

## There Are Six Bodies in This Relationship: An Anthropological Approach to the Romance Genre

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Published online: 4 August 2010

<http://www.jprstudies.org>

**Abstract:** Following Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Margaret M. Lock, we suggest that each romance protagonist has three bodies: a physical body, a social body, and a political body. In applying this insight to the romance genre we focus on the socio-sexual aspects of the social body and the socio-political aspects of the political body, and draw on existing analyses of romance novels in order to explore some of the continuities and variations in the representations of the bodies of romance protagonists and the interactions between those bodies. The primary texts cited span a period of over 200 years and include classics such as Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740) and Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) as well as a range of more recent category and single-title romances.

In what we term the “alchemical” model of romantic relationships, the heroine’s socio-sexual body (her Glittery HooHa) attracts, and ensures the monogamy of, the hero’s socio-sexual body (his Mighty Wang), allowing the heroine’s socio-political body (her Prism) to focus, and benefit from, the attributes of the hero’s socio-political body (his Phallus). This is not the only model of romantic relationships present in the genre and therefore a few of the alternative models are briefly examined. We conclude that the bodies of romance heroes and heroines are sites of reinforcement of, and resistance to, enculturated sexualities and gender ideologies.

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**Keywords:** Anne Herries, anthropology, Barbara Cartland, Barbara Samuel, Beverly Jenkins, body, Cheryl St. John, Diana Palmer, E. M. Hull, Elizabeth Bevarly, femininity, Foucault, Frances Burney, gender, Georgette Heyer, Harlequin Mills & Boon, heteronormativity, homosexuality, inspirational romance, Jane Austen, Jayne Ann Krentz, Jo Beverley, Johanna Lindsey, Kyra Kramer, Lani Diane Rich, Laura Vivanco, Loretta Chase, manhood, Mary Jo Putney, masculinity, Merline Lovelace, Michelle Martin, monogamy, motherhood, patriarchy, phallus, politics, rape, romance, Samuel Richardson, sex, Susan Mallery, Susan Napier, virginity

Modern romance novels written in English have a pedigree which stretches back to the eighteenth century:

Harlequins can be traced back through the work of Charlotte Brontë and Jane Austen to the sentimental novel and ultimately [...] to the novels of Samuel Richardson, whose *Pamela* is considered by many scholars to be the first British novel (it was also the first English novel printed in America). (Modleski 15)[[1](#)]

Defined as novels in which “The main plot centers around two individuals falling in love and struggling to make the relationship work” (RWA) and which conclude with “an emotionally-satisfying and optimistic ending” (RWA), romances constitute a genre which, despite being “so stable in its form” (Regis 207), has not remained unchanged: “Although the base plot [...] remains constant, themes vary from decade to decade and author to author” (Dixon 8). With regard to the portrayal of sexuality in the genre, however, it has been suggested that although many modern romances “portray human sexuality more explicitly than in the past, [...] assumptions about male sexuality [...] have not altered as much as one might expect from Samuel Richardson’s *Pamela* to one of last month’s Harlequin Romances” (Mussell 4). It has also been argued that “the popular romance genre since 1972 has been divided into two basic types — the sweet romance and the erotic romance — with the fundamental difference between them being the presence or absence of specific sexual behavioral norms and explicit sexual activities” (Thurston 7). We have examined primary texts in English which span more than two centuries, and which include both “sweet” and more explicit romances, in order to explore some of the continuities and variations that exist in the interactions between the bodies of the “individuals falling in love and struggling to make the relationship work.”

Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Margaret M. Lock’s “The Mindful Body: A Prolegomenon to Future Work in Medical Anthropology” provides a framework within which many of the existing analyses of the physical appearances, social statuses, and sexual behaviours of the characters in romance novels can be pieced together to reveal differing models of romantic relationships. Scheper-Hughes and Lock’s essay, which draws on Michel Foucault’s theories about the body, can be summarised thus:

The human body is both naturally and culturally produced, and each body has three distinct points of analysis and perspective [...]. While the most obvious body is the individual body, or the embodied self, the human body is also a social body and a political body. (Kramer)

This tripartite approach to understanding the human body can usefully be applied to the protagonists of romance novels. We can think of them as individuals with physical bodies (the individual body), as representations of cultural identities (the social body), and as characters existing in a particular political context (the political body). Each character's three bodies can be conceptualised and analysed separately, but they exist simultaneously and therefore, as we shall see, a description of a character's appearance in the least sexually explicit of romances may nonetheless intimate much about the sexuality of his or her social body.

Since each protagonist has three bodies, there are six bodies in a monogamous romantic relationship. Although we will discuss all six bodies, our discussion will centre around some socio-sexual aspects of the social bodies and a few socio-political elements of the political bodies. We focus in particular on one configuration of the six bodies which is both extremely common in modern romances and has a long history within the genre, and then briefly discuss a few alternative configurations, some of which are relatively recent innovations and others of which have been present in romantic fiction for centuries.

## The Individual Body

As humans, we understand that we have a body; our consciousness is embodied in a physical self. This is the individual body, an "expectant canvas of human flesh" (Scheper-Hughes and Lock 10). The individual bodies of heroines vary, and one may have "a pair of fine eyes" (Austen, *Pride* 73) while another has a "lush lower lip and unblemished skin" (Lindsey 65), but "some indication, however slight, of the heroine's physical attributes has always been an important part of the romantic novel" (Anderson 85). Social beliefs are inscribed on the "expectant canvas" of the body as soon as value judgements are included in the description. A heroine's appearance, for example, may be compared to particular ideals of feminine beauty and attractiveness:

Was he looking at her nose? 'Strong' was the euphemism that people tossed around but Grace knew what she saw in the mirror every morning. Her nose was too big for the perfect oval of her face, too distinctive. Like her height, another 'advantage' that she had been encouraged to flaunt rather than conceal. She knew without vanity that she was beautiful, but not in the classical sense of the word. Her features taken piece by piece were far from perfect — apart from her nose, her blue eyes were too widely spaced, her mouth too full — but together with her gleaming cap of midnight-black hair they formed a striking whole. Her beauty was 'unique' and in this era of mass-production uniqueness had an inflationary value. (Napier 6)

Ann Barr Snitow has suggested that “There are more descriptions of his [the hero’s] body than of hers [the heroine’s]” (248), and although

The body of the romantic hero may represent an ideal of masculine beauty, [...] beauty here is the equivalent of physical strength, and physical strength itself becomes a sign of something more, a definition of authentic virility as a power that is always scarcely contained. (Cook 155)

Descriptions of a hero whose “Iron-hewed strength rippled from every muscle” (Lindsey 47), or whose “gold-blond hair had been cut military short, a style that looked both severe and sexy” (Mallery 19), certainly call attention to his strength (which may be a component of his socio-political body) and to the potent sexuality of his socio-sexual body.

Since sexual desire is such an important part of romantic relationships, it is unsurprising that even in “sweet” romances, or in scenes which involve non-sexual activity, descriptions of the protagonists’ individual bodies are often overlaid by references to their socio-sexual bodies:

Harlequins revitalize daily routines by insisting that a woman combing her hair, a woman reaching up to put a plate on a high shelf (so that her knees show beneath the hem, if only there were a viewer), a woman doing what women do all day, is in a constant state of potential sexuality. (Snitow 249)

Bodies are more than flesh, blood, and bone: the social and political bodies co-exist with, and are written on, the individual body.

## The Social Body

The social body can be thought of as the way in which the individual body relates to its cultural context. Descriptions of the protagonists’ clothing and adornments can be particularly helpful in revealing the social body. In Johanna Lindsey’s *Defy Not the Heart*, for example, we are told that the hero’s preference for “simple attire said a lot for his character” (274). His avoidance of ostentatious dress reveals his lack of vanity and is a culturally approved masculine behaviour, albeit perhaps a historically anachronistic one for a novel set in the Middle Ages.<sup>[2]</sup> Clothing may thus assist both in distinguishing between male and female individual bodies and in increasing or decreasing the former’s masculinity and the latter’s femininity, for although “The ‘naturalness’ of gender is constantly invoked, [...] masculinity and femininity are disciplines of the body that require *work*” (King 33). Women, for example, are expected to construct their social bodies through how they dress and adorn themselves. In turn, “Cultural constructions of and about the body are useful in sustaining particular views of society and social relations” (Scheper-Hughes and Lock 19), and women’s fashion has been deemed problematic by many feminists because it can reinforce negative images of women:

Turning woman into an ornamented surface requires an enormous amount of discipline and can cause discomfort, not to mention untold feelings of inadequacy. [...] Female styles over the years have also served to confirm myths about woman: as duplicitous, over-sexualised temptress; delicate and weak or narcissistic, frivolous and obsessed with trivialities. (King 36)

Culturally constructed “ideas about men and women, their appropriate behaviors and attributes, and their relations to each other” are called “gender ideologies” (Blackwood 240-41). Despite the fluid nature of gender across cultures, each culture’s ideologies about gender tend to assume that gender is natural, inherent, and determined by a person’s sex at birth. For example, “the social sciences in the postwar period [...] posited women as expressive (emotional) and men as instrumental (pragmatic, rational, and cognitive)” (Gutmann 388). Cross-cultural studies have found that

most societies hold consensual ideas — guiding or admonitory images — for conventional masculinity and femininity by which individuals are judged worthy members of one or the other sex [...]. Such ideal statuses and their attendant images, or models, often become psychic anchors, or psychological identities, for most individuals, serving as a basis for self-perception. (Gilmore 208)

Masculinity can be defined as “anything men think and do to **be** men” (Gutmann 386, emphasis added). In many societies, perhaps even all cultures, “there is a constantly recurring notion that real manhood is different from simple anatomical maleness” (Gilmore 208) and that manhood must be earned or achieved in particular ways. After his first experience of sexual intercourse, for example, a rare virginal romance hero tells his heroine that “I gave you my virginity; you gave me my manhood” (Napier 133). Zilbergeld suggests that sexuality is an area in which men feel under particular pressure to earn and demonstrate manhood:

One of the cornerstones of the masculine stereotype in our society is that a man is one who has no doubts, questions, or confusion about sex, and that a real man knows how to have good sex and does so frequently. For a man to ask a question about sex, thereby revealing ignorance, or to express concern, or to admit to a problem is to risk being thought something less than a man. (5)

Manhood, then, is a status which once achieved must be maintained, and it therefore appears to be a status more easily lost by males than womanhood is by females. Jo Beverley’s Cyn Malloren, for example, must frequently fight to maintain his manhood because his individual body constantly calls it into question:

Despite all evidence to the contrary people would persist in seeing him as fragile, even his family who certainly should know better. [...] As a boy he’d believed age would toughen his looks, but at twenty-four, a veteran of

Quebec and Louisbourg, he was still disgustingly *pretty*. He had to fight duels with nearly every new officer in the regiment to establish his manhood. (6)

As Gilmore has observed,

femininity seems to be judged differently. It usually involves questions of body ornament or sexual allure, or other essentially cosmetic behaviors that enhance, rather than create, an inherent quality of character [...], femininity is more often construed as a biological given that is culturally refined or augmented. (208-09)

Even if she chooses not to augment her femininity but instead performs actions and behaviours associated with masculinity, a heroine may do so without losing her womanhood. In E. M. Hull's *The Sheik*, for example, Diana Mayo's "boyish directness" (6) and the fact that she is "far more at home" (14) in "smart-cut breeches and high brown boots" (13) than in "pretty dresses" (14) are the result of having been "brought up as a boy" (9). Nonetheless, "Diana Mayo, with the clothes and manners of a boy, was really an uncommonly beautiful young woman" (17), and one who at a ball can be found "ten deep in would-be partners" (3). By contrast, cross-dressing heroes are extremely rare, and if a hero acts in ways which are associated with femininity, this will tend to be dealt with circumspectly, so as not to impugn his masculinity. Cyn Malloren may disguise himself as a woman for a time, but he does so to play "knight-errant" (Beverley 25) to a "damsel in distress" (28). He is an experienced soldier, and the reader is aware that beneath the feminine dress he has chosen to wear, his individual body bears witness to his masculine socio-political and socio-sexual bodies: "He had a scar across his chest which it seemed no woman could ignore. It came from a minor wound, a long shallow saber cut, but it looked dramatic" (31). The scar is described in considerable detail while Cyn is dressing in "female garments" (58) for the first time and the reader is again told that women find it irresistible, thus emphasising the masculinity of Cyn's socio-sexual body: "All the women who had been favored with a glimpse of it had been impelled to touch it, [...] some with a finger, some with their mouths" (58). It also provides information about his socio-political body: seeing the scar convinces the heroine that "you really are a soldier" (59). In addition, even in disguise "His jaw was a little too square, his cheeks too lean. He carefully applied rouge to them, and was heartened to realize that for once he looked too masculine" (65). In another romance, analysed by Mary M. Talbot, it is the hero's choice of profession which poses a threat to his masculinity since

Artists are assumed to be male, but at the same time there is some sort of problem with having an artist as hero. There is a shadow of doubt cast on the gender identity of artists. Being artistic is not masculine. The two identities sit uneasily together; there is a suspicion of homosexuality or, less serious but still quite unsuitable, being 'weird'. He is made 'whole' by the label Anna attaches to him: 'He's a *portrait* painter'. The hero [...] is established as artist but reassuringly masculine, meaning heterosexual. (93)

## Sexualities of the Social Bodies

Gender ideologies create, and are simultaneously created by, beliefs about human sexuality. There are deeply ingrained cultural beliefs about the differences between male and female sexuality (Kane and Schippers). A clergyman in Richardson's *Pamela*, for example, attempts to excuse Mr. B.'s abduction and intended rape or seduction of Pamela on the grounds that "'tis what all young Gentlemen will do" (135). These differences, however, may not all have biological causes: "Foucault [...], Tiefer [...], and others have argued that sexuality is constructed within particular sociocultural contexts and discourses" (Gilbert, Walker, McKinney, and Snell 755). Far from being entirely innate,

sexual potential takes its form through a number of social processes, including ideologies of religion or ritual, ethnicity, class, gender, family, and reproduction, as well as the material and social conditions of everyday life. These processes provide the interpretive context for sexual feelings, desires and longings. (Blackwood 237)

Women have long been constructed as sexually "feeble and passive, literally a receptacle for the desires of the male" (King 31). This may explain why so many romance heroines, particularly in older romances, are virgins who are initiated into sexual activity by a romance hero, although thereafter they may enjoy sex immensely. Romance author Doreen Owens Malek argues that the heroine's virginity is important because

virginity is a gift that can only be given *once*, and it is ideally bestowed on a woman's great love. This giving of virginity adds an immeasurable element of drama and power to the story. It changes the heroine, of course, but in romance novels it also changes the hero. (118)

It is significant that Owens Malek only discusses the virginity of female characters. Virginal heroes do exist in the genre, but as acknowledged in a short questionnaire which Mills & Boon appended to Susan Napier's *Secret Admirer*, "Many heroines in our stories are virgins, but it is rare for the hero to be sexually inexperienced." In Owens Malek's description of virginity there is no suggestion that the hero might be a virgin whose virginity would be considered a "gift that can only be given *once*" and would change the heroine. Napier's virgin hero, Scott Gregory, does, however, use this kind of language:

'Couldn't you tell, Grace? Was my gift such a paltry thing? I thought one's partner could always tell.' [...]  
'What gift? T-tell-what?' she stammered [...]  
'Why, that it was my first time, of course.' (133)

If we reword the quotation from Talbot which we cited earlier in the essay, so that "artist" is replaced by "male virgin," we can say that this gender reversal casts

a shadow of doubt [...] on the gender identity of [male virgins]. Being [a male virgin] is not masculine. The two identities sit uneasily together; there is a suspicion of homosexuality or, less serious but still quite unsuitable, being 'weird'. (93)

Grace, in her attempt to reconcile Scott's claim of virginity with the knowledge that he has "been out with lots of women" (139), eventually asks "Are you homosexual?" (140) but Napier has already defused most of the suspicions about Scott's sexuality and masculine identity by ensuring that the revelation occurs after Scott has lost his virginity and demonstrated that in all other respects his sexual behaviour is identical to that of a great many other romance heroes. Having literally, as well as emotionally, chased the heroine until she surrendered to him:

His desire [...] had proved insatiable. And, although the second and third time they made love it was not with the stunning speed of the first, it was still fiercely, gloriously energetic. [...] He made her feel unutterably sexy [...]. In short, he was every bit the fantastic lover. (131)

By taking the lead in initiating sex, ensuring that his partner experiences hitherto unknown heights of pleasure, and demonstrating the stamina necessary to repeat the experience several times in one night, Scott has proved that he is indeed a man.

The group of cultural beliefs about masculine sexuality known as the

male sexual drive discourse was identified by Hollway [...]. Zilbergeld [...] identified the following themes: sex is a male performance; the man is responsible for orchestrating sex; a man always wants and is always ready to have sex; for a man, all physical contact must lead to sex; and birth control is the woman's responsibility. Similarly, Reinholtz et al. [...] included the following in their list of common themes in communication about sexuality: male sexuality as uncontrollable, female responsibility for male sexuality, sex as a force of nature, and men as dominant and women as submissive. These researchers also identified a theme they labeled, "romance," the cultural notion that when two people "fall in love," sex automatically follows and cannot be controlled by rational consideration. (Gilbert, Walker, McKinney, and Snell 755-56)

With the possible exception of ideas surrounding contraception, since modern romance heroes often take responsibility for providing condoms, these beliefs about gendered sexuality frequently appear to underlie the sexual behaviour of characters in the romance genre. However, although "both men and women perceive men's sexual drives as greater than women's" (Kane and Schippers 655), there is

a clear and consistent pattern of gender differences in beliefs [...] related to sexual power [...]. Women are much more likely to see men's sexual power as greater than their own, while men are much more likely than women to hold

the view that women's sexual power is greater. [...] In terms of value judgments regarding power differentials, both men and women are likely to see the other group as too powerful. (Kane and Schippers 655)

In the romance genre, however, perhaps because it often offers "a fantasy of female empowerment" (Phillips 55), the heroine will tend to possess "an unrelenting and absolute power [...] over the hero's mind and body. The conventional line is often literally 'No other woman had affected him like this before'" (Johnson-Kurek 127). It is possible for a hero to resist the power of the heroine's allure. He may even seek to deny the possibility of any attraction, as Darcy does when he states that "She is tolerable; but not handsome enough to tempt me" (Austen, *Pride* 59). He cannot, however, resist indefinitely and Darcy eventually confesses to Elizabeth Bennet that "In vain have I struggled. It will not do. My feelings will not be repressed. You must allow me to tell you how ardently I admire and love you" (221). If she is aware of the attraction the hero feels towards her, a heroine may exult in it:

his mouth, hard and hungry, fell upon hers, dragging over her lips as though to punish her.

But what Jessica tasted was victory. She felt it in the heat he couldn't disguise, and in the pulsing tension of his frame, and she heard it clear as any declaration when his tongue pushed impatiently for entry.

He wanted her. (Chase 160)

Madeline has a similar response to the evidence of her hero's desire:

She'd seen the desire that flamed in his eyes when he held her. She'd felt the tremors in his arms and heard the pounding of his heart. A heady sense of feminine power shimmered in her veins. It thrilled her that she could cause such a reaction and made her eager to test her power over him once again. (Lovelace 133)

## The Mighty Wang

Each of these heroines has aroused her hero's Mighty Wang. The term "Mighty Wang" (Wendell and Tan 36) was coined by Sarah Wendell and Candy Tan as a humorous way to describe the extremely large and effective sexual organ possessed by many a romance hero. The Mighty Wang (MW) can also be thought of as a symbol of the male sexual drive discourse: it is a penis functioning as a symbol of the ideal masculine socio-sexual body. The term "MW," as it is used in this paper, will refer not to the individual body's penis, but to the hero's socio-sexual body. The appropriation of the name of this particular body-part to refer to the whole of a hero's socio-sexual body seems particularly apt given that in romances there is frequent "use of the personal pronouns — me, he, him, himself — to signify this body part [...]. The seemingly unavoidable use of these pronouns is a [...] curious euphemistic practice because it equates the man's penis with the man himself" (Johnson-Kurek 119). The sentence "She cradled the rigid length of him in her

palm" (Castle 172) is an example of this kind of writing: the part seems to become the whole. Conversely, when the reader is told that a hero's body has "Long, long legs, [...] a broad back that went on forever, all golden-skinned and rock-hard" (Lindsey 47), the allusion to another part of the hero that might be long, broad, and hard is not subtle.[\[3\]](#)

When the MW performs acts which are common to the male sexual drive discourse, he is giving a demonstration of the socio-cultural attributes of masculine sexuality. Although Austen is so discreet about these matters that the reader is left to surmise what she or he will about the precise ways in which "the utmost force of passion" (*Pride* 228) might be expressed physically, many of the more explicit modern romances take the reader into the bedroom to observe the MW in action; it is not uncommon for the hero's penis to be, if not quite "Two Feet Long, Hard As Steel, And Can Go All Night," as described in the title of Zilbergeld's chapter on "The Fantasy Model of Sex," at least unusually large, hard, and possessed of immense stamina. Although Zilbergeld was writing in 1978, his comment that "Much of the explicitness of recent [...] fiction serves only to give more detailed presentations of the same old myths" (53) continues to ring true in relation to the romance genre. The size of Ranulf's penis, for example, is implied when, prior to his second sexual encounter with Reina he partially reassures her by reminding her that "you have withstood my size once without dying" (Lindsey 177) and Dain fears that his immense organ will damage his virgin wife: "His lust-swollen rod strained furiously against his trousers, a great, monstrous invader that would tear her to pieces" (Chase 223).

The MW exists "in a state of constant hornytoad" (Wendell and Tan 84) and Wendell and Tan have noted its immense stamina:

There is a concept of recovery time that never really affects the romance hero, and thus casts mortal men with normal turgid boners in a shameful light, because immediately after having a great orgasm, real men need at least a half hour before they can think about going another round. (167)

Another of the characteristics of the MW as it appears in more explicit romances is that it can "Elevate sexual intercourse to near heavenly experiences, one orgasm at a time" (Wendell and Tan 84). During Clare's first experience of sexual intercourse, for example, she experiences "passion without subtlety: a primal, desperate need for union that swept them both into the heart of the storm" (Putney 292). This, however, is merely "a synopsis" (300), and "the unabridged version" (300) which follows is so intensely pleasurable that afterwards Clare murmurs "This could make someone forget about God, for it is hard to imagine that heaven can offer anything more" (301). If the heroine is sexually experienced, she has generally never had sex quite as good as the sex she has with the MW. In Merline Lovelace's *His Lady's Ransom*, for example, Madeline, despite "Having twice been wed, [...]" was yet a stranger to the feeling that suddenly coursed through her at the sight of this tall, broad-shouldered man" (29-30) and the contrast is even greater once they actually reach the bedroom:

her first lord, as gentle as he'd been with her young innocence, had lacked either the skill or the stamina to hold himself in check. And in his eagerness, her second lord had all but spilled himself afore he got his braies off. But Ian

had wrung responses from her she'd never dreamed she was capable of.  
(226)

In less explicit romances, the description of the MW's kisses may seem to foreshadow the even greater delights still in store for the heroine. Germaine Greer once sarcastically commented of a Barbara Cartland romance that "when handkissing results in orgasm it is possible that an actual kiss might bring on epilepsy" (178). Cartland did not, of course, write a scene in which handkissing literally resulted in orgasm but she did use hyperbolic language to describe the intensely pleasurable sensations experienced by her heroines while kissing:

his mouth came down on hers [...] and it was even more wonderful than she had thought it could be.  
She had not imagined a kiss could make her feel as if a streak of sunlight ran through her body, making her pulsatingly alive. (Cartland, *Problems* 138)

The heroine of Beverly Jenkins's *Josephine* experiences similarly intense sensations while being kissed by a MW:

Her whole world seemed to have come alive in response to his kisses. Now she understood how a girl could become overwhelmed and allow a boy to take liberties he shouldn't. The soaring sensations and rising emotions were so exciting, Jo didn't want to stop.  
They had to, however, and they both knew it. (227)

In Georgette Heyer's *Devil's Cub*, the pleasure and power of the MW's embrace almost render the heroine unconscious:

He had caught her in his arms so fiercely that the breath was almost crushed out of her. His dark face swam before her eyes for an instant, then his mouth was locked to hers, in a kiss so hard that her lips felt bruised. She yielded, carried away half-swooning on the tide of his passion. (277)

Another way in which the sexual potency of the MW may be revealed is via a description of the hero's sexual history: Richardson's Mr. B. has an illegitimate child by a woman he seduced; Cartland's Duc de Savigne has had many liaisons with "women whom he takes up on an impulse and apparently without any consideration for their feelings, discards [...] as soon as they bore him" (*Love* 8); and another hero, prior to meeting his heroine, "took what the wenches threw at him, never doubt it" (Lindsey 223). While multitudes of former sexual partners can serve as a demonstration of the MW's allure, this can also be expressed via descriptions of women who find the hero attractive but who may not have had direct experience of his sexual prowess. Mr. B., for example, "is admir'd, as I know, by half a dozen Ladies" (Richardson 41) while Adam Morgan is "a young man accustomed to having young ladies jump at his beck and call" (Jenkins 176) who has "never had a young lady throw my interest back in my face" (188). Given the number of willing

females available to him, it takes a very special woman to capture the MW's permanent attention: a woman with a Glittery HooHa.

## The Glittery HooHa

Although the term "Glittery HooHa" (GHH) "emerged at the internet discussion board Television Without Pity" (Vivanco) between 2004 and 2006, authors have long been describing heroines as glowing, sparkling and glittering. Pamela has "speaking Eyes" which can "overflow" with tears "without losing any of their Brilliancy!" (Richardson 186) and we learn of Syrilla that

there was something more than mere beauty about her, he thought, which made her different from other women.

It was the fact that she was so intensely alive, and that when she was animated she seemed almost to sparkle as she spoke, while her eyes shone as if they had captured the sunlight. (Cartland, *Love* 81)

A more recent example of a glittering heroine is Jo Best, whose "dark unblemished skin glowed with health and beauty. She was by far the most radiant young woman he'd ever had the pleasure of knowing" (Jenkins 123).

The GHH is a symbol of the female socio-sexual body and in particular of female sexual allure. Its glitter indicates the desirability of the heroine's socio-sexual body. When Mr. B. states that Pamela is "so pretty, that go where you will, you will never be free from the Designs of some or other of our Sex" (Richardson 87), he is revealing that he himself has some quite definitely sexual "Designs" upon her GHH. Austen is much more reticent about sexual matters and Darcy has no immoral "Designs" on Elizabeth, but when he notices "the beautiful expression of her dark eyes" (*Pride* 70) and is "forced to acknowledge her figure to be light and pleasing" (70), it is evident that despite having initially "looked at her only to criticise" (70), he is unable to deny the growing attraction he feels towards her GHH. As is demonstrated by *Pride and Prejudice*, there is no need for a heroine to be either the most beautiful woman in the novel, or one whom all men find irresistible. What matters is the special effect her GHH has on the hero:

A woman with a hooha as glittery as this girl merely needs to walk around as glitter falls from her netherparts, leaving a trail for Our Hero to follow. And once he finds her, it only takes one dip in the Glittery HooHa to snare him forever. [...] For yea, no matter how many hoohas he might see, never will there be one as glittery as hers. (Crusie, Stuart, and Rich 237)

The heroine's GHH is not merely sexually alluring; it is powerful enough to render a MW monogamous. Even while the attraction remains unconsummated and the hero's physical penis (which is part of his individual body) has not penetrated the "hooha" or vagina (which is part of the heroine's individual body), it is not uncommon for the hero to realise that his MW is no longer attracted to other women and their less glittery GHHs. Cyn

Malloren “found he had difficulty imagining being aroused by any woman other than this one” (Beverley 68). In Diana Palmer’s *Silent Night Man*, the hero sets up a date with a woman who is not the heroine. She kisses him, and “In the old days, that would have set the fires burning. But not tonight” (85). That, and his inability to concentrate on anything except the heroine, enable the woman to reach an accurate diagnosis:

“Poor man,” she sighed. She reached up and kissed his cheek. “I guess we all meet our Waterloo someday. Looks like this is yours.” [...] That same thought was only beginning to form in his own mind. He smiled sheepishly. (86)

In romance, then, it is often “the heroine’s task to remake male sexuality, to subordinate it [...] to love” (Cohn 30) and her success is made possible by her GHH.

Not all romance heroes need their sexuality to be “remade” in the same way. Some heroes have repressed, rather than hyperactive, MWs. Heyer’s Simon the Coldheart, for example, states that “There is no place for women in my life, and no liking for women in my breast” (16). In this case, the GHH regulates the MW by bringing forth a “new-born passion” (298). In Napier’s *Secret Admirer*, the hero’s sexuality was affected by his step-mother who, when he “turned fifteen [...] decided that it was time I was taught the facts of life ... on a practical basis” (154). Sent to a private boarding school by his father as punishment for what was assumed to be the attempted rape of his step-mother, Scott found that his “guilt and revulsion about sex in general was reinforced by the crude boastings in the dorm” (156). After that, he “never felt so strongly attracted to any one [...] that I was willing to allow myself to be vulnerable” (158), but the heroine’s GHH changes his attitude towards sex. Whether hyper-sexual and promiscuous, or repressed and underused, the MW is attracted to, and then regulated by, the GHH.

Although the GHH is irresistible to the MW, the MW is also extremely attractive to the GHH. In some cases “The hero’s proximity alone can send the blood pounding through her veins, make her hands tremble, deprive her of speech and reason” (Douglas 26). In Anne Herries’s *Captive of the Harem*, the heroine expresses this attraction in terms of magic:

The sweetness of that kiss had surprised her, and aroused a longing for something that she did not understand, robbing her of the will to resist him. She had felt as though he cast a magic spell over her by some sorcery — was it this that made so many of the harem women eager for his notice? (99)

The heroine, who is generally unaware of extent of her GHH’s power over the MW, may initially fear the “magic spell” cast by the MW. Such fears are not unfounded. In Barbara Samuel’s *The Love Talker*, in which the hero is quite literally a magical being, we are given a description of the full extent of the damage a MW can cause to women whose GHHs are not glittery enough to tame it:

The Love Talker is a fixture of Irish faery lore, a seductive and dangerous being indeed, a conscienceless faery who ravishes the senses of unsuspecting

women and leaves them to pine away to their deaths. In all the poems and stories, he is the King of Rakes, a libertine of unholy power. (195)

This reflects the way in which male sexuality is culturally constructed as an active, unemotional, possibly dangerous part of masculine behaviour.

In a romance novel, the sexual desires and activities of a hero and heroine often reveal their growing emotional attachment, but how, when, where, and with whom the protagonists have sex, as well as the ramifications of their sexual activity, can express socio-cultural ideologies about what constitutes “ideal” sexuality.

## The Political Body

Sex is not simply an activity engaged in by individual bodies: “Cultures are disciplines that provide codes and social scripts for the domestication of the individual body in conformity to the needs of the social and political order” (Scheper-Hughes and Lock 26). These codes and scripts are often translated into law, making it illegal to go against the cultural definition of normality. One of the most significant differences between the social body and the political body is that while the social body may be subjected to cultural sanctions, such as being socially marginalised, the political body may be disciplined by the state, especially through imprisonment.

Romances, however, generally conclude with the political bodies of the protagonists being rewarded. One of the key narrative elements of a romance is the “betrothal,” a “scene or scenes” in which “the hero asks the heroine to marry him and she accepts; or the heroine asks the hero, and he accepts” (Regis 37).<sup>[4]</sup> Marriage, or even the promise of marriage, gives both cultural and legal recognition to their relationship and legitimises the joining of their social and political bodies as well as of their individual bodies. In romances the pairing of the hero and heroine’s individual bodies, and of the MW and GHH, is complemented by the pairing of their socio-political bodies, which we shall call the Phallus and the Prism.

## The Phallus in Romance

Teresa Ebert has described the romance hero as the personification of the Phallus:

The phallus [...] is ideologically disguised as a full, embodied presence. [...] Harlequin Romances, for example, are saturated with representations of the male anatomical organ. These representations take the form of tropic substitutions for the penis, as in such descriptions of the hero as “straight and tall, as brown and unbending as the monster trees rearing ... behind him,” and “the erect masculine figure astride the horse”; or, more directly, “the thrusting weight of steel-hard thighs and hips.” These images [...] reify the penis and thus mystify male power, sensuality, and sexual difference as physical and natural, while concealing the production of the phallus as

signifier as well as the construction of male prowess and privilege in signification behind the naturalized penis. (34)

Perhaps the conflation of the Phallus with the penis occurs because while “generally ethnographers have concluded that few men actually equate their manhood with their genitalia, nonetheless many studies indicate that they are a favorite point of reference” (Gutmann 396). Regardless of the cause of the conflation,

The penis is what men have and women do not; the phallus is the attribute of power which neither men nor women have. But as long as the attribute of power is a phallus which refers to and can be confused [...] with a penis, this confusion will support a structure in which it seems reasonable that men have power and women do not. (Gallop 97)

In this essay the “Phallus” refers to the socio-political body which expresses aspects of masculinity associated with the Father, such as authority, the capacity to administer punishment, and the ability to love and care for those under his protection. If a full range of Phallic traits is evinced by a hero then his socio-political body is a Completed Phallus.

At the beginning of a romance novel, however, most heroes have Incomplete Phalluses. Such heroes tend to demonstrate authoritarian or aggressive aspects of Phallic masculinity, including “the threat of violence, the law-giving nature, the ownership of the world, a power vested in physical presence” (Cook 154), and few of the softer qualities, such as care-giving. In a romance in which the Incomplete Phallus displays many of the negative characteristics of men in patriarchal culture, the hero of the romance can also be “its villain, a potent symbol of all the obstacles life presents to women” (Phillips 57). In Lindsey’s *Defy Not the Heart*, the hero abducts the heroine on another man’s behalf before marrying her himself, and in Napier’s *Secret Admirer* the hero poses a threat on a business level because he’s “powerful enough to destroy us if he wants to — he’s done it before to other companies” (22). Not infrequently the heroine is wary of the Incomplete Phallus, and rightly so, since he may attempt to use his power and authority to imprison or coerce her. In Lovelace’s *His Lady’s Ransom*, for example, the hero is convinced that the heroine is nothing more than a GHH to be controlled and has her confined within an isolated castle. In other romances the MW and Incomplete Phallus may work in conjunction, through rape or sexual assault, to assert their dominance over the heroine. This is the case in Richardson’s *Pamela*, in which the hero attempts to rape the heroine, and in E. M. Hull’s *The Sheik*, in which the hero succeeds in such attempts.<sup>[5]</sup> More recent romances do not tend to include rapes of the heroine by the hero, but one can still find “ritual” versions, such as a punishing kiss which serves to demonstrate the social status and/or physical power of the Incomplete Phallus, and the sexual potency of the MW.

The Incomplete Phallus tends to have obtained his power and authority from one or more typically male-dominated cultural areas. He frequently has high social status (e.g. Duke, Sheik), wealth (billionaire, tycoon), or both. With or without wealth, he usually displays fighting skills or at least physical strength (SEAL, warrior, cowboy). In his most obviously patriarchal guise he has the ability to regulate society by enforcing the law (police officer, sheriff), or he may try to perfect society by fighting a corrupt system

(outlaw, spy, private detective). There are, of course, other professions open to heroes, but many of them seem to involve power in forms strongly associated with masculinity.

Many Incomplete Phalluses lack emotional connection to others, but this lack can manifest itself in a number of different ways. A hero with a very strong MW and a very Incomplete Phallus may be a rake who spends much of his time engaging in sexual activity, as Dain does in Loretta Chase's *Lord of Scoundrels*:

He lusted for virtually every attractive female he saw. He had a prodigious sexual appetite [...]. If he lusted for a whore, he paid her and had her. If he lusted for a respectable female, he found a whore as a substitute, paid her, and had her. (49)

In slightly less extreme cases this type of hero may be a "passionate, romantic figure with a past, perhaps most familiar in Charlotte Brontë's Mr. Rochester" (Mussell 119). Sometimes rakish behaviour is ascribed to a deep emotional pain suffered by the hero:

He had deliberately set out to defy the conventions, to shock decent men and women, to become a by-word for everything that was debauched and immoral.

He had succeeded, but strangely enough it had not eased the hurt which had caused him to behave in such a manner, and the wound within himself had not healed. (Cartland, *Love* 84)

Although a rake generally acts in response to the demands of his MW, particularly where the heroine is concerned, his Phallic attributes may be considerable. Richardson's Mr. B., for example, is a landowner, Justice of the Peace, and Member of Parliament and Sheik Ahmed Ben Hassan states that "The French Government has no jurisdiction over me. I am not subject to it. I am an independent chief, my own master. I recognise no government. My tribe obey me and only me" (Hull 63).

A second type of Incomplete Phallus may be identified by his devotion to his work (often in one of the typically Phallic professions listed above) and his avoidance of family ties. This type of hero's Incomplete Phallus tendencies thus take precedence over those of his MW. Often this behaviour too is shown to be an imperfect coping mechanism developed in response to emotional trauma. Napier's business "piranha" (22), for example, has been "taking over electronics companies, and offering preferential deals to anyone who has business with RedWing" (97) as part of his plan to destroy his father's company in revenge for the way his mother was treated:

My mother died because she couldn't afford a life-saving operation. [...] She asked him for money and he told her that she had made her bed and now she could lie on it ... but he meant *die* on it. [...] my father *had* no humanity. (97)

He may be an emotionally wounded warrior, like Susan Mallery's Rafe, whose "[...] folks died when I was four. There wasn't anyone else. I became a ward of the state.' [...] He'd learned to take care of himself and never need anyone" (183). Diana Palmer's Tony, a

“professional soldier” specialising “in counterterrorism” (41), was physically abused by his father, who also “started doing things to my little sister, when she was about eight. [...] My mother caught him at it [...] She stabbed that knife up to the hilt in his stomach, all the way to the heart. [...] I never saw so much blood” (70-71). Then, “When my sister and I went into foster care, it was like the end of the world. Especially when they separated us. [...] She killed herself” (57). As he acknowledges, “I’ve got a past that’s going to make it hard for any woman to live with me on a permanent basis” (74). In Lindsey’s *Defy Not the Heart*, the hero is an emotionally damaged, illegitimate, mercenary knight who has

no home, but it was his burning ambition to correct that lack. It was his only goal, yet it was an all-consuming one. It was all he worked toward, hiring out to any man no matter the task, no matter the difficulty, no matter his own feelings in the matter. His ambition did not allow for scruples. (15-16)

This particular ambition, and his authoritarian attitude towards his followers, put him on the brink of transforming into a third type of Incomplete Phallus.

This type manifests the incompleteness of his Phallus by the way in which he assumes his patriarchal authority and family duties. Although he may work hard, be a (phallic) pillar of the community, and a devoted father or brother, he tends to be an authoritarian patriarch who is emotionally flawed in some way. Darcy is an example of this kind of hero, since he has both high social standing and wealth, his father is deceased and he therefore stands *in loco parentis* to his younger sister, and he is declared by one of his servants to be “the best landlord, and the best master [...] that ever lived” (Austen, *Pride* 270). This patriarch’s flaw, the evidence of his emotional lack, is his pride. Simon the Coldheart embodies, as far as that is possible for a human, the qualities of justice — “If it was a question of judgment or arbitration men found Simon relentlessly, mercilessly just” (Heyer 19) — and of omniscience:

‘[...] God alone knows what will come to this poor land!’

‘Nay, not God alone,’ the secretary said. ‘My lord knows also.’ (97)[\[6\]](#)

God-like in his own domain, Simon is omnipotent and one might say he “Suffer[s] the little children to come unto” (Mark 10:14) him because he “dost love children” (Heyer 114). In general, however, he seems incapable of feeling warmer emotions: “something he seemed to lack, for with all his assets and attainments, he was cold as stone, almost as though some humanising part of him had been left out in his fashioning” (130).

## The Prism

The feminine equivalent of the Phallus is the socio-political body we shall term the Prism. The word appears in the rakish Marquis of Vidal’s mocking designation of Mary Challoner as “Miss Prunes and Prisms” (Heyer, *Devil’s Cub* 49), a phrase which characterises her as prim and disapproving. The term “Prism,” as used in this essay, also

draws on Jayne Castle's *Orchid*, set in a futuristic society in which many individuals are "talents" but only a few, including the heroine, are "prisms":

talents [...] possessed a specific type of paranormal power that could be actively used. [...] The psychic energy that talents produced endowed them with a sixth sense. But unlike the other five senses, it could not be accessed except in brief, unpredictable, erratic bursts without the aid of a prism. [...] In them, paranormal energy took a different form. Prisms possessed the ability to focus the powers of a talent for an extended length of time. (3)

Even though a romance heroine's Prism is initially incomplete, it nonetheless focuses her hero's powers, enabling his Incomplete Phallus to fulfil its potential in a socially acceptable manner and become a Completed Phallus.

The Prism embodies the Mother aspect of femininity and the Incomplete Prism's motherliness tends to manifest itself in differing combinations of two different qualities. The first is nurturing tenderness, and the second is feistiness, which may also be thought of as an incomplete version of maternal authority and

the lioness aspect of the female personality [...]. It's acceptable for a woman, socially, to be outspoken and rude when defending her children — everyone knows not to get between a mother bear and her cub. (Wendell and Tan 59)

With the decline in the number of virgin heroines there may have been an increase in the proportion of heroines who are biological mothers, but childless heroines have long been given opportunities to display the nurturing aspect of their Prisms. Such heroines may often be found caring for children, either due to their jobs or because they have responsibility for younger siblings or abandoned infants. Slightly less blatant demonstrations of the Prism's nurturing motherliness include expressions of love and care for animals or vulnerable friends. As Wendell and Tan declare in their humorous "ten commandments of heroine conduct" (36):

Thou shalt have a nurturing streak larger and warmer than the South China Sea. Thy desire for children shall be unquestioned [...]. And shouldst thou choose to remain child-free, thou freak of nature, verily thou shouldst display your nurturing streak with animals. (36)

Elizabeth Bennet's mother is so incompetent a parent that Elizabeth attempts to provide her sisters with both maternal care and authoritative maternal guidance. When her older sister Jane is "very unwell" (78), it is Elizabeth, not their mother, who feels "really anxious" (Austen, *Pride* 78) and tends to her during the illness. Furthermore, "Elizabeth had frequently united with Jane in an endeavour to check the imprudence of Catherine and Lydia; but while they were supported by their mother's indulgence, what chance could there be of improvement?" (241). In Cartland's *The Problems of Love*, the heroine has taken on the role of mother: "I now have the family to look after, because my mother died five years ago" (11). On this heroine's wedding day it also becomes apparent that in some

respects she resembles the hero's mother: "I was thinking in Church today when we were married that you were like the lilies that were arranged on the altar. I have never felt that about any other woman with the exception of my mother" (145). In some romances, the heroine may express motherly feelings towards the hero. Mary, the heroine of Heyer's *Devil's Cub*, recognises that

it was not a notorious Marquis with whom she had fallen in love; it was with the wild, sulky, unmanageable boy that she saw behind the rake.  
'I could manage him,' she sighed. 'Oh, but I could!' (110)

Similarly Jessica sees "the lonely little boy in" Dain (Chase 269), and understands that he needs "love [...] he needed it far more than many, because, apparently, he hadn't had so much as a whiff of it since he was a babe" (269). In some romances this motherly nurturance may take a very literal form: Sarah S. G. Frantz has written of one romance hero that his

desire to suckle (to be suckled) at his wife's breast, when read against his whole character, can be read as the desire to return to the mother's nourishment that he never received as a child, as his need for his lover to embody his mother and his mother to be his lover. (25)

Gentle maternal qualities are not the only traits demonstrated by Prisms, for as the Rev. Mr. Villars instructs Evelina, "Though gentleness and modesty are the peculiar attributes of your sex, yet fortitude and firmness, when occasion demands them, are virtues as noble and as becoming in women as in men" (Burney 242). The Prism's feisty "fortitude and firmness" may be displayed on behalf of others, as when Elizabeth Bennet angrily rejects a marriage proposal from Darcy, "who has been the means of ruining, perhaps for ever, the happiness of a most beloved sister" (Austen, *Pride* 222), or in self-defence, often against either an untamed MW or an Incomplete Phallus. Pamela, for example, although only a servant, constantly expresses her resistance to her master's designs upon her virtue:

when you forget what belongs to Decency in your Actions, and when Words are all that are left me, to shew my Resentment of such Actions, I will not promise to forbear the strongest Expressions that my distressed Mind shall suggest to me; nor shall your angriest Frowns deter me. (Richardson 211)

In *Devil's Cub*, Mary goes so far as to shoot and injure Dominic when his untamed MW is about to rape her (Heyer 102).

In the end, displays of feisty strength in the heroine tend to bring forth positive characteristics in the hero, but as Incomplete Prisms differ in their type of feistiness and Incomplete Phalluses vary in the qualities they lack, each heroine will bring out slightly different personality traits in her hero: Pamela's feistiness is focused on preserving her virtue, and she therefore stimulates her hero's piety; Elizabeth Bennet's blunt honesty about Darcy's arrogance inspires him to become more self-aware and kind; Margaret "stole what men thought was not there to steal. Thy cold heart" (Heyer, *Simon* 300) and so

teaches Simon to love; and Josephine is “a beautiful, headstrong woman” (Jenkins 100), and so the “man who marries you will have to have patience, a strong mind and an even stronger wit” (100).

## Completing the Phallus

The Incomplete Prism’s feistiness poses a challenge to the Incomplete Phallus’s authority and its nurturance gentles him, bringing into focus his softer qualities. Many romances conclude with the hero “endowed with maternal qualities; he is not simply the phallus but also the maternal phallus: the ideal mother and father” (Treacher 80). However, since the Father also has nurturing qualities it should not be assumed that a Completed Phallus is an androgynous parental figure. The transformed hero is “the ideal male, who is masculine and strong yet nurturant too” (Radway 97). In becoming a Completed Phallus the hero suffers no loss of his culturally ascribed masculinity: he will still tend to exert control and power over others, but he is more likely to take the heroine’s views into account, and protectiveness will take the place of jealousy and aggression. Johanna Lindsey’s Ranulf, for example, becomes the Lord of Clydon and his military prowess ensures the safety of Reina, her lands, and dependants. The Completed Phallus’s Prism-inspired paternal care for the wider community may also be expressed politically. As the Marquis of Osminton declares:

I had never expected a woman to think seriously as you do on social and political questions, which have always been left to men. [...] It will help and inspire me to make a greater effort in that direction than I have done in the past. (Cartland, *Problems* 144)

If he couldn’t before, he will now be able to express his feelings and often becomes an emotionally involved father. In Chase’s *Lord of Scoundrels*, for example, Dain could initially only think of his illegitimate son as an “unspeakable thing” (293) which “was as foul inwardly as it was hideous outwardly, [...] there was not a scrap of good it could have inherited from its depraved monster of a sire” (293-94). Dain’s own self-loathing has clearly affected his perception of the child who looks so much like him, but Jessica forces him into a situation in which he cannot help but realise that his son is indeed “just like his father, he needed someone [...] to accept him” (340). Jessica’s conviction that Dain is not “a monster, impossible to love” (339) alters Dain’s perception of both himself and his son, and enables him to accept love for himself and show it to his child. In much less traumatic circumstances the Marquis of Osminton, too, is reconciled to the idea of fatherhood and confesses that

Once, before I knew you, [...] I thought that children might disturb my well-organised life and perhaps be destructive, but now, because I love you, my darling, I can think of nothing more wonderful than to see you holding my son in your arms. (Cartland, *Problems* 146)

If he had feelings of loneliness or uncertainty about his role in life, these will be resolved by the Incomplete Prism. Barbara Samuel's Galen is a faery cursed "to wander between the mortal and faerie realms, never to cross to either," and so experiences a "loneliness so vast 'twould make stones cry" (Samuel 199). His suffering lasts for 285 years, until he meets Moira who feels the allure of his MW, but is able to resist it in order to break the curse. As a heroine with a strong Incomplete Prism, she "wanted to protect him, protect him from the despair she'd glimpsed on his face [...], protect him from having to return to the lost world of his exile" (247). Clare Morgan may not have to break a faery curse, but she is "the one Marta foresaw [...] who would heal her Nikki's heart" (Putney 346). It is thanks to Clare that "Nicholas Davies, the Gypsy Earl of Aberdare" (12), a man who says he doesn't "give a damn about anyone or anything" (17), becomes involved in his local community, is reconciled with an estranged best friend, finds himself emotionally "free" (377) from his dead wife's betrayal and his deceased grandfather's hatred, and "can believe in my childhood again" (376).

The final transformation of the Incomplete Phallus may take place in a dramatic, emotionally charged scene. In Susan Mallery's *The Sheikh & the Virgin Princess*, Rafe is an emotionally-wounded warrior hero who has power and status but is clearly an Incomplete Phallus because he has no desire to become the head of a stable family unit: "Rafe had told her that she was a marriage-and-kids kind of woman and that he wasn't a marriage-and-kids kind of guy" (158). Zara intuits the reason behind this stance: "she knew. She read it in the pain in his eyes, in the set of his shoulders. After a lifetime of people turning away from him, he wasn't about to trust her with something as fragile as his heart. Not before he knew that she would be willing to stay forever" (247-48). By demonstrating that she is indeed "willing to stay forever," the Incomplete Prism transforms Rafe into a Completed Phallus:

The thick, angry barrier around his heart shattered and blew away. [...] He knew then that he had to believe her or lose her forever. That he was nothing without her. That he had finally found a safe place to belong.  
"I love you," he told her. [...] "[...] I want to spend the rest of my life with you. Please do me the honor of marrying me." (248-49)

In a way that parallels the GHH's regulation of the MW, the Incomplete Prism completes the Phallus, making him a happier, better man than he was without her: "till within these few Days, I knew not what it was to be happy. [...] I hope, from *her* good Example, [...] in time, to be half as good as my Tutoress" (Richardson 308).

## Completing the Prism

As with Incomplete Phalluses, there is variation in what is lacking in Incomplete Prisms. Some extremely feisty Incomplete Prisms are described as having a boyish appearance or behaving mannishly. Diana Mayo, for example, "looks like a boy in petticoats, a damned pretty boy" (Hull 2). It is said of Lady Margaret that she "fights at the head of her men" (Heyer, *Simon* 135) and when she "don[s] boy's raiment" (196) in an attempt to escape from Simon she looks like "a slim stripling" (198) and declares "In man's clothes I

stand, and a man will I be" (216). Feistiness taken to the point of mannishness is depicted in these two novels as a characteristic of which the heroine must be broken, at least insofar as she relates to the hero, so that she can become a Completed Prism. Diana Mayo's sheik adopts particularly violent methods:

with a greater arrogance and a determination stronger than her own Ahmed Ben Hassan had tamed her as he tamed the magnificent horses that he rode. He had been brutal and merciless, using no half measures, forcing her to obedience by sheer strength of will and compelling a complete submission. (Hull 226-27)

She comes to think of him as "A man of men. Monseigneur! Monseigneur! *Mon maître et seigneur*" (245) and Lady Margaret murmurs "Stern, merciless conqueror! Simon, *mon maître et mon seigneur!*" (Heyer, *Simon* 299).

Another way in which heroines may demonstrate their feisty nature is by engaging in "Too Stupid To Live" (TSTL) behaviour. This type of behaviour was "first recognized [...] at romance supersite All About Romance" (Wendell and Tan 31) but AAR's Laurie Gold has clarified that the term

tstl, or too-stupid-to-live [...] actually came from a very well-known author who wrote me about it in 1997 and asked to remain anonymous. A tstl heroine does things like going [...] where specifically told not to by the hero and ends up endangering both with her foolishness.

In Diana Palmer's *Silent Night Man*, the heroine knows that "some crazy person is trying to kill me" (48), and she has been told that her apartment "is a death trap [...]. [...] Easy entrance and exit right outside the door, no dead bolts, a perfect line-of-sight aim for anybody with a high-powered rifle with a scope" (48). Her safety can only be assured if she moves in with Tony, whose professional skills will enable him to act as her bodyguard. She does so, but after an argument with him she decides to prove to him that she "wasn't a doormat. No way was she staying in here to listen to him cavorting with his girlfriend! No way!" (82). Unfortunately, and rather predictably, the hit man "was watching and followed her home" (93). Tony only just arrives in time to save her. TSTL behaviour on the part of the heroine thus gives the hero an opportunity to display his manly prowess, and may demonstrate the extent to which the heroine needs the protection of a Phallus.

Removed from the context of TSTL behaviour, and described in terms which are more flattering to the heroine, this protection could be thought of as a benefit which accrues to the heroine once she has taken indirect control of his Phallus: "his almost superhuman physical strength is now *hers to command*" (Phillips 58). Once the heroine of Lindsey's *Defy Not the Heart* marries Ranulf, for example, she is safe from attacks by other males intent on usurping her wealth and power. Regardless of whether one views this outcome as evidence of the heroine's lack or of her triumph, the end result is that the Completed Prism falls under the protection of the Completed Phallus.

Marriage to the Phallus may also enable a Prism to enter the socio-political elite or, "Put more polemically, popular romance tells the story of how the heroine gains access to

money — to power — in patriarchal society” (Cohn 3). Millie, a woman who “came from a poor background, and lived on a meager budget” (Palmer 58), marries Tony, who is “rich” (62). In Richardson’s *Pamela* there is an even more marked elevation in the social status of the heroine: the landowner hero marries “his Mother’s Waiting-maid” (261) and “She was regularly visited by the principal Ladies in the Neighbourhood; who were fond of her Acquaintance” (499). In Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*, Mrs. Bennet, though not noted for her intelligence in other matters, perceives the material benefits which will accrue to Elizabeth upon her marriage to Darcy: “how rich and how great you will be!” (386). By the end of *Devil’s Cub* Mary, a commoner, is engaged to the Marquis of Vidal who is “one of the biggest prizes on the matrimonial market” (Heyer 14).

Increased access to money and power may give the Completed Prism greater opportunities for displaying the nurturing aspects of the Prism. After her marriage to the Earl of Aberdare, Clare may have had to give up

being a full-time teacher, but [...] now that she had Nicholas’s deep purse to plunder, she was able to help people on a broader scale. There were no more hungry children in Penreith, and the valley was becoming the prosperous, happy place she had dreamed of. (Putney 379-80)

Similarly, whereas Richardson’s *Pamela* as an Incomplete Prism, having received a charitable gift, exclaimed “O how amiable a Thing is doing good! — It is all I envy great Folks for!” (18), once she has been transformed by marriage into a Completed Prism she is able to reward her new servants, take Mr. B.’s illegitimate child into their home, and display “a diffusive Charity to all worthy Objects within the Compass of their Knowledge” (499).

The conclusion of Richardson’s novel also reveals that *Pamela* “made her beloved Spouse happy in a numerous and hopeful Progeny” (499), and in the epilogue to *Thunder and Roses* we learn that Clare “was almost sure that the next Gypsy Earl was on the way” (Putney 380). Dain and Jessica require no such epilogue for although they have only “been wed five weeks” by the end of *Lord of Scoundrels*, “It is easy enough to calculate. One fertile marchioness plus one virile marquess equals a brat” (Chase 373). Given the increase in recent decades of premarital sex in romances, it is now not uncommon for the virility of heroes and the fertility of heroines to be demonstrated long before either their wedding or the end of the novel. The heroine of *His Lady’s Ransom*, for example, falls pregnant after one night of “wild, prolonged and very thorough couplings” (Lovelace 273) with the hero; they marry a few months later, and in the final chapter their baby lies “in a basket on the table, gurgling” (353). Regardless of the method by which romance authors impart the information, it is common for them to provide evidence that the Completed Phallus and Prism, secure in their domestic bliss, have produced, or will produce, a suitable number of offspring.

## The Alchemical Model of Relationships

In the model of romantic relationships outlined above, the processes of transformation are complex and involve the protagonists’ individual bodies, a GHH and

MW, and an Incomplete Phallus and Incomplete Prism. Frantz suggests that a heroine who gives her breast milk to a supplicant hero is “appropriating patriarchal power for herself, but she is also then generous enough to return some to the hero, who continues to embody patriarchal power” (27). In such scenes, the individual bodies of the protagonists perform actions which can be read as symbolising the changes that are occurring to their socio-political bodies: the Incomplete Prism becomes a Completed Prism through her relationship with the Incomplete Phallus, and does so in a way which renders him Completed too. The GHH tends to be the catalyst for the transformation, because by ensuring that the MW desires union with this particular GHH, the hero’s Incomplete Phallus is brought into contact with the heroine’s Incomplete Prism. The Incomplete Prism then transmutes the glitter of sexual attraction into the gold of a socially sanctioned relationship between a Completed Prism and Completed Phallus. This, then, may be termed the alchemical model of relationships and it has been summarised by Mr. B., who admits to Pamela that “after having been long tost by the boisterous Winds of a more culpable Passion, I have now conquer’d it, and am not so much the Victim of your Love, all charming as you are, as of your Virtue” (Richardson 341); or, put more succinctly, “her Person made me her Lover; but her Mind made her my Wife” (474). Here “your Love” and “her Person” seem to refer to what we might term the heroine’s GHH, whereas her “Virtue” and her “Mind” are aspects of her Prism.

It is only because the heroine possesses both a particularly glittery GHH and an Incomplete Prism that she is able to have a transformative effect on both the MW and the Incomplete Phallus; as Janice A. Radway observed with regard to Alaina McGaren, the heroine of Kathleen Woodiwiss’s *Ashes in the Wind*, “It is [...] the combination of her womanly sensuality and mothering capacities that will magically remake a man incapable of expressing emotions or of admitting dependence” (127). A GHH unaccompanied by an Incomplete Prism will be unable to effect the transformation of the Incomplete Phallus, as is demonstrated in Diana Palmer’s *Silent Night Man* in which, as the heroine is aware, the hero has frequently found other women sexually attractive and “the brassier they are, the better you like them” (50). These women, however, appear to have lacked Incomplete Prisms, for as the hero explains:

“Those glittery women are fine for a good time. You don’t plan a future around them.”

He was insinuating that they were fine for a one-night stand. (60)

The brassy glitter of these promiscuous women is very different from the special glitter of the heroine, who is “illuminated” (59) and displays a special “radiance” (59) when in the presence of the hero. Her GHH is so closely associated with her Incomplete Prism that, like Mr. B.’s Pamela, she “would never go to bed with a man she hadn’t married” (58), and both novels conclude with the hero and heroine safely united in matrimony. Cartland’s Syrilla also has a glitter which is quite clearly inextricable from her Prism: “she had a radiance in her face that was not of this world” (*Love* 87), and since for the hero she “brought back dreams [...] of a woman who could be innocent and pure and inspire a man spiritually as well as physically” (152), she may serve as a reminder to the reader that where some heroines are concerned, marriage is definitely Holy Matrimony.

The initial fear that many heroes experience in response to their overwhelming desire for the heroine can therefore be understood not solely in sexual terms (as a fear of a monogamy caused by a desire so strong and so specific for the GHH that the MW can barely feel attraction towards any other woman), but also as a fear of the gentling which will occur as his Incomplete Phallus is focused by the Incomplete Prism. The way in which the heroine's GHH binds the hero to her, enabling the Incomplete Prism and Incomplete Phallus to act on each other and become Completed, has been described by Cook as

a bargain: his love for her sex. [...] He finds pleasure in the confession of love because love is something he has learned to deny and fear, often as the result of a terrible experience in earlier life. She finds pleasure in the confession of sex because she can give freely to the hero what he has brought about in her and not fear the ruin of her identity. The formula of the bargain creates a kind of symmetry, a pretence of equality. The father of desire meets the mother of love and they exchange gifts. Each makes the other complete in a fantasy of total union.

But the bargain is also, on the heroine's part, about attaching desire to social convention, to propriety, to marriage. It is part of her traditional role that she should represent virtue. [...] Her function is to [...] reassure us that, in the end, desire and the law are compatible. (157) [\[7\]](#)

There can be no better representative of the "traditional role" than Pamela, whose would-be seducer is so thoroughly reformed by his interactions with her Prism that he becomes "the best and fondest of Husbands; and, after her Example, became remarkable for Piety, Virtue, and all the Social Duties of a Man and a Christian" (Richardson 499).

## Some Alternative Models

Although the alchemical model of relationships, in which a GHH regulates a MW, an Incomplete Prism focusses an Incomplete Phallus, and an Incomplete Phallus completes an Incomplete Prism, has been present in the genre for centuries, there are alternative models of how the six bodies of romance protagonists can interact, some of which also have a very long literary history. It would be impossible to offer a comprehensive survey of all of these models in the space available, and this section therefore provides only a very brief overview of just a few of the alternative models to be found within the genre.

One of these alternative models offers the reader a hero who, at the start of the novel, already embodies masculine perfection. His MW needs no regulation and almost all he requires in order to become a Completed Phallus is a wife. Marriage is necessary in order to comply with the demands of heteronormativity: as Fulk tells the young Simon, "a man must take a wife unto himself" (Heyer, *Simon* 115), or, as Austen somewhat satirically observes, "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife" (*Pride* 51). Among these near-perfect heroes are Frances Burney's Lord Orville, who is depicted "as a fully formed paragon of male manners from his first appearance" (Hamilton 429), and Austen's Mr. Knightley. A more recent example may

be found in Heyer's *The Nonesuch*. Sir Waldo Hawkridge, the novel's hero, is known by this nickname which

means *perfection!* [...]

'A paragon, certainly.' [...]

'[...] they say the Nonesuch is a clipping rider to hounds too. [...]' [...]

'Sir Waldo is first in *consequence* with the ton, and of the first style of elegance, besides being very handsome, and *hugely* wealthy!' (20)

Sir Waldo, who "commanded as much liking as admiration" (169), is also a philanthropist and a responsible and caring role model to his younger cousin. This kind of hero is "the more conventional, sensitive, mature and competent husband-lover" who "has great strength and stability and seems particularly solid and trustworthy" (Mussell 119-20). He can be found in the novels of Betty Neels, which Jay Dixon recalls reading "to fill my need for a knowledgeable and calm father-figure" (35). As Mussell observes, such heroes

appeal [...] because of their implicit stability, their self-knowledge, and the status they can confer through marriage. If this figure seems more mature and sensitive than other men, and more attractive and intelligent, he offers an assurance of sexual fidelity because he knows his own mind in choosing the heroine. [...] His strength and power derive from self-assurance, self-control, and uncompromising moral principles. (124)

Since his MW is already perfectly regulated, and he already manifests the full range of qualities required to be a Completed Phallus, the heroine's GHH and Prism function solely to attract him and assure him of her suitability, but there is no need for them to effect a major transformation of his personality. She, however, may be taught by him, as is the case in Austen's *Emma*, or enjoy the benefits which, as described above, generally accrue to a Completed Prism. In *The Nonesuch*, for example, Ancilla Trent is saved from life as a governess and restored to the social circle from which her father's death had distanced her. In addition, Sir Waldo's philanthropy will give her ample opportunity to manifest the charitable, caring aspects of the Completed Prism, particularly as his "mother [...] will welcome you with open arms, and will very likely egg you on to bully me into starting an asylum for female orphans" (275).

Many modern "inspirational" romances feature an explicitly Christian version of this near-perfect type of hero. His possession of a MW may be implied via descriptions of his individual body: "The heroes' physical stature and good looks reinforce their virility and attractiveness to heroines" (Neal 149). In Cheryl St. John's *The Preacher's Wife*, for example, Samuel Hart is "broad-shouldered" (13) and although "It was inappropriate that she should notice his well-defined cheekbones or his recently shaved, firm, square chin, [...] she had. Even his deep, rich voice arrested her attention" (15). The use of the word "inappropriate" suggests that Josie, the heroine, is not merely cataloguing the features of Samuel's individual body: despite his status as "a widower, a father and a preacher" (109) he has "a fluid agility and masculine grace" (109) — in other words a MW — which "she couldn't help but appreciate" (109). That the ideal Christian romance hero's MW is pre-regulated

and incapable of succumbing to uncontrollable lust is made very clear in the guidelines provided by some publishers. In Steeple Hill's Love Inspired romances, for example, "Any physical interactions (i.e., kissing, hugging) should emphasize emotional tenderness rather than sexual desire or sensuality" (eHarlequin). Similarly, the guidelines for Barbour Publishing's Heartsong Presents stipulate that:

Physical tension between characters should not be overdone. Do not be overly descriptive when describing how characters feel in a particular romantic moment, for example, kissing, embracing, and so on. It has been our belief from day one that we *can* tell a great love story without going into excessive physical detail. People can easily imagine the desires and tensions between a couple who are blossoming into love. Kisses are fine (no tongues or heights of arousal, please).

One consequence of the sexual restraint demonstrated by this near-perfect Christian romance hero is that he poses a challenge to some aspects of the "male sexual drive discourse" so often present in the mainstream romance genre's depiction of heroes' socio-sexual bodies. In addition to having a well-regulated MW he

retains all the rugged individualism, toughness, and power of secular heroes but combines this traditional masculinity with gentleness, patience, and attention to female needs, from snuggling to child-rearing. (Barrett-Fox 97)

He, like the near-perfect secular hero, is thus in possession of a Phallus which can become fully Completed without the need for major personality changes. However, despite the strong similarities between the near-perfect Christian hero and his secular counterpart, there is one very significant difference between the processes by which their Phalluses, and the Prisms of their heroines, become Completed: "The transformation that seems 'magical' in secular romances is explained by divinely sparked spiritual growth in their evangelical counterparts" (Neal 5).<sup>[8]</sup> Returning again to Samuel Hart, we find that he has an almost perfect Phallus, "He represented everything that was good and perfect about fathers and husbands" (St. John 157), but he does occasionally make mistakes and "Whenever he overlooked the obvious, whenever he let pride get in the way of what was best, God graciously pointed his foolishness out to him" (209).

The "beta" hero presents a challenge to the gender roles underlying all of the previous models because his Phallus is never Completed: he is never transformed into an authoritative, patriarchal figure. He is "More playful and relaxed," "More of the 'boy (or man) next door' type," "Considerate of his heroine's feelings and opinions" and "The sort of man that a reader can actually imagine meeting, falling in love with, marrying — and being able to live with!" (Walker 100). Jayne Ann Krentz scornfully describes him as a "neurotic wimp" and "a sensitive, understanding, right-thinking 'modern' man who is part therapist, part best friend, and thoroughly tamed from the start" (109). It is indeed true that "you don't get much of a challenge for a heroine" (109) from such a hero, if that challenge is understood in terms of demonstrating the power of her Prism and GHH. He brings into

question the role of the heroine in the alchemical model because he tends not to need her to tame, gentle, domesticate or regulate his bodies.

Although Krentz attributes the beta hero's appearance in romance to "a wave of young editors fresh out of East Coast colleges who arrived in New York to take up their first positions in publishing" (107), he is not a recent invention. Edward Ferrars in Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* (1811) is

too diffident to do justice to himself; but when his natural shyness was overcome, his behaviour gave every indication of an open affectionate heart [...]. All his wishes centered in domestic comfort and the quiet of private life. (49)

Like the more recent "beta" heroes, he has been found wanting by some readers:

There is a strong tendency among critics to disparage Edward Ferrars as romantic hero. [...] I suspect that Edward's gender dissonance has stymied even professional readers. [...] Edward [...] lacks aggression altogether: for the most part he is retiring, he is passive, and he is as backward a lover as *ladies* are enjoined to be. [...] As to society, Edward lacks ambition and the desire to be somebody in the world [...]. Against the grain of the affluent gentry's model for men, but consonantly with the female model, he aspires to nothing higher than a happy domestic life. (Perkins 5-6)

This "beta" hero is favourably contrasted with an "uncommonly handsome" (75) rake, as is also the case in Heyer's *Cotillion*, in which she "was teasing her fans [...] by making ineffective Freddy the hero rather than handsome Jack Westruther" (Aiken Hodge 91). Jack is "a tall man" (Heyer, *Cotillion* 110) with "powerful thighs" (110), whereas Freddy is "a slender young gentleman, of average height and graceful carriage" (36), and this smaller, less physically powerful individual body is matched by a less attractive socio-sexual body and a very socially acceptable but non-dominant socio-political body:

He was neither witty nor handsome; his disposition was retiring; and although he might be seen at any social gathering, he never (except by the excellence of his tailoring) drew attention to himself [...] he was too inarticulate to pay charming compliments, and had never been known to indulge in the mildest flirtation. But a numerous circle of male acquaintances held him in considerable affection, and with the ladies he was a prime favourite. The most sought-after beauty was pleased to stand up with so graceful a dancer; any lady desirous of redecorating her drawing-room was anxious for his advice. (108-09)

Many "beta" heroes are neither shy nor sexually inexperienced, but as a type the "beta" hero, because of his lack of a Completed Phallus and the fact that he often possesses character traits more often associated with femininity, challenges the way in which particular groups of traits (such as those which are characteristic of the Prism) tend to be assigned only to individuals of one biological sex.

Although the Phallus is firmly associated with masculinity and the Prism with femininity, psychologists have long acknowledged that no individual is exclusively imbued with qualities ascribed to only one gender:

In every human being, Freud [...] remarks, “pure masculinity or femininity is not to be found either in a psychological or a biological sense. Every individual on the contrary displays a mixture.” [...] It is now generally accepted [...] that masculine and feminine principles are not inherent polarities [...]. Still, [...] there exists a recurrent cultural tendency to distinguish and to polarize gender roles. (Gilmore 214)

Sexual, social, and political power are expressed in highly gendered ways when the MW and Phallus are strongly associated with heroes and their male individual bodies, while the GHH and Prism are strongly associated with heroines and their female individual bodies.

Elizabeth Bevarly's *Dr Mummy* challenges such gender roles, but unlike romances featuring “beta” heroes, it does so by reversing the biological sex of the characters who, by the end of the novel, possess the Prism and Phallus. Perhaps in order to neutralise the threat to the hero's masculinity which might result from this departure from the usual configuration of the six bodies, the transformation is not revealed until the epilogue, long after the hero's “appealingly rugged, startlingly handsome [...]. And big. Really, really big” (24) individual body has been established as being in conformity with the masculine ideal. The relationship between Nick and Claire's socio-sexual bodies also conforms to romance conventions: “Nick's hot, unyielding body before her, and the sense of his overwhelming possession thrilled her in a way that nothing else could” (117). The transformations undergone by their socio-political bodies, however, are anything but conventional. Nick begins the novel as an Incomplete Phallus: law enforcement is a typically Phallic profession and he works as a “narcotics detective” (15). Years before the start of the novel he had wanted to marry Claire and become a Completed Phallus:

He'd wanted them to have a half-dozen kids, just as his folks had done. He'd [...] wanted Claire to stay at home with the kids, had wanted to work himself to death to take care of the family financially. [...] And Claire just couldn't see that happening. She hadn't wanted to give birth to and care for six children — or even one child. She hadn't wanted to be a homemaker — she'd wanted to be a doctor. (48)

Nick's dream of having a large family with Claire is achievable, but only by abandoning traditional gender roles. By the end of the novel he has been transformed into a Completed Prism, a homemaking, stay-at-home parent who is “in charge of the bake sale this year” (184) and certain that “the job I have now is so much more important than the one I had before” (185). Claire, initially an Incomplete Phallus who had resisted parenthood, dedicated herself to her highly paid professional job, and who “had always had difficulty revealing any honest emotion” (56), becomes a Completed Phallus as the family's only wage-earner.

Romances featuring protagonists of the same sex may also offer new dynamics between, and depictions of, their six bodies. Phyllis M. Betz states that in a lesbian romance “The very fact that two women have determined to pursue a passionate relationship

contravenes traditional social norms and expectations" (105), and as Paulina Palmer has observed, "By placing characters who identify as lesbian in a heterosexist frame and highlighting the tensions this generates, they alert the reader to the ideological limitations of the romance genre and the social codes which it inscribes" (203). Michelle Martin's *Pembroke Park*, for example, opens as Lady Joanna Sinclair is walking and daydreaming about romances, and so it is while "half expecting to find Ivanhoe" (2) that she first encounters Lady Diana March and "instead of a knight in shining armor there was a fair damsel [...]. She was [...] dressed in brown turkish trousers" (2). Lady Diana's individual body is female, but her socio-political body has traditionally masculine attributes, as indicated by her attire and the comparison with Ivanhoe. Her "excellent birth [...], her friends at the highest level of English society, and her vast fortune" (164-65), as well as the role she plays in rescuing Joanna from familial oppression, mark her as the possessor of an Incomplete Phallus. As the more sexually experienced of the two, her socio-sexual body can be thought of as a MW. For her part Joanna, who despite having been married has "never been in the throes of a Grand Passion" (111), has a GHH and as the mother of a young daughter and a woman in need of protection, she is clearly an Incomplete Prism whose love will heal Diana's emotional wounds. In many respects, then, *Pembroke Park* tells the traditional story of how a GHH and Incomplete Prism work together to gentle and complete a MW and Incomplete Phallus, but because that MW and Incomplete Phallus belong to a person with a biologically female individual body, Diana "flagrantly sidestep[s] every rule of social decorum!" (4).

## Conclusion

Romance novels, because they deal so explicitly with sexuality and men's and women's roles within sexual relationships, are cultural agents (primarily for women) for the transmission of gender ideologies. Gender ideologies, in turn, "construct men's and women's sexualities" (Blackwood 240). Although we have stressed the degree of continuity that exists in the depiction of the alchemical model of heterosexual romantic relationships, the genre has responded to changes in social attitudes towards sexuality and gender roles. In addition, despite the fact that all romances feature protagonists with three bodies (individual, social, political) there are some romances which offer alternatives to the pairing of a female protagonist's individual body, GHH, and Prism with a male protagonist's individual body, MW, and Phallus. Such romances provide alternative "guiding or admonitory images" (Gilmore 208) regarding ideal masculinity or femininity. Due to the diversity that exists within the genre, the many bodies of romance heroes and heroines may be sites of reinforcement of, or of resistance to, enculturated sexualities and gender ideologies.

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[1] For a more detailed analysis of the genre's history, see Pamela Regis's *A Natural History of the Romance Novel*.

[2] Simplicity in men's apparel was not unknown in the medieval period but, "In the Middle Ages, the norms regarding clothes were based on the nearly timeless precept that differentiations in social structure should be recognized by means of dress, hair and beard. However, at the same time – thanks to Christianity – clothes were endowed with a number of moral-symbolic interpretations [...] controversy was caused on the one hand by the fashions prevalent at royal and aristocratic courts, and on the other by the symbolic attire of the ascetic religious movements, which opposed in equal measure the opulence of the Church *and* of the laity" (Klaniczay 52). It is only in much more recent centuries that simple fashions for men have been widely adopted by the aristocracy: "Clothing historians have labeled the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the era of 'the great masculine renunciation,' a period of increasing modesty and simplicity in middle- and upper-class men's dress" (Kuchta 54).

[3] Unusually, this description is given from the point of view of a gay male, Theodric, who also observes the hero's "tight, exquisitely curved arse" (47).

[4] Regis acknowledges that "In romance novels from the last quarter of the twentieth century marriage is not necessary as long as it is clear that heroine and hero will end up together" (37-38).

[5] Rape may also function, as Kate Saunders has observed in her introduction to *The Sheik*, as a way to ensure the heroine "is morally off the hook, in an era when female sexual desire on its own was shameful and improper" (vi).

[6] Another indication of his near omniscience is that "No matter how softly one might creep up to him, he always knew of the approach, and needed not to see who it was who drew near" (111).

[7] With regard to the "pretence of equality," Cohn suggests that "the belief that a fair bargain has been struck between two parties when one offers rank and wealth and the other, moral improvement is the kind of pious wish-fulfillment called on to mask social relations that are far less benign" (140).

[8] Another significant difference between Christian romances and many secular romances is that characters in Christian romances have a fourth, spiritual, body. The existence of a spiritual body is explicitly mentioned in Cheryl St. John's *The Preacher's Wife*, in which the reader is informed that a minor character's "physical body lay beneath the lush grass in the fenced-in cemetery behind the tiny white church. His spirit had gone on to be with the Lord" (7).

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