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JACK SHALL HAVE JILL?

AN EXPERIMENT IN LITERARY CRITICAL APPRECIATION, USING A  
COMPARISON BETWEEN THREE NINETEENTH-CENTURY NOVELS PRESCRIBED  
BY THE CAPE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT AND A RANDOM SAMPLE OF MILLS  
AND BOON POPULAR ROMANCE FICTION.

THESIS

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### ABSTRACT

The novel as an art form provides writers with the opportunity of exercising their imaginative power to create a 'speaking picture' of life. Whatever form that picture may take, it is vital that it should offer relevance to real life.

The literature teacher's earnest intention, therefore, should be to encourage an appreciation of literary novels among adolescent pupils in order to enrich the quality of their living and to sharpen their awareness of the human condition.

Teaching adolescents to discern the essential differences between the novel of quality and the novel which exists purely to provide wish-fulfilment and sensual titillation is the aim of this dissertation.

Thus a structural analysis of the literary novel is presented, asserting that certain aspects of the novel should be identified and appreciated by the developing reader.

Three novels which have recently been prescribed by the Cape Education Department for pupils in standards 9 or 10 are briefly examined in order to test the intensity of their illusion of reality in conjunction with the literary skills of their creators. These novels are Pride and Prejudice (Jane Austen), Wuthering Heights (Emily Brontë) and Tess of the d'Urbervilles (Thomas Hardy). Each has been viewed from a different angle, but each reveals its right to be evaluated as great literature.

In order to develop literary appreciation among teenage readers, and to convince them of the delights and insights to be gained, it is proposed that comparison of the 'literary' with the 'unliterary' novel should promote discernment and sound judgement. Popular romance fiction, as published by Mills & Boon, is therefore investigated. These stories enjoy immense popularity, particularly among teenage girls.

Far from promoting the illusion that life has been faithfully represented, these novels are shown to reveal a world manipulated to suit both the author and the reader: life as it might have been rather than as it is.

A sample of adolescent responses to this type of comparative reading is provided in the last chapter. These responses reveal that the pupils' critical faculties were engaged and literary appreciation was evident.

## INTRODUCTION

Arranged in ever-growing piles on every counter-shaped article in the room, are small paper-backed books of similar shape and size. The pictures on the covers portray a variety of settings – some exotic and 'Eastern', others room-confined and intimate. One thing they have in common – a man and a woman.

I pick up ten books at random. The men are dark-haired in eight of them; the women, blonde. They are all products of a publishing house which has become a 'bestseller' – not by title of book, nor by author – but by type of fiction offered to certain willing readers. The 'novels' are known simply by the name of the publishing house: Mills and Boon. The titles are usually irrelevant (Bitter Harvest, The Waterfalls of the Moon, Dangerous Tide, Dilemma in Paradise...) but the authors may draw a second glance from the initiated – some being more popular than others.

'Why bother with them?' the serious educationist or literary critic might ask. The answer to that is the reason for this dissertation: 'Because, like Everest, they are there.'

They are there; they are read; they are sold by the thousands every year; and women from the age of ten, which includes hundreds of young school-girls in whom I, as an English teacher, have a particular interest, often read very little else.

This study, therefore, has as its aim the investigation of a random sample of these 'novels' in order to answer the following questions:

- Why are they so popular?
- Who are the readers?
- Why have they never been prescribed for senior high school pupils?
- Should they be used for comparative purposes in high school literary appreciation programmes?

In addition, the emphasis will be on an assessment of the literary novel as an important educational instrument in the teaching of English as a first language to senior high school pupils (standards nine and ten). Three classical novels, ranging from the early to the late nineteenth century, have been selected for scrutiny. They are:

Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen (1813)

Wuthering Heights by Emily Brontë (1846)

Tess of the d'Urbervilles by Thomas Hardy (1891)

These three novels have been selected from those prescribed in the mid-1980's by the Cape Education Department for pupils in standards nine or ten.

Some critics might feel that if my intention is to draw some sort of comparison between the literary and the 'unliterary' novel as a teaching aid, it would be more pertinent to select novels written in the twentieth century.

My reasons for choosing those listed above are five-fold:

Firstly, Pride and Prejudice has several similarities in plot to Mills and Boon popular romance fiction. It would be interesting, therefore, to study the point of departure (if there is one) in Jane Austen's novel.

Secondly, Wuthering Heights contains aspects of the Gothic influence, with the "dark, Satanic hero" (Wellek, R. & Warren, A., 1949, p.228) in the form of Heathcliff, often echoed in the Mills and Boon type of hero. The violence of that hero is also a recurring theme in Mills and Boon romances.

Thirdly, Tess of the d'Urbervilles has proved to be a popular choice for standard ten pupils. In Jane Reid's study of 1982, Tess was rated as the second most popular of recently prescribed novels (after Harper Lee's To Kill a Mockingbird). (p.109.) As Hardy is clearly a popular novelist (according to Jane Reid's findings) among senior school pupils, this seemed to be a good reason to include him in this

study.

A fourth reason for the choice above is that each one in its particular way includes the 'boy-meets-girl' theme. This is a sine qua non of all Mills & Boon popular romance fiction.

"Jack shall have Jill;

Naught shall go ill."

(A Midsummer Night's Dream: 3/2/461-2)

Finally, another justification for the choice of the nineteenth-century literary novels in this comparative study is that the literary novel of the twentieth century has become more experimental in pattern and idea than those of the traditional novels selected above.

In this restricted investigation, it is not my intention to define the literary novel as a genre, nor to describe its developing complexities. Many excellent works have already been published on this topic. What I do intend is to examine aspects of the novel which would enrich the literary experience of '16+' pupils and enable them to make value judgements about the books which they read or will choose to read in the future. This will necessitate a structural investigation of the genre.

I am, however, aware of the increasing interest in reader-response criticism among educationists and researchers, and the last chapter will deal with this aspect of literary appreciation.

In addition to using three novels recently prescribed by the Cape Education Department, this study will look at what Henry James in "The Future of the Novel" called "the novel of commerce" (Miller, J.E. (ed.), 1972, p.340) - the examples chosen being Mills & Boon popular romance fiction books.

The methods of research, therefore, are linked both with the structural investigation of the novel genre, both literary and 'unliterary', and the informal responses of a limited number of senior high school girls who have been readers of Mills & Boon

fiction and who have studied either Tess or Wuthering Heights. These responses are presented in the form of a group interview (which also included the completion of a preliminary questionnaire), and brief, written comparisons between either Tess or Wuthering Heights and a Mills & Boon novel of the pupil's own choice. The readers' responses are spontaneous but earnest value judgements.



## CHAPTER ONE

### THE LITERARY NOVEL

#### 1.1 The raison d'être for the teaching of the literary novel

"'And what are you reading, Miss -?'  
 'Oh! it is only a novel!' replies the young lady; while she lays down her book with affected indifference, or momentary shame ... in short, only some work in which the greatest powers of the mind are displayed, in which the most thorough knowledge of human nature, the happiest delineation of its varieties, the liveliest effusions of wit and humour are conveyed to the world in the best chosen language."

(Austen, J., Northanger Abbey.)

When the novel as a literary genre was yet a fledgling, Jane Austen was able to recognise its importance. She points out in the authorial intrusion quoted above that the novel provides writers with the opportunity of revealing their imaginative power and of representing life in all its variety. This can be offered in the "best chosen language" including "the liveliest effusions of wit and humour".

Henry James was more succinct:

"The only reason for the existence of a novel is that it does attempt to represent life."

(Edel, L., (ed.), 1957, p.25.)

And Walter Allen:

"Like any other artist the novelist is a maker. He is making an imitation, an imitation of the life of man on earth."

(1954, p.12.)

The novel, as its name suggests, became the newest of the major literary forms. Its European origin can be traced to Cervantes' Don Quixote (1605), although Anthony Burgess argues that Petronius' The Satyricon, written in the time of Nero, is the first European novel. (1967, p.14.) However, Arnold Kettle claims that it cannot be defined as a novel because it is not realistic and is

fragmentary as we know it. (1951, p.29.)

The history of the English novel, however, begins with Daniel Defoe. Although Defoe's fiction may be said to lack a well integrated plot, there is no doubt that Robinson Crusoe (1719) has all the other elements of a good novel and it has remained popular to this day.

Kettle defines the novel as "a realistic prose fiction, complete in itself and of a certain length" (p.28). By "realistic" he means "relevant to real life" (p.28). This relevance to real life, or an imitation of life, is what grants the novel the distinction of being possibly the most important of the literary genres today and also arguably the most widely read.

Aristotle's views on the epic, comedy and tragedy genres can also be adopted for the novel as this has absorbed much of those earlier forms. The recurring word that was used by him to define all of these forms was "mimesis" - whether it was the imitation of great characters and actions, as in the epic, or the imitation of ridiculous characters, as in comedy, or lastly the imitation of a complete action, exciting terror and pity, as in tragedy.

Henry James and Walter Allen's definitions, therefore, are echoes of Aristotelian thought. Whatever form the "imitation" may take, whether it be "some elaborate joke about the nature of reality", which Lionel Trilling believes is the sine qua non of "the great novel" (1950, p.258), or whether it be in "the series of shocks it gives to the reader's preconceptions - preconceptions usually unconscious, of how people behave and why, what is admirable and what reprehensible" (Leavis, Q.D., 1932, p.256.), it is nevertheless a representation of life, which, while man exists, precludes it from ever being totally out of date, despite the gloom of certain twentieth century critics.

This vital ingredient can be cited as the raison d'être for the teaching of the literary novel at secondary schools.

"Literature brings the child into an encounter with language in its most complex and varied forms. Through these complexities are presented the thoughts, experiences and feelings of people who exist outside and beyond the reader's daily awareness. The process of bringing them within that circle of consciousness is where the greatest value of literature lies."

(Bullock Report, 1975, p.125.)

As this study is particularly concerned with the literary interests and needs of standards nine and ten high school pupils whose first language is English, the novel as an art form will be investigated and defined in order to capture the essence of what is meant by a literary novel with the intention of extending the understanding and appreciation of the reading pupil.

"It is only by acquiring access to good poetry, great drama, and the best novels, the forms of art that, since they achieve their effects through language, most readily improve the quality of living, that the atmosphere in which we live may be oxygenated."

(Leavis, Q.D., 1932, p.211.)

To sustain Q.D. Leavis's "oxygenation" metaphor, it would appear that the reading of great literature is the essential component in the circulatory system of mankind. Without it, society will slowly asphyxiate. Not only does great literature oxygenate the atmosphere, but Henry James claims that "a novel is a living thing, all one and continuous, like any other organism". (Edel, L., (ed.), 1957, p.34.)

The "thing" itself, while offering life-giving properties to society, has its own life - one which is dependent on its readers for its perpetuation. "The novel is the book of life" said D.H. Lawrence in his essay "Why the novel matters" (Enright, D.J. & de Chickera, E., (ed.), 1962, p.289).

## 1.2 Beginning with the "work itself"

It is not recommended that pupils should be forced to read available literary criticisms of the particular novel prescribed for study.

Adolescents are often diffident and self-effacing about their own responses to literature and will readily grasp the published ideas of eminent critics. C.S. Lewis was sceptical "about the necessity or utility of evaluative criticism". He continues:

"Less and less do we meet the individual response. The all-important conjunction (Reader Meets Text) never seems to have been allowed to occur of itself and develop spontaneously. Here, plainly, are young people drenched, dizzied, and bedevilled by criticism to a point at which primary literary experience is no longer possible."

(1961, pp. 128-9.)

The "primary literary experience" is essential for the young person and the teacher who has been granted the privilege of introducing the text to the pupil must ensure that the reading of the complete novel should occur before any evaluative criticism is undertaken. "The work itself must be our standard" (Booth, W.C., 1961, p.392.) and any teaching programme of the novel should commence with the "work itself".

There are many shortcuts in the form of guidelines and teaching aids offered to students. These are frequently read by the pupils instead of the literary work itself in the hope that these will provide a magic formula for passing the "examination". These aids are often facile and sketchy, encouraging the student to view the prescribed work as a series of examination questions with easily learned answers, rather than offering probes to promote greater personal appreciation of the work itself.

Unfortunately, there are many time-consuming pressures placed on the adolescent pupil in the form of demanding homework schedules and compulsory extra-mural activities. Social entertainment and attractive television programmes fill up the hours available for leisure. The result is that the act of reading for enjoyment is very often limited to newspapers, magazines and pocket-sized paperbacks. The pupil seems to lack the self-discipline or inclination to read novels which require critical reflection and alert reasoning in the reader's

response. Books that make no demands on the reader's imagination or intelligence are preferred by the average teenager. With these the reader does not reach frustration level in failing to understand or interpret the author's meaning. The books are usually exciting, titillating or frightening and provide momentary escape and vicarious satisfaction for the reader. The skeletal nature of the subject-matter is often seen as an advantage to the pressurised seeker of soporifics rather than "mind-stretchers". The pocket-sized paperbacks can be read at one sitting, which is an added reason for their popularity.

Margaret R. Marshall (1975, p.135) asserts that:

"Public Library and school library surveys of reading tastes and habits have normally concluded that there is a stage in early teens when reading and library use lessens or ceases."

However, it is important to define what is meant by "reading". She continues:

"...newspapers, magazines and comics are often not considered reading, this term being reserved for the hardback or school book. The conclusion that teenagers do not read is therefore only half a truth... there is ample evidence that most teenagers use the skill of reading in several forms and at varying levels above and below their actual or school classified reading ability."

(p.135.)

It would seem, therefore, that that "all important conjunction (Reader Meets Text) (Lewis, C.S., 1961, p.128.) very often does occur though not with what might be termed "the desired" type of literature.

Q.D. Leavis cites four reasons why novels are read:

- "1. To pass time not unpleasantly
2. To obtain vicarious satisfaction or compensation for life
3. To obtain assistance in the business of living
4. To enrich the quality of living by extending, deepening, refining, co-ordinating experience."

(1932, p.48.)



Commercialised novels are usually read for the first two reasons - those of mental relaxation and wishfulfilment. The literary novel can provide the reader with a satisfactory solution to (3) and (4) - although fewer readers are giving themselves the opportunity of discovering this.

The literature teacher's earnest intention should be to encourage an interest in the reading of the literary novel; thus leading the pupil out of the shallows of "pop lit" into unknown, but refreshingly invigorating, deeper waters.

The Newsom Report of 1963 (Half our Future) states that "all pupils, including those of very limited attainments, need the civilising experience of contact with great literature, and can respond to its universality although they will depend heavily on the skill of the teacher as an interpreter." (p.155.) The aim of literature teaching, therefore, is concerned with pupil development - both personal and moral - in other words, to bring the pupil into contact with Sidney's "speaking picture...to teach and delight" or Shakespeare's "mirror [held] up to nature".

### 1.3 The literary novel: a speaking picture

It has been asserted earlier that the "primary literary experience" of reading the work itself is of first importance with no need for young people to be "drenched, dizzied and bedevilled by criticism". Nevertheless, for the adolescent reading-novice the "speaking picture" may perform only its second function - to delight - if no more than reading of the novel is advocated. If the novel is to "teach", the reader must understand more about the way in which the artist (or author) has composed his picture and what he wishes to communicate.

The teenage reader must first be enlightened about the philosophical concept of universal, or general truth. He or she must learn the difference between particular truth, such as historical fact, which relates what has been, and general truth, such as may be expressed in any imaginative work, which relates what might be or might have happened as a consequence of certain events. Aristotle reasons that poetry

(in other words, the imaginative work) is therefore a more excellent thing than history because the former is concerned with universal truth - an unchanging absolute - and the latter, merely with particular (more limited) truth.

### 1.3.1 Universal truth

Robert Scholes attempts to clarify the elusive concept of truth by means of a metaphorical colour spectrum:

"[Fiction] can be very factual, maintaining the closest possible correspondence between its story and things that have actually happened in the world. Or it can be very fanciful, defying our sense of life's ordinary possibilities. Taking these two extremes as the opposite ends of a whole spectrum of fictional possibilities, between the infra-red of pure history and the ultra-violet of pure imagination we can distinguish many shades of coloration. But all are fragments of the white radiance of truth, which is present in both history books and fairy tales, but only partly present in each - fragmented by the prism of fiction, without which we should not be able to see it at all. For truth is like ordinary light, present everywhere but invisible, and we must break it to behold it."

(1968, pp 3-4.)

The truth to be found in the great novels is not necessarily identified in the circumstances described there. These may be highly improbable.

"The reality of a work of fiction - i.e. its illusion of reality, its effect on the reader as a convincing reading of life - is not necessarily or primarily a reality of circumstance or detail or commonplace routine."

(Wellek, R. & Warren, A., 1949, p.220.)

What is it about a nineteenth-century novel, say, that enables one to comment, "Life is like this"? It cannot be, for example, the description of life at Longbourn, Netherfield or Pemberley in the world of the Bennets, Bingleys or Darcys. To that we might have to say, "Life is no longer like that." It is to be found in what C.S. Lewis calls "hypothetical probability - what would be probable if the initial situation occurred." (1969, p.65) The reader discerns that

there is a relevance which helps him or her to understand life better than before. It may be found in the author's portrayal of love, or suffering, or man's inhumanity to man, or "...the thousand natural shocks/That flesh is heir to." (Hamlet 3/1/62-3.)

The more intensely the illusion of reality has been portrayed by the author, the more memorable his work of art will be to the reader.

"Whatever intensity is achieved must be the intensity of the illusion that genuine life has been presented.... But to give it with intensity, to make the imagined picture of reality glow with more than a dim light, requires the artist's finest compositional powers."

(Booth, W.C., 1961, p.44.)

Developing an awareness of "the finest compositional powers" of the author is therefore the next logical step in learning to appreciate the art of the novel. The author's composition is often so unified and harmonious that the various aspects of the novel seem to be inseparable from each other. Some critics warn of the dangers of dissecting or "pigeon-holing" a book, claiming that the whole of it may lose its vitality and significance when one attempts to abstract.

Henry James's famous comment on this matter is worth quoting in full:

"People often talk of these things as if they had a kind of internecine distinctness, instead of melting into each other at every breath, and being intimately connected parts of one general effort of expression. I cannot imagine composition existing in a series of blocks, nor conceive, in any novel worth discussing at all, of a passage of dialogue that is not in its intention description, a touch of truth of any sort that does not partake of the nature of the incident, or an incident that derives its interest from any other source than the general and only source of the success of a work of art - that of being illustrative. A novel is a living thing, all one and continuous, like any other organism, and in proportion as it lives will it be found, I think, that in each of the parts there is something of the other parts."

(Edel, L., (ed.), 1957, p.34.)



I remember an occasion when I congratulated a professional artist on his superb lighting design, and its execution, for Romeo and Juliet. I praised the roseate hues of the dawn and the subtle brightening of the new day. When I had finished delivering my accolades, he replied, "You have not complimented me at all. If you noticed the lighting changes, then I have failed in my intention." His aim was to achieve harmony and subtlety - one picture blending into another so gradually that the spectator should not notice how it had been done. His accusation was that I was seeking "to paint the lily", which in Shakespeare's book would be "wasteful and ridiculous excess". What he did not realise was that I was a conscious critic - deliberately examining the technical expertise, thus isolating the part from the whole. The mental dissection did not decrease but rather increased my admiration of his art.

It is possible to abstract particular qualities from a work, and that abstraction can heighten the reader's appreciation of the overall design. The reader, however, must constantly bear in mind that no evaluation is worthwhile without the continual awareness that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

Arnold Kettle asserts that in all great works of art there are two inseparable elements - life and pattern. Art imparts life and has life. (1951, p.13.) Nevertheless, while these two elements may be interdependent, it is possible and even valuable to analyse their "intimately connected parts".

"This world or Kosmos of a novelist - this pattern or structure or organism, which includes plot, characters, setting, world-view, 'tone' - is what we must scrutinise when we attempt to compare a novel with life or to judge, ethically or socially, a novelist's work."

(Wellek, R. & Warren, A., 1949, p.221.)

It is this world with all its parts that the pupil must come to know, understand and appreciate fully.

### 1.3.2 The novelist's 'Kosmos'

#### a) The author's voice

The novelist is a creator. He has power to organise, order, change or destroy the world that he creates. He has to impart an idea - a "figure in the carpet", to borrow James's metaphor - and that idea is borne along between character and action in their interaction. "Life is a struggle" may be one idea, one "figure in the carpet" that Henry James may be weaving throughout his novels. "The human condition is a sad one" may be the string that holds all the beads of many other novels. The great novelist will communicate that idea, thus giving his work significance. The idea is part of his "world-view" - his weltanschauung. This view of life of the author "will determine the nature and the profundity of the pattern of his book." (Kettle, A., 1951, p.26.)

Discernible by means of plot, characters and setting, the author's voice will speak the idea, will inform the moral and aesthetic purpose, will reveal the reality beneath the appearance, so that the reader might see, and in seeing might understand. The novelist's whole purpose is expressed by means of his voice.

"My task which I am trying to achieve is, by the power of the written word to make you hear, to make you feel - it is, before all, to make you see. That - and no more, and it is everything. If I succeed you shall find there according to your deserts: encouragement, consolation, fear, charm - all you demand - and, perhaps, also that glimpse of truth for which you have forgotten to ask."

(Joseph Conrad: Preface to The Nigger of the Narcissus, 1897.)

How does the novelist make one see? How does he communicate his idea? In other words, how does he make his "picture" speak?

In early novels the author made his presence quite obvious by intruding in his work by means of comments, witticisms and words of wisdom. Henry Fielding, for instance, maintained a constant tête á tête with his reader in the following fashion:

"I question not but several of my readers will know the lawyer in the stage-coach, the moment they hear his voice.... I declare here once for all, I describe not men, but manners; not an individual, but a species. Perhaps it will be answered, are not the characters then taken from life? To which I answer in the affirmative; nay, I believe I might aver, that I have writ little more than I have seen."

(1742, p.1681)

This type of authorial intrusion usually has the effect of diluting the intensity of the illusion of life. For this reason, explicit commentary later became more implicit in the development of the novel. Natural settings were used as symbols or even portents of what was to come. In Tess of the d'Urbervilles, for instance, the recurrent use of the colour red is but one of the many images that offer implicit and dramatic commentary on the events that follow. A type of proleptic image is used as a pointer: the clock strikes and the reader is implicitly warned that a significant turn of events can be expected. Here the author stands between the reader and the action as an omniscient narrator, allowing the reader to share in his global vision. But here, too, another technical device is becoming interfaced with the author's voice: that of point of view.

It is important for the reader to be conscious of point of view in the novel, for arising out of that the novelist's ability to convey his moral sense will be judged. Is he a reliable or an unreliable commentator? This means that the author's quality of mind must come under scrutiny.

"No good novel will ever proceed from a superficial mind; that seems an axiom which for the artist in fiction, will cover all needful moral ground."

(Edel, L., (ed.), 1957, p.44.)

#### b) Point of view

Percy Lubbock, in his book The Craft of Fiction, has described various methods of presenting point of view. One of these is that of the novelist as omniscient narrator, mentioned earlier. The author is

able to render his characters with full understanding of their motives and hidden thoughts. Twentieth century literary criticism suggests that this type of method has severe limitations as, according to Wayne Booth, it has no "bewilderment".

"There can be no illusion of life where there is no bewilderment and the omniscient narrator is obviously not bewildered."

(1961, p.45.)

Sometimes the author selects a particular character to express point of view. This type of third-person narrator is called a "reflector" by Henry James and an "assigned point of view" by William Knott. Through the mind of that character (usually the protagonist) all the action is sifted. Often he is really "the implied author" (Booth, W.C., 1961, p.158). Sometimes, however, the author's tone is ironic and that assigned character is an object of satire. If the reader does not detect this, he may think that the point of view is fallacious.

The point of view may shift from one character to another - and even back to the author. This is known as a shifting or multiple viewpoint, and has the advantage of allowing the reader to assess the vantage point of several characters. The more dramatic approach may also be used here in the form of diaries or letters.

The first-person narrator may be used as the centre of consciousness. The reader is limited to the thoughts and judgements of that narrator and must view the constituted world of the novel from that angle of vision.

A form of this is called "the frame within the frame" by Knott (1977, p.100) in which the story is told by someone else to a listener who may be the I-narrator (as in Wuthering Heights).

When the author decides upon his particular type of narrative technique, he is faced with a problem of what types of characters he will

use to express point of view and how he will use them in interaction with other characters in the novel.

c) Characters and characterisation

Perhaps one of the most important tests for a young critic of the novel is whether the characters can be seen as people whose rise and fall of fortunes are a matter of deep concern to the reader. I have noticed that high school girls, for instance, really care about Hardy's Tess. They ache with her in her misfortunes and are filled with despair when "backwardness", as Hardy calls it, prevents her from rectifying the wrongs that she suffers. The reader understands the anguish of Heathcliff at last when, howling like a wounded beast, he cries out, "Oh, God! it is unutterable. I cannot live without my life! I cannot live without my soul!"

No reference to the use of characterisation is complete without a comment on E.M. Forster's "flat" and "round" characters.

Flat characters are usually types or caricatures. Readers are expected to recognise certain stock characteristics in their portrayal. These characters do not undergo any learning experience as a result of the rigours of circumstance and they tend to exhibit easily recognisable and predictable responses to certain events. They may act as comic butts for the convenience of the author and may co-exist with round characters in great novels.

Jane Austen portrays many of her minor characters in caricature but E.M. Forster argues that "she is a miniaturist, but never two-dimensional. All her characters are round, or capable of rotundity." (1927, p.51.)

In his essay on "Character and caricature in Jane Austen", D.W. Harding concludes that "the device of giving... occasional glimpses of something behind the surface she caricatures is an aspect of the serious moral framework within which Jane Austen wrote." (Southam, B.C., (ed.), 1968, p.105.) Jane Austen's characters are seldom totally predictable.



"The test of a round character is whether it is capable of surprising in a convincing way. If it never surprises, it is flat. If it does not convince, it is flat pretending to be round. It has the incalculability of life about it - life within the pages of a book."

(Forster, E.M., 1927, p.54.)

These characters must have "life within the pages of a book". There must be a time and a defined space in which they "live and move and have their being". The three unities of time, place and action are central to the structure of the novel.

d) The three unities: Time, Place and Action

Whether the novel be judged "good" or "bad", it should be capable of fragmentation into point of view, character, time, place, action and plot. The author's style can also be evaluated. The point of departure for the "novel of commerce" in the form, for this study, of Mills and Boon fiction, will probably be found in the extent to which the novels are "speaking pictures" of reality - or whether they provide merely the appearance of reality. The quality of the author's voice must be discernible, if it is present at all. The treatment of the unity of time in the novel can add to the illusion of reality or detract from it. Booth claims that "it is 'unrealistic' to begin at the beginning and plod methodically through to the end." (1961, p.191.)

The linear chronology, moving methodically through time from (a) to (b) to (c), and so on, is, however, used by many great early novelists, for example, Jane Austen and Thomas Hardy, with realistic effect. Fragmented chronologies, making use of flashback techniques, which have become more popular in the twentieth century, do, however, seem to increase the intensity of the illusion of reality. The technique of the flashback is particularly successful in Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby and it is central to the plot and subsequent surprise ending of Golding's Pincher Martin. Emily Brontë used the flashback technique in a many-layered narrative method in Wuthering Heights to excellent effect as early as the mid-nineteenth century.

The time-span of the novel is flexible. It can be in the form of a saga - extending over a period of many years (The Rainbow by D.H. Lawrence) - or it can spread its seven hundred-odd pages over a mere twenty-four hours as in Joyce's Ulysses. The "fast-forward and re-wind" technique used in Pincher Martin is played through the time it takes for someone to drown, who has no time to kick off his boots - two minutes?

Setting relates to the environment - the time in which the novel is set and the space in which the action moves. Sometimes the place description is used metaphorically as well as realistically, as in Wuthering Heights and Tess of the d'Urbervilles. The place may be in the imagination of the central character - Pincher Martin - although the appearance may be that of the sea.

Action moves through time and space by means of the characters and their thoughts or dialogue. In Wuthering Heights, for instance, the complete action spans two generations within the confines of Thrushcross Grange, Wuthering Heights and the Yorkshire moors.

It can thus be seen that the three unities of time, place and action are inseparable.

The complete novel, however, is greater than the fragments mentioned above. One only analyses in order to arrive at a deeper understanding of the whole.

#### e) The plot

The plot is not just a mere narrative of events set in a certain place at a certain time. E.M. Forster defines the difference between a plot and a story by means of the following illustration:

" 'The king died and then the queen died' is a story.  
 'The king died and then the queen died of grief' is a plot.  
 The time-sequence is preserved, but the sense of causality overshadows it."

(1927, p.60.)

The plot expects the reader to ask "Why?". Forster points out that both intelligence and memory are required by the novel-reader to appreciate the plot fully. Causality and mystery are essential requirements.

The traditional term "plot" refers to the narrative structure of the novel. Under its umbrella, episodes, climaxes and a variety of events will occur. There will be conflict – both external and internal – between character and character, between character and environment, between character and destiny, or within the characters themselves. The problems must be resolved, not necessarily happily if the reflection in the "mirror [held] up to nature" is to be clear and true. Edwin Muir's definition of the term summarises these comments: "...the chain of events in a story and the principle which knits it together." (1928, p.16.)

Plots, however, are "nothing but pegs", novelist Fay Weldon informs us in Letters to Alice (on first reading Jane Austen) (1984, p.79). Although some twentieth-century experimentalists contend that the plot is an unnecessary adjunct to the novel, Fay Weldon gives this piece of criticism to her aspirant novelist niece:

" 'Return to the Hotel Atlantic' was an agreeable title, little more. It had no shape, no inbuilt tensions. I had no real idea what was going to happen next, or worse, what was the point of the story. Not only did I have no peg to put the coat on, I had no coat."

(p.119)

#### f) Style

C.S. Lewis claims that one of the hallmarks of "unliterary" readers is an unconsciousness of style.

"You give them, it would seem, just the sort of matter they want, but all far better done: descriptions that really describe, dialogue that can produce some illusion, characters one can distinctly imagine. They peck about at it and presently lay the book aside."

(1961, pp 29-30.)

The young trainee in the art of the novel must become conscious of the way in which the novelist tells his story. It is inadvisable to use



stock terms to describe overall style as is the habit of some teachers in order to make their pupils feel more "comfortable" about giving a label to this rather complex aspect of the novel. The terms often trotted out are "terse" as in Bacon, "graphic" as in Laurie Lee, "economic" as in Scott Fitzgerald, to name a few examples. All of these may be true of the author's style at some time, but further description is required. The whole orchestration of sound and sense in the language used calls for close reader-consciousness.

The "unliterary" novel makes its point of departure, not only in the author's voice, but also in his style (if they are indeed separable). Style in this type of novel is likely to be stereotyped, clichéd and unoriginal. It is presented in the form of the chocolate box picture: flat, recognisable, 'sweet', predictable. There is no shadowing, no symbolism, no "foreshortening" (to use James's term to explain the art of figuring synthetically to create richness and depth in a compact way of writing).

The novelist must weave his fabric by means of language. The age in which he lives, the type of novel which he writes and the region where it is set will act as determiners of his style.

To this may be added imagery and symbolism or perhaps the use of the 'leitmotif', in which a recurring motif is used throughout the work, associated with a certain character or situation. (The wasp in A Passage to India.)

Whatever the author's style may be, Anthony Trollope avers that it must be both intelligible and harmonious.

"Let [the novelist] have all other possible gifts... they will avail him nothing for his purpose, unless he can put forth his work in pleasant words.... But he must be intelligible, - intelligible without trouble; and he must be harmonious."

(Allott, M., (ed.), 1959, p.316.)

Anthony Trollope wrote in the nineteenth century. The twentieth century introduced writing styles which could scarcely be defined

as "pleasant". The aim of the serious novelist is to write in appropriate register to strengthen the illusion of reality. Salinger's The Catcher in the Rye provides an example of this.

"If you really want to hear about it, the first thing you'll probably want to know is where I was born, and what my lousy childhood was like, and how many parents were occupied and all before they had me, and all that David Copperfield kind of crap, but I don't feel like going into it."

(1951, p.5.)

This is scarcely "pleasant" or "harmonious" in Trollope's terms. The long, single sentence which opens the novel, is loosely devised by means of compound structures - but it is appropriate. The first-person narrator is an anti-hero of seventeen years and the reader is able to say, "This is what life is like for some."

These points illustrate how interdependent the author's style is on all the other parts: characterisation, plot, the unities of time, place and action, point of view and the author's voice.

A critical understanding of the author's intention with relation to all of these is central to the development of appreciation of great literature among adolescents.

#### 1.4 A literary appreciation proposal

Margaret Mathieson, in a discussion on the views of G.H. Bantock and David Holbrook, says:

"Like Arnold and Leavis these writers, concerned above all with what Holbrook calls the children's 'humanity', believe that this can be touched and sensitised by engagement with great works of art... they insist upon the universality of the literary experience which, if neglected, will mean severe imaginative deprivation for children continually exposed to what, they argue, are the banalities of the mass media."

(1975, p.198.)

Somehow the teacher of English has to create an enthusiasm for good books among his or her pupils. There is no doubt that "the banalities of the mass media" and second-rate popular fiction enjoy popular support among many high school children. How does one try to negotiate the strong currents in order to prevent the "severe imaginative deprivation" quoted by Margaret Mathieson? Perhaps the best way to prevent drowning is to float with the currents in order to reach the shore.

I postulate that a system of teaching the novel by comparing the "unliterary" with the literary, will stimulate interest and encourage open discussion among pupils about the merits and demerits of each.

It is not suggested that any "bestseller" would be suitable for comparison. Many bestsellers of the past have become classics today. It is important, however, to choose novels or types of novels currently popular among the high school pupils. For this reason I wish to investigate the type of popular romance fiction published by Mills and Boon, as it is read widely by many teenage girls, to see whether it holds up to a definition of the "unliterary" novel and whether it could be used for my teaching proposal.

In the next chapter, aspects of the three novels discussed in the introduction will be aired, providing examples of how the authors of each have earned their right to form part of the great literary tradition. These novels are repeatedly prescribed by the Cape Education Department for pupils in standards nine and ten. Why do they merit that distinction?

In her critique of set books of 1982, Jane Reid had this to say about novels chosen for study in school:

"The novels must be capable of being enjoyed and extending the minds, thoughts and experience of their readers; they must be worth studying and they must have some relation to the lives of their readers."

(p.105)

Although it may seem rather pretentious to postulate that books that are not "worth studying" should be compared with those that are, I hope it will not be construed as frivolous to state that contrasts are always more interesting to the observer.

Perhaps the study of "dappled things" in literature may prove to be the very thing to create enthusiasm for the great literary works among the young.

## CHAPTER TWO

### DISCUSSION OF THREE PRESCRIBED NOVELS

#### 2.1 Pride and Prejudice - Jane Austen (1813)

Of the three literary novels selected from among those prescribed in the 1980s by the Cape Education Department for either standard nine or ten pupils, Pride and Prejudice is the only one not included by Jane Reid in her thesis English Literature in South African Senior Schools (1982).

Unfortunately, schoolboys are not often introduced to the delights of Jane Austen's art - perhaps because her subject matter is "always a young woman's finding a husband" (Allen, W., 1954, p.104), which may be construed as a "soppy" love story by many scornful boys. Thus Pride and Prejudice, when it is offered, is more likely to be chosen by subject-heads of girls' high schools than by those of co-educational or boys' schools.

Nevertheless, of all the novels prescribed in the 1980s, Pride and Prejudice is most similar in plot to Mills and Boon popular romance fiction, which makes it a highly significant novel for use in a comparative study such as this.

Perhaps, too, the knowledge that Jane Austen became a successful writer at the age of fifteen (Love and Freindship (sic)) would increase her popularity among teenage girls.

"She was writing for everybody, for nobody, for our age, for her own: in other words, even at that early age Jane Austen was writing.... But what is this note which never merges in the rest, which sounds distinctly and penetratingly all through the volume? It is the sound of laughter. The girl of fifteen is laughing, in her corner, at the world."

(Woolff, V., 1925, pp.170-1.)

Despite the similarities between the plot of Pride and Prejudice and that of Mills and Boon books (see Chapter Three) - the boy-meets-girl theme; the happy ending; the tall, handsome (arrogant and rich);

The heroine usually from a less affluent background; the rival; the complications and hostility at first; finally marriage – the first point of departure for Jane Austen is observed in the fact that she "is laughing, in her corner, at the world". Lionel Trilling emphasises this:

"Sooner or later, when we speak of Jane Austen (1775-1817), we speak of her irony, and it is better to speak of it sooner rather than later because nothing can so far mislead us about her work as a wrong understanding of this one aspect of it."

(Ford, B., (ed.), 1957, p.112.)

Jane Austen is able to perceive the world, with all its idiosyncrasies, with an observation so fine and accurate, that discerning readers will soon discover that her comic irony is aimed not only at several of her characters but also at themselves. Readers who are expecting a literal presentation of character and action will soon experience "the series of shocks it gives to the reader's preconceptions" – a prerequisite for the success of a great novel, according to Q.D. Leavis (1932, p.256).

Pride and Prejudice may well be described as "some elaborate joke about the nature of reality", thus endorsing Lionel Trilling's definition of a great novel. (1950, p.258) The "elaborate joke" is expressed by means of Jane Austen's use of comic irony; "the nature of reality" is revealed in her accuracy of delineation of the foibles of her characters as a "speaking picture" of the world as the reader knows it to be.

The tone of the whole book is set in the brilliant, and often quoted, opening of the novel:

"It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife."

The reader is immediately able to assess the following:



1. The author's tone is amusing and ironic.
2. The novel will soon introduce a rich bachelor.
3. There will be young women available for marriage to such a man.
4. The "truth universally acknowledged" will be presented from the point of view of some other character - a comic butt.
5. The author's style is epigrammatic, offering the reader a morsel of the tasty dish that is to follow.

Part of the author's success lies in the fact that her own vision of what is most desirable in taste and good sense allows her to depart from that model in the presentation of many of her characters as fools. Mr Collins, Mrs Bennet, Lady Catherine de Bourgh, are the first most obvious butts to come to mind; but not one of her characters is perfect, not even Elizabeth. The fools, however, are separated from the wise by means of their ability or inability to learn from experience.

"One after another she creates her fools, her prigs, her worldlings, her Mr Collinses... her Mrs Bennets. She encircles them with the lash of a whip-like phrase which, as it runs round them, cuts out their silhouettes for ever."

(Woolff, V., 1925, p.176.)

Jane Austen's unique voice and her presentation of the nature of reality by means of that voice, together form the first point of departure from what it will be seen in Chapter Three is offered to the reader in the Mills and Boon novel - even though there may be similarity of plot. Walter Allen points out that the classical Greek golden mean "Know thyself" "is the imperative of every comic writer" (1954, p.107) and it is this unerring knowledge that enables Jane Austen to show the difference between appearance and reality in her work.

The next point of departure from the Mills and Boon novel is found in her delineation of character.

"She is so constantly right in her judgments of the characters and events in the small world she created that we are convinced that she would be equally right on characters and events in the larger world outside."

(Allen, W., 1954, p.107.)

Elizabeth Bennet is a triumph of characterisation. It has been stated that she represents a mirror image of Jane Austen herself, which could account for her total authenticity. Certainly her "quickness of observation" and "lively disposition which delighted in anything ridiculous" can be shared with the author. Walter Allen maintains that the main reason for the popularity of Pride and Prejudice is "the brilliant creation of Elizabeth Bennet, a heroine as witty as she is charming". (p.107.)

E.M. Forster asks the question: "Why do the characters in Jane Austen give us a slightly new pleasure each time they come in...?" and answers it:

"All the Jane Austen characters are ready for an extended life, for a life which the scheme of her books seldom requires them to lead, and that is why they lead their actual lives so satisfactorily."

(1927, p.52.)

Her characters seem to take on a reality of existence beyond the pages of the book - although this type of criticism might provoke the frown of an L.C. Knights ("How many children had Lady Macbeth?").

Mills and Boon heroines are mostly beautiful (unlike Elizabeth, whose "beautiful expression of her dark eyes" are, however, a redeeming feature); they usually come from a mediocre background in which their families seldom play any part in the action (whereas Elizabeth's world is enhanced by contrast with the Bennet family's action and dialogue); and they do not undergo any learning experience as they are usually without major fault to begin with - their problems centred in being misunderstood (mostly by themselves).

This essential aspect - the learning experience - is the crucial pivotal point on which the whole action of the novel is balanced. From the moment that Elizabeth says, "Till this moment I never knew myself", the reader is able to witness a change from Elizabeth's former display of prejudice. She is not the same person at the end of the novel as she is at the start of it.



Neither is Darcy: "By you, (Elizabeth) I was properly humbled. I came to you without a doubt of my reception. You showed me how insufficient were all my pretensions to please a woman worthy of being pleased."

The two abstract nouns of the title are the overriding faults of hero and heroine when they are introduced to the reader. The fact that these characters are capable of change through the learning experience is part of their credibility.

The "minute particulars" (Allen, W., p.105) of the world which Jane Austen creates, the contrasts of character, their dialogue, social life and society manners of her age, her serious moral values hidden beneath "the sound of laughter" - all these and more create in the reader a desire to read and re-read her novels in contrast with Mills and Boon romances, which, although its readers do sometimes take them up more than once, yields no further surprises even if a close reading study is attempted after a preliminary, superficial 'fast-forward' reading technique.

Mills and Boon novels do, of course, offer the so-called "desired" happy ending. So does Jane Austen - but with an important difference in Pride and Prejudice:

"Elizabeth comes to distinguish unthinking prejudice from impartial judgment, and so can love and be loved by Mr Darcy. Jane Austen defines our faults for us, analyses our virtues, and tells us that if we will control the one with the other, all will yet be well."

(Weldon, F., 1984, p.68)

Of course a happy ending may dim the illusion of reality for the reader, but Jane Austen uses the conventions of high comedy and the reader must always be conscious of this. With her "Jack shall have Jill" - but from the same source she echoes: "Lord, what fools these mortals be" - which is not an obvious viewpoint in Mills and Boon fiction!

Jane Austen's "social comedy", as it has been called by Miriam Allott

(1959, p.206), is quite different from the next novel earmarked for discussion. "A poetic tragedy" is the phrase she uses to describe Wuthering Heights (p.206).

This is its first point of departure from Mills and Boon romances.

## 2.2 Wuthering Heights - Emily Brontë (1846)

The canvas on which Wuthering Heights has been painted is so dense and so detailed that comparison with any other novel would be a meaningless endeavour. Mills and Boon romance is "as different as a moonbeam from lightning, or frost from fire", to use Emily Brontë's type of comparison, when viewed in the light of her singularly powerful work of art.

The earliest critics were so benumbed by this total departure from all previous forms of the novel that many of them condemned it utterly:

"We rise from the perusal of Wuthering Heights as if we had come fresh from a pest-house. Read Jane Eyre is our advice, but burn Wuthering Heights..."

(Paterson's Magazine, March 1848 - Allott, M., (ed.), 1970, p.50)

"It should have been called Withering Heights, for anything from which the mind and body would more instinctively shrink, than the mansion and its tenants, cannot be imagined.... Our novel reading experience does not enable us to refer to anything to be compared with the personages we are introduced to at this desolate spot..."

(New Monthly Magazine, Jan.1848 - Allott, M., (ed.), 1970, p.46)

Wuthering Heights is so powerful in its conception, so intense and original, that, once read, even by schoolchildren, it cannot be forgotten. It has inspired numerous critics to describe its multifaceted surfaces and hidden strata - and it emerges as

"The most remarkable novel in English. It is perfect, and perfect in the rarest way: it is the complete bodying forth of an intensely individual apprehension of the nature of man and life. That is to say, the content is strange enough, indeed baffling enough; while the artistic expression of it is flawless."

(Allen, W., 1954, p.185.)

It is this flawless "artistic expression" in style and structure, which calls for some discussion as a major 'sheering-off' point from Mills and Boon fiction.

I have said that Miriam Allott calls Wuthering Heights "a poetic tragedy". Certainly as a "tragedy" it excites the reader's pity and terror. Yet it seems to go further than our notion of the term - it takes us beyond concrete reality into a spiritual domain in which the tortured souls of Catherine Earnshaw and Heathcliff are happily united at last.

"The book enlarges the nature of tragedy: it shows how a genuinely tragic action can be carried on past the fatality into an ending in positive happiness."

(Abercrombie, L., (1924) - Allott, M., (ed.), 1970, p.119.)

So different is Emily Brontë's treatment of the former conventions of novel-writing that it becomes impossible to give her work a label at all, except, perhaps, to call it "a most remarkable novel". According to her conditions, Jack shall have Jill, but Shakespeare's next line, "Naught shall go ill" is out of kilter here. Emily Brontë had no intention of confining her work to any prescribed structural conventions or formulae.

"Emily Brontë was as independent artistically as she was intellectually. She did not take her form from other authors: she made it up herself, as she made up her philosophy of life."

(Cecil, D., 1934 - Allott, M., (ed.), (1970), p.141.)

Her style is poetic. The novel abounds in imagery and symbolism dealing with the vast universal issues of man and destiny in a microcosmic setting.

The contrast between the two houses, Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange, with all the "atmospheric tumult" associated with the former and the orderly calm of the other, is also a symbolic contrast of the worlds of the families dwelling there. These principles of storm and calm that dominate the novel are clearly expounded by Lord Cecil:

"The setting is a microcosm of the universal scheme as Emily Brontë conceived it. On the one hand, we have Wuthering Heights, the land of storm; high on the

barren moorland, naked to the shock of the elements, the natural home of the Earnshaw family, fiery, untamed children of the storm. On the other, sheltered in the leafy valley below, stands Thrushcross Grange, the appropriate home of the children of calm, the gentle, passive, timid Lintons. Together each group, following its own nature in its own sphere, combines to compose a cosmic harmony. It is the destruction and re-establishment of this harmony which is the theme of the story."

(Allott, M., 1970, p.137.)

Images of the vagaries of the weather, associated with the occupants of the two houses, abound in the narrative. Storm and wind betoken ill omens, and calm mellowness of weather prognosticates moments of harmony.

"The storm came rattling over the Heights in full fury. There was a violent wind, as well as thunder" on the night when Heathcliff leaves the home. Three years later, "on a mellow evening in September" he returns. At the end of the novel, when harmony and cyclic order have been re-established, the sky is "benign" and the "wind breathing through the grass" is soft.

The nature of Catherine's love is expressed by means of nature imagery:

"My love for Linton is like the foliage in the woods.  
Time will change it, I'm well aware, as winter changes  
the trees - my love for Heathcliff resembles the  
eternal rocks beneath"

as is her description of the relationship between Heathcliff and Isabella:

"He'd crush you, like a sparrow's egg, Isabella."

Throughout the novel this poetic style is prevalent.

Dorothy van Ghent, in a brilliant essay on Wuthering Heights, traces the "window-pane" image used from episode to episode to reveal the separation, "treacherously transparent", of "the 'inside' from the 'outside', the 'human' from the alien and terrible 'other'".

(Kettle, A., (ed.), 1972, p.116.)

The whole novel is rendered by the hand of a poet - but the seeds are sown carefully into the prepared earth, growing naturally and harmoniously in their environment. The imagery is by no means "rank and gross".

Form and style in Mills and Boon fiction, on the other hand, do not vary much in their expression, as will be seen in the next chapter. Landscape descriptions are literal, seldom symbolic or metaphorical, and there will be no death of either hero or heroine to confuse or shock the reader. No "woman wailing for her demon-lover" will be found within those pages. If she does weep, it will not be in awareness of humanity's perpetual pain; hers will be but superficial and momentary frustration.

The mention of "demon-lover" introduces a point at which Wuthering Heights and Mills and Boon romances touch as they pass. The "dark, Satanic hero" portrayed so vividly in the form of Heathcliff, is often found in two-dimensional silhouette in Mills and Boon fiction. As will be seen, the Mills and Boon hero is often the brooding, almost brutal, dark and powerful sort. He is merely misunderstood, however, and the bull invariably becomes a lamb - to use Heathcliff's choice of metaphor.

Not so the daemonic character of Heathcliff with his uncertain origin and his "frightful, life-like gaze of exultation" in his death, causing his servant, Joseph, to cry, "Th' divil's harried off his soul."

Heathcliff's conception is probably to be found in the Byronic hero, which in turn might be a descendant of Milton's Satan. The following lines by Byron certainly seem to describe Heathcliff:

"There was in him a vital scorn of all:  
As if the worst had fall'n which could befall.  
He stood a stranger in this breathing world,  
An erring spirit from another hurl'd;  
A thing of dark imaginings, that shaped  
By choice the perils he by chance escaped;  
But 'scaped in vain, for in their memory yet  
His mind would half exult and half regret:



With more capacity for love than earth  
 Bestows on most of mortal mould and birth,  
 His early dreams of good outstripp'd the truth  
 And troubled manhood follow'd baffled youth."

(Lara, Canto I - xiii)

Further reading of Lara and parts of Childe Harold reveal the influence of Byron in the characterisation of Heathcliff.

He dominates the novel from the first page to the last - a figure "with more capacity for love than earth/ Bestows on most of mortal mould and birth"; yet, paradoxically, "a thing of dark imaginings" in revenge and hatred.

Of his mysterious birth there is no mention. He could, indeed, like Lucifer, have been "an erring spirit from another [world] hurl'd". When Mr Earnshaw brings him home to the Heights, the child is described as "it" - "Take it as a gift of God, though it's dark almost as if it came from the devil." From that time on, chaos and disorder enter the Earnshaw world. Peace and harmony are granted only in the three years of Heathcliff's disappearance and after his death.

He is at various times in the novel called "imp of Satan", "diabolical", "an evil beast", "hellish villain", "monster", "that devil Heathcliff", "fiend" and "goblin"; and yet, despite the brutality and ruthlessness which Heathcliff so often displays, we as readers sympathise with this outcast from heaven because

"instinctively we recognise a rough moral justice in what he had done to his oppressors and because, though he is inhuman, we understand why he is inhuman.... The deep and complex issues behind his actions are revealed to us. We recognise that the very forces which drove him to rebellion for a higher freedom have themselves entrapped him in their own values and determined the nature of his revenge."

(Kettle, A., 1951, p.150.)

"The deep and complex issues behind his actions" together help to sculpture the character of Heathcliff in the round, separating him unequivocally from the would-be-Byronic shadows of Mills and Boon fiction.

"Deep and complex issues" abound in more than just the character of Heathcliff. In the multi-lapped narrative technique of the book, wave upon wave of differing points of view cross continually one upon the other.

We view the whole dramatic action from the point of view of Lockwood who sets down Nellie Dean's story, thus shifting to her point of view. She in turn allows Isabella (by means of a letter) and Zillah to add their opinions. At one stage there is the complication of Nellie Dean's story being re-phrased in Lockwood's words - so the reader has to analyse the characters of Lockwood, Nellie Dean, Isabella and Zillah (by means of their dialogue and actions) regarding the significance of the whole.

Added to this is the complex time-sequence which C.P.S. [Sanger] has clarified for readers in his often quoted paper, "The Structure of Wuthering Heights" (1926) (Everitt, A., (ed.), 1967, pp 193-208). Dorothy van Ghent, in her essay on Wuthering Heights from The English Novel: Form and Function (1961) (pp 153-70), divides the time-sequence into time past, middle time and present time; time past relating to the "mythological romance" of Heathcliff and Catherine as two children in an idyllic relationship, later to grow up; middle time relating to the next generation - Cathy and Linton - also as two children in a romance parody; and time present, in which the two children are Cathy and Hareton in their domestic romance, which concludes the novel and completes the cycle. Bound up in these three layers of time is Heathcliff as lover and "father"; with Lockwood and Nellie Dean as ever-present observers at varying times.

The whole integrated picture of fragmented time, layered point of view and the symbolic two-house structure, reveals a technique that forms no part of the structure of Mills and Boon fiction. Mostly offered in linear time (with occasional reflective flashback), Mills and Boon novels use their light and bright heroines to provide third-person point of view which is not always a reliable one for the more discerning reader in so far as it is a world reflected through a limited mind. Symbolism is a strange country.



Symbolism and recurring motif are also prevalent in Tess of the d'Urbervilles, perhaps more readily received by high school pupils than those used in Wuthering Heights because they are more obvious – the clues are not quite as cryptic for the awakening mind to decipher. This may be one of the aspects that account for Hardy's popularity among teenagers.

### 2.3 Tess of the d'Urbervilles - Thomas Hardy (1891)

Of the three novels selected for discussion in this chapter, Tess of the d'Urbervilles seems to capture the imagination of the maturing teenager most readily. I have suggested that one of the reasons for this is that Hardy's "clues" are not as cryptic as those of more sophisticated novelists. For Hardy does, indeed, seem to reveal some naïveté in his writing, which has caused critics like Henry James, F.R. Leavis and T.S. Eliot to speak of him with some reserve.

Nevertheless, for the initiate in the art of reading the novel (in this case the high school pupil), the very techniques that might provoke some patronage among certain critics, offer excitement and illumination to the awakening mind. A reading of Hardy produces "frustration level" only in the often unfamiliar Victorian strangeness of phrase or word. (Hardy does have a tendency to use impossible words like "prestidigitation" from time to time.) The time-harried teenager frequently becomes frustrated with lengthy descriptions, but when these are shown to offer patterns of recurring symbols and motifs, they take on a new significance, enabling the "primary literary experience" of the adolescent to be accompanied by "treasure-hunt" enthusiasm.

Even those pupils who tend to operate on a more literal level of understanding than an imaginative or a figurative one, are able to spot Hardy's signposts in landscape symbolism or metaphorical comparison.

The very descriptions that produce a condescending snigger among some who are more critically "aware", are likely to delight the questing teenager.

For instance, the tracing of the colour red may be somewhat overstated to the more refined imagination, yet it produces a pattern throughout the novel that any teenager can easily discern: the red ribbon in Tess's hair in the second chapter (in contrast with all the white); the "pouted-up deep red mouth"; the blood-bespattered Tess at the death of the unhappy "Prince" (white still present in the cold atmosphere and Tess's features); the "crimson brick lodge" of the spurious

d'Urbervilles; Alec's red complexion; the strawberries; the roses; and the man who was to become "the blood-red ray in the spectrum of her young life". These are all offered before the start of chapter six. Obvious they certainly are, but to many teenagers they indicate a whole new way of reading - one that asks one to look beyond the simple narrative in order to interpret the minatory "writing on the wall". This they would never encounter in Mills and Boon fiction, nor even in more sophisticated "bestsellers".

The Eden allusions (before and after the fall), Tess as the two Marys (the Mother and the loving, but fallen, Magdalene), Tess as a bird (recurring throughout the novel), the card images, Tess's journeys, the prophetic significance of the striking clocks, the pagan symbols - all add a density of texture to the novel, which enables the reader to follow the author's direction without confusion. Hardy ably guides the reader by means of his use of imagery.

Many readers have panned the melodramatic descriptions of the villainous Alec, who is always associated with "skeins of smoke" and on one occasion even a pitchfork: His "well-groomed black moustache with curled points" and "bold rolling eye" may seem at first to be a rather grotesque representation - but Arnold Kettle argues that this "very typicality" of the archetypal Victorian villain "serves the purposes of the novel".

"Far from being weakened by the associations of crude melodrama he in fact illuminates the whole type and we understand better why the character of which he is a symbol did dominate a certain grade of Victorian entertainment and was enthusiastically hissed by the audience."

(1953, p.55.)

The diabolic villain is set in direct comparison with the idealistic Angel (complete with harp). His name proves to be ironic as he reveals "a hard logical deposit, like a vein of metal in a soft loam" when he cruelly discards the hapless Tess.

The two "Jacks" of this novel are both responsible for Tess's persecution. It may be said that each one in his way "has" his Jill - not in the way of high comedy, but with a tragic twist - far removed from the Mills and Boon offerings of "sweetness and light". The best characteristics in both Alec and Angel would perhaps provide one perfect "Jack" for the reader; instead, the worst of these produce a richness revealed in the portrayal of Tess as a persecuted but pure and unforgettable woman.

This theme of the persecuted woman is a subject "as old as the world", Mario Praz points out in The Romantic Agony (1933, p.144) but in Tess there is more than archetype; there is "the will to recover, the growth of love, faithfulness, frail happenings, and death." (Ford, B., (ed.), 1958, p.416.)

Her "appetite for joy" which pervades the whole novel and which, according to Hardy, "pervades all creation", is what makes the novel so poignant; for, together with this "inherent will to enjoy" is "the circumstantial will against enjoyment" - with Tess as the victim taking on some of "the most tremendous problems that can confront mankind." (Woolff, V., 1932, p.193.) The portrayal of this capacity for suffering is one of the aspects that earn for Hardy the accolade given to him by Virginia Woolff as "the greatest tragic writer among English novelists". (p.193)

But it is in the symbolism of the natural setting, the landscape, in relation to his central tragic figure, Tess, that Hardy moves away from traditional prose writing and prompts his reader to call his work "a poetic novel".

"Poetry is the constant attendant of Hardy's tragic characters. It is not an intellectual poetry... it is much more primitive and magical, and always it heightens the significance of the characters and the reader's consciousness of their tragic stature."

(Allen, W., 1954, p.242.)

It is Hardy's "evocation of the natural background" which is his special triumph. The atmosphere which he evokes

"is not an embellishment to the book, but an integral part of it.... When Hardy begins theorising, discussing in abstract terms Tess's plight, we become uneasy; when he presents her to us in the misty dawn at Talbothays we feel no need to question her authenticity."

(Kettle, A., 1953, pp 55-60)

These are the aspects that make Tess of the d'Urbervilles especially suitable for the developing young literary critic. Hardy points towards greater appreciation of literature. The patterns in this novel reveal a richness of texture that the teenager is able to recognise, but which many a superior critic has dismissed.

#### 2.4 Conclusion

The three novels discussed in this chapter have all earned their right to be listed as great literature. To discuss them in full in comparison with the "unliterary" novel would be a thesis in itself. For that reason I have viewed them from certain angles, hoping that the ray of light shed by each one will brighten the understanding of the novel and its impact on the adolescent.

What remains to be seen is what the "unliterary" novel offers in return.

The next two chapters will examine certain aspects of Mills and Boon popular fiction, together with pupils' responses to this type of writing, in relation to the tenets of the literary novel.

## CHAPTER THREE

### MILLS & BOON POPULAR ROMANCE FICTION

#### 3.1 The public's "general preference"

"It is clear that a novel cannot be too bad to be worth publishing.... It is certainly possible for a novel to be too good to be worth publishing."

(G.B. Shaw, 1898)

George Bernard Shaw's paradoxical comment, made on the eve of the twentieth century, introduced a subject that has influenced the type and quality of most of the fiction that has been published in the last hundred years. The subject is "the novel of commerce".

The question of whether a book will sell is very often the first to be debated by the major publishing houses when considering the merits of that book. The accolade "a good solid commercial work" is what will prompt a publisher to market the "product". If that work happens to have literary worth, that will be an additional bonus.

Publishers, therefore, wield the power, thus turning the Shavian paradox into a truism. Many a novel may be too good, too "literary", to warrant publication. There may not be sufficient readers of good taste to promote the book as a profitable venture.

As far back as 1899 Henry James expressed alarm at "the rapid increase of the multitude able to possess itself in one way or another of the book". (Edel, L., (ed.), 1957, p.48.) This growing public, among whom were increasing numbers of women readers and boys and girls, created a demand for what James called "the story".

Publishers became conscious of the lucrative potential in this quarter and authors were encouraged to write with specific readers in mind. Henry James's fears were well founded:



"The sort of taste that used to be called 'good' has nothing to do with the matter: we are so demonstrably in presence of millions for whom taste is but an obscure, confused, immediate instinct. In the flare of railway bookstalls, in the shop fronts of most booksellers... in the advertisements of the weekly newspapers, and in fifty places besides, this testimony to the general preference triumphs..."

(Edel, L., (ed.), 1957, p.49.)

Henry James felt that the literary novel was threatened by the public's "general preference" for fast-selling, fast-reading stories. It is this shared uneasiness that prompted the author of this dissertation to promote a comparative study of "literary" and "unliterary" novels among senior high school pupils to encourage critical awareness and greater literary appreciation. For not only should the books themselves be scrutinised, but it is also important for eager readers of these fast-selling genres to understand how irreflective and uncritical they themselves may be.

Among the most popular of the fast-selling genres are Westerns, Science Fiction and Women's Romance. Any one of these genres could be selected for comparison with the currently prescribed literary novel for senior high school pupils, (although it must be remembered that certain writers of Science Fiction have elevated the status of the genre to a high level), but the particular sample selected for this study is the Women's Romance genre - more specifically Mills & Boon romance fiction.

### 3.2 Readers of Romances

The intensity of women's consciousness in the latter half of the twentieth century has resulted in an increased demand for romance, as reported by John Sutherland:

"A less articulate consequence of heightened women's consciousness in the 1970s was the spectacular increase in the appetite for romance. This had always been a solid sector of the popular fiction market, but suddenly it boomed.... Firms like Avon in America, Mills & Boon in Britain and the multinational Harlequin expanded their operation dramatically."

(1981, p.85.)

In Mills & Boon's most recent press release (undated) regarding its "company profile", the following readership claim was made:

"In the competitive and fast-growing world of romantic fiction, the name of Mills & Boon stands out as a market leader. The UK romantic fiction market currently consists of approximately 7.8 million readers; of this number Mills & Boon claims a readership of over 60%.... As market leader, Mills & Boon sales exceed 25 million copies in its UK and Export markets, and form part of the Harlequin Group Worldwide total of over 220 million."

(Annexure A.)

A variety of romances is published each month - the more popular choices being translated in up to 23 languages. Of these, the Mills & Boon collection of stories is offered as follows (for full comment see Annexure B) :

1. Contemporary Romances - simple, modern love stories (10 titles every month)
2. Temptation Romances - passionate, sensual novels (3 times a month)
3. Best Seller Romances - popular reprints (2 titles a month)
4. Doctor/Nurse Romances - (3 titles every month)
5. The Collection - popular authors in omnibus edition (6 times a year)
6. Gift Packs - (4 in a pack)

With approximately 20 titles being offered every month, it would not be surprising if the giant Mills & Boon publishing house were to draw the attention of academic researchers.

In a letter to me dated 21 October 1987 (Annexure C), the General Manager of Book Services International (the South African Agents for Mills & Boon) stated that sales in South Africa in 1986 were approximately half a million. Readers abound among all colour and language groups.

In a market research survey, prepared in 1981, the following

conclusions were recorded:

"Contrary to what is generally expected the Asian market tended to be the heaviest readers of Mills & Boon books in terms of quantity read followed by Coloureds, Whites and then Blacks."

(p.92 - Annexure D.)

Dr Peter H. Mann (University of Sheffield) conducted Mills & Boon readership surveys in 1969 and 1973. The 1969 survey was the first ever made of readers of romantic novels. Before that time there had been

"a conspiracy of silence about romantic novels. Many thousands were avidly bought each month by enthusiastic readers all over the world, and many public libraries bought them in large quantities for their eager readers. But in spite of the large readership for romance, the genre was still regarded as something not to be discussed in polite circles. Newspapers, magazines and broadcasting journalists - most of whom had never read a romantic novel - had the strangest stereotypes of romance readers and if the books were ever mentioned on the mass media, it was usually in gently sneering terms.... Stereotypes still die hard amongst people who have very fixed ideas about the women who read romantic fiction."

(1974, p.5.)

The following is a summary of some of the claims made by Dr Mann regarding readers of romantic novels:

1. "Romantic novels are read by women of all ages. Romance has added many young recruits [emphasis mine] to its readership and nearly half the readers in 1973 who had begun reading in the past five years were under the age of 24."

(p.7.)

2. The idea that romantic novels appeal mainly to spinsters is fallacious. Only one-third of the readers are single and these include readers under the age of 25 (one out of every five).

(p.8.)

3. Most readers are women who are full-time housewives or in full-time employment. One of the comments made in the questionnaire was "I think your books are an excellent vehicle for forgetting the strains of modern living."

(p.9.)

4. "Readers of romances are very varied in their occupations." (p.10.) Results reveal that most of the employed readers have office and clerical jobs, 19 per cent are factory or manual workers, and 10 per cent have professional or technical jobs.

5. "Romance reading for sheer relaxation after a hard day's study or mental work is clearly popular with numbers of women at college or in quite intellectually demanding jobs."

(p.11.)

One respondent wrote:

"I am an English literature major and sometimes the classics can be very heavy reading, and then in particular I am glad of your books."

(p.11.)

Dr Mann concludes that romance readers are a general cross-section of the female population and he makes an observation that is particularly relevant to this study:

"At one time romantic fiction was either not spoken of at all in 'decent' literary circles or else it was treated as a joke. But now I think that its enormous popularity and the craftsmanship of its writers... have overcome the earlier prejudices of the literary elitists who now accept that romantic fiction, like the detective story, is a recognisable genre which includes good writers as well as bad ones, but which has an enormous following and simply cannot be ignored [emphasis mine]."

(p.24.)

The "recognisable genre" of romance fiction has burgeoned in the twentieth century to the extent that it no longer can be ignored.

Dr Mann reports further in an essay entitled "Romantic fiction and its readership" that Euromonitor surveys carried out in Britain in 1983 have revealed that of all current reading, both fiction and non-fiction, 31 per cent was accounted for by romantic fiction amongst women readers.

(Annexure K.)

This survey confirms that romantic fiction is extremely popular - a startling revelation when one considers that romances are neither frequently reviewed nor given much attention elsewhere in the media. Publishers, however, are acutely conscious of the commercial value of these books as is evident in the continued success of the Mills & Boon publishing house.

Of the many South African readers of Mills & Boon romances (approximately half a million Mills & Boon books were sold to South African readers in 1986 : Annexure C), one in particular invites mention.

In October 1985 Woman's Value Magazine challenged readers to better Cathy Windell's record. Of the 4000 romantic novels that she owns, 3000 have been published by Mills & Boon! She reads 30 books a month. Woman's Value journalist, Wendy Christopher, calls her "the undisputed champion Mills & Boon collector in South Africa." (p.61.)

These details are given to emphasise the hold that books of this type have on the collective unconscious.

### 3.3 The Mills & Boon Story

Gerald Mills and Charles Boon founded the publishing company in 1908. Although early authors included P.G. Wodehouse, Jack London and Hugh Walpole, it was Georgette Heyer who ushered in the particular type of story in which the company later specialised.

Social disasters in the form of two world wars and the great depression of the thirties, heightened the popularity of the romance. It offered escapism and promises of an ideal world in which "Jack shall have Jill" and "all shall be well".

Cover designs of the books altered with passing fashion, developing from the early brown binding ("the books in brown") through Art Deco of the thirties, sentimental war scenes of the forties, exotic settings of the fifties and sixties (as international travel increased), to the present photographic simplicity of the eighties.

Decline of the lending libraries in Great Britain and the arrival of television prompted Mills & Boon to produce paperback romances, publishing eight titles a month in the early sixties (now about 20 titles a month). Reacting to readers' preferences, the independent heroine (usually orphaned) became a popular choice.

A Canadian publisher, Harlequin, was granted the North American rights for some of the Mills & Boon Doctor/Nurse titles, and links between the two publishers strengthened, resulting in a merger between them in 1972. Since this time the Harlequin group has grown to include 15 companies, publishing "from Australia and Scandinavia to Brazil and Japan" with translations into 23 languages and sales exceeding 25 million copies in the UK and Export markets, and 220 million as part of the worldwide Harlequin group.

About 200 women authors, from a variety of backgrounds, provide the manuscripts - some of them selling "several million books worldwide through the Harlequin network". About 5000 manuscripts are received



each year (unsolicited) but most are not suitable for publication.

... (Annexure E.)

In its January 1984 issue, Woman's Value magazine reported that one of the Mills & Boon popular authors, Charlotte Lamb, was earning £250 000 per year. She and her family live on the Isle of Man as tax exiles!

"Some 250 million women all over the world buy her books each year to confirm their traditional needs and desires."

(p.57.)

Ms Lamb usually finishes a book a week but her record is three days!

Two of the company's successful authors are South Africans Jane Bauling and Yvonne Whittal.

Beryl Roberts of the Sunday Times (19 May 1985) quotes Jane Bauling:

"I suppose I do write to a formula but I don't find that difficult to do because I believe that I am giving pleasure to a vast number of readers."

(Lifestyle, p.3.)

### 3.4 Publisher's requirements for aspirant authors

When I originally embarked on this study I had an idea that I would be able to crack a rigid formula common to all Mills & Boon romances. It would be possible, I thought, to demonstrate that the heroine would have had some physical contact with the hero by page 18, that by page 50 he would have kissed her, and so on.

Although there is some formulaic structure in all the stories concerned, they are not reducible to a set diagram (as I had hoped).

There are, however, certain common denominators:

The main conventions of archetypal high comedy romance are present, i.e.

- . Boy-meets-girl
- . A series of mishaps keeps them hostile
- . The conflict is resolved in marriage or the promise of marriage, in an "all shall be well" ending
- . A beginning, a middle and an end are evident (thus conforming to the more traditional novel form)

With occasional exceptions, the story is told from the heroine's perspective.

The following imaginary advertisement introduces the latest "tip-sheet" offered by Mills & Boon to aspirant romance writers: (Annexure F.)

"Editor seeks manuscripts for publication in women's category Romance market. Applications should be between 50-55000 words long and concerned with the development of true love (with view to marriage) between lady, 17-28, and gentleman, 30-45 (must be rich and/or powerful). Exotic location preferred, happy ending essential."

After this, the tip-sheet becomes rather diffuse, calling for "a genuine love of storytelling, combined with a freshness and originality of approach". Other prerequisites are "an individual touch" and one's "own particular way of telling a story".

"A good book is not simply a question of constructing a plot with a hero, a heroine, two quarrels and a happy ending, and spinning it out for 200 pages."

A separate sheet offering hints on presentation of the manuscript is also supplied. (Annexure G.)

Recently, the Mills & Boon group released a 40-minute audio-tape entitled "And then he kissed her..." as a guide to the writing of romantic fiction. Side one offers an introduction and discusses characterisation and dialogue. Side two continues with plot and background, using dramatisations to illustrate "good and bad style"

"The tape gives a detailed explanation of the structure of a romantic fiction novel, but does not attempt to tell exactly when and where action should take place - it merely suggests."

(Annexure H.)

Dr Mann, in his paper entitled "Romantic fiction and its readership", points out that

"the first few pages of a book set the whole tone of what is to follow and it is recognised amongst editors of romantic fiction that an unsolicited manuscript which has failed to grab their interest by about page 10 is highly unlikely to be acceptable."

(1985, p.5.)

He claims further that the views of the critics who have never read romantics are usually quite wrong.

"I have met several literary critics who are prepared to discuss romantic fiction on the basis of not having read any of it! Such arrogance is astonishing but only exemplifies the low esteem they accord to this genre.... Unread critics who still fondly believe that romantic fiction has not changed for fifty years would do well to read fifty or so contemporary romances to bring them up to date."

(p.6.)

Teachers of English need to become more closely acquainted with the types of books that their pupils are reading - not so much for the "if-you-can't-beat-'em-join-'em" attitude, as for the purpose of helping their pupils to exercise judgment between their prescribed works and the material they are likely to be reading.

"The picture that emerges from various surveys of children's reading in the last decade is that the bulk of our pupils do not read for enjoyment the books in which their teachers see so much merit; and that the books that are read and enjoyed are regarded with at least condescension and often contempt both by many teachers and by educational writers."

(Fane, N. 1984, p.23.)

A closer look at some of the books that pupils are reading for enjoyment, must therefore follow.

### 3.5 Focus on "the work itself"

In Chapter One, certain aspects common to all literary novels were discussed. It is time to examine Mills & Boon stories, using those elements as a model.

- Universal truth
- The Author's voice
- Point of view
- Characters and characterization
- The three unities : Time, Place, Action
- Plot
- Style.

#### 3.5.1 The truth?

Arnold Kettle points out that romance "hinders the writer from telling the truth about life in all its aspects.... The fantasy of romance carries away the reader in order that he need not face life."

(1951, p.40.)

This function is in direct opposition with the function of the great novel, which is to portray intensely "the illusion that genuine life has been presented." (Booth, W.C., 1961, p.44.)

The Mills & Boon type of novel can be linked with the romance genre, which Arnold Kettle describes as:

"non-realistic in the sense that its underlying purpose was not to help people cope in a positive way with the business of living but to transport them to a world different, idealised, nicer than their own.... And romance performed, as it performs to this day, the double function of entertainment through titillation and the conveying in palatable form of a particular kind of philosophy of life."

(pp 31-32.)

This is borne out in the Market Research report of 1981 on readers of romance in South Africa. The following findings were summarised:

"In terms of the actual Mills & Boon books, the major attraction appears to be in the escapism and not mainly the mere romantic aspect which these novels provide to their readers. This was perceived to be particularly applicable to both the Afrikaans and Coloured population groups as these readers were able to escape to a world which was totally removed in language and lifestyle as well as geographical reference to their ordinary lives."

(Annexure D, p.90.)

The romantic notion that "Jack shall have Jill/Naught shall go ill" is, to put it in the words of Anthony Burgess, "a grossly oversimplified picture of life". (1967, p.20.)

Writing about "modern fiction" and "materialist" authors (admittedly in 1925) Virginia Woolff observes:

"The form of fiction most in vogue more often misses than secures the thing we seek, whether we call it life or spirit, truth or reality, this, the essential thing, has moved off, or on, and refuses to be contained in such ill-fitting vestments as we provide.... The writer seems constrained, not by his own free will but by some powerful and unscrupulous tyrant who has him in thrall, to provide a plot, to provide comedy, tragedy, love interest, and an air of probability embalming the whole so impeccable that if all his figures were to come to life they would find themselves dressed down to the last button of their coats in the fashion of the hour."

(1925, p.188.)

Writers of Mills & Boon fiction are held in thrall by their publishers. They are willing prisoners, however, for the fruits of their labour enable them to subsist in grander manner than most "free" authors. The price they pay is that the answer is "No" to the question "Is life like this?" They must therefore sacrifice the central intention of the serious novelist to present a "speaking picture" of reality. Instead of holding the "mirror up to nature", they

accuse nature of playing man false, and state implicitly that "life should be like this". The problem is that the coats they provide for their characters become "ill-fitting vestments" after "the fashion of the hour" has passed. I suppose one could argue that the stories they write are not true novels at all.

"We recognise the main difference between the fictional entertainment and the serious novel from the work of a man who writes both - Graham Greene. The serious novels probe into the world as it really is; the entertainments falsify the world, manipulate it.... The popular novel is not an examination of the nature of reality; it is an escape-shaft out of reality, a device for engendering easy thrills or pleasant dreams."

(Burgess, A., 1967, p.206.)

The intention of all English teachers of senior high school pupils should be to teach them how to recognise the difference between the two types of novels. This must come through reading and discussion of both.

"To believe a Mills & Boon novel reflects real life, is to live in perpetual disappointment. You are meant to believe while the reading lasts, and not a moment longer."

(Weldon, F., 1984, p.8.)

### 3.5.2 The Author's voice?

On page 10 of this study I stated:

"Discernible by means of plot, characters and setting, the author's voice will speak the idea, will inform the moral and aesthetic purpose, will reveal the reality beneath the appearance, so that the reader might see, and in seeing might understand."

The purpose is expressed by the voice.

Mills & Boon writers are clearly aware of the subjugation of the authorial voice to the "tyrant" who presents himself both in the form of the publisher and also the crowd. Certainly one of them



defensively uses the following dialogue in her story Bride for a Captain:

"'You're good,' he said admiringly.

'But not as good as he is, and I'm fast coming to the conclusion I'll never be as good. I don't possess his imagination. I've mastered the skill of how to put paint on canvas or paper and I can create pretty pictures, that's all. I call them "crowd-pleasers",' she said with a touch of self-mockery.

'So what's wrong with that?' he replied. "I've been doing it for the past five years too, writing scripts for T.V. Series strictly designed to entertain and please the crowds who watch. The masses, the people in the street are the ones you should aim to please, in my opinion.... To hell with the critics who say a painter or a writer has to shock or show the ugly side of life before he or she can be accounted as a true artist.'"

(Kidd, F., 1981, p.110.)

Flora Kidd, perhaps conscious of the mockery of the critics, pre-empted their dismissal of her type of writing by building up an apologia for "crowd-pleasers". Unfortunately, as is the case with all sentimental writing, the overt intention is spurious. Whereas even the best of writers ought not only to be aware of the reader in the book but actively to engage him in discerning the reality beneath the appearance; to be controlled by that reader's whims is to reverse the central intention of the great novel. The greatness and the usefulness of the novel, says Lionel Trilling, lies

"in its unremitting work of involving the reader himself in the moral life, inviting him to put his own motives under examination, suggesting that reality is not as his conventional education has led him to see it."

(1950, p.223.)

Far from having to put "his own motives under examination" the reader of Mills & Boon fiction is actually a type of ventriloquist, with the author as puppet perched upon his knee. The author really has no voice at all but simply echoes what the public is demanding.

Unlike Jane Austen (see Chapter Two, p.21), the Mills & Boon author is never "laughing, in her corner, at the world". There is no elaborate joke about the nature of reality". The heroine in the extract quoted above is deadly serious and so is her creator, who is pandering to the tastes of her readers and her publishers, not to truth.

The voice of the author is false.

### 3.5.3 Point of View

The heroine, often an unsure narrator and poor judge of her feelings, is the key figure from whose perspective all the events of the romance must be viewed by the reader. She is the centre of consciousness in the book. Readers, however, are not meant to be totally deceived. They participate in the game of confusion and hostility on the part of the heroine, indulging her ignorance, knowing that she will soon discover her true love for the hero.

"To gain the entertainment the reader must accept, even if 'temporarily', the consciousness of the romance. Although the explicit models of behaviour are open to the reader's independent judgment, the ordering of consciousness, the perspective, can be questioned only in analysis.... Once the conventions of the form become familiar to her, the romance reader knows she must understand the world through the eyes and feelings of the heroine."

(Margolies, D., p.5.)

The reader is expected to accept the traditional role of the romance-heroine, that of ultimate subordination to a dominant and authoritative hero. I use the word "ultimate" in preference to "passive" because the heroine of the 80s in Mills & Boon romances is granted more independence and "worldliness" than her earlier counterparts.

The author, however, either consciously or carelessly, occasionally grants the perspective to herself as the author or to some other character, usually the hero. The following example from Coming Home by Alison Fraser illustrates this:

"Andros saw his point, but he had assured his friend that less of a victim than Alex Saunders he was unlikely to meet....  
 Yes, he should have been pleased at Mario's evident fascination. In time the girl would surely grow bored by her confinement, and if the Italian boy was induced to become bolder.... So why should he feel decidedly nauseated by the idea?"

(1984, p.80.)

The author herself rarely intrudes in the story in Fielding- or even Hardy-style but Juliet Shore makes a personal observation in the following example from Hospital under the Jacarandas:

"Pain is the loneliest of worlds; and in it we are allowed to be self-centred and self-pitying to a degree."

(1963, p.129.)

She concludes the story with:

"This seems as good a time as any to ring down the curtain and say goodbye to those who had found a kindly fate awaiting them in the hospital under the jacarandas."

(p.188.)

The heroine, however, is at the heart of each of the Mills & Boon stories and the reader is expected to empathise with her - especially when it comes to moral choice.

"One recipe for unhappiness, she thought as she brushed her hair. Fall in love with a man you don't respect, yet be so weak as to agree to be his latest mistress. Dear God, to lose one's independence and self-esteem so easily and completely! To be so much at the mercy of one's body that a man could upset the moral code of one's upbringing just by being!"

(Donald, R., 1978, p.174.)

Her own vision is distorted, which means that there will be no reliable learning experience for her nor any kind of epiphany for the reader. The literary aspect of point of view, therefore, does not play an important role in this type of book as it is presented through a limited mind (see Chapter Two, p.32). One is reminded of Henry James's emphatic comment that "No good novel will ever proceed from a superficial mind." (Edel, L., (ed.), 1957, p.44.)

What then is important to the reader of Mills & Boon books? The answer is not simply "Jack shall have Jill/Naught shall go ill" but that the reader should be given an opportunity to become personally involved in the fantasy which lifts her from the prosaic quality of her own existence.

#### 3.5.4 The question of characterisation

Unlike Jane Austen, who is always "so constantly right in her judgments of the characters and events in the small world she created" (see Chapter Two, p. 23) Mills & Boon authors tend to cling to stereotyped figures in the following forms: the Heroine, the Hero (presented as a Super-Male), the Other Woman, and the Shadow-Male. (I am indebted to Professor Joanna Russ for these terms from her paper entitled "The Modern Gothic", pp. 666-691.)

##### a) The Heroine

"Mills & Boon heroines are mostly beautiful... they usually come from a mediocre background in which their families seldom play any part in the action... and they do not undergo any learning experience as they are usually without major fault to begin with - their problems centred in being misunderstood (mostly by themselves)."

(Chapter Two, p. 24.)

Adoration of various parts of the body features strongly in Mills & Boon stories. This begins with the description of the heroine by means of the following methods:

- the author lists her features
- the heroine appraises herself in the mirror
- the hero exclaims on her beauty

Examples selected at random verify this:

"From the moment she arrived Stephanie had forsaken her glamorous city-image but even without her smart clothes and the glossy make-up she had an awful lot going for her - a beautiful figure and a flawless olive skin that had the glow of perfect health. She had masses of thick mahogany dark hair with a generous natural curl and where one expected dark eyes, Stephanie's were a deep and beautiful flower-blue - almost violet."

(Way, M., 1984, p.9.)

Later in the same story Stephanie's eyes change colour from flower-blue to purple. (Desire has done this for her.)

"'Then why have your eyes gone purple? I can show you a mirror if you like.'

He did so and she was shocked at the change in herself. She looked deliberately, wildly provocative, the mane of her hair almost feline, a high colour deepening the natural gold of her skin, her eyes narrowed and yes, a deep purple..."

(p.184.)

Anne Mather (A Haunting Compulsion) introduces her heroine to the reader by means of the mirror reflection:

"(She) examined her miniaturised reflection in the mirror.... The same calm Madonna-like features gazed back at her..."

(1981, p.6.)

The description continues over the next ten lines.

Heroine Robyn Barrett of Confirmed Bachelor has "golden-blond hair" on page 6, which is described as "silver-blond" on page 12. Hero Bradley Dexter, however, finds her beauty unassailable:

"'You're beautiful,' he said thickly. Every part of you.'"

(Leigh, R., 1981, p.96.)

Description of the heroine's beauty includes frequent references to the clothes she wears. There are at least fifteen references to Robyn Barrett's clothes in Confirmed Bachelor.

"For the party Robyn wore red; a vivid zinging red, that gave her skin the iridescent sheen of a pearl. The neckline was high, outlining the full curves of her breasts, which owed nothing to a bra, as the low-cut back testified, and the sweeping lines of the skirt made her seem even taller than she was."

(p.152.)

Action and dialogue reveal a usually spirited young lady (aged between 17 and 26 years). Despite her fiery resistance, however, her passions become subordinate to the dominant Super-Male to whose charms she helplessly succumbs.

"She was beside herself with rage when he released her and, spitting like a cat, clawed at his face, incoherent with anger. Grig easily imprisoned her raking fingers and pulled her roughly back on to his lap.

'Cat!' he laughed. 'I know one good way of dealing with a woman when she gets like this.' His lips closed over hers, hard, demanding, cruel, burning, ravishing her mouth and searing her soul.

...Her lips moved with a will of their own against his..."

(Young, R., 1983, pp 116-117.)

Although subordination of the female to the male is usually revealed by means of reluctant submission in the various stages of love-making, there is always evidence of the desire to participate, even though the body appears to be a traitor to the mind. The heroine, however, is usually a virgin (though not always) at first and marriage is either effected or promised by the end of the story, so the heroine, to the Super-Male's awed pleasure, remains a one-man girl.

Mills & Boon romances published before the mid-70s stop short of the



bed in any love-making scenes. Although there is mention of sexual experience and competence on his part, she remains a virgin while unmarried.

"Almost without volition she reached up and put her fingers to her mouth. Untouched by passion, Nick had said. But how could he possibly know just how little lovemaking she had experienced by merely looking at her? The eye of a connoisseur, perhaps? A man who had made love to many women in his time."

(Thorpe, K., 1969, p.84.)

In the novels of the 80s:

"heroines are as liberated as they choose to be, and heroes can no longer depend on the assumption that they are Prince Charming. A Mills & Boon romance adapts to the society from which it takes its cues, but it still features a happy ending."

(Annexure E, p.6.)

However, even the most sophisticated heroine of the eighties is still submissive to the dominant Super-Male, particularly after marriage. In Eldorado by South African author, Yvonne Whittal, the clever heroine a systems analyst, automatically gives up her job after a marriage of convenience to the hero. When after certain complications arise she wishes to work again, her husband refuses to grant permission.

(1987, p.148.)

The heroine is often a poor judge of her own worth. She is unsure of herself and this insecurity is revealed in personal disgust at some of her actions, or in jealousy of the Other Woman, or lack of belief that the hero might love her.

"How could she have been so stupid? She was acting like a thirteen-year-old again, and the worst of it was, she did not really feel that way at all, it was just her impulsive speech that was always landing her in trouble..."

(Flanders, R., 1983, p.86.)

She is often incapable of assessing that she has aroused the interest of the hero and cannot acknowledge that he loves her until he states it plainly. Even then she is astounded:

"'Marry me.'

He named his price, spelling out the warning that she failed to heed. She gulped and stammered,

'M-marry you?'...

(Peters, S., 1982, pp 186-7.)

In his essay Mills & Boon: Guilt without Sex, David Margolies makes the point that the heroine's

"most fundamental guilt feelings...seem to be concerned with sex. She wants sexual fulfilment...but at the same time she is ashamed of having a sexual response. The situation is one of steamy impossibility, of continual stimulation without satisfaction - while the flesh says 'yes', the rational mind says 'no'."

(Margolies, D., 1982, p.11.)

The "unwilling" maiden in Dilemma in Paradise is held in thrall by a dominant Super-Male and it is a relationship like this which is the central theme of every Mills & Boon romance.

"A flame of need so urgent that she felt it like a pain made her moan softly and pull herself against him; dimly she was aware that shame would come later, but for the moment she was in thrall to a bondage far sweeter than any she had ever dreamed of."

(Donald, R., 1978, p.58.)

#### b) The Super-Male

In Chapter Two, the character, Heathcliff, was discussed as a "dark, Satanic hero" - brooding, brutal, dark and powerful. His cardboard counterpart is the Super-Male of Mills & Boon fiction. He is more

often dark than blond; always tall and physically exciting; always rich and/or powerful; always decisive and confident. His expertise is revealed in all that he does (even in driving a motor car); especially in love-making, in which he reveals considerable experience. His age is usually in the mid-thirties.

"With so much given to him, wealth and privilege, vast land holdings, one might have thought the gods would stop short at physical endowments, but with Ballinger nothing seemed to be the limit. He was stunningly handsome in the manner of a fallen angel; very dark and proud, a faintly intimidating cast to his aristocratic features."

(Way, M., 1984, pp 12-13.)

The "fallen angel" - archetype Lucifer - reveals his almost evil intent in the love-making scenes. At times he comes dangerously close to rape of the virginal heroine (reminiscent of the Gothic villain) but is spared censure by the Tess-like "half-pleased, half-reluctant state" of the heroine, who, like Tess, obeys "like one in a dream."

"'You can't make me,' she said. I'm not going to be your mistress,' she hissed furiously.

'You'll be anything I choose.' He caught her up fiercely, carrying her back to the bed and throwing her right into the middle of it. She had always said he looked like a fallen angel now the devilish side was coming out."

(p.188.)

Amazingly, despite a steamy love scene which follows, the heroine retains her virginity, and Hunt the Sun ends with a promise of immediate marriage.

The shadow-Satanic hero is also described, somewhat anti-climactically, in Anne Mather's A Haunting Compulsion:

"He was standing just inside the doorway, a sinister Machiavelli, in a black short and black denims, his dark hair smooth and brushing his collar at the back."

(1981, p.40.)

The hero's wealth is implied in the type of sleek motor car which he drives or in the description of his home and possessions.

"He led her to his car, a huge white monster with a mass of gleaming chrome which he handled with unexpected ease."

(Leigh, R., 1976, p.121.)

As in the example above, the "expert driver" theme frequently appears - as if it were an unusually admirable asset. Expertise is always present in the Super-Male's professional or occupational knowledge. The same hero with the "white monster" of a motor car in Too Young to Love is described as:

"a man of natural talent and personality, smiled upon by the gods and given a handful of gifts where one alone would have been sufficient to set him on the road to success."

(p.38.)

His physical appearance is always attractive. He is never short, hairless or fat. Nor is he pale. His tanned skin is mentioned in virtually every story - sometimes to the point of the ridiculous:

"This man was the highest mountain of all. He was broad to match, yet still hard - resilient, whipcord, tough. He was near Red Indian-skinned, almost the same colour as the unusual red-stoned ring he wore."

(Dingwell, J., 1970, p.15.)

Hardy-like, his name is not Oak but Stone!

The Mills & Boon publishing house has produced an audio-tape, as already mentioned on page 46. Against a background of romantic music, the speaker stresses that whereas the heroine may well be recognisable as the girl-next-door, the hero must be someone many women dream about. Thus physical attractiveness and sensuality (coupled with wealth and success) are recurrent features. The ellipsis dots at the

end of the title ("And then he kissed her...") inspire the perfect dream scenario concerning his magical qualities.

That these "qualities" include a startling excess of aggression, anger and violence, is somewhat surprising.

"The whole weight of his body held her down on to the bed, he caught her head between his hands and his mouth came down in a burning, savage cruelty, forcing hers open... until she was mindless, yielding, as weak under the forcefully inflicted rape as an addict in the grip of a narcotic."

(Lamb, C., 1980, pp 134-5.)

The framework of boy-meets-girl, conflict in the relationship, and eventual happy ending is all that makes up the plot. No other rigid formula exists. However, the plot is the "peg" on which the whole relationship between the hero and the heroine hangs - so it requires some attention in this study.

### 3.5.5 Plot

The developing relationship between the hero and the heroine is what Mills & Boon romances are all about. The tape, "And then he kissed her..." warns authors not to send short stories, non-fiction, Westerns, or other types of fiction to Mills & Boon for consideration.

The plot is manufactured around the theme - which means that conflict and complications in the relationship will occur externally in the form of the Other Woman and/or the Shadow-Male, together with the internal conflict of the heroine's doubts, misconceptions and periodic hostility. The boy-meets-girl theme is central to the story. Very rarely a sub-plot may be added in the form of some mysterious event but as the length of each work should be approximately 50000 words (about

190 pages) there is very little allowance for additional details.

Of the random sample selected for this study, only one book, Jade, by Sue Peters, included a sub-plot in the form of a missing brother and a valuable jade amulet which had disappeared with him. Into this little mystery story is woven the developing relationship between Woolfe Wieland and Isla in the wilds of Burma: I note, however, that this story is longer than the average Mills & Boon romance as although it contains 188 pages (the usual limit), there is an average of twelve words to a line on 39-line pages in comparison with the more usual eight words a line on a 34-line page.

The presence of a sub-plot is discouraged by the publishers.

The boy/girl relationship has become far more intimate over the last decade with each story liberally sprinkled with sex scenes. Sometimes the heroine is still a virgin on the closing pages despite torrid arousals (she often is overcome by guilt and shame moments before the "vicious minute" occurs). In Hunt the Sun (Margaret Way), for instance, Stephanie says on the penultimate page, "I would like to come to my husband a virgin". This might amaze the critical reader as there are sexually titillating scenes throughout the story, such as on p.73, which romps through to:

"Not only did he take what was so flagrantly offered he held her to him by the hips so the lower half of her body was conjoined with his."

Judy Olivier, London Associate Editor of Fair Lady magazine, on querying this change of attitude to sex by the publishers, was given the following reply by Inge Lubbock (Public Relations Manager of Mills & Boon):

"It happened about ten years ago. We had to move with the times you see. Real life was changing, and so our novels had to as well. It was all perfectly natural. We didn't tell our writers: 'You must have sexual contact.' They just followed the trends."

(30 September, 1987, p.176.) (Annexure I.)



The freedom of description of the sex scenes makes my promotion of Mills & Boon romances for comparative purposes a daunting prospect for teachers or educational selectors. Suggestions will be given in Chapter Four regarding this problem. Not every romance of the 1980s is wildly explicit, however, and one soon gets to know the preferences of certain authors. Charlotte Lamb, for instance, often favours the ruthlessly aggressive hero trying to win over a reluctant heroine who has suffered some kind of emotional trauma. This author appears to be a favourite among teenagers, as is Penny Jordan. Conversation, enquiry and discussions with librarians indicate that elderly women seem to enjoy Betty Neels, whose treatment of sex is less bold.

I have deliberately omitted discussion about the Other Woman or the Shadow-Male in the section on characterisation as the presence of these stereotyped stock figures is merely there to complicate the plot. They act as foils to the heroine or the hero - often in direct contrast with them - and there is very little else to be said about them except that the woman is usually malicious, the Shadow-Male, mild.

Edwin Muir's definition of plot (see Chapter One, p.16) as "the chain of events in a story and the principle which knits it together" does not hold true for Mills & Boon fiction, in which plot is merely a type of "peg" on which to hang the activities of the hero and heroine. The plot is really of little concern to the reader.

"Plot, as ordering of events, is of secondary importance; it is a vehicle for the approach of the heroine and hero where sequence other than alternation of closeness and distance is of little concern.... The reader... is encouraged to sink into feeling - and to feel without regard for the structure of the situation or circumstances that give rise to it."

(Margolies, D., 1982, pp 8-9.)

In other words, the traditional role of the plot has been ousted and all that really matters to the reader (apart from the opportunities provided for wish-fulfilment) is that the conventions of romantic fiction as summarised by the heroine and hero of The Drummer and the Song (Joyce Dingwell, 1969) be evident in every story.

"'Good lord, boy meets girl before boy falls in love with girl. Don't you ever read romantic fiction, Miss Milford?'

'The third stage,' she reminded him, still angry, 'is boy falls out with girl.'

'After which the real thing happens for both of them. I'm glad you're not so romantically unread after all.'

(p.72.)

Another Mills & Boon author, Flora Kidd, draws an interesting analogy between a viola and a clarinet to explain the pattern of the love story. "The story of the ill-matched pair" is reproduced in Annexure J from Desperate Desire. (1984, pp 136-138.)

### 3.5.6 The Three Unities - Time, Place, Action

Time, in Mills & Boon fiction, is always linear in structure, with occasional reflective flashbacks in the mind of the heroine. This is one of the reasons why comparison with the traditional novel rather than the more experimental modern novel is more valid.

The actual time span of the plot is a matter of choice - usually over a period of weeks or months - the time it takes for the two lovers to develop a relationship which can lead to marriage (or love, if a marriage of convenience has already occurred). Sometimes the heroine leaves the presence of the hero for a period of some months or even years (although her activities during this period are glossed over in a single paragraph) and she is sought and eventually found by the hero with his promise of marriage and happiness. Savage Atonement by Penny Jordan (1983) and Too Young to Love (Roberta Leigh, 1976) provide examples of this.

Place is important to Mills & Boon readers. Exotic locations are popular but it must be remembered that Mills & Boon romances are read all over the world and a variety of settings, in order to please every reader at some of the time, is important. Thus, in the random

sample of books before me, the backgrounds are, among others, a Polynesian South Sea island, Australia, New Zealand, Bahrain in the Far East, an African jungle, Johannesburg, Athens, Paris, London and Bombay!

Comfort and wealth are always evident in the hero's home for it is important that he should be part of the fantasy and no one ever fantasises about being poor.

The Mills & Boon tape, "And then he kissed her...", warns that accuracy of description regarding the geographical location is essential in our well travelled age. Often the background is described simply as a type of tour guide, no more being offered than one could easily read about in the pamphlets supplied by travel agencies, or at best the National Geographic Magazine. The Australian scenes usually convince but no attempt is made to integrate them into the novel in the way that Emily Brontë's Yorkshire moors and Hardy's "Wessex" are. There is no symbolic significance in the lists of names that are sometimes provided by Mills & Boon authors, such as those by Jayne Bauling in Abode of Princes (1986). (Annexure L.)

Setting, like romantic music, serves as a background to add glow to the action, played out in the love relationship of the hero and heroine. Metaphor occasionally is used at the end of the story in a kind of "the sun will break through the clouds" type of cliché. Marjorie Moore's novel, Borne on the Wind (a more acceptable story than most of the romances studied), ends in this way:

"The wind had risen and from the distance, came the sound of high waves breaking against the jetty. The seagulls cawing loudly were flying inland, circling across the white cliffs, seeking the sunshine which had now broken through the mist."

(1975, p.188.)

The third unity, Action, has already been discussed with the Plot. Dialogue plays a prominent role in the presentation of action, and this feature introduces the last of the aspects for discussion, that of style.

3.5.7 Style

"Style in this type of novel is likely to be stereotyped, clichéd and unoriginal. It is presented in the form of the chocolate box picture: flat, recognisable, 'sweet', predictable."

(Chapter One, p.17.)

One of the objects of this study was to read Mills & Boon books written by a wide range of authors in order to assess whether each differed noticeably from the others in her style of writing. What has been detected is the similarity. This is due mainly to the use of clichéd phrases and hackneyed metaphors, easy to copy or parody. (See examples of pupils' responses to this exercise in Chapter Four.) For example, the following excerpts might have been written by one author instead of three of the most popular Mills & Boon writers:

"She became deeply aware of the muscled thigh close to her own."

(Lamb, C., 1978, p.36.)

"She was overwhelmingly aware of his thigh only inches away from hers on the cushioned seat, and the muscled length of his legs."

(Mather, A., 1981, p.40.)

"She knew that the slightest movement would bring the bare suntanned length of his thigh against hers."

(Jordan, P., 1983, p.98.)

Descriptions of clothes, food and room interiors appear in nearly every story (see p.56). These have the purpose of underlining the wealth, power and good looks of the hero, or the beauty or personality of the heroine. For example, in Too Young to Love (Roberta Leigh, 1976), the heroine's clothing does the following things for her:

"It folded itself around her tall slender body and gently defined the outline of breasts and hips." (p.11.)

"It emphasised the gold in her toffee-coloured hair." (p.47.)

"... moulded her body like a second skin." (p.109.)

The hero's clothing "emphasised his bronze skin and black hair." (p.28.)

Parts of the body are also subjected to repeated comment (see the examples of the 'thigh' given above). Eyes are a particular favourite, sometimes involving themselves in ludicrous activities:

"Dipping her eyes back to the brandy, she shut them tight..."

(Fraser, A., 1984, p.33.)

"She dropped her eyes..." (p.97.)

"Snapping back her head, she took in a pair of frigidly cold eyes..." (p.15.)

"Appraising eyes travelled over her slim body..." (p.16.)

"She let her eyes skirt round the bar..." (p.27.)

In The Great Escape the heroine's eyes are also very active. On one occasion, "her eyes bounced down on him and then away" (p.46); on another they were "winging to him doubtfully" while his "eyes shuttered down." (Carpenter, A., 1984, pp 170-1.)

An article on the use of "eyes" in Mills & Boon romances would make entertaining reading and provide interesting material for pupil discussion.

In Coming Home (quoted above), I counted thirty references to eyes, and there may be more.

The following paragraph from the same book illustrates a number of the gaze/eye stereotypes used frequently in these romances:

"For a long tense moment their gazes locked, each demanding that the other back down. Alex felt that she had a right, more right, to be angry, and she had no intention of giving in. Only she did, completely losing her nerve at the ruthless glint in his dark eyes. She wasn't left doubting what might have happened, if she hadn't dropped her eyes in submission and shown her fear with the slight,

shameful trembling of her body."

(p.90.)

In Cassandra by Chance by Betty Neels (1973), the partially blind hero's glasses are given rather unusual activities:

"the glasses glared" (p.30);

"dark glasses sparkling with hidden mirth" (p.55);

"dark glasses dancing with unholy merriment" (p.57);

"the dark glasses beamed back" (p.58);

"the glasses...were dazzling in their triumph" (p.73);

"Benedict's dark glasses exchanged a long thoughtful stare with his partner" (p.100);

"the dark glasses conveyed amused contempt" (p.109).

Metaphor and simile are occasionally used with eye descriptions. Sometimes, however, the comparisons conjure up alarming pictures in the critical reader's imagination:

"His silver eyes looked up at her, not soft, but brilliantly hard like melted diamonds."

(Way, M., 1984, p.18.)

"He was standing looking down at her, stormy eyes, flushed cheeks and heaving breasts, his own eyes frozen lakes..." (p.28.)

When attempts are made to use metaphor (often in landscape descriptions), the writer sometimes lapses into mixing the metaphors, thus confirming Fay Weldon's prediction of "perpetual disappointment" for the more discerning reader. (1984, p.8.)



"It was sunset and the western sky was aflame, the dust hazed sun a pulsing blood red with an aureole of molten gold. At another time she would have found the sight splendid, now it seemed like the fiery prelude to nightmare."

(Way, M., 1984, p.5.)

Fire, blood, molten gold, music – all provide a pot pourri of the sunset in two sentences.

The moon in Hospital under the Jacarandas also becomes a strange conglomerate:

"It sailed in an indigo sky, a large golden dinner-plate of a moon with a wise bland old face smiling an enigmatic smile on the foolish, rushing ant-people of earth."

(1963, p.41.)

To mix the metaphor further, I should call the above description of the moon a gem!

Mary-Louise Peires is writing an interesting study on Selected Linguistic Structures in Popular Literature and to repeat her observations in the lexis of pulp literature would be superfluous. Her investigations in this field promise to be of considerable value in teaching the differences between "pulp" and "good" literature.

Mills & Boon romances are obviously hastily put together without much attention being paid to careful proof-reading, with the result that words are frequently mis-spelt and even the name of the heroine may alter! (Luenda becomes "Lucinda" on p.71 of A Mountain for Luenda by Essie Summers, 1983.) The heroine, Sara, in Too Young to Love is eighteen when she and the hero become acquainted (p.36). Four years later (p.103) she is only twenty (p.115). In The Red Sarong the hero and heroine use Shadow-Male, Howard's motor car on page 58 but on page 77 she is told (as if this were a surprise) that "Howard's car is in the garage there...." In Jade the heroine is ordered by the hero to sit down (p.16) but she has already been seated since the previous page. In Penny Jordan's Islands of the Dawn, heroine Chloe's "jeans and a serviceable blouse" (p.151) alter to a "thin dress... soaked through and clinging to her" (p.153).

Mary-Louise Peires points out that there is much direct speech in Mills & Boon romances. Writers are, in fact, reminded of the importance of the use of dialogue on the tape "And then he kissed her...". Dialogue promotes the relationship and provokes the conflict between hero and heroine in all the stories - perhaps equating these books with television serials in this way. Dialogue and descriptions of food, houses and dress, enable the reader to visualise the scenes as if watching a film. No extension of the imagination is required.

Ellipsis dots are often favoured in the punctuation of dialogue - particularly by popular author Essie Summers, who is unstinting in her use of these.

One major change that has swept through Mills & Boon romances in the last decade is in the treatment of sex. Since about 1974 "hot" scenes have become increasingly apparent. The "hot" romantic mode seems to be favoured by many schoolgirl readers, perhaps because they believe that they can learn about the art of lovemaking in a few easy steps. Although the stories cannot be described as "bodice-rippers", at times they come very close to this label.

"Still dazed, Selina broke free briefly, only to have him pull her back against him, his body deliberately brutal as he used his superior strength to force her to lie still. His hands took hold of her dress, ripping the front of it, and she gave a short, choked scream which died under the crushing savagery of his mouth. He kissed her endlessly, his mouth exploring the softness of hers without compunction while his hands moved over her ruthlessly, making her body yield to his touch as helplessly as her mouth."

(Lamb, C., 1978, p.112.)

Usually the love scenes become embarrassingly stereotyped. There is a limit to the number of ways one can describe the act of love-making, and I agree with Colleen McCullough's observation that

"Love-making is such a non-verbal thing. I hate that explicit 'he stuck it in her' kind of thing because it is boring. You can only say 'he stuck it in her' so many ways."

(Guardian, 15 April, 1977.)

John Sutherland reports that Colleen McCullough was forced by her editor to introduce "the ecstatic physical consummation that produces Meg and de Bricassart's lover-child" in The Thorn Birds, much against her will. (1981, p.80.)

This type of writing ought to be discussed with teenagers, controversial as this suggestion may seem to be. Teachers should not delude themselves that their pupils are not reading these scenes.

When the lovers finally declare their love for each other, the descriptions become rather bathotic. The passionate ruthlessness of the hero and the unwilling submissiveness of the heroine both settle into amiable acceptance:

"All Tammy could see were moons and stars. She was still a little mad at him, but when he eventually released her all she could say was, 'Rick Hatton, you need a shave.'"

(Corrie, J., 1975, p.191.)

Fay Weldon's "perpetual disappointment" comes to mind.

### 3.6 Conclusion

There is no doubt that there has been a romance swell, particularly over the last two decades, and many pupils have been borne along on its tide.

Jane Reid emphasises that

"Popular culture undergoes very little academic analysis, in spite of its enormous influence with the young."

(1982, p.10.)

In this chapter I have concentrated on one aspect of "popular culture". Although I have pointed out by example the lack of quality which pervades the pages of the popular romantics, I remain convinced that we need to meet the pupils on their own level - not reach out, Cleopatra-

like, from our monument to hoist them up. That approach might not succeed.

"The real way of mending a man's taste is not to denigrate his present favourites but to teach him how to enjoy something better."

(Lewis, C.S., 1961, p.112.)

No one has the right to "denigrate his present favourites" without knowing something about those favourites. The central aim of this study is to teach pupils "how to enjoy something better."

What remains is to examine the responses of the pupils themselves to this form of "popular culture" and to propose possible methods of helping senior high school pupils to appreciate the worth of the great novel.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE ROLES OF BOTH TEACHER AND READER

"For the teacher of English, the study of literature must involve not only consideration of the literary work itself, but also concern for the way in which students respond to a literary work."

(Squire, J.R., 1964, p.1.)

#### 4.1 The work itself and the reader's response

Throughout this study I have emphasized the need for a structural examination of "the thing itself". My argument has been that a comparative study between a prescribed literary novel and a work of popular fiction should lead to literary appreciation and critical awareness among adolescent readers - thus assisting in their reading development.

This focus on the text has been the subject of much discourse by the Reader-Response School of Critics, who propose that literary meaning cannot exist independently of the reader's response to it. The text, they argue, cannot be wholly objective.

"The 'concretization' of a text in any particular instance requires that the reader's imagination come into play. Each reader fills in the unwritten portions of the text, its 'gaps' or areas of 'indeterminacy' in his own way. But this is not to say that the text thus arrived at is a mere subjective fabrication of the reader's. The range of interpretations that arise as a result of the reader's creative activity is seen rather as proof of the text's 'inexhaustibility'."

(Tompkins, J.P., (ed.), 1980, p.XV.)

The text's "inexhaustibility" is the key to reading enjoyment, and it is this that the English teacher should attempt to exploit in any literary work. The work becomes "a living thing" only when "reader-meets-text" and when the reader participates in the discovery of textual meaning. The text will always place certain constraints upon the reader but there is a uniqueness in each response which makes the whole

text greater than the sum of its parts.

"Usually, people respond to literary works in two ways together. They work with what is publicly available - the words-on-the-page as a readiness of structured information. They make from that sharable promptuary a completely original and private enterprise."

(Holland, N.N., 1975, p.287.)

The more the reader gains from the "promptuary", the more satisfying will be his literary experience. The English teacher's mission is to act as an additional "prompt", developing the adolescent's response to reading by means of demonstrating the author's artistry (in a structural approach) and engaging the collective readers' interpretive awareness in what might prosaically be called the "reader-response" approach. The dynamic nature of the literary work is dependent upon the convergence of the two.

Wolfgang Iser is one of those critics who stress the importance of the reader's response.

"The work is more than the text, for the text only takes on life when it is realised, and furthermore the realisation is by no means independent of the individual disposition of the reader - though this in turn is acted upon by the different patterns of the text. The convergence of text and reader brings the literary work into existence.... As the reader uses the various perspectives offered him by the text ... he sets the work in motion, and this very process results ultimately in the awakening of responses within himself. Thus, reading causes the literary work to unfold its inherently dynamic character."

(Tompkins, J.P., (ed.), 1980, p.50.)

In other words, to use Aidan Chambers' succinct summary of the reader's role in the book, "It takes two to say a thing." (Chambers, N., (ed.), 1980, p.252.)

The logical conclusion is that the teacher of English literature should encourage reader-response among the pupils. The aim of this study is not to list the varieties of methods that can be used but rather to promote one possible method - that of comparison between the prescribed



novel and aspects of popular fiction - in this case, Mills & Boon romances.

Robert Protherough's work Developing Response to Fiction (1983) provides several suggestions on successful novel-reading in the classroom. To repeat all his suggestions would be impertinent - let the work speak for itself. He stresses, however, that whatever methods the teacher may use, there should be variety.

"No method is popular if it is practised all the time, becoming monotonous and predictable."

(Protherough, R., 1983, p.178.)

One of the methods which he advocates is that of comparison, which he considers "important for the deepening of response" (p.196). It is that "deepening of response" in the young reader which should be the highest concern of the literature teacher. (Annexure M indicates a method used with some success by two Natal teachers, P. Schultz and S.M. Smith.)

If young readers, by means of comparison between the great novel and popular romance fiction, learned but to discern the changing nature of living relationships - beyond stereotypes and predictable conclusions - they would be on course towards understanding, among other things, the meaning of morality in a novel - particularly according to D.H. Lawrence's interpretation of its meaning:

"Morality in the novel is the trembling instability of the balance. When the novelist puts his thumb in the scale, to pull down the balance to his own predilection, that is immorality."

(Kettle, A. (ed.), 1972, p.45.)

Unfortunately, Mills & Boon authors tend to put their thumbs in the scale - manipulating both character and conclusion. Discovery of this fact alone forms part of the literary development of young readers, training them both to respond more sensitively and intelligently, and to choose their reading matter more judiciously.

This seldom occurs spontaneously. Training and encouragement must be given by the literature teacher.

"The teacher's job is to suggest and stimulate, to ease the transition into the unfamiliar and to demonstrate that it is worthwhile making the effort to read and understand authors who at first sight seem too hard; even, eventually, to choose them rather than the others."

(Reid, J., 1982, p.28.)

Thus it can be perceived that upward mobility in adolescent literary appreciation is dependent on the personal response of the reader and the training given by the teacher. It combines the employment of both reader-response criticism and the more traditional structural approach.

#### 4.2 A discussion of some personal responses

##### 4.2.1 Focused Interview

In the early stages of this study (while I was still engaged in the reading of text upon text of Mills & Boon fiction) I conducted a group interview with seven adolescent girls. They formed a homogeneous group in that they shared the following common characteristics:

1. They attended a single sex school for girls.
2. They were school boarders.
3. They were in the upper senior school (Stds 9 and 10).
4. They had all read Mills & Boon romances.
5. They had studied either Wuthering Heights or Tess of the d'Ubervilles.

It was felt that a group interview would be more beneficial than individual interviews as the dynamic nature of group discussions would be more likely to spark off argument and ideas than a more isolated approach.

The interview itself could be defined as a focused interview in that the persons interviewed were known to have been involved in a particular

situation and the researcher had already analysed the situation in which the interviewees had been involved (in this case, the reading of Mills & Boon fiction). (Cohen, L., & Manion L., 1985, p.310.) The interview, therefore, was focused on the subjects' personal responses to their reading.

The interviewees (all of whom were above average intelligence) were asked to complete a brief questionnaire (Annexure N), before commencement of the interview. The seven pupils responded with sincerity and enthusiasm and some interesting perspectives were noted.

An analysis of this questionnaire revealed the following information:

1. Six had been reading Mills & Boon fiction for more than three years.
2. Four had read more than 50, two between 20 and 50 and one between 10 and 20. All of them were in the habit of reading other books.
3. Six read them because they were short and easy to absorb;  
Seven, because the novels provided light relief when tired;  
Five, because they were readily available.  
(It was noted that none read the romances for the reason that they ended happily.)
4. Five favoured novels set in Australia or New Zealand, three, an exotic island setting.
5. Favourite authors were Charlotte Lamb, Penny Jordan, Anne Mather, Catherine George.

Rachel, Vivienne and Rose had started reading Mills & Boon fiction while at primary school and Jacqui had a friend who had read "at least fifty of them" by the time she had entered high school. According to Jacqui (who subsequently gained an A-Aggregate with A symbols for both English first language and Literature in the Cape Senior Certificate examinations) her friend was "very bright ... one of these literature bofs". Vivienne, who had started reading these books

in Standard five, said that at that time all her friends were reading them.

When asked why they still read these books the following responses were offered:

- Rose : It relaxes all the tension that you've got inside.
- Adriane : The author gives you everything you want to receive.... It's an hour and a half just to go into neutral.
- Rose : I find when I'm bored - just lethargic - and I don't want to do anything else, I read a romance and it puts me in a good mood.
- Shelley : I suppose it is a type of escape.

They all agreed that the more recent issues were more sexually explicit than earlier stories:

- Rose : Well... they've become more open...
- Adriane : More physical contact.
- Rose : Much more physical contact.
- Interviewer : About sex, in other words?
- Jacqui : Yes. And some of them are now sleeping together before they get married.
- Interviewer : But they always get married - is that what you're saying?
- Rose : Always.

Regarding the length of each work (approximately 50 000 words or 190 pages) the responses were positive: "nice and short"; "finish at one sitting"; "It's like watching a T.V. programme".

A discussion on the comparison between Mills & Boon fiction and their prescribed novels produced the following observations:

- Adriane : I think the main difference is that there is no development of character.... We watch Tess from when she is young and she has her tragic bygone trouble, and we watch her become a woman. In Mills & Boon, she stays the same all the time...
- Rose : Wuthering Heights is on its own, almost... it is one of a kind. In Mills & Boon there are hundreds of the same.

Adriane : They are all written on the same basic story line. In Mills & Boon you are writing for the reader. You don't take very much notice of the author.

Interviewer : Do you feel that you actually learn about love from Mills & Boon?

General : No.

Interviewer : Would any of you define love for me?

Adriane : Something to do with unconditional...

Vivienne : You accept them as they are.

Adriane : ...It won't just come and go...

Later in the interview:

Adriane : You couldn't really call Tess a love story, though. It wasn't a love story.

Interviewer : What would you call it?

Adriane : (Pause) A story of Tess...

Interviewer : Tess had an appetite for joy. She longed for happiness, as everyone does...

Adriane : I think that Tess was living - alive - and anything that is living seeks for joy.... Her faults made her more human - they weren't detrimental to her at all.

When asked whether Mills & Boon fiction could be damaging in any way to the teenager, Adriane's response was the most interesting:

"...You start setting standards for yourself in your own love life which very, very seldom you reach - and you're likely to live an unsatisfactory life if you start wanting to live like that.... It's very easy to set a standard for the kind of guy you'd like - because the way the guy is presented in there is very desirable - and they lay such a lot of emphasis on looks. He's got to be good looking. After a while that might sink in. The guy that you go out with has got to be good looking. We might have been infiltrated already and not know of it.... Every girl has her ideal man and I think if you read a lot of Mills & Boon that helps build him up. I don't think that's good."

The discussion on the hero was picked up later in the interview:

Interviewer : Is he always successful?

General : O yes...very much so...that's part of his attraction.

- Interviewer : So the girls are materialists too.  
 Rose : The whole book is materialistic.  
           The writer writes it for money and the  
           characters are all interested in money...  
 Adriane : Same as T.V.  
 Rose : It is basically a love story but everything  
        revolves around money - you know, how much  
        you've got.

Adriane (who gained an A-symbol for English in the Cape Senior Certificate examination) summarised the major difference between prescribed books and Mills & Boon fiction:

"In the kind of books they prescribe, like Tess and Wuthering Heights, the author actually gives of himself - he writes what he thinks and what he feels is right. But I think in Mills & Boon you are writing for the reader - you know what the reader wants and that's what you're giving her."

The penetrating quality of Adriane's intelligence is obvious from her responses.

#### 4.2.2 Written comparisons

Personal responses were also offered in the form of written critical essays.

Twenty-six pupils responded to a request to read a Mills & Boon romance of their own choice and compare it in writing with either Tess of the d'Urbervilles or Wuthering Heights.

This exercise produced a variety of responses but the conclusion drawn by 21 of the 26 pupils was that the prescribed work was more meaningful or memorable than the Mills & Boon romance which would most likely be forgotten shortly after the reading of it. The five remaining pupils simply compared the novels without offering their opinions.

Nicky, who had never read Mills & Boon romances before this exercise, writes:



"The essential difference is that Mills & Boon is a mere romantic fairy-tale (... and they all lived happily ever after), whereas Hardy's Tess is a romantic novel, saying something about life. Hardy's novel will last and live on forever whereas Mills & Boons will be forgotten once read."

Cathy T., who also gained an A-symbol for English in the Senior Certificate examination, comments:

"No one can base a true meaningful relationship on physical feelings alone. There has to be a certain amount of mental compatibility and that is what I see as the main difference between the two novels. That is what makes Wuthering Heights credible and Passionate Intruder (Lilian Peake) a fantasy. That is the reason why Passionate Intruder can be read once and discarded and why Wuthering Heights has become a classic."

Cathy G. (A-symbol for English) states:

"Tess unfolds over 546 pages, Wild Enchantress over 187. Both stories end with a couple walking hand-in-hand away from the past. Catherine and Jared are strolling down a beach at sunset with the waves of the Caribbean lapping at their ankles; and Liza-Lu and Angel are walking away from the sight of a black flag. It is ironic that the desired happy ending makes one story instantly forgettable and that the absence of a happy ending in the other and the fact that the reader would prefer such an ending makes the other story memorable."

For the pupils who participated in this exercise, the discipline of writing the comparisons enabled them to discern the essential differences between the works more clearly and discuss them afterwards with interest and confidence.

#### 4.2.3 Questionnaire on recreational reading

Finally, a questionnaire on the reading preferences of senior high school adolescents was completed by pupils in Standards nine and ten of three English medium Eastern Cape High Schools.

Each school acted as a type of representative of one of the three kinds of English medium Government High Schools which are currently attended by white pupils in the Cape. Two of them are single-sex schools and the remaining one is a co-educational school.

The findings of the questionnaire (Annexure O) in percentages were as follows:

BOOKS READ	SINGLE SEX SCHOOLS		CO-EDUCATIONAL SCHOOL	
	GIRLS %	BOYS %	GIRLS %	BOYS %
1. <u>Mills &amp; Boon Romances:</u>				
None	17	92	30	98
Fewer than 10	58	8	41	2
More than 10	25	0	29	0
2. <u>Westerns:</u>				
None	70	35	76	45
Fewer than 10	27	43	21	40
More than 10	3	22	3	15
3. <u>Other reading:</u>				
None	0,5	0,4	0	4
Detective stories	43	49	40	46
Adventure stories	61	67	54	70
War stories	29	50	19	48
Love stories	69	14	76	3
Stories about home life	38	8	33	4
Historical stories	30	19	22	14
Science fiction	19	29	30	42
Animal stories	29	26	22	18
Stories about teenage problems	38	22	46	10
Biographies	39	12	17	10
Short stories	45	53	33	34
Magazines	85	70	75	61
Newspapers	54	61	38	54
Other (specify)	30	20	19	13

In the school for girls, 83 per cent admitted to having read Mills & Boon romances. In the co-educational school the percentage was 70 among the girls. The love stories category also revealed a decided preference among girls. Magazines were favoured by all groups.

Adventure stories revealed popularity among both boys and girls. Suitable material from this category could be selected by teachers in co-educational schools for comparative purposes.

I regret that I failed to include horror stories in the 'Other reading' group of the questionnaire. These stories, together with 'thrillers' seem to be gaining in popularity among senior adolescents. Several pupils included these in the last group (reading to be specified), but this does not guarantee that there were no others.

The purpose of this questionnaire was firstly to verify that there was sufficient interest in Mills & Boon fiction among girls to justify an investigation of these books, and secondly to ascertain the general reading interests of adolescents in Standards nine and ten. In the three schools selected for this purpose, 657 pupils responded to this questionnaire, which was supervised by their English teachers during class time.

Of the 228 boys who responded in the single-sex school, 39 did not know what types of stories were published by Mills & Boon. Most of the pupils offered the opinion that they were "soppy love stories" or 'romantic rubbish". Only 5 of the 187 in the girls' school did not appear to know about them. In the co-educational school ten girls of the 144 did not respond to question 4.1 on Mills & Boon and 34 of the 98 boys did not know. However several of these pupils were also unsure of what was meant by the term 'Westerns'.

The pupils were invited to write an opening paragraph of either a Mills & Boon story or a Western. These revealed a clear understanding of the stereotypes and clichés frequently found in these novels. Titles, too, were typical: "Passionate Encounter"; "Golden Moments"; "Reckless Surrender"; "Pacific Paradise"; "Dangerous Meeting";

"Interlude in Paris"; and "This Time Forever".

One young man who had read neither Mills & Boon romances nor Westerns, but who listed among his literary interests the reading of poetry, wrote the following typical Mills & Boon paragraph:

In this paragraph he has used typical names: Ashley & Adam; presented an exotic setting: Corfu; given his heroine the popular "disintegrating family" background and found the clichés such as "relentless grip" and "inescapable destiny", so familiar to the reader of Mills & Boon. The love story is clearly established and its conclusion already predicted.

"It was with a surprising coolness that Ashley stepped out into the sunshine from the artificial calm of the airbus. Corfu, she now knew, had always been her home, despite recollections of an unhappy childhood fraught with the pain of a disintegrating family; despite the memory of her marriage to Adam in the tiny church so soon to be demolished by her uncle's minions. She knew that the island held her in a relentless grip. It was here where her heart lay - and here, she was certain, she would find the love she so desperately sought. For the island - and those it held in awe represented her inescapable destiny."

This pupil clearly has an intuitive and instinctive understanding of the predictable style and plot of the Mills & Boon Romance.

#### 4.3 Conclusion

At different times, and with varying circumstances, even the most erudite of literary scholars might choose to escape into the swift-moving narratives of the detective novel, the adventure story, thrillers and horrors, Westerns or popular romance. The aim of this study was not to attempt to deflate or deride such a choice of reading, but to enable young readers to evaluate and discern. The 'sin' is not the choice of novel to be read; it is ignorance of the worth of that novel.

C.S. Lewis distinguishes between the 'user' and the 'receiver' in

the reading approach. There are times when it is expedient simply to know what happens next as a way of 'switching off' to the demands of serious thought. It is C.S. Lewis's belief (and mine) that

"the unliterary are unliterary not because they enjoy stories in these ways, but because they enjoy them in no other. Not what they have but what they lack cuts them off from the fullness of literary experience." (1961, p.38.)

The young need some guidance in appreciating the art of the novel. They need to see the novel as a whole (with the Gestalt idea of the whole being greater than the sum of its parts) and they need to examine the parts in order to appreciate the "fullness of literary experience". The critical faculties of the pupil must be engaged in the reading act as well as the capacity for pure enjoyment.

"Omne tulit punctum qui miscunt utile dulci,  
Lectorem delectando pariterque monendo."

(Horace: Ars Poetica, ll 342-2.)

(He has gained every point who has mingled profit  
with pleasure, at once pleasing and teaching the  
reader.)

Coleridge defined two cardinal points of poetry:

"The power of exciting the sympathy of the reader  
by a faithful adherence to the truth of nature,  
and the power of giving the interest of novelty  
by the modifying colours of imagination."

(Watson, G. (ed.), 1975, p.168.)

These two 'powers' are also prerequisites of the great novel. My extensive reading of Mills & Boon romances for the purpose of this study reveals that they failed Coleridge's two-point test.



In his book, The Novel Now, Anthony Burgess states that he writes "for the young, who are starting to take the art of the novel seriously" (1967, p.11). My wish is that the young will take the art of the novel more seriously and discover its worth in being

"An imitation of the life of man on earth."

(Allen, W., 1954, p.12.)

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ANNEXURES

A

Posted to N.J. Stear  
on 22 September 1987

Date: Immediate  
Contact: Jo Langham

MILLS & BOON - COMPANY PROFILE

In the competitive and fast-growing world of romantic fiction, the name of Mills & Boon stands out as the market leader. The UK romantic fiction market currently consists of approximately 7.8 million readers; of this number, Mills & Boon claims a readership of over 60%.

Mills & Boon was formed in 1908 in London by Gerald Mills and Charles Boon. As general fiction publishers, their early authors included P. G. Wodehouse, Jack London and Hugh Walpole. Georgette Heyer was first launched as a romantic fiction author by Mills & Boon.

During the Depression years of the early 30's, reading became the favourite form of escapism and, with the upsurge of commercial libraries, it was decided at Mills & Boon to concentrate on hardback romances, which were an instant success. Mills & Boon were initially sold through weekly twopenny libraries and had a distinctive brown binding, which led to them becoming known as 'the books in brown'.

With the decline of lending libraries in the 50's, and the subsequent demand for paperback fiction, Mills & Boon turned its attention to the production of paperback romances. At this time, a small paperback publisher in Canada, Harlequin, approached Mills & Boon for the North American rights to some of its Doctor/Nurse titles to be produced under the Harlequin imprint. So successful was this enterprise that in 1960 Mills & Boon launched its own paperback series by importing back into the UK the Canadian Doctor/Nurse editions.

.../2

*Press Release*

Mills & Boon then entered paperback publishing in its own right, adding a more general series of popular romantic fiction, publishing some 8 titles per month by the early sixties. Ties with Harlequin remained close as they continued to re-print titles from this series, and in 1972 the two companies merged. In 1981 this association came under the wing of the Canadian based Torstar Group, of which Alan and John Boon - sons of the founder - are now senior directors.

Since 1972, the Harlequin Group has grown to include 15 locally based companies, publishing romantic fiction throughout the world (much of which is originated at Mills & Boon), from Australia and Scandinavia to Japan and Mexico. The books have been translated in up to 23 languages and are published in varying formats.

Mills & Boon is now led by Robert Williams, who has been with the company since 1979 and was appointed Managing Director in August, 1985. As market leader, Mills & Boon sales exceed 25 million copies in its UK and Export markets, and form part of the Harlequin Group Worldwide total of over 220 million.

Since the company formed, tastes in romantic fiction have altered considerably. Mills & Boon has therefore invested widely in market research and is continually responding to consumer demands for new series. Currently, Mills & Boon publishes a variety of romances each month under the Rose of Romance brand including: Doctor/Nurse stories, three Best Seller reprints of popular titles and two Masquerade Historical novels.

In the UK, every romance title has a print-run of over 50,000, with many authors having sold several million books worldwide through the Harlequin network. Manuscripts are originated exclusively by some 200 women authors who come from a variety of backgrounds - some at home, some out working - but all writing at speeds to suit themselves. Mills & Boon also receive a staggering 5,000 unsolicited manuscripts each year, of which only a few are suitable for publication.

The books are sold on a traditional standing order principle through both wholesalers, and direct to retailers. Mills & Boon novels are available throughout the country wherever good paperbacks are sold.

- ends -

For further information, please contact:

Jo Langham or Deborah Welham; The Grayling Company;  
Number One; Dean's Yard; Westminster, London; SW1P 3NR

Tel. 01 799 9811

B

THE MILLS & BOON COLLECTION

Contemporary Romances - Simple, modern love stories, focusing on hero and heroine. Rewarding happy endings for naive and sophisticated characters.

The original Mills & Boon Series, at £1.20, with 10 titles every month.



Temptation Romances - Passionate, sensual novels, where larger than life characters face temptation and make difficult choices. Compelling plots follow mature heroines into unusual careers, as they tackle the dilemmas of life and love. 224 pages at £1.20, three times a month.



Best Seller Romances - Popular reprints of best-selling Romances. 7-10 years old, and designed for those interested in previous titles by current authors. Two titles a month at £1.10.



Doctor/Nurse Romances - The medical profession provides a unique theme as nurses and doctors find time for love in busy hospitals and crowded surgeries. Three titles every month at £1.10.



Masquerade Historical Romances - Centuries of intrigue, discovery and conquest, from 1066 to the late 19th century. The past brought to life with romance. Two 256-page novels every month at £1.50.



The Collection - The best of established, popular authors in a special omnibus edition of two Romance titles. Available 6 times a year at £1.99.



Gift Packs - The perfect gift for Mother's Day, Christmas or holidays, for celebrating successful authors or introducing new ones. Attractive slipcases hold four new Romances, at £4.80.

\* \* \* \* \*



# BOOK SERVICES INTERNATIONAL

(SA) (PTY) LIMITED

Agents for Mills & Boon, Silhouette, Harlequin, Worldwide, Gold Eagle

1st Floor, North East Wing, Hyde Park Corner, Hyde Park 2196, Johannesburg — Tel (011) 788-1738. Telex 4-28368

21 October 1987

Mrs Natalie J. Stear  
Maud Villa  
13 Westbourne Road  
Cooper's Kloof  
PORT ELIZABETH  
6001

Dear Mrs Stear

I regret the delay in replying to your letter of 11 August. However, since it was addressed to Mr Rafferty at our Book Club address, it has only recently been passed on for my attention. Mr Rafferty is no longer with Mills & Boon in South Africa.

I am enclosing copies of some market research conclusions prepared in 1981. Unfortunately I do not have more recent available research for the South African market. Our sales in South Africa in 1986 were approximately half a million. I am afraid that any more detailed information is confidential.

Wynne May has, in fact, not written a novel for us for some time but I have requested a recent Jayne Bauling and Yvonne Whittal novel to be sent to you from our Book Club in Randburg. They are also sending a copy of the writer's guidelines with the books.

I wish you success with your thesis and hope that this information is of some use to you.

Yours sincerely

  
TONI REIDY  
General Manager

D

MARKET RESEARCH PREPARED IN 1981(See Annexure C)CONCLUSIONS.

We conclude from the findings of this survey that:-

- in terms of the actual Mills and Boon books, the major attraction appears to be in the escapism and not mainly the mere romantic aspect which these novels provide to their readers. This was perceived to be particularly applicable to both the Afrikaans and Coloured population groups as these readers were able to escape to a world which was totally removed in language and lifestyle as well as geographical reference to their ordinary lives. Such escapism is slightly reduced amongst English speaking Whites and Indians, as their home language is already English and their lifestyle references are, very often, more "international". The Black reader seems to savour both the perceived romantic aspects as well as the totally alien-but totally credible - lifestyles of those characters described in these novels particularly admiring hospital backgrounds.
- following on to these escapist demands, the typical Afrikaans readers and buyers of Mills and Boon books do not want to have the artificial escapism of their dream worlds brought into the reality of their own home language, i.e. Afrikaans is perceived to be suitable for historical South African novel and no further.
- Mills and Boon books provided light and relaxing reading particularly suited for bedtime/evening reading. Due to the fact that little concentration was required for reading these books, these novels were seen to be suitable for reading at practically any available time, i.e. inbetween housework, in trains, etc. The White market was particularly attracted by the thinness of the books and the ease with which they could be read as it enables them to complete a book quickly. The Black market there-against found the books slightly more complex to read possibly due to the fact that they are produced in English which is usually their second language. This greater

difficulty in comprehension led the Blacks to appreciate both the thinness and easier language used in the Mills and Boon books particularly when compared to other paperback books.

- in order to both retain the current Mills and Boon readers as well as to possibly attract more readers, a greater degree of intrigue and/or suspense could be introduced thereby preventing the books from becoming stereotype. However, the happy ending should not be changed as this contributes towards the attraction of the books.
- Contrary to what is generally expected the Asian market tended to be the heaviest readers of Mills and Boon books in terms of quantity read followed by the Coloureds, Whites and then Blacks. However, the Blacks tended to read more regularly though due to the slight difficulty experienced in reading the English language their reading speed is reduced resulting in them reading more often yet less at a time.

PLEASE NOTE: This annexure has been retyped verbatim from the original text. This includes all the syntactical and spelling errors.

N.J.S.

Posted 22/9/1987

Date: Immediate  
Contact: Jo Langham or Sharon Roche

## THE CHANGING FACE OF ROMANCE

Keeping the spark alive in a romance for 75 years is, by anyone's standards, quite a special achievement, but for Mills & Boon and its readers, the flame has never gone out. Now in its 77th year of successful romantic fiction publishing, Mills & Boon continues to represent the Changing Face of Romance, in terms of both the contents and the cover designs of its novels. In a diamond anniversary exhibition held in 1984, covers from each decade painted a lively picture of Mills & Boon's history, and a study of the book's story lines showed how closely the two are linked.

Cover illustrations have always reflected the changes in fashions and social attitudes to romance, contained within the pages of the books. It is the illustration which first attracts the reader, an invitation to enter a world of romance. The cover illustration must therefore speak volumes.

Some things, of course, never change. A romance still means the meeting of a man and a woman: their falling in love, the misunderstandings, the eventual solutions, and the type of ending enjoyed by millions - a happy one. A romantic cover still features a couple. So much for the basic ingredients: Mills & Boon has always built its world on these foundations.

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*Press Release*

...2.

When Mills & boon was founded in 1908 by Gerald Mills and Charles Boon, romance was only one element of a general list that included such authors as Jack London, Hugh Walpole and P. G. Wodehouse. However, the introduction by Mills & Boon of Georgette Heyer in those early days as a romantic fiction author paved the way for the company's later specialisation. An early Punch review of the novels of the company's first author, Sophie Cole, describes the type of romance popular over sixty years ago: "Her tales should appeal to every reader who does not insist on battle, murder and divorce as essential to the best romance." Cover designs at that time were very simple: 3-colour, line drawings were the order of the day.

The Depression years brought many changes. Reading became the favourite form of escapism. Commercial libraries, first known as weekly twopenny libraries, flourished as money became short. Mills & Boon novels had a distinctive brown binding, and soon became known as "the books in brown". The sort of books they required were romantic novels: by the early 30's, Mills & Boon was concentrating with great success on hardback romances. Fans could 'pay as you read' of charmed existences, of an adult-orientated society far from the rigours of everyday life, in which the young strove to emulate their more polished and wiser elders in a light, cheery fashion. At the beginning of the 30's, the cover design was still simple and linear, very much a reflection of the Art Deco movement; but by the end of the decade, a more elaborate, 4-colour design had been adopted.

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World War II presented Mills & Boon with a dilemma. Paper rationing meant fewer books could be published, but demand for romantic fiction was stronger than ever: entertainment was limited, and the troubles of the world made for heavy reading. Every novel that could be printed was sold, and lending libraries enjoyed an even brisker trade. It was in the 1940's that the Mills & Boon Cupid, bearing his placard inscribed with 'A Mills & Boon Love Story' made his appearance on the front cover.

The novels of this period broke away from the belief that older people were the wisest; the war made for a more egalitarian society, breaking down class barriers in both the romantic and the real world. More local colour was used by authors; heroes were in the services, and heroines joined the war effort. The injured heroes set the scene for the Doctor/Nurse romances which were later to gain great prominence. Cover illustrations were sentimental but ever mindful of the audience for which they were intended: uniformed officers embracing young sweethearts struck a chord with the women left at home. Reacting also to the Hollywood boom, it became possible during this period to detect striking resemblances between movie queens and the heroines depicted on the covers, a feature that continued into the 1970's.

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In the 1950's, the editorial style of Mills & Boon swung away from the harsh realities of the previous decade, and took on a fairy-tale quality: stories were exotic, taking readers away from Britain and the memory of the war with international travel, foreign names and places. Colourful detail became still more important, and covers featured holiday resorts, dance halls and pretty dresses. Towards the late 1950's, however, lending libraries began to decline, and with them, Mills & Boon's major outlet. Readers could not afford hardback books, romance paperbacks were not yet available, and yet the taste for romantic fiction itself had not waned. It was the arrival of television, originally feared to be the downfall of reading, that provided the solution. The Doctor/Nurse theme, already successful for Mills & Boon, became suddenly more popular via television medical dramas. In response to this vogue, a small paperback publishing firm in Canada, Harlequin, approached Mills & Boon for the North American rights to some of the Doctor/Nurse titles, to then be produced under the Harlequin imprint. So successful was this enterprise that in 1960, Mills & Boon was able to turn its attention to the launching of its own paperback series.

Having built its paperback list on the Doctor/Nurse novels, Mills & Boon was then able to enter general paperback production in its own right, adding more popular romantic fiction, and publishing some eight titles per month by the early sixties. These titles took an editorial turn back to realism. In the new generation, the notion of parents vanished off the page, as independence became the most valuable commodity.

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For the first time, the assumption was made that a living must be earned - it was no longer a luxury. Cover design matched this mood with light-hearted, young characters in playful moods, but very little background detail, resulting in a poster-like effect. The lushness of the 1940 and 1950's artwork had given way to modern simplicity.

Ties with Harlequin remained close as they continued to reprint the UK editions, and in 1972, the two companies merged. The Harlequin Group grew to eventually include 13 locally-based companies, publishing romantic fiction throughout the world in up to 23 languages. This commercial expansion had a very definite effect on the type of novels written for Mills & Boon. The world suddenly became aware of romantic fiction as a literary force, and the genre responded by taking on a still more realistic and readily identifiable profile. Heroines engaged in ever more challenging careers, spending more time with both feet planted firmly on the ground and less in foreign, even exotic, situations. Nonetheless, the central theme of romantic fiction - a love story - was never overshadowed.

The 1980's reflect all of Mills & Boon's experience in the publishing of romantic fiction: fantasy for the reader within the realm of possibility. the stories vary from exotic to familiar locations, from naive characters to sophisticated ones, from unconventional to traditional careers - in short, the best possible combination of the past seven decades.

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Heroines are as liberated as they choose to be, and heroes can no longer depend on the assumption that they are Prince Charming. A Mills & Boon romance adapts to the society from which it takes its cues, but it still features a happy ending. As in all the previous decades, the cover design has also kept pace. In 1984, Mills & Boon launched a brand new range of cover designs: illustrations are more detailed, using an almost photographic style; the couple on the cover embrace more passionately; the background colours are warmer, more vibrant. All these elements combine in a modern cover to suit a contemporary romance.

It is only by constantly updating its novels both outwardly and inwardly that Mills & Boon can continue to woo its readers, for their tastes in, and requirements of, romantic fiction are a publisher's most vital barometer. An ad from the 1940's is still relevant today: "There is always a new Mills & Boon". The familiar face of Mills & Boon is inextricably linked with the Changing Face of Romance.

- ends -

F

Posted 22/9/1987

## A FINE ROMANCE ... is hard to find!

EDITOR seeks manuscripts for publication in women's Category Romance market. Applications should be between 50-55,000 words long and concerned with the development of true love (with view to marriage) between lady, 17-28, and gentleman, 30-45 (must be rich and/or powerful). Exotic location preferred, happy ending essential. Applications in writing to  
*Editorial Department,  
 Romance Fiction, Mills & Boon Ltd.,  
 15-16 Brook's Mews,  
 London, W1A 1DR.*

If only it were as easy as that! Every Mills & Boon reader and every aspiring Mills & Boon writer has a very clear picture of what makes our books so successful; some people have even tried to reduce it to a formula which, in its essentials, would look very like the fake ad above. But in order to keep up the high reputation which rests at the core of Mills & Boon's success we have to be a lot tougher than that.

We believe that the so-called formula is only the beginning, and that originality, imagination and individuality are the most important qualities in a romance writer. Any competent novelist can follow a detailed recipe for success, but we want writers who have the sort of star quality that makes their books instantly recognisable as *theirs*. The Mills & Boon editorial office receives nearly 4,000 manuscripts for consideration every year from aspiring authors. If a dozen new authors are selected for publication in that time, we reckon we are having a bumper year!

In a very short space of time, the world of romantic fiction has grown into a big business, and it's not easy to stay businesslike *and* romantic. However, we still believe that quality is more important than quantity — that romance readers deserve the best we can find. A book that simply 'makes the right noises' will *not* make a Mills & Boon.

What do we look for when we read a manuscript for the first time? Many would-be authors have tried to find exactly the right note, but have had to admit defeat in the end. Surprisingly, we don't worry too much about flawless presentation; a book that has been written with genuine feeling can be forgiven a few typing mistakes. What is more important is a genuine love of storytelling, combined with a freshness and originality of approach. Sincerity, and belief in the characters as real people, communicate themselves to the reader; if a writer is less concerned about conveying her heroine's innermost thoughts so that the reader understands and sympathises, than making sure the hero first kisses her on page 18 as laid down by the tip-sheet, that preoccupation will show up on the page. Similarly, although imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, we don't want new authors whose work echoes the style of our readers' current favourites. Each of our authors must possess an individual touch, her own particular way of telling a story, and this quality is vital. The great artist is not simply someone who can paint a human figure with the right number of arms and legs, and the great musician does more than hit the correct notes in the correct order! In the same way, it is what a romance writer creates with her material that makes her special (and successful); a good book is not simply a question of constructing a plot with a hero, a heroine, two quarrels and a happy ending, and spinning it out for 200 pages.

The story doesn't necessarily have to be complicated — in fact, a simple tale introducing only a few characters besides the hero and heroine is often very successful. Make sure, however, that the characters are convincing in both their actions and their words. If the hero is meant to be a man of authority, used to being obeyed, he should be shown as such and the other characters should react to him accordingly. With such clues of behaviour, too, it is not always necessary to state bald facts; you can afford to keep the reader guessing by stimulating his/her imagination. For instance, if you include a scene in which the heroine quarrels violently with someone, there is then no need to state that she has an unpredictable temper! If such behaviour is unusual, the reason for it (nervous strain, a headache, a feeling of apprehension) immediately gives the reader a deeper understanding of the heroine's character, and one that has been arrived at by guesswork; the reader who guesses about a character in a book is an interested reader. In general, the dialogue should be completely unstilted. A would-be writer should be aware all the time of everyday patterns of speech, and should try to make the characters as true to life as possible.

Equally important is the background against which the principal characters are set. It is vital that this should be as accurate as research allows, although there is no substitute for an author's personal knowledge of a particular background. All Mills & Boon authors spend a good deal of time checking the material used in their books, because they realise how quickly the recognition of a fault or inaccuracy can spoil the reader's enjoyment of a scene.

This care should be extended to small details, as well as the more obvious points such as foreign locations and customs; if, for instance, a would-be writer has no idea about office life, it is a mistake to make the heroine a secretary! A working knowledge of the practical details is essential at such points. All this may sound like obvious common sense, but it is surprising how often the obvious is ignored!

When attempting a Mills & Boon novel, concentrate on writing a good book rather than a saleable proposition. A good book sells itself and is good indefinitely, while a 'saleable proposition' tends to be based on what is saleable *at the time of writing* — even if a publisher snaps it up, the world will have moved on by at least nine months by the time it finally appears. Think of what you, as a reader, would like to read, rather than what you think an editor will buy — the one will lead to the other if all goes well.

A Mills & Boon has a standard length of about 190 printed pages — between 50,000 and 55,000 words. From a purely practical angle, any manuscript which differs so greatly that its author cannot reduce or expand its size to fit this requirement is unsuitable. The most important consideration in accepting or rejecting a manuscript is, however, whether the story lives up to the high standard that Mills & Boon readers have set for us. We know from their letters what they like and dislike about our books, and their opinions matter to us. Maybe we can't please every one of our readers all the time, but it isn't for want of trying!



POSTED 22/9/1987

### SOME HINTS ON PRESENTATION

We do realise that not everyone is a competent typist, but certain ways of setting out help the editor's job tremendously, and save eyestrain!

1. Use A4 or quarto size paper of a reasonable strength.
2. Type on one side of the page only, in double line spacings, with a clear ribbon. Faint print is a strain.
3. Start each chapter on a fresh page, and leave at least  $1\frac{1}{2}$ " margins on all edges.
4. Number the pages consecutively from 1 onwards, don't begin with 1 again for each chapter. It's also a good security measure to add your surname or a word from the title over the number on each page.
5. Don't bind the manuscript, or put it in a ring folder. Loose pages with an elastic band are much easier to handle in the office with less likelihood of damage, though obviously you should ensure the manuscript is well packed to withstand the postal system.
6. We take every reasonable care of manuscripts while they are with us, and always return any which prove unsuitable, but we cannot take responsibility for the vagaries of the Post Office, so please be sure to retain a photocopy or carbon copy of your manuscript against any unfortunate losses.

### SOME FREQUENT QUERIES ANSWERED

1. We do read unsolicited manuscripts - we will look at the first three chapters and a synopsis of the remainder of the story (the synopsis need not be more than 1/2 pages), or the complete manuscript.
2. If you wish, you may use a Literary Agency to place your manuscript with us, but it is not essential that you do so (see 1 above).
3. Payment, or the system of payment, cannot be discussed unless and until a contract is offered.
4. You may use a pseudonym if you wish, and a note of this on the frontispiece of the manuscript is all that is needed, though you should write to us using your real name. If you prefer to write under your real name, this also is perfectly acceptable.
5. It would be very much appreciated if you could include return postage when sending your manuscript. Our thanks.



Date: Immediate  
Contact: Inga Lubbock

"AND THEN HE KISSED HER ..."  
A MILLS & BOON GUIDE TO WRITING ROMANTIC FICTION

Thanks to an inspired idea from romantic fiction experts Mills & Boon, aspiring romantic fiction authors who have already experienced the rejection slip, or those who have never had the confidence to try their hand at creative writing, can take heart.

Mills & Boon receive thousands of unsolicited manuscripts each year. With any manuscript reluctantly returned to its hopeful author, a short set of writers guidelines aiming to help her improve on her next attempt are usually included. Recently however, Mills & Boon felt that writers should have a more comprehensive guide. They have therefore compiled a 40-minute cassette which explains in detail how to set about writing a romantic novel, and offers hints which could be applied to almost any form of creative writing.

The tape, entitled "And then he kissed her ...", shows that it is possible to break into this competitive market. Mills & Boon are eminently qualified to make this statement and to give advice, for two reasons. They have been publishing romantic fiction for over 75 years, and over 200 current Mills & Boon authors are regularly seeing their names in print, thanks to persisting in the time-honoured tradition of "send it in and we'll look at it".

Too often, would-be authors hit upon a good idea, but don't know enough about the techniques of characterisation, dialogue, plotting and background. Without these four vital ingredients, most novels won't meet the high standards required by Mills & Boon - or indeed any other publisher. The tape emphasises a number of important factors to be taken into consideration, before any writing takes place! Good preparation is the key to writing and hard work is necessary.

Mills & Boon novels are between 50-55,000 words in length, and should be written in the third person, from the heroine's point of view. Any plot or setting can be used, but it must be believable. The focus should be on the development of a romantic relationship and of course it must have a happy ending!

*Press Release*

"And then he kissed her ..." illustrates examples of good and bad style with the use of dramatisations by professional actors. The tape gives a detailed explanation of the structure of a romantic fiction novel, but does not attempt to tell exactly when and where action should take place - it merely suggests. The rest is up to the writer.

The Mills & Boon Guide to Writing Romantic Fiction costs just £2.95 including VAT and postage and is only available direct from Mills & Boon, "And then he kissed her ...", FREEPOST, P.O. Box 236, Croydon, Surrey CR9 9EL. Please make cheques and postal orders payable to Mills & Boon.

ENDS

I



## AND THEN HE XXXX HER

IN A SMALL local library, I am remembered with awe. I was the teenager with the huge appetite for books.

I would like to be able to say it is because I read *War and Peace* in a couple of days. It isn't and I didn't.

I was the very tall, extremely thin 15 year old with braces on every available tooth who took out six romantic novels each Friday afternoon and returned them the next Monday.

I had plunged straight from the Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew, with a slight deviation in the direction of Sue Barton, Student Nurse, deep into the heart of True Love stories. I devoured them.

Doctors with clefts in their chins and nurses with long red hair and short tempers, strongly-built men farmers and fragile but feisty lady farmers, men with firm jaws and girls with navy-blue eyes - I couldn't get enough of them.

I can still remember the joy of finishing my homework on a Friday evening knowing I had the whole weekend ahead to escape into a world in which there were no short, unattractive adolescent boys who sneered at a tall teenage girl with a mouth full of heavy metal.

I loved everything about the books. The way the hero and heroine disliked each other at the start before giving in to a force stronger than both of them. The fact that he had a hard, even cruel, side to him while she was wilful and strong-minded. His masculinity, which was so impressive, her femininity - so desirable.

Despite his untamed arrogance, he was your basic knight in shining armour, ready to rescue a heroine faced with a raging river, a

jealous senior nursing sister or a fate worse than death. It was a long way from a world in which one's prayers centred on being spared the humiliation of propping up the wall at weekly ballroom dancing classes.

Sexuality pulsed in those pages. He might not kiss her until the final lines, at which stage she melted into his arms in a series of dots, but lust throbbed beneath the surface.

Comfortingly for those of us who swooned when Pat Boone sang *Love Letters in the Sand*, that lust stayed beneath the surface. Sexual attraction was safely disguised as True Love. Virginity was a prerequisite for marriage.

I didn't have a chance to become disillusioned. As soon as I was sought after by a blond blue-eyed, first-year engineering student with a cleft in his chin, I jettisoned Mills and Boon and everything they stood for.

Thirty years later I went back, but not to look for escapist romantic fiction in middle age. The reason was baser: money. I had discovered that Sally Beaumann, who made a million dollars with her much-hyped sex-and-shopping blockbuster, *Destiny*, once got a royalty cheque for £30 000 for the Harlequin romances which started her on the road to financial, if not literary, fame.

Intent on research, I bought half-a-dozen Mills and Boon and Harlequin romances and sat down prepared for a trip down the memory land of my innocent youth.

I was stunned. While the blurb on the covers ('Did she love him or hate him?') promised the naive pleasures of the past, inside lust was running rampant. It was not so much that he no longer wait-

ed till the last page until he kissed her, it was what he did to her before that which was such a shock:

'Ben adored her - with his hands, his mouth, his words. And soon her shirt and jeans and panties had disappeared along with his clothes, and it was just the two of them touching, naked flesh to naked flesh, perfect need to perfect passion. Total, consummate desire.

'Ben! Now!' she whispered, writhing beneath him ...'

'Writhing beneath him' ... what kind of writing is that? It didn't seem possible. Could page 99 of Anne McAllister's *To Tame a Wolf*, published by Mills and Boon, be rogue randiness?

I picked up *When the Night Grows Cold* by Lindsay Armstrong (also Mills and Boon):

'He pulled the pillow up behind him and sat her astride his lap and she gasped then went still as he kissed her breasts, teased her nipples with his teeth, buried his face in their fullness.'

Well, really. The only thing to be said for this is that it didn't happen till page 165.

I telephoned Inge Lubbock, public relations manager of Mills and Boon, to find out when the change had come about - and why.

'It happened about 10 years ago,' she said cheerfully. 'We had to move with the times, you see. Real life was changing, and so our novels had to as well. It was all perfectly natural. We didn't tell our writers: "You must have sexual contact." They just followed the trends. There were no complaints from readers - they simply accepted the new sexual standards.'

Mills and Boon, who sell 225 million books worldwide

every year, are not trendsetters, explained Inge Lubbock. They follow what is happening in the world.

So they have gone like lambs down the fashionable path of sexual promiscuity. But now the real world has come to the end of that road and is becoming increasingly puritanical. Where does Mills and Boon stand in the AIDS era?

'This is a rather thorny issue. It's such a shame that the pendulum has swung so far. But sex is a part of adult life, and Aids isn't going to stop that.'

'I think that in our books you can expect the heroines will look after themselves. But condoms will not be talked about in the pages of romantic novels,' said Inge.

A great relief! Just imagine this dialogue:

'Jake threw her down roughly on the sand. The hot sun was beating on his rippling, sun-tanned body, and she could see the cleft throb in his chin.'

'The manly strength of his virile frame on hers was more than she could resist. He kissed her urgently, a kiss which seemed to last forever. Her body was raging with a heat that seemed to come from deep inside her.'

'With an effort she managed to regain control. "Darling," she whispered tenderly in his ear, "did you remember the Durex?"'

## CONCLUSIONS

By  
JUDY  
OLIVIER

from: Kidd, F., 1984, DESPERATE DESIRE pp 136-138

...

disappointment and then into something very close to despair. He'd gone and she would never see him again, she was sure, for if the operation was successful and he recovered his sight he would never come here again. He would go back to his work as a news cameraman. And if the operation wasn't successful ... oh, it didn't bear thinking about, and it might be all her fault. As Valerie Baker had so shrewdly pointed out, it would be a burden on her conscience for the rest of her life.

She drove back to the Inn, but she didn't tell Blythe where she had been or why. Somehow she got through the afternoon and at four o'clock went off to Isaac's house for a final rehearsal. Rose greeted her with an exclamation of concern.

'Lenore, what is the matter? You look so, how shall I put it? Strung-up? You are anxious about the concert, maybe?

'A little.'

'But you shouldn't be. You play so well.'

'Not well enough for Isaac, though,' said Lenore, smiling at the violinist as he came out of the room where they usually rehearsed to welcome her.

'That is so, that is so,' he said, smiling back at her and taking hold of her arm affectionately to lead her into the room. 'But it is not the technique I criticise. That is perfect - no, brilliant. It is the lack of expression. You must learn to let go and let your feelings come through, and I have thought how I might help you in this. You must think of this trio as a little love story. The story of the ill-matched pair, the viola and the clarinet. Can you do that?

'I'll try. But please tell me more,' said Lenore, intrigued by the suggestion.

'Listen, then.' Isaac picked up his viola and tucked it under his chin. 'While we wait for Jack we will talk, you and I, through our instruments, the ill-matched pair. As you know, the main theme of the first movement is stated first by me on the viola in a most quarrelsome fashion.' He played the tune in a vigorous way, and the sonorous sound of the instrument did suggest someone who was snarling irritably



... in the same way that Adam had snarled at her when they had first met, she thought. 'That is our hero, the viola, stating his position. He's a real tough guy ... what you call these days macho. Now you, on the clarinet, our heroine, play the same theme, but more ardently because you are female. Go on - play it now, with the feeling in mind that you like him and want to know more about him.'

Lenore, who had lifted her clarinet from its case and had put it together, wetted the reed with her lips, then began to play. The notes fell on the air clearly as pure as a bird's song as she remembered how she had felt when she had met Adam in his house, how she had tried to soften him. The memory grew, filled her mind, and the tone of the clarinet notes changed. They grew rounder and warmer, less disciplined, and when she came to the end of the tune and paused to take breath, Isaac clapped his hands in delight.

'That's it - that's it! Now I know that you have experience of what I'm saying. Now you do not play like a sexless being. Always, Lenore, you must bring your experience of life into your playing. So we move on to the second movement, that is lighthearted, although there are some serious moments, and in the trio section the clarinet sighs forth its yearning appeal, getting an immediate and exceedingly bad-tempered response from the viola. You begin to understand how it is like a love story. Advance and retreat, proposal and rejection.'

'Yes, I understand,' muttered Lenore. 'But how does it end ... the love story, I mean?'

'In the last movement, as you know, the clarinet is given pride of place with two glorious melodies ... the female expressing once and for all her love, and for a while the two ill-matched companions quarrel with each other as the viola - our hero - refuses to admit he has been conquered by love. Then at last, all opposition is overcome and viola and clarinet, our hero and heroine, go side by side in amity.'

'A happy ending?' asked Lenore.

'A happy ending. You will remember it while you play, please.'

'I'll try,' she whispered, then asked quickly, 'Isaac, you've been to Adam Jonson's house this week, haven't you?'

K

from: Mann, P., ROMANTIC FICTION AND ITS READERSHIPTable 1

Subject of books being read. 1983, in %.

	Men	Women	All
Romance	1	31	18
Crime/Thriller	14	11	12
Historical	7	13	10
War/adventure	8	3	5
Modern novel	7	10	9
Classic	2	3	2
Science fiction	4	1	2
Horror/occult	3	2	2
Western	3	0	1
Childrens	*	*	*
Humour	2	1	1
Other fiction	3	5	4
All non-fiction	44	19	32
Don't know	1	1	1
Total reading	100	100	100

PLEASE NOTE: Columns 'Men' and 'All' total 99 each.

N.J.S.



L

from: Bauling, J., 1986, ABODE OF PRINCES pp 39-40

Cadence would never forget her first day in India, that land where the passions of its many peoples had written a turbulent history, both remote and recent, and made the future a continuation of the adventure, for the paradoxes of conflict and unity, triumph and tragedy, humour and pathos would be part of India still and responsible for the fascination she had exerted for so long.

The Towers of Silence and the waiting vultures were alien enough to satisfy even Cadence's taste for the novel, and she shuddered even while she appreciated the simple logic that lay behind the Parsee manner of dealing with death.

Jon also showed her the so-called hanging gardens, financed by that wealthy community, descendants of Persia's Zoroastrian fireworshippers, constructed over a reservoir to prevent the vultures polluting the city's water by dropping pieces of flesh as they flew over; but there were homely things too, that made Bombay endearing as well as awesome, ordinary things and yet essentially part of the Indian experience - strolling among the crowds of local people in Kalama Nehru Park, Indian music coming tinnily from loudspeakers in the trees; sipping cold drinks in an open-air café; pavement vendors mixing strange concoctions and wrapping them in leaves for sale to the local people; an unfortunate dog being persuaded to perform simple tricks between busy lanes of traffic; and, everywhere, cricket games or practice sessions in progress, on large well-tended fields or on tiny rough allotments between old grey buildings, a fierce national passion preponderant even over that for the cinema.

Like any other city, Bombay combined both beauty and ugliness. Beauty was in the marine drive round the bay and in Hindu and Jain temples. The greatest ugliness, as far as Cadence was concerned, was the sight of poor prostitutes kept in cages, and she suspected that Jon had been testing her in some way by telling their driver to bring them to this district, quoting her wish to see 'the people', but she refused to pretend to emotions other than those she felt - mostly pity in this case - and Jon made no comment about her reaction, merely telling their driver that they had seen enough here.

In contrast, their next stop was at the house where Ghandi had stayed when visiting Bombay, now the repository of books and letters pertaining to his famous life, and Cadence spent an absorbed half hour wandering about an upstairs room where the main events of the Mahatma's life were depicted by the most incredibly realistic little dolls, the painstaking work of one devoted woman.

Down in the street once more, Jon turned to her.

'And now, Cadence, we're returning to the hotel. Anything else can wait until tomorrow or the next morning - we don't leave for Rajasthan until the afternoon. You may not be tired, but you're probably slightly dehydrated. Air travel alone does that, and then the heat here is more intense than anything you've been used to.'

I've noticed how you've been plying me with soft drinks all around town,' she commented. She had been grateful for them too, although she hadn't thought to wonder what was causing her excessive need for liquid.

'Somehow I don't think Christopher would be exactly thrilled if I returned you to him in a state of collapse,' Jon said drily.

'Back to the hotel it is, then. You see, I can be a passive little woman after all!'

'When it suits you, yes. I'm under no illusions, Cadence.'

**M**

from: CRUX, February, 1987, Volume 21 : 1.

**READING DEVELOPMENT FOR RELUCTANT READERS**

P SCHULTZ Mowat Park and S M SMITH Durban High School

(Reprinted from N E D Guide to Corrective Reading 1985)

**MILLS & BOON – A QUESTION OF CREDIBILITY**

Either the question, 'Why are there no Mills & Boon books in the school library?' or the sight of the top students in Form II avidly working their way through piles of Mills & Boon during lunch breaks, is sufficient incentive for an English teacher to look at these books with a view to developing some sense of discrimination which might serve to wean them off this diet.

There are obviously many ways of approaching this task. One might begin by selecting several pages from different books and reading them aloud to the class.

**A**

His hand on her arm was sending a current through her blood, quickening her heartbeat. Long afterwards Melissa remembered the beating of fragile wings in her heavy breast, for scales seemed to drop from her eyes as they entered the bright outdoors again, slowly this time to assimilate the glare. It had taken these last brief moments alone with him to reveal the shattering secret of her heart. She loved Yorke Powys. She really loved him.

**B**

The next ten minutes were sheer bliss and Ravena reluctantly left the water, feeling tingling fresh, to see Rhodri Brenin striding powerfully towards her from the direction of the villa. As she ran to meet him her bare feet slid along the rest of the distance between them and she was catapulted into his arms. Instantly, Rhodri reached out for her, his arms hauling her close. His strong, tanned, lean body was hard, and the unpremeditated contact startled her. The strength of his hold, his nearness, rippled along her nerves and her legs felt weak.

**C**

And then Ramón was there. He left his Italian sports car and came on the terrace with his long strides. He was in great good humour,

glowing with health and vitality and masculine charm. And yet she had known love would be like this when it came, the warning leap of her heart when he was near, the tortured breathlessness when his eyes became entangled with her own. His fingers tightened on hers. His hand on her back seemed to squeeze her heart. He lifted an arrogant brow and his eyes mocked her deepening colour and quivering uncertainty. Candida looked solemnly up at him. She said humbly, 'I wouldn't have you any other way, and I wouldn't want to live without you.'

If the passages are read with exaggeration and mock seriousness the students soon realize that the quality of the writing is very poor and that your tone is tongue-in-cheek.

They will readily identify the ridiculous:

'His hand on her back seemed to squeeze her heart'

'... the tortured breathlessness when his eyes became entangled with her own.'

There will be many examples of the trite and the clichéd:

'the shattering secret of her heart'

'the warning leap of her heart'

'His hand on her arm was sending a current through her blood, quickening her heartbeat.'

Students may find it a difficult task to re-write these phrases in language that is fresh and original; nevertheless it is a useful exercise.

At this point one might look at the setting of the story, at the choice of names and places:

Ramón and Candida who lived in the Villa Faustino

Ravena and Rhodri Brenin who lived in Greystones

Damian St Ewan and Don Gerardo Cortez ...

Students find this amusing and ridiculous and they realize that it is not likely that everyone has a title and that not all handkerchiefs are lace-edged.

In discussing the structure and 'plot' the opportunity arises to discuss the typical eternal triangle used as a framework for these stories.



This in conjunction with the old-style Hollywood format of:

- 1 Boy meets Girl.
- 2 Obstacle presents itself.
- 3 Obstacle is overcome
- 4 Boy and Girl walk off hand in hand into the golden sunset and live happily ever after.

This may give rise to discussions on modern novels and films which do not follow this format and the appeal of books and films that end happily even if they are trivial, trite and contrived.

Another point of contention is the attitude of the men to the women. There is always the implication that women are inferior, helpless beings, totally incapable of making a decision or asserting themselves without a man to assist them. In the 'love scenes' the men appear to be arrogant, brutal, commanding and impatient and the women humble, trembling, tearful, grateful and weak at the knees with hearts that have either stopped beating altogether or are racing at a breath-taking speed: 'the tortured breathlessness'.

'The strength of his hold, his nearness, rippled along her nerves and her legs felt weak'.

'He lifted an arrogant brow and his eyes mocked her deepening colour and quivering uncertainty', while she, of course, 'said humbly, "I wouldn't want to live without you."'

Some discussion focusing on the appearance of the characters proves valuable in identifying over-statement and under-statement. The men are invariably tall, slim, tanned, with electric blue eyes and the required amount of lean, hard muscle. Intellect is seldom mentioned. The women all enjoy flawless beauty, exquisite dress sense, and a stunning elegance. Perhaps this is to compensate for suffering untold silent tortures in their entanglements with the men they want and cannot have.

Students readily recognize that no one walks: everyone strides, glides, slides and finds themselves 'catapulted into his arms' where he then has the privilege of 'hauling her close'.



The question that arises in a class of girls is: Is this really the quality of love that makes the world go round?

Looking at the language and the intention of the authors of these books is an effective way of making students study the text with a view to discrimination. Decisions will have to be made on whether authors have succeeded in their goals and what techniques they have used to achieve this success. Students will often admit that these books are so alike that they cannot tell from reading an extract out loud whether they have read the book or not. Many students say they can identify the ones they have read only by the cover and the title.

The title gives one the opportunity to consider the quality of work. If you read aloud extracts from novels the students have studied, like **Jane Eyre** or **Lord of the Flies**, they realize at once that they could never confuse the two in the same way they do Mills & Boon books.

There is much to be gained from a discussion of the choice of titles combined with the obligatory 'romantic' picture on the cover.

**Damaged Angel**

**They met in Zanzibar**

**Heir to Windrush Hill**

**Himalayan Moonlight**

**The Secret of Val Verde**

This discussion can be extended into a warning that one should not be too quick to discard a book because of its cover or its title, nor should one select a book solely on the same basis. In Form II reluctant readers often do this in the school library, and so a D.H. Lawrence novel like **The Virgin and the Gipsy** is a very popular choice – for a day.

The possible areas of study are far-reaching. One can consider the emotions that dominate these books: love, hate, jealousy, anger, spite, revenge and passion. There are endless opportunities to call into question norms, values, moral codes, criteria and situational ethics and to consider the fact that people are not simply either cruel or kind, tough or weak, good or bad.

Once the students have become critical of the language and the style it is interesting to ask them to write their own extract in the style of Mills & Boon.

Here are some examples. The first set was written by a top Form II class. The second set was written by a top Form III practical level class. (Only one of these extracts is authentic.)



**A**

The wind was icy and stung their faces. But still they walked on, through the tall, rich green grass. Todd was slightly in front. Clarissa stopped and stared long and hard at his solid, strong back. He looked at her and bent down and picked a flower from the rock bank. He looked at it for quite some time as though he were entranced and captured by its beauty. Suddenly his fist clenched and he crushed it in his powerful hands. Clarissa flinched. He swung round and stared at her fixedly.

**B**

Avoiding his eyes she picked up her towel and vigorously rubbed at the wet strands before sitting down on the towel and taking out a comb from the beach bag at her side. She turned her head away from him as she pulled the comb through her hair, and she didn't know he had moved until it was pulled from her grasp and his quiet voice, 'Let me.' 'No!' She turned sharply, making a grab for the comb.

He smiled and said, 'You want to fight me for it?'

Meeting the challenge in his eyes she knew where that could lead. The comb stroked her hair and she fiercely gritted her teeth against the nearness of him behind her, the feel of his fingers on her neck as he carefully combed out the tangles.

**C**

He swerved the Lamborghini off the lonely highway which seemed never-ending. He turned roughly in his seat, his steel-grey eyes glinting angrily under his half-lowered lids. 'My God, don't you know how beautiful you are to me?'

She turned her hazel eyes lazily on him, letting them wander over his contorted face. He let out a hoarse cry and seized her roughly, his lips brutally crushing hers, parting them as he crushed her melting body to his.

**D**

She swam angrily to the edge, the tears and melting down her face. (sic) 'I love you,' she said. Her heart was pounding as she leapt out of the pool, and dropped down on to her towel, and started combing her long hair. He swept out of the pool and came and stood tall and demanding next to her. 'Felicity, darling ...' He dropped down next

to her and suddenly like a dart she was in his arms and his mouth was hard on hers. She felt his tall masculine figure pressed against her. He began to fondle her hair and she ran her hand down his perfect spine. 'Come,' he demanded, and grabbed her wrist and led her inside. His tightened olive skin felt warm and exciting against her, she felt herself slipping away, melting into a dream. He was slowly undoing her bikini strap when Jake thundered into the room.

(Extract B was the one selected from a Mills & Boon book)

These are extracts from a Form III practical class.

**A**

His powerful body swept over hers as she lay under the huge oak. 'Clementine, you are so divine and romantic. When I first met you you were like a fairy sprung up in springtime. Your hazel eyes are so enchanting.'

She looked at him with tears in her eyes. She could hardly utter a word. Far away a dog barked. His huge hand covered hers and she uttered a tiny cry.

'Darling, do you love me?'

'Yes,' she answered.

His white teeth shone in the sun.

'Yes,' she said shyly, brushing her hair away with her finger tips. Her hair glistened and shone in the sun. He loved its golden touch.

**B**

It was nine o'clock when Julie let herself into the house. She tried not to make a noise. She could not face Kevin now after what he had said in the argument before lunch. Julie wondered what Kevin had done when she walked out. As she entered the study she saw those sharp blue eyes looking at her. 'Where the hell have you been?' he shouted, his fists clenched. 'I have told you and I am not repeating myself, you are not to go out with him.'

'Who do you think you are? Because you are my step-brother does not mean that you can rule my life.'

Some of the better pieces of work may be pinned up on the back wall and students asked to identify which they think is the authentic piece.

Once the students have mastered the technique and proved that they can produce work that is difficult to recognize from the actual text the books lose their appeal. Often after lessons of this nature one hears a student saying scornfully, 'Oh, do you read **those** books!'

There is a possible follow-up to this exercise in the senior school. This is outlined in the following section.

#### **A senior-school follow-up.**

I am fortunate in having this valuable work done in the junior school, so that building upon it is sheer pleasure. A more secure basis for discriminating between writing styles now begins to develop. Now that a good book has been seen to involve more than a fanciful story, what other elements does one look for?

We might begin with predictability of story line or plot. There is a moment of crisis which is always happily surmounted in Mills & Boon, Barbara Cartland and the like who specialize in predictable fairytale endings. We must bring our critical abilities to bear on this and ask what the reader learns about life from the situation. How genuine a representation of life is the novelist offering the reader? The pupil here readily recognizes that the view of life offered is contrived, artificial, simplistic, shallow, romantic and narrow. It too readily fits a neat formula to be credible. At this point, depending on the readiness of pupils, it is often advantageous to discuss the conflict of good versus evil in great tragedy and one learns that after a crisis, a balance is restored only at great cost, that valuable lessons in life can be learned vicariously by the reader. In a conflict situation the individual is called upon to make a moral choice, which is seldom easy and which leads to definite consequences that he will have to face. Hence the reader is called upon to interact intellectually, to make up his own mind about what he would do in similar circumstances, and so learn without the cost of experience. Good literature demands pleasurable activity or involvement on behalf of the reader, which a predictable plot would preclude.

Following the same lines the credibility of characters and relationships can be fruitfully discussed, in order to sharpen critical awareness and so further develop discrimination. Dickens provides an invaluable source for drawing distinctions between caricatures and characters. Notions such as the prototype, stereotype, round, flat, cardboard character might be identified, together with the fact that credible characters are usually a complex mixture of good and bad qualities

and that during the course of the novel they undergo some form of development or change. The reader is thus engaged in considering what is important, what trivial, what admirable and what detestable in life and behaviour. The reader's sense of judgement is exercised and developed and lastly his own understanding of human nature is broadened.

I have found that pupils readily recognize and enjoy poking fun at preposterous, shallow characters and situations but take much longer and find it that much more difficult to express appreciation for the credible well-rounded character.

Lastly, the credibility of the language used by these exaggerated characters provides another area which helps develop discernment in the reader. Focus on not only what is said but how it is said provides an insight into the function of writing. If you are lucky enough to have Speech & Drama pupils in your class, they will have a basic working knowledge of melodrama and its components. A discussion of melodrama, or if more ambitious, a short dramatized extract featuring the stereotype villain and heroine (with appropriate mood-setting music) can easily be linked with Mills & Boon examples. Pupils love the larger-than-life gesture, the forced tears, the contrived sigh, the pointed word, the profusion of sentimental emotion. They recognize this as a special style of writing; they recognize its tone.

To extend the pupils' experience of writing style and tone and still maintain our theme of credibility, a comparison of Jane Austin's (sic) **Northanger Abbey** with a melodrama or extracts from Mills & Boon can prove invaluable. **Northanger Abbey** is a serious novel, yet part of Jane Austen's intention in writing is to parody the gothic novel. Austen points out that the dangers of reading indiscriminately lie in the reader's adopting a distorted attitude to life as represented by books of the gothic novel and Mills & Boon genre. Carefully selected extracts from the novel that depict Catherine's folly and false judgement (because she has unthinkingly interpreted her world in gothic terms) illustrate very well the pitfalls of this style of writing.

I have found this a highly successful exercise with Form V and Form VI pupils, leading to improved selection of reading material and improved oral work on books. Austen's unconventional heroine is clearly not a disappointment because she is ordinary but fascinatingly real as she gains in maturity of judgement, as many members of your class will. Authenticity lends credibility to writing and the hallmark of a discerning reader is what he accepts as authentic.

N

QUESTIONNAIRE ON MILLS & BOON  
ROMANCE FICTION

1. NAME: .....
2. ADDRESS: .....  
.....
3. DATE OF BIRTH: .....

TICK THE APPROPRIATE NUMBER:

4. I started reading Mills & Boon (M&B) novels for the first time:
  - 4.1 this year
  - 4.2 last year
  - 4.3 more than three years ago
  
5. I have read approximately the following number of M&B novels:
  - 5.1 Fewer than ten
  - 5.2 Between ten and twenty
  - 5.3 Between twenty and fifty
  - 5.4 More than fifty
  
6. I read:
  - 6.1 M&B novels exclusively
  - 6.2 M&B plus a few other novels
  - 6.3 M&B plus a number of other books
  
7. TICK AS MANY OF THE FOLLOWING POINTS AS ARE APPROPRIATE:
 

I read M&B because:

  - 7.1 They are short and easy to absorb
  - 7.2 They deal with the theme of romance
  - 7.3 They end happily
  - 7.4 The hero usually fits the picture of my ideal man
  - 7.5 The heroine is the sort of person with whom I could easily identify
  - 7.6 The novels provide light relief when I am tired
  - 7.7 They take my mind off my problems
  - 7.8 They allow me to day-dream (fantasize)

7.9 With a few exceptions they are the books that interest me most

7.10 They are readily available

7.11 Other (specify)

8. My favourite type of M&B genre is:

8.1 Doctor/Nurse

8.2 Australian outback or New Zealand setting

8.3 Exotic island setting

8.4 Historical romance

8.5 Other (specify)

9. The following are my favourite M&B authors:

(Specify below or state 'No one in particular')

10. I dislike reading M&B novels by the following authors:

(Specify below or state 'None')

11. Additional comments:

Drawn up by: N.J. Stear

November, 1986



QUESTIONNAIRE ON RECREATIONAL READING

The aim of this questionnaire is to gain some idea of your light reading interests. It is not to be regarded as a threatening attempt to change your reading habits. Please answer the questions sincerely and honestly.

Your name is not required.

TICK THE APPROPRIATE NUMBER BELOW:

1.   1.1   Standard nine  
      1.2   Standard ten
  
2.   2.1   Male  
      2.2   Female
  
3.   3.1   Between 15 and 16 years  
      3.2   Between 16 and 17 years  
      3.3   Between 17 and 18 years  
      3.4   Between 18 and 19 years
  
4.   Complete the following:
  - 4.1   Mills and Boon publish the following types of books:
  
  - 4.2   'Western' stories have the following in common:

Tick the appropriate numbers below:

5.   I have read the following number of Mills & Boon books:
  - 5.1   None
  - 5.2   Fewer than ten
  - 5.3   Between ten and thirty
  - 5.4   More than thirty

6. I have read the following number of Westerns:
  - 6.1 None
  - 6.2 Fewer than ten
  - 6.3 Between ten and thirty
  - 6.4 More than thirty
  
7. I enjoy reading the following types of other books:
  - 7.1 None
  - 7.2 Detective stories
  - 7.3 Adventure stories
  - 7.4 War stories
  - 7.5 Historical stories
  - 7.6 Stories of home life
  - 7.7 Science fiction
  - 7.8 Animal stories
  - 7.9 Stories about teenage problems
  - 7.10 Biographies
  - 7.11 Love stories
  - 7.12 Magazines
  - 7.13 Newspapers
  - 7.14 Short stories
  - 7.15 Other (specify)