seminar XX Encore Jacques Lacan invokes the not 
insight into the drama of the unconscious underpinning this incompatibility 
of courtly love are a performance of desire that stand in for consummati 
giving cause and excuse for the obstacles and blockages that pile up against 
forms of perversion, such acts of courtly culture are a potent metaphor fo 
speaking being the relation between the sexes does not take place” (L 
contemporary forms of courtly culture, ritual and commodity concern in T 
role. In Freud’s useful phrase to account for perversion, we may read Guy 

I will begin here by outlining the film’s general themes. Given the narrative 
the way in which the film relies heavily on Guy’s agency, his fantasy of loss a 
of the great cinematic perversions – for its emotional impact. Despite 
however, cannot account for this impact alone. By beginning this article wit 
stasis sequence, I wish to highlight that the sadness, and perhaps even grie 
watching the film are not solely reliant upon the who of loss expressed by 
experienced by both characters and spectators more generally. I argue that 

Page 2
film, in its obvious advancement towards stillness, is not merely Guy’s loss of love through his separation from his former girlfriend Jenny (Frances O’Connor), but the loss of the palpable sense of movement that we know Guy once experienced in his life. It was this capacity for movement that also gave Guy and Jenny the gift of freedom and the gift of movement that it implies. As Laura Mulvey has written of her primary form of “delayed cinema”, “the actual act of slowing down the flow of film” (2006: 8) as we have observed it in the final scene. This last minute retardation acts in the service of one particular form of narrative cinema which, Mulvey considers, creates a “desire for the end, elongating the road down which the story travels, postponing the structurally inevitable conclusion” (2006: 144). Mulvey’s “two grand conventions of narrative closure that allow the drive of a story to return to stasis: death or marriage” have merged in Thank God He Met Lizzie advancement towards stillness, Freud’s death instinct as a kind of “no fault”

“The trouble with happiness is . . . you remember it.”

Alexandra Long’s screenplay begins with Guy’s awkward failure to meet a potential partner at a catered affair expressly designed for the purpose. He then continues his misfortune on two blind dates before finally meeting Lizzie in a chance encounter involving a pregnant cat. We see Lizzie and Guy only once together, lounging by some Sydney side waterway, before the wedding plans are in full swing. A priest is brought in; Guy informs Lizzie a professionally wrapped engagement present which seems to seal the deal and it takes the particular probing of the Catholic priest to raise the spectre of a three shot mini-montage in which she features at passionate moments in their past relationship. The devil of romantic desire seemingly exorcised, the wedding ceremony takes place off screen, and the major part of the film, a wedding reception, can then proceed.

The wedding reception is regularly punctuated by expressions of the fake and the fakery and cynicism of the event. These moments provide the cues for extended flashbacks of Guy’s life with Jenny; their me pubs and parties, embarrassing family get-togethers, the ups and downs of their sexual appetites, the traumas of foreign travel, their fights and, finally, the growing irreconcilability of their differences leading to the bitter-sweet termination of the relationship. Before these flashbacks are done, the functionality of the wedding is made chillingly explicit when Lizzie’s mother Poppy (Linden Wilkinson) produces a forged letter purporting to be from Fong Hu giving an innocent and moving blessing on their nuptials. Knowing it to be a fake, the letter causes Guy momentary terror before he gives into his sense of decorum and continues with his duties at the reception. Later in their hotel room, released of his first night obligations by a tired and emotional bride, that terror is magnified by a speech Lizzie gives him, calmly advocating her need and desire for what used to be known as an “open marriage”. Shocked then resigned, “overwhelmed by life’s choices” as Margaret Smith has observed (Smith, 48), Guy does not argue the point. The film then cuts to a devastating scene in which Guy sees a vision of Jenny in Martin Place. He approaches her with enthusiasm, only to see the vision first disappear in the crowd of cold and wintry spirits rushing to work, and then become occluded by the family picture postcard scene described above. “The trouble with happiness”, Guy writes (and narrates) to Fong I remember it.”

“Like a horse and carriage”

Something about Thank God He Met Lizzie that stands out immediately, for banal, unselfconscious and middle-class it seems in its milieu and subject “first world problems.” As a film about the basic disconnect between romance and straightforward picture of the persistently questioned, but ultimately unshakable marriage customs of the audience for which it is intended? In this sense, “the melodrama of one bourgeois addressing another” as Geoffrey Nowell-Smith puts it (91), which is present here, relies on a certain sense of the mundane to e
emotional dilemmas are usually those closest to home. The greatest strangers to us are most often ourselves. In another sense, however, like Noel Coward and David Lean’s timelessly affecting Brief Encounter theme relies on its very simplicity of expression. Any extraordinary estrangement of the audience from the world represented, such as Matthews observes as central to the types of love stories praised by Andre Breton and Surrealist thought generally (Matthews, 37-50), runs the risk of clouding the already complex issue. The obvious message of the disconnect between romantic love and marriage seems so lost in our culture, the clinging to the mono-myth of romance so tenacious, that Thank God He Met Lizzie impresses upon its audience the fact that all attempts at mystification run the risk of supporting that very tenacity. Placing this affair amongst the guns of V Juliet, the mentally ill characters jumping off Melbourne’s Westgate Bridge, Henry James (Portrait of a Lady, 1997) or even simply making it happen be intellectuals (What I Have Written, 1995), threatens to portray it as something that happens to other people. In its dramatic understatement and lack of hyperbole, in its very middle-class context, a comparatively Australian cinema, Thank God He Met Lizzie demonstrates that the romantic love/marriage disconnect is not portrayed as “their” problem but “ours”.

Marriage, as represented in Thank God He Met Lizzie, is a department store gift registry length list of abominations. From the plot description and brief visual analysis I have already presented, we can see that the film’s marriage portrait shows us the manipulation, deception, convenience, emotional entrapment, fear, community involvement and expectation, nostalgia and compromise that seem central to the institution. Whether any of these characteristics really has the potential to shock any adult who has experienced more than about three weeks of a settled domestic relationship is an important point. As a summary of any important partnership, this might well, at different times in our lives, argue for both the need and the genuine use for the institutionalisation of such relationships. The film itself does not totally shun this point of view. In this context, however, it is testament to the work of the film that these “abominations” do appear shocking and detestable however familiar and even necessary they may be. Beyond what it presents as familiar and practical, however, it is in the way this particular portrait of marriage represents the desire for intimacy in relationships that we see the real source of its conclusions about the abhorrence of marriage. The same may be said for the film’s rendering of even something so basic in marriage as the desire for friendship and companionship.

In their only real moment together as a couple, before they become caught up in wedding preparations, Guy and Lizzie are lounging by the water and talking about how her father, a surgeon, once told her she could become “a doctor, a lawyer or a piece of shit”. Once assured that his own occupational status, or relative lack thereof, will pass muster, Guy begins to admire Lizzie’s once fair hair. Lizzie embarks on a deconstruction of the validity of the adult blonde before Guy attempts to stop her by saying, “Don’t tell me about it. We’ve got the rest of our lives to find out about each other. It will be boring if you tell me now”. In this playful moment, Lizzie presses on, in an intimacy “over-share”, with information about her family history and her first sexual encounter, before Guy stops her mouth with a kiss. At that point the scene dissolves with a high medium shot framing their headless bodies rolling on-top of each other, a clear allusion to the essential biology behind the union which seems to trump all other threatening complications. The personal back-stories of each character, Guy’s relationship with Jenny, and Lizzie’s “married by thirty and then have affairs” agenda among them, will emerge as part of their discourse soon enough. The essential fear and mistrust of genuine intimacy, expressed through Guy’s concealment and Lizzie’s shocking frankness, as part of their marriage is the most disturbing aspect of the film’s portrait of married life. As Cate Blanchett says of the couple, “They sort of don’t want to know about each other.” (Blanchett, “Cast Interviews”)

Somewhere between the need to be kept in ignorance and the need to be horrifyingly overly-informed lies the film’s representation of the fear of the line between intimacy, true partnership and marriage. Importantly, this is a fear that the film does not restrict to its portrait of marriage, but one that is also an acknowledged part of its idea of romantic love. Guy knows this fear as much in his relationship with Jenny as with Lizzie. The difference is that with Jenny he has the freedom to express it and explore its implications, however bleak they may be. [End Page 6]

Lizzie is the frankness expert in the film and she knows how to use that frankness in the fight against intimacy. When Raoul (Jacek Koman) is teasing her about her pre-ordained vision of a marriage...
“you couldn’t expect me to make a commitment like that to someone I knew.” Despite Lizzie’s sophistication in this matter, it is Jenny, from the safety of a presumptively directionless, one night pub ¶ the information/ignorance/intimacy triad. When Guy explains to Jenny that involved, Jenny replies, “Oh, see, you are taking a big risk there . . . you might and then you’ll miss out on a fantastic root.” Of course, nothing about the potential for intimacy. The point made, however, is that deep knowledge of emotional intimacy is presented in the film as not only a threat to good marriage of this kind of intimacy may be desirable within a twenty-something relative thirty-something marriage. Just where it leaves the obvious search for intimacy dilemma.

If the scenes with Lizzie provide us a view of the film’s cynicism about marriage, the Jenny flashback sequences speak of love in its romantic mode. The flashback scenes of Guy’s relationship with Jenny are not nostalgic or rose-coloured in content. Certainly they are warm above all, full of movement. In their isolation from community interests and decorum, these moments stand in high contrast to Guy’s experience of the preparations. For all their relative warmth and colour, however, these moments sweet sort of pain, an affair that is fleeting, potentially fatal (when they are drugged and ultimately lost without the benefit of hindsight). As Guy makes clear in the last words of the film, these moments represent a happiness that is not known but only remembered. Like Brief Encounter, the “probably” gives the narrative its romantic potential, but this potential is so grounded in the armed camp-like detention of the protagonists’ present life that any real thought of romantic fulfilment is little more than fantasy.

Just over an hour into the film, as Lizzie’s “married by thirty” plan is outed by Raoul, Guy reflects on the scene of his breakup with Jenny. The scene is typical of all Guy’s reminiscences throughout the film, but the act of breaking up and the directness and honesty with which the decision is arrived at give the scene a devastating resonance. It is the most moving scene of the film and, in many ways, the most expressive of any real form of love exchange. Common to all their scenes together is the movement of Kathryn Milliss’ hand-held camera, never resting and always maintaining a feeling of uncertainty and high energy in the spectator. As in the moment in this scene when Jenny rushes to find Guy’s hidden photos of Fong Hu, this off-balance movement, like their relationship itself, sometimes becomes disconcerting. Also a feature of all their scenes together, in contrast to the shades of grey and white of the scenes with Lizzie, is the explosion of colour about them. Whatever mood is portrayed, and in this film mood can move across a scale between joy and horror, the richness and variety of colours provides a depth of feeling and a sense of emotional substance to their scenes together. This colour is matched by their Hepburn/Tracy-like, screwball physicality and a verbal banter routine, as here, when they squabble over Jenny’s annoying habit of leaving her clothes on the floor, and the quibble she makes over the plural form of cactus and “other related succulents”, in light of her extensive collection of cacti that have now become odious to Guy.

Where the break up scene turns away from the expected levity, however, it is Guy’s sponsored child in Vietnam. In all their years together, we discover Jenny. Challenged over this, Guy babbles on for a moment about Fong H question of why he and Jenny are not married. What he does not say or understand about his relationship with Fong Hu, and what Jenny’s challenge implies, is that it is a model of the structure of his desire. In the face of the dilemmas of emotional intimacy with Jenny, the distance, cultural estrangement and age gap that he enjoys with Fong Hu provides him with an ideal relationship. Ultimately he sidesteps that emotional conundrum, as his melancholic “crypt” of solitude (Abraham and Torok, 135-6), by intro
their separation. This sidestepping is an act of resistance that demonstrates clearly unwilling, or unable, to cross. That resistance, however, does manage a degree of honesty about their states of mind, which makes the scene end crypt), but Jenny counters by pointing out the emptiness and untouchability feelings “you can’t touch”, but Jenny does not want to hear about his feelings has. Her reaction to this admission is genuinely empathetic, but like a true i cannot see why. In many ways this is a confused, illogical and, in terms of their view uncompatible with the truth of the moment as we might expect it t clueless moment of “what do we do now?” that they find the “end of the tears as Guy holds her with an expression of exhaustion and sadness.

Jenny and Guy’s last and final scene together in the film, in which theyparents, simply underlines the trauma of the previous scene. The substance at the heart of their relationship: that is, the inevitable incompatibility between their social context of their lives. With Jenny’s mind and body moving towards implies the move towards permanent union. This is the very announce expecting. But such external expectations of permanent union and grandch expectations fail to acknowledge, in their push towards the altar, is the biological imperative and male emotional inexperience. Guy’s isolationist en work and counselling contexts as “men in sheds”, and his protection of hi may look like a sit-com joke. That very reticence is, however, an [End Page plays a role, similar to Jenny’s desire for children, in breaking up the rel scenes in the film, the most strikingly consistent element in the break up sce of their union. If Thank God He Met Lizzie shows its portrait of marriage persistent and unbreakable, the film shows romance as brutally true – home hopelessly lost in the empty and intangible space of the past.

**Man Melancholy**

As to Guy’s “men in sheds” emotional obstructions, it is worth noting the same year as Adrian Lyne’s Lolita, this co-incidence suggesting the usefulness of the dynamics of male impairment and loss, most notably represent Ips, which highlighted a continuing strain of cinematic male melodrama in reading Guy’s lament (Nicholls 2004; 2012). This approach relies heavily and constructs both Lizzie and Jenny as objects of an emotional empower male melancholic discourse since Hamlet (Schiesari, pp. 5-6).

The scene of Jenny’s final appearance in the film might have easily been lifted from scenes of mournful parting in films from Taxi Driver (1976) to Shutter Island sense of horror when, on their wedding night, Lizzie suggests they pursue an open marriage, the scene cuts to a windy, cold, drab and grey working day morning in Martin Place. Guy is on his way to w only real colour in the sequence, walking towards him. Guy smiles enthusiastically as they approach each other but as Jenny appears to see him her expression moves gently from a contented air to one of cold reproach. Martin Armiger’s violin and string concerto pauses for seven seconds as the camera is over-cranked, shooting Jenny in slow motion until she finally comes to a halt. As the music track resumes and a very brief piano accompaniment is added into the score, Jenny stands staring towards Guy. Although Jenny seems frozen, other city dwellers pass in front of the camera, at first momentarily obscuring our view of Jenny, and then the shot goes to black as if one of these walkers has lingered. When the shot cuts back to the scene of action, Jenny has gone. Guy’s point of view shot (although not in his own close up) then remains in slow motion for a few seconds more, before standard cranking returns to t
Guy’s close-up is held for an excruciating twenty seconds while his confused state of mind tries to work out where Jenny went and what happened. The sequence then ends with a high, extreme long shot of Guy in the square, looking around, still in his state of confusion, while his fellow workers cross his path from every to work.

The reading of *Thank God He Met Lizzie* as an expression of male melancholia demonstrates its key tendencies: a sense of separateness from a conservative and over-bearing group (Lizzie and her world), the trauma of loss (his life and separation from Jenny), a tendency to fetishise and refuse that refusal (going through with the marriage when he knows it is a fake), an outward show of conformity, self-sacrifice and renunciation of that refusal (going through with the marriage when he knows it is a fake), and finally, a consolidation of his personal authority through melancholic display (the attraction of the spectator’s sympathy for him) (Nicholls, 2004, 1-14).

Guy duly performs all these tendencies throughout the film and they take up the major part of the film’s duration. They are also summarised in the Martin Place scene where, as the man in the grey flannel suit, Guy interrupts his dutiful walk to his Lizzie lifestyle-supporting job to perform his desire, his radicalism, his loss and to receive the mandated adulation and sympathy as the great bourgeois of sorrows. In the years following Daniel Day Lewis’ Newland Archer in *Innocence* (1997) and Jeremy Irons’ performance as Humbert Humbert, Richard Roxburgh’s incarnation of the melancholic Guy is a performance of emotional “sad man candy” that is too similar to sh...

Implying an unrevised Mulvian representation of visual, and emotional, plea 14-28 & 29-38), however, the celebration of male loss in narrative cinema is spectators across the spectrum of gender and sexual identity. But this is the expression of loss that multiple perspectives leak out. In the case of the Martin Place scene, as opposed to being there as a member of the group, consider whether she was, in fact, in that or in any of her scenes. Could Jenny be the face of the intolerable realities of his present situation? Is the unrecognisable version of Lizzie when young, before she got old and serious? Of male melancholia, I am not willing to dismiss it as an utterly suitable read readings. Looking at the film some fifteen years later, however, what stra...

“A relationship is like a shark”

Woody Allen is one of the greatest expressionists of the cinema of male
character and relationship studies however, we can see that he is committed that I am interested in here. Allen specialises in the charms of the type of I Met Lizzie. In his Husbands and Wives (1992), Gabe (Allen himself) and sequence with a final scene of lyrical reminiscence of their life together whic a sad but sweet moment, typical of Allen’s films since Annie Hall (1977), whi to the sadness and trauma of romantic separation. The reason these films v in the middle of any relationship turmoil, is that they advocate the virtues Anni (Diane Keaton) are considering breaking up in Annie Hall, Alvy obse constantly move forward or it dies. And I think what we got on our hands i the role of the humour in these so-called Romantic Comedies is central to t 1928 essay, humour is about assuaging fear and pain, reminding us, “Look amounts to. Child’s play – the very thing to jest about.” (Freud, 1950, 220), away from psychological insight, not to mention the many physical acts of i It also relates directly to the privileging of mobility over stasis that I have er film so far. It is, therefore, a humorous line of dialogue that helps us unders a gender-wide sense and beyond the perversions of male melancholia, as w

Central to the work of melancholia in classical Freudian terms is the subject herself from loss and the past. This “inhibition of all activity” is read by I (Freud, 1984, 252, 263). In the work of Julia Kristeva, we read the logical, mourning in the ultimate stupor, stasis and immobility of the death drive drawn to these ideas of movement, and the lack thereof, by considering brought to the foreground by a 2011 exhibition at the Dax Centre in Melbourne. In the exhibition book of essays, child psychiatrist Pia Brous looks at the id neuroscience and highlights the work of Australian biological psychiatrist “conceptualises the “core” of melancholia as a disorder of movement conceptualisation has it that “psychomotor retardation or agitation is the es

As we have observed in Thank God He Met Lizzie, it is exactly this type of j stake. Through the apparently simple strategy of contrasting the Jenny movement with the creamy, Steadicam and stable diegesis of the Lizzie so point of stasis and freeze-frame, we locate the true centre of despair in the paradoxical relation between movement and stillness”, as Laura Mulvey h: idea of death and destruction (2006, 71& 104). What is mourned in the film is youth and lack of responsibility that, from one perspective and in contrast t says of the “magic” that Guy wants to get back, “why would we want to do we want to go back to what was before?” What Guy mourns, however, movement. The symptoms of melancholia in the film are its predominant present with Lizzie. At the very point when the worst possible expression cannot resist the incredible propulsion towards this stability, a death-drive to

The scenes with Jenny threaded throughout the wedding reception m: experimentation, but the break up scene is not only extremely sad, but the f impresses such a response on us because it implies the greatest of all act demonstrates that, however dead inside Jenny and Guy have become, howe at that point in their lives they still have the ability to move on, to change, experience. This break up is so moving because it is the ultimate sign of love up says, “I love you so much that I am willing to set you free and to spar immobility.” This is the very immobility to which not only the final sn perhaps fantastically perverted, vision of Jenny in Martin Place rests, before
Since the early 1970s, divorce in Australian law is all “no fault”. I am using this phrase to highlight the idea in the film that marriage is essentially perverse but that the film’s protagonists are not to blame for it. “Fault” is still part of popular discourse of divorce, but is not part of the legal grounds for divorce in Australia.

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A Masculine Romance: The Sentimental Bloke and Australian Culture in the War- and Early Interwar Years
by Melissa Bellanta

October 24th, 2014

In 1915, the Australian poet and journalist C. J. Dennis published a book of verse called When read in sequence, the verse told a love story about an uncultivated young man, Bill, and his sweetheart, Doreen, who worked in a Melbourne pickle factory. Though written in verse, the narrative was what we might now call a romantic comedy. Its humor sprang from the fact that Bill was the antithesis of a romantic type, yet he proved himself a hopeless romantic just the same. In the parlance of the day, Bill was an Australian “larrikin.” He was a young rowdy from the city who spent most of his time fighting, gambling, drinking and street-hawking – yet by the end of the narrative he had transformed into a loving husband and family man. Told in the first person by Bill, the work proved enormously popular. It sold prodigiously during the First World War, prompting Dennis to write four spin-off works over the following decade. Over that period, the currency of The Sentimental Bloke (as it became known) grew rather than waned. It became a multi-media phenomenon, comprising a silent film and travelling stage musical, and it was frequently recited on radio and in concert halls.

Crucial to the success of The Sentimental Bloke was the fact that it was a masculine romance. It was a love story expressing heterosexual romantic feeling from a male point of view and in a self-consciously masculine way. As such it touched a cultural nerve. The war and early interwar years were rife with confusion about men’s relationship to women and romance. Australian men had been expected to be warriors during the war, but upon return were expected to transform into caring spouses (Garton). Romantic Hollywood leads such as Rudolph Valentino became celebrities in early interwar Australia, admired for their sophistication and charm (Matthews 4; Teo 2012: 1). At the same time, however, prominent voices such as the bohemian artist and writer, Norman Lindsay, decried romantic love as feminine and marriage as suffocating to men (Forsyth 59). The Bloke helped audiences to navigate these conflicting messages. It insisted that it was possible for a modern Australian man to be romantic without compromising his masculinity, provided he did so in a sufficiently straightforward manner and steered clear of “Yankee” suavity.

The content and reception of The Sentimental Bloke requires us to think more subtly about the relationship between Australian masculinity and romantic sentimentality across the early decades of the 1900s. Chiefly, it requires us to give more credence to Australian men’s interest in certain forms of romantic popular culture, and to masculine constructions of romantic feeling, than most previous scholars have allowed. Yet Australianists are not the only ones who will benefit from contemplating The Sentimental Bloke. In the field of romance studies at large, romantic love is still largely treated as “feminized love,” to borrow Anthony Giddens’ phrase (43). As things stand, the phrases “masculine romance” and “masculine sentimentality” function almost as oxymorons within romance discussions of homosexual romance (eg. Shuggart and Waggoner 26–7). My hope is that this discussion will prompt romance scholars to take more interest in masculine romance, and to consider in the war and early interwar years.
Almost as soon as it hit the bookstores in late 1915, it was apparent that The Sentimental Bloke held a powerful popular appeal. Dennis had engaged in canny publicity for preceding years, publishing a few poems about Bill in an earlier work ("The Sentimental Bloke", "The Songs of a Sentimental Bloke"). Publicity paid off because by 1920 approximately 110,000 copies of the book were sold in Australasia and the United Kingdom (McLaren 92). That was an astonishing figure for any Australian work given the country's population was less than five million at the time. Yet it hardly represented the total number of those familiar with its verse. Reports of read aloud in workplaces, performed on recital stages, borrowed from the New South Wales Bookstall Company Library and handed around among Australian servicemen indicate that it reached a considerably larger audience (Chisholm 58; Lyons and Taksa 67; Laugesen 51).

In 1919, the Australian film-maker Raymond Longford released a cinematic film was also a commercial success. It broke box-office records for a Melbourne that October (Bertrand; Pike and Cooper 120). A theatrical version opened at Melbourne’s King’s Theatre in September 1922. It starred Walter Cornock in the lead role, a man described for years afterwards as the “Original Sentimental Bloke” (“Walter Cornock Coming”; “Pot Luck”). The production played for twelve weeks in Melbourne before touring Australia and New Zealand, continued to be performed throughout Australasia for the rest of the decade, during which time recitations of the verse were also broadcast on radio and performed on the elocution stage (e.g. ‘Sentimental Bloke’: A Triumph of Elocution”).

Inspired by the success of The Sentimental Bloke, Dennis wrote four loosely-connected works of verse between 1916 and 1924. These were The Moods of Ginger Mick (1916), Doreen (1917), Digger Smith (1918) and The Songs of Ginger Mick was also narrated by Bill and became a best-seller in its own right. It concerned the decision by Bill’s larrikin friend Ginger Mick to enlist in the Australian Imperial Forces and travel overseas to take part in the war. Ending with Mick’s tragic death in battle, it had sold over 70,000 copies by 1920 (McLaren 119). Although beyond the scope of my discussion here, fresh adaptations of The Bloke continued to appear throughout the rest of the century. These included a talkie film directed by Frank Thring in 1932 (poorly executed and unpopular, and thus omitted here), a ballet by Victoria’s Ballet Guild in 1952, a new stage musical and recordings of the verse by the country music singer Tex Morton in the 1960s, a television drama in 1976, and another rendition in dance by the Australian Ballet in 1985 (Boyd; Dermody; McLaren 199–200; Ingram). Across this period the book continued to sell: indeed, it is still the highest-selling work of poetry in Australian history (Butterss 2009: 16).

The larrikin everyman

When The Songs of a Sentimental Bloke first appeared, some critics hailed Bill as a novel figure in Australian popular culture. According to a writer for the Sydney Morning Herald, Dennis had broken ground with the work: “a poetic cycle has never been written about such an unpoetic individual as Bill” (“The Sentimental Bloke” was inaccurate. Dennis was not the first Australian writer to use a rough male figure as a romantic protagonist. Four years earlier, in fact, the Sydney-based writer Louis Stone had published Jonah, a novel about a street-fighting larrikin who fell in love with a poor-but-genteel woman and struggled to win her regard. The larrikin had been sent up in the odd vaudeville act performed on Australia’s Tivoli Theatre circuit. These were modelled on English offerings about romantic Cockneys such as Albert Chevalier’s famous music-hall song, “My Old Dutch” (Bellanta Larrikins 35). The use of Cockney figures indeed a feature of British popular culture from the last years of the nineteenth century. In Australia, however, theatrical
songs such as “I’ve Chucked Up the Push for My Donah” (meaning “I’ve given up my street-fighting friends for my
sweetheart”) had a mocking rather than celebratory air. Created in 1892 for the touring British burlesque comedian, E. J. Lonnen, this act ridiculed the very concept of larrikin romance (Bellanta Larrikins). Though the idea of writing about a romantic larrikin was not original, the way in which Dennis went about it was. The bushman had long been presented sympathetically in Australian culture: the essence of the Australian character. The same could not be said for the urban larrikin. In spite of Dyson’s and Stone’s efforts and the occasional story by Henry Lawson (e.g. “Elder Man’s Lane”), larrikins had overwhelmingly been portrayed as vulgar or frightening before Dennis published his work. Back in the 1880s, a panic about a “larrikin menace” in the colonial capitals after a number of nasty pack rapes of young women took place in inner-industrial Sydney. News reporters had written sensational stories of larrikin “brutes” and “fiends.” (Bellanta Larrikins 86–91). By the turn of the century, some writers and artists had started creating mocking caricatures of larrikins – the vaudeville routine just mentioned being an obvious example. Bill was obviously different from these earlier representations in that he was offered as a subject with whom audiences could identify.

The fact that Bill was offered to audiences as a subject of affectionate moments of The Sentimental Bloke. He was depicted in the throes of dissa something more uplifting, though he scarcely knew what it might be:

… As the poit sez, me ‘eart ‘as got

The pip wiv yearning for … I dunno wot.

The preface, written by Henry Lawson, an iconic literary figure in Australian him the status of everyman. “Take the first poem”, he wrote. “How many m something better – to be something better?” Bill was thus presented as an brutish underworld. Though his quaint vernacular and lack of guile, he was decent man, rough around the edges or otherwise.

**The romantic properties of The Sentimental Bloke**

Bill might have appeared alone and vaguely yearning in the opening stanzas the next poem that the narrative concerned romantic love. From that mom Pamela Regis’ hard-line definition of romantic fiction in her Natural Histor, one can tick off each of her “eight essential elements” of romantic nar description of “the initial state of society in which heroine and hero must about his larrikin life (30). It then proceeded to the meeting between hero a in spite of their mutual attraction; and came to a point of what Regis impossible that Bill would prove himself capable of true romance. As one being reborn, ending with the pair joyfully united against the odds.

The first obstacle to Bill’s romantic union with Doreen was in the form of a ‘at coot” (47–52). Unable to help himself, he challenged this socially-su displeased by this show of roughness that she quarreled and split from Bill heard her singing a plaintive love-ballad at a neighborhood “beano” (party obstacle arose after the pair was wed. This took place after Bill was tempete Ginger Mick. Nursing his hangover in bed the next day, he was painfully av with Doreen. “Eight weeks uv married bliss / Wiv my Doreen, an’ now it’s
was soon turned to new life, however, when the couple left the city for a small farm. In the final moments of the action, Bill and Doreen appeared blissfully ensconced in their own cottage, mutually delighting in a newborn son.

The illustrations accompanying the print version of *The Sentimental Bloke* Dennis’ friend Hal Gye, they portrayed Bill as a “Cupid” or “chivalric innocent” (Elliott 254; Cross 57), complete with chubby thighs and stubbily diaphanous wings. On a dust-jacket for an early edition, Gye depicted the couple and Juliet, with a cherub-like Bill playing a concertina at the foot of a balcony. Advertisements for the silent film similarly highlighted its romantic character. One created for West’s Olympia cinema franchise broke down the narrative into its key romantic elements. It comprised four cartoons representing stages in Bill and Doreen’s love-story. In the first, Bill appeared, sad and lonely before he met Doreen; in the second, Doreen was shown snubbing Bill after their quarrel; in the third, the pair were tearfully reconciled; and in the fourth, “hitched.”
Figure 1: Cover image by Hal Gye for a 1919 edition of Dennis’ work
I'm crook; me name is Mud, I've done me dash.

But strike, tha' Yeh'd think a bloke was Queen. 'Er name's Don

And this is What Happens to

"Ah, Kid," she sobs, "yeh nearly broke me 'cart!"

In Addition to the Great P

Harry Morey in "Silent"
AN AMAZING MYSTERY ROM
Australian masculinity and the “open secret” of romantic sentimentality

Since The Sentimental Bloke was so obviously presented as a romance, one might be forgiven for expecting that the text and its protagonist would have been ridiculed in the Australia of its day. A great deal of what we hear about Australian culture and masculinity in this period emphasizes the dry-witted bushmen as a key figure, “laconic” and “sentimental as a steam-roller” (“Anzac Types” cited in Caesar 150). Much has also been written about the celebration of the tough and irreverently humorous returned serviceman in 1920s Australia (e.g. Seal; Caesar; Williams 127–33; Fotheringham 2010). Historian Richard Waterhouse has argued that opposition to Victorian-era piety and morality was paramount in urban Australia’s popular culture by the end of the First World War (176), while Peter Kirkpatrick (52) and Tony Moore (117–43) show that members of interwar Sydney’s bohemian scene regarded marriage and domesticity contemptuously. In actual fact, one of these bohemians did ridicule the Bloke for his romantic sentimentality. The earlier-mentioned artist and writer, Norman Lindsay, burnt a copy of The Sentimental Bloke on a crucifix and described

Fascinatingly, though, mocking reactions of this kind were rare. Even masculinist papers such as the Hand produced glowing reviews (“The Sentimental Bloke” Bulletin; “The Songs of a Sentimental Bloke”; “C. J. Dennis”). The vast majority of critics responded to Bill much as he was presented to them: with affection and/or empathy. After the silent film was released, for example, a reviewer for the Green Room suggested that he had been nervous about whether Arthur Tauchert, the actor playing Bill, would do the justice to the character. “Nearly everybody knew Dennis’ creation by heart, and we all had a hazy mental vision of the gentleman who loved Doreen to distraction”, he wrote. Happily, the actor had acquitted himself admirably: “Tauchert’s Bloke is the Bloke of Blokes” (“C. J. Dennis’ Characters”). Five years later, in 1924, a country Victorian critic waxed rapturous about The Sentimental Bloke musical: “You’ll laugh, you’ll cry… and you’ll join in and say it is the greatest of all” (“The Sentimental Bloke” Horsham Times).

Reports of audiences laughing and noisily applauding recitations of The Bloke responded warmly to Bill (e.g. “Lawrence Campbell”; “The Sentimental Bloke” Chisholm, would later recall the enthusiasm he and his colleagues at a country newspaper felt for The Bloke’s career. Even the most “hard-bitten” of compositors used to beg him to read from it as they worked, Chisholm wrote. “We knew in particular ‘The Introduction’, that delicate tale … of the initial meeting between the Bloke and the ‘bonzer peach’ [Doreen]” (58). Another middle-class reader recalled that even though she had not been a fan of the colloquial verse during her childhood in the 1920s, “The Sentimental Bloke was a great favorite of Dad’s” (cited in Lyons and Taksa 67).

Because The Sentimental Bloke relied so heavily on colloquialisms, it was never regarded as Literature. As Martyn Lyons and Lucy Taksa observe, the work never received “official sanction” (67). It was ignored by most academics until the late twentieth century. Yet this lack of was regarded so affectionately. One of the reasons he was so widely favored “unofficial” knowledge about men and romance that had long existed on the sly, as it were, in Australian culture. Presented masculine tenderness as what Eve Sedgwick would call an “open secret” (145), in other words. Its comedy sprang from the suggestion that all men had the capacity for romantic feeling, even though they tried to hide it beneath a hard-bitten or laconic exterior. Everyone knew that men could be sentimental even though “officially” this was not supposed to be true.

One of the ways that The Bloke gestured at an ordinary belief in male sentimentality was via its original title, Sentimental Bloke. By this means it likened its fourteen poems to romantic songs performed by the earnest young Bill. Male vocalists sang romantic ballads such as “Annie Laurie” and “Belle Mahone” any night of the week in Australian homes or
vaudeville shows in the years before, during and immediately after the war (Bellanta “Australian Masculinities”). Just in case fans missed the allusion, the sequel Ginger Mick made explicit reference to these commonplace songs. In a letter written to Bill from a military camp in Egypt, Ginger Mick declared that ballads such as “Bonnie Mary” and “My Little Grey Home in the West” were dear to Australian servicemen’s hearts. Laced with memories of sweethearts and romantic picnics, these songs helped to sustain Australia’s soldiers as they coped with battle far from home. “When I’m sittin’ in me dug-out wiv me rifle on me knees”, Mick began:

An’ a yowlin’, ‘owlin’ chorus comes a-floatin’ up the breeze,
Jist a bit o’ “Bonnie Mary” or “Long Way to Tipperary”–
Then I know I’m in Australia, took an’ planted overseas.
… O, it’s “On the Mississippi” or “Me Grey ‘Ome in the West”.
If it’s death an’ ’ell nex’ minute they must git it orf their chest.
’Ere’s a snatch o’ “When yer Roamin’ – “When yer Roamin’ in the Gloa
’Struth! The first time that I ’eard it, wiv me ’ead on Rosie’s breast.
We wus comin’ frrom a picnic in a Ferntree Gully train…
But the shrapnel made the music when I ’eard it sung again (61).

In her rich study of Australian servicemen’s reading habits and entertainments during the war, Amanda Laugesen reveals a considerable interest in romantic and otherwise sentimental cultural forms. In their letters home, she tells us, numerous Australian soldiers mentioned the works of Gene Stratton Porter, “a [female with a strong moral message and whose works sold in the millions” (62). Ot Corelli, Jean Webster, Hall Caine and Charles Garvice (who also wrote unde many of whose works were made into films in the 1910s. Laugesen also noted strong sentimentality focused on home and family” (61), and that servable romantic songs of the sort referred to in Ginger Mick (79–104; Bellanta “Aus

In pointing to a significant cross-gender interest in romantic ballads and n was able to appeal to folk knowledge about masculine sentimentality in Th that we need to revisit the standard scholarly accounts of male cultural p Those accounts tell us plenty about adventure novels and sporting [End Pa 1992). Some also tell us about “galloping rhymes” and stories about stoic silent on the topic of a male investment in popular romance. As The representations of galloping adventurers nor of laconic bushmen amount about Australian masculinity. Nor did men confine themselves to cultural ft of masculinity in the early 1900s. Their cultural consumption was always mo

A plain approach to romance

If The Sentimental Bloke tapped a vein of unofficial knowledge about mas-stouched a cultural nerve. The work’s combination of comedy and sentimer was indeed edgy territory in the war- and early interwar years. It is true that performed and cherished in the 1920s and even beyond. They were starting with their quaveringly tender choruses and address of the beloved as “th Mary… / Bonnie Mary of Argyle”). Earnest songs of this kind were made th
by men who were embarrassed by their emotional impact and wanted to demonstrate that they were not in their thrall (Seal 57–9; Bellanta “Australian Masculinities” 426–7). Similar things may be said of the sentimentality focused on home and family among Australian servicemen during the war. That sentimentality had to be carefully managed in order to prevent it from detracting from military solidarity, hedged about by jokes and the celebration of male-on-male company (Seal 66, 75–7).

Contending claims made about the relationship between men and romantic sentiment became even more apparent after the armistice, when servicemen were being repatriated en masse into the world of civilian work and family. During this period, the allure of marriage and domesticity on the one hand, and of carousing and military fellowship on the other, made for a degree of ambivalence about both sets of ideals (Garton). It was in this context that all men were romantic in spite of their hard exteriors (and friendship with mates) really came to the fore. Yet the work went a lot further than gesturing at the “open secret” of men’s romantic attributes. It also suggested that there was a distinctly masculine approach to romantic sentimentality that any man might adopt without fear of embarrassment, the hallmarks of which were plainness and straightforwardness. These were romantic tendencies from a woman’s, and distinguished him from effeminate types.

The key way in which The Sentimental Bloke constructed a masculine approach to romance was by juxtaposing the exemplary Bill with two other male characters, both of whom were portrayed as comparatively effete. The first of these men was the parson who conducted Bill’s marriage to Doreen. The second was the straw-hatted rival who also sought Doreen’s hand. Of these, the parson was the most effeminate. In both Dennis’ original text and Longford’s adaptation, he was dressed in flowing vestments and comically labelled “is nibs” or “the pilot cove” by Bill. At the start of the wedding scene, Bill mocked his mincing manner, mimicking his reading of the vows in what was supposed to be a sing-song voice: “An’–wilt–yeh–take–this–woman–fer–to–be / Yer–wedded–”

O, strike me! Will I wot?

Take ‘er? Doreen? ’E stan’s there arstin’ me!

As if ’e thort per’aps I’d rather not!

Take ‘er? ’E seemed to think ’er kind was got

Like cigarette-cards, fer the arstin’.

Still, I does me stunt in this ’ere hitchin’ rot,

An’ speaks me piece: “Righto!” I sez, “I will.” (77)

As the ceremony proceeded, Bill became steadily more frustrated with its “swell” and “stylish” character:

… Ar, strike! No more swell marridges fer me!

It seems a blinded year afore ’e’s done.

We could ’a’ fixed it in the registree

Twice over ’fore this cove ’ad ’arf begun.

I s’pose the wimmin git some sorter fun

Wiv all this guyver, an ’is nibs’s shirt.

But, seems to me, it takes the bloomin’ bun,

This stylish splicin’ uv a bloke an’ skirt. (79)
This scene was instrumental to *The Bloke*'s message that plainness and approach to romance. There was no doubting that Bill was powerfully in *arstin’ me! / As if ’e thort per’aps I’d rather not!*) Unlike the parson or the “stood for themselves without need for elaborate packaging.

The idea that Bill’s stance on romance was solidly masculine was reinforced by his contrast with the “coot.” This “coot” was full of simpering smiles and “tork” about his office job in Doreen’s company. Bill, on the other hand, was incapable of glib eloquence: “No, I ain’t jealous – but – Ar, I dunno!” (39). His inability to “tork the tork” was portrayed as a sign of the genuineness of his romantic intentions: a cause for laughter, perhaps, but also proof of his salt-of-the-earth straightforwardness. The “coot” also dressed in what Bill contemptuously described as a “giddy tie an’ Yankee soot” (49), while Bill himself preferred ordinary street attire. The film made this distinction even more conspicuous by choosing the weedy Harry Young to play the “coot”. His slender physique was an obvious foil to the burliness of Arthur Tauchert’s Bill.

[End Page 11]

Figure 3. A still from the Longford film showing Bill’s confrontation with the ‘s and Sound Archive, Canberra, Australia.

**Australian masculinity and the Americanized culture of romantic love**

Preserved in the subtitles to the film, Dennis’ description of the coot’s dress as “Yankee” added another dimension to the representation of Bill’s masculinity in *The Sentimental Bloke*. In the eyes of certain interwar critics, at any rate, the Bloke was seen as quintessentially Australian, a refreshing change from the American characters who were becoming increasingly...
prominent in Australian popular culture. As early as 1916, in fact, a writer Bloke’s use of an Australian vernacular as a welcome break from the “Y audiences in “comedies and in plays dealing with the American criminal Comments of this kind were also made in relation to Longford’s film. One F ambience, pleased that it moved “right away from the rather hard and artif The idea that Bill represented a specifically Australian masculinity was partly identity that accompanied Australia’s effort in the First World War (Se consciousness of the [End Page 12] growing clout of American popular cu us, all manner of mass-produced American commodities began making included “technology, machines and gadgets, business methods, fashions a “Yankee” commodities was even more apparent in the 1920s, a dec entertainment companies vigorously expanded their international reach (: Australian public was manifestly enthusiastic about American culture and been a market for them otherwise. Even so, a niggling concern about Ar populace. This was apparent in a defensive insistence on the Australianvaunted as a “True Australian Film.” After the premiere of Longford’s E commended him for marshaling a team “as great in their particular sph assembled”, attempting to place him on a par with the great American film In press interviews about his films in the early interwar period, Longford e settings and characters (“C. J. Dennis’ Characters”; “The Man Behind ‘Ru would speak bitterly of the early troubles he had experienced trying to con Australian film distributors and cinema owners had been so much under been forced to hold the premiere for the film in Melbourne Town Hall, l reinforced the fact that the Bloke came to be regarded as “intensely Austral a normative power through his association with Australian national identity see also “The Sentimental Bloke” Brisbane Courier). More pertinently, i romance was understood as an Australian alternative to the American cultu As Hsu-Ming Teo tells us, Australia’s culture of romantic love was underg (2006). By this, she means that a more commodified approach to courtshij on developments that had already taken place in the United States. For de gifts and paid outings as the key means for a man to express romantic feel popular culture also celebrated men who made declarations of love with a : “You Made Me Love You” (1913), or the alluring heroes of romantic film (1925). In addition, American advertisers promoted commodities such as so that they would enhance their chances of romance with glamorous men. evident in Australia at the end of the First World War.

The Americanizing influences on Australia’s culture of romantic love were Advertisers did not begin inducting Australian men into romanticized cons personal or leisure consumption for men” – products such as Berger P: General Motors-Holden cars – were advertised through images of factories romantic desires (Teo 2006: 181–86). This [End Page 13] made for a dis women’s approach to the culture of romantic love that became increasing was strikingly evident by the time American servicemen arrived in Austral War. Young Australian women tended to regard these “Yanks” as romar Americans’ success with “their” women and superior access to consumer gc

Knowing what we do about the representation of Bill in The Sentimental B
approach to romantic love tended to be so different from Australian women's. The work treated Bill's lack of glamor and suavity as a boon; proof not just of the genuineness of his romantic intentions but his Australianness. Crucially, it also suggested that Australian men risked compromising their masculinity if they entered too enthusiastically into the Americanized culture of romantic consumerism. “Intensely Australian” types were neither supposed to indulge in glibly romantic “tork” nor trouble over their appearance if they wanted to avoid accusations of effeminacy. They were supposed to regard being plain and unadorned as a good thing, even in their dealings with women. This was not because Australian men did not care about romance, however, but rather because such things...
noting that Australia’s first examples of romantic larrikins were influenced by British depictions of romantic Cockney men.

It would be fascinating to explore the use of the Cockney vernacular and characters to voice masculine approaches to romantic love in British culture in the early 1900s, as well as to investigate analogous examples in the United States and elsewhere. The multi-media character and enormous popularity of *The Sentimental Bloke* that examples of masculine romance might fruitfully identified and explored elsewhere in Anglophone society.

The persistence of masculine sentimentality in Anglo- or American culture has attracted attention from a number of scholars in recent years. International scholars (131–46) have indeed grappled with similar issues to those discussed in an Australian context here (see also Chapman and Hendler; Shamir and Travis.) Sedgwick in particular has highlighted the fact that examples of masculine romance might fruitfully identified and explored elsewhere in Anglophone society. At the very least, this work should alert romance scholars to the need to take the relationship between heterosexual masculinity and romantic sentimentality seriously. It suggests that romance scholars should give more thought to the complex relationship between masculinity and romance in twentieth-century culture instead of treating romantic love as “feminize elaborate expressions of romantic feeling or the consumerist culture associated with American popular romance by the 1920s. Demeaning romance as feminine was not the only response to this discomfort, however – another was the construction of avowedly masculine articulations of romantic sentiment such as that of

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[End Page 20]
“We have to learn to love imperially”: Love in Late Colonial and Federation Australian Romance Novels by Hsu-Ming Teo

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In Mary Bradford Whiting’s *A Daughter of the Empire* (1919), Christina Strafford travels to England after her father’s death to live with her cousin, Lady Agatha Strafford. The young Australian woman is dismayed to find the Mother Country “a little fussed-up place where you can’t so much as turn roun’ skirts”. England is a place where people brood over petty problems and in things in their lives and too much time to spend on the little things” (Whiting 55 and 131). Although Desmond, the younger son of the aristocratic Strafford family, falls in love with her, Christina—an outback girl brought up in a mining camp who has dealt resourcefully with floods, fires and other natural and human disasters Colonial and is later banished from the manor because of a silly misunderstanding. Undaunted by her relatives’ rejection, she turns her energy to helping a neighbor run a hospital for wounded men when World War I breaks out. It is only after she saves the Straffords from death during a Zeppelin bombing raid that Lady of this romance novel, the war has claimed the life of Lady Agatha’s adored amputee, but it has also left Desmond heir to the ancient baronial estate at family slowly succumbing to senescence as a result of its sclerotic belief Australian blood. Romance revives an English family, with far-reaching co ideological affirmation not just of Australia’s ties and loyalty to Britain, Empire, Desmond declares to Christina:

I have thought sometimes that you and I have been brought together at ourselves alone, but for some special end. I am a typical son of the old v the past, and you are a typical daughter of the new world, vivid and vig present, and from those two points of view will spring the hope of the fut

Whiting’s novel draws together a number of themes that had developed in . late colonial period – to the decades immediately following Federation: the self-governing British colonies on the southern continent federated to form Christina Strafford exemplifies the superiority of the so-called “Australian young nation – over her English counterparts whose gender ideals, social m a new nation at the dawn of a new century (Lee 129-132). However, Motherland is tempered by a simultaneous recognition of, and cultural del order, even as this is gently critiqued by Whiting. The success of the “Austr landed gentry, and the man she falls in love with exemplifies that class a Australia, the death of her father launches her on a quest for her family’s c quest that will bring her the fulfilment of romantic love and a new family.

This article explores romance fiction from the late-nineteenth and early women writers conceptualized romantic love, gender relation within the nation and British Empire. I suggest that the difficulties of achieving colonial society were due to the vulnerability of immigrant women in misogynistic masculinity in a frontier society; the instability of identity in a and the threat of interracial relationships between English immigrants a
Unhappy love stories dominated colonial romances in the period leading up to Federation, but Federation brought forth a burst of patriotic sentiment and a deliberate attempt in romance novels to craft new relationships that both affirmed ties of loyalty with Britain, while simultaneously emphasizing the superiority of the Australian Girl over the British gentlewoman, as others have argued (Giles 1988 and 1998, Jones, Lee, Sheridan 1995, and Gelder and Weaver); the superiorit of the “Coming Man” – the model of new Australian masculinity; the settler colonial war heroines; and the radical redefinition of Australian “mateship” – traditionally of egalitarian romantic partnership. The rewards of successful romantic love contributed to the building of the young Australian nation and revived the British Empire.

Unhappy endings and other obstacles to romantic love

As Ken Gelder and Rachael Weaver’s Anthology of Colonial Australian Romance Fiction the 1880s to the 1920s have been concerned as much with the failure of stories of successful courtship, love and marriage. Among the earliest Australian love stories identified by Gelder and Weaver is “Hal’s” “The Desolate Homestead” (1866, Gelder and Weaver 13-27), which recounts the shipboard ruin of Mark Stanford's wife (never named) as she emigrates to Australia. The sexual vulnerability of immigrant English women was well-documented, and it was not uncommon for these women to become pregnant on the voyage out to the Australian colonies. For this reason, Richard White observed, the “attitude to female immigrants” among Australian settlers was especially “harsh, since it embodied Victorian attitudes to sex as well as class. J.D. La New South Wales into ‘a sink of prostitution’ was a common one among there was a concerted effort by immigration programs such as the Female Middle Class Emigration Society of the 1860s to send middle-class women out to the colonies. In “Hal’s” story, Mrs. Stanford leaves England to join her husband on his property in the Australian outback but en route to Australia, she falls in love with and is seduced by Arthur Headleigh, the degenerate son of a wealthy squatter (that is, a pastoralist expropriating huge tracts of land simply by dint of being the first European authorized by British legal processes to settle that land). Headleigh had been to be educated and civilized, but the vices and pleasures of the imperial metropole have corrupted him instead. Where sexual attraction would be a marker of “true love” in twentieth century romance novels, desire was often regarded suspiciously by nineteenth-century romance writers who constructed it as the false and often fatal alternative to love. Mrs. Stanford is persuaded to abandon her husband and to live with Headleigh as his mistress. When Headleigh inevitably tires of her and abandons her, Mark Stanford, who still loves his wife, arranges for her to be looked after until she dies. His wife’s infidelity has not only broken Mark; it has also deprived the colony of a valuable worker and pioneer because “Through all their discomforts, and they had many, through all the miseries of the rainy season, Mark was sustained and invigorated by one strong incentive to cultivate the frontier; he simply abandons his homestead. Mrs. Stanford’s betrayal of her husband is doubly a betrayal of the nation because she undermines his nation-building efforts. If Stanford’s love for his wife is supposed to form a sharp contrast with Headleigh’s fleeting passion, it is too weak to enable him to reconcile with her. He is too bound by the social conventions of the time to countenance living with his adulterous wife, and he refuses to see her again. Only at her death does he realize that since he loved her, he might well have made other choices.

Mrs. Stanford falls in love with Headleigh because he is handsome and charming, but also because he misrepresents himself to her. In an immigrant society so geographically remote from the Mother communication were slow, fraudsters could quite easily assume false identities for social and economic advantages, as Kirsten McKenzie (2010) has shown in the case of the convicted forger John Dow who successfully impersonated Viscount Lascelles, eldest son of the Earl of Harewood, in New South Wales during the 1830s. The instability or uncertainty of identity in settler colonial society could thus form an obstacle to the success of love, courtship and...
marriage, especially in colonial romances. In Mrs. Mannington Caffyn’s short story “Victims of Circe” (1891, in Gelder and Weaver 59-91), a very fashionable, sophisticated lady turns up in an Australian country town with her step-brother and together they charm people in the town. She proceeds to infatuate several men who want to marry her. However, this “woman of the world” turns out not to be a lady but an actress, and her scenario of duplicity, Rosa Praed’s romance novel The Maid of the River: An Australian Girl’s Love Story, illustrates how these women are inclined to fall for the deceptions of sophisticated gentlemen – often English – who pretend to a social status or moral character they do not actually possess, who woo them with words and romance, and then cause them to overlook the true “salt of the earth” types of men whose love is less thrilling but more enduring: rough but honest Australian bushmen such as Mark Stanford in “The Desolate Homestead”, or the stolid but ever dependable Willy Chase in Praed’s The Maid of the River.

While the Australian romance novel is clearly an English import, there was a perception that English mores could be an impediment to love in the colonies. Romantic protagonists who fell in love with English immigrants found themselves thwarted by the ties of the English past, while English values and moral character were sometimes equated with emotional dishonesty and a consequent lack of authenticity or genuineness in romantic relationships. Mura Leigh’s short story, “A Romance of Coma” (1878, in Gelder and Weaver 28-36), exemplifies the extinguishing effects of the English past on love in the colonies. Leigh recounts the story of Mary Guthrie, a pretty postmistress in the country town of Coma who falls in love with Hugh Douglas, a new squatter lately arrived from England. Their love, however, remains unfulfilled. When his sister and her husband visit the colonies, they bring with them Hugh’s fiancée – a distant relative for whom he feels only mild affection. In England, he had believed this to be a sufficient basis for marriage. When he emigrates to Australia he finally realises what love and passion might be. In the end, however, the obligations contracted in England outweigh Hugh’s love for Mary; he proceeds with an unhappy marriage while Mary becomes increasingly despondent and eventually leaves the town.

Yet colonial Australian society was by no means regarded as naturally conducive to romantic love and marriage, or automatically superior to British society. One of the main reasons why love fails in colonial romances from the mid- to late nineteenth century is because of the misogynistic and irresponsible masculinity that developed along the frontier, a masculinity antithetical to the notion of the domesticated husband who loves his wife. In Australian history, the frontier/outback/bush experience has often been eulogized as the essence of a masculinized Australian culture. Russel Ward’s The Australian Legend famously contended that Australia’s independence, anti-authoritarianism and spirit of mateship developed in the bush. This idealistic view of the bush and the values it fosters ignores the threat of white men to Aboriginal people, and also to white women. As Marilyn Lake has argued:

In frontier societies white men roamed free, but men’s mobility seemed to spell women’s misfortune. In feminist discourse, mobile men were dangerous men and the wandering members of the British race — the nomad tribe, the swagmen, the men on the track — became a bunch of marauding white men.

The danger the mobility of itinerant white men posed to romantic love can be seen in J.S. Borlase’s short story “Twelve Miles Broad” (1885, in Gelder and Weaver), where the romantic hero visits his fiancée Gretchen and her father, Matthew Fallon, a German wine-maker, on a very hot Christmas Day. Their Christmas celebration is interrupted by a dirty swagman who wants to join them for a meal. When he is offered money to buy himself lunch at a nearby bush inn instead, rather than the hospitality and company he wants, he takes his leave but avenges himself by setting fire to the bush and destroying the Fallon’s property. The narrator manages to save Gretchen but her father dies in the terrible conflagration that Christmas Day.

In many Australian romance novels, masculine frontier culture leads to physical violence and abuse, as in Mary Gaunt’s Dave’s Sweetheart (1894). Of all the romance novels produced during this period,
Forrest’s Justin’s alcoholic past (until God miraculously cures him through prayer in the Australian bush), the heroine of Mabel worthy of such a gift” despite Iris’s assurances that her love for him remains unchanged. Where Iris is able to overlook to temptation and revert to alcoholism again. This, he feels, forms an obstacle to love and marriage because he is “not respect, but he fears that if he ever leaves Tasmania and returns to reclaim his aristocratic title in England, he will succumb alcohol. Only after he emigrated to Tasmania was he able to live a “clean” and healthy life and recover a measure of self- “drunkard” who has ruined his life and squandered his privileges and opportunities in England because of his addiction to courtship and marriage. Justin, the hero of Marie Bjelke Petersen’s Federation romance novels the hero’s propensity towards alcoholism constitutes the most significant obstacle to romantic

One of the things that made men so dangerous on the frontier was the rampant alcoholism that accompanied the culture of the Australian feminist movement of the late nineteenth century developed close ties with the international Women’s dangers women encountered in frontier regions.

For the heroines of colonial romances, the frontier is also characterized by put their daughters in untenable situations where it is difficult for them to

Girl (1917), Marion Pike, the “selector” (homesteader) girl of the title, has abusive treatment of her mother. She tells one of her suitors that a “de “something I could never be with any man, not – not now. I’ve seen so m Mum’s shoes for just five minutes now and then so that I could flatten him” The Wild Moth (1924), fares even worse initially; she meets the hero when he rage, and the hero is forced to shoot him. Both novels end happily w “wholesome” men who are notably different from other men on the frontière, where undomesticated men turned feral threatened, rather than : of these romance novelists did not identify themselves as feminists, they no dangers women encountered in frontier regions.

One of the things that made men so dangerous on the frontier was the ramř mateship and the concomitant rejection of domesticity, either in the form abandonment of wives and children (Lake 1986, Spearritt, and Grimshaw et the Australian feminist movement of the late nineteenth century develo Christian Temperance Union, which originated in the United States and (Grimshaw [End Page 6] 200). This issue was not emphasized as much ir Federation romance novels the hero’s propensity towards alcoholism cons courtship and marriage. Justin, the hero of Marie Bjelke Petersen’s The “drunkard” who has ruined his life and squandered his privileges and oppp alcohol. Only after he emigrated to Tasmania was he able to live a “clean” respect, but he fears that if he ever leaves Tasmania and returns to reclaim to temptation and revert to alcoholism again. This, he feels, forms an ob: worthy of such a gift” despite Iris’s assurances that her love for him rem Justin’s alcoholic past (until God miraculously cures him through prayer Forrest’s Hibiscus Heart (1927) finds it much harder to disregard the hero’s
bush girls, she could not take what they called the state of ‘being potted’ in a sporting spirit. Even if she smiled, as in duty bound, deprecatingly, in her soul she shuddered” (178). The greatest transformation in this novel occurs in Miranda when she realizes that if she wants to be married to Ted, she has to force herself to ignore his occasional lapses when he is out drinking with the boys.

The final obstacle to romantic love in love stories from this period was the racial threat posed by Aborigines. In the mid-nineteenth century, the threat consisted of Aboriginal attacks on settlers in the outback, but such external threats could create the opportunity for strengthening romantic ties if the couple survived the violence. Douglas Sladen’s “The Inside Station” (1866, in Gelder and Weaver 202-214) features a “plucky”, “pretty head to foot almost as much like a man as a woman” and disdains men, error of her misanthropy when a “new chum” – an English immigrant – station in “the Never Never country”. The attack was a revenge massacre for the abduction of an Aboriginal girl by a white man. In return, the white men massacred the Aborigines. At the end of the less of the fast-disappearing aborigines of Australia” (212), but in the a successful conclusion of the Englishman’s courtship. The racial threat to from the possibility of miscegenation, especially in post-Federation novels. An Aboriginal woman referred to in the novel only as “the handsome half-cast” Dell Ferris and the hero Tom Resoult, because she is in love with Tom. Not Because she is not a pure white woman, she does not understand love, no writes that “only one thing looked out of men’s eyes at her. It was Lust, no caste” makes plans to kill Dell, but the heroine is saved by another Aborigi her cousin. When her racial heritage is discovered, the “half-caste” give thinking that: “Had she been Eurasian, half Maori, Samoan, it would hav Australia! It was like negro blood in America. And it was ‘no good’” (192). hero Tom) might desire her, they would never marry her. In the end, she r river and drowns. It seems that the colonial or Federation love story could o

Clearly, the obstacles arising specifically from the Australian colonial conte: these issues continue into the post-Federation period. What, then, makes love novels of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century?

**Happy endings and reasons why love succeeds**

The Australian colonial romance novel began to take shape in the 1880s “Australian” gripped the collective imagination and intercolonial talks p underway. Australian literary culture of the fin-de-siècle was dominated Bulletin magazine which championed the mythical ideals of the Australi agenda summarized in its masthead slogan, “Australia for the White Man” days ran a “women’s page” and published the work of women writers, masculinism. The cluster of male writers who became associated with the had little time for women, the romance genre or Britain. Yet Australian subscribed to its nationalist, bush-celebrating ethos while striving to insert w were excluded (see Bird’s discussion of Miles Franklin), and being consci as serial publications in Australian weekly periodicals (Sheridan 1986, 51), F biggest market. Indeed, some Australian women writers including romanc Rosman resided in London and wrote many of their Australian novels in t: result was an attempt to write love stories which foregrounded the distinct environment, while weaving these stories back into the fabric of the British I
That romance novelists in the far-flung outposts of Empire should be “writing back” to the imperial center was inevitable, for London was the center of Anglophone book-publishing and the Publishers’ Association of Great Britain controlled the publication and distribution of books throughout the Empire (Teo 2012). In novels involving British and Australian protagonists, romantic love succeeds australianness of the characters, environment, gender relations, or culture. The insistence by a number of authors that the Australian ingredient in the romance novel made a happy ending more likely was as much a response to insecurity about British condescension as to nascent feelings of truculent nationalism. Many love stories began by emphasizing the ways in which the British misperceived and did not bother to understand At “Victims of Circe” (1891, Gelder and Weaver 59-91) summed up Australian words: [End Page 8]

To the well-constituted British mind Australia is invariably connected either with sheep or convicts. If a rich Australian goes home and dispenses his coin as befits him, we give him the benefit of the doubt, and talk sheep; if he is not quite rich enough, or sticks to his gettings, we make a wild effort to find out what his father or his more remote ancestor was sent out for. (60)

Against such stereotypes of Australians, Australian romance novelists constructed counter-stereotypes particularly of the English upper classes. Cold, snobbish, ignorant, condescending, overly formal, hidebound in tradition, relics of a time gone by, and fairly ineffectual in the modern age, they needed to be shaken out enterprise. In Alice Grant Rosman’s post-Federation romance, Miss Bryde is considered by her relatives to be on the shelf and cannot support do anything “useful”. When her Australian cousin Katherine visits, Helen about Australia, thinks of it “as a wild and desert country, full of impossible Supreme Court of South Australia, “distributing justice to dark ladies and gentlemen that “Colonials are always so delightful” (15-16). She tries to Australian cousin’s knowledge of the world, cultural richness and experiences through Katherine that Helen gradually realizes how unsatisfactory her humbles her, changes her attitude towards others and makes it possible for Helen to fall in love and to be loved in return. Katherine is, of course, an example of the “Australian Girl” that so many (Dalziell, Gelder and Weaver) have discussed in relation to the colonial womanhood that distinguished Australians from Britons, and made it possible for them to flourish. The Australian Girl developed as a national type towards the end of the nineteenth century, a categorization based on the dubious science of the day that tried to descry physical, psychological, moral and social characteristics in particular “races” (White 64). As Richard White has observed, when visitors commented on the Australian girl, they praised her freshness, beauty, good sense and lack of affectation. The colonial Miss was the salvation of English visitors trapped into endless colonial balls and tea parties. What delighted most observers was what they called her independence.

Much of the extant Australian scholarship (Giles 1988 and 1998, Sheridan 1995, Dalziell, Gelder and Weaver) on the colonial romance novel has focused on the Australian Girl because colonial women writers used this figure to insert themselves into a masculine narrative of nationhood and national identity that deliberately marginalized or excluded women (Sheridan 1986 and 1995). Giles argues that colonial romance novels contributed to the creation of women as heroic “national types” (1988, 223) because romantic heroines were exemplified by the “Australian Girl” – symbolic of the new nation. This figure has been the subject of Tanya Dalziell’s (2004) of Australian women romance writers in furthering the objectives of capital
Rachel Weaver’s (2010) suggestion that the colonial romance “provided a crucial site for the struggle” over what Australian womanhood should mean: “social restraint and maturity”, sublimating sexual and other desires to social and familial responsibilities as a subject engaged in the nation-building process, or resonated with the emerging nation as it tried to assert its independence. An Australian heroine contended “with the idea of being Australian, in either the national intersects with her quest for love and the process of her formation as a hero being an antiquated colonial product of British culture, as contemporary male writers and later Australian critics contended dismissively (Giles 1988, 226-227), Australian women’s romances actively contributed to the cultural imagining of the new nation-state.

Giles has traced the development of the Australian Girl as romantic heroine. Rosa Praed’s *An Australian Heroine* (1880, published under Praed’s maiden name R. Murray Prior) features Esther Haggart as the eponymous heroine, “a daughter of the bush with a special spiritual quality” who astonishes her English relatives with her “outstanding moral integrity and stamina … fortified by her Australian origins” (Giles 1988, 232). Praed would go on to develop an impossibly idealistic image of the Australian Girl as romantic heroine in “The Bushman’s Love Story” (1909, Gelder and Weaver, 251-269). In this short story set in London, one of the Australian characters praises the heroine Theodora Swifte who is currently making her mark in London society, particularly in suffrage circles. Theodora is just my model of what a woman ought to be: can talk and laugh and dance, and will have every man in the place stepping to her tune. … Whoever else goes under, she will always come out for what she supposes are her rights. She don’t care about rights. She can do the stockman, sit a buckjumper or she can cook a dinner that you’d enjoy eating, and make her frocks – an brains. Why, she’s taken her M.A. degree in Sydney University, and now Woman Question. (256)

Gelder and Weaver (5) have observed that there is a measure of ambivalence about this quasi-feminist figure, affiliated with but also differentiated from the New Woman by the fact that although she is politically progressive and highly educated, although she has casually achieved what British women are still struggling so hard to obtain and is now teaching the British how to deal with the Woman Question, “she don’t care about rights”.

Other Australian Girls in post-Federation romance novels share a similarly ambivalent attitude towards feminism, partly as a result of Australia being the second country in the world (after New Zealand) to grant female suffrage to its population upon Federation. The English feminist governess in Mary Bradford Whiting’s *the Australian achievement when she tells Christina Strafford: “I was forgetting that you come from Australia. Woman has asserted herself more successfully there than we have been able to do at present. But our day is coming” (106). For Christina, that day is already here and she sees no need to go on about it. Praed’s heroine in *An Australian Girl’s Love Story* (1905), Marion Pike in Broda Reynold’s *Whiting’s A Daughter of the Empire*, and Miranda Garry in Mabel Forrest’s *Hibiscus Heart* are beautiful, intelligent, practical, resourceful, independent, and they do not waste their lives waiting around for men to court them, pining for love. Their lives are already full and fulfilling, and this in love with them. These love stories succeed because the fortitude of (below) enables the romantic couple to overcome all kinds of barriers: cultural.

The counterpart to the Australian Girl is the Australian hero, patterned after what was known in the era around Federation as the “Coming Man”, a new racial type of masculinity forged by the environment and specific Australian experiences, and characterized by “independence, manliness, a fondness for sport, egalitarianism, a certain disrespect for authority” (White 76-77). These were characteri
eulogized by the Bulletin magazine: a highly influential anti-imperial, natic
siècle Australian culture with so many of its masculine stereotypes, and which
or culturally deficient” (Giles 1988, 226). But in the hands of romance novelists
the bushman were substituted with characteristics that were shared by Emí
wilderness and made domestic life possible in frontier regions (Teo 2004)  
*Girl’s Love Story* featured just such a hero in Willy Chase, the “superinten
many another young Australian, bred in the backblocks, … was a splen
common sense, but not remarkable for the finer qualities of intellect or en
lacks the glib charm and flattering words of a visiting Englishman who sedu
with child. Willy, however, shows his sterling qualities in that he continues to
the ground around her alcoholic father’s home, “civilizing” the bush and m-
surprisingly for a romance novel during this period, Willy’s love for Nuni
Englishman and he marries Nuni regardless of her illegitimate child. Such
England at this time, where virginal heroines who are seduced are fit for litt
however, the qualities of the Coming Man and the Australian Girl, and if
physical and environmental hardship, are sometimes enough to defy the c
grant Nuni and Willy a happy ending.

Romantic love also succeeds in the colonial and Federation romance n
Australian bush, and in this regard, women’s romance novels differ in impo
literature of the period. Where colonial literature had represented women
frontier regions (an echo of the adage that “the Empire was no place for a v
physical absence of women in the bush [End Page 11] does not mean the al
Interior, the outback, the red centre, the dead heart, the desert, a waste
unforgiving mother (Schaffer 23). In most colonial representations the l
conquered and tamed”, but it is “also a loathed and feared plain of exile wh
metaphorically, resides here” (Schaffer 23). Not so, however, in colonial and

In romance novels of this period, the Australian bush purifies, transforms,
love to succeed. Broda Reynolds’ *The Heart of the Bush* (1910) and Praed’s *M
(1886) and *The Maid of the River* (1905) all feature love stories where th
character of the Australian Girl or the Coming Man, uniting the lovers and
harsh, frightening and destructive – the hero and heroine of Reynolds’ *The
eight days, getting caught in a bush fire and nearly dying of exposure – bu
eviron are a superior species to all others and more likely than most to n
Praed’s “The Bushman’s Love Story” (1909) has had her character mol
droughts, floods, agrarian recession and other difficulties to redeem the h
bush also permits women certain latitude in gender roles. Because Miranda
lives in the bush, she is able to take on many tasks or roles considered “ma
and makes a home in it, rather than her stepbrother to whom the bush
*Jewelled Nights* (1923), the heroine cross-dresses as a young man in or:
mining activities in Tasmania, where she proves to be a far more successfu
(2003) has argued that Bjelke Petersen subverts gender expectations throu
the end, gender is irrelevant to the formation of the couple” (123), but this c
space of the bush.

Bjelke Petersen, a Danish immigrant, was among the most ardent promoter
the Australian landscape (Alexander). Her Tasmanian romance novels pub
earliest literary eulogies of the State’s wild and sublime landscapes” (Hay
power of wilderness” (Haynes 2010, 43). Bjelke Petersen’s *The Captive Sing.
bush, where the alcoholic English hero finds the lost English heroine, finds God, and finds the strength to stop drinking, thus allowing him to marry the heroine in good conscience and to resume his position as the heir to an earldom. At the end of the novel, an American woman comments that “they are the real thing; or the reader knows that without their transforming experience in the Tasmanian bush, neither would have found love nor their calling in life.

In Australian mythology, the homosocial bonds of “mateship” – more profound, more emotionally fulfilling and more enduring for men than the ties of heterosexual romantic love and the nuclear family – were forged through the experience of men along the frontier. However, Australian romance writers transformed heterosexual companionate partnership, often held together by the hero’s work ethic, one based on the pragmatic realities of colonial life, especially frontier life. As Bernice McPherson observed, Australian colonial women did not accept the middle-class English notion that “it was not ‘feminine’ or ‘ladylike’ for a woman to work in paid employment outside the home” (12). Persistent labor shortage in the colonies meant that “It became acceptable, indeed desirable, for middle-class women to take on all sorts of jobs deemed unsuitable in England. And it became a model for the daughters of the household to take on responsibility” (McPherson 13).

As McPherson has suggested, Ada Cambridge’s short story “A Sweet Day” is an early example of the Australian Girl’s work ethic. Lord Thomas de Bohun, twice-married son of a duke who was “sick and tired of womenkind” comes out to Australia because “He thought a year or two of travel in a savage country, free of all the trammels of civilization, would give him a rest” (150). He is rich, idle, bored and restive, but “as soon as he escaped into the country he was all right. Clad in moleskins and a Crimean shirt, with a soft felt hat on his head, and big spurs on his heels, he galloped about at kangaroo hunts and cattle musters, a simple bushman of the bush” (150). He meets Letty Kemp, the daughter of his country host, and is fascinated by her because she isn’t interested in flirting with him. Instead, her attention is entirely absorbed by her bee-keeping and she works incredibly hard “with an energy interesting to contemplate in a person of her sex and years” (155). He is intrigued because she understands commerce and has ambitions to expand her honey business. He falls in love with her because she teaches him to be “useful”. When he marries her, this Australian Girl makes “an excellent duchess” because she manages “great households”, rears “young dukes”, and “transferred her interest in honey to the wives of her husband’s tenants”, teaching them to become financially independent.

Alice Grant Rosman made the same point about hard-working, entrepreneurial Australians as opposed to their idle British counterparts in two of her novels. In *Miss Bryde of England* (1915), Katherine is particularly critical of the supposedly English propensity for idleness. She tells her English cousin Helen that her class: had been brought up to do nothing, because no one ever imagined they would have any necessity to do anything. That is the general rule among your leisured classes …. The girls are brought up to marry, and the eldest boy to inherit the property; then when some unexpected calamity happens, the world without the slightest preparation or equipment. Even if girls don’t marry, and there is very little money. Then, I suppose, they become what you call decayed gentlewomen by and by. (133)
When Helen is accidentally embroiled in a silly and baseless scandal involving the local vicar, she is forced to seek help from her competent and capable Australian cousin. Under Katherine’s tutelage, Helen learns secretarial skills, earns her own living, changes to become a more considerate and humble person, and thus the hero falls in love with her. The superiority of Australians’ work ethic is especially emphasized in Rosman’s *The Back Seat Driver* affection develop more naturally among Australians because they are used to hard work. Again, the English heroine Constance looks down on Australians and scorns their preoccupation with commerce. By contrast, the Englishman she is to marry, Bill Trevor, has been wounded in the First World War and as a result, “had settled down into a dull but comfortable rut of inanition” (23). Constance sees little wrong with Bill’s attitude and lacks unevenly until Bill meets his Australian friend and fellow war veteran, Dick, wasting his life and opportunities, Dick has been busily getting on with building.

The Australian had his Government behind him as well as important commercial interests, for his experience with the Air Force during the war and his pioneering work at civil aviation sit the least overawed by the magnitude of his task, and obviously looked forward to it with delight. (42)

The capacity and willingness of the Australian Girl to work qualifies her as companionate marriage and partnership. In Rosman’s *Miss Bryde of England* London, she deals with all practical matters such as finding accommodation belonged to a nation that out of its very youth, out of the significance of its out of the significance and struggle of pioneering days and all they meant of gallantly shared labour and effort, had evolved a saner attitude recognizing that in the fitness and equipment of its women, no less than of its men, lay the surest way to economic strength and prosperity. (25)

Rosa Praed’s *Lady Bridget in the Never-Never Land* (1915) emphasizes the imperialist who wants to be a Cecil Rhodes in Australia, pioneering a stat aristocratic Lady Bridget to be his “Mate” as well as his “Ideal” woman. “You shoulder to shoulder, back to back — no gettin for you mate, if it comes to a pinch” (97). After many trials in the bush, Bridget finally learns what it means to be “a thorough-going “mate”” to her Irish peer, has to learn what the Australian Girl Theodora Swifte instinctively knows in Praed’s “A Bushman’s Love Story”. Theodora is one of those true women who are spiritually advanced enough to know that love is the most sacred, the divinest thing in God’s universe, and that it may not be given to any but the God-ordained mate. Then, the woman and the man are as one perfect whole, and there can be no question of injustice to the one equal. (264)

In this way, the masculinist “Bush ideal” of Australian mateship, which encompasses the heterosexual meaning of a partner or spouse. These romance novelists insisted that the qualities of homosocial mateship could be found in a relationship with a heterosexual mate; that mateship could encompass romance, companionate marriage and a gender equality in rights that depended not on legislation but on love – and hard work, of course.

In the end, the success of romantic relationships between Australians or Britons and Australians rested on supercilious but simultaneously anxious claims about the superiority of Australian culture. This purity”, this “purity”, this “
either artificially repressed and inhibited, or decadent and corrupted. The emotions among the English arises in Rosman’s *The Back Seat Driver* in which embraces and public displays of affection as “merely an eccentric integral part of being engaged”, and when her fiancé hugs her in public, admonishes him: “Don’t, Bill. Somebody might see” (43). In *Bjelke Petersen* she visits Australia, Iris Dearn waxes lyrical about the land and its people: “I love their great, almost primitive, simplicity; it has something of the same grand force about it as their immense tangled bush. Australians have lived so near the heart of Nature that they have retained a wonderful, natural integrity. I should imagine it type” (152). Her friend Mrs Henderson adds: “Natural integrity has almost died out in certain parts of Europe, and an artificial culture has taken its place” (152); artificial, and also materialistic and cynical. In the same novel, the English aristocrat Lady Maud scoffs that love and “its servant, passion” are “hopelessly ancient sentiments” (3). There is no room in the modern age for “the kind of love which would lay down life itself for the object of its devotion”, for “That kind of affection died with Romeo. In these days,” says Lady Maud, “we flirt with the good-looking men, but we marry the rich ones” (3). By contrast, gender relations in Australia were ostensibly more “pure” and “natural” without the flirtations, game-playing, petty proprieties or constant fear of scandal and shame. This is why the English hero and heroine have to come to Australia to be transformed by its bush-inflected culture before they can fall in love, and when they do, their passion is purified by the bush. In *Miss Bryde of England* Australian Katherine has the advantage over her English cousin Helen because she like other Australian girls, grew up in the unrestricted, sane, healthy atmosphere in which ignorance was never paraded as virtue, nor evil girls always had plenty of friends of both sexes, who were little less the friend always welcome there. … The result was natural. She was pure-minded women are not. Sordid things had no attraction for her (89).

Being “purer”, Australian characters in these novels are quicker to recognize pursuit or protection of it. 

Short stories about love and romance novels prior to Federation tended romantic love in the colonies; both male and female writers of love stories women in the colonies, especially along the frontier. After Federation, in colonial romance persisted, but in an access of post-Federation nationalistic character and culture were ultimately sufficient to overcome such obstacle: more likely to have happy endings than the colonial romances. As Giles (If nineteenth and early twentieth century Australian love stories provided wo the story of the nation at a time when the “Bulletin school” was intense xenophobic masculinist Australian culture and identity. Australian wom transformed the bushman into a romantic hero, matched in quality and cha of Australian culture and character was dwelled upon almost obsessively in t However, because women novelists were aware that their primary market published in Britain first before being imported to Australia, as was Bjel really rules of Australian superiority with obsequious assi Eriksson (2012, ch. 3) has shown, British travelers to Australia from the 18th with the question of how the issue of independence could coexist with d Australian romance novelists’ solution to this problem was to knit British an for the advancement of Empire. The imagined debilitation of English culture weakening of the English economy would be reinvigorated by Australian imperial loyalty and commerce is exemplified in Australian Dick Dumares Rosman’s *The Backseat Driver*. Staunchly Australian, Dick nevertheless af
Constance that “you’re wrong if you think England is just one little island wherever English men have carried the English law. The chap who said it is sometimes a corner of a foreign field knew a thing or so” (89). Just as Dick had proved his loyalty to Britain by fighting in the Great War, now, he claims, he and his English fiancé will prove that loyalty by embarking on “the adventure of Australia and Britain (89). Dick’s claims are rejected by Constance, but Desmond Strafford in Whiting’s *A Daughter of the Empire* Australian Christina, Desmond has found a new mission in life after the First World War. He proposes that after they are married, he and Christina will “visit all the Dominions and study the conditions of life in them, and see how they affect the conditions of life at home” because he should “like my special work to be in connection with questions of Imperial policy” (287-288). The marriage of an Australian to a Briton always serves the high-building:

We have been told in the past to think imperially and we have learnt the bloodshed; but now we have to learn to love imperially, and with that knowledge will come the true fellowship of the sons and daughters of the Empire which will help to bring peace and

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