

WOMEN AND ROMANTIC FICTION:
A CASE STUDY OF HARLEQUIN ENTERPRISES,
ROMANCES, AND READERS

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ABSTRACT

The main theoretical issue dealt with in this study is the reproduction of capitalism through romantic fiction for women. The analytical framework is built upon the concept of hegemony, the material and ideological reproduction of society through a combination of consent and coercion. This study examines this process as it applies to a specific phenomena: Harlequin Enterprises, Romances, and readers.

The analysis is based on archival research on Harlequin Enterprises and interviews with company officials. The Harlequin Romances component of the study is based on the content analysis of a random sample of fifty Harlequins. Data on readers are based on company information, readers' letters to Harlequin Enterprises, and interviews with twenty-four readers.

The study concludes that Harlequin Enterprises and Harlequin Romances are part of the hegemonic reproduction of capitalism. They maintain and legitimate sex role structure, corporate structure, and class structure, crucial aspects of our society. The study also concludes that women's consumption of Harlequins is best understood as being a part of this same process of hegemony. Their reading is shaped by the structure of their lives, by Harlequin Enterprises, and by Harlequin Romances. The study suggests that further

theoretical refinement and empirical research is necessary to explore the possibility that there are various types of readers who interpret and respond to romantic fiction in different ways.

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CHAPTER I

CAPITALISM, HEGEMONY AND WOMEN: THEORETICAL ISSUES

Come into the world of Harlequin novels...and be a part of a wonderful dream.... Read one...and discover our world. It's a beautiful place to be. You belong in the world of Harlequin.

Harlequin advertisement

It will probably be thought tedious to all such as dip into it, expecting a light Novel, or transitory Romance; and look upon Story in it (interesting as that is generally allowed to be) as its sole end, rather than as a vehicle to the Instruction.

Sammuel Richardson, *Clarissa*

Introduction

As the 1970's draw to a close, attempts to characterize and assess the decade will appear and will, in large part, shape the way the decade will be remembered. One of the phenomena occurring during these years that may be cited is the women's liberation movement. Although the women's movement emerged during the 1960's, it received more widespread recognition in the 1970's which culminated in the declaration of International Women's Year in 1975. An assessment of the 1970's then, might include an assessment of the women's movement. This is not an easy task for there is conflicting evidence about the success of the movement. Laurie Davidson and Laura Kramer Gordon in their text on sex roles point out that:

Feminism has had effects, in concrete efforts to change the operation of major institutions and in advancing alternative ideologies about the ideal and expected activities of women and men. Feminism also has met serious and sustained opposition because its fundamental principles of egalitarianism of men and women will require massive changes in the organization of all major U.S. institutions.¹

It is true that there have been some gains. An increase in the data available on women, heightened consciousness about the issue of women's liberation, the passage of legislation prohibiting sex discrimination in such crucial areas as employment, pay, and credit opportunities, and the liberalization of abortion laws are examples of these gains. However, it is also true that there have been setbacks and opposition. Any realistic assessment must acknowledge that much more remains to be done than has been achieved inspite of over a decade of the women's movement. The 1970's may be remembered as a decade in which there was a lot of talk about women's liberation but little qualitative social change in women's position in society.

There is evidence to support this view. The introduction to a text on women and labour force participation notes that:

some characteristics of women's participation remain amazingly resistant to change: their concentration in sex-typed jobs, their disproportionate share of low-ranking positions, and their relatively low earnings compared to men of similar training and experience.²

The book goes on to document this lack of change. In fact, in the area of labour force participation, there is evidence that women have actually lost ground on some fronts. Pat and Hugh Armstrong conclude, on the basis of Canadian census data, that "women were even more concentrated in clerical jobs in 1971 than they were in 1941 If anything, the segregation of women in a limited number of jobs increased over this 30-year-period...."³ In the United States, the National Commission on Working Women found that:

During the last 25 years, women's earnings as a percent of men's have dropped steadily. In 1955, full time women workers earned 64¢ to men's one dollar.... 1977 census data show that the median annual earnings for full time male workers was \$14,626 and for female workers was \$8,618 or 58.9%.⁴

Upon examination, even some of the gains appear less impressive than they did initially. Equal employment and wage laws, for example, are not always enforced.⁵ Enforcement would be more ensured in the United States by the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment, but this proposal has been meeting increased opposition and is still several states' ratifications short of the number required, with time running out. Abortion laws may be liberalized but United States federal government funds may no longer be used for abortion funding for needy individuals. This means that poor women are again excluded, in effect, from

this option.

One can see that the gains made have been limited and sometimes temporary. This is a striking fact for it is contrary to what one might have expected on the basis of the public attention that the issue has received. This discrepancy requires an examination and an explanation. How can we explain the persistence of women's inequality?

One explanation that has been offered is that it is an essential part of capitalism and cannot be qualitatively changed within that socio-economic context. Women in their subordinate positions perform many necessary functions such as serving as a cheap, active or reserve labour force, reproducing and socializing children, consuming goods and services, and managing the tensions of their husbands and children.* This explanation emphasizes the importance of social structure in general, and economic institutions (the forces and relations of production) in particular, in maintaining women's inequality. In addition, the perspective acknowledges that our sexist society is also perpetuated by the dominant ideology, the set of beliefs and values that is the expression of the interests of those who own and control the means of production.⁶** Therefore, the main

* These functions will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

** These beliefs will also be discussed in more detail later in the chapter.

focus of this perspective is on the relationships between capitalism, ideology, and women.

Some analyses of the specific values within the dominant ideology which legitimize and perpetuate women's inequality have noted that romantic love is an important component of this ideology. For example, Germaine Greer suggests that: "Women must recognize in the cheap ideology of being in love the essential persuasion to take an irrational and self-destructive step."⁷ Shulamith Firestone is even more adamant: "A book on radical feminism that did not deal with love would be a political failure. For love...is the pivot of women's oppression today."⁸ Firestone connects socio-economic structure and ideology by arguing that "the culture of romance" reinforces women's dependence and subordination which has been created by economic and social oppression."⁹

Sidney Greenfield is another scholar who discusses the social significance of romance in our society.* He leads into it with a discussion of economic structure. Greenfield states that "the production, distribution, and consumption of material goods and services...tends to take precedence over almost all other activities engaged in by members of the society."¹⁰ Material goods are highly

*However, unlike Greer and Firestone, Greenfield is not critical of romance.

valued, but the only way one can obtain these goods is through the market. Individuals purchase goods and services with money which is usually earned through participation in the labour force. However some people, women to some extent and children to a large extent, are excluded from or are unable to participate in the labour force and therefore have no income. This creates a problem for how are they to obtain essential goods and services?

Greenfield argues that nuclear families are formed to provide for dependents' needs and that romantic love serves as the "reward-motive" which induces people to form these units which:

are essential not only for reproduction and socialization but also to maintain the existing arrangements for distributing and consuming goods and services and, in general, to keep the social system in proper working order and thus maintaining it as a going concern.¹¹

Romantic love, in other words, serves an ideological function by reinforcing the status quo. This means that romantic love also perpetuates women's inequality as it is one aspect of the status quo.*

* Many people would rebel against the argument at this point and Firestone admits that it has "frightening implications". However, she also maintains that "The panic felt at any threat to love is a good clue to its political significance." (Firestone, *Dialectic*, p. 142.) One should note that when we discuss romantic love and romance, we are referring to "a specific culture trait", "a distinctive pattern of social behaviour" that exists in modern North American society, as Greenfield puts it. (Greenfield,

These previous analyses have focused on romance as ideology, have analyzed it within the context of our socio-economic structures, and have indicated its importance in maintaining those structures, one aspect of which is traditional sex roles and women's inequality. This study continues this line of investigation. It differs from some of its predecessors, however, in focusing on a specific and concrete manifestation of "the culture of romance". Its object of analysis is a series of popular romance novels which is widely read by women and which is produced by a large, multinational corporation, that is: Harlequin Romances, Harlequin Enterprises Ltd., and Harlequin readers. Its thesis is that Harlequin Enterprises, its products and their contents, and its consumers' receptivity are a part of and reinforce the existing socio-economic system. The study locates Harlequin Enterprises in a nexus of class, corporate, and sex role structures within the capitalist system; it analyzes the images of these structures in Harlequin Romances as ideological legitimations of this system; and it argues that the women readers' reception of the romances is shaped by these same social structural factors.

"Love and Marriage", p. 362.) We are not analyzing or criticizing love as an emotion, as warm feelings. Instead we are interested in romance as an expression of ideology.

Although the study is specifically about the Harlequin phenomena, it is necessary to preface this analysis with a discussion of the larger issues involved. The significance of the Harlequin phenomena is best determined by examining it with these issues in mind. Three basic questions are addressed within this study. The first deals with the reproduction of the existing socio-economic system. How a society reproduces itself is a complex issue. It obviously requires material production, but it also requires its members to share certain understandings about the legitimacy of the structures and processes that make up the society. Different societies require different material reproduction and different sets of understandings. The question posed here is: how does North American capitalist society reproduce itself? Ideologically answering this question in total would be an enormous task beyond the scope of this study. Therefore, the second question to be addressed narrows the first. It restricts the inquiry to asking how this process of ideological reproduction is carried out through the production and consumption of popular fiction. Actually the concern with popular fiction springs out of another broad question about the relationship between fiction and society. Although this issue is also too general to be dealt with in its entirety, my study does address it on a specific level, that is, the

relationship between Harlequin Romances and society. The third question contributes a further focus by asking how the process of reproduction of capitalism through the production and consumption of popular fiction applies to women. Popular fiction is, of course, read by both men and women. In order to restrict the scope of the study to women and to incorporate an examination of the role of romance in the ideological reproduction of our society, the type of function studied was narrowed to romance, a fictional form read predominantly by women. The larger issue of concern in this case is an understanding of the positions of women in our society and the process by which those positions are reproduced. The examination of Harlequin Romances and women readers is pursued with this issue in mind. These are the three questions to be discussed in this chapter.

The Reproduction of Capitalism

To understand the reproduction of capitalism, it is first necessary to understand its internal structures and dynamics. What, exactly, must be reproduced? The answer is that the mode of production which includes both the forces of production and the social relations of production must be reproduced. These concepts are defined as follows:


The forces of production consist of the tools, buildings and equipment used to carry out production, as well as the existing state of science and technology, know-how, organizational techniques, etc.¹²

The social relations of production are precisely the relationships between those who produce the social surplus and those who control or appropriate it.¹³

These will be discussed in turn.

The main organizational unit of the forces of production in the North American economy is the large multinational corporation. This has not always been the case. In fact, it is only since the turn of the twentieth century that there has been a significant evolution from numerous, small, regional, family businesses to a few, large, multinational enterprises. These powerful economic units are characterized by four major traits: private ownership and control, wage labour, profitability, and growth.

Ownership and control of the small family business was obvious but ownership and control of the multinational is often not so transparent. Multinationals are publicly incorporated and there are often thousands of shareholders. Nevertheless, the forces of production or corporate structures as a whole are controlled by a very small percentage of the population. These owners or their representatives are usually on the board of directors, a body which represents the interests of the owners. The board of directors' task is to make a profit for the company and



dividends for the shareholders. They control the general direction of the company and supervise all the major decisions made in the company about rate of profit to be achieved, large capital outlays, expansion ventures, etc. Another important power they have is the hiring of management. The board is not generally involved in the day-to-day operations of the company although senior executives who are involved usually sit on the board. They hire management to supervise operations but retain ultimate control themselves.

The second trait is the use of wage labour which produces the profit, the accumulation of surplus which is appropriated by the owners. Workers sell their labour power to owners who pay them a wage. Once hired, the workers produce commodities which the owner sells for more than his costs of production, thus yielding him a profit. Profitability is consequently the third trait of the corporate structure. The major goal of corporations is achieving a profit and their organizational activities are geared towards this end. This goal leads directly to another, that of growth.

The fourth trait of corporate structure is that corporations must grow. There is no choice available to those in control. If they do not expand, they will be taken over or driven out by other corporations that are

expanding. Thus the history of modern corporations is one of the continual growth and expansion of successful corporations and of the merger or collapse of the less successful, usually smaller corporations.

Corporations may experience four stages of growth--diversification, horizontal integration, vertical integration, and consolidation.

At first, expansion is characterized by diversification. The profits which are generated through the day-to-day operations of the company are invested in other business concerns....

Once a corporation has gained control of a number of different companies, future investment decisions are usually made with these holdings in mind. Market control and control of the various stages of production become the principal criteria for further growth. Market control is achieved through the acquisition of competing firms--a process known as horizontal integration.

While horizontal integration refers to control over a particular segment of the industry, it does not necessitate any changes in the production process. However, since profit is generated at each step in the production cycle, a corporation that controls many or all steps in the process can compound its profit. This pattern of investment, known as vertical integration, occurs when a corporation attempts to extend its control over all production stages.

The final stage in a corporation's growth is consolidation. This occurs when a corporation develops internal strategies to maximize its profits through the reduction of costs, the elimination of redundancies, and the centralization of management.¹⁴

Growth, a requirement for survival in the corporate world, depends on a company's profits, causing a constant drive for profit. The corporation's profits are invested in further production to make more profits which, in turn,

must be re-invested in an ever spiralling process. Corporations expand, but the greater the volume of goods produced, the quicker markets are saturated. Demand falls off and the spiral turns downward. Corporations face stagnation and crisis. Re-investment of profits which results in growth is both a requirement and a problem.

There are a number of solutions that have been attempted in response to this problem. First of all, a common response to a saturated consumer market is to heighten the already-existing consumer demand for products. A company may embark on a program of heavy advertising and high pressure salesmanship; they may create "new" products which are slightly different and "improved"; they may build in obsolescence; or they may create fashion and style obsolescence.

Secondly, if consumer demand is not satisfied, but consumers are unable to buy, corporations may extend credit to potential consumers. Alternatively, they may pressure the government to give the corporations special concessions on taxes, assistance in keeping wage costs down, or financial incentives to expand at home or abroad, which decrease costs and boost profits.

A third solution is that corporations may try to expand to new markets. This usually means expansion outside a region or even a nation. New customers are sought in

international markets. A corporation tries to achieve both growth and stability in this fashion, balancing out fluctuations in individual national economies with a broader base. That this has been a common solution is apparent in the fact that multinational corporations are just that --multi-national.

Corporations, which are characterized by private ownership and control, wage labour, profitability, and growth, are the key units of the forces of reproduction. These corporate structures are reproduced by the various mechanisms described in the maintenance of capitalism. However, capitalism is more than a set of economic institutions: it is also a system of social relations between classes.

Class structure is closely linked to corporate structure because the main defining criterion for class is the ownership of productive property. Since few people own productive property while most must sell their labour for a living, the class structure is characterized by inequality of ownership. This disparity leads to broader social inequalities in income, wealth, power, and access to certain occupations, education, health care, housing, etc. These factors may be considered to be supporting class characteristics.

The upper class is composed of people who own

capital. It is difficult to estimate the exact size of the upper class because specific information about the ownership of productive property is scarce and sketchy. However, it is certain that the upper class is very small because ownership of productive property is highly concentrated. An indication of this is that in the United States, the wealthiest 1 per cent of the population owns 61 percent of corporate stock¹⁵ and in Canada, the top 1 per cent of income earners owns 42 per cent of corporate shares.¹⁶ Only 10 per cent of all income earners own even one share.¹⁷ Not everyone who owns a corporate share is a member of the upper class. An additional qualifier is that the bulk of the income of members of the upper class is revenue from their ownership of private property rather than from their salaries or wages. Another defining characteristic of this class is that through their ownership, they are major employers of the labour power of others.

The upper class is the most cohesive of the social classes. Small in numbers, its cohesion is strengthened by its members' similar experiences and socialization. In elite private schools, members of the upper class develop networks of contacts, keeping their friendships within the same class. After school, these connections are maintained through business contacts and memberships in private social clubs. In addition, the upper class

shares residential areas within a city, holidaying spots, participation and leadership in cultural activities such as charity work, sitting on hospital and university boards, being active in theatre, art galleries, museums, and so on. There is considerable upper class inter-marrying as well. All of these activities serve to reinforce cohesion within the upper class on a general social level in addition to the basic unity which stems from their similar economic positions.

The middle class is larger but still encompasses a minority of the population. There are two sections of the middle class. First of all, there are those who own and manage their own means of production. In contrast to the upper class' vast ownership interests and many employees, the middle class' holdings are small enough to be worked and managed predominantly by the owners themselves. This section of the middle class has been traditionally referred to as the *petit bourgeoisie*. The second division of the middle class is composed of people who are primarily dependent upon a salary as a source of income, but whose relationship to the forces of production is made more complex by the fact that they perform both capital and labour functions. Rosemary Crompton explains why this group should be considered to be middle class:

a minority of the middle class (e.g. top management), even though they may not legally own the means of production, have real control over the material means of production, labour, and surplus value. Such control can be described as 'real' as opposed to 'legal' ownership, and renders their class situation unambiguous.¹⁸

In addition, people in the middle class usually accumulate capital as well, even if it does not constitute the bulk of their income.

The working class is the largest class in society, comprising the majority of the population. It is entirely dependent upon wage labour for a living. The members of this class are employed by others. The surplus value of their labour creates profit for employers, usually the upper class.

The middle and working classes are not as unified as the upper class. The larger numbers, the diversity of occupations, regional distribution, racial and ethnic origins, the range of incomes, and other factors work against cohesion. In spite of these differences, however, members of these socio-economic classes share a basically similar relationship to the forces of production with other members of their class.

The relationships between classes, particularly between the upper and working classes, are antagonistic because of their relationship to the means of production. The upper class, through its ownership of the economic

apparatus, asserts its control over production and attempts to increase profits. These efforts are often at the expense of the working class who are forced to relinquish control and forego higher wages. However, the working class does not do this readily or easily and this results in a perpetual struggle between these classes.* Given that not only the forces of production but also these relations of production must be reproduced, how is capitalism reproduced inspite of the conflicts and contradictions?

Every society is maintained by a combination of coercion and consent, and capitalism is no exception. Antonio Gramsci has referred to this process as hegemony. The functions of hegemony include:

1. The "spontaneous" consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; this consent is "historically" caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production.

2. The apparatus of state coercive power which "legally" enforces discipline on those groups who do not "consent" either actively or passively. This apparatus is, however, constituted for the whole of society in anticipation of moments of crisis of command and direction when spontaneous consent has failed.¹⁹

* The intensity and overtness of this struggle varies with the historical period and conditions from within and without the society. For example, during periods of war, the working and upper class may unite and direct their energies against an external enemy or during a period of overall prosperity and expansion, the economic increases accruing to both owners and workers may be sufficient to alleviate the conflict between them.

Hegemony is exercised by the dominant group through the "superstructural 'level'" of society, a combination of "civil society" which is an ensemble of "private" institutions and activities like trade unions, schools, churches, and the media, and "political society" or "the State".*

This introduces the concept of "superstructure", which coupled with the term "economic base", has played an important role in the debate about the nature of and persistence of capitalism. The terms first appeared in the work of Karl Marx:

In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political, and intellectual life process in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness.²⁰

Since Marx's initial statements, there has been a great deal of debate over the nature of the relationship between "the economic base" and "ideological superstructure". The most crude interpretation is that the "economic base"

*Louis Althusser discusses a similar theory in "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" in his *Lenin and Philosophy*, trans. Ben Breuster (Monthly Review Press, 1971).

is the sole determinant of the "superstructure" which is a direct reflection of that base. Marx and Engels both fought against this vulgarization of materialism. As Engels wrote:

According to the materialist conception of history, the ultimately determining factor in history is the production and reproduction of real life. Neither Marx nor I have ever asserted more than this. Hence if somebody twists this into saying that the economic factor is the only determining one, he transforms that proposition into a meaningless, abstract, absurd phrase. The economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure... also exercise their influence upon the course of the historical struggles and in many cases determine their form in particular.²¹

Thus Marx and Engels maintained that, although the superstructure is related to the base, it also has a certain degree of autonomy.

Recent theorists have gone beyond this qualification of the original "base-superstructure" concept to argue that the very conceptualization of the issue into the separate categories of "base" and "superstructure" makes it not only vulnerable to vulgarization but sidetracks analysis. These theorists do not see the production of material goods and the production of consent as being two separate categories. They regard it as a mistake to even formulate the issue in terms of these dualities. Raymond Williams argues this most explicitly:

Yet any ruling class devotes a significant part of material production to establish a political order. The social and political order which maintains a

capitalist market...is necessarily a material production. From castles and palaces and churches to prisons and workhouses and schools: from weapons of war to a controlled press: any ruling class, in variable ways though always materially, produces a social and political order. These are never superstructural activities. They are the necessary material production.... The complexity of this process is especially remarkable in advanced capitalist societies, where it is wholly beside the point to isolate "production" and "industry" from the comparably material production of "defence," "law and order," "welfare," "entertainment," and "public opinion." In failing to grasp the material character of the production of a social and political order, this specialized...materialism failed also, but even more conspicuously, to understand the material character of the production of a cultural order.²²

One of the insights that Gramsci contributed was his more sophisticated interpretation of the relationship between the "economic base" and "ideological superstructure" as a combined process of hegemony. Williams comments that "the concept of 'hegemony' goes beyond 'ideology'. What is decisive is not only the conscious system of ideas and beliefs, but the whole lived social process as practically organized by specific and dominant meanings and values."²³ In hegemony, consciousness is realized in a socio-economic system. It is institutionalized as social practice in the social structure and experienced as reality. This social structure has just been discussed and the ideas and beliefs that serve to secure consent and perpetuate this system will now be described. Throughout the ensuing discussion, one must keep in mind that the beliefs mentioned

are not disembodied spiritual creations that exist independently of the people who maintain them or these individuals' positions in the socio-economic system. As Louis Althusser points out: "An ideology always exists in an apparatus, and its practice or practices. This existence is always material."⁴*

One of the main legitimations of the existing socio-economic system is the belief in the sanctity of private property and the rights of individuals and individual corporations to manage and dispose of their property. There is a strong belief in economic individualism which maintains that if individuals pursue their own economic self-interest, they also further society's best interests. In this view, the right to acquire private property is seen as a necessary incentive to motivate people to work. This is true for both capitalists and workers.

Private property rights enable capitalists to invest their money, to make a profit, to re-invest, and grow. This accumulation of capital is seen as the reward or payment for the use of the individual's or corporation's initial

* This does not mean that hegemony is either static or monolithic. Raymond Williams cautions that "The reality of any hegemony...is that, while by definition it is always dominant, it is never either total or exclusive. At any time, forms of alternative or directly oppositional politics and culture exist as significant elements in the society." (Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, p. 113.) Thus hegemony has to continually be reproduced, defended, and modified to maintain its dominance.

layout of money, for their managerial talent, their risk-taking, and their heavy responsibilities. Individuals or corporations are seen as valuable, effective economic units. If they profit, the whole country profits. (This is expressed, for example, in the saying, "What's good for General Motors is good for the nation.") Corporations serve society by providing employment, giving sustaining donations to universities, cultural activities, and charitable concerns, making technological discoveries, and most important of all, delivering the goods. Almost single-handedly, they have created our high standard of living. They make the joys of consumerism possible.

Although workers do not own productive property, they do own consumer goods. According to Thomas Weisskopf, the extensive efforts to acquire consumer goods on the part of workers is an essential aspect of the maintenance of capitalism:

Consumerism derives from a fundamental tenet of capitalist ideology: the assertion that the primary requirement for individual self-fulfillment and happiness is the possession and consumption of material goods. Like all aspects of capitalist ideology, this consumerist assertion is grounded in the basic capitalist relations of production. A society based on alienated labour allows most people little opportunity for individual expression in production; the main outlet for individual expression is in one's life as a consumer.²⁵

The fact that the working class can and does buy consumer goods obscures the basic structure of class

inequality. People come to believe in a conception of society in which there is one vast middle class. In this view, there are no real or substantial class differences. Everyone is relatively homogeneous.

The great middle...encompasses almost everybody, and the lower and the upper--which must exist if there is a middle--can only be defined in terms of relative wealth. A few may be rich, a few may be poor, but most people, according to this belief, are somewhere between these small groups.... Canadians may not quite believe that all people have equal opportunity, that birth has no effect on rank, or that anyone may rise to the top. But they see the defects as imperfections in a classless and mobile society.... Golf, appliances, deodorants, and Beethoven are equally available to all, and the lack of class distinctions is nowhere more apparent than in the market place.²⁶

A variation of this approach may admit that there are classes and inequalities of ownership and wealth, but deny that these differences are important. It is not how much one owns but what kind of person one is that is truly important. Goodness is the real virtue, and good people, whether rich or poor, will reap their reward in this life or "the life to come".

Another approach openly admits that there are class differences but justifies them. This form of legitimation may maintain that, although there are unequal social classes, there is widespread mobility. There is equal opportunity for all in our society to make it to the top, through whatever route--education, hard work, talent, etc. Those who have "made it", therefore, are seen as deserving and

special. This emphasis is consistent with the belief in economic individualism. Patricia Marchak comments that: "Individualism as a creed provides an explanation for differences in wealth and status; we make it on our own, and deserve what we get."²⁷

The upper class is seen as providing leadership, as being cultured, perhaps naturally more intelligent, gifted, hard-working, responsible, refined, and generally deserving of their portion in life. In contrast, the working class is seen as needing leadership, as being simple, a little lazy, crude, and generally content with their lot. The two classes complement each other.

There is also a legitimating belief about a mechanism that perpetuates class differences, that is, inheritance. A belief in private property leads to a belief in the right to dispose of private property as the owner wishes. This belief, realised through the practice of the family, legitimates the inheritance of property by the children in general, by the sons, or even just the elder sons of the upper class which passes class membership over the generations.

To conclude, the corporate and class structures of capitalism are characterized by an inequality of ownership of the forces of production. These structures are maintained by beliefs in the legitimacy of private property and efficacy of economic individualism. Class differences

are either denied or justified.

These beliefs operate at the level of "common sense", a term used by Gramsci to mean "the uncritical and largely unconscious way of perceiving and understanding the world that has become 'common' in any given epoch."²⁸ However, rather than being seen as a product of a special society in a given epoch, these perceptions are claimed to be universal, based on an understanding of "human nature" or "instincts". This relatively unquestioning acceptance of the ideological justifications of capitalism secures the consent of the majority of the population and contributes to the maintenance of the socio-economic system.

So far this chapter has posed the question: how is capitalism reproduced? It has described the class and corporate structures (the forces and relations of production) that must be reproduced and indicated that this reproduction is carried out through the process of hegemony. Now the focus will narrow to the role that popular fiction plays in this process.

The Reproduction of Capitalism Through Popular Fiction

Gramsci noted that hegemony is carried out not only through the State but also through the "private" institutions that comprise "civil society". Because of the historical time period and nation in which he was living and writing (Italy in the 1920's-1930's), Gramsci focused

much of his analysis of the production of hegemony in "civil society" on religious institutions. More recently, Althusser has argued that religious institutions have been superceded in significance by educational institutions. While not denying the importance of either of these, this study is concerned with the hegemonic role of another institution, the entertainment industry, and particularly a section of it which produces popular fiction. One of the characteristics of life in advanced industrial society has been the development of an emphasis on leisure and the concomitant development of the entertainment industry. Entertainment pursuits are an increasingly important part of people's lives and the economy. This area provides an ideal opportunity to study the hegemonic conjunction of "economic base" and "ideological superstructure".

Raymond Williams comments on the need for such studies:

The major modern communications systems are now so evidently key institutions in advanced capitalist societies that they require the same kind of attention...that is given to the institutions of industrial production and distribution.²⁹

According to Williams, these studies will not only provide empirical results, but also "force theoretical revision of the formula of base and superstructure and of the definition of productive forces, in a social area in which large-scale capitalist economic activity and cultural production are now inseparable."³⁰ First, however, we must backtrack

and briefly trace how studies of popular fiction have come to this point.

The nature of the general relationship between society and fiction has been an issue of debate for sociologists for some time. Over the years, there has been an evolution in sociological approaches to this problem. Initially, the most frequently used perspective was that fiction, like a mirror, reflects society.* This was first proposed in the beginning of the nineteenth century. In this simplest form, literature was regarded as a social document which reflected various aspects of the social structure. It was regarded as dealing with the same issues as sociology but was considered particularly valuable because of its immediacy and intensity. Sociologists directed research to test the reflection theory. For example, Ruth Inglis studied heroines of periodical fiction to determine if social change in the position of women in reality was reflected in fiction.³¹ James Barnett and Rhoda Gruen compared the literary treatment of divorce with actual divorce statistics.³² Bernard Berelson and Patricia Salter examined the distribution of minority Americans in magazine fiction compared to actual demographic

* One can see the similarity between this perspective and the vulgar Marxist perspective on the relationship of "base" and "superstructure".

data.³³

Most of the studies of this type found that literature, by-and-large, did not reflect statistical trends. Consequently, the perspective was modified. Sociologists next turned their attention to the portrayal of values rather than social structure per se. If literature did not reflect "facts", perhaps it reflected significant values or desired values. Alan Swingewood and Diana Laurenson in their book, *The Sociology of Literature*, suggest that:

the task of the sociologist is not simply to discover historical and social reflection (or refraction) in works of literature, but to articulate the nature of values embedded within particular literary works....³⁴

A corollary of this developed which posited that, if literature reflects values, it is also a vehicle for social control: "if literature reflects attitudes and ideals, then it also confirms and strengthens cultural norms, attitudes, and beliefs."³⁵ This insight led to the further realization that sociologists must also examine whose values were being strengthened in this process. Some scholars re-examined social structure and discovered that:

literature provides an objective demonstration of the articulation of traditional values and of emergent values which, in turn, reflect the power structure of society and the challenges to it.³⁶

This more dynamic approach came close to analyzing fiction as a part of the process of hegemony. However, North

American sociologists have been slow to directly adopt the concept of hegemony in their analyses of fiction.*

As the analysis of the relationship between fiction and society has developed, sociologists have gradually become aware of another factor that must be considered which, to some degree, lies outside the immediate field of sociology, and that is literary precedents of fictional forms and content elements. John Cawelti is one cross-discipline scholar who has dealt with this aspect of popular fiction. His work on literary formulas deserves some consideration.

Cawelti defines a literary formula as being "a structure of narrative or dramatic conventions employed in a great number of individual works."³⁷ There are two elements within any literary formula. The first element is cultural stereotypes of things or people. These are "patterns of convention which are usually quite specific to a particular culture and period and do not mean the same outside this specific context."³⁸ The second element is the large plot settings which transcend any specific culture or period. These patterns have almost universal appeal. Cawelti concludes that "formulas are ways in which

* Most of the work using this approach has come out of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham in England. This work has only recently begun to surface in North America.

specific cultural themes and stereotypes become embodied in more universal story archetypes."³⁹

Cawelti maintains that an examination of popular formulas will reveal "both certain basic concerns that dominate a particular culture and also something about the way in which that culture is predisposed to order or deal with those concerns."⁴⁰ He suggests that formula stories are basically conservative in that they reinforce cultural stability. They do so in four ways.

1. Formula stories affirm existing interests and attitudes by presenting an imaginary world that is aligned with these interests and attitudes....
2. Formulas resolve tensions and ambiguities resulting from the conflicting interests of different groups within the culture or from ambiguous attitudes toward particular values....
3. Formulas enable the audience to explore in fantasy the boundary between the permitted and the forbidden and to experience in a carefully controlled way the possibility of stepping across this boundary....
4. Finally, literary formulas assist in the process of assimilating changes in values to traditional imaginative constructs.... literary formulas ease the transition between old and new ways of expressing things and thus contribute to cultural continuity.⁴¹

Cawelti, like the other researchers mentioned, comes close to analysing fiction as part of a hegemonic process which secures the consent of the population for the existing socio-economic system, but he does not use this concept directly. Cawelti's main contributions lies in his recognition of the interplay between cross-cultural and culturally specific aspects of popular formula fiction.

This means that, on the one hand, fiction can never be seen as a simple mirror reflection or an exclusive product of any one culture. However, on the other hand, it means that fiction is never divorced from the specific culture in which it is found either.

The previous work of sociologists and scholars like John Cawelti has considerably advanced our understanding of the relationship between fiction and society. It has pointed out the importance of determining the extent of reflection or refraction of reality in fiction, of examining the values that fiction advocates or denigrates, and of specifying whose interests these values support. For the purpose of this study, however, analysis must be placed more specifically in the context of the first theoretical question about reproduction discussed earlier. This means that the study of fiction must be approached from an even wider perspective. Analysis must include not only the above foci on content, but also an analysis of the production and consumption of that content. Studies of the relationship between fiction and society fall short when they do not include this examination. "Hegemony" is the conceptual tool that can guide this analysis.

The study of hegemony has been most developed in Marxist analyses of fiction which have been criticised

for being simplistic, mechanical, and reductionist.* For instance, even though his work is not antithetical to the Marxist approach, John Cawelti has been critical of it. He calls it a "deterministic" theory and comments that a "weakness of most deterministic approaches is their tendency to reduce literary experience to other forms of behavior."⁴² Such theories "depend on the a priori assumption that a particular social...dynamic is the basic cause of human behavior."⁴³ Let us deal with these criticisms in turn.

First of all, although Marxist analyses have been deemed "simple", in fact, they take into account more factors than most analyses of fiction. As Terry Eagleton notes:

Marxist criticism is not merely a 'sociology of literature', concerned with how novels get published and whether they mention the working class. Its aim is to explain the literary work more fully; and this means a sensitive attention to its forms, styles, and meanings. But it also means grasping those forms, styles, and meanings as the products of a particular history.⁴⁴

This is hardly a simple task.

Secondly, Marxist analyses have been said to be mechanical. This may have been true of early Marxist analyses

* See Albrecht, "The Relationship of Literature and Society", pp. 428-430; Cawelti, *Adventure, Mystery, Romance*, pp. 24-26; Laurenson and Swingewood, *The Sociology of Literature*, pp. 40-77; Harold Mendelsohn, *Mass Entertainment* (College & University Press, 1966), pp. 15-49; and Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, pp. 83-89.

of fiction. For a time, when Marxists conceptualized "superstructure" as being a reflection of the "base", their analyses were necessarily a somewhat mechanical tracing of the fictional correspondence to capitalist forms. However, as has been noted, this was also true of the early non-Marxist sociologists who studied fiction. More recent analysts, both Marxist and non-Marxist, have avoided this weakness. Now, particularly through the contributions of Gramsci, most Marxists are aware of the complexity of the process of hegemony and the implications this has for the study of fiction.

The third criticism is that the Marxist approach has been termed reductionist and deterministic. As Williams phrases it:

According to its opponents, Marxism is a necessarily reductive and determinist kind of theory: no cultural activity is allowed to be real and significant in itself, but is always reduced to a direct or indirect expression of some preceding and controlling economic content, or of a political content determined by an economic position or situation.⁴⁵

This criticism is bound up with the other two and, again, stems from the issue of the relationship between "superstructure" and "base". From the beginning, Marx and Engels fought against this charge, as is evident from the quotation cited on pages 19-20 of this chapter. Later Gramsci went beyond Marx and Engel's disclaimers by developing the

concept of hegemony which was another step away from any tendency to interpret Marxism in reductive terms. Thus, by the middle of the twentieth century, Williams states, the description of Marxism as reductive and determinist was "a caricature".⁴⁶

Another limitation of these criticisms, particularly as phrased by Cawelti, is that the term, "deterministic", is used so loosely that it lacks any meaningful critical content. Cawelti says that Marxism as a deterministic theory depends on the a priori assumption that a particular social dynamic is the basic cause of human behavior, but this is hardly a damning statement. The entire discipline of sociology is based on the assumption that human behaviour is primarily shaped by social dynamics. In these terms, sociology itself is "deterministic". Cawelti attempts to justify this statement in reference to Marxism by specifying a particular social dynamic, (meaning economics) but this is a reduction of Marxism. Even Cawelti eventually recognizes that he must qualify his criticism, although he continues to underestimate the sophistication of the Marxist approach:

I think we cannot deny that stories, like other forms of behavior, are determined in some fashion. Though artistic experience may have an autonomy that present theories of social...determinism are not sufficiently complex to allow for, I presume that, as human behavior in general is more fully understood, we will also be better able to generalize about how social...factors play a role in

the process by which stories and other imaginative forms are created and enjoyed.⁴⁷

This section discussed various conceptualizations of the social significance of popular fiction. Some of the earlier approaches were described and a new formulation, which builds upon the insights of the early research, was proposed. The formulation suggests studying fiction as a part of the process of hegemony, in other words, as a part of the material and ideological reproduction of capitalism. The next section will add the final theoretical component of this study.

The Reproduction of Capitalism Through Romantic Fiction For Women

Before discussing romantic fiction for women, it is first necessary to understand women's position in our society. To do so, women's participation in three areas will be described: public production, private production, and personal life.

Production in capitalism is divided into public and private production. Martin Meissner describes this division:

Public production has concentrated on material goods and impersonal services, in organizations which use human beings as resources, and to ends which are not the immediate and personal purposes and needs of the individuals so used. Private production has concentrated on personal services and goods for immediate consumption in households commonly occupied by

families. In this context it can be said that a population is compelled to meet collectively the following requirements: (1) making a living through labour for wages and salaries, and the production of surpluses for redistribution to the privileged and dependent; and (2) performing unpaid household labour capable of providing for the personal needs of those who perform it, and producing a surplus for the personal needs of those household members who do not.⁴⁸

This arrangement has produced a division of labour, a sexual division of labour, which is evident in both the home and the work-place, and which has proven to be resistant to basic change. There has been one change in recent years, however, and that is the extent of women's labour force participation. Their participation rate has more than doubled since 1941 and women now make up almost 40 per cent of the labour force.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, their increased participation rate has not essentially changed their position in the economy. They are still isolated in lower status, low paid jobs which are often extensions of their work in the home. Women's occupations are predominantly low skilled and offer few opportunities for advancement. Women are less frequently members of unions and have less job security and benefits than men have in the labour force. Women face a higher chance of unemployment than men since they are typically "last hired, first fired".

Women's position in the paid labour force is closely linked to women's position in the home. Although many married women are now working in the labour force, they

are still generally responsible for the work in the home as well. Therefore, their work and work patterns are tied to their domestic duties. These duties often prevent women from participating continuously or fully in the labour force. Because of this, women's work has been considered to be marginal to both women and the economy. This argument has been disputed and it has been pointed out that, in fact, women are vital to capitalism for a number of reasons.⁵⁰ First of all, they are economical. Women work for lower wages which means more surplus value of labour or profit, which is a key goal of corporate structures. Secondly, they constitute a valuable reserve labour force which can be drawn upon when there is a need for their labour and laid off when there is not a need. Thirdly, because of these factors, they can be used as a check on the militancy of other workers. Finally, because of their "marginality" and their vulnerability, they can often be induced to work at unpleasant, menial jobs that otherwise might go unfilled. Therefore, women play an important role in public production.

Private production is no less important to the maintenance of society than is public production. Eli Zaretsky maintains that:

The wage labour system...is sustained by the socially necessary but private labour of housewives and mothers. Child-rearing, cleaning, laundry, the maintenance of

property, the preparation of food, daily health care, reproduction, etc. constitute a perpetual cycle of labour necessary to maintain life in this society.⁵¹

However, according to Margaret Benston, this socially necessary work is often not regarded to be work at all because the women workers are not directly paid for their labour.⁵² Money is a key measure of value in our socio-economic system. Consequently unpaid labour and the people who perform it are regarded as valueless. This contributes to women's low status and dependent position in our society.

Because they are wageless, housewives are dependent upon a wage labourer, their husband. Even if the housewives are also participating in the labour force, the wages are so low in typical female occupations that they cannot support themselves and a family alone. Thus, they provide services in exchange for the promise or obligation of the husband to completely or partially take care of them. They are not paid directly by capitalists but are indirectly dependent upon them through the dependency of their husbands. This system proves beneficial to capitalism in two ways.

Benston elaborates:

The need to keep women in the home arises from two aspects of the present system. First, the amount of unpaid labour performed by women is very large and profitable to those who own the means of production. To pay women for their work, even at minimum wage scales, would imply a massive redistribution of wealth. At present, the support of a family is hidden tax on the wage earner--his wage buys the labour power of two people. And second,

there is the problem of whether the economy can expand enough to put all women to work as a part of the normally employed labor force.⁵³

Women's affiliation with the home, then provides socially necessary labour both within the home and in the labour force at minimum cost.

Another major function of women in the home is consumption. The family is a key unit of consumption and women do much of the purchasing for the family. One indication of this is how frequently women go shopping. Helena Lopata's study of American housewives revealed that 25 per cent of her sample went to a store daily or at least three times a week and another 60 per cent went at least once or twice a week.⁵⁴ Anne Oakley's study of British housewives showed that 65 per cent of her sample went shopping six times a week and no housewife went shopping only once a week.⁵⁵ Purchasing goods for consumption is a regular part of women's everyday lives.

The demand for goods and services created by millions of family units is functional for corporate structures as it stimulates growth and bolsters profits. In addition, consumption may reconcile men and women to the system that produces the goods, for consumption is often gratifying to wage earners and housewives. Thus, both Lopata and Oakley indicate that women consider shopping to be one of the more pleasurable tasks associated with being a

housewife. In addition, Lopata reports that these pleasures are not limited to women for shopping is the area of the greatest amount of housekeeping help from husbands.⁵⁶

The split between private and public production is closely related to another split which has enormous consequences for women and their role in the family. Eli Zaretsky describes this second split:

So long as the family was a productive unit based upon private property, its members understood their domestic life and 'personal' relations to be rooted in their mutual labour. Since the rise of industry, however, proletarianization separated most people (or families) from the ownership of productive property. As a result 'work' and 'life' were separated; proletarianization split off the outer world of alienated labour from an inner world of personal feeling. Just as capitalist development gave rise to the idea of the family as a separate realm from the economy, so it created a 'separate' sphere of personal life, seemingly divorced from the mode of production.⁵⁷

Zaretsky argues that people have learned to look to their personal relationships and consumer goods for satisfaction rather than to look for meaning and fulfillment in their work. Personal relationships and the family have come to be seen as a refuge from the harsh realities of life. It is in this context that the importance of romantic love and romance becomes evident.

Although consumption is satisfying to individuals in our society as just indicated, people also want more than accumulation of material goods. Greenfield comments:

The content of this 'more than' category, however, invariably is left unspecified. The romantic love complex subsumes many of the possibilities.... Culminating the love affair with marriage thus promises the values (or rewards) of affection, companionship, care, emotional security--in a society in which most activities are highly anxiety-provoking--and general happiness.⁵⁸

Love and marriage, therefore, ease the tensions and frustrations which have been generated by a society in which economic activities take precedence over almost all other concerns.* Although both men and women need and experience this release, they are not equally involved in providing it within a relationship. It is women who are primarily responsible for tension-managment. Jessie Bernard, Shulamith Firestone, Margaret Adams, and Dorothy Smith, among others, have pointed out the importance of this in understanding women's role in society.⁵⁹ The consensus is that women, through their emotional support of others, contribute to the maintenance of society. A general example which focuses on women's contribution to the maintenance of the labour force can illustrate this. Women bear and rear the children who will eventually become the labour force (a task which drastically affects their own

* Ironically, love and marriage also tie individuals into the very economic system that produces the tensions they sought to escape in marriage. Heads of households now have to support not only themselves but also their dependents. This is the beauty of the romantic love complex, according to Greenfield. It is totally functional to the on-going system.

labour force participation). However, it is not enough that there are bodies available to fill occupational slots. People must also be mentally and emotionally equipped to work. As mothers, women socialize their children to fit the corporate mode.⁶⁰ As wives, women provide physical comforts and attempt to ease the tensions of their husbands to enable them to return to the occupational world.*

One can see that women play a key role in the maintenance of capitalism through their public production, private production, and tension-management in personal life. It is equally important to understand how the capitalist system reproduces this sex role structure and activity. It does so through a number of popularly held legitimating assumptions and beliefs which are regarded to be "common sense".

Biological differences between women and men in terms of size, hormones, reproductive capacities, strength and other characteristics are considered to be important and are emphasized.** It is believed that these biological

* Dorothy Smith notes that this attempt by women is rarely very successful. Nevertheless, the expectations are there; the responsibility is theirs.

** Because of the influence of these beliefs, most texts on women devote a portion of their contents to analyzing them. For example, Armstrong, *The Double Ghetto*, pp. 92-110; Germaine Greer, *The Female Eunich* (Paladin, 1970), pp. 25-57; Clarice Stasz Stoll, *Female and Male* (Wm. C. Brown Company Publishers, 1974), pp. 13-34; Carol Tavris

differences lead to personality and social differences which are inevitable because they are rooted in biology. Related to these fixed biological differences are inherent instincts. It is commonly believed that men and women are heir to different and specific instincts as well as physiologies. Women are generally thought to be driven by a maternal instinct, the need to bear and raise children or at least to be generally nurturant. They are also believed to have a nesting instinct, the need to set up house and to care for it. Men, on the other hand, are believed to have an instinct to protect and provide for their mates and offspring. There is one instinct that is attributed to both sexes and that is a heterosexual mating instinct. It is believed that it is natural for all men and women to marry and have children. Generally, however, men and women are seen as being very different physically and instinctually. These differences are also believed to be evident in the personalities of women and men. Women are considered to be passive, emotional, weak, and compassionate. Men, in contrast, are aggressive,

and Carole Offir, *The Longest War* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977), pp. 93-130; Laura Richardson Walum, *The Dynamics of Sex and Gender* (Rand McNally College Publishing Company, 1977), pp. 71-89; and Shirley Weitz, *Sex Roles* (Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 10-58. There may be less emphasis now on this ideological justification of women's subordination than has been previously the case.

achieving, analytic, and independent.

The sex roles that emerge from these differences are held to be universal, divinely inspired, biologically fixed, and functional for society. They mesh together and harmoniously achieve a workable social system. As one representative of this position puts it:

What is the Role of Man? It is to be the guide, protector, and provider for his wife and children. This role is not merely a result of custom or tradition but is of divine origin.... Women were given a different assignment--that of wife, mother, and homemaker. The masculine and feminine roles are complimentary to each other.⁶¹

The sexual division of labour in the home is considered to be natural and good. An extension of this is that, if women have to work for financial reasons, they should restrict themselves to feminine occupations which require home-related skills and knowledge. This view, therefore, legitimates 1) the segregation of women in public production, 2) the dominance of women in private production, and 3) the allegation of responsibility to women for emotional support and personal life. These points will be elaborated.

First of all, this view supports inequality and excusion in the sphere of public production. Employers use biological, psychological, and social reasons to justify relegating women to unpleasant, low paid, traditionally female jobs.⁶² They argue primarily that women are not

committed to their occupations outside the home because their main commitment is to their homes and family. Therefore, the argument continues, they have a high turn-over because they are always leaving to have children or to follow their husbands when they are transferred in the course of their occupations. They have high absentee rates because they are always taking time off to care for sick children. Perhaps as a result of these prior, more important commitments or because of their "natures", employers also maintain that women do not want jobs with more responsibility. They add that women cannot physically take on some of the higher paying jobs which require either strength or steady nerves. In fact, most of these contentions are not substantiated by data,⁶³ but this does not seem to daunt supporters of this view. Therefore, the legitimation often used for women's subordinate position in public production is that they are incapable of or disinclined to better their position.

Secondly, this view supports sex role differentiation and inequality in the sphere of private production. Women are deemed more suitable for work in the home because of their maternal and nesting instincts. In addition, partly because women's work is unpaid and therefore considered to be relatively valueless and partly because of existence of "modern conveniences", it is assumed that

women do not spend much time on household care. As a result, it is believed that women have the "free time" necessary for ardent and meticulous consumption. Again this is not substantiated by data. Research results indicate that from 50 to at least 80 hours per week are spent on housework by fulltime housewives.⁶⁴ These figures include some shopping. If one omits the shopping which, according to a study by Joann Vanek takes up 7-10 hours per week,⁶⁵ housewives are still putting in at least a 40 hour week. This fact is usually overlooked, however.

Finally, this view reinforces the maintenance role that women in the family perform. Women are seen as being singularly well suited for making personal life worthwhile as a substitute for other kinds of social satisfactions which are lacking in our society. This is because of their generalized maternal instinct or ability which enables women to be supportive of others.*

So far we have seen that women's positions in our society are an essential part of capitalism. It has also been argued that these positions are reproduced by structural mechanisms and legitimating beliefs in irrevocable,

* If there is any change in this ideology, it is a move away from saying women are better in these roles by nature to saying women are better in these roles by nurture. In other words, they have been socialized to do them. This alteration does not change the overall belief that women are better suited to perform these tasks.

complementary physical and psychological differences between men and women. Now it only remains to examine how popular romantic fiction for women contributes to the reproduction of women's position in our society.

The depiction of women in popular culture, which includes romantic fiction, has received considerable attention from diverse academic and journalistic sources. Gaye Tuchman, in a recent review essay on women's depiction by mass media summarized the predominant conclusions reached by most investigators. "The descriptive facts seem straightforward: Since 1954, there has been relatively little change in the presentation of women according to the available statistical indicators."⁶⁶

These studies have strongly documented this basic lack of change.⁶⁷ Studies of romantic fiction are of particular interest and they, too, reveal the persistence of traditional sex roles in fictional form.* Kathryn

* Studies of romantic fiction have focused on sentimental novels, gothic novels, mass periodical fiction, and love comics. See, for example: Cornelia Butler Flora, "The Passive Female: Her Comparative Image by Class and Culture in Women's Magazine Fiction", *Journal of Marriage and the Family* XXXIII (August, 1971), pp. 435-444; Patricke Johns-Heine and Hans H. Gerth, "Values in Mass Periodical Fiction, 1921-1940", *Public Opinion Quarterly* XIII (Spring, 1949), pp. 105-113; Edward Ifkovic, "The Garden of the Lord: Gene Stratton-Porter", *Journal of Popular Culture* VIII (Spring, 1975), pp. 757-766; Margaret B. Lefkowitz, "The Women's Magazine Short-Story Heroine in 1957 and 1967", in Constantina Safilios-Rothchild, ed., *Toward a Sociology of Women* (Xerox College Publishing, 1972), pp. 37-40;

Weibel, one of the scholars studying images of women, remarks that "fiction written for women over the past two and a half centuries has communicated to its readers a set of common images and values relatively unaffected by the passage of time."⁶⁸ These studies are valuable but limited. Unfortunately, the operative word in Tuchman's summary of these studies is "descriptive". Most of them have been atheoretical and narrowly conceived. Researchers have been satisfied with describing content. They have not addressed themselves to the question of why the traditional portrayals of women have persisted or else they explain this persistence in simplistic terms. For example, Tuchman comments that one of the explanations that has been offered is "the media offer a deleterious portrait of women because few women hold positions of responsibility within the media."⁶⁹ Tuchman rightfully dismisses this and suggests instead that "sexism...is best understood as an institutional, not a personal phenomenon."⁷⁰

Elizabeth MacAndrew and Susan Gorsky, "Why Do they Faint and Die?", *Journal of Popular Culture* VIII (Spring, 1975), pp. 735-745; Maureen Moore, *Romantic Love, Ecstasy, and Deprivation*, M.A. Thesis, University of British Columbia, 1973; Kay Mussell, "Beautiful and Damned", *Journal of Popular Culture* IX (Summer, 1975), pp. 84-89; Philippe Perebinosoff, "What Does a Kiss Mean?", *Journal of Popular Culture* VIII (Spring, 1975), pp. 825-835; Joanna Russ, "Somebody's Trying to Kill Me and I Think It's My Husband," *Journal of Popular Culture* VI (Spring, 1973), pp. 666-691.

Studying sexism in fiction at the institutional level means not just describing the content of the media, but also relating it to the socio-economic context in which it is produced and consumed. Some of the better previous studies, particularly research done on changes in media portrayals over time, have done this to some extent. For example, Betty Friedan has shown that the portrayal of women and work changed in women's magazine fiction as the need of women in the labour force changed. This was particularly obvious during the Second World War. When women were needed, fiction portrayed women happily and usefully working in the labour force, but when women were no longer needed, the emphasis in the fiction switched back to women finding fulfillment exclusively in love relationships.⁷¹

However, even Friedan's study offers only a beginning of analysis for her main explanation for the changes in images of women focuses on men, not on social structure. "The old image of the spirited career girl was largely created by writers and editors who were women.... The new image of woman as housewife-mother has been largely created by writers and editors who are men."⁷² Once she makes a passing reference to the fact that editors' decisions about what to publish were based on what they thought would appeal to women and therefore sell, but she does not elaborate.⁷³ Yet this is one of the most promising areas

of investigation. How do institutional constraints affect the portrayal of women in popular fiction? What is the relationship between the corporate producer of fiction and the content of that fiction? How do corporate policies and editorial policies fit together? These questions have been neglected and must be addressed for a broader understanding of why women are portrayed as they are and why there is little change in this area.

Another factor that studies have usually omitted from direct scrutiny is the consumer of such fiction. Scholars may attribute characteristics and reactions to readers, but there are very few studies which have included any research on consumers. No one seems to have bothered to ask readers who they are, what they read, or why they read what they do. This is obviously another major omission.

A holistic approach would analyze the corporate producer of the media product and would discuss how its economic interests shape the product. Furthermore, it would go beyond the immediate corporate producer to locate the corporation itself in a larger socio-economic context. It would also focus on consumers to completely understand the production-consumption cycle. To summarize, the distinguishing features of this approach would be:

- its emphasis on viewing the mass media and their audience within the structure of society as a whole.
- It pays central attention to the institutions of the media, to the factors which influence the production of media materials, and to the linkages

between the media and the dominant groups in society. Similarly, it views the behaviour of the audience in relation to the media as shaped by the same social structural factors which also determine the structure and contents of the media.⁷⁴

This approach best enables one to examine the hegemonic role of popular romantic fiction for women, and is the one adopted in this study.

Methodology

As stated initially, my study is of Harlequin Enterprises, Harlequin Romances, and Harlequin readers. I chose to concentrate on the Harlequin phenomena for several reasons. First of all, I was interested in romantic fiction both because it is a fictional form read by women and because it has been pointed out to be a significant form of ideology. Studying romantic fiction, however, would cover a vast range of material so I decided to limit my study to one series of romantic fiction. Harlequin Romances were chosen because they are very popular. They are read by millions of women throughout the world. In addition, since the Harlequins are produced in regular, sizeable quantities, the books are easily available. A second factor was that Harlequin Romances are produced by one company, Harlequin Enterprises. Narrowing the study to one series produced by one company enabled me to do an in-depth analysis of a corporate producer, a focus that has been omitted in previous studies. In addition, Harlequin

Enterprises is a highly successful and innovative leader in its field and well worth studying. Finally, Harlequin readers are fairly readily identifiable because Harlequin Romances are distributed and displayed by the company's name, rather than by scattered genres and authors. This enabled me to contact and talk to readers. I could, therefore, attempt to redress the omission of studies of readers in previous studies.

I have used a number of specific methodologies appropriate for the different aspects of my study. Each of these methods will be discussed in the individual chapters in which they have been used. In order to study Harlequin Enterprises, which is analyzed in Chapter II, I did archival research and interviewed company officials. I did a content analysis of a random sample of fifty Harlequin Romances in order to study the ideological images and themes in the books. This analysis is given in Chapters III and IV. Finally, I interviewed twenty-four readers to explore why women read Harlequins, what they like about them, and how the books fit into the women's lives. This material is analyzed in Chapter V.

To conclude, the intent of this study is to demonstrate that Harlequin Enterprises and Harlequin Romances are a part of the general process of hegemony. It will do this by analyzing how they maintain and legitimize sex

role structure, corporate structure (the forces of production) and class structure (the relations of production) which have been discussed in this chapter as essential aspects of capitalism which must be reproduced. Furthermore, the study intends to demonstrate that women's consumption of Harlequins is best understood as being a part of this same process of hegemony. It will do this by analyzing how women's consumption of Harlequins is shaped by the structure of their lives, by Harlequin Enterprises and by Harlequin Romances.

This study builds upon the insights of earlier theory and research and attempts to avoid some of its limitations which have been discussed. However, in the avoidance of these limitations, the study opens itself up to others, and these should be noted. First, this is a case study of a company and its romance publications and although there is evidence that the company and its romances are typical of the industry and the genre, they also have their unique features. One must be careful, therefore, about generalizing beyond this specific case without taking these features into consideration. Secondly, hegemony is a much broader process than is studied here. The production of ideology in romantic fiction is obviously only one small aspect of hegemony and not even the most important, thus this study does not claim to fully reveal

the complexities of hegemony. Thirdly, the study emphasized maintenance of the social system, not social change. This emphasis is not unwarranted by the data (Harlequin Romances, for example, have changed very little over the last 15 years), but it is a perspective that may overlook aspects of change within and challenge to the on-going system. These limitations, however, are balanced out by the study's contributions.

CHAPTER II

HARLEQUIN ENTERPRISES LIMITED

In 1975 Harlequin Books sold, if stacked one on top of the other, would reach 1,396 times the height of Mount Everest! If all the words were laid end to end, they would pave an astral path which would reach the distance from earth to beyond Mars!

Harlequin publicity material

We're going gang busters.... The women love us.
The dealers love us. We love ourselves.

Richard Bellringer
Vice-president, Harlequin

Introduction

This chapter shows how Harlequin Enterprises is shaped by and reinforces corporate, class, and sex role structures. Harlequin Enterprises helps reproduce the legitimations of these structures crucial to the maintenance of the capitalist system and the prevailing structure of inequality. The relationship between Harlequin Enterprises and each of these structures will be the subject of this chapter. Specifically, Harlequin's position in the corporate world, its reproduction of corporate structure through its growth process, and its ideological justifications of this structure and process will be analyzed. The class position of its board of directors will be discussed and placed within the context of class structure in our society. Finally, women's positions in Harlequin Enterprises

will be examined and compared to the position of women in our society. Harlequin Enterprises' role in perpetuating sex role structure will be analyzed.

Methodology

Information about the company and its board of directors was obtained from a number of sources. First of all, sources of information independent of the company were utilized. These included governmental publications, trade journals and indexes, biographical reference works, and general periodicals. Secondly, information obtained directly from Harlequin Enterprises was utilized. This material included press releases, advertising copy, and annual reports. In addition, I conducted open ended interviews with Fred Kerner, Director of Publishing, and David Sanderson, Director of Retail Sales and Marketing.*

These sources yielded considerable information about the ownership and operations of the company. Corporate research, however, is subject to limitations, given the nature of data available. First of all, some important information is simply not available. This is particularly true of ownership data. It is relatively easy to obtain

* I also spoke more informally with Allan Stormont and Pam Galsworthy in Publicity Relations at Harlequin Enterprises, and with Judith Burgess who is the daughter of the original owners of Harlequin Enterprises and sister to the present chairman of the board.

information on the corporate ownership of corporations but information on the individual holdings of corporate stock is more difficult to trace. One can arrive at estimates based on sound indirect evidence, but there is an element of speculation about such estimates that remains. Secondly, information obtained from a company is undoubtedly affected by the company's self-interest in presenting itself in the most favorable manner possible. Annual reports, for example, are glossy salesmanship efforts directed towards shareholders or potential shareholders. One must be cautious in accepting at face value all the information that a company and its publicity relations department releases. Thirdly, periodical reports about a company are often based, in large part, upon information they have received from the company. There may be straight reporting rather than analysis in these cases so, again, one has to be cautious about uncritical acceptance of these sources. Fourthly, corporations have competitors. When they release information, they must protect their operations from other corporations that might benefit from certain kinds of information, for example, consumer research results. Therefore, there is another barrier set up against open access to corporate information. Finally, some sources on corporations are published infrequently and the information they contain may be dated. All of these problems involved

in doing corporate research were encountered in this study. In spite of them, there is a great deal one can say about Harlequin Enterprises.

Corporate Structure

Harlequin Enterprises is one of the few financially viable Canadian publishers and as such, has been the subject of attention and acclaim. A federal governmental study of book publishing in Canada, for example, focused favourably on Harlequin and advised other publishers to be as marketing conscious and as business-like as Harlequin.¹ Harlequin's fellow Canadian publishers, however, do not accept the comparison:

for the Canadian publishers who bring out books by Mordecai Richler or Robertson Davies or Hugh Hood, Harlequin Books is an interesting curiosity, nothing more. They sell garbage, and they sell it effectively, but the idea that one of our serious publishers might actually emulate Harlequin is--in the eyes of the publishing gents--altogether outlandish.²

Their protestations are not without substance. Harlequin has special advantages which allow them to market, advertise, and distribute their books with relative ease. Harlequin sells a brand name, a formula, while other publishers must sell different types of fiction and non-fiction as well as new and different writers with different styles and appeal.

In fact, instead of being classified as a publishing firm, Harlequin is more appropriately classified as part of a large, dominant media complex, that of Torstar Limited, (its owner), and its subsidiaries. In studies of dominant Canadian media, the Torstar group is invariably included because of its size and scope. It ranks 108th of the top 200 industrials ranked by sales for 1976-77, moving up from 136th the previous year. It is 110th in terms of its assets, 82nd in terms of net income.³

Torstar-Harlequin encompasses daily newspapers (accounting for 8.4 per cent of total daily Canadian circulation⁴), weekly newspapers, fiction (accounting for nearly 25 per cent of all Canadian paperbacks sold and 10-12 per cent in the United States⁵), non-fiction, educational materials, television programming and movie production. Although Canadian based, it is an international organization and its importance is more accurately measured by the competitive position it has achieved in the North American context. The company itself emphasizes this and David Sanderson, speaking for Harlequin, states that "We tend to think of North America as being borderless" and "the border doesn't really exist for us." Harlequin's marketing performance has been observed by other North American corporations who have tried to emulate its success. For example, one major publisher, Avon Books, started a romance

series which has become so popular that "the new genre now dominates Avon's original publishing program."⁶ Six other publishers have also initiated new romance series: Fawcett Publications with Hamilton House, Bantam Book with Red Rose, Prestige Books with Valentine, Dell Publishing Company with Candlelight, New American Library with Rainbow, and Ace Books with Regency Romances.⁷

Torstar-Harlequin is thoroughly integrated into the international and national media world. Within Canada, Torstar has joint ownership ventures with Southam Press and an interlocking directorate with FP Publications. Internationally, Harlequin has joint ownership ventures with New American Library in the United States, a joint ownership venture with Axel Springer Verlag in Germany, and a joint ownership company which Harlequin controls in Switzerland.

The Torstar group is an expanding complex of some importance in Canada and internationally; nevertheless it is still relatively small compared to some of its indigenous and international competition. On its own home ground, for example, the Desmarais-Power Corporation Group has considerable depth and breadth. Power Corporation by itself is ranked 90th by sales, 40th by assets.⁸ The group together dominates the Quebec media, owning daily newspapers, weekly newspapers, magazines, radio stations, and television stations. Power Corporation also has

extensive holdings in other sectors of the economy and controls or has a direct or indirect interest in Canada Steamship Lines, Imperial Life Assurance, Investors Group, Montreal Trust, Great West Life Assurance, Consolidated Bathurst, Dominion Glass, Union Acceptact Corporation and Argus Corporation, which is another extensive media complex in its own right.⁹

Torstar is also led in Canada by Southam Press (number 78th ranked by sales, 92nd by assets), Thomson Newspapers (number 96th by sales, 69th by assets) and FP Publications (106th by sales, 99th by assets).¹⁰ These three, again, are essentially media corporations and seem relatively narrow in scope compared to a widespread giant like Power Corporation in Canada, or an international competitor, Reed International Ltd.

Reed International publishes, among seventy other consumer magazines, *Woman's Weekly*, a mini-paperback series of romances which dominates that particular market and with which Harlequin was unable to compete. British based, Reed's four hundred subsidiaries extend into forty-four countries, including Canada.¹¹ Reed is not only a book, magazine, and newspaper publisher, but also an important international industrial firm, producing pulp and paper, wall coverings, furniture, draperies, carpets, paint, stationery, etc. Reed's Canadian subsidiary alone has assets of \$400 million, compared to Torstar's \$128 million.¹²

Torstar-Harlequin, compared to many corporations, is powerful and important. By and large, it is not the most significant corporate group; however, its relatively large size and powerfulness is the most important characteristic to consider.

Harlequin, in particular, has made the transition from a small, family owned, regional business to a diversified, multinational corporation. Harlequin Enterprises Ltd. was incorporated in 1949 in Winnipeg as Harlequin Books Ltd.¹³ In 1958, it was sold to Richard and Mary Bonnycastle who owned the corporation for another ten years before they converted it from a private to a public corporation, changing the name to Harlequin Enterprises Ltd., and moving it to Toronto.¹⁴ The Bonnycastles remained in control until 1976 when Toronto Star, (now Torstar Corporation Ltd.), bought controlling interest in Harlequin for \$22,581,000 plus 555,900 class B shares of Torstar.¹⁵ Torstar has a claim on 66.7 per cent of the outstanding shares of Harlequin and by May of 1979 owned 58.7 per cent of that company.¹⁶ Richard Bonnycastle, the son of the former Richard Bonnycastle who originally bought Harlequin, is still chairman of the board of directors but Harlequin ~~is~~ no longer a family corporation.

Harlequin Enterprises has a twelve man board, the composition of which is a good reflection of the company's

ownership and interests. The board is composed of an ownership core, a related expertise and connection group, and an internal upper management representative.*

Within the ownership core, William Dimma and Beland Honderich are key, being the representatives or owners of the controlling stock holder-Torstar Corporation. Of these two, Honderich is both an owner and representative of Torstar. He is chief executive officer, chairman, and publisher of Torstar, as well as being a principal shareholder, owning 13.4 per cent of the corporation.¹⁷ Dimma is president of Torstar and has widespread social connections but he does not have the obvious ownership base that Honderich has. Nevertheless, on the Harlequin board he would have considerable power due to his Torstar position. Dimma shares a connection with Woods, Gordon, & Co. with Walter Gordon, another Torstar director whose family founded Woods, Gordon. (William Willson, Harlequin's vice-president, was also with Woods, Gordon before he moved to Harlequin. A common link exists in this instance between the Torstar

* After my research was completed and analyzed, Harlequin Enterprises added two more members to the board of directors. William Willson, vice-president of Harlequin Enterprises, was promoted to executive vice-president and added to the board. He would be an internal upper management representative. In addition, J. Murray Cockburn, a Torstar executive, joined the board. He would be a part of the ownership or representative of ownership core.

board, the Harlequin board, and Harlequin management.)

The next two of significance are members of the Bonnycastle family. Laurence Bonnycastle is the brother of the Richard who founded Harlequin and uncle to the present Richard Bonnycastle. Besides his family link, he has corporate connections with several Torstar board members. He is vice chairman of Canadian Corporate Management Ltd. Alexander MacIntosh and Walter Gordon, both Torstar directors, are also on Canadian Corporate Management's board, being director and chairman respectively. In addition, Laurence Bonnycastle was formerly vice-president with John Labatt Ltd., of which MacIntosh is a director. Richard Bonnycastle is the chairman of Harlequin and sits on the Torstar board of directors. The Bonnycastles probably retained a sizeable minority holding in Harlequin through the exchange of shares during the takeover and are of importance on the Harlequin board as both owners and links to Torstar.

The final pair in the central core of Harlequin's board are John and Alan Boon, chairman and editor, respectively, of Mills & Boon, a principal subsidiary of Harlequin's. When Harlequin acquired Mills & Boon, there was very likely an exchange of shares as well as a cash settlement and the Boons are probably also minority block shareholders.

This six man core will have the most decisive say

within the board of directors and are on the board because of their ownership or representation of ownership.

The related expertise and connection group within the board are of scattered background and interests-- Laurence Bell, retired partner of Richardson Securities; Sir John Brown, publisher with Oxford University Press in London, England; George Gardiner, president of Gardiner, Watson, Ltd., a stock brokerage firm; Joseph Kelnberger, Jr., senior vice-president with Bristol-Myers Products in the United States; and Daniel Sprague, chairman of James B. Carter Ltd. of Winnipeg, a manufacturer of auto accessories and parts. Disparate as these men appear to be, a little probing reveals their connections to Harlequin, Torstar, and to each other.

Laurence Bell, although now retired, was a partner of Richardson Securities. When Harlequin went public in 1969, the underwriter was Richardson Securities. In addition, Richard Bonnycastle was with Richardson Securities from 1963-68.

Sir John Brown shares an interest in publishing. In background experience and connections, he overlaps with both the Boons and the Bonnycastles. For example, John Boon served as president of the British Publishers Association from 1961-63, Brown from 1963-65. Both are members of the British Council. Boon has carried out overseas

missions for the British Council in Southeast Asia where Brown has business connections. They are both directors for Book Tokens Ltd. In terms of the Bonnycastles, all three of the original Bonnycastle sons--Charles, Laurence, and Richard--were educated at Oxford University, as was Brown, who is also a Professorial Fellow at Oxford.

George Gardiner, a stock broker, has a valuable connection to another major media complex-FP Publications. Gardiner and Richard Bonnycastle have a social club in common. Bonnycastle is steward of the Jockey Club of Canada and Gardiner is vice-president and director of the Ontario Jockey Club. Gardiner shares a closer club connection with William Dimma through membership in the Granite Club. In addition, he and Dimma both attended Harvard Business School.

Daniel Sprague has both corporate and personal connections. He is on the advisory board of Montreal Trust Co., and Harlequin's registrar and transfer agent is Montreal Trust, but his most important link is his western Canada origins. The Bonnycastles are originally from Winnipeg; Sprague still is. Sprague is more contemporary with the late Richard Bonnycastle. They both served as directors of Stovel-Advocate Press, were chairman of Greater Winnipeg Corporation, and had memberships in the Manitoba, St. Charles Country, and Winnipeg Winter Clubs.

The present Richard Bonnycastle has retained membership in the Manitoba and St. Charles Clubs.

Joseph Kelnberger Jr.'s position on the board is more difficult to trace. I could find little information on him because he is senior management and not on the board of directors of Bristol-Myers. He is probably on Harlequin's board because of his connection with Bristol-Myers, a large American company specializing in toiletries and household cleaning products with some food products and some pharmaceuticals. This company has a massive marketing campaign; think of the advertising done for cosmetics and hair care, such as, Clairol, a Bristol-Myers product. Its marketing and advertising campaign, as well as Harlequin's, is carefully researched, tested, and geared towards women. The company's consumer profiles closely parallel Harlequin's readers' profiles. Harlequin has already done one promotional venture with Kimberly-Clark, another similar corporation. In addition, Bristol-Myers and Kelnberger are American, Harlequin's main expanding market. One may surmise that Klenberger's expertise and connections are in line with Harlequin's interests.

Thus, the related expertise and connection groups are not as an eclectic grouping as first appeared. The individuals are linked by both corporate and social connections, and their connections are useful both to the

individuals and to Harlequin.

The remaining member of the board is W. Laurence Heisey, president of Harlequin. His primary corporate connections are with Harlequin subsidiaries and generally Heisey would be a management spokesman to the board of directors and would relay corporate policy established by the board back to the management.

The board of directors of Harlequin, like other corporate boards, represents the interests of the owners. Ultimate control rests with this board, but Harlequin's day to day operations are carried out by management.

Sanderson expressed it this way:

Any board of directors...it's essentially a formality. Management is either doing a good job or they're not. If they're not, generally you change management. You don't try to do it yourself--just get someone who can. Generally, that's the way it's done.

In the case of Harlequin, Richard Bonnycastle in 1971, as controlling stockholder and chairman of the board, brought in his management team composed of W. Laurence Heisey as president, a Torontonion who had received his education at Harvard Business School and who had just spent thirteen years with Proctor & Gamble; Richard Bellringer as vice-president, who was with Coles Book Stores, a mass market chain; and William Willson as vice-president and secretary, who was with Woods, Gordon.

'None of the three of us came from the publishing world,' recalls Bellringer, 'but we recognized that we had a tiger by the tail. All we had to do was squeeze that tail and hope by heck it would jump in the right direction.'¹⁸

Bonnycastle obviously directed the development of the company by bringing in non-publishing marketing people. Equally obvious is the fact Harlequin management is doing a good job. They have consistently made substantial and increasing profits. Consequently they probably have a fair amount of autonomy with little direct board of directors' supervision.

This same relationship exists between Harlequin and its owner, Torstar. Sanderson stated that one never saw Torstar people around Harlequin's office, and that Harlequin's operations are completely independent. This is not surprising as there is no reason for Torstar's or even Harlequin's board of directors' interference into management as long as the management is so successful.

This is true not only of management's relationship to the board and Harlequin's relationship to Torstar, but also of Harlequin's relationship with its own subsidiaries. Foreign operations report periodically to Harlequin's overseas director and must have approval for major new expenditures or programs, but otherwise the subsidiaries are relatively independent.

Nevertheless, all operations in Harlequin Enterprises

work within the boundaries of the corporate goals set up by the board of directors. These are as follows:

Harlequin's corporate objectives are to continue to increase the development of English-language markets for romantic fiction, to develop and expand publishing activities in other languages, and to acquire other businesses in related areas that will capitalize on the Company's publishing, marketing, or distribution skills.... We have achieved important growth in all markets in which we operate, and we have begun the development of a dynamic international organization.¹⁹

A corporate goal, therefore, is profitable growth and Harlequin, as a typical corporation, is going through the various stages of growth: diversification, horizontal integration, and vertical integration.

First of all, Harlequin has undergone a continual process of expansion through diversification. In its first year of operations, Harlequin Books Ltd. published only twenty-five titles, a mixture of romance, westerns, mysteries, thrillers, and non-fiction. In contrast to the clean and respectable image that Harlequins have now, many of the first selections were openly lurid and sensational, for example, *Lady, That's My Skull*, number 91 by Carl Shannon, *The Lady Was a Tramp*, number 140 by Harry Whillington, and *Twelve Chinks and a Woman*, number 160 by James Hadley Chase.²⁰ Harlequin Books originally published a number of authors who have since gained fame in their respective fields--Al Cody (westerns), Agatha Christie (mysteries), Jean Plaidy who is better known

as Victoria Holt (romances), James Hadley Chase (mysteries), and even W. Somerset Maugham.

When Harlequin Books was sold to the Bonnycastles, however, Mrs. Mary Bonnycastle became the editor and started choosing more romances which she considered to be "fiction 'of good taste'".²¹ Harlequin began importing romances for distribution from Mills & Boon Limited, a British publishing firm, in 1958 and by 1964, the switch in fiction had been made to an exclusively Mills & Boon offering.²²

When Harlequin Books Ltd. was re-named Harlequin Enterprises Ltd., a significant change took place. Within two years Harlequin began a program of diversification which has continued ever since. In 1971, Harlequin combined its Canadian non-fiction, educational publishing subsidiaries, Jack Hood Supplies Company and Nor-Ed Supplies, into Scholar's Choice Ltd.²³ In addition, a new company, Learning Concepts Ltd., was formed and in 1974, Harlequin added Harry Smith & Sons of Vancouver, an educational books distributor.²⁴ Together, these companies form the learning materials division of Harlequin and are major suppliers of Canadian multi-media educational materials like Canadian Studies and metric learning kits.

Also in 1971, Harlequin acquired ownership of Mills & Boon.²⁵ By this time, Mills & Boon was a well established company. It had published its first romance in 1909 and

had grown into an important publisher and distributor of romances, as well as a publisher of general non-fiction and educational books. Shortly after this purchase, Mills & Boon itself expanded by acquiring Mills & Boon Pty Limited, an Australian and New Zealand based subsidiary.²⁶ By incorporating Mills & Boon, Harlequin entered the international arena.

Harlequin's overseas operations have grown to such an extent that a special division has been created within the company to deal with European operations. In 1975, Harlequin began a wholly owned company in Holland.²⁷ In late 1976, Harlequin bought 50 per cent of a West Germany company, Cora Verlag KG, for \$2,100,000.²⁸ The company had previously been publishing Harlequins on a licensing basis, but is now incorporated directly into Harlequin's structure. In addition, in early 1977, Harlequin France was established on a wholly owned basis.²⁹

The main area of expansion, however, has been in the United States. The bulk of Harlequin's romance sales have switched from Canada to the United States. In 1969, 78 per cent of sales were in Canada: by 1975, only 30 per cent of total sales were in Canada.³⁰ As Richard Bellringer, vice-president of Harlequin put it: "'The American Woman, once introduced to Harlequin, is prone to succumb.... We see unlimited potential there.'"³¹ As

a result, Harlequin has switched both publication of Harlequins for the United States market and the direct mail order service for American readers from Canada to the United States.

In 1976, W. Laurence Heisey, president of Harlequin, announced that Harlequin was seeking American acquisitions and within a year Harlequin bought Ideals Publishing Corporation, a U.S. book and magazine publisher.³² Harlequin continued its American expansion by also purchasing the Laufer Company in California, a Hollywood based magazine publisher which publishes magazines like the teen idol magazine, *Tiger Beat*, and adult gossip magazine, *Rona Barrett's Hollywood*.³³ Harlequin is planning further expansion of its magazine publishing in the United States. It has formed a new magazine division within the company which is searching for more acquisitions of "attractive magazines with a broad consumer orientation".³⁴

Again extending its scope, Harlequin has recently created a new company, Jonathan-James Books, as an entry into the field of international book packaging. The company will "manage the creative and publishing process for new books on a worldwide, pre-sold basis on behalf of other publishers."³⁵ This is another venture into non-romance fields; the first book published by Jonathan-James was *Kain and Augustyn*.

Besides publishing, Harlequin has begun to diversify into movie production. In 1977, Harlequin produced its first film based on a Harlequin Presents novel, *Leopard in the Snow*, by Anne Mather which had sold nearly a million copies. The film, costing \$1.1 million, was released in 1978. Heisey expressed his hopes for the film and Harlequin's film division by stating that "We would like to be to women in the romantic field as Disney is to children."³⁶ In addition to the films, Harlequin Enterprises is developing material for international television programming of romances.³⁷

Harlequin Enterprises awaits further testing to determine the success of *Leopard in the Snow* and the feasibility of film production. If the results are positive, Harlequin will do two or three films a year. If not, Harlequin will simply write it off as an experiment. Harlequin wants to diversify but of course it does not pursue unprofitable ventures. For example, for about a year and a half, Harlequin published a monthly science fiction series under the name Laser Books. The series never achieved a respectable profit margin and consequently it was phased out.* The criteria of profitability holds

* All was not lost however, for Harlequin gained general experience and specific knowledge about the science fiction market. This knowledge is marketable, even if the books were not: "it will convert this knowledge into

for even the romance publications. Harlequin used to publish a small pamphlet-like romance of about 80 pages, similar to *Woman's Weekly*, called *Worldwide Romance Library*. This also was phased out because of tough competition and because the market for the series did not show much "potential". Another example is that Harlequin published a monthly romance magazine entitled *Harlequin* which featured sections on travel, crafts, and cooking, as well as short stories and a full-length back issue Harlequin romance novel. It was available by subscription but more commonly was a "free gift" sent to readers who had a subscription to a Harlequin romance novel series. Women readers would write in about how much they enjoyed the magazine but this reader service proved too costly to Harlequin and the magazine was discontinued.

Thus the quest for profitability is the primary determinant of Harlequin's operations. Although Mary Bonnycastle may have decided originally to publish romances because they were "in good taste", Harlequin Enterprises chooses to continue publishing romances because they make money. This observation is supported by two facts. First

crisp cash profits. At the very least, the company hopes to sell the results of its market research to some other publisher." Brian Fraser, "Why Harlequin Enterprises fell out of love with science fiction", *The Financial Post*, Dec. 17, 1977, p. 16.

of all, as indicated, Harlequin Enterprises discontinues romance lines which do not prove to be sufficiently profitable. Secondly, Harlequin Enterprises is apparently willing to return to publishing material "in questionable taste", like Hollywood "scandal sheets", if these are profitable. Harlequin's expansion and diversification is guided by this criteria.

Harlequin has experienced considerable horizontal integration as well as diversification. It has increased not only the number and range of companies controlled but also has extended each companies' operations, thus increasing its share of the market. Harlequin's own romance book division has experienced major growth. The number of romance titles offered each year varied from 1949 to 1963 but in 1964 Harlequin adopted its present format of publishing eight regular Harlequins each month, although this is soon going to be cut back to six releases a month in favour of expanding other lines. There are over 2,000 Harlequin titles which can be purchased on the stands or from Harlequin's mail order and subscription service. There have been price increases in 1972, 1975, 1977, and 1979, but Harlequins are still cheaper than other romance competitors and have suffered no ill effects from the increases: "Price increases (of about 25 per cent on books) that were instituted early this year are meeting

no resistance at all, one Toronto analyst noted."³⁸

In 1973, Harlequin began publishing a new series, Harlequin Presents, which contains "Romance stories written for contemporary women of today"³⁹ and are generally considered to be "stronger" or "racier" than the regular Harlequins. Harlequin Presents are also more expensive, slightly longer and have a different cover presentation. They have been published at a rate of four a month but they have become so popular that the rate had been increased to six a month. There are over 250 titles in this series and they are also available both on the stands and from reader mail order service.

Besides ~~these~~ two series, Harlequin publishes collections of previously published Harlequin romances in another two series. One combines three novels by one author in a paperback book of nearly 600 pages. This series, the Harlequin Omnibus, was begun in 1976 with two Omnibuses released a month. These are available through the reader mail order, subscription service, and on the stands. The second collection, begun in 1977, is Romance Treasury, a hardcover anthology of three novels by different authors. The Romance Treasury is available only by mail order.

These collection are drawn from back issues of romances that are no longer available to the public. In order to enable readers to buy even more extensively from

out-of-print listings, Harlequin began re-issuing selected back issues. 1976 was billed as "Collector's Year" and since then, hundreds of early titles of Harlequins, Harlequin Presents, and Harlequin Omnibuses have been re-issued.

In the fall of 1977, Harlequin launched two new slightly more expensive but still competitive romance series in an effort to extend their widely recognized name into other areas of the romance market where they have been unrepresented, namely suspense and historical romances, both extremely popular mass market areas. Harlequin Historicals, unlike Harlequins and Harlequin Presents which have contemporary settings, are set in the past. They began to appear at the rate of three novels released about every three months for a total of twelve books a year. They are available on a mail order basis, on the stands, or by subscription. Harlequin Mystiques are stories of "romance, suspense, and intrigue", and are also offered from the reader mail order service and are available on the stands.

Expansion in the Mills & Boon operation is often passed on to Harlequin. For example, Mills & Boon was the first to publish experimentally the historical romance series which Harlequin subsequently published. Mills & Boon also published first a new series, Mills & Boon Classics, which contained reprints of out-of-print romances

which was the forerunner of Harlequin's new Romance Treasury series. However, Mills & Boon also develops its own separate programs. They began a new series of romances with specifically medial backgrounds. In addition, they have expanded their non-romance program of general non-fiction and educational books.

Internal growth has also been the rule in Harlequin's European subsidiaries. Harlequin Holland now publishes two romance series which are drawn from Mills & Boon listings and then translated into Dutch. Cora Verlag, the West German firm, now has three lines of romances which are Mills & Boon listings translated into German. Since they began, all of these companies have increased the number of romance series and the number of titles offered in each of the series that they publish.

The non-romance division of Harlequin, Scholar's Choice and Learning Concepts, is also characterized by internal expansion. This division supplies more than 25,000 items to schools in Canada and is continually developing and marketing new products.⁴⁰ Also a new retail store has been opened in Toronto. This expansion is reflected in the growth of the division's contributions to revenues from approximately \$3 million in 1969 to over \$8 million in 1976.⁴¹

Finally, Harlequin has not only diversified and

extended production in its fields (horizontal integration), it has also become increasingly vertically integrated. One characteristic of Harlequin is that it has bypassed the retailer-distributor for a considerable portion of its business by selling directly to the consumer through its mail order service. Readers can order either single selections or can subscribe to a whole series. Readers benefit because they can order books without having to search through stores to find them and they get new issues before they hit the stands. Harlequin benefits because they forego middle man expenses. One investment advisor has noted Harlequin's "operational skills and distribution strengths" in this regard and has commented on Harlequin's campaign "to build the volume of business done by direct mail which, of course, is significantly more profitable because of the absence of wholesale and retail commissions."⁴² In addition, subscribers through the mail order service constitute a reliable, steady market for Harlequins, something that is not available to most other publishers.

Harlequin is also eliminating distributor's costs by taking over its own distribution. Until 1977, Harlequin's distributor in Canada was Har-Nal Distributors Ltd. of Markham, Ontario which was 50 per cent owned by Harlequin and 50 per cent owned by New American Library. Harlequin now acts as its own distributor.⁴³ Similarly in the United

States, distribution was handled by Simon & Schuster's Pocket Books Distribution Corporation but this too has been taken over by Harlequin.⁴⁴

On an international level, Harlequin is increasingly eliminating other middle man publishers who may previously have had translation rights to Harlequins. Harlequin is now publishing in foreign languages through its own companies and is planning to expand this in the future:

Harlequin will commence publishing translations of its backlists in the Spanish, Finnish and Swedish languages. The company will be forming joint ventures to replace current outright licencing arrangements in Greece and Brazil to publish books on its own account. Late in 1979, it will launch its books in Japan, a potential market one-half the size of the United States.⁴⁵

One can see, therefore, that Harlequin has been experiencing considerable growth. Statistics on Harlequin's corporate assets give some indication of the extent of this growth. Total assets in 1970 were \$7.5 million. After the steady process of expansion which began in 1971, total assets in 1978 reached nearly \$108 million.⁴⁶

Harlequin's sales and profits also reflect the growth Harlequin has experienced. The number of romance books sold jumped from 6 million in 1965 to 125 million in 1978.⁴⁷ These figures refer to English language sales of romances by Harlequin owned companies only. Millions of additional romances are published in other languages

as well. Harlequins have been translated into seventeen languages--French, German, Spanish, Italian, Norwegian, Swedish, Danish, Hebrew, Greek, Indonesian, Dutch, Turkish, Portuguese, Finnish, Maltese, Afrikaans, and Russian.⁴⁸ These figures do not include Harlequin's non-romance sales, so they should be regarded as an underestimation of both romance sales and total sales.

Net earnings or profitability has experienced an even more impressive growth, with the exception of a slight slump in 1970. Profits have climbed from \$100 thousand in 1970 to \$16.8 million in 1978.⁴⁹ In one year alone, 1976-77, Harlequin's net earnings jumped 135 per cent.⁵⁰ Investment advisors predict this growth will continue and estimate that profits will rise to \$33.2 million by 1981.⁵¹

One of the major sources of this increased profit is foreign subsidiaries. The Holland venture, for example, was an instant success and was contributing profits within the first year of operation. Harlequin Enterprises, in turn, boosts Torstar's profits. Thus 1977 Torstar reports announce gains which are attributed to the contributions of Harlequin.⁵²

Harlequin's success can be explained in large part by two basic factors: the first is the format of the books themselves and the second is Harlequin's aggressive marketing programs. As indicated, Harlequin is almost unique in

the publishing industry for publishing and selling a brand new name rather than a specific title or author. Readers buy the Harlequin name, as the following reader reports:

I do not have a preference in authors; each offers a different style, which is what I like. As long as a book as the Harlequin trademark, I'll read it.⁵³

Because of this, Harlequin consistently has the lowest return rates in the paperback industry. The *Financial Post* explains:

Every year, 5,000 new paperback titles appear in North America, each with an average print run of 100,000 copies. Publishers...must plan on selling on average, only 55,000 copies of each title. The rest are returned to the publisher for credit as waste copies.

The return ratio is the key in this business. While others suffer with a return rate of almost 50%, Harlequin's is 20% on average print runs of 450,000 copies per title. This arithmetic allows Harlequin's price to be the lowest on the shelves.... Multiple sales per customer mean high profit margins for the retailer.⁵⁴

The interchangeability of Harlequin romances, despite different titles and authors, facilitates easy distribution. Again, the *Financial Post* explains the difference between Harlequin and other publishers.

Publishers must allocate to each retailer a sufficient number of volumes of each title—a tricky balancing act. Harlequin's titles, on the other hand, are almost interchangeable, thanks to editorial uniformity and a high brand identification. As Heisey cheerfully points out, it is as though Harlequin were selling one standing consumer product, rather than books.⁵⁵

Therefore, the format of Harlequin's romance product is part of the reason for their success. Another reason for their success is that Harlequin has actively utilized most of the tactics that corporations typically use to solve the potential problem of stagnation and lack of growth. These tactics include stimulating existing consumers' demand, creating slightly different new products, opening new markets, and pressuring the government for financial concessions.

One of the first things that Bonnycastle's new management team did was to begin an intensive research program on their product and their readers. This has since become a regular part of corporate operations. As a result, Harlequin has a very clear picture of its market and Sanderson was able to describe the average Harlequin reader in terms of age, education, family income, marital status, employment, and geographical distribution.

The second step was the launching of a massive test television advertising campaign in the United States and Canada, costing nearly \$400,000. The average increase in net sales in ten cities in the United States after the test commercials was an astonishing 79 per cent.⁵⁶ In 1975, Harlequin purchased over a million dollars worth of television time; 1976 saw this amount increased to one and a half million dollars.⁵⁷

Harlequin has a number of ads, each aimed at a special group of women readers--the housewife and mother, the mature woman or widow, the working mother, the active young woman, and so on. The ads are based on reader's letters to Harlequin. The following is an example of an ad directed towards a mother:

Nap time for the twins. And now it's my turn to curl up and disappear. With a good book. Do you know what I read? Harlequin Romances. They're well-written. Exciting...a good love story always is. And the characters go to foreign places and see things I dream of seeing.... They're my disappearing act.⁵⁸

These ads were run on network time which means hundreds of stations were showing them. In 1976 in Canada, during three months in the spring and fall, the ads were seen across the country in Halifax, Sydney, Moncton/St. John, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto/Hamilton, Kitchener, London/Wingham, Winnipeg, Regina, Calgary, Edmonton, and Vancouver/Victoria. They were seen during evening prime time shows such as All in the Family, Price is Right, Sanford & Son, etc. Harlequin calculates that the commercials reached 75 per cent of Canadian women with a frequency of three commercials per month.⁵⁹

The American television campaign was even more intensive, running for eight months on all three major networks-ABC, CBS, and NBC. Coverage was mostly during afternoon soap serials and game shows such as Edge of Night,

Match Game, Another World, etc. The ads reached up to 91 per cent of all television households and were viewed by 75 per cent of American women at the rate of nearly six commercial a month.⁶⁰

The results were extremely rewarding. Heisey estimates that the television campaign in the United States increased awareness of Harlequin by almost 25 per cent overall and "suggested that it is doubtful that Harlequin will ever go without an intensive advertising campaign."⁶¹ Part of the reason that Harlequin had shifted attention from Canada to the United States was that they believed the Canadian market was already saturated. They discovered that this was not so:

Three months later it is obvious the TV ads are having an enormous impact. Eaton's in Winnipeg reports that it has shifted its housewares department to make room for an area devoted to Harlequins. Simpsons store in Toronto turned over its entire display inventory three times in its first eight days of operation (about 2,500 books).⁶²

The advertising campaign has been carried to magazines as well. For example, a full page ad in the Ladies Home Journal reads: "Remember when you first fell in love? Relive that special excitement...everytime you read a Harlequin romance. Come into the world of Harlequin novels ...and be a part of a wonderful dream."⁶³

Advertising has been coupled with a give-away program. In 1973, dealers were sent two million free copies

of a Harlequin which they were to sell for 15¢ (regular price at that time was 60¢) in an attempt to get new readers.⁶⁴ Other promotional ventures done on a contractual basis include a complete Harlequin published in *Good Housekeeping* which was followed by a coupon which the reader could clip, send in, and thereby receive a free Harlequin; a Harlequin packed in the large sized box of Kotex feminine napkins; Harlequins given away to customers at Canadian McDonald's restaurants on Mother's Day; Harlequins given away with purchases of Avon products; Harlequins packed in boxes of Bio-Ad detergent; and a free Harlequin given in exchange for a coupon found on the bottom of Ajax cans.⁶⁵ This whole give-away campaign is based on the assumption that Harlequins are "addictive". This is frequently stated by the company:

"We know that once we get a reader hooked she comes back for more."⁶⁶

"We know through research and experience that Harlequins are a very addictive line to readers of all ages."⁶⁷

"The company...provides addictive reading for women of all ages."⁶⁸

This line of thinking is also evidence in Harlequin's advertising directed, not at the consumer, but at the retailer. Ads appearing in trade magazines such as the *Progressive Grocer*, *Supermarket News*, and *Book Trade* emphasize the repeat potential of the loyal Harlequin reader:

Our regular reader, bless her. Why does she-and millions of other women like her-come back to Harlequin displays all over the country, week after week?.... You're missing a sure thing if you're not offering her the books she loves-and buys-week after week.⁶⁹

Another ad features excerpts from readers' letters which proclaim their addiction to Harlequins.

\$60 in retail sales-that's what the average Harlequin reader spends each year. Maybe you don't read letters. But you do read profits. Shouldn't you be prominently merchandising Harlequin Books?⁷⁰

Even the books themselves serve as a vehicle for further advertisement for Harlequin. Harlequins will often contain order blanks and coupons for other Harlequin products. For example, Harlequin inserted advertisements for its movie in 15-20 million books published over a four month period before its release.⁷¹

Thus Harlequin has taken an active hand in stimulating demand with an extensive advertising program. As we have already seen, Harlequin has also created new, slightly different products (Harlequin Presents, Historicals, and Mystiques) in an effort to create more demand and attract more readers in their present markets. However, not content with existing markets, they have expanded outside North America, creating new markets all over the world. Finally, Harlequin has made financial gains from governmental policies.

Torstar-Harlequin, like so many other corporations, complains about governmental interference on the one hand while benefitting from governmental policies on the other hand. Harlequin's president has been vocal in his criticism of government rules, regulations, and agencies. Heisey has criticized decisions by the Foreign Investment Review Agency and the Secretary of State. He also has indicated that Harlequin's expansion in the U.S. is a deliberate move because "the over-all government attitude to business is more positive in the United States than in Canada...."⁷² Sanderson also expressed his frustrations with the Canadian government:

You'll never know until you have to live with it, the incredible, bureaucratic, governmental... oh my God, the world is strangling in government...!

Although the complaints are often loud, the benefits that the corporations experience are usually not proclaimed. For example, *Toronto Star* took a strong editorial stand against tax privileges for *Time* and *Reader's Digest* which the government eventually rescinded, thus protecting, to some extent, this market for Canadian publishers.⁷³ Another example: because government policy allowed corporations to write off subsidiary losses in previous years, Torstar's total net income for fiscal 1976 was boosted by tax reductions of over \$1 million, substantially contributing to the 25 per cent increase in net

income for that year.⁷⁴

Harlequin is, therefore, a corporation operating under the same exigencies as other corporations: competing, surviving, and growing. Harlequin has been shaped by the forces of capitalism and in its success has reproduced them. The company legitimates its existence by citing its contribution to the Canadian economy and by making a distinction between Harlequin and other less well intentioned corporations. Thus Sanderson protests:

Do we look like...we're exploiting the down-trodden masses or something? I mean, I don't get the sense that we put a mine in British Guyana, pay the peasants 50¢ a week and then take all the bauxite and then once it's gone, we leave the peasants to starve. We're not in that kind of business.

It's not as if we were in the tobacco business causing cancer.... I mean, we're making alot of people happy reading our little books.

It's harmless. I mean, we don't cause cancer. We don't rot anyone's teeth.

Other companies may be exploitative but Harlequin is not. Instead, Harlequin presents itself as a good company that is producing a socially useful product. "Light reading has a positive value in our modern society. The elements of gentle fantasy in romantic novels provide a definite but controllable escape from the increasing complexity of day-to-day living."⁷⁵

Thus Harlequin not only produces a material product but also voices an ideological legitimation of that product

and of the company. Chapters III and IV will analyze how that ideology is implicit and explicit within its product, Harlequin Romances. Chapter V will analyze the extent to which Harlequins are a positive phenomena, a gentle fanstasy, and a controllable escape for women in our society. Before continuing that line of investigation, however, this study describes the class positions of the members of Harlequin's board of directors.

Class Structure

Most of the members of the boards of directors of Harlequin and Torstar are members of the same social class, the upper class. They are members of this class by virtue of their relationship to the forces of production. As previously noted, they own and control these companies. By virtue of their ownership, they make the major decisions and establish corporate policies within the two corporations. Furthermore they are employers; that is, they hire the labour power of others. Harlequin employs 980 people and Torstar employs 3,800.^{76*}

Members of Harlequin's and Torstar's boards can also be considered to be in the upper class by virtue of

* Harlequin's employee figure does not include authors who work on a contractual basis. It refers to those who are involved in the printing and handling of Harlequins as well as clerical staff.

their social characteristics which were designated to be supporting class criteria in Chapter I. Many of the members of both corporate boards belong to exclusive social clubs, (the Toronto, Manitoba, Granite, and Royal Canadian Yacht Club among them), have attended private elite schools (Trinity College, Upper Canada College, Royal Military College, Ravenscourt, and University of Toronto Schools among them), are listed in national indexes of "Who's Who", and come from Canadian or English "old families". They head up charities, hospitals, universities, governmental advisory agencies, etc. Participation in these organizations is a unifying mechanism within this class. The overlapping contacts and experiences foster cohesion and power. The directors and owners of Harlequin and Torstar are not exceptions to this for they are linked together and to other members of the upper class through their corporate connections, social clubs, and schools.

Within Canada's social structure, the individuals who are board members of Harlequin and Torstar are "at the top", by either social or economic criteria. However, even within this group, some individuals are more significant than others in terms of the stability of their class position, the scope of their activities, and the extent of their power. Thus, one could describe a three rung hierarchy within the group.

At the lowest level are the senior management representatives, like Heisey of Harlequin or Goodman of Torstar. In fact, these men are more accurately described as middle class rather than upper class. They are probably primarily dependent upon a salary for an income. Yet they are not members of the working class because, as explained in Chapter I, they do have control over the means of production through their managerial positions. They are powerful but their power is limited to their positions.

Next in the hierarchy are "company men". These people may be firmly entrenched and may be very influential within their sphere, but they do not have broadly based power. For example, Beland Honderich's position on Harlequin's and Torstar's boards is unassailable because of his long term connection with the firm and the fact that he is a principal shareholder. This, in turn, ensures his position in the upper class. However, Honderich is essentially a newspaper man sitting solely on the boards of Harlequin and Torstar. In addition, he apparently has few of the traditionally important social ties. Therefore, although he may be powerful in the media world (which is a key sphere of power), one must not over-estimate his overall economic or social importance.

The most powerful section of the upper class are those with a wide base of industrial and financial control.

There are a number of people on the Harlequin and Torstar boards that have these economic connections in conjunction with social connections. Most notable are Hon. Walter Gordon and Alexander MacIntosh. The Gordon family's position in the upper class goes back over several generations.⁷⁷ His involvement in key positions in Canadian society spans economic, political, and educational institutions. MacIntosh has the more impressive corporate links of the two men, having ties with some of the largest, most powerful Canadian corporations including Hudson's Bay, Canadian Corporate Management, Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, John Labatt, and Brascan. He also has a membership in the Toronto Club, which both John Porter and Wallace Clement cite as a nationally important social club.⁷⁸

A subsection within this powerful group are those who have a broad base of social and economic connections in a region of Canada, rather than nationwide. This group includes Laurence and Richard Bonnycastle, George Gardiner, and Daniel Sprague. These men sit on the boards of diverse but generally regionally based social clubs, etc.

In spite of these variations, however, most of the directors of Harlequin and Torstar must be considered to be part of the upper class. These individuals' lives and their corporate ownership and positions are an important part of Canadian class structure.

As members of the upper class, it is in their interests to maintain and strengthen their class positions. In other words, it is in their interests to reproduce the existing relations of production, and they have done this. The families involved in these companies have continued their dominance by passing corporate ownership and control on to children and grandchildren. For example, Richard Bonnycastle inherited the chairmanship (and presumably stock as well) from his father. Ruth Hindmarsh, director and an owner of Torstar, inherited her stock from her father, Joseph S., and grandfather, Joseph E. Atkinson, original controllers of Toronto Star Ltd. This inheritance of property perpetuates these individuals' control of the Harlequin-Torstar complex and perpetuates their membership in the upper class. These families and family members, therefore, are not only a product of but also reinforce existing class structure in a society.

Sex Role Structure

The final aspect of capitalism to be explored with regard to Harlequin Enterprises is sex role structure. Given that women are the main customers, it is interesting to examine the role they have played in the company's development and direction. Dorothy Smith has argued that women have been excluded from ideological structures:

In the various social apparatuses concerned with the production and distribution of ideas and images, or with the training of people to participate in and respond to these forms of thought, it is men who occupy the positions of authority, men who predominate in the production of ideas and social knowledge, and men who control what enters the discourse by occupying the positions which do the work of gatekeeping and the positions from which people and their 'mental products' are evaluated.⁷⁹

Smith qualifies this, however, by pointing out that women have not been excluded from certain areas, notably domestic concerns:

Women have of course had access to and used the limited and largely domestic zone of women's magazines, television programs, women's novels, poetry, soap operas, etc. But this is a limited zone. It follows the contours of their restricted role in the society.⁸⁰

Harlequin Enterprises is an ideological structure that falls within this domestic zone but even here women's participation has been limited. One of the striking things about the company is that there is not a single woman on the board of directors. Harlequin has, quite literally, a twelve man board.* There is one woman involved in Harlequin's divisional management: Roberta Steinberg, director of personnel, and one woman in Mills & Boon's management: Heather Jeeves, editorial director of fiction.⁸¹

* This is now a fourteen man board with the two recent additions. Torstar has two women on its board of directors: Ruth A. Hindmarsh and Catherine A. Crang.

Otherwise, Harlequin's management as well as its board of directors is exclusively male.

Nevertheless, it would be inaccurate to say that women have been excluded from Harlequin Enterprises. Mary Bonnycastle influenced the development of the company when she chose to publish the romances that have led to Harlequin's growth and financial success. Heather Jeeves, as an editorial director of fiction at Mills & Boon (the division which makes the key editorial decisions for the entire Harlequin operation) probably makes many of the on-going decisions about what is to be published. Both of these women have been in, or are in, "gatekeeper" positions.

A further consideration is the fact that according to Harlequin all of its approximately 150 writers are women.* It is women who are producing Harlequin's romance product. Women have not, then, been totally excluded from Harlequin Enterprises. However, Smith warns that attention to simple representation of women is not sufficient to adequately understand the extent of their exclusion from these kinds of structures. For even when women are present,

*Whether Harlequin writers are, in fact, all women is another thing. It is possible that there are male writers writing under female pseudonyms; this does occur in other romance publishing companies. It is ironic that originally women novelists had to assume male names to get published while now men have to take on female names to get published, at least in the romance field.

they are concentrated in the least powerful positions:
 "the closer positions come to policy-making or innovation
 in ideological forms, the smaller the proportion of women."⁸²

This has been and is true of women's positions
 in Harlequin. For example, although Mary Bonnycastle acted
 as editor, it was her husband Richard who headed the company
 and her son Richard who took over after his father's death.
 Neither of her daughters have played dominant roles in
 the company.* At Mills & Boon, although Heather Jeeves
 is an editor, Alan Boon is the Group Editorial Director
 of Fiction. He sits on Harlequin's board of directors;
 she does not. At Harlequin's head office, Roberta Steinberg
 may be director of personnel but this means she is in charge
 of clerical and secretarial staff who are women even more
 removed from policy-making positions. Her authority extends
 largely to other powerless women and is therefore limited.
 Thus, while women are present, they are not in the most
 powerful positions in Harlequin Enterprises.

Smith makes a related point that men's work is
 deemed important, but women's work is not. Men constitute
 an inner circle to which women are seldom admitted. She
 gives an example:

* In an interview, Judith Burgess, a Bonnycastle
 daughter, told me that although she had once participated
 in the company in an editorial capacity, her priority was
 to be a wife and mother.

It seems that women as a social category lack proper title to membership in the circle of those who count for one another in the making of ideological forms. To identify a woman novelist as a woman novelist is to place her in a special class outside that of novelists in general.⁸³

If this is true of women novelists, it is even more true of women novelists who are writing romances, women's literature. As a result, Harlequin Romances, the direct product of women's work as novelists, are commonly regarded to be "garbage". They are believed to have no relevance or importance. However, the significance of Harlequin Enterprises is an entirely different matter. As mentioned, the corporate board is entirely composed of men, and their work, the management and control of the corporation, has complete credibility in our society. The novels may be considered to be trash and the women who read and write them may be considered facile, but there is never any questioning of the skill and ability of the men and the corporation.

Although these attitudes are prevalent and perpetuated, Harlequin Enterprises and Harlequin Romances should not be seen as a "male conspiracy" carried out to reinforce male dominance and female subordination. Again, Smith cautions:

The model of manipulation from behind the scenes, the model of ideology as ideas designed to deceive and fool the innocent and ignorant put forward

consciously and with malign intent by a ruling elite, is quite inadequate to analyse the phenomena we are concerned with.⁸⁴

There are three objections to be made to a "male conspiracy" theory used to explain the Harlequin phenomena. First of all, Harlequin Enterprises does not exist in a vacuum. It exists in a sexist society and its corporate structure reflects that. Harlequin Enterprises faces certain organizational imperatives. Boards of directors are best composed of wealthy, powerful, well-connected people who can facilitate the company's goal of profitable growth. These people are most likely to be male in our society. Not surprising, then, males are most likely to appear on board of directors. Harlequin Enterprises is not alone in having an exclusively male board. The under-representation of women in corporate ranks is not, therefore, a single-handed effort on their part to perpetuate male dominance and female subordination. It should be understood, however, that the perpetuation of male dominance is one effect of the acceptance of this state of affairs and Harlequin Enterprises has apparently taken no steps to change the sex composition of their board. A second objection is that Harlequin Enterprise's overt goal, as stated in official policy, is to sell romance and to make a profit, not to sell romance for ideology's sake. If sexism sells, they also experience secondary ideological gains which are

certainly not to be discounted. However, profit is their primary goal. The final objection is that sexism is not limited to males. As indicated, women have participated in the origins and promotion of Harlequin Romances and to the extent that Harlequin Romances are sexist (a subject addressed in Chapters III and IV), these women have also participated in perpetuating sexist ideology.

Harlequin Enterprises can not be seen as an exclusively male conspiracy designed to consciously perpetuate sex role inequality. This is too simplistic. However, Harlequin Enterprises does reproduce the sexism found in our society. The male dominant composition of its board of directors and upper levels of management is evidence of this. Harlequin Enterprises maintains sex role structure by accepting this inequality.

Conclusions

The subject of this chapter has been Harlequin Enterprises. The analysis has been guided by the three major theoretical issues discussed in Chapter I. The first issue dealt with what must be reproduced to maintain capitalism and how that reproduction takes place. The second dealt with the relationship between fiction and society. The third issue was about the position of women in our society and the process by which those positions are reproduced. What is the significance of Harlequin

Enterprises for each of these structures, relationships and processes?

In terms of the first issue, Chapter I indicated that the forces and relations of production (corporate and class structure) must be reproduced for the maintenance of capitalism. This reproduction takes place through the process of hegemony and incorporates both material and ideological aspects of reproduction. This chapter has demonstrated that Harlequin Enterprises is a part of this process. It showed that Harlequin has been remarkably successful in reproducing the forces of production, the material bases of capitalism. It has grown from a small, regional, family corporation into a large multinational corporation. It has experienced considerable expansion, diversification, vertical and horizontal integration during its growth process. Its production, sales, assets and profits have increased. Harlequin Enterprises has reproduced not only the forces of production, but also the relations of production through its maintenance of class structure. The ownership of Harlequin is concentrated in the hands of a few who are members of the upper class, their control of the company is reproduced and perpetuated by inheritance of corporate stock. In addition, Harlequin Enterprises produces ideological legitimations of the company, its policies, and operations. Management states

that Harlequin is producing harmless, happy entertainment for women. They respond to a market and provide a service which enables writers to write and sell well, and readers to obtain cheap, high quality light fiction. Thus, a major portion of the chapter has shown how Harlequin Enterprises is part of the process of hegemony.

Discussion in Chapter I on the second issue about the relationship between fiction and society had indicated that one must examine the producers and consumers of fiction as well as the fiction itself. This chapter has begun such an analysis. It revealed that corporate policies like profitability, expansion, and diversification are important factors that affect what gets published. Harlequin officials may say that Harlequin simply responds to the market, and this is partially true, but it also does its best to create a market as well, through advertising, publicity, and promotion. In other words, Harlequin Enterprises as a corporate producer of fiction, affects what kind of fiction society wants and gets. This will be further explored in Chapter III.

Finally, this chapter addressed the issue of sex role structure. Chapter I had argued that women are in subordinate positions in capitalism and that these positions are reproduced through the process of hegemony. The position of women in Harlequin Enterprises was examined

and the chapter demonstrated that, although women were not totally excluded from Harlequin Enterprises, they were not in key positions within the company. Harlequin Enterprises, therefore, internally reproduces unequal sex role structure.

CHAPTER III
HARLEQUIN ROMANCES

She closed her eyes and let her thoughts rove deliciously. To be married to someone tall and dark and masterful, and to return from a honeymoon to this house in the sun. A lovely home, a husband, children Heavens, how trite could one get!
Harlequin 843

Nothing produces such an effect as a good platitude.
Oscar Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest*

Introduction

The previous chapter analyzed Harlequin Enterprises' material and overt ideological reproduction of capitalism. It showed that Harlequin Enterprises' growth into a large multinational has been due largely to the success of their main product, Harlequin Romances. It also indicated that these romances are read by millions of women throughout the world. A detailed examination of Harlequin Romances is warranted by the size and scope of Harlequin Enterprises. In addition, an analysis of the ideological content of Harlequin Romances is essential to further an understanding of Harlequin's hegemonic role in our society. Therefore, this chapter will discuss the typical plots, settings and characters of Harlequin Romances, while the following chapter will focus on the ideological portrayal of sex role, class,

and corporate structures within these romances. Before proceeding with this, this chapter will situate the Harlequin phenomena in a historical context, for Harlequin Enterprises and Harlequin Romances are part of a socio-economic and literary tradition.

Historical Background

The novel emerged as a literary form in eighteenth-century England.* Historians of the novel have connected its emergence with other changes that were also occurring at this time. The growth of the reading public, the rise of the middle class, the spread of a philosophy of economic individualism, and changes in the social position of women are some of the changes that have been cited as significant. Thus, Leslie Fiedler describes the role that the middle class and particularly middle class women, played in the rise of the novel:

traditional literature...did not satisfy the hunger of the majority of the new social group; and certainly the masculine wit of eighteenth century verse and essay seemed more at home in the coffeehouse than in the boudoir where the middle classes tended to believe books were properly to be consumed. The

* The term "novel" shall be used to mean an extended fictional prose narrative. I am aware of the more specific definition of the term which incorporates the features of realism, probability, and commonplace modern settings, and which provides a contrast to a romance. However, for the purposes of general background, a more simple definition will suffice. This holds true for "romance" as well. Therefore, this term will be used to mean a novel in which the themes of love and marriage are emphasized.

merchant was unwilling to spend much of his time ...on the trivialities of art; such pursuits seemed to him more proper for the female members of his family.... The moment at which the novel took hold coincides with the moment of the sexual division of labor which left business to the male, the arts to the female....¹

Until this time, most women had been actively involved in production within the home, but the growth of commerce and the development of manufacture outside the home changed this situation considerably for some women. Women in the middle class were freed from former domestic demands but still excluded from many activities that took place outside the home, like politics, business, and leisure activities like sports or drinking. Ian Watt comments that: "Such women, therefore, had a great deal of leisure, and this leisure was often occupied by omnivorous reading."²

Reading was no longer an exclusively aristocratic occupation. In fact, the middle class began to dominate the reading population. This change had an effect on the kind of literature that was being produced:

One general effect of some interest for the rise of the novel, however, seems to follow from the change in the centre of gravity of the reading public. The fact that literature in the eighteenth century was addressed to an ever-widening audience must have weakened the relative importance of those readers with enough education and leisure to take a professional or semi-professional interest in classical and modern letters; and in return it must have increased the relative importance of those who desired an easier form of literary entertainment, even if it had little prestige among the literati.³

The extension of the reading population in general was one factor that led to the popularity of the novel, a form that was accessible and entertaining. The extension of the reading population to women was a factor that led to the themes of love and marriage that often characterized these novels. Economic changes, the numerical surplus of women, and the social pressure on women to marry had created an understandable preoccupation with the subject:

There is...a considerable variety of evidence to support the view that the transition to an individualist social and economic order brought with it a crisis in marriage which bore particularly hard upon the feminine part of the population. Their future depended much more completely than before on their being able to marry and on the kind of marriage they made, while at the same time it was more and more difficult for them to find a husband.⁴

A few of the women who found themselves without husbands turned to writing as one of the least disagreeable ways in which a middle class woman could earn a living and produced the sentimental romantic novels for women that came to dominate the literary market for a time.

Indeed, for the first time it began to be appropriate to speak of a literary market. Authors had previously survived through a system of aristocratic patronage, but this system was being replaced by the development of professional book sellers or publishers. This change led to others for book sellers began to exert an influence on the authors and the type of literature being produced.

They needed to make a profit and in order to do this, they needed to sell books. They began to calculate the potential popularity and sales of a manuscript and to cater to the new audience's tastes. There was some stir over this state of affairs and booksellers were frequently accused of "turning literature itself into a mere market commodity".⁵

According to Ian Watt, the main effect of the application of economic criteria to the production of literature was 1) to encourage writers to write prose (novels) rather than verse, 2) to encourage them to write very simply to allow for a less well educated audience than before, and 3) to encourage them to write quickly as they were paid for their output.⁶ Thus capitalism shaped the production of fiction through the creation of a new reading population which had specific tastes and through the extension of the commodity market into book publishing.

The popularity of novels spread from England to North America. English novels quickly made their way overseas. For example, Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* was released in an American edition within two years of its English publication.⁷ North America produced its own fiction as well. Again, women writers, women readers, and themes of love and marriage in the novels were characteristic:

Sentimental "domestic novels" written largely by women for women dominated the literary market from the 1840s through the 1880s. Middle-class women became in a very real sense consumers of literature.⁸

The development of cheap paper-bound books and the spread of public education led to another extension of the reading market and eventually middle and working class women alike were indulging their penchant for romantic fiction. One woman who worked in a box-making sweat shop in New York in 1905 related her fellow workers' infatuation with romances:

Although we had a half hour, luncheon was swallowed quickly by most of the girls, eager to steal away to a sequestered bower among the boxes, there to lose themselves in paper-backed romance.⁹

Promptly at half past twelve the awakening machinery called us back to the workaday world. Storybooks were tucked away, and their entranced readers dragged themselves back to the machines and steaming pastepots, to dream and to talk as they worked ...of bankers and millowners who in fiction have wooed and won and honorably wedded just such poor toilers as they themselves.¹⁰

The popularity of romantic novels has persisted throughout the twentieth century and women are still the key audience for booksellers:

Publishing people figure that women account for as much as 70 per cent of sales. Not surprisingly, then, publishing houses are catering to women as never before.

"You have to chase after the market," a Warner Books representative said. "The good ladies are the market today."¹¹

Another publishing official has commented that printing romances is "'like printing money'".¹² As a result, romance series have proliferated. Not only are new romance titles published, but old romances (some over fifty years old)

are re-issued to take advantage of the demand. Romantic variations keep readers interested and attract new readers. These include domestic romances (for example, Gene Stratton Porter), religious romances (for example, Grace Livingston Hill), patriotic romances (for example, Emily Loring), gothic romances (for example, Mary Stewart), historical romances (for example, Barbara Cartland), and passionate epic romances (for example, Rosemary Rogers). Each variation has a special "twist" but they are all romances.

The success of these publishing ventures has often depended upon the success of individual authors. Readers have had to wait for thier favourite author's new book, an event that would usually occur only once or twice a year. The individual author has been an important consideration; most readers have probably been unaware of what publisher was publishing their favourite. It is at this point that Harlequin Enterprises and Harlequin Romances diverge from the mainstream of publishers and romances. Until now, it could easily be seen as a typical publisher of romantic fiction that is marketing a commodity in response to feminine demand, as has been the case with publishers since the eighteenth century. They are a part of this tradition and could not be considered to be unique. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, Harlequin Enterprises has also made innovations in the romantic fiction publishing

world. One innovation is that Harlequin's emphasis is not on individual authors but on the company's brand name. Readers do not have to wait for their favourite author's intermittent publishing. Instead they can depend on Harlequin's regular monthly output.* Another important innovation is Harlequin's extensive use of market research. It is not merely passive, responding to pre-existing demand. Instead, it actively pursues and creates markets.

These innovations are both a break from tradition and a continuation of it. While they are new techniques, they are still techniques for achieving the same goals as Harlequin's publishing predecessors, that is, to sell books and make a profit. Harlequin also continues the policy of applying economic criteria to the production of fiction, a subject which shall be explored in more detail in the following section on Harlequin's editorial guidelines.

Editorial Guidelines

Harlequin has a "stable" of 120-150 authors who write romances for Mills & Boon, and hence, Harlequin. The

* Some of the publishing firms are now adopting Harlequin's series format. One of the interesting ones is Bantam's Barbara Cartland. She is so prolific that she is a series in and of herself. Her contract requires her to produce two romantic novels per month which are released in a numbered series. In addition, she is beginning a new numbered edited series, Barbara Cartland's Library of Love. Ray Walters, "Paperback Talk," *New York Times Book Review*, November 6, 1977, pp. 56-60.

authors are predominantly of English or British Commonwealth origins although there are now a few North American authors. The British dominance is explained by the fact that the romances are first published in England by Mills & Boon, the originators of the whole Harlequin romance series throughout the world.

Not all of the authors have contributed to the Harlequin lists to the same degree. There is a steady core group of authors who are the most prolific. For example, one woman, Roberta Leigh, has written over forty Harlequins that are published under three names--her own, Rachel Lindsay, and Roumelia Lane. She usually publishes between eight and twelve books a year. Another, Mary Burchell, has been writing at a similar rate for Harlequin for the last twenty years.

The regular authors are paid on a royalty basis. Every author who turns out a number of Harlequins is assured of an impressive income since sales of 450,000 per title are nearly guaranteed because of the Harlequin imprint. Compare this to the sales figures of such well known Canadian books such as Margaret Laurence's *Stone Angel*--200,000 copies, Pierre Berton's *The National Dream*--100,000 copies, or Gabrielle Roy's *The Tin Flute*--160,000 copies.¹³ Some popular Harlequin authors far surpass these figures, having books to their credit that have sold nearly a million

copies.

Harlequin offices in Canada have little contact with the authors. All of the substantive editing is done at Mills & Boon. There is an editing staff at Harlequin but the staff does mostly copy editing. For example, if an English writer writes a novel set in North America which is to be published here, editors will go through the Mills & Boon novel and rewrite idioms and slang to fit the North American context. However, director of publishing at Harlequin, Fred Kerner, predicts that as the number of North American authors increases, Harlequin's editorial role will increase. Harlequin may even begin to release some new romances in North America.

Even though the substantive editing is done by Mills & Boon, Harlequin and its other subsidiaries maintain separate and autonomous editorial staffs who decide which of the Mills & Boon titles they will publish to suit their particular market. For example, both Mills & Boon and Cora Verlag publish a series of medical romances. Kerner indicates that these would not be as popular in North America and Harlequin's editors choose not to issue them.

Kerner maintains that Harlequin has no specific editorial policy with which the authors must comply and that Harlequins are not formula fiction "any more than life is". He says that writing fiction and editing are

creative processes and exist as such within Harlequin. There is no formal structure, no strictured operation, no guidelines to follow--only the author must give the reader what she wants. This means no overt sex or violence and a happy ending. According to Kerner, apart from these three things, the author is free to construct the story as she wishes. However, Kerner added that, in deciding whether a particular story or situation was acceptable for a Harlequin, he would also ask: "Is it offensive? Is it reality? Is it appropriate?"

As has been true ever since the development of a literary commodity market, the public is a key arbiter of the definitions of these guidelines. John Cawelti emphasizes this point:

formula stories are created and distributed almost entirely in terms of commerical exploitation. Therefore, allowing for a certain degree of inertia in the process, the production of formula is largely dependent on audience response.¹⁴

Harlequin carefully monitors its audience's response and Kerner stated: "If we ever got an overwhelming number of complaints about something, we would seriously look at it because we'd say--are we not giving the reader the total entertainment that she wants?"

As we have seen, Harlequin Enterprises has gone a step farther than most publishers in assessing their audience and in creating a product that will appeal to

the broadest possible base of readers. Harlequin Romances are not aimed at speciality audiences like some of the variations that have been developed. For example, Grace Livingston Hill's romances revolve around religious issues to such an extent that at least one of the main characters will not only fall in love but be converted to Christianity at the same time. This would probably be considered "inappropriate" for a Harlequin. Occasionally church, God, or Christian attitudes may be mentioned in passing in a Harlequin, but it is never a central aspect of the romance. In Emily Loring's patriotic American romances, the hero is likely to be an honest crusading politician or federal government official who is fighting corruption and "Commies". There are ringing speeches from both hero and heroine about truth, justice, freedom, and democracy. This theme would probably be considered to be too political for a Harlequin.* If they deal with them at all, Harlequins are more subtle in their approach to potentially controversial issues. In fact, Harlequins are kept as inoffensive as possible. Their only "twist" is that they feature interesting, "exotic" settings. This is a feature that is unlikely to offend anyone.

* I recall a Harlequin Presents novel in which the hero rescues the stranded heroine from behind the "Iron Curtain" but the main emphasis was on their relationship.

Harlequin Enterprises, therefore, imposes business criteria on editorial policy. This is officially stated in one of its annual reports: "The Mills & Boon editors help to direct the creativity of the authors with editorial guidelines which are market-oriented."¹⁵ In other words, authors are free to write anything they like as long as they write romantic fiction with no overt sex or violence that has a happy ending, that is in "good taste", that is appropriate, realistic, and inoffensive, and that appeals to women readers. One might note that this is a rather limited freedom, but there seems to be little resistance to this policy on the part of Harlequin's individual authors.

At a writer's conference held in Alberta in 1974, Richard Bellringer reportedly advised potential Harlequin authors to learn "the formula" by simply reading twelve Harlequin romances.¹⁶ The writers should get the idea, and of course, they do. If they have any business sense themselves, they know Harlequin is looking for a standard product and they produce it if they want to get published. Therefore, Harlequin or Mills & Boon do not have to direct or censor their authors very often because the authors are self-censoring.

It is not mere business sense, however, that leads Harlequin authors to produce Harlequin Romances, for they also apparently share the backgrounds, attitudes, and

fantasies of their women readers. Harlequin magazine featured short biographies of Harlequin writers. In these biographies, the women writers related how they grew up reading popular romantic fiction, how they supported themselves by working as secretaries and waitresses, how they got married and had children, as well as how they came to write Harlequins. These women not only write romances but they claim they believe what they write:

As for what I write--well, the romantic story has always been a "natural" for me. It's all in the way you look at the world, perhaps in your own personal experience. Perhaps if I hadn't been lucky enough to find love myself...I might have viewed the world with bitterness and cynicism and written downbeat stories. As it is I love to write happy stories about what is surely the most important and exciting part of growing up, and that is falling in love.¹⁷

We all know that Harlequin Romances are not great literature and that they represent escapism pure and simple. So what? We all need occasional doses of escapism. These days reading the newspaper headlines is enough to drive one to drink. And our bookstores are over-loaded with material to satisfy one's appetite for vicarious violence, sex, and the seamier side of life. To turn to romantic love as an antidote for all this is by no means a bad thing. I still have an unfashionable degree of faith in the institutions of love, marriage, and the family.¹⁸

As one can see, Harlequin authors are modest, but sincere. They do not claim to be producing great literature but they do maintain that romantic fiction is a worthwhile enterprise because it brings such happiness, relaxation, and reassurance to readers. Roberta Leigh says that the

core of the romances, love, is:

the one emotion that is with us from the cradle to the grave. I mean, love in all its aspects ...sexually, spiritually, mentally. Without it we are nothing, so if one can put some form of love into a book then one knows it will give pleasure to those who read it.¹⁹

Richard Hoggart, in his study of English working class culture, found that popular writers typically emerged from the culture and class for which they were producing and shared the same ethos of their readers.

They become the writers rather than the readers because they can body those fantasies into stories and characters, and because they have a fluency in language. Not the attitude to language of the creative writer, trying to mould words into a shape which will bear the peculiar quality of his experience; but a fluency, a 'gift of gab', and a facility with thousands of stock phrases which will set the figures moving on the highly conventionalized stage of their readers' imaginations. They put into words and intensify the daydreams of their readers, often with considerable technical skill. Their relation to their readers...is more direct than that of the creative writer. They do not create an object-in-itself; they act as picture-makers for what is behind the readers' daydreams....²⁰

This description seems to describe Harlequin authors who apparently accept the ideology which is explicit and implicit in the romances that they and Harlequin Enterprises produce.

Content Analysis

In order to analyze the ideological content of Harlequin Romances, a stratified random probability sample

of fifty Harlequins was analyzed in terms of plot setting, characters, and themes. See Appendix I for more details.

Content analysis has been applied by the social sciences and other fields to study a wide range of areas-- interaction processes, psychological states, historical personalities, authorship of literary documents, propaganda, and cultural values.²¹ Although it is a commonly used method, it has been referred to as "The Achilles Heel of Popular Culture".²² As there is some controversy about this approach, an understanding of some of its strengths and limitations is necessary. Debate has revolved around three general issues.

The first issue is whether content analysis has been or can be objective. Part of the popularity of content analysis grew out of its claims of objectivity, but this has been challenged by a number of people. R. Serge Denisoff, for example, has argued that researchers in the past have impressionistically selected samples of cultural materials that are not representative of the idiom.²³ This is a serious charge, but the error cited is an easy one to avoid. One chooses a random sample to avoid researcher bias in the selection process. This is what I did when choosing the sample of Harlequin Romances.

There is, however, a more basic criticism of content analysis. It is argued that it is impossible for content

analysis to be value-free because the theoretical framework chosen and the coding categories developed are subjective decisions on the part of the researchers:

Despite the stress in all these definitions on the systematic and objective nature of content analysis, this ultimately devolves upon the specific categories which are established by the researcher. Such categories are determined a priori by the researcher and determine the way in which the content is analysed. This construction of a system of categories is a crucial and distinguishing feature of content analysis....²⁴

This statement is unassailable but it shifts the debate to another level entirely. Sociology as a whole, not just content analysis, is constructed by researchers and theorists. Thomas Carney has rightly pointed out that this kind of objection is a red herring:

Complete objectivity is not possible. But the question as to whether anyone can reach an unattainable ideal is merely a rhetorical one. In fact, analyses are strung out at various points along a continuum ranging from utter subjectivity to complete objectivity. In real life the question is whether one method of analysis is closer than another to the objectivity end of this continuum. What participants to a debate or dispute require is a method of analysis which both can agree upon because it is impartial.... And there can be no doubt that content analysis is far superior to reading for impression on this score....²⁵

A major strength of systematic content analysis, then, is that it "is based on procedures which minimize participant bias and the distortions generated by unsystematic analysis."²⁶

The second issue debated has been whether content analysis must be quantitative. Bernard Berelson's classic book on content analysis defined it as "a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication", thus making content analysis quantitative by definition.²⁷ Berelson's definition has had considerable influence and much content analysis has been quantitative.

One of the primary concerns of the quantitative approach has been the frequency counts of content units. An advantage of quantification stemming from this has been the degree of precision and brevity with which one can deal with large quantities of material. However, an emphasis on quantification has been often connected with an inadequate use of theory. Numbers alone do not constitute a good analysis. Matilda White Riley and Clarice Stoll warn that:

The fruitless character of content analysis without careful reference to adequate theory is, unfortunately, all too often overlooked. Complex techniques of measurement and analysis may be applied blindly, without questioning their theoretical relevance.... Yet such oversights in connecting techniques with theory can yield meaningless--even misleading --results.²⁸

It does not matter how precisely content units are measured if they are irrelevant content units. In addition, frequency of content units is not necessarily related to their importance. Quantitative researchers have not always addressed these problems.

These limitations of quantitative content analysis have led some researchers to prefer qualitative methods. Berelson has compared these two approaches and cites a number of differences.²⁹ Researchers using the qualitative approach are as interested in what is not present in the content as they are in what is present (frequency counts). Qualitative analysis is more theoretically oriented, has less formalized categories, and uses more complex themes than quantitative content analysis. Ole Holsti adds another difference when he indicates that the qualitative approach allows one to draw more meaningful inferences.³⁰ However, in this, as in the subjectivity-objectivity debate, there is a continuum between qualitative and quantitative methods. Most qualitative theorists make quantitative statements of some type and of course quantitative researchers make inferences from their data. Ole Holsti concludes that:

the content analyst should use qualitative and quantitative methods to supplement each other. It is by moving back and forth between these approaches that the investigator is most likely to gain insight into the meaning of his data.³¹

I have combined these two approaches in my own analysis. I was interested in quantitative results to further eliminate researcher bias but a structured quantitative content analysis is more easily applied to organized, non-personal documents.³² Also there are themes in the Harlequins that are important that do not lend themselves

to quantification so a combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis is utilized.

The third issue is whether content analysis deals more appropriately with manifest or latent content. One can see from Berelson's definition given previously that he defines manifest content as the object of analysis. The advantage of focusing on manifest content is that it is a straightforward procedure that can be duplicated by others and is relatively objective. However, a disadvantage is that it may exclude important latent themes from investigation.

However, there are also difficulties with focusing on latent content. Carney comments that: "Inference from latent content involves compounding one act of subjective judgment with another."³³ Nevertheless, if proper sampling techniques and coding procedures are used when possible to minimize bias, the researcher who analyses latent as well as manifest content may go beyond description and contribute to a deeper understanding of the phenomena in question. In fact, James Curran notes that this has been the trend and that content analysis "is increasingly concerned with the analysis of latent as well as manifest meanings of messages, and their evaluation as a 'structured whole'."³⁴

In this study, the manifest content of Harlequin

Romances has been categorized and will be described. There have also been inferences drawn from this material about the underlying themes that permeate the romances as a whole. Thus I have again combined approaches to maximize their strengths and to minimize their limitations.

The remainder of the chapter will analyze the plots, settings, and principle characters of Harlequin Romances. This and analysis in the following chapter is based on the content analysis of a random sample of fifty Harlequins.

The Plot Formula

The major characteristic of Harlequin Romances is that they are formula fiction; they are a brand name product; and they are basically interchangeable. Some Harlequin representatives deny this. For example, we have seen that Fred Kerner disagrees. He maintains that books and authors are varied and distinct and, moreover, that romance readers are aware of these differences. He says that Harlequin keeps short plot summaries of all the romances they publish and checks each new manuscript before accepting it to ensure that it is not a duplicate or too similar to previously published romances. Otherwise, Kerner states, Harlequin Enterprises would be bombarded with complaints from attentive readers. Kerner's position is echoed by Peter Mann who, in his study of Mills & Boon readers, found that romance readers do discriminate.

THEY SAY: ...That romance readers don't know
one book from another.... WRONG!^{3 5}

An uninitiated reader may justifiably be baffled by such discernment, but after reading a number of Harlequins, differences do become apparent. For example, Violet Winspear is an extreme writer who creates particularly exotic characters; Janet Daily is one of the few writers who writes about the United States; Marjorie Norrell only writes doctor-nurse medical romances, and so on.

However, these differences revolve around character descriptions, settings, or minor plot mechanisms. The basic plot structure in all Harlequins is essentially the same and is easily recognized. This statement can be verified by systematic content analysis and my findings support the claim that Harlequins are formula fiction. Nevertheless, this procedure is hardly necessary to detect the pattern, for it is evident to even casual readers. One reader I interviewed commented:

They're all the same. They really are. You know, the girl's hair colour is different, and they'll describe each one in detail and the names will be different, but each story is the same. That's all there is to it.

The basic plot is that the hero and heroine meet and fall in love, but there is an obstacle to their love. In this, Harlequins conform to traditional tales of romantic love in which the lovers are constantly stymied by

insurmountable obstacles, for example, Tristan and Isolde, Orpheus and Eurydice, Romeo and Juliet. In these classics, however, love is denied by death. Harlequins, in contrast, feature a happy ending.* The obstacle is only temporary or even chimeric. The barriers are removed in the last chapter and the hero and the heroine are allowed to unite. Any variation unfolds itself within this structure.

Harlequins present an illusion of difference inspite of the underlying uniformity, an illusion of conflict inspite of the inevitable resolution. Theodor Adorno has pointed out that this kind of entertainment is consistent with the social structure of advanced capitalism:

Tension is but superficially maintained and is unlikely to have a serious effect any more. On the contrary, the spectator [reader] feels on safe ground all the time. This longing for "feeling on safe ground"...is catered to. The element of excitement is preserved only with tongue in cheek. Such changes fall in line with the potential change from a freely competitive to a virtually "closed" society from which one fears to be rejected. Everything somehow appears "predestined".³⁶

* Sometimes the great romances of the past are adopted by Harlequin writers who re-write the objectionable tragic endings. Thus the back cover of *Clouded Waters* by Sue Peters proclaims:

The feud between the Montagues and the Capulets was like a childish squabble compared to the long-standing quarrel between the Dane and Baird families. It had already ruined the romance between Marian Dane and Adam Baird. But now Fate had brought them together again. Were they being offered a second chance? Yes, they were. Romeo and Juliet may perish but Adam and Marian will live together happily ever after.

This appearance of predestination occurs on two levels in Harlequins. First, it is the impression given by the overall plots. The sequence of love, courtship, and marriage is immutable. The hero and heroine always fall in love. Any problems or obstacles they face are always resolved. The hero and heroine are always united. There are no other alternatives in a Harlequin. Indeed, no other alternatives need be even considered because love and marriage is such a satisfying, happy "choice".

Secondly, predestination, fate or coincidence is used within the romances as a plot device. Many of the books have references to fate scattered throughout, and some books rely upon it heavily as a form of explanation for behaviour and events. For example:

"I had to keep you. It wasn't my choice, far from it, it was just something I had to do. Fate, if you like, destiny." (999, p. 185)*

Then why on earth should he have this premonition... that here something more important, more dramatic than anything he had yet experienced, was going to happen? Because sheer chance had brought him, and when that happened, one never knew whether, actually, it was not chance at all? Mark shrugged his shoulders. He was something of a fatalist. What would be, would be. There was nothing one could about it. (1255, p. 4)

* All quotations from Harlequin Romances will be cited in the text by the number of the Romance and the page number. A complete list of the romances used, their numbers, titles, authors, and dates of publication can be found in Appendix I.

In these cases, it was "meant" that the hero and heroine should meet and fall in love. There is no use fighting fate and no point in fighting fate, for fate treats the characters well.

Fate is used in Harlequins to technically justify unlikely coincidences which frequently occur in the plots. Occasionally the authors are conscious of the use of fate and coincidences as a plot mechanism and have their characters comment on it. For example, in *Into a Golden Land* by Elizabeth Hoy, the heroine's father gets a job offer in Aleria just when he wants to go to a warm climate to recover from the flu. The heroine goes with him to keep house for him and discovers her English love of two years past, working for the same Sheik as her father. Even the characters' credulities are strained by this as they remark:

"You and I landing up in this oriental set-up, Young Warrender! I just can't believe it. The long arm of coincidence stretching to a breaking point."

"It is rather extraordinary," Allison agreed drily. (1520, p. 64)

Again, however, this is explained and justified as fate.

And fate had brought her all the way to Sidi bou Kef to find him again. It was like a beautiful shining pattern falling into place. (1520, p. 187)

As a result of the stress on fate and inevitability, the attitude towards life that Harlequins typically portray is one of optimistic fatalism. One does not have much

control over one's life, but things usually work out for the best. This is the personal attitude of at least some of the writers as well, as is evident in the following statements of two Harlequin writers:

Also, I'm an enternal optimist. When one door of opportunity closes, another one opens, so I'm always looking for the open door. I suppose I have a 'Pollyanna' nature because I always see something good in everything.³⁷

I've come to believe that the important things in one's life happen because they have to happen and are ready to happen, not because one plans them. Something goes "click" and the wheel of your life turns round a fraction.³⁸

These attitudes surface in the romances as we have seen. One of the most interesting examples of this is found in *To the Highest Bidder* by Hilda Pressley:

She had a sudden vision of some giant hand manoeuvring them all...into positions, picking them up and setting them down willy-nilly like lifeless chessmen. (1469, p. 124)

The similarity between this image and Adam Smith's "invisible hand" in the market place in capitalism is striking. In both cases, it is believed that people's lives are directed by some benevolent agency and that everything is as it should be.

Frank Parkin describes the social basis for this belief in an unequal society:

The interpretation of social reality in terms of chance happenings and the mysterious intervention of fate is common among groups or strata whose members have little direct control over their environment. ...the under-class in any

stratified order is much more likely to be at the receiving end of other men's decisions, than to be the originator of decisions. It is not too surprising that those who are less active than acted upon should be prone to view the social world as one governed by apparently irrational forces beyond their control.³⁹

A consequence of this interpretation is that people are not encouraged to take action against these forces that are supposedly beyond their control. As a result, this attitude reinforces the prevailing structure of inequality. Harlequins, therefore, perform an ideological legitimating function when they emphasize optimistic fatalism.*

In analyzing the plots of Harlequins more specifically, one finds that there are a number of frequently used obstacles to love. These are usually caused by a lack of communication between the hero and heroine. By far the most common obstacle is the existence of rival men and women. The plots that use this obstacle revolve around the belief of the hero or heroine that the other is in love with or even married to another man or woman.

* My argument is that the ideology within Harlequin Romances legitimates the capitalist system in which they are produced. To support my argument, it is necessary for me to show how the content of Harlequins reinforces or justifies capitalist structure and values. It is not necessary for me to show that the plot devices and images used in Harlequins are specific to capitalism. Indeed, some of them, like the emphasis on resignation to fate, have served as legitimations of other societies in other times. However, this does not negate the fact that they are also ideological props of capitalism and that is the focus of concern in this study.

This belief is usually unfounded and is of complete surprise to the hero or heroine when they are finally told of the other's suspicions.

Another obstacle often found in conjunction with a rival man or woman is that the hero and/or heroine has been given erroneous information about the romantic relationships of the other which casts doubt upon the other's character. They try to fight their growing attraction to the other person but they are unsuccessful. This fortunately does not matter because the information is later revealed to be false and their love is vindicated. For example, the heroine in *Golden Harvest* by Stella Frances Nel falsely assumes the hero is married so when he tries to make love to her, she thinks he is a philanderer. This misunderstanding is cleared up, but she still thinks that he is committed to the rival woman. When this misconception is also destroyed, she confesses:

"I've loved you from the time I met you, so you might as well know. Even when I thought you were married. My mind was disgusted, but my heart was irrevocably yours!" (1708, p. 187)

There are additional misunderstandings which do not revolve around suspected rivals. These are usually noble or innocent actions on the part of the hero or heroine that are wrongly perceived or maliciously interpreted to the hero or heroine by less noble and innocent people.

For example, in *Rocks Under Shining Water* by Jane Donnelly, the heroine is told that the rich, land-owning hero is a tyrant who has destroyed traditional village life. It turns out, however, that he has brought prosperity to the villagers and is tolerant, responsible, and hardworking. In *Dark Viking* by Mary Wibberley, the hero suspects the heroine of being a foreign spy who is interested in the Early Warning System which protects America and Western NATO powers from sudden missile attacks from the East.* Instead she is a weary model on holidays and is interested only in him. A little trust and communication resolves all of these obstacles.

Other obstacles are not based on misunderstandings, but they are no less easily resolved. These difficulties include age differences, pressing family responsibilities or loyalties, and occasionally social class differences. By the end of the story, these difficulties have either been redefined as unimportant and are no longer an obstacle in the light of "real love", or else the hindering conditions have changed during the course of the story. For example, an overly young heroine is suddenly matured by love, or a heroine's dependent crippled younger sister miraculously walks and gets married, which frees the heroine to marry

* This is one of the few Harlequins with a direct political reference.

as well.

One characteristic that all of these types of obstacles have in common is their focus on the individual. The Harlequin world is one of isolated individuals, each caught up in their own private lives with their own unique problems. Structural conflicts are over-shadowed or replaced by personal conflicts. As a result, problems are resolved by a combination of fate, luck, interpersonal communication, and individual initiative.

Richard Hoggart argues that this view of the world is typical of working class people:

Working-class people are only rarely interested in theories or movements. They do not usually think of their lives as leading to an improvement in status or to some financial goal. They are enormously interested in people: they have the novelist's fascination with individual behaviour, with relationships--though not so as to put them into a pattern, but for their own sake.⁴⁰*

Hoggart attributes this attitude to the socio-economic distance that looms between the working class and the upper class who has power over their lives. The working class is relatively powerless and takes refuge in a preoccupation with the intimate, the concrete, and the individual. This

* There are limits to the validity of this claim. Obviously, working class people have been actively involved in social movements, like unionization. However, Hoggart claims that solidarity within the working class is primarily experienced on an interpersonal level and is not usually translated into class consciousness and direct political action.

is a world where they can exert some power.

This situation of powerlessness and the preoccupation with individuals is also characteristic of women in our society. In both instances, the working class' and women's response to their positions must be seen as an adaptive, rather than oppositional, response. A total focus on individual problems and solutions diverts attention from social problems and solutions. Therefore Harlequins, through their portrayal of a world of isolated individuals reinforces the status quo.* This is again an ideological function of Harlequin.

Setting

Part of the appeal of Harlequins for readers are the foreign settings. Harlequin Enterprises' advertisements

* This may seem like a ponderous and inappropriate statement. One might protest that one hardly expects a sociological analysis of social problems in light fiction. To some extent, this is a justifiable reservation. Nevertheless, there are two important reasons why such an analysis has been included. First of all, it is possible to blend insight into social problems and light entertainment fiction. For example, the Martin Beck Police Mystery series by Maj Sjöwall and Per Wahlöö illustrate this combination. Television programs and movies have also achieved this. If it is not an impossibility, then it must be a choice and that choice tells us something. It is significant that we do not expect our light fiction to be concerned with social issues and that instead we expect "pure escapism". Secondly, as shall be shown, Harlequins are not ideologically neutral. Those who say that entertainment, not ideology, is the intent of the novels overlook the fact that ideology is embedded in the images within the romances and, indeed, in the structure of the

usually emphasize the settings as a selling point. A pamphlet advertising Harlequin Presents claims:

You'll be swept to distant lands you've dreamed
of visiting... You'll come to know them so well,
you'll feel like you've lived there!

Back cover "grabbers" on the books, as well as front cover illustrations, usually point out the settings.

The very air of magical Morocco breathed romance,
instilling thoughts of love into every heart....
(921)

The cover of the same book shows the hero and heroine racing across the desert on horseback, the hero wearing traditional Moroccan headgear.

The settings and the atmosphere they create are of considerable importance to the romances as they constitute part of Harlequins' appeal. A great many readers' letters to Harlequin Enterprises mention the attraction the settings have for them:

I spend many enjoyable hours reading the excellent books: learning about the culture, customs, and productivity of the locale in each story.⁴¹

I appreciate them for the delightful armchair traveling they afford. I have nearly worn out a geographic map of the British Isles looking for locations of stories and also use encyclopedia maps of other countries mentioned in the stories.⁴²

A sizeable number of Harlequins are set either

novels as a whole. Ideological dissemination may not be the author's or the company's primary purpose, but it would be a serious error to ignore this aspect of the Harlequin phenomena.

in their entirety or partially in England (44 per cent of the sample). Most of the other settings are British Commonwealth countries--Scotland, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, etc., (another 32 per cent of the sample). This is probably due to the fact that most of the writers are English. The remaining settings are primarily European--Portugal, Italy, Holland, and Greece. Some of the romances take place in more than one country and are travel tours which move from one country to the next with each chapter.

Leslie Fiedler comments on this focusing on settings in romances. His comments also apply to Harlequins:

Action itself becomes the end, the evasion of ennui is sought through a constant change of tempo and place. Though certain landscapes... come to have symbolic overtones, they are chiefly prized as examples of hitherto unexplored settings, glimpses of the unknown. Vicarious tourism draws the reader on....⁴³

But the tour is a package deal; it is both artificial and superficial. Although the details of the setting description may be accurate, the portrayal is usually glamorized and stereotyped.

The amount of setting and scenery description varies among the authors and books, but in almost every novel there is some general description. The following passage, a completely typical one, touches upon most of the elements usually described:

Time passed; the fleeting twilight shades of gold and orange and rust melted into the deep purple of night. Stars appeared, hanging like diamonds suspended beneath a canopy of softest tulle. A wisp of cloud here and there, a floating moon, the calm dark sea, and carried on the breeze the scent of roses and jasmine. Sheep bells on the mountainside, a distant bray of a donkey.... This was Cyprus, island in the sun. (1672, p. 25)*

Sometimes there is an elaborate categorizing of the area's flora and fauna. For example, in Essie Summers' *Through All The Years*, the reader is told about no less than twenty-five types of flowers, shrubs, and trees, to mention just the flora. In these instances I suspect that many readers skip or skim the detail in order to "get on with the story". One reader comments:

It's nice to read and learn about other countries, but a little less scenery and more romance wouldn't come amiss.⁴⁴

Most Harlequins, however, are not so detailed and would not call forth protest. Authors usually are content to evoke the appropriate atmosphere with a few stock phrases and images. In these cases, Corfu blends into South Africa

* This passage cited sounds like an advertisement from a travel agency or from the Cyprus tourist bureau, and occasionally Harlequins do whet readers' appetites for more than armchair travel.

Our first overseas visit was enriched this year by reading about various areas and cities in your books and magazines. Indeed, I was anxious to see places I'd never given much thought to before! *Harlequin*, IV (No. 9), 5.

blends into Scotland. Only the names and temperatures change. As a result, the settings, as well as the plots, give the illusion of diversity, but the whole remains overwhelmingly the same. The settings in Harlequins ultimately are background to the real action and that is, the romance. One can fall desperately in love anywhere in the world--whether it be under an apple tree in North America or a palm tree in Africa.

The Characters

Harlequins revolve around two main characters, the hero and the heroine. The books usually begin by introducing the heroine and she is seldom absent from the action throughout the entire book. Within the first two chapters, the hero also enters the picture. The reader can easily recognize these characters. One might expect this to be true of the heroine, but more surprisingly, there is equally little suspense about the identity of the hero. Both characters can be recognized by the descriptions of their appearances, personality, and socio-economic backgrounds, as well as by the amount of detail and space given to them within the novels and even on the cover of the books.

Besides the hero and heroine, there are usually minor characters central to the plot, the rival men and

women. Ninety-eight per cent of the books in the sample included male or female rivals. The presence of these characters varies to some extent from book to book.

Although out of fifty books, there are fifty heroes and fifty heroines, there are fifty-four rival men and forty-four rival women. Overall, 84 per cent of the romances had female rivals and 94 per cent had male rivals.*

There can be either a single rival or numerous rivals in any Harlequin. For example, some of the romances have the hero and heroine equally suspicious of a rival male and female while others may feature two suspected rival men and one rival woman, or one rival man only, or two rival women only, etc. The most rivals appeared in one Harlequin in which the hero and heroine suspect no less than five rivals (three men and two women). The following section will describe the characteristics of the major and minor characters.

The Heroines

The main focus of attention in Harlequins, in terms of characters, is on the heroines. They are the characters

* Often rivals are not really rivals at all, but the hero and heroine think they are and act accordingly. These characters were included in my analysis as rivals. However, I did not include the seven instances of people who were dead but who were still considered to be rivals in spirit as there was usually very little information given about them.

that are developed most fully--not only their appearance and socio-economic background, but also their thoughts and emotions, even their bodily sensations. The heroine is the character with whom the readers are expected to identify, no matter how different the heroine or her experiences may be from themselves and their lives.

Harlequin heroines vary in appearance from plainly attractive to beautiful. No one is ever ugly, homely, or just plain. For example, when an author is being "critical" of a heroine's appearance, she may indicate that the heroine's nose is a little too small and her mouth a little too generous for "ideal beauty",* or she may say that the heroine does not have a very conspicuous face but

* In case anyone is uncertain about what constitutes "Ideal Beauty," Harlequin's magazine ran an article on this subject, describing it and offering advice on how to approach this ideal. The following are brief excerpts:

THE PERFECT FACE is oval and ideally, the classical oval face can be divided lengthways into three equal sections....

PERFECT EYES are large and sparkling with thick, curving lashes and a lot of space between the eye and the eyebrow.

PERFECT LIPS are soft and curvy, and the ideal mouth should be the distance between the pupils of the eyes in width.

THE PERFECT WAIST is ten inches smaller than bust and hips.

THE PERFECT PAIR OF LEGS, when placed together, standing, should show three spaces--just above the ankles, just below the knees, and just above the knees.

Rebecca Scott, "What is Ideal Beauty," *Harlequin*, IV (No. 4), 7.

add that she has gold highlights in her hair, wide hazel eyes, and neat, pretty hands and feet (1071, pp. 5, 119), so the overall impression is still favourable and glamorized.

Eyes and hair are particularly emphasized. Heroines usually have large, thickly fringed eyes of wonderful colours --dark, smoky blue (1812, p. 18), gold-green (1160, p. 35), pansy brown (1975, p. 12), or blue-violet (1396, p. 24). They also have glorious hair of varying lengths and styles--silver-pale (1308, p. 7), thick chestnut gold (1520, p. 10), supple honey-bright blonde (921, p. 5), or molten red-gold (880, p. 9).

Heroines can be either tall or short, but they are always slender, delicate, and physically vulnerable. Heroines have "a slender figure of nymph-like charm and captivating allure". (1672, p. 43) They have very small feet (880, p. 75), slim ankles (1355, p. 96), slim legs (1952, p. 50), a slender, tiny waist (1595, p. 86), slim hands (1708, p. 28), slender fingers (921, p. 8), slim shoulders (843, p. 110), and small, fine features (1909, p. 7), which may include a small nose (1355, p. 5), a small chin (1952, p. 55), or even small teeth (921, p. 15), set in a small, finely shaped head (1268, p. 5).

The heroines are also soft. They have soft lips (1812, p. 76), soft hands (973, p. 144), a soft laugh (1255, p. 121), a soft mouth and soft hair (1160, p. 138),

soft eyes (999, p. 18), soft skin (1879, p. 48), and a soft heart (921, p. 27).

As one can see, the heroine's appearance is described in some detail and she is always pictured on the cover of the book as well. Heroines are not ravishing, irresistibly beautiful goddesses. Their attractiveness is built upon solid, wholesome grounds: the hair, bones, skin, and teeth. Their kind of beauty is not just skin deep. It radiates from within.

The heroine's personality is worthy of her appearance. The most outstanding character trait of a Harlequin heroine is her warmth, her compassion, her generosity, and her unselfishness. Heroines are loving people who often care more about others than they do about themselves:

Here...was love, devotion, loyalty, all the womanly virtues as well as the beauty of heart, mind, and character which enhances the beauties of physical charms and which outlasts them through all the years which lay ahead. (1042, p. 191)

The second most frequent characteristic is the heroine's honesty, sincerity, purity, or innocence. Heroines are usually so open and ingenuous that they are described as being "transparently honest". This is usually problematic for them as there is a fine line between naivety and gullibility. If the first trait of warmth leads her to loving the hero, the second trait of naivety is often the obstacle between them, with the heroine temporarily

believing every preposterous lie about the hero that the rivals can concoct.

The third character trait redeems the heroine, however, and that trait is loyalty. Heroines are responsible and dutiful, and they stand behind their friends, family, and loves. Sometimes this only applies if they know the person in question is a good person, (otherwise it would conflict with their honesty and morality), but other times they are loyal even when they are not sure about the person's goodness but love him or her anyway. In these cases, they are blindly in love. Sometimes "knowing" whether a person is good or not depends on learned facts; other times, it is based upon sheer "instinct". At any rate, heroines remain faithful and true, and are ultimately rewarded for this loyalty.

Other kinds of personality traits heroines may have include good humor or affability, common sense, courage, resourcefulness, modesty, and sentimentality. Overall, their perceptions of people and events and their subsequent responses are based on emotion rather than reason, but these emotions are generally portrayed as being valuable and good, if sometimes misguided. (The problem of misguided good intentions is worked out in the romance; by the end, the reader knows the hero will provide the necessary guidance in the future.)

The three predominant traits of compassion, honesty, and loyalty are constant, but temperament can vary. Heroines can be either firey, spirited, and passionate, or serene, reserved, and gentle. The spirited independent heroines predominate slightly. A reason for this might be that one can create a faster paced novel if there is conflict and verbal riposte between the hero and heroine than if they are immediately compatible and simply engage in polite conversation throughout the story. In fact, a good deal of the action in this first kind of Harlequin consists of the "taming" of the independent heroine. Conversely, a certain amount of the action in the Harlequins with shy, reserved heroines consist of the hero slowly becoming convinced of the heroine's regard for him and of the heroine finally becoming "forward" enough to admit her love for him.

The appearance and personality of the heroine are always known and socio-economic characteristics are usually mentioned as well, although the amount and kind of detail for the latter will vary. This information may be stated directly, indirectly, or even omitted. In the ensuing description of these characteristics, the amount of information that was available for each characteristic will be indicated.

Heroines are relatively young, usually in their

late teens or early twenties (68 per cent of my sample). The average and median age of heroines for whom there is specific age information is 21-22 years old. The youngest heroine is 17 years old; the oldest is 29 years old. There are no heroines over 30 years old. In nearly a quarter of the books, the heroine's specific age is not indicated, although there is usually a general impression of youth or a description like "in her twenties" or "young".

Heroines are always single. Only one heroine had been married before, but she had been a widow for two years before the story begins. A few others have been engaged before or are even currently engaged, but these attachments are soon dismissed.

The heroines in my sample are all English in nationality, mostly from England, a few from Commonwealth countries like Australia. The majority of the heroines are away from their home country for at least part of the story because they are traveling, going to take a job in another country, or visiting someone who lives in another country. Thus, the majority of the heroines are not on their "home turf" and this often makes them vulnerable and makes them appear to the other characters in the story to be ignorant, stupid, or insensitive. The readers know that they are not, but this additional misunderstanding between characters adds to the plot.

In terms of education, 4 per cent of the heroines have had no formal schooling whatsoever; 34 per cent have had post-high school, non-university education like nurse's training or secretarial school; and 2 per cent have graduated from medical school. The educational levels of the rest of the heroines are unknown. One can assume that most of them entered and probably finished high school on the basis of their occupations and references to their school days, chums, and activities. On the whole, education is not considered to be a vitally important aspect of the heroine's life, for heroines are either not highly educated or their educational levels are not mentioned at all.

The heroines' labour force participation will be dealt with extensively in the next chapter but a brief outline will be given here. The majority of the heroines are in the semi-professions or clerical occupations. Most are in traditionally feminine occupations like nursing, teaching, secretarial work, and modeling. A minority of heroines have no formal occupation and are not working in the labour force.

At the beginning of the romances, the heroines are over-whelmingly middle (44 per cent) and working (46 per cent) class.* They own very little property. Only

* Class position is defined primarily by the characters' relationship to the means of production. Using this criteria, the upper class is composed of individuals

28 per cent own either a home or a car. The number owning capital or productive property is smaller still--8 per cent of the heroines. By far the majority of the heroines are propertyless. They will be loved for themselves alone.

By the end of the stories, they are not only loved but upwardly mobile because of their marriages or impending marriages to men in superior social positions. Half of the middle class heroines and all of the working class heroines experience this kind of mobility. The extent of mobility varies. A heroine most frequently goes from a tenuous no-frills-but-surviving existence to assured comfort, but occasionally she shoots from starvation poverty to sumptuous riches. A result of this prosperity is that the heroines will not have to work in the labour force after marriage. None of the heroines declare their firm intention to continue regular full time or even part time work, and most of them do quit or plan to quit their jobs after marriage.

who own income-producing property and who are employees of wage labour. The middle class consists of individuals who own and manage their own means of production, plus those who perform capital functions in management positions. The working class is composed of individuals who sell their labour for a wage. Supporting class criteria such as occupation, education and family background are also considered and included. The main effect this has is that the middle class category is extended to incorporate individuals in salaried but professional or semi-professional occupations.

Of all the characters, heroines have the most family mentioned in the novels, yet a good many of the heroines are still relatively alone, and some of them are preoccupied with their loneliness. Thirty-eight per cent of them are orphans. Another 24 per cent have only one parent, with less than one third (30 per cent) having both parents alive. The rest of the heroines' parents are not mentioned (8 per cent). One assumes that they are not important to the heroines as a source of support, either financially or emotionally. Even the heroines with parents are not in close contact with them since the heroines are often a long distance away from home. Parents in England, even loving parents, cannot offer on-the-spot assistance if one is troubled in Greece.

The majority of heroines are also apparently single children; 42 per cent of the heroines have brothers or sisters who are mentioned. A smaller number, 32 per cent have intimate friends of either sex with whom they can do things, share confidences, ask for help or advice. These figures over-estimate the support systems available to heroines because brothers and sisters may be younger and dependent upon the heroine, or beautiful sisters may turn out to be rivals, or at least perceived rivals, for the hero's love. This is also true of some women friends. There may or may not be intended competition on their part,

but it nevertheless affects the relationship between the heroine and these women, thus isolating the heroines further.

Perhaps the heroines as characters can be best understood and summarized by a composite picture. The Harlequin heroine is, to use Peter Mann's phrase, "Every-woman". She is not a raving beauty, but she has some good features which make her attractive. This attractiveness is reinforced by her personality, for above all else, she is a nice person, kind and loving, responsible and trustworthy. However, she is not perfect. She has bouts of temperament or irrationality, but she also has good intentions, so these failings may be forgiven. She is middle or working class, with a high school education. She is working at a traditionally female job until she gets married. At this point she will quit and return full-time to the home to care for her husband and eventually their children. She is relatively poor and alone in the world, but these distressing conditions will be remedied by the hero, marriage, and consequent ecstasy for which she will strive to be worthy for the rest of her life.

Harlequin heroines are a continuation of a long tradition of fictional female characters. Margaret Dalziel, in a study of cheap popular literature of the mid-nineteenth century, described the typical heroine in these books. They are similar to Harlequin heroines:

Young and lovely, religious, submissive and dependent, confiding and sensitive and chaste, accepting without question the destiny of marriage, the heroine emerges from the pages of the popular novels and periodical as a well understood and consistent type.⁴⁵

This type of heroine has widespread modern popularity as well and can be commonly found in gothic romances,⁴⁶ love comics,⁴⁷ mass periodical fiction,⁴⁸ and confession magazines.⁴⁹

John Cawelti maintains that the identification of the reader with the main character is a crucial aspect of formula fiction and is different from the sort of identification that occurs between the reader and the main character in mimetic literature ("serious" literature):

Its purpose is not to make me confront motives and experiences in myself that I might prefer to ignore but to take me out of myself by confirming an idealized self-image.... The art of formulaic character creation requires the establishment of some direct bond between us and a superior figure....⁵⁰

Part of the durability of the type of heroine just described is due to the fact that she is a character with whom readers can easily identify, for "she is at the same time like all other girls yet like all other girls want to be."⁵¹ Harlequin heroines conform not only to a literary character type, but also to a traditional female sex role stereotype. Various writers have pointed out that women in our society have been taught to be concerned about their

youthfulness and appearance,⁵² to be emotional and expressive,⁵³ and to be relatively passive and dependent.⁵⁴ This particular socialization process is both a result of and a cause of structural conditions. As indicated in Chapter I, sex role differentiation is functional for capitalism. Harlequins, through their positive portrayals of heroines who exemplify traditional womanhood, reinforce this process and the structures that give rise to it.

The Heroes

Readers are also well informed about the Harlequin hero although they are not familiar with his every thought or emotion unless he verbalizes them, which is usually not the case. Nevertheless, the hero is obviously crucial to the story and the character is described with a certain amount of detail.

Harlequin heroes have a commanding physical presence. The most outstanding physical feature of the heroes is that they are invariably tall and strong. These are no short, weak heroes. Just as everything about a heroine is small, soft, or slender, so everything about a hero is big, hard, or strong. The hero may have strong features (1723, p. 21), in a strong face (1450, p. 23), which may include a hard mouth (1595, p. 69), muscular lips (1185, p. 102), strong eyes (1160, p. 190), strong teeth (1879,

p. 45), a strong jaw (1708, p. 13), and a big nose which indicates strength of character (1071, p. 73), a strong throat (1754, p. 81), wide, powerful shoulders (800, p. 9), strong arms (1909, p. 35), strong hands (1268, p. 26) with big palms (1952, p. 53) and fingers like steel pincers (843, p. 84), a strong heart (1355, p. 189), and even tough knees (800, p. 152). In other words, he is a giant of a man (1854, p. 23), and everything about him breathes masculinity (1909, p. 25). These heroes are usually ruggedly handsome or just rugged.*

Heroes have equally imposing personalities. Their main characteristic is their self-confidence, their arrogance. This self-confidence is not mere sham. It is based on a solid foundation of achievement. In fact, one hero is described as being "competence itself" (1268, p. 6). Besides having a complete and absolute knowledge of his large corporation, he is an excellent dancer, and accomplished horseman, bi-lingual, a fashion expert, and a good

* Although there were no examples in my sample, there are Harlequin heroes whose faces are badly scarred and who are crippled or maimed. See, for example, *A Mask of Scars* by Anne Mather, *The Little Nobody* by Violet Winspear, or *The Leopard in the Snow* by Anne Mather. However, even these heroes are tall, strong, and physically compelling. They are relatively infrequent characters and are usually found in the more extreme Harlequin Presents series rather than the regular Harlequin series. One need hardly add that there are no equivalent heroines.

lover. Even his competence, however, is overshadowed by another hero who numbers amongst his talents the ability to speak eight languages fluently (1879). Another example of an all-around accomplished hero is one who is a brilliant barrister, plays polo, is captain of a cricket team, is a beautiful diver, an expert swimmer, plays first class tennis, rides faultlessly, is the perfect host, plays the piano delightfully with a great sense of rhythm, and studies history in his spare time (880). Such heroes may perhaps be excused for a touch of arrogance!

Heroes combine ruthlessness and drive with kindness and tenderness. They are "men of steel and velvet". At first, they may appear to be insensitive and unfeeling, but they are capable of strong emotion. They can be passionate and loving once they let go of their "iron control". This vented passion can be as violent as it is tender.

Flamboyant heroes are often paired up with temperamental heroines. In their encounters with each other, "sparks fly" and a fair amount of the plot revolves around resolving their personality clashes. By the end of the romance, the hero and heroine are in complete agreement and are so in love that they cannot remember what the conflict was all about in the first place:

Now she could only look into Brett's blue eyes, wondering why she had ever thought them hard and cold, uncompromising eyes. (1520, p. 190)

There is a minority of heroes who are nice, generous, and good-humoured throughout the book. They are usually coupled with the nice, quiet, good-humoured, shy heroines. The plot in these instances, as noted already, may revolve around overcoming reticence as well as the usual external obstacles or rival loves. Generally, however, heroes are authoritative, determined, capable of tenderness, urbane, passionate, proud, just, and charming. They are heroes--literally and figuratively larger than life.

In part, the heroes' accomplishments may be explained by their ages. They are not "callow youths". The ages of the heroes, which are specifically noted for nearly three-quarters of the sample, range from 26 to 40 years old. Most of the heroes are in their early 30's. They are the oldest and most experienced of the major and minor characters.

Although by far the majority of heroes have never been married, a small proportion of them (8 per cent) have been previously married and are widowers. There are no divorced heroes, although their former marriages may not have been happy ones. Most of these widowers have a child, in my sample invariably a small boy, from their previous

marriage, so they may be parents as well.*

Just over three-quarters of the heroes are from England or British Commonwealth countries. The remainder are from Europe (18 per cent) or South America and Mexico (4 per cent).** During the stories, 52 per cent of the heroes are living in the country of their nationality. Another 22 per cent primarily live there but travel for part of the story as well. Some of them are "citizens of the world", with homes in more than one country. Unlike the heroines, they are nearly always familiar with and at ease in their surroundings.

Heroes are also more educated than heroines. Forty per cent of the heroes have had university education. Slightly over half of these attended medical school. Another 4 per cent have had skilled apprenticeship training. However, educational level for the majority of heroes is unknown and does not really matter. If a hero is a wealthy aristocrat descended from an ancient lineage who owns large estates, a castle, cars, and a yacht, it adds very little to say that he is also an university graduate.

The occupations, property ownership, and social

* In these cases, the heroines are attracted to the child as much as to the hero. In several other instances as well, children--wards, nephews or nieces, patients, and so on--provide the link between the hero and heroine.

** There is only one hero whose nationality is not definitely known, and he is either French or English.

class status of the heroes are described with more detail. The most outstanding occupational characteristics of the heroes is that by and large they are independent businessmen. Fifty-six per cent of them own their own businesses which range from family farms to multinational corporations. Another 34 per cent are self-employed professionals, generally doctors and engineers, or musicians, artists, and authors. The remaining heroes are top management in large corporations. They may be employed by others but even these heroes are portrayed to have complete job autonomy for they are so competent that they are free to choose where and for whom they will work, or they have the option of setting up their own business if they so desired. Thus heroes are seldom accountable to anyone but themselves.

As one can see from the above information, the majority of heroes own income-producing property.* An even greater number (98 per cent) own major consumer goods like houses, villas, castles, yachts, airplanes, etc. This is in striking contrast to the heroines' propertyless positions.

Heroes are predominantly upper class (62 per cent) by virtue of either their ownership of extensive capital

* Besides the 56 per cent who own businesses, another 10 per cent of the heroes own income-producing property of some type, usually unspecified.

or aristocratic backgrounds. They are usually wealthy members of "old families" who employ both productive labourers and loyal family retainers. The other 38 per cent of the heroes are middle class. These are the professionals, small businessmen or farmers who are financially secure but not really wealthy. They may employ one or two people but generally only personal servants or a housekeeper. There are no working class heroes.

Heroes, like the heroines, are relatively alone in the world. Slightly less than one-quarter of the heroes have both parents alive, although another 12 per cent have one parent. However, the majority of the heroes (66 per cent) are either orphans or their parents are not mentioned. They have a few more brothers and sisters (46 per cent) than the heroines, but less intimate friends. Only 10 per cent of the heroes have friends of either sex in whom they can confide. Six per cent of them have children of their own. Heroes, on the whole, are even more removed from personal contact than the heroines because of their responsibilities. They are often responsible for not only the well being of their immediate families, but for the prosperity of the entire village. They bear the weight of the world on their strong shoulders.

A composite picture of a Harlequin hero would include, then, a tall, strong rugged man who is self-

confident, capable, and charming. He owns his own business or is an independent professional of middle or upper class background. He comes from a good family and is generally cultured, perhaps with a college education. He is well-off with no financial problems or occupational insecurities. He is relatively alone in the world. He can take responsibility and isolation in his stride, but he will alleviate his remoteness by marrying the heroine who will shower him with love, compassion, and solicitude.

This hero, like the heroine, is the result of both a literary tradition and our society's structure and values. Although the Harlequin hero has undergone some modifications, he shares many of the qualities that Dalziel indicates were typical of the hero of nineteenth century popular fiction. One need only think of Darcy in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* to realize the continuity of the wealthy, aloof yet passionate hero. This kind of hero is also consistent with a male sex role stereotype that is still a widely held ideal. Deborah David and Robert Brannon argue that there are four themes or dimensions that comprise the male sex role as we know it:

1. No Sissy Stuff: The stigma of all stereotyped feminine characteristics and qualities, including openness and vulnerability.
2. The Big Wheel: Success, status, and the need to be looked up to.
3. The Sturdy Oak: A manly air of toughness, confidence, and self-reliance.

4. Give 'Em Hell!: The aura of aggression, violence, and daring.⁵⁵

These are all characteristics that the harlequin heroes possess to varying degrees. The heroes are a part of this literary and social heritage. Harlequins positively portray these heroes, and, therefore, they reinforce the traditional male sex role that the heroes typify.

Rival Women

The rival woman, as a minor character, is more sketchily portrayed although she plays an important role in the plot. There are two types of rival women: a woman who is an intentional rival who really does want the hero (86 per cent) or a woman whom the heroine perceives to be a rival but who does not want the hero (14 per cent). These two types of rivals are also two different types of women in other ways as well, as shall be discussed.

Intentional rival women are extraordinarily beautiful or striking. They are usually everything a heroine is not but wishes to be. For example, if a heroine is petite, the rival woman is gracefully tall; if the heroine is tall, the rival woman is daintily petite. The intended rival woman is irresistible. In *Bright Wilderness*, by Gwen Westwood, the rival woman, Carlotta, is gorgeous with long, sleek, dark hair, perfect features, large dark eyes with long curling lashes, a full bee-sting mouth, a small

pink tongue, dimples, lovely shoulders, a small Tanagre Venus figure with perfect breasts; she is utterly feminine with "a provocative air of innocence and allure about her that...could have a most devastating effect upon any man." (1396, p. 35) Perceived rivals may be either arresting like intentional rivals or merely attractive like the heroine.

Intentional rival women, unlike heroines, do not have an equally attractive personality. At best they are self-centered and thoroughly spoiled. At worst, they are mean, mercenary, cold, calculating, aggressive bitches with no finer feelings, who would stop at nothing to get the hero, including blackmail and possibly murder. These traits are the rival woman's true personality, but this is revealed only to the heroine and the reader. On the surface, the rival woman may appear to be charming, warm, and sophisticated. This is the only side of her that the hero is allowed to see, unless her poise slips at the end in her frustration at not winning the hero. Then she may reveal herself to be the shallow, vicious person she actually is.

The perceived rival woman may, in contrast, be very nice, and the heroine is torn between her jealousy and her liking of the rival in these cases. She may even be inspired enough to nobly relinquish any claims she has on the hero or to voluntarily withdraw from the competition

for the hero's love. The former situation with the despicable intentional rival is far more frequent, however.

Rival women are generally older than heroines. There are no teenage rival women, although 16 per cent of the heroines are teenagers, and 30 per cent of the rival women are over 26 years old in comparison to only 8 per cent of the heroines. The youngest rival is 21 years old; the oldest is 33 years old. Ages are unknown for over half of the rival women, but the reader is given the impression that the rival is an "older" woman.

She is also more experienced or "sophisticated" than the heroine. A greater proportion of rivals than heroines have been married before. Fourteen per cent of the rivals are widows, 2 per cent are divorced, and 5 per cent are still married. (The latter are usually only perceived rivals rather than rivals in fact.) Perhaps as a result of their experience, rival women are more bold and more directly sexual in their pursuit of the hero. For example, some of them express their willingness to have an affair with the hero.*

Rival women, like heroines, are predominantly English (50 per cent) or of British Commonwealth background

* Such willingness is revealed to be a tactical error if the rival is ultimately hoping for marriage with the hero, because the hero would never marry a "loose woman".

(another 23 per cent), but there is also a representation of "foreign" women (16 per cent) who are even more exotic than is usual for rival women. They are from Europe or South America. The remainder of rival women's nationalities are unknown.

Most of the rival women are living in the country of their nationality for at least part of the time of the story, or, like the heroes, they are familiar with the setting. It is the heroines who are the outsiders, the strangers in the novels.*

Educational information is not usually given for rival women. In the sample, data is available for only a quarter of the rivals. Most of these have post-high school, non-university education like nurse's training, modelling classes or business school, but two rivals have attended college. Just as the heroes' education is unimportant because of their competence and wealth, the educational achievements of rival women are also insignificant because of their great beauty, wealth, or marital ambitions.

The rival women who work have occupations similar to the heroines' traditional female jobs, but only half of the rival women participate in the labour force at all during the stories. Part of the reason why so many rival

* This is emphasized in the title of one Harlequin in my sample: Eleanor Farnes' *The Young Intruder*.

women do not work or work sporadically is that they or their parents are wealthy. This applies to 39 per cent of the rival women. Still others have incomes sufficient enough for them to live "comfortably" without working, although they are not truly wealthy.

Rival women, like the heroes, are predominantly upper and middle class. Forty-eight per cent of these women are in the upper class, 43 per cent are in the middle class, and 9 per cent are in the working class. Interestingly, some of the working class rival women will marry men of higher social positions by the end of the books, so upward mobility through marriage extends to some rival women as well as heroines. Rival women are consistent with the pattern of isolated individuals. Under half (45 per cent) of the rival women have parents living. Only 18 per cent have siblings and fewer still have any friends. This is particularly true of the intentional rivals. Any friends they have are ones they "cultivate" in order to further their self-interest. This policy especially applies to any potential women friends. Rival women would have no compunction about forsaking or betraying women friends if it was in their interests to do so. A rival woman is sometimes referred to as being "a man's woman", but she is not a friend to men because she is either using them or is in pursuit of them as potential husband or lover

material. The rival woman is a loner. She relies on no one.

The average rival woman, then, is irresistibly beautiful, but a bitch. She is about thirty years old. She is usually English but may be an exotic "foreigner". She is upper or middle class. She may be a widow who is living on the inheritance from her late husband; she may be a single woman who is living on the wealth of her family or working for a living in a feminine occupation. Her main preoccupation, however, is with getting a man, not just any man, but the prize, the hero. She is relatively alone in the world and is, as the expression goes, "looking out for number one".

The beautiful evil rival woman has her predecessors in fiction. One may recall that Jane Eyre wins Mr. Rochester away from an aristocratic, patronising beauty and Kay Mussell has described precisely such a character in her article, "Beautiful and Damned: The Sexual Woman in Gothic Fiction". Mussell explicitly connects the fictional character and the traditional female sex role in our society. She notes that rival women are "negative role models, providing reinforcement for the female reader of the traditional assumptions of proper feminine behavior (exemplified by the heroine)...."⁵⁶ Mussell argues that the popularity of romances that still portray women in these ways is

evidence that women continue to hold traditional values in spite of the women's movement. Once again it is evident that Harlequin characters are a part of a literary tradition and society, and further, that the portrayals of these characters are conservative in that they reinforce existing sex roles.

Rival Men

Like rival women, rival men are sketchily outlined. One is given impressions of characters rather than actual development of characters.*

Rival men are either attractive without being handsome or they are preposterously good looking, as one author puts it. (1096, p. 6) Their handsomeness is based on smooth, regular features. Compared to the rugged handsomeness of the heroes, their features are a little too smooth and a little too regular. They are usually slender in comparison to the massive bulk of the heroes. They may even be slightly effeminate with carefully trimmed curls and elegant wrists (1520, p. 14), or their chin may betray a lack of strength and their lower lip a trace of petulance. (1308, p. 32) Overall, they are suavely, boyishly attractive

*None of the characters in Harlequins are developed in depth but this is specially true of rival men and women. Other characters who are even more peripheral to the plot are described in a line or two.

with carefully cultivated rakishness and style, although there is a small minority representation of tall, sturdily built, rugged rivals.

Correspondingly, rival men can be divided into roughly two personality types. By far the majority are charming, flattering playboys. They are the type who are great fun to go out with but are not considered to be good "marriage material", because they are egotistical, irresponsible, superficial, manipulative, unfaithful, unscrupulous, and basically weak. The remaining minority of rival men are serious, conscientious, self-effacing, hard-working, dependable and companionable. This type of man is a dear, but deadly dull.

Although specific ages are unknown for just over half of the rival men, they are usually older than heroines, but younger than heroes. There is even a teenage rival in one instance, although he is obviously unsuitable!

Peter looked so young in his tight trousers.
He hadn't really filled out yet into manhood,
she noticed with surprise. (1071, p. 71)

Although there are no heroes who are twenty-five years old or younger, 15 per cent of the rival men are in this age category. Most of the rivals are in their late 20's while most of the heroes are in their early 30's. Rival men are usually single and have never been married before. There is only one case of a divorced man and no widowers

among the rivals in my sample.

Rival men are predominantly English (63 per cent) or of British Commonwealth descent (another 20 per cent), with the rest being European, South American, or American. Almost three-quarters are living in the country of their nationality, so they, along with rival women and heroes, are familiar with the setting of the stories.

Rival men are not as well educated as the heroes but they have a higher level of education than either the heroines or rival women. Educational information is usually not given although it is known that over a third have higher education. Most of these have college education.

Rival men have the broadest span of occupations of any of the characters. They range from being a poor peasant to being a rich multinational corporation owner. Generally, they are less occupationally independent than the heroes. Twenty-four per cent own their own business but their businesses are small or partially owned, in which case they are the junior partner. Another 41 per cent are relatively independent professionals--doctors, engineers, movie director, musician agent, journalists, and so on. Thirteen per cent are employed as semi-professionals or lower level management. Twelve per cent are manual labourers and 3 per cent are in miscellaneous occupations, mostly the military. Seven per cent have no known occupation.

Thirty-one per cent of the rival men own income earning property, and almost three-quarters of them own major consumer goods. However, their consumer goods are not as luxurious as the heroes' possessions. Rival men usually own cars, but not Jaguars; they may own a flat, but not a castle.

Rival men are usually middle class (59 per cent), with 26 per cent in the upper class and 15 per cent in the working class. They rank below the heroes and rival women, but above the heroines.

Rival men are the most alone of all the characters. Only 35 per cent of them have any parents living and fewer (24 per cent) have brothers and sisters. Like the rival women, they apparently have no close friends, although they may be surrounded by acquaintances with whom they have a good time. They are popular, but have no long-term, in-depth relationships.

To summarize, the average rival man in a Harlequin is classically handsome and dapper. He is charming, but shallow and weak. He is usually in his late 20's, but whatever his age he is slightly immature. He is single with few family ties. He is usually English. He may have a college education. He is usually a small businessman, a manager, or a professional. He is middle class, probably owns a car and maybe a house. He has no friends but this

does not really concern him as he is too self-centered to notice or care.

The rival man has the least exact literary history of the Harlequin characters, although many romances have contained "unsatisfactory" male figures who vie for the heroine's love. Joanna Russ describes such a male character in gothic novels, the "Shadow-Male", who is a negatively evaluated rival man.⁵⁷ However, his personality characteristics are quite different. He is described as appearing to be gentle, protective, responsible, quiet, humorous, tender and calm. In addition, his function in the story is different. He provides terror in the gothics as he usually turns out to be an insane murderer. This is a much stronger character than a Harlequin rival man who, at his most insidious, is merely a liar or a blackmailer. The function of the rival man in Harlequins is that he acts as a foil to the hero.

The significance of the rival man lies in this contrast between the hero and the rival man. The hero is the ideal man whose sterling qualities are highlighted by the rival man's weaknesses and faults. While the hero lives up to David and Brannon's descriptions of the proscribed male sex role--No Sissy Stuff, The Big Wheel, The Sturdy Oak, and Give 'Em Hell, the rival man fails. He is slightly effeminate, a qualified success, unreliable,

and weak. Like the rival woman, he is a negative role model.

Conclusions

Throughout the chapter, three points have been made about Harlequin Romances. It has been argued that Harlequins' content is related to 1) corporate policy, 2) literary tradition, and 3) social values and structure. These points will be summarized and their implications for analyzing Harlequins as a part of hegemony indicated.

First of all, it was shown that Harlequins are affected by Harlequin Enterprises' corporate policy which is to sell its product and to make a profit. This goal is obviously not unique to Harlequin. Instead, as indicated in Chapter I, it is a goal which is pursued by all corporations in a capitalist system. It is a requirement of that system. In order to fulfill this material requirement, Harlequin has devised an editorial policy which has ideological ramifications. This editorial policy requires Harlequins to be uniform, happy, and inoffensive. The ideology that results is a product of omission and commission. The editorial requirement of happiness and inoffensiveness automatically excludes the portrayal of some possibly unpleasant social conditions and leads to a focus on individuals. This focus, in conjunction with an emphasis on optimistic fatalism which is conveyed by the characters

and by the structure of the plot, provides an ideological reinforcement of the existing socio-economic system.

Harlequin Enterprises has found that its books, which conform to its editorial policy and which contain this ideological content, sell very well. The company has prospered and so, therefore, has the capitalist system of which it is a part. What is happening is that Harlequin Enterprises is reproducing both the "economic base" and the "ideological superstructure". In other words, Harlequin is contributing to hegemony.

Secondly, Harlequins are a part of a literary tradition. As noted in Chapter I, John Cawelti has pointed out that formula fiction consists of specific cultural themes and stereotypes, and transcending archetypes. Harlequins are typical formula fiction in this regard for they are a mixture of these two elements. There are literary predecessors of Harlequins' plot and main characters which transcend twentieth century North America, yet the plot and characters are fleshed out with more culturally specific traits. Cawelti also indicated that formula stories are basically conservative in that they present an imaginary world that affirms existing interests and attitudes. This chapter began to show that this is true of Harlequins.

One other aspect of the literary tradition that the chapter dealt with was its connection to the rest of

society. Literature is not a separate sphere of ideas and activity. Instead it is integrally related to the socio-economic forces of the society in which it is produced and consumed. Specifically, the chapter argued that the development of romances was affected and continues to be affected by 1) industrialization and the subsequent shift in production from the home to the factory which left middle class women with increased leisure time and an increased material as well as psychological interest in marriage, 2) the extension of education, 3) the development of technology which enabled the cheap production of books, and 4) the conversion of publishing from a patron sponsored, aristocratic activity into profit-oriented commodity production. Again the link between the "ideological superstructure" and social economic conditions and forces is evident. The Harlequin phenomena is best understood in the context of the development and perpetuation of this relationship.

Finally, Harlequins are related to social values and structures. This statement actually subsumes the previous two points and various aspects of this relationship have already have been discussed. I want to add a brief specific discussion of sex role structure as it has received the most attention in the chapter.

Chapter II revealed that Harlequin Enterprises both responds to and creates women's demand for Harlequin Romances. This chapter has suggested that there is a similar dynamic between the image of sex roles in Harlequins and sex roles in society. The image in Harlequins is both a response to and a reinforcement of traditional sex roles.* This reinforcement can be seen in the positive portrayals of the hero and heroine who represent the traditional male and female sex roles, and in the negative portrayals of the rival men and women who do not live up to these sex roles. Biological, psychological, and sociological differences between the sexes, particularly between the hero and heroine, are emphasized. He is tough; she is soft. He is rational; she is emotional. He is knowledgeable; she is ignorant. He is wealthy; she is poor. These differences are portrayed to be complementary and functional.

We have already seen in Chapter I that traditional sex role structure is a part of the capitalist system. When Harlequins reinforce sex role structure, therefore, they also reinforce that larger socio-economic system. Again, this is a hegemonic function.

In brief, Chapter III continued to develop the argument that Harlequin Enterprises are a part of the

* This notion will be developed in subsequent chapters.

hegemonic reproduction of capitalism. Chapter IV will analyze Harlequin Romances' specific ideological reproduction of sex role, class, and corporate structures within the novels.

CHAPTER IV

HARLEQUIN ROMANCES

Formulaic literature is generally characterized by a simple and emotionally charged style that encourages immediate involvement in a characters' actions without much sense of complex irony or psychological subtlety.

John Cawelti, *Adventure,
Mystery and Romance*

"You're reading my mind again," she accused....
"...let's face it," he added with a smile, "you're
not very hard to read."

Harlequin 1754

Introduction

The characters described in the previous chapter exist and interact with each other in a socio-economic context. Harlequins portray an image, therefore, not only of individual characters but of the society they inhabit. This chapter will expore Harlequins' images of this society by analyzing sex role, class, and corporate structures. These will be discussed in the order cited as this reflects their importance in Harlequins.

A consideration of images in Harlequins necessarily means a comparison of fiction with "reality". Gaye Tuchman has warned researchers about simplistically using this approach. In discussing the studies of the images of women in the media which have found that media images are not

congruent with reality, she states:

Too frequently, the term used to characterize these findings is "distortion." Both political and perjorative, the term itself seems to transmute the literary theory of realism. However, the idea that a literature reflects its society is transformed into the statement that the media should reflect society and the charge that contemporary media do not properly reflect the position of women. ...studies imply there should be a direct, discernible correspondence between the depiction of women in the media and contemporary life.¹

In spite of her objections, however, the fact remains that often the portrayal of women has been and continues to be a distortion. The term is not necessarily political (it may be merely descriptive), but the phenomena is certainly political. Substituting another term does not change this fact. It would only hide it. Tuchman is correct in maintaining that the key issue to be addressed is not just whether the portrayals of women, men, events, and institutions are distorted. Analysis must also focus on the direction of distortion when it occurs and what functions or interests the distortion may serve in our society. With this purpose in mind, the portrayal of sex role, class, and corporate structures in Harlequins will be compared to Canadian society.

There are two limitations to these comparisons. First of all, my data about Canadian society are from 1974, while the Harlequin Romances in my sample were written,

published, and presumably set during the period 1964-1976. During this time span, there have been changes in Canadian society and presumably Harlequin Romances. One could, therefore, question the direct comparability of a single year and a twelve year period. One could point out that any "distortion" in Harlequins might be due simply to the fact that most of the books were published before 1974 and are "dated" in this sense. Harlequins may be a distortion of reality now, but perhaps they were a reflection of reality when they were initially published. Secondly, Harlequin Romances are set in many different countries around the world while the statistics given for comparison purposes are for Canada only. Again one could explain away any "distortion" found in Harlequin Romances when compared to Canadian reality on the grounds that situations and people in other countries are different and the Harlequins may not be a distortion of reality in those countries.

Although these objections have some merit, there are a number of factors which counterbalance the limitations of comparing Harlequins and Canada. First of all, although the earlier Harlequin Romances may be "dated", women are still currently reading them. Most of the women I talked to bought their books second-hand from a used book store and the old books are more available than the more recent ones from this source. Also many avid readers read more

than Harlequin's regular monthly output and read old Harlequins when they have exhausted their month's supply of new Harlequins and are waiting for the next month's shipment. Still other women who like a particular author will search for copies of their favourite's books, whether new or old. In addition, Harlequin continually re-issues old Harlequins. So the older Harlequins are still being read.

Secondly, Harlequins have contemporary settings, but there are no direct references to contemporary events, fads, or expressions that would make it obvious that they were ten or fifteen years old. One can read a Harlequin written in 1964 and easily imagine that it is set in 1974.

Finally, the readers I interviewed are living in Canada. Canadian society, not English or European society, is their social reality, their reference point. Therefore, even though none of the Harlequins were set in Canada, a Canadian-Harlequin comparison is still the most revealing. Using this comparison, it is possible to contrast Canadian readers' lives and Harlequin characters' lives. These comparisons, then, permit an analysis of sex role, class, and corporate structures and their ideological implications.

Sex Role Structure

The discussion of the portrayal of sex role structure is divided into three sections: public production, private production, and personal life. The analysis of

public production focuses on the labour force participation of men and women. Women's work in the home is addressed in the private production section. The section on personal life analyzes love, marriage, and sexuality.

Public Production

There are three significant images that emerge from Harlequins in this context. First of all, the sexual division of labour within the labour force is portrayed to be more extremely segregated by sex than is actually the case in Canadian society. Secondly, women's work in the labour force is glamorized. Thirdly, women's labour force participation is portrayed as marginal to women's lives and to the economy.

One of the main images of sex roles and public production in Harlequins is the widespread existence of sex-typed, sex-segregated work. This is also the situation in Canadian society. Seventy per cent of all employed women in the labour force are concentrated in just four occupational categories--teaching, medicine and health, clerical, and service--which are numerically dominated by women.² The majority of Harlequin women, 63 per cent of the heroines and rival women who are working in the labour force, are concentrated in these four occupations. This is slightly less than is the case in reality but one must not jump to the conclusion that the overall image

in Harlequins is one of less sex segregation and stereotyping. Actually another 29 per cent of Harlequin women are in acceptably feminine sectors of the other occupations even if the occupations as a whole are not numerically dominated by women.* For example, fully 57 per cent of those who are not in female-dominated occupations are in the literary, artistic, and recreational occupational category. Most of the Harlequin women in this category are models, a stereotypically feminine job. The main image of women's work, then, is an image of sex segregated, woman-dominated occupations or sectors of occupations.

There are more men than women in the Canadian labour force and they are scattered throughout the occupational categories. Eighty per cent of men in the labour force are in male-dominated occupations which include, of course, most occupations since women are concentrated in such a few areas.³ In Harlequins, 77 per cent of the men are in male-dominated occupations, again slightly less than reality. Nevertheless, Harlequin men are concentrated in the more typically masculine portions of female-dominated occupations. For example, 70 per cent of those in occupations not dominated as a whole by men

* The significance of the 8 per cent who are in atypical jobs should not be over-estimated for most of them quit or fail at their jobs during the stories.

are in the medical and health occupations. They are doctors and surgeons. In fact, there are no Harlequin men who are in occupations that are generally considered to be "women's jobs", with the possible exception of one rival man who teaches children.

One can see that there is sex segregation not only between occupational categories but within any one occupational category as well. This is true of both Canadian society and Harlequins. The sex segregation of occupations in Harlequins is also evident when one approaches labour force participation from another angle of comparison. The major characters, the hero and heroine, fall into ten occupational categories: 1) managerial and administrative, 2) natural sciences and engineering, 3) social science, 4) teaching, 5) medicine, 6) artistic, literary and recreational, 7) clerical, 8) sales, 9) service, and 10) farming. One half of these categories in Harlequins are characterized by having either all women or men workers in the jobs. This is not true of any of these categories in reality and is true of only 24 per cent of all occupational categories in Canada. There is an over-statement of sex polarity in the labour force in Harlequins.

Another revealing comparison of men's and women's positions in the labour force is to look at the distribution by sex of the class of worker for the Canadian employed

labour force and for Harlequins. Labour Canada has classified employed workers into four categories: paid workers who are employed by others, self-employed workers who work for themselves and do not have any paid employees, employers who work for themselves and have one or more paid employees, and unpaid family workers. These are broadly defined categories and there is a considerable range of people and positions within any one of these categories, but generally speaking, people who are self-employed or employers have higher status and more power in our society. They constitute the middle and upper class as opposed to the working class. In reality, men and women are fairly evenly distributed throughout the categories of class of worker and the class system. More men than women are self-employed and employers, and more women than men are employees, but the majority of both sexes are employees. Harlequins offer a more extreme, sex segregated and class skewed version of this distribution.

Table 1 shows that Harlequins over-state the difference between men and women in each class of worker category.*
The most extreme discrepancies are in the paid labour and

* Apart from the issue of sexual division of labour, one might notice that both Harlequin men and women are extensively over-represented in the self-employed category. The main focus in Harlequins is on the middle and upper classes, not the working class. This shall be discussed later in the chapter.

Table 1

CLASS OF WORKER BY SEX, 1974 CANADIAN EMPLOYED
LABOUR FORCE AND HARLEQUINS

Class of Worker	Reality		Harlequins	
	Percentage (Rounded)		Percentage (Rounded)	
	Women	Men	Women (N=62)	Men (N=98)
Paid	93	86	58	30
Self-employed	3	7	35	29
Employer	1	5	3	41
Unpaid family worker	3	1	5	0

Source: *Women in the Labour Force* (Ottawa: Information Canada, 1975), Table 22, p. 45.

Table 2

CLASS OF WORKER BY SEX, 1974 CANADIAN EMPLOYED
LABOUR FORCE AND HARLEQUINS

Class of Worker	Reality		Harlequins	
	Percentage (Rounded)		Percentage (Rounded)	
	Women	Men	Heroines (N=42)	Heroes (N=50)
Paid	93	86	76	.12
Self-employed	3	.7	14	28
Employer	1	5	0	60
Unpaid family worker	3	1	10	0

Source: *Women in the Labour Force* (Ottawa: Information Canada, 1975), Table 22, p. 45.

employer categories. There is a 7 percentage points difference between the percentages of men and women in the paid worker category in reality, compared to a 28 percentage points difference in Harlequins. For Canadian men and women in the employer category, there is only a 4 percentage points difference but in Harlequins, there is a 38 percentage points difference between men and women.

If the consideration of sex differences for class of worker is limited to the hero and heroine, the overstatement of sex differences is even more marked, as shown in Table 2. Again the polarity between the sexes is not exaggerated in the categories of paid labour and employees. Again, there is a 7 percentage points difference between the sexes involved in paid labour positions in reality, compared to a 64 percentage points difference for heroes and heroines. For men and women in the employer category in reality, the 4 percentage points difference is stretched to 60 percentage points difference between heroes and heroines.

Thus, the first significant image that emerges from Harlequins is that the sexual division of labour within the labour force is portrayed to be more extremely segregated than is the case in Canadian society, a society that is already characterized by extensive occupational segregation. Harlequins extend this into class of worker

as well and over-state the extent of segregation in each class. In addition, this portrayal over-states the proportion of women in subordinate positions and the proportion of men in powerful, dominant positions.

The second major image of sex roles and public production in *Harlequins* is the glamorization of women's work, inspite of the fact that women's work in reality is not particularly glamorous. Instead, Pat and Hugh Armstrong comment:

a clear division of labour exists in the Canadian economy, a division of labour based on sex. Women are segregated into particular sectors of the industrial structure, and within these sectors they perform a limited number of low-skilled and/or low-paid jobs.⁴

One indication of the low pay is that, in Canadian society, the average income of women with paid work is less than half that of men.⁵ In addition, the women in these positions have little prestige and little control over their work. Much of women's work consists of mundane, routine tasks which parallels the work they do in the home. Some of these traits are portrayed in *Harlequins* but most are not.

In *Harlequins*, although exact figures are never given, income differentials between men and women are obvious. One indication is the ownership of income-producing property and consumer goods. Income-producing property in *Harlequins* is typically owned by men. Harlequin men

own this kind of property twice as often as Harlequin women (49 per cent of men compared to 26 per cent of women).

The contrast between heroes and heroines is even greater with 66 per cent of heroes but only 8 per cent of heroines owning income-producing property. The possession of major consumer goods is another sign of substantial income and, again, Harlequin men fare better than Harlequin women.

Eighty-four per cent of Harlequin men own consumer goods; 47 per cent of the women own consumer goods. Furthermore, their goods are usually less magnificent than the men's. Narrowing it down to heroes and heroines, 98 per cent of the heroes own major consumer goods while only 28 per cent of the heroines do so. Harlequins' portrayal of men's financial advantage over women is consistent with the male-female income differences in our society.

Although it is obvious that Harlequin women are not prosperous, most of the Harlequin women who are working in the labour force are wholly satisfied with the salaries they receive. There are no complaints of the low pay that typifies the women's jobs that they hold. Instead, there are references to "well-paid hours in the office" (1723, p. 71) and vows to generous employers: "'I'll try to earn my remuneration....'" (1952, p. 56) In fact, Harlequin heroines are apparently so well paid that they are willing to take on extra work with no increase in salary and may

even reject the employer's offer of additional money. Thus, one heroine who is being promoted from secretary to general manager of a hotel informs her employer: "'I wouldn't want much salary. I'd be learning myself most of the time....'" (1096, p. 176)

Money isn't everything, according to the heroines. In the few instances when heroines admit their pay is comparatively low, they dismiss or excuse it. A nurse comments on nursing: "'It's a wonderful job and very rewarding. Not, perhaps as financially rewarding as some jobs we might mention, but there are other things.'" (1042, p. 139)

"Other things" might include job autonomy and prestige but these have not been available to women in sex-segregated occupations. There are occasional glimpses of this state of affairs in Harlequins. The following quotations are heroines' comments about the lack of control they experience in their occupations:

"I'm not exactly my own boss." (1429, p. 40)

For, although she genuinely liked her office life, like everyone who has once known freedom, she was sometimes a good deal irked by the necessary routine and restrictions. (1567, p. 139)

"I'm not by any means a free agent...." (800, p. 59)

As for prestige, status differentials based on sex are difficult to determine in Harlequins. Occupations

such as managerial positions which are male dominated are the most respected, but women's occupations are certainly not denigrated within the books. Nevertheless, an awareness of the lower status of women's occupations and a certain defensiveness about it sometimes surfaces. This happens most frequently in the Harlequins in which there are female nurses who are in the same occupational category as male doctors, but who have a different pay and prestige level. In one Harlequin, for example, there is a modest comment about the "humbler role of nurse" (1520, p. 113) in comparison to the apparently more exalted role of doctor, but later the heroine bursts out resentfully:

Who was it that had decreed that all nurses must stand in awed respect while doctors sat? Some starched old follower of Florence Nightingale in the nineteenth century? It gave swollen-headed youngmen even more swollen-headed opinions of themselves. (1520, p. 150)

Protests are mild, however, and generally Harlequin women accept the lack of control and lower prestige of their work as readily as they accept their low pay:

"He is the boss.... He is entitled to do as he pleases." (1429, p. 103)

"After all, you pay my salary. I can't expect too much besides." (800, p. 45)

"But Raff has a perfect right to call the tune--after all he pays the piper." (1096, p. 160)

There is placid accommodation to the boss' authority, however arbitrary and unreasonable. Heroines adapt to humiliating

working conditions at times. In one Harlequin, the heroine-secretary is quite aware that her employer has no interest in her or consideration for her as a person. Instead he regards secretaries as "'useful appendages for holding pencils and such like, to take down letters and attend to other clerical duties of the firm.'" (1268, p. 15)

Nevertheless, she is not resentful or indignant:

"I took my work very seriously.... I intended to be successful, so I adopted the sort of attitude I thought you would want. If you wanted just another piece of office furniture about you, you could have it." (1268, p. 119)

In another novel, the heroine-secretary is required by the hero, her employer, who is an author and works at home, to not only come in to do the usual secretarial tasks but also to "tidy up". The rival man, the hero's brother and heroine's current boyfriend, is incensed at this:

"'You'd no right to turn Isobel into a char,' Nigel told his brother shortly. 'She's a trained secretary and that's what you're paying her for.'" (1754, p. 14) The heroine, however, defends the hero and his right to use her as he wishes. In fact, she insists that she does not mind tidying up, that she likes being kept busy and points out "'that there's more to being a secretary than shorthand and typing.'" (1754, p. 14)

Heroines and Harlequins in general glamorize and justify sex-typed women's work. Marvellous opportunities

are available to women in these positions. Thus, the heroine-secretary in *Harbour of Deceit* is whisked away to Portugal on a crucial, exciting mission for her employer; the heroine-beautician in *Islands of Summer* is offered a "junior beauty consultant" position in a luxury hotel in Bermuda by the international beauty salon company owner herself; the heroine-nurse in *Promise the Doctor* is unexpectedly left a small estate, a couple of servants, and an income by a grateful dying patient; the heroine-companion in *A Summer in Barbazon* finds herself living in a Portuguese castle mingling with the nobility.

Besides these attractions, there are intrinsic rewards to be gained from women's work, according to Harlequins. The "other things" that compensate for a low salary are the joy and satisfaction of helping other people. Such virtue is its own reward:

working among these deprived children would bring its satisfactions--the feeling that she was doing a worthwhile job in the world. (892, p. 146)

Her own years of hospital training and her subsequent job as housekeeper to her father...were occupations that left her her dignity. (1520, p. 49)

"I never once saw an unhappy nurse...." (1185, p. 124)

Although helping others is undeniably a worthwhile and rewarding task, Margaret Adams has called the attitude exemplified in the above quotes, "the compassion trap". She states:

The main target of my concern is the pervasive belief...that woman's primary and most valuable social function is to provide the tender and compassionate components of life and that through the exercise of these particular traits, women have set themselves up as the exclusive model for protecting, nurturing, and fostering the growth of others. Fundamental to this protective nurturing is the socially invaluable process of synthesizing diffuse and fragmented elements into a viable whole--a basic ingredient of any society's development and survival.⁶

The result of this belief, Adam continues, is the psychological and economic exploitation of women. Women are allowed into only a few occupations for which they are regarded to be particularly well suited because of their nurturing natures, which perpetuates sex segregation in the labour force which, in turn, is associated with the low pay and prestige of women's work. The belief in women's altruistic natures evades recognition of the fact that women may be working for money rather than for sheer psychological fulfillment. The emphasis on the humane value of their work, rather than the economic value of their work, leaves women open to emotional blackmail in the marketplace. They have not escaped "the compassion trap" by going to work:

Obviously, women's geographical shift out of the home away from domestic ploys did not involve a similar psychological emancipation from the pervasive concept of protection and nurturing. Thus, although women may appear to have achieved economic freedom by performing a job that is independent of the practical ties of children and husband, in terms of psychological commitment they are generally subject to the same sort of

thinking; their modus operandi utilizes the identical resources and skills as the homebound wife and mother.⁷

Adams says this is unfortunate because it perpetuates psychological and social conditions that are detrimental to women. Harlequins, however, portray the connection between women's work in the labour force and the home as a good phenomena. Women's sex-typed work in the labour force is favoured because it prepares women for their work in the home:

"Your talent is for domestic things, so obviously the thing for you would be a training in domestic science. And if that's what you'd like, then you shall have it--all the interest and fun of training in the job for which you have a bent. And when you're qualified, you should be able to get a very good job at a very good salary. And when you marry, better still, for you'll be cut out for a model wife!" (1135, p. 106)

Teachers, nurses, companions, beauticians, dress designers, and secretaries can put their skills to good use in the home, helping their husbands and children.

The image of women's work in Harlequins, therefore, glamorizes and justifies traditionally sex-typed occupations. Low pay, the lack of job autonomy, and low prestige are conditions of women's work that are generally ignored or explained away. The emphasis is on acceptance, not rebellion.

The third image of sex roles and public production is the existence of women as a "marginal labour force". Pat Connelly has argued that women constitute an essential

reserve army of labour within capitalism which can be activated and utilized in all sectors of the economy when necessary and withdrawn when not needed. The kind and number of jobs ordinarily open to women in the labour force are few, so many women remain in the inactive reserve labour force. This has remained true inspite of the increase in the number of women working. This increase has been absorbed primarily through the growth of female occupations, not through the integration of male occupations. The reserve army concept is not the conventional conception of women's labour force participation, however:

This conception of women's labour emphasizes their permanent and integral connection to the capitalist production process by virtue of their status as employed or active-inactive reserve labour. It indicates that a supply of female labour is always available to be drawn on when the conditions of the capitalist economy dictate. This differs from the conventional economic view which considers married women...as outside the production process.⁸

Connelly calls the conventional perspective the "consumer choice approach" as it maintains that "married women make a conscious choice whether or not to enter the labour force and this choice is determined by subjective conditions over which they have some control."⁹ This is the perspective that Harlequins' portrayals of women's labour force participation support. They show women continually moving in and out of the labour force by choice and indicate that women's work is marginal to their lives

in comparison to their involvement with the home. This image of women's labour force participation is conveyed through first, the extent of women's participation in the labour force, secondly, the extent of women's movement into and out of the labour force while single, and thirdly, the extent of women's actual or planned participation in the labour force after marriage.

In 1974, 40 per cent of all women and 77 per cent of all men were in the Canadian labour force.¹⁰ Women's supposed marginality is not immediately apparent in Harlequins when one considers just the extent of the women characters' participation in the labour force, for a comparison of Harlequins and reality reveals that Harlequins over-state both men's and women's labour force participation. Women have a participation rate of 68 per cent and men have a rate of 94 per cent in Harlequins.

These general statistics can be broken down into more specific figures that take the typical age and marital status of Canadian men, women and the Harlequin characters into account. (See Table 3) As can be seen, the portrayal of the women characters in Harlequins corresponds least to reality. Heroine's labour force participation is overstated while rival women's participation is about equally understated. This is consistent with the social class positions of these women. Heroines are in the middle and

Table 3

LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE, 1974

CANADA AND HARLEQUINS

Characters	Harlequin	Reality
	Percentage	Percentage
Heroines	84 (N=50)	Women, single, 14-34 yr.
Rival Women	46 (N=44)	67
Heroes	100 (N=50)	Men, single, 20-44 yr.
Rival Men	90 (N=54)	87

Source: *Women in the Labour Force* (Ottawa: Information Canada, 1975), Table 16, p. 33.

working classes while rival women are in the middle and upper classes. Rival women are relatively uninvolved in the labour force because of their wealth. One rival woman's sister describes the typical rival woman's relationship to the labour force: "'Gerry? She doesn't work. She's had a try at a few things, but she never sticks it long. ...Of course, she doesn't need to work. Daddy's quite rich, you know.'" (1355, pp. 71-72)

Both heroes' and rival men's labour force participation rates are over-stated, according to marital status and age specifications. The heroes' participation is more exaggerated than rival men's participation. The heroes constitute the solid core of the Harlequin labour force. However, both heroes and rival men participate more extensively in the labour force than women.

The second aspect of the marginality of women's labour force participation portrayed in Harlequins is their frequent movement into and out of the labour force. One way to illustrate this is with rate of unemployment figures. According to the 1974 Canadian Labour Force Survey, the unemployment rate for single women in the labour force was 7 per cent and the unemployment rate for single men was 11 per cent.¹¹ There is, however, a debate about the accuracy of these figures, particularly for women. Lorna

Marsden, for example, argues that revised surveys reveal that "unemployment rates are higher among women than among men"¹² and even the Women's Bureau admits that "the 'Labour Force Survey...may have a tendency to undercount unemployed females, especially those with marginal attachment to the labour force.'"¹³ In addition, government estimates of unemployment rates in general tend to be conservative.

Harlequin's portrayal of unemployment rates, however, is extreme enough that even considerable upward revision of Canadian male and female unemployment rates would not affect Harlequin's basic over-statement of women's unemployment and under-statement of men's unemployment. The difference between heroes and heroines is enormous. Forty-eight per cent of the heroines in the labour force are unemployed while single during the course of the novels compared to only 2 per cent of the heroes. People are more important to Harlequin heroines than their jobs. Consequently, they willingly quit their jobs whenever they are needed by brothers and sisters (892, 1116, and 1787), parents (1520 and 1567), grandparents (1838), nephews and nieces (1723 and 1812), aunts and uncles (1396), friends (1952) or even total strangers (1071 and 1550). Thus, there are not only more men than women in the labour force in Harlequins, but they work more steadily as well.

The most telling indication of women's "marginality"

to the labour force is their actual or planned withdrawal from the labour force after marriage. Of the heroines who have jobs during the stories, 88 per cent withdraw or plan to withdraw from the paid labour force after marriage. Only 12 per cent of the heroines apparently plan to continue to work for someone other than their husbands after marriage. Sixty per cent of these are involved in either part-time work or free lance work which they can do at home. This participation rate for married women is less than a third of the actual participation rate of Canadian married women, 37 per cent of whom work in the labour force. Needless to say, none of the heroes plan to withdraw from the labour force after they marry.

These aspects of labour force participation--the extent of women's participation, their movement in and out of the labour force while single and married--convey the picture of women as a marginal labour force. If this image is implied by the labour force participation figures just given, it is made explicit by the characters' attitudes and conversations about women and work.

The image of women working and women's work is initially favourable and Harlequins do legitimate women's participation in the labour force on a limited basis. Work is seen as a necessity for a full and useful life and Harlequin women are generally enthusiastic about their work.

a nurse: Joy felt that satisfying sense of contentment, fulfillment in her chosen work.... (1042, p. 14)

a dress designer: "I'm not happy unless I'm designing clothes." (1684, p. 47)

a secretary: Clancy found her post at Jarrah Publications both pleasant and stimulating. (1160, p. 61)

It is just as well that women in Harlequins are content with their sex-typed work because Harlequin men, while generally approving of women and womanly work ("She's the best secretary I've ever had and she's decorative too, what more can any man ask?" 1754, p. 125), do not lend their support to women in other occupations or activities. This does not mean that women are guaranteed approval if they confine themselves to the traditionally feminine occupations, for Harlequin men object to any woman who takes her work too seriously and is in danger of becoming a "career woman". Men may have their careers but women must be more restrained or they invite censure:

"These career women are all alike and they'll sell their soul sometimes to further their interests." (1550, p. 101)

"You're not a woman--you're a machine. All you can think about is your modelling."
"And what about you?" she'd flung back. "Isn't your job important? You talk about it enough."
"It's different for a man. This is my life, my career." (1879, p. 66)

In spite of these reservations, Harlequin men think it is probably a good idea for (single) women to (temporarily)

work (in women's occupations) in the labour force. "'After all, Satan finds mischief still for idle hands to do!'" (1255, p. 134) There is, therefore, positive reinforcement from both Harlequin men and women of women's "marginal" participation in sex-typed work in the labour force and a justification or denial of the limitations of women's occupations, as previously shown.

One must stress that this is conditional reinforcement,. Harlequin women, although they may rail against blatant sexism in the workplace, also share the same hesitations about women's continued enthusiastic participation in labour force. Heroines may like their work at the beginning of the books, but by the middle or end, they have met the hero, fallen in love, and they begin to have doubts about their work:

a secretary: She would, she thought, probably marry him quite soon and settle down, for all of a sudden she saw the prospect of life as secretary far less attractive. (1754, p. 180)

a concert pianist: her success paled beside her love for Drew.... Thrilled and happy though she was about her success, she would give it all up gladly to marry Drew. (1647, pp. 166-7)

a horse jumper: "I love you, Nick. I always will." "Enough to give up jumping for?" he insisted. "If you want me to." Her reply was without any pause. "It isn't important now." (1355, p. 190)

Work suddenly becomes an unsatisfactory, unfulfilling chore compared to the prospect of marriage and motherhood:

She was free in the full sense of the word; free to develop her potentialities as a designer and as a woman.

As a woman? Her thoughts stumbled over the phrase. How could she in all honesty say that she could develop fully as a woman on her own? How could she fulfil her destiny as a woman without the love of a man? (1684, p. 136)

"I have a good job..., but I still desire children above all things." (1185, p. 131)

Marion had to stifle a longing she could never quite suppress, that natural yearning for babies of her own that lies deep in every woman's heart, turn her hand to whatever else she will. (1975, p. 10)

As a result, as indicated previously, Harlequin heroines promptly drop out or plan to drop out of the labour force when they marry and have children. This is in accordance with Harlequin men's wishes, for they definitely do not want their wives to work:*

"How glad I am that you're just you, Janie, and you've no interest in a career. I couldn't have fallen for you as I have done if you'd been a career-woman, for I want my wife to think of nothing but me!" (1550, p. 101)

"Let's just say I'm old fashioned. In any case, if one's home doesn't have a certain pull, there's something wrong somewhere. It's all very well

* I could find only one exception to this rule. Only one hero consistently and directly stated his acceptance of a working wife:

"I'd want her to do just whatever made her happy. Even though I can earn enough for both of us and to keep the house going, if she had a career and wanted to pursue it, then that would be fine by me." (1647, p. 111)

a girl wanting a career, but marriage is the best career." (1233, p. 107)

"Well, you can't have a musical career now...." he said firmly. "Being Mrs. Jas Lawrence is enough of a career for anyone...." (1116, p. 187)

According to Harlequin men, women must give up their careers when they marry and have children because "'it's in the natural order of things.'" (1233, p. 108)

Heroines may put up a token resistance for the sake of argument and plot, but they generally agree that a woman's place is in the home rather than the labour force:

He laughed. "Well, you must admit it would look very odd if the woman went out to work while the man stayed home to look after the children, wouldn't it?"

"I don't see why," Julie said obstinately. "Anyway a woman should still be free to choose." She was really talking nonsense and she knew it. (1233, p. 108)

The decision to remain in or to leave the labour force is portrayed in Harlequins as a choice that women are free to make according to their (and their husband's) personal preferences and values. This view of women's labour force participation emphasizes the subjective factors, not the objective factors involved in the issue:

"Besides, not all women go out to work for financial reasons. They do it because their career is interesting or useful to the community, or because they like to be among a lot of people." (1647, p. 111)

This passage does describe women in Harlequins, for after marriage, heroines will not have to work for economic reasons, although they could choose to work for fulfillment or sociability. It does not describe reality where most women are economically obliged to work to supply themselves or their families with necessities.*

This section on women and public production has argued that there are three main images of women and work in Harlequins. First of all, the sexual division of labour is portrayed to be more extremely segregated than is true of Canadian society. Secondly, women's work is glamorized in contrast to its many drawbacks in reality. Thirdly, women are portrayed to be a voluntary marginal labour force instead of the essential reserve army of labour they constitute in Canadian society.

The next issue to address is: what are the implications these images have for sex role structure and capitalism? The answer is that these images are ideological legitimations. They reinforce some of the notions that have been used to justify isolating women into low status positions which require little skill, allow no job autonomy, and pay poorly. These notions include the belief that women are not committed

*English, American, and Canadian studies indicate that married women work primarily because they need the money. Armstrong, *The Double Ghetto*, pp. 147-158. This will vary according to the woman's social class position.

to their work and have high rates of turnover; that married women work for sociability or "pin money" and do not need a high salary; and that married women are free to choose whether or not they want to work according to their personal preferences. Employers can and have justified the use of women as a cheap labour force by citing these beliefs which Harlequins accept and perpetuate. The distortions of reality that one finds in Harlequins, therefore, are in the interests of employers. In other words, the distortions are ideological.

Women's public production is related to their private production. Harlequins not only legitimize women's role in the labour force, they also legitimize women's role in the home.

Private Production

Work in the home is seen as women's true work and vocation in Harlequins. Women have a special talent for it while men are rather inept at it. This is regarded to be both normal and right.

Heroes are more than willing to concede to women's expertise in this area in contrast to their attitudes about women and work in the labour force:

generally: "I always believe in leaving the homemaking bits to the little woman." (1952, p. 74)

child care: "Of course, it does need a woman's touch really...." (1450, p. 155)

meals: "Meals, my dear, are entirely your department." And he added crisply. "I do draw the line somewhere." (1672, p. 52)

home furnishings: "I need a woman's advice about curtains and things for the house." (1469, p. 43)

Women can create transformations and can miraculously turn a mere house into a Home. The heroines not only accept this tribute but guard it jealously. They are patronizing when the men reveal their ignorance or clumsiness in dealing with "women's concerns". In the following example, the heroine demonstrates her female superiority in handling maypole ribbons:

"Men!" Marion ran after it and rescued the truant [ribbon], rolling it expertly in her fingers..., laughing outright at the irritated males who could cope with a huge heavy pole, and had to admit defeat when faced with a bundle of bright ribbons. ...She sorted out the ribbons, unable to hide her chuckle at the look of disbelief on her companions' faces as she restored the unruly colours to swift order, slotted them into their places on the top of the maypole, and knotted them tightly. ... "Check my knots, will you?" she asked the men, restoring their pride. (1975, p. 116)

The heroines feel threatened when the men do not need them and prove to be self-sufficient:

She would jolly well stay to lunch and see just how well he could manage without a woman to do it for him. The disappointing thing was that when they sat down to the meal she had to admit that he seemed to manage extremely well. (1071, p. 16)

What a breakfast! ...really, no one would have believed this came from a bachelor household. Well, she'd heard...that most New Zealand men could cook a snack when needed, but this was so

good it made her feel superfluous. (1854, p. 66)

On the rare occasion when the hero offers to help the heroine in the house, she rejects his offer in no uncertain terms: "'You'll do nothing of the sort!' she said. 'The house is my department....'" (1071, p. 67)

This Harlequin character echoes some of the women whom Ann Oakley interviewed in her study of housewives and housework. She found:

A striking aspect of these interviews was that none of the women questioned the assignment to women of the primary duty to look after home and children. This was reflected in the language they used. Housework is talked about as 'my work'...; the interior decor of the home is spoken of as the housewife's own.... The home is the woman's domain.¹⁴

Husbands, at most, "help out" with ~~the~~ wife's work and although the women Oakley interviewed valued their husbands' "assistance", most of them evidenced "a firm belief in the 'natural' domesticity of women, and a corresponding belief that domesticity in men is 'unnatural.'"¹⁵

This is the typical attitude in Harlequins as well and Harlequin characters support a strict sexual division of labour both within the labour force and the home. Traditional sex role structure is fairly rigidly portrayed and an essential aspect of this is women's work in the home.

Before continuing the discussion of this, the extent of heroine's experience with work in the home should

be outlined. Six of the heroines become wives during the novels and all of them are responsible for the work done in the home.* Another seven heroines are single heads of households, responsible for the care of others besides themselves. Therefore, just over a quarter of the heroines are responsible for women's work in the home during the stories. More tellingly, all of the heroines, by the end of the novels, plan to marry, if they are not already married, and a picture of their futures, constructed from comments made by the characters, indicates that they too will be considered responsible for private production and consumption. In fact, the heroines' act of committing themselves to marriage and housewifery is the climax of the stories, so their work in the home is a very important aspect of Harlequins although it is portrayed more indirectly than women's work in the labour force.

Harlequins glamorize women's work in the home just as they do women's work in the labour force. They do this in several ways. First of all, the heroines as housewives have or will have almost unlimited money to spend. Although

* A possible exception is the case of one heroine who demands to know from the hero whether he will expect her to clean up as a matter of course after they are married. He replies: "'It will be entirely up to you whether you clean it or not....'" (1684, p. 161) However, there is absolutely no indication that he will clean up if she does not. In addition, he has previously paid another woman to clean.

they are not paid directly for their labour (that would be regarded as an insult and a sign of a lack of affection), they have only to ask their husbands for money and they will receive it. Heroes are generous as husbands, providing ample household money and presents as well. Heroines are showered with jewels and furs.

In contrast, Oakley found that part of the reason women dislike women's work in the home is that they are usually working under financial constraints.¹⁶ They can not afford "conveniences" which may save them time and energy; they have to strictly budget and shop for bargains which may be inferior goods which they not only dislike but which quickly wear out only to be replaced at more expense and effort. These strains will not be faced by Harlequin heroines. They may have had to scrimp when they were single but not when they marry. The portrayal of the certainty of a financially secure future as a housewife is more wishful thinking than reality for considerable numbers of married women must work in the labour force in addition to their work in the home.

Secondly, the future married wealth of the heroines means that the vast majority of them will have paid help for work in the home which is infrequently the case in reality. Nearly three-quarters of the heroes have housekeepers, servants, or daily help. Many of these are

long-term, loyal employees with family status and it is unlikely that they will be let go when the heroes and heroines marry. Of the six heroines who marry heroes during the books, at least five of them have paid help for work in the home. This considerably lightens the heroines' work load and keeps them company at the same time:

Ginny thought she had never known such a tireless worker as Sparky. An understanding-in fact, a genuine affection-had sprung up between the two and Ginny had taken to helping the housekeeper with whatever chore she had on hand.

Together they bottled fruits and vegetables; made jams; preserved juices; sliced innumerable buckets of green beans...and packed them in huge earthenware jars between layers of salt. Ginny thoroughly enjoyed both the work and the companionship.... (1116, p. 101)

Alice had proved herself to be a gem, handing over the reins of housekeeping without withholding her support, so that within a week Sarah was beginning to feel her feet. She took over the flowers for the house and a few odd dusting jobs and busied herself inspecting drawers and cupboards, and twice a week when Alice was free, she cooked. There was a daily woman too, a small wisp of a thing who seemed to get a surprising amount of work done in an unobtrusive fashion. (1498, pp. 82-3)

Harlequin's portrayal of women's work ignores the social isolation and the amount of work that most housewives face alone in the home.¹⁷

Thirdly, because married Harlequin heroines have or will have paid help in the home, they can choose which of the household tasks they will do and which they will leave for their help to do. This arrangement enables

Harlequins to emphasize and portray women doing pleasure-able creative household tasks like cooking, entertaining, gardening and decorating. Harlequins seldom describe women doing unpleasureable tasks which are repetitive and boring, like cleaning, washing, and ironing.¹⁸ Thus heroines seem to spend an unusual amount of time cutting and arranging flowers or preserving and canning food. These are tasks that are creative, noticeable, and appreciated.

In addition to this narrow focus on household work, Harlequins emphasize consumption within the home. One characteristic of women's private production in reality is that it is inseparably related to consumption. Many of the goods formerly produced in the home are now produced in the sphere of public production. "As a result, housewives have come to allocate much of their time to obtaining from the marketplace those things which were formerly produced in the home."¹⁹ Consumption has become an essential part (or replacement) of private production and women must learn to be consumers as well as domestic workers. Harlequins reflect this in that they focus on consumption more than any other aspect of women's work in the home. This preoccupation is understandable as the consumption of consumer items is generally more enjoyable than the production and maintenance of them. Joanna Russ has noted this emphasis in gothic romances as well:

These novels are written for women who cook, who decorate their own house, who shop for clothing for themselves and their children--in short, for housewives. But the Heroines--who toil not, neither do they spin--know and utilize...the occupation of their reader. "Occupation: Housewife" is simultaneously avoided, glamorized, and vindicated.²⁰

This statement is equally applicable to Harlequins, for they generally focus favorably on household work and other related aspects of women's role in the home, such as consumption and image keeping. There is such extensive coverage of these facets of women's lives, that a detailed examination is warranted. The portrayal of three specific aspects of private production and consumption will be analyzed. These include food consumption and preparation, housekeeping and home decorating, and image keeping through personal appearance.

Harlequin heroines are seldom faced with the three-times-a-day inevitability of meal preparation, serving and cleaning up. This aspect of food preparation and consumption is not particularly glamorous and is omitted. Instead, most of the food the heroines eat is prepared by invisible others in elegant restaurants or by housekeepers in private homes. The stress is on consumption, not preparation.

Therefore, the food is described in detail:

But the dinner was heavenly....the steak and mushrooms were perfectly grilled, the baked jacket potatoes artistically cupped in slit foil, the vegetables obviously home-grown and flavoury. The pavlova was all a pavlova should be, crisply sugary on the outside, marshmallow-soft inside,

filled with a delectable mixture of fruit and cream and tangy with the passion-fruit pulp.... (1854, p. 54)

Heroines regularly dine on fare like quenelles in lobster sauce with feuilleté de poulet à la reine, Monte Bianco, and champagne (1498, p. 49), glazed boar's heads, whole salmon lying on beds of lettuce, hams studded with cloves and pineapple and large oval plates of delicately sliced chicken, turkey and tongue (1308, pp. 127-8), or steaming roast pigeon in a nest of browned potatoes, grilled tomatoes, tiny peas, asparagus sticks, button mushrooms, and curls of ham (843, p. 92).

There is a tremendous amount of detail and sometimes even brand names are mentioned. Besides the effect of the detailed cataloging of course after course, the language that is used glamorizes food and meals. In the above quotes, for example, baked potatoes are artistically cupped and one eats tiny peas, curls of ham, and steaming pigeon. In other cases, heroines eat prawn cocktails from a crystal sphere (1396, p. 63 my emphasis), beautifully creamy eggs, wafer-thin brown bread and butter, (1327, p. 63 my emphasis), wild strawberries and lashings of cream (1595, p. 124 my emphasis), and pommes mousselines (1498, p. 145 my emphasis).

The glamorization obscures the fact that food and meals are the product of labour, usually women's unpaid labour. Meal preparation in reality may be routine and

dull, but when one is serving pommes mousselines in a crystal sphere, one's life and work may seem less dreary and more worthwhile. This refined and edited version of food preparation and consumption is the image that Harlequins portray.

The interest in food and cooking evident in Harlequins extended into the Harlequin magazine which regularly ran a cooking section in each issue. This section usually featured different recipes from countries around the world, some of which were drawn directly from the Harlequin novels. Glennis Zilm, the author of these sections, began her articles by tracing the recipe back to the novel in which the food is mentioned:

In many Harlequin novels, you'll read about the early-morning cup of tea, which is the equivalent of the American eye-opening cup of coffee. Whoever is up first makes a large pot of the strong breakfast type and serves it with milk in a heavy cup for those who are just getting up, as Marcus did for Nicola in Margery Hilton's *Interlude in Arcady* (#1367).

But few North Americans, unless their families come "from the old country," can make good tea. Here are several tips....²¹

The readers responded to the novels' and magazine's interest in food preparation and consumption. They wrote to Harlequin thanking them for recipes and requesting others:

I've learned more...cooking than I ever did in school.... My husband says that my cooking has improved.... Just trying to fix some of the dishes mentioned in the stories has been a real

treat.²²

I wait anxiously each month for your (my) magazine.... I read the description of the novel, then flip immediately to Harlequin Cookery. This section is enjoyed very much. Many of the recipes have become standard favorites of our family; not only that, I find that I read the description of food in the stories more carefully and wonder if they will soon be included in the magazine. My only unhappiness comes from the fact that the food described is from a book I have not read and it is no longer available.²³

I hope you never stop printing the recipes taken from the romances. It's such a pleasure to cook them and feel that even if you know it's make-believe, someone in that country might really be cooking the same for her family. I always go find the book and end up reading it all over again.²⁴

In these instances, there is an interesting double effect, for Harlequins not only glamorize food preparation and consumption, but also reinforce Harlequin reading.*

Harlequins also present an edited and glamorized version of housekeeping and home decorating. As discussed previously, Harlequin heroines are not or will not be actively involved in housekeeping as they have or will have employees

*Although the *Harlequin* magazine has been discontinued, one of Harlequin's latest areas of expansion has been the purchase of Ideals Publishing Co. in the United States. Among other items, Ideals publishes cookbooks. One wonders whether Harlequin will eventually publish a Harlequin Cookbook, possible using the same format as the *Nancy Drew Cookbook* in which each recipe is related to a mystery in the Nancy Drew series. They could advertise it through their novels and magazines. They have already advertised the *Ideals* magazine through the *Harlequin* magazine.

to do it for them. Nevertheless, there are a few occasions where these chores are mentioned. In each instance, women's participation in housekeeping is portrayed positively or rationalized:

It was hard work, but strangely satisfying to see the house gradually take on a more cheerful aspect as it became cleaner.... Emma stood back to survey her work when at last it was completed, and gave a deep sign of satisfaction. (1879, p. 27)

Cooking and housekeeping could be the most satisfying job in all the world, she thought, if one were doing it for the man one loved, making a home for him and for one's children. (1135, p. 15)

Now she knew why she had rebelled for so long against the idea of marriage. No woman used to freedom and independence as she was could do the sort of work she had just done willingly. Only for love would a woman submit willingly to such slavery. Only for love.... (1684, p. 155)

This heroine may call housekeeping slavery, but she does submit, willingly. Thus, the image of housework, to the limited extent to which it is portrayed, is that it is intrinsically or altruistically satisfying for women. This is in contrast to Harlequin men who are quite willing to leave these matters to the women. It is also in contrast to housewives in reality who rank housework as the worst thing about being a housewife.²⁵

Most of the attention Harlequins pay to the home is to more pleasant consumption-oriented tasks, particularly interior decoration. Although the majority of heroines

upon marriage will move into the heroes' homes which are already furnished with impeccable taste, a few of the heroines, in the course of the books, help design future homes and completely furnish them with no consideration for cost. Whether heroines are moving into or even visiting someone else's home or furnishing their own home, there is considerable detail given about home furnishings--type of furniture, type of material, colour schemes, etc.:

She led the way across the red-tiled hall where the leaves of an exotic plant, gleaming in its copper container, warmed a bare corner, and into the room opposite. The walk-in fireplace was furnished with chintz-padded seats and coffee tables and a huge white skin rug fronted the log fire centrepiece. Around the room polished tables and sideboards reflected the blue of the sky and the greenery of the garden through the windows. As the day was coming to a close the reflections were tinged with a glow of amber. There was an abundance of armchairs arranged beside lamps and antique pieces, and huge velvet sofas, themselves a warm amber, played a dominant part in the centre of the room. (1920, p. 96)

These descriptions vary in length from pages and paragraphs to one line references to "a marquetry William and Mary china cabinet" (1498, p. 23), "Aubusson carpet" (1396, p. 43), "a Louis Quinze sofa" (1723, p. 64), "a Benares brass tray" (1684, p. 21), or walls of "red Canadian cedar" (1233, p. 14). There is the same use of descriptive words to lift household concerns out of the realm of work and into the realm of gratifying consumerism.

This type of portrayal is also typical of another

related area of private production and consumption and that is the image keeping role of the housewife. Women are expected to create and maintain an appropriate image of themselves and their family. Dorothy Smith says that one of the sources of this image is the media and that working on the image provided by the media has become an important focus for housewives.²⁶ Women do this through not only their housekeeping standards, but also through personal appearance.

Women are traditionally believed to be preoccupied with clothes and appearance. This is expected of them and is considered to be one of their areas of expertise, enjoyment, and duty. Harlequins are consistent with this sex role stereotype and the books supply their women readers with extensive descriptions of the personal appearance:

She was dressed very simply in a pleated navy skirt and a blue and white striped shirt, with a broad black patent belt cinching her waist. Her hair, teeth, and nails shone with cleanliness. One knew at a glance that her underwear would be as fresh and immaculate as her outer clothes.... (948, p. 26)

The descriptions which deal with hair, clothes, accessories, and makeup both glamorize and instruct. One may learn that "...one doesn't smother oneself in French perfume. A discreet drop is all that's necessary" (1308, p. 101); that one wears certain colours to show off one's tan (1975, p. 156); that one wears the style that accents

one's slenderness (1838, p. 56) or curvaceousness (843, p. 142); and that the appropriate jewels can dramatically change a simple gown into a lovely creation (1160, p. 138). Knowing how to apply makeup, style hair, and choose clothes is regarded as akin to art and is a quality in a woman, even a rival woman, that is always admired in Harlequins. There is no need or excuse for a woman to be unattractive because a little makeup and hair care can transform even a plain person into a beauty. Take, for example, this heroine who is being instructed in beauty techniques in

Rising Star:

"Didn't anyone ever tell you that Cinderella is only a fairy story?" she said bitingly. "You can't just wave a magic wand and turn yourself into a raving beauty without putting in a little groundwork first. Sit down. We'll start from scratch." ...

Even as she spoke her hands were moving lightly over Gina's face, smoothing in cream and applying a dusting of powder. "Just a touch of green shadow," she murmured, "but I don't think we need bother with mascara. Your lashes are so thick and dark it isn't really necessary. Lucky girl!" Deftly she used lipstick, had her blot it on a tissue and repeated the process. "And now your hair. It certainly won't do as it is. Not tonight."

Gina began to feel a spark of interest as the thickness of her hair was brushed and bullied upwards, held firmly in place with a few strategically placed pins. Margot's confidence and growing smile made her wonder just how far the transformation went.

"There..." At last the other laid down brush and comb and stood back to admire her handiwork. "Not too much, not too little. You're going to wow them all! Here...have a look at yourself."

Gina gazed in silence at her reflection. Was

that really her, long-necked and creamy-throated, the piled coils of hair emphasizing the delicate boning of her face? Even the dress looked suddenly different, ivory sheen warm against her skin, skirt flowing smoothly over slender hips. (1355, pp. 148-9)

The rewarding effect of this "transformation" is all that the heroine could have hoped for. She has to fight men off and her altered appearance causes the hero, in a "real moment of truth" to realize that he loves her.

The promise is that if it can happen to Gina, it can happen to any woman with a little help from Revlon, Max Factor, or another company in the cosmetics and fashion industry. The underside of the promise, however, is the rebuke that a woman has only herself to blame if she does not try to improve her appearance and does not attract men.

The ultimate goal is to look and feel totally feminine if one is a woman and masculine if one is a man. One's appearance should emphasize one's sex:*

She put on a pretty pink dress with a soft, silky sheen surface which...felt good and looked decidedly feminine. (1233, p. 183)

In the white dinner jacket with a black cummerbund at his waist he looked both devastatingly handsome and supremely male. (1909, p. 21)

*There are descriptions of the clothing and appearance of men as well as women in Harlequins. However, they are less frequent and usually less detailed.

The contrast between the sexes is therefore stressed at the same time that clothes, makeup, and personal appearance aids are glamorized.

This section has argued that the image of women's work in the home in Harlequins is a selective and glamorized version of reality. It has further argued that this image reinforces traditional sex role structure. It does so by emphasizing sex differences, by presenting the home as woman's rightful place, and by portraying women's work in the home as totally enjoyable, rewarding work at which women are particularly well skilled and to which they are "naturally" disposed.

This aspect of Harlequins' reinforcement of sex role structure reinforces capitalism in three ways. First, as previously discussed, women's work in the labour force is closely related to women's work in the home. Viewing women as a marginal labour force and using them as a reserve army of labour is dependent upon women's ability and willingness to move into and out of the labour force from the home. Women's position in the home must be seen as their main concern and priority. Their labour force participation is the factor which can be manipulated.

How does this work? If there is a need for women's labour, their participation is encouraged. We have seen that Harlequins provide some support for women's participation

in public production. However, when there is little need for their labour, their participation must be discouraged. In addition, this non-participation must be accepted. If women see themselves as unemployed workers, their exclusion may be resisted. A legitimating ideology has developed, therefore, which forestalls discontent and that ideology posits that women's rightful place is in the home. They may make excursions into the labour force but their primary role and identity is as wives and mothers, not workers. This ideology legitimates using women as a cheap, flexible labour force. This ideology is evident in Harlequins portrayal of women's role in the home and in the labour force.

Secondly, as pointed out in Chapter I: "The wage labour system...is sustained by the socially necessary but private labour of housewives and mothers."²⁷ Women's work in the home enables others within the family to participate in the labour force. An additional benefit to the society is that housewife's work is unpaid work. The capitalist system does not have to directly provide these services in order to maintain its labour force. If these services had to be paid for, they could prove to be costly. Capitalism is spared this because women absorb the cost. Again, the emphasis on women's role in the home proves to be ideological.

Finally, Harlequins stress consumption as a task and pleasure that is part of women's role in the home. Consumption is an integral part of capitalism. Previously, it was noted that corporations must continually stimulate consumer demand in order to continue their growth cycle and profitability. Harlequins glamorize consumer products and portray the joys of consumerism for women. These images lend support to the system that produces the goods.

Personal Life

The final aspect of sex role structure to be analyzed is the relationship between the sexes in personal life. Since Harlequins are romances, the portrayal of love, marriage, and sexuality dominates the books. Coupling is a major plot element in Harlequins. Not only do the hero and Heroine get engaged or married in these books, but so do other minor characters like rivals, parents, siblings, friends, and employees as well. Nearly one half of the books have more than the one major couple pairing. One book had a total of five couples getting together before the end of the story.

Harlequin characters consider love to be the most important thing in their lives. Love and marriage are of ultimate importance in both men's and women's lives:

"I want to come first in a man's life...not be of secondary importance to a man's hobby or sport, or even his work." (1647, p. 13)

"A man who does not love is only half alive."
(1268, p. 185)

"The great fundamental need of everyone, of course,
is for love." (1233, p. 49)

"it really is love that makes the world go around.
Without it you are nothing, absolutely nothing."
(1838, p. 110)

"of all things, love comes first." (999, p. 10)

The importance of love and marriage is dictated by instincts, according to Harlequins. Heroes and particularly heroines instinctively recognize their intended mates and are drawn towards them. "She made for him at once, with all the instinct of a homing pigeon." (1382, p. 92) In another Harlequin, the heroine tries to avoid the hero but continually finds herself looking for him and seeking him out:

Secretly astounded by her own behaviour, Lisa found she could not help it. For once natural instinct was having its way with her, pushing aside the dictates of her will no matter how hard she tried to assert that strong and highly-developed faculty. (1684, p. 121)

Mating instincts rule supreme and cannot be denied. It is impossible to fight love. One may try but if the right person comes along any struggles are futile. The heart rules the mind:

Fighting her feeling for Nick was like trying to hold back an overwhelming tide. If she had any sense left at all she would put as much distance as possible between herself and Oakleigh, no matter what it cost her. Staying here in contact with him would be nothing but self-inflicted torture.

But she wouldn't go, she knew. She wouldn't go because she couldn't. Falling in love with Nick hadn't been sensible. Leaving him of her own free will was beyond her. (1355, p. 144)

This attitude echoes the powerlessness and acquiescence to "fate" typical of Harlequins. Things happen to people; people seldom make things happen.

Since love is so important, Harlequins give a definite and detailed description of this exalted emotional state. Harlequin characters believe in traditional romantic love. Real love is intensive and demanding, occurs only once in a lifetime, and can be inspired by only one person who is the quintessence of his or her gender.

There can be little mistake about what Harlequins regard to be love because they meticulously describe the symptoms and characteristics of love and lovers. The most obvious symptom of love is cardio-vascular disturbances--hearts race, pulses pound, bodies tremble, and knees go weak. Extreme physical sensations are triggered by minimal bodily contact with the loved one, the mere sight of the loved one, or even contact with objects that belong to the loved one. For example, in the following quotation, the hero and heroine are simply dancing:

Lesley could feel her bones beginning to melt, she slipped into a kind of mental swoon, aware only of the man who held her in his arms.... Close to him like this, her body was criss-crossed with the craziest feelings--the sharp pains of delight and desire went through her like knives, taking her breath and leaving her spent, almost

gasping, weak as water. She felt herself slacken, and then in reaction tense nervously.... (1812, p. 103)

Love is a peak experience. It is ecstasy, paradise, elation, delicious joy, exhilaration, and a sweet storm. Any other experience pales besides the intensity of love.

The only emotion that it may be difficult to distinguish love from in Harlequins is hate, for "hatred is akin to love." (1004, p. 191) These two emotions are frequently found side by side ("'Funny how you could love and hate a person at the same time.'" 1879, p. 155), but the love excuses the hate. In fact, hating and hurting are welcomed as reliable proof of love for "'one always behaves hideously to the person one loves.'" (1185, p. 189) Harlequin characters seldom question the connection between love and hate, because they want to experience strong emotions and sensations. They favour violently passionate relationships that demand their time and attention. Only love that is intense can be recognized to be real love.

Because love is felt so strongly, it has a powerful effect upon the person who loves. The characters expect their very appearances and souls to be altered by their love:

she felt dazed and yet so blissful that when she went into the cloakroom to tidy herself she was surprised to see her own face looking at her in the glass. As she no longer felt the

same person inside she had expected to see a different face. How could the lips he had kissed look like her former lips which had not been thus blessed? (880, p. 183)

Love is so powerful that it removes all barriers and transforms people's lives for "love, the real thing... can move mountains with the same ease as faith." (1185, p. 147) No effort is required, just faith. Again, this is consistent with the passivity and resignation which is characteristic of Harlequins.

Another characteristic of traditional real love is that it is jealous and possessive. Heroes and heroines accept possessiveness as a natural part of love because they want love that is complete and exclusive involvement and unity:

"Love is doing things together, forgiving each other, loving the other so much that when he is miserable, you're miserable too, when he's happy so are you, if one of you treads on a nail the other's foot hurts." (1647, p. 13)

"All I know is that when you fall in love...you just love-and want, naturally, to spend every minute of the rest of your lives together." (1429, p. 78)

"I am not prepared to share even a particle of her love or loyalty with another--a simple and natural wish, surely." (1308, p. 79)

"I think I'd break your neck if you allowed someone else to give you so much as a chaste salute on the forehead. You're going to find me fiendishly jealous." (880, p. 184)

There is no murmur of protest about this kind of possessiveness from the heroines. On the contrary, they are more

likely to be grateful for it, as in this Harlequin: "She thought, tremulously, that she would never quite believe the miracle of belonging to Nicholas, and for the test of her life she would strive to deserve it." (800, p. 191) There is little room for other people or activities in such a relationship but Harlequin characters do not want much outside their relations because they expect everything from it. There is no need to have other social contact and support systems because Harlequin characters confidently expect their love relationships to last forever. This is another instance of Harlequin's portrayal of the relatively isolated individual.

A final characteristic of Harlequin love is that it is not generally a love between equals. Instead, it is a love between men and women who are necessarily unequal. The ideal man or woman in Harlequins is a womanly woman for the men and a manly man for the women. Sex role stereotypical characteristics are a basic requirement, thus the heroes are big, strong and dominant while the heroines are soft, slender, and ultimately compliant. The characters fit into rigid sex role categories. Heroes search for their Ideal Woman as eagerly as heroines search for their Ideal Man. It is indeed a search when there is only one person in the world that one can really love. Rarity makes the

search compelling and time and energy consuming, although the women usually have more time to devote to this quest. When one does find this ideal, as one always does in Harlequins, that relationship is so unique and even hallowed that it is worth any sacrifice to maintain it, although the women sacrifice more for the relationship than do the men.

There is a small minority of books and characters who want love based on equality but this means equality of status and respect, not equality in doing household tasks or being breadwinners, etc. Only one book really emphasizes equality--*The Taming of Lisa*--and one can see by the title that the stress on equality rings a little hollow by the end of the book when Lisa is "tamed" by love. On the whole, there is little mention of equality between men and women in love relationships. In another book for example, the hero advises the heroine on her ideal man and describes him in the following way:

"One thing is certain. You'd need a man whose mind matched your own--lively and intelligent. But his brain would have to be slightly superior to yours. You wouldn't want it other. And he would have to be firm with you at times." (1429, p. 58)

This hero is right in his assessment; the heroine does want an "equal but slightly superior" man. In fact, most of the heroines do. They do not fight male superiority after love is acknowledged; instead they submit with relief

and submerge themselves in the hero:

At present she was entirely dependent upon him.
She discovered that she quite liked the idea.
(1327, p. 30)

Not a "Will you?" or a "Won't you?" or a "By
your leave." It was Brett the masterful making
the plans now. And she was content that it should
be so. (1520, p. 189)

Surely complete identification with one's husband
was the most basically satisfying experience
a woman could know...? (921, p. 171)

The heroines want to submit and want to make great
sacrifices to prove their love, for, according to Harlequins,
love is "caring more for him than you do for yourself."
(1879, p. 67) This is all taken for granted: "Her whole
life, she supposed would now revolve around him...." (1429,
p. 113) and it is portrayed as feeling good as well: "She
hadn't believed it could possibly be so good to give in
and admit that someone else was more important to her than
she was to herself." (815, p. 180) Male dominance and
female subordination in love is expected and approved.

When people do not put love first and when women
become too assertive, trouble begins. Marriages are
jeopardized and people are unhappy. In one Harlequin,
for example, the heroine attempts to begin her marriage
to the hero on an equal footing but she soon sees the folly
of her ways: "She had lost him, she concluded despairingly,
and all through her own silly efforts to manage him and
her striving for equality." (1672, p. 171) She admits

that she wants her hero-husband to dominate her. Of course, she does not lose the hero who has been watching her struggles with amusement: "'I couldn't help laughing, sweetheart. It was so diverting watching you fighting for freedom when in fact you were already free.'" (1672, p. 188)*

Love, then, is a wondrous emotion that is experienced both spiritually and physically. It has a strong effect and can transform people and their lives. A person is powerless to resist and at first is torn between love and hate, indifference and violent jealousy, but when the person finally acknowledges the realness of their love, they realize that they want to become one with the loved one, that their love will last forever, and that no sacrifice is too great to secure that love.

Mutual love inevitably means marriage in Harlequin. Some Harlequins revolve around an already-married plot, but most conclude by promising marriage in the near future. Marriage is regarded as essential to people's lives, particularly women's lives:

But should one stand completely alone? Most people didn't. They paired off, married. That, it seems, was the most natural state for everyone, or almost everyone. Was she different? (1469, p. 54)

* One must realize that the hero's definition of freedom is rather restricted, considering that during the course of the book, he dictates to the heroine what she will wear, when she will eat, how she will behave, and at one point, threatens to strangle her when she does not obey him.

"But everybody gets married," she insisted....
 "Unless it's girls who are too plain for anyone to want them." (1255, p. 19)

To go home without a husband or the promise of one was the last word in humiliation. (800, p. 130)

Harlequins imply that a young unmarried woman may be complete and happy for a time, but as she grows older and people pair off all around her, she will be left lonely, insecure, and slightly pathetic--an unnatural, hypochondriac old maid who is dotty about her cats. Harlequins indicate that marriage would have prevented all of these problems. This image is in contrast to Jessie Bernard's findings that married women fare less well than single women in mental health surveys.²⁸ However, Harlequins ignore any drawbacks of marriage and focus on the advantages as they see them. There are two major advantages accruing to women through marriage: first, financial and emotional security and secondly, status.

The most important advantage of marriage for Harlequin women is emotional and financial security. This is a constant theme. Heroines, even the so-called independent heroines, quickly tire of the responsibility of taking care of themselves and find it a relief to let the hero take over. Once they experience the joy of being a very feminine clinging vine, they can never regain their desire or ability to live a life of independence and self-reliance. Independence becomes a burden and security becomes a major

goal in life which ends in the sanctuary of the hero's arms and home:

Only in his arms did she feel secure. (1909, p. 57)

"It's all right, my little one," he crooned, stroking her hair. "You're safe now, and with me you always will be safe!" (1550, p. 183)

She had Mark, and a future made safe by his love. (1596, p. 149)

He put his arms around me.... I felt as if I had lived all my life for this moment, as if I had been on a long and difficult journey from which at last I was in safe harbour. (1004, p. 191)

Heroes are infallible and welcome additional responsibility, so it seems perfectly sensible and "natural" for the heroines to turn to them. There is no need for the women to have alternative means of emotional or financial support because the heroes supply everything they want and need. Harlequin heroines have complete faith and trust in their fiancés or husbands. For example, one heroine is totally in awe of her future husband:

What an unusual world his mind must be. She felt sure that there would be nothing commonplace in it. She did not think that he was capable of thinking a commonplace thought or of uttering a commonplace word. (880, p. 103)

The hero is no less optimistic, promising the heroine that "'For us, it isn't going to be just one enchanted evening but an enchanted lifetime.'" (880, p. 191) In another Harlequin, the heroine asks the hero what they

are going to do about their love for each other. He replies: "One marries...And one makes love for the rest of one's life.'" (843, p. 187) The heroine gives her consent to this proposed arrangement. She is in for a shock. Indeed, Bernard has proposed "A Shock Theory of Marriage" to describe what happens to women who marry with expectations similar to the Harlequin heroines':

In addition to these "conventional" shocks..., there is another only recently recognized-- discovering the fallacy of the sex stereotypes that the wife has been socialized into accepting Her husband is not the sturdy oak on whom she can depend. There are few trauma greater than...the wife's discovery of her own gut-superiority in a thousand hidden crannies of the relationship; than the realization that in many situations his judgment is not better than hers;...that he is not the calm, rational, nonemotional dealer in facts and relevant arguments; that he is, in brief, not at all the kind of person the male stereotype pictures him to be. Equally, if not more, serious is her recognition that...she is often called upon to be the strong one in the relationship. These trauma are the more harrowing because they are interpreted as individual, unique, secret, not-to-be-shared with others, not even, if possible, to be admitted to oneself.²⁹

There are several ways of coping with this shock. Joanna Russ has suggested that one of the routes women take is to immerse themselves in reading romances.³⁰ This is an ironic "solution" since the romances reinforce the very notions and expectations that set women up for the shock of marriage. Whether women read romances for this reason or not, it is certainly true that Harlequins do nothing to educate women about the realities of marriage,

and, in fact, add to the mythology of getting married and living happily ever after.

The second benefit of marriage for women is their rise in status. As indicated, single women, particularly older single women, do not have much status or respect. Marriage relieves Harlequin women of the possibility of the ridicule, suspicion, and pity connected with a single marital status. Marriage does not only prevent low status, but also actively promotes high status for heroines for the majority of them marry above their own class.

Heroes, heroines and readers are aware of this lure because the hero's wealth and prestige are flaunted by the author throughout the books. Although the characters maintain they marry for love, the wealth and status is constantly in evidence. Occasionally the hero's status is such an essential part of how he sees himself, of how the heroine sees him, and of their future relationship, that it can not be ignored even in their most intimate moments:

Down in the speed boat the oil boss swung Sarah aboard.... She would have to start calling him Bryce. Soon now he would be her husband.

The engine roared. As they thundered away Sarah let her gaze rest on his dark shape with a loving tender light.

Dear as he was to her heart, she would always think of him as the oil boss. (1920, p. 188)

"My darling dumb one, do you know that we belong?" he breathed with rough passion, and

Jane's answer was to seek his lips again with sweet ardour. To whisper:

"Yes, boss." (1708, p. 188)

"You didn't need me any more?"

"Not as ombudsman.... But" ... a long deliberate pause.... "how does Mrs. Corporation Boss sound?"

"Mrs.--But you're the Corporation Boss."

"I believe it's what I'm called."

"Then Mrs. Corporation Boss would mean--"

"Yes, it would mean the wife of the boss, Miss Searle." (1952, p. 187)

It is not unusual in Harlequins for a woman to be elevated from secretary to Mrs. Corporation Boss via marriage, a leap in status that would have never been possible as a result of the heroine's own efforts or heritage.

Marriage, therefore, in Harlequins, is a wonderful thing. Indeed, it is to be wondered, that out of the briefness of the acquaintance, the confusion, the jealousy, and the hate("Oh, Ian, is this really happening? I thought you didn't even like me." 948, p. 180), Harlequin characters come to experience and expect so much of marriage, but they do and they are portrayed as being totally justified in doing so.

There is one other aspect of sex role structure and interpersonal relationships that needs to be discussed and that is sexuality. Although there is a greater stress on love and marriage, the portrayal of sexuality is an essential part of Harlequins. When asked about editorial

restrictions on Harlequins, Harlequin officials reply that Harlequins must have a happy ending, and that there must be no overt sex or violence. Compared to other novels on the popular market, this may be a relatively accurate description of Harlequins, but they do contain both sex and violence.*

A general preoccupation with sexuality exists throughout the books, although by and large sexual references are indirect and coy. Innuendoes which can be interpreted sexually are not uncommon. For example:

He was infinitely tender and gentle, yet there was a possessive quality in the warmth and strength of his body, so very close to hers. She quivered under the touch of his hands, feeling their warmth though the thinness of her attire; and as the silent moments passed she became profoundly aware of his rising ardour..... (1672, p. 190)

In addition to the description of sexuality experienced by the characters, the characters offer direct comments on sexuality. The portrayal of sexuality that emerges is one that is in accordance with traditional attitudes towards sex, that is, the double standard.

It is understood that the heroes are experienced men. They are so attractive and "supremely male" that it would be suspicious if they were as virginal as the

* This is particularly the case in the Harlequin Presents series but is applicable to the regular Harlequin series as well, which is the focus of this study.

heroines for, after all, a man has "needs". Women, on the other hand, do not have "needs" or if they do, they had better suppress them or thought to be cheap and unworthy of marriage. Heroes and heroines alike share this view of women's sexuality or rather decent women's asexuality. Judith Long Laws and Pepper Schwartz note that this is the traditional sexual script for men and women:

Let us look at the social constructions of female and male sexuality that fit this script. The woman is essentially ignorant, the man experienced. If a woman is without substantial sexual experience, sexual initiation is a specific kind of learning experience. The male is cast as the teacher. One hackneyed image likens the male to a skilled musician, who can draw from the (inert) female instrument the most beautiful music.³¹

This describes the basic image of sexuality in Harlequins. Until the sexual "awakening" which takes place within the bonds of marriage or at least a love relationship, a woman must suppress her sexuality and remain pure. Heroines castigate themselves if they have been caught in an apparently "compromising" situation and heroes, always believing "the worst", automatically condemn them until the heroines can prove their innocence:

"It was a bitter blow to find that fellow there when I took you home. I didn't want to believe even then, that you were that sort of girl."
(1116, p. 187)

She freed herself almost viciously from his demanding arms, shocked, sickened. He thought she was that sort of a girl! (1812, p. 106)

The same duality that people have imposed on women and sexuality in society exists in Harlequins. Women are seen as either pure or evil, virgins or whores, angels or temptresses. Regardless of the woman's intentions, women are seen as being responsible for illicit sexual responses in the male. They are blamed if they do arouse men and are blamed if they don't arouse men, the reaction dependent upon the context. Unthinkingly or intentionally, women inflame men who valiantly try to maintain their iron control but are ultimately unable to resist the seductress and the force of their male passion. For example:

"you can't arouse the primitive in a man and always get away with it. You are not a child. If you don't know how a man reacts when he feels desire for you, then it's time you did." (1396, p. 124)

"Oh, Alison, you defeat me," he murmured brokenly. "I can't hold out against you any longer." (1520, p. 187)

"If you don't want such things to happen [a seering kiss] you should take care not to be so damned provocative." (1812, p. 106)

These are good instances of sexual "blaming the victim" in which the men are never guilty of unwarranted assault because women "ask for it". This is true inspite of their innocence or intentions because heroines are seldom deliberately seductive. In fact, they are inordinately shy, blushing at the mention of the hero, kisses, babies, and beds. They prudishly maintain their virtue ("I

haven't made it a habit in my life to allow men to kiss me.'" 1550, p. 131) and attempt to quell any physical response that the heroes arouse in them:

A quiver of fire ran through her at his touch, for which she despised herself. (1520, p. 94)

The starry heavens became a crazy kaleidoscope and the girl shut her eyes and forced her traitorous body into rigid stiffening control. (1708, p. 77)

Heroines make every attempt to block their sexuality; they must do so in order to be socially acceptable. However, they also are expected to be able to suddenly revive their sexuality when they fall in love and marry. After love and marriage, any sexual awkwardness or reluctance on their part is not welcomed as a sign of virtuous worth as before, but is now regarded to be childishness and unworthiness:

"I'm going--I've got better things to do than waste time on you," he answered. "You don't even know how to kiss properly." (1879, p. 105)

In another Harlequin, the hero rapes his heroine-wife:

"Andre," she said, "if you stay here tonight I shall despise you. I promise you that!"

His expression did not change. "Then despise me," he said, and came purposefully towards her. (1909, p. 123)

Afterwards, he berates her for not responding. He says she doesn't know anything about love and he wants "a wife who is prepared to make some real effort towards effecting

a proper relationship, not a child who weeps into her pillow because her romantic dreams weren't fulfilled." (1909, p. 138) *

Heroes make it plain that, after marriage, although they may be temporarily tolerant, they will not put up with the maidenly scruples they required before marriage:

"Do I appear to you...the type to put up with that sort of marriage?" He demanded it harshly, directly, inclining his head to the single bedroom. "Do you think I'd be the kind to bear with half-measures, Miss Royden? Do you?I would not be that type, Miss Royden. I would expect and demand entirety, fulfilment, conclusion, a completion to a logical end. Do you understand?" (999, pp. 56-7)

When unmarried, heroines must avoid being "that sort of girl" but after marriage they must become "that sort of girl" in order to avoid having "that sort of marriage". In Harlequins, however, this switch is apparently accomplished with ease; romantic dreams are fulfilled. The switch is easy for heroines because of love. Love and sexuality are not separated for women in Harlequins like they can be for Harlequin men; instead, they are synonymous:

"So..., it is true you are not in love with Winterton. You couldn't kiss another man like that if you were." (1550, p. 131)

* Bernard talks about precisely this kind of sexual experience as another shock that women may face in marriage. Bernard, "The Paradox", pp. 153-154.

She had fallen in love with Grenville Garrison. Otherwise she could have never answered to his passions as she had. (1812, p. 123)

So women do respond in Harlequins, but Laws and Schwartz indicate that this kind of response is essentially passive:

Romantic love affords the delights of passive abandonment.... Identifying and giving oneself up to love permits the individual woman to have what she wants, without exercising force (or even volition). In love, she is not responsible. This may be particularly appealing to women, given the restraint and responsibility the standard script imposes on them.³²

An interesting aspect of this portrayal of sexuality is that, probably contrary to women's real experiences in the past, it shows women retaining traditional restrictive attitudes towards sex, but still being easily sexually fulfilled, albeit passively at the proper time with the right man. Women quickly overcome any inhibitions in this context:

In that one swift moment she told him all that he needed to know. The loneliness and the repression that had been her childhood had slipped away from her. She was completely confident that she could give him anything he wanted. (1071, p. 192)

The inhibitions that women readily dismiss in Harlequins have been more pervasive in reality. However, Harlequins do not acknowledge that or consider it to be a problem. On the contrary, they portray favourably the social attitudes that constrain "decent" women's sexuality

and condemn the expression of sexuality in women. This is evident in their negative portrayal of rival women who are the sexual women in Harlequins. Women's sexual fulfillment can be experienced only within the context of love and marriage, thus the institution of marriage and traditional sex roles receive further justification.

Another aspect of sexuality portrayed in Harlequins that is consistent with or an exaggerated version of traditional male and female sexuality is the connection between sexuality and violence. The old stereotype that women love brutes and really want to be abused is a standard image in Harlequins. As one rival man puts it, "'Women admire ruthlessness, don't they? It appeals to their age-old desire to be dragged off by the hair to some lair in the wilds--'" (921, p. 26) Eighty-two per cent of the heroines experience male violence, which ranges from bruising grips to punches in the jaw to rapes (within the bonds of marriage). Readers may thrill to the classic "you're so strong and I'm so weak" situation in almost every novel for male and female size and strength are continually contrasted:

he leaned over and put his arms roughly around her and kissed her. Dark, deep, effortless, because he was so strong and she was helpless to resist... (1879, p. 92)

[He] took her in his arms masterful and overpowering. Helpless, with pinioned arms, she could not struggle. (1135, p. 187)

Harlequins abound in cruel kisses and savage embraces but the violence is interpreted positively as a sign of love, or at least as a sign of feeling of some sort and as already argued, feeling is highly valued in Harlequins:

Violence had been another form of kissing and had also brought its own satisfaction. They had to be emotional over each other, no matter what form it took. (1185, p. 117)

Violence is kissing and kissing is violent, but heroines make no complaint because they want a dominant man. They reject many of the rival men on the grounds that they are "weak". They prefer the strong heroes:

The tears fell, tears of anger and helplessness; and disappointment that her husband was a weakling, and not masterful as she now knew she wanted him to be.... She didn't want to be terrified...no, just made to feel a little apprehensive of her husband, as she had on the one or two occasions when he had decided to assert his authority. (1672, p. 171)

She was no longer capable of resistance. Something in her even revelled in the savagery of his embrace --accepted it, responded to it. She clung to him drowningly. (1812, p. 123)

She wanted him to do just that--to tease him, to goad him into doing exactly what he had threatened [to take her across his knees and spank her], so that she could feel his arms about her, pit her small strength against his. (1233, p. 140)

Harlequin characters expect as much from their sexual relationships as they do from their marriages. Heroes want innocence, but passionate innocence. Heroines want violence, but tender violence. They want to feel apprehensive of their men, but safe and secure. They

want their men to be sexually experienced and attractive, but faithful. Above all, both Harlequin men and women want feeling and fulfillment from their love and sex life.

To summarize, the portrayal of personal life and the relationship between the sexes in Harlequins is largely a glamorization of love and marriage. There is a strong stress placed on romantic love as the primary source of gratification in life. Intense love and passion are positively portrayed, even if their expression is violent. Throughout the Harlequins, traditional male-female sex roles are reinforced. Men are expected to be dominant and women are expected to be submissive in their relationships.

This portrayal serves as ideology in several ways. First, Eli Zaretsky has pointed out that workers do not own the means of production within capitalism. Their work, separated from ownership and control, loses its meaningful character for them. They seek a substitute in the family and in personal life. Zaretsky implies that this is an adaptive response:

By the twentieth century, a sphere of 'personal' life emerged among the proletariat itself. In the absence of a political movement that sought to transform both personal life and production, personal life was characterized by subjectivity--the search for personal identity outside the social division of labour.³³

The family and personal relationships fulfill psychological needs of individuals which are not otherwise met by society

The frustration of these needs could lead to rebellion. Thus, a focus on personal relationships as fulfillment diverts possible dissent and helps maintain the on-going system. Harlequins reinforce this focus .

Secondly, it has been previously noted that the family is also a necessary economic unit for private production, distribution, and the consumption of goods in our society. Sidney Greenfield has stated that love is the inducement for people to form these economic units. Harlequins reinforce this through their positive portrayals of romantic love, and the inevitable connection between love and marriage that they feature.

Thirdly, the portrayal of the connection between sexuality and violence as it is directed towards women reinforces women's dependency upon men within the family structure. Harlequins indicate that women are unable to effectively resist force. They must seek the protection of a man. As a result, men control women's sexuality. This is true in Harlequins and to some extent in society. Lorene Clark and Debra Lewis have attempted to explain the function that violent sexuality directed towards women plays in capitalism. They relate it to the dominant members' need to control not only the means of production, but also the means of reproduction:

The conversion of women...into forms of private property resulted from the evolution of social

and legal institutions designed to ensure effective control to men over the certainty of their future offspring, and thereby to fulfill the need for a settled principle of inheritance which could preserve property through time.³⁴

The restraint of women's sexuality to the family helps ensure the perpetuation of class lines.* This theory offers an explanation which can provide insight into the relationship between Harlequins, women, violent sexuality, and society.

So far the chapter has analyzed three aspects of sex role structure--public production, private production, and personal life. These receive the most attention in Harlequins but there are two additional facets of society that are also important in Harlequins--class and corporate structures. The remainder of the chapter will analyze Harlequins' portrayal of these two structures.

Class Structure

Class structure in capitalism is characterized by inequality which is "founded upon two interlocking... social processes. One is the allocation of rewards attaching to different positions in the social system; the other

* With the development of more reliable birth control, the need for the restraint of women's sexuality is lessened. Harlequins may reflect this change for they are becoming increasingly sexual. When sexuality becomes less directly connected to reproduction, it becomes less instrumental. It becomes expressive and is, therefore, another form of personal life which is expected to be meaningful and fulfilling.

is the process of recruitment to these positions."³⁵

This section will analyze the portrayal of social class positions and recruitment to these positions within Harlequins.

Social Class Positions

Although extreme class differences exist in Harlequins, they are not usually the primary focus of attention for two reasons. First, love, not class, is the main motif of the novels. Secondly, the main characters as a whole are disproportionately wealthy. Of the 198 heroes, heroines, and rivals, 36 per cent are in the upper class, 46 per cent are in the middle class, and 18 per cent are in the working class. Compared to reality, the numbers in the upper and middle classes in Harlequins are considerably over-stated, while the numbers in the working class are understated. Therefore, the focus in Harlequins is not on class differences as much as it is on the general prosperity of the main characters.

The exclusion of the working class is particularly evident when the the class positions of just the heroes and heroines are considered. Of all the characters, heroines contribute the most to the ranks of the working class. Forty-six per cent are working class at the beginning of the story. However, they are not usually descendants of the working class but are recent additions to it. They

are "fallen middle class" with middle class values and outlook on life. They are also only temporary members of the working class because by the end of the stories, all of the working class heroines are upwardly mobile through marriage to the heroes. The heroes are the prime objects of desire and admiration in Harlequins, and significantly, there is not a single working class hero.

This omission is not surprising in view of the high status of the upper class and low status of the working class in our society. John Cawelti comments that in order for popular formula fiction to work, the formulas:

must be embodied in figures, settings, and situations that have appropriate meanings for the culture which produces them. One cannot write a successful adventure story about a social character that the culture cannot conceive in heroic terms; that is why we have so few adventure stories about plumbers, janitors, or streetsweepers.³⁶

We do not have Harlequin Romances about them either.

Harlequins both reflect and reproduce the existing class distinctions and evaluations. The images of the upper, middle, and working class will be discussed in turn.

There is no single image of the upper class in Harlequins. However, the portrayal of the upper class in Harlequins can be fairly easily grouped into two broad categories--a positive and a negative view.

The predominant image of the upper class is the positive view, largely because of the heroes. In this

conception, the upper class is gracious, cultured, generous, hard-working, responsible, and either democratic or benevolently feudal. This section of the upper class receives nothing but admiration in Harlequins. "'They must be very rich, she thought with respect, very rich and very aristocratic." (973, p. 22) Heroines are impressed with the "quiet good taste" that seems to characterize the genteel upper class. Life is good and the people are virtuous:

The Pearces, of course, lived in Salisbury's most select suburb.... They had a swimming pool and a tennis court, they owned stables out of town and three cars. They entertained a good deal, kept open house...; they gave freely to charity, and democratically had friends in all walks of life. (815, p. 168)

The wealth that allows this kind of living is never tainted with dishonesty or corruption because Harlequins maintain that "'A man as wealthy as he was had no need for dishonesty of any sort.'" (1838, p. 132) Thus in Harlequins, the upper class' wealth ensures their honesty, rather than allowing dishonesty and ensuring merely their impunity from discovery and punishment as is often the case in reality.

Instead, in Harlequins, the wealth and position of the upper class is the result of hard work, accurate judgment, and the shouldering of responsibility. In *Rocks Under Shining Water*, for example, the hero is fabulously wealthy, owning the entire town and the local

means of production. At first the heroine resents his wealth and power, but gradually she realizes that the hero "works his eyes out" and never pulls rank unless things are going wrong. (1723, pp. 53, 71) In *Heir to Glen Ghyll*, the hero has an "enormous responsibility" as head of the family corporation that employs most of the local inhabitants. (1450, p. 47) In *Time of Grace*, the rival woman who is in a similar position of wealth and ownership, is continually mindful of her class responsibilities: "'We have a duty to our tenants.'" (973, p. 59) The upper class in this perspective is characterized by generosity and humility. The members of this class are worthy of their wealth:

"He has given everyone something to work for, and one day he plans to give everyone a share in their island. Do you not think that is remarkable?" (1838, p. 105)

"I'm a little ashamed that I can drive myself home, warm and dry, for I imagine, from their appearance, that quite a number of my patients haven't even the price of a bus fare...." (1498, p. 29)

This image of the upper class is totally sympathetic. These people are refined and wonderful, but they are also human beings, real people, like you and I, with their share of sorrows and tribulations. They may be objects of admiration and emulation, but they are also to be pitied for the lot of the upper class is not always an easy one.

They have material benefits, to be sure, but money is not everything:

"Being rich doesn't always make people happy, you know." (1838, p. 150)

Caroline felt sorry for her because her life was so luxurious, yet so empty. (948, p. 14)

"Even the rich have their problems...." (1268, p. 22)

the dollar-millionaire class. That way lay troubles galore: a positive Niagra of begging letters, unrelenting newspaper publicity, gross fawning and flattery, and perhaps even the hatred and envy of the less fortunate. (892, p. 177)

It is lonely at the top, bearing the weight of the world on your shoulders, being vulnerable to beggars, flatterers, kidnappers, and the jealousy of those "less fortunate". Heroes sigh manfully and bemoan "'the penalties of being a landlord'" (1838, p. 172), while heroines look on and sympathize. Having money is good ("being normal she could take pleasure in the things that money could buy." 1268, p. 115), but it is also a burden and responsibility which very few people can handle ably.

The second category of portrayal of the upper class is a negative one, due largely to rival women. In this view, the upper class is lazy, snobbish, spoiled, unfeeling and mercenary. There are occasional references to:

...the kind of supercilious young men and women who idled through life cushioned by their parent's affluence and social position, and whose attitude to all outsiders was one of preconceived dislike or patronage. (948, pp. 110-111)

Perhaps riches made one arrogant and superior like that.... (1672, p. 16)

This attitude results in some rebellion against inequality of wealth, power, and status:

"Why should Lewis always get his own way just because he was rich and had influence?" (1396, p. 40)

"I decided we were not living in the Dark Ages and if Mr. Max Fallon wants to run his precious island on feudal lines--you know, servants keeping their place and all that--well, then it's not for me." (1838, p. 155)

"When one thinks of all the fabulous cost of a place like this! [a private palace turned into a public showpiece] And I suppose while money was being poured into this museum piece the ordinary people were starving. Surely money could be better spent?" (1327, p. 26)

This rebellion, however, is very limited for a number of reasons. First of all, many of the criticisms are revealed to be unjustified and not based on facts. The first two criticisms quoted above, for example, are directed towards heroes who do not prove to be selfish or unfair at all. The third criticism quoted above is also rejected on the grounds that it is superficial and one-sided. The hero, in response to the heroine's criticism of spending money on fancy palaces while people starved, reminds her in classic Biblical tradition that: "' the poor are always with us. It might seem a waste of money at the time when these places are being built, but life would be so much duller and poorer without some of these beautiful

buildings.'" (1327, p. 26) The criticisms are, in turn, criticized and existing inequality is ultimately justified.

Secondly, condemnations of the rich or of class inequality are usually voiced by a "weak" character such as a rival man who is really motivated by jealousy, not justice, or a heroine who is obviously irrational and over-emotional. Those who denounce the rich are usually revealed to have ulterior motives, therefore their criticism cannot be taken at face value and may be dismissed as "sour grapes".

Thirdly and most importantly, criticisms are almost invariably of individuals, not social structure. Private ownership of property and wealth are unquestioningly accepted. There is nothing wrong with the system, only bad individuals. This, of course, is consistent with capitalism's and Harlequin's emphasis on individuals. Thus, the general image of the upper class in Harlequins is a positive one, with the exception of a few bad individuals.

The middle class predominates in Harlequins, both in terms of characters and outlook. There is a pervasive belief that "money has become more evenly distributed" (1429, p. 76) and that most people are in the middle class. The image of this class in Harlequins is uniformly positive. Members of the middle class are practical, down-to-earth people. They are typified by one individual who has "a

calm and collected attitude to life, totally lacking in prejudice." (1684, p. 113) They are solid citizens who believe in work, the family, and clean underwear.

There are few direct comments on the middle class in Harlequins. They are regarded to be the norm. Therefore, there is more material about the upper and working classes. These people are the ones who are different. It is their social positions which must be explained.

Although there is more material in Harlequins on the working class, its portrayal is limited in other ways. For example, the "old working class" comprised of blue collar workers involved in industrial production is almost totally ignored. Only service workers and the white collar members of the working class are represented to any extent. In contrast to the omission of blue collar workers, nearly every Harlequin includes a portrayal of personal employees or servants. This is an extreme over-statement of their numbers in reality. These glimpses of the working class are primarily supplied by the brief portrayals of minor characters.

In these portrayals, the working class is clearly regarded to be subordinate (sometimes they are referred to as "the lower orders" 843, p. 160) and this is accepted as "natural". The classes are basically expected to "know their place" and to keep in it. In one Harlequin, the

heroine is lonely and mixes with the servants. She is chided by the hero: "'You must learn your place, Tansy, just as Ellen has had to learn hers,' he said sharply after he ordered her out of the kitchen with obvious displeasure."

(973, p. 104) In another Harlequin, the heroine warns "Gloria, their reasonably devoted maid" that her father has re-married and that she will therefore have a new "mistress":

"Oh, I'll soon get her used to my ways, I expect," said Gloria kindly. And, since she obviously meant no offence in this reversal of the natural order of things, Margaret wisely decided to leave it to time and Gloria's natural good-humour to accomplish whatever changes were required. (1567, p. 19, my emphasis)

There is a critical awareness of those members of the working class who ignore class barriers without permission to do so. For example, there is one reference to "the deplorable habit privileged Irish servants had of joining in the conversation." (1096, p. 27)

The working class, like the upper class, is portrayed both "positively" and negatively, but the main image of the working class, whether "positive" or negative, is always condescending. The negative view of the working class portrays them as simple, lazy, ignorant, gossipy, and dishonest. The middle and upper classes suffer through a "series of unsatisfactory domestic help" (1520, p. 10), who need explicit direction (892, p. 20), cannot deal with

anything too complicated (1429, p. 120), and do not know the meaning of work (1498, p. 112). They are objects of amusement, to be treated with the same tolerance that one uses with children and animals. For example, in one *Harlequin*, two upper class children recount a story of their dog, Tim, who catches a rabbit, brings it still alive into the house and who is consequently scolded by the servant, Lizzie: "'But when Lizzie said Tim was a bad dog, Janet said he wasn't, acause catching rabbits is his nature, like it's Lizzie's nature not to sweep ahind the sofa!'" (1135, p. 140) Out of the mouths of babes, you know.

In another novel, the hero and heroine take a charity trip to a London slum. They are repulsed by the appearance and the smell of the area. The doctor's splendid nose flares fastidiously and the heroine also wrinkles her own small nose until she looks like a "rather choosy angel". The heroine comments: "'How drab it all is-- how can they live here?'" (1498, pp. 18-19) She does not require an answer and *Harlequin* authors do not usually see fit to supply one.

In the "positive" view of the working class, people are no less simple, but they are also respectful, loyal, keen workers who enjoy their work. The ideal worker, in a *Harlequin*, is someone who is "respectful but by no means servile". (1909, p. 137) The working class may have

"rough exteriors" and appear dirty to others but underneath those "rough exteriors" lie hearts of gold.

The working class's working situations are usually glamorized. Servants are "almost one of the family" (1619, p. 65) and are eager to serve their "masters". They sing as they work, the perfect image of idyllic contented workers. For example, although in reality, fruit pickers all over the world are notoriously low paid and over-worked, and suffer from insecure employment and high mortality rates, the image of this occupation in Harlequins is quite different:

The vineyards were alive with September activity. It was grape-picking time and the harvesters climbed the terraces with the huge baskets strapped from their heads. Women wore hats and head-cloths against the sun, and the grapes were picked to the rhythm of flutes and drums. Up near the house musicians accompanied the unloading of the over-flowing baskets. The simply dressed harvesters danced a kind of reel. (1920, pp. 157-158)

They and other members of the working class have no complaints about their lives and living conditions for: "'You see it is disposition as much as circumstances that makes people happy or miserable.'" (880, p. 37) Harlequins are great promoters of the power of positive thinking; it is better to be contented than to be rich.

The previous descriptions were of the Anglo-Saxon or European working class. The portrayal of the black working class in the 32 per cent of Harlequins in which they appear exhibits even more patronage. This has been a long standing

phenomena in popular fiction. Bernard Berelson and Patricia Salter did a study of majority and minority Americans in magazine fiction in 1945 and found the same thing. Minorities were portrayed primarily in minor, less approved roles:

Indeed, some of the minor non-Americans, falling even lower on a scale of personalities-in-their-own-right, came to serve the function of things in the stories. That is, they merely provided the atmosphere and mood or dramatized the broad-minded or cosmopolitan nature of The Americans.³⁷

Similarly, in Harlequins, blacks are portrayed so stereotypically and shallowly that they are reduced to objects that add local "colour" to the stories. Not surprisingly then, there is a continual emphasis on their colour and physical features, on their differences. They are coffee-coloured (921, p. 32) or dark chocolate coloured (1071, p. 17), wooly-headed (800, p. 103), with a wide sugar-white grin (921, pp. 5-6) and rolling, velvety eyes (1708, p. 16). They speak in "pidgin English": "'Dat Boss is ver' pertickular 'bout dem fruit, de black boys sees him dey jump like grasshoppers!'" (1708, p. 16) They address their white employers as "Missy" (1708), "Bwana" or "Memasahib" (1071). They, in turn, are referred to as "boys" (as many as 42 times in one book, 815) and "piccanins" (800). They smell (815, p. 6), shuffle (1708, p. 35), and have rhythm in their bones:

"'He all the time for dance and sing.'" (800, p. 157)

The women pickers wore their best bright cottons and silks, the men strutted in fine suits and strummed a variety of instruments, and the children, born with rhythm in their bones, jerked about and planted their little feet in a childish version of age-old dancing. (800, p. 93)

They are intuitively simple, wise, and happy:

"Africans are like children and dogs, they always know." (1071, p. 125)

How wise these people were, who lived in the sunshine, never hurrying and apparently never worrying. (1520, p. 137)

The main characters in Harlequin, in the liberal tradition, exhibit nothing but kindly good will towards the non-white races. They do not tolerate any overt denigration of them for they are very useful (in their place). For example, in one Harlequin, the rival man, a doctor, refers to the blacks working at the hospital as "nig-nogs" but the heroine objects:

Lesley had always minded Brad's referring to coloured staff as nig-nogs. If it wasn't for these ladies and gentlemen from the Commonwealth the hospitals would be much more understaffed than they already were. (1185, p. 106)

Berelson and Salter found the same attitude in U.S. magazine fiction and linked it to the cultural context in which the fiction was produced and consumed:

One of this country's favorite ideologies claims equality for the diverse national, racial, and religious strains which make up the United States. In one sense, it is "immoral" to suggest that inequality actually exists or, if that is acknowledged, that it cannot be attributed to biological factors or individual inadequacies. This ideology

is not challenged in these stories. Minority differences are regularly recognized but the minorities are not overtly depreciated.³⁸

Harlequins are also characterized by this ideology.

Heroines, in particular, are not unfeeling about racism and injustice ("the inequalities of life worry me" 880, p. 37) and they sometimes voice their concern. They are told that they are mistaken and should not be so silly. Take, for example, this heroine's distress about nomads in Egypt:

The tears pricked Judy's eyes. What was wrong in the world that human beings had to live like this--without homes, without proper food and clothing, tortured by the merciless sun during the day and by the intense cold at night. She suddenly felt ashamed that she had all the comforts money could buy, but her one deep emotion was pity, pity she could not control and the tears streamed down her face....

"It's so--so awful! Why don't people do something for them?"

"Hush, you silly child. They're used to this life; they were born to it. They don't know anything else."

"What has that to do with it? Why isn't something being done!"

"Something is being done," he assured her patiently. "Wait until we reach the irrigated part, then you'll see a difference. These nomads wouldn't thank you for putting them into houses and making them go out to work every morning.... Come now, I shall begin to wish I hadn't brought you.... You're on holiday, child. You've come here to enjoy yourself."

"I feel so guilty."

He had to laugh....

"You're a very silly child to feel guilty. Have you contributed to any-er-discomfort these people may be suffering?"

"No, but neither have I contributed to any cause which might relieve their suffering."

He gave an amused but faintly exasperated little sigh....

More miles of desert, flat and monotonous, and then trees! Here was where irrigation had begun, Chris told her. The desert was becoming productive, but these things took time. He spoke softly and soothingly, and she became calm; the dry sobs which were the aftermath of her tears ceased abruptly and she turned to give Chris a sheepish smile as she said,

"I'm silly, aren't I?"

"Yes, dear, you are." (1672, pp. 120-121)

Other heroines are not even initially cognizant of the poverty and hardship because they are so beguiled by the wonderful weather in, for example, Algeria and South Africa:

No doubt the poverty the Shiek had spoken of existed beneath the surface, but no matter how poor you were in Algeria you had for most of the time a gorgeous climate.... (1520, p. 9)

It was a fine, young country, she thought. Full of troubles, but what country, old or new, could boast peace and prosperity? Here, at least, one could be sure of sunshine and plenty! (800, p. 174)

So Harlequin characters do not have to concern themselves with class inequality and the poverty of other races or the working class because 1) these people are not really so bad off and they are used to it in any case, 2) it is not the major characters' doing; they are not oppressing these other people, and 3) something is being done about inequality (to the extent that it exists) already ...by other people. The system does not appear to be unjust after all. Any problems are being resolved; reform is

just around the corner.

Allocation to Social Class Positions

Frank Parkin points out that class inequality is maintained with an ideology that stresses not only deference (the belief that inequality is inevitable as well as just), but also aspiration:

This aspirational model of reality endorses the class and status system as it stands, but also represents it as a relatively open order in which men of talent and ability can, with effort, rise above their present station.³⁹

Both the deference and aspirational modes of reality are versions of the dominant value system which promotes accomodative responses to the facts of inequality and low status. Both are evident in Harlequins.

There is a firm belief in the possibility of vertical mobility in Harlequins: "'we can all of us rise above our backgrounds.'" (1550, p. 95). In addition, there is a great deal of actual vertical mobility as well. As noted previously, this is particularly true for heroines, the majority of whom marry men from higher social class positions. Heroines do not have to be concerned about poverty or poor working conditions because, if they find their work is beginning to look less attractive as a life-long career, they simply marry the boss and quit. This is a theme in 34 per cent of the Harlequins studied. Another 34 per cent marry

men other than their employers who are of a higher social class position.

There is a feeling in Harlequins that in general people should "keep in their place" but if some restless, talented, deserving or lucky individuals want to improve themselves, there is ample opportunity for them to do so. Even the poorest of peasants can become rich overnight. (1595, p. 127) And if they do not, it is either their fault or it was not "meant":

now she knew that all the golden windows of the world were equally distributed, she knew that if one had the right approach all places were fair but that some places suited some people better.... (1160, pp. 24-25)

Once again Harlequins "blame the victim". If a person doesn't "make it", it must be that individual's fault. He or she did not use the right approach or were not in the right place at the right time. It must be their fault because others (the heroines, for example) do "make it".

Although a number of characters go from rags to riches, no one goes from riches to rags in Harlequins. Downward mobility is not portrayed. Not even rival characters are punished with downward mobility. They, too, marry well or they inherit which is the most important way to secure a favourable position in the class system in both Harlequins and reality.

There is a strong belief in inheritance in Harlequins.

Inheritance is regarded to be a birthright, a heritage due to the descendants. Any attempts to circumvent the line of family inheritance are strongly resisted by the characters:

"He can't just hand over the-the family birth-right to a stranger." (1567, p. 26)

"I can't lose my inheritance." (1595, p. 129)

An indication of the importance of inheritance in Harlequins is the fact that it plays a major role in many of the stories--either standing as an obstacle between the hero and heroine, or uniting them, or attracting the rival characters to them. In one Harlequin, for example, the hero's and heroine's families are farming neighbours but they have been feuding for generations. The hero and heroine love each other and want to marry but they know they would be disowned and the hero would lose his family's farm. The heroine can not bring herself to consent to marry him because of these consequences:

For Adam was strong, strong enough, she sensed, in his present mood to give up everything for her, even his beloved home, but what about afterwards? The years ahead, when he might regret his decision, longing to feel the acres that were his birthright under his feet once more, and even worse perhaps, if they had a son, depriving him of the right to regard Ridegeways as his inheritance. (1975, p. 56)

Inheritance is regarded to be a right, particularly a male right. This is true in Harlequins and in our society. Although Harlequins criticize some aspects of the class

system, they never question the inheritance of property and wealth. Thus their criticisms of the structure of inequality remain superficial.

It has been argued that there is an unequal class structure portrayed in Harlequins. The portrayal justifies or legitimates this class structure in several ways. First, Harlequins basically portray the upper class in a positive way by emphasizing their hard work and heavy responsibilities. In contrast, the working class is rather simple. The upper class provides the leadership and guidance the working class requires. This distribution of power is functional and just. Secondly, Harlequins down-play class differences by implying that inequalities of wealth and ownership are unimportant. "Money cannot buy happiness". "It is love that makes the world go round." These are familiar phrases in Harlequins which deny the importance of class inequality. Class differences are also de-emphasized as a result of the small numbers of working class individuals among the major characters. Thirdly, allocation to class positions is open and fair. Vertical mobility is widespread in Harlequins and the opportunity to advance is available to everyone. If one does not advance it is either that individual's own fault or fate. Therefore, class inequality, which is a key feature of capitalism, and the processes that perpetuate it are legitimated in Harlequins. In this,

Harlequins serve as ideology.

Corporate Structure

Since class is defined by relationship to the means of production, some of the images and themes that were discussed in the context of class structure re-emerge in the analysis of corporate structure. This section will examine the portrayal of this aspect of capitalism in Harlequins more extensively.* It will focus on the four features of corporate structures that were outlined in Chapter I: private ownership and control, wage labour, profitability, and growth.

Private Ownership

It has already been argued that private ownership of property is unquestioningly accepted in Harlequins. Ownership and the inheritance of property are regarded by Harlequin characters as a right.

The connection between ownership and control of corporations in Harlequins is obvious. Most of the corporations, large or small, are family or individual owned and controlled. In most Harlequins, it is either the hero by himself or the hero as a representative of his family, who is clearly the boss, the Corporation Boss (1952). One hero demurs:

* Fifty per cent of the Harlequins in the sample have a portrayal of or comments on corporations and business practices.

"How many ships have you got?"
 "I, personally, don't have any. It's a company."
 "But you're a ship-owner...."
 "I suppose I do own some ships," he conceded,
 "But, as I've said, it's a firm, so everything
 is shared, as it were." (1672, p. 61)

Generally, however, the owners do not hide the structure of ownership and control as is usually the case in reality, but display it, in an unobtrusive manner of course. The ownership and control of property is a measure of a person's importance and worthiness in Harlequins. Individual economic power is positively evaluated.

Wage Labour

Secondly, the system of wage labour and relationships between employer and employees are also portrayed favourably. This has already been evident in the general portrayal of the working class and the upper class, but it should be re-emphasized specifically in terms of work and corporate structure.

Employers (heroes) in Harlequin are tough: "'I don't want to hear excuses--haven't time for them. Out of you, all I want is work and more work.'" (815, p. 17)
 Nevertheless, they are just:

He was competence itself, had complete and absolute knowledge of the concerns of his firm and never spared himself when hard work was a necessity; and by the same token he was so ruthlessly efficient that he expected the same efficiency from everyone who served him. If they failed to justify a position with the firm he sacked them. But he never sacked them unfairly.... (1268, pp. 6-7)

Employers in Harlequins, even though they are at the head of huge multinational corporations, still take "an intense personal interest in every aspect of the business." (948, p. 10) They are particularly concerned about the physical and mental well-being of their employees and their families. "'Employer-employee relations are very important to me.'" (1160, p. 126) Even though they may have over a hundred employees, the Harlequin employer knows every one of them; they personally straighten out the delinquent sons of bewildered employees and send them to medical school (1723, pp. 68-9); they are the first down in the mines to start dangerous rescue operations for their employees after a roof collapse (1723, p. 95); they patch up employee marriages and provide enriching pottery classes, drama classes, yoga, eurythmics, and tango lessons for the wives of their employees (1952, p. 55), etc.

All in all, then, employers are fair, knowledgeable, hard-working, and generous. Obviously any rebellion against these paragons can only be dismissed as irrational:

"You'll have to overcome this completely unreasonable resentment of those in authority over you. I can assure you that their dictates usually have a basis of sound common sense." (1116, p. 83)

There is seldom rebellion in Harlequins, however, because employees are satisfied with their lives and jobs--their working conditions, their job control, and their wages. They need supervision ("You have to keep an eye

on even the best of workers.....'" 1647, p. 123) and they do not want responsibility. (1708, p. 25) Many employees, particularly blacks, are erratic workers who cannot be relied upon for any length of time (815, p. 97; 1160, p. 149; 1952, p. 145). In spite of these qualities, they are well paid by their employers (1952, p. 56; 1708, p. 26).

Working conditions in working class occupations are either glamorized or ignored. They are largely ignored because none of the heroes and only a minority of the other main characters are in the working class. None of the major characters work in large factories in non-managerial, manual positions. The working class and the occupations in which they are concentrated are thus only sketchily portrayed as background in the novels. When these occupations and working conditions are mentioned, they are usually glamorized by the use of positive descriptive imagery and the omission of description of the less attractive features of the work. So, for example, Harlequins speak of "the dramatic fascination of white-hot furnace and molten metal" (1567, p. 12); they fail to mention that some steel workers have to work in temperatures so hot that book matches ignite in their shirt pockets.⁴⁰ Slag heaps become "Great white pyramids shining in the moonlight," and "A touch of Egypt in the English wilderness of Dartmoor," (973, p. 28, p. 9). Even an oil refinery becomes aesthetic because: "'Nowadays we

go in for landscaping on a big scale.'" (1920, p. 175)

There is little, if any, mention of environmental problems like water, soil, and air pollution created by unregulated large scale industrialized firms, or of the serious occupational health problems caused by working conditions in these corporations.

Instead, the main emphasis is on the acquiescence of the workers, the skill of the owner, and the efficiency of the system:

With Peter's [the hero-boss] return the nursery became a machine.

Not a grinding, ruthless machine that went on interminably, as Susan would have liked to think, but a studied, disciplined mechanism that produced, distributed, produced, and distributed again in well-planned and efficient rhythm.

In spite of herself Susan could not help but be impressed by the way Peter had every detail under his control.

She began to know the routine herself, since everything happened in the same smooth manner it had happened the previous week.

It was the only way to run a business....
(999, p. 40)

Harlequins accept owner-management designed and controlled, routinized work as readily as they accept private ownership.

Profitability

The legitimation of the wage labour system closely parallels the legitimation of the third characteristic of corporate structure, that is, profitability. Corporations

and employers earn their profits through their hard work, superior management ability, and risks. Their profit is portrayed to be due to their own efforts and not due to the labour of their employees.

Corporations and businesses in Harlequins are satisfied with a modest profit. This is partly because profit is not the only goal a corporation or business is portrayed to pursue. In fact, corporate profits sometimes seem incidental to the corporate goals of customer service, community development, and cultural enrichment. Therefore, a heroine who is an antique dealer who makes a profit from re-selling antiques she discovers in junk shops and house sales is not only making a profit for herself but contributing to society as well for "if she and others like her did not seek out artistic and beautiful objects from the past, a great deal of beauty would vanish from the world." (1469, pp. 119-120) The hero in another Harlequin also makes a profit as an after-thought to his mission of furthering culture:

"[He] brings over obscure groups of artists from foreign countries, you know; and companies who act the lesser-known dramatists; keeping up standards of culture at his own financial risk. And nearly always seems to bring it off, which proves he's a good businessman too." (1207, p. 38)

Another hero who is a publisher is similarly motivated:

"'Guy is no fool.... Naturally he has to be first a businessman. ...However, he will stand

a loss if a manuscript particularly appeals to him. He's not all business and no soul." (1160, p. 56)

Employers and corporations are responsible citizens. They build libraries, schools, and hospitals for the community (1920, pp. 124-125; 1952, p. 39). They only set up permanent operations that contribute to the nation and the community and are not sidetracked by the lure of more glamorous, more profitable, or temporary opportunities. For example, in one Harlequin, the hero heads a mining operation in Australia. Traces of gold turn up in some exploratory diggings but he doesn't allow this information to become public because the gold is "'There, along with the stuff the nation depends on. Gold is not depended on. It's a luxury. In other words,...gold is jam, but it's never bread and butter, which must come first.'" (1952, p. 145) The message here is that corporations provide the nation's bread and butter; the nation depends on them. A "reasonable" profit is surely a cheap price to pay for bread and butter with culture, beauty, libraries, schools, and hospitals thrown in for good measure. Thus, profit-making is justified in Harlequins.

Growth

The fourth characteristic of corporate structure is growth--growth in the size of corporations, growth in the international scope of corporations, and growth in consumer demand. Growth is regarded to be good in and of

itself in both reality and Harlequins; in fact, it is a requirement for prosperity:

"You have a good deal to learn about the successful running of a business, Miss Barclay. You must always appear to be expanding. A look of prosperity attracts prosperity. Never appear to be content to just jog along." (1429, p. 34)

Growth is also regarded favourably for a more specific reason; that is, corporate growth in Harlequins means more jobs. Thus in several Harlequins, the heroes expand their businesses and help the communities as much as themselves. The heroes increase their output, employ more people, and generally give their villages new life. Any opposition is portrayed to be stubborn, wrong, and motivated by past romantic-related grudges. (1684 and 1723) The conclusion of these books is that growth is both inevitable and good. If small communities are to be viable, "'they have to move with the times'" for "'you can't stop the march of time and progress.'" (1684, p. 112) Again Harlequins reinforce passivity and resignation.

Corporate growth is good both at home and abroad, and foreign corporate growth is justified in a similar fashion. In *Harbour of Deceit*, the hero is a top management representative of a huge, multinational oil refinery firm. He is trying to start an oil refinery in a small village in Portugal and uses the following argument to convince the local landowners:

"Oh, come now, Joaquin, a scheme like this can give employment to thousands and possibly attract immigrants back from abroad. What's bad about that for Portugal? It means prosperity for the people of Laso and improved standards all round. It can only create stability." (1920, p. 175)

Corporate growth in non-industrialized countries by the industrialized nations' corporations is thus welcomed both by the establishing corporations and the "host" countries. These arrangements are portrayed to benefit both parties and all is peace, harmony, and progress. Another example is a Harlequin set in the Northern Territory of Australia where the hero has bought a huge tract of land from the aborigines:

It had been an amicable deal, since the rightful owners had been ready to move out anyway--no sacred grounds to stop them, no tribal taboos, and more amicable since Anthony Vine had paid them so generously. (1952, pp. 5-6)

No one is displaced, deceived, or cheated in international business deals in Harlequins. The white Anglo-Europeans are the black man's helper. When they do encounter hostility, Harlequin characters evince surprise and hurt:

it was Jamaica, and the crowded streets were full of dark, mostly hostile countenances. He was surprised how unpopular the British were abroad. Why, they might have been the black man's worst enemies instead of his teachers and mentors. (1185, p. 90)

There is no connection made between the hostility of the poor black Jamaican peddlers and workers and the fact that the speaker is a white British tourist leisurely

sitting under an umbrella at a sidewalk cafe ordering a beer from "the boy". Rather, the hostility is inexplicable in Harlequins. It can only be interpreted, once again, as an irrational and unwarranted rebellion against authority.

Harlequins also, more indirectly, reinforce consumerism by consistently glamorizing consumer goods. This has already been discussed with specific reference to household goods, clothes, and beauty aids, but this kind of positive portrayal is also true of consumer goods in general. Personal yachts are spacious and luxurious with polished tiered decks, shining brasswork, and thick pile carpets. Cars are powerful, sleek, racy and just lightly touched with chrome:

a low-slung, high-powered car purred up the driveway....

"Wow!" said Jane, her eyes glued to the sleek lines of the car....

"If 'tis permitted to use expressive slang when referring to that well-bred, sleek, autocratic, fabulous automobile? Definitely a snazzy job!"
(1708, pp. 26-27)

"Absolutely super, marvellous suspension-- it's like floating inches off the ground, and the engine's so silent. Synchroneshed?"

...."Automatic transmission, air-conditioned, button-control radio. You name it, this baby's got it!"

"You will show me the engine some time?" Jane closed her eyes dreamily. "If I possessed a baby like this, I would travel all the time...."
(1708, p. 31)

Fulfillment, travel, and excitement are only a purchase away. Consumer goods are the next best thing to love.

This section has analyzed the portrayal of corporations in Harlequins. It has been shown that their four main characteristics--private ownership and control, wage labour, profitability, and growth--are favourably portrayed. There is no hint of criticism directed towards these organizations. Instead their present structure is portrayed as the best way to organize economic activities, indeed "the only way".

This portrayal offers ideological support for corporate structure in capitalism. It can also act as a more specific justification for Harlequin Enterprises, for the company is a part of this larger structure. Chapter II showed that Harlequin Enterprises offers direct legitimations of its activities and products. This section has revealed that Harlequin Enterprises also produces indirect legitimations in the content of the romances. One Harlequin is most obvious example of this form of ideology appearing in the novels. The fiction referred to in the quotation is mysteries, not romances; nevertheless, the parallel is unmistakable:

"They're written for sheer entertainment, yes, escapism if you like, but what's wrong with escapism? We all need to escape and relax these days of tension and mental stress. I've been amazed at the letters that have come from readers through Dad's publishers. From men in all walks of life saying they've enjoyed them. Even to a couple of professors and no less than three politicians! Grateful for relaxation they were.... So don't be patronising...." (1854, p. 146)

One of the legitimations of corporate structure is that corporations provide social services. Harlequin's version of this is that it provides beneficial light entertainment. This is stated in the company's annual reports, voiced by the authors, and portrayed in the romances. This form of ideology, therefore is evident in many aspects of Harlequin's operations.

Conclusions

This chapter analyzed Harlequin's portrayals of three key structures in our society--sex role, class, and corporate structures. It argued that the images of these structures are a selective and glamorized version of reality. The images are not direct reflections of reality. This finding confirms the findings of previous studies on the relationship between fiction and society which were cited in Chapter I.

The chapter also argued that, although Harlequins do not directly reflect social structure, they do reflect and reinforce certain values and beliefs. Furthermore, this reinforcement is ideological. Harlequins legitimate the basic structures within capitalist society. Each section of the chapter discussed the support capitalism derives from the specific structures or values portrayed in Harlequins.

Briefly summarized, the portrayal of sex role structure dominates the romances. Traditional sex roles

are reinforced by an exaggerated emphasis on biological, psychological, and social differences between the sexes. This, in turn, justifies the use of women as a reserve army of labour and reinforces the sexual division of labour within the home and the workplace. Harlequins also lend ideological support by glamorizing women's work. Capitalism benefits because women provide cheap, essential labour in both settings. In addition, Harlequins stress personal relationships as the major source of social identity and fulfillment. Capitalism benefits because individuals can provide each other with necessary psychological support and compensate for structural inadequacies.

The portrayal of class structure in Harlequins legitimates class inequality. Harlequins simultaneously minimize and justify class differences. They minimize differences by focusing disproportionately on the middle and upper classes while largely excluding the working class. They also minimize the significance of class by denying the importance of wealth and ownership as a means to happiness. Harlequins justify class difference through their predominantly positive portrayals of the upper and middle classes, and their patronising portrayals of the working class and blacks. Harlequins further justify differences by favourably portraying the main mechanism for the perpetuation of inequality-inheritance, while

denying its importance, for Harlequins maintain that class position is a result of individuals' traits, efforts, and abilities. The existing system of class inequality in capitalism is given ideological support through these images because they focus on individual worth, cooperation and consent rather than structurally based conflict and dissent.

Finally, the images of corporations in Harlequins reinforces corporate structure in our society. Private ownership and control, wage labour, profitability, and growth are unhesitatingly accepted. Corporations are portrayed to be solid citizens, contributing jobs and products to individuals and to nations. Capitalism benefits from this portrayal because its key economic units are legitimated.

Chapter IV completes the investigation of Harlequin Romances begun in Chapter III. Together, these chapters argue that the content of Harlequin Romances offers ideological support for the specific corporation and larger socio-economic system that produces them. Chapter V focuses on the one remaining aspect of the Harlequin phenomena to be analyzed--the readers.

CHAPTER V
HARLEQUIN READERS

no matter how vulgarized the sentimental myth
may have become, no matter how smugly we snicker
at it, we are somehow still its victims and
beneficiaries.

Leslie Fiedler, *Love and
Death in the American
Novel*

"Nice girls never do quite forget their upbringing,
you know...."

Harlequin 1185

Introduction

A crucial aspect of hegemony is "The 'spontaneous' consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental groups...."¹ This consent is obtained through many channels. Scholars have suggested that literature is one such channel and have investigated the ideological content of literature. However, most of these studies have not extended their analysis to include the population that is reading the literature. This is an unfortunate omission because the study of readers is essential to complete an understanding of the hegemonic function of literature.

This chapter analyzes the readers of Harlequin Romances. This examination is important for two major

reasons. First, women readers of Harlequins are exposed to the ideology within them. Chapters III and IV have shown how Harlequins offer ideological support to the key structures that form the basis of the social system in which the readers live. This chapter will analyze more explicitly the relationship between society, women's lives, and Harlequins. Secondly, women readers are Harlequin Enterprises' customers. They are also important factors in the material production of the books.

This chapter will describe the methods used to obtain information about Harlequin readers. It will discuss the socio-economic characteristics of Harlequin readers. Attention will also be paid to where Harlequin readers get their books, how many they read, and how many they own. The core of the chapter deals with why women read Harlequins. The popularity of Harlequin Romances is explained by citing the aspects of corporate, class, and sex role structures that facilitate Harlequin reading. The chapter will close on a more speculative note of how women are affected by Harlequin Romances.

Methods

Information about the readers was drawn from three sources: interviews with readers, readers' letters to the Harlequin magazine, and information on the readers provided by the company. These sources will be discussed

in turn.

I conducted open-ended taped interviews with twenty-four readers. See Appendix II for details. I negotiated with Harlequin Enterprises for a sample of readers from their readership lists. Upon consideration, however, they decided against this to protect their readers. This made systematically finding readers a difficult process. Four techniques were used. First, the manager of a Hamilton bookstore that has a large selection of Harlequins for sale and trade agreed to give Harlequin customers a written request for interview volunteers. See Appendix III for details. This was relatively unsuccessful. Only two women readers were contacted this way. Next, Harlequin customers in the store were personally approached and asked if they would participate. This was more successful and thirteen readers were obtained in this fashion. The third method used was one suggested by Harlequin Enterprises. Names of Harlequin readers were solicited from friends and colleagues. Three readers were contacted as a result of this procedure. The final approach used was a snowballing technique. Readers were asked for names of other readers. The remaining eight readers were contacted in this manner.*

* There are no men in the group. Only one elderly man was encountered at the Harlequin section of the bookstore during the entire time I spent there. He was buying for his wife. During the interviews, women readers were

As is evident, the group of women interviewed is not a randomly selected sample. For example, it may over-represent the number of and perhaps the type of Harlequin readers who obtain their books from a used book store. This is not a problem specific to the use of a used book store for a place of contact. A sample randomly drawn from Harlequin's readership lists would have been equally skewed in favour of those who have subscriptions or who order books directly from the company as opposed to those who buy them new on the stands, buy them used, or get them from friends and relatives. Although there was no one in my group with a subscription, they did obtain their Harlequins from all of these other sources.

Although not randomly selected, my group of readers does include women with a range of social characteristics, for example, age (18 to 76 years old), educational level (grade three to some college), marital status (single, married, and widowed), number of children (none to fourteen), ethnic background (Trinidadian, Polish, Italian, Irish, etc.), and present or former occupation (factory worker, student, teacher, housewife, etc.). There was also a range in the number of Harlequins the readers read (two to sixty

asked if their husbands ever read Harlequins. Only one woman replied "yes, sometimes"; the other women laughed. There are probably very few male Harlequin readers.

a month), in the length of time they had been reading them (two to twenty years), and so on. The extent to which the interviewed readers are typical of the Harlequin reading population will be discussed shortly.

The second source of reader information and attitudes was readers' letters published in Harlequin magazine. I read 293 letters published in thirty-seven issues of the magazine.* The letters were written primarily by subscribers so this source supplements the reader interviews of non-subscribers. The reader letters in Harlequin's magazine are a rich source of material. Letters mention who introduced the readers to Harlequins, how long they have been reading them, how many they own, where they get their Harlequins, and who their favourite authors are. The letters also include general expressions of gratitude for Harlequins, an occasional suggestion or criticism, and various personal anecdotes. However, the amount and kind of information each letter contains varies. Their use as a source of information is also tempered by the fact that Harlequin Enterprises selects which letters are printed. The letters

* *Harlequin* volumes I, II, and most of III were not available. The issues studied include the complete set of *Harlequin* magazines published since the beginning of 1976 (Volume IV), with two exceptions. Harlequin Enterprises stopped numbering the magazine half-way through Volume VI and started to simply date each issue in terms of the month and year published. The magazine was discontinued after the December, 1978 issue.

published may not be representative of the letters received. In addition, only a small proportion of Harlequin readers would actually write the company, those who do would probably be the most keen readers. Because of these limitations, the letters are used primarily for illustrative purposes.

The third source of information was Harlequin Enterprises itself. Fred Kerner, director of publishing, and David Sanderson, product manager of Harlequin Enterprises were interviewed, as previously mentioned in Chapter II. They relayed some reader information. Pam Galsworthy, publicity relations officer, supplied additional material on readers. Finally, I requested and received from Mills & Boon the summary of the English readership survey conducted by Dr. Peter Mann of the University of Sheffield.

Combined, these sources give a fairly balanced picture of the women readers. The main concern in this chapter is with the socio-economic reasons rather than the psychological explanations of why women read Harlequins. The data from these sources offer considerable insight into this, albeit not a definitive analysis. Suggestions concerning future research will be made throughout the chapter.

Characteristics of Readers

Peter Mann conducted two surveys of Mills & Boon English readers, one in 1968 with 2,788 readers and another

in 1973 involving 2,000 readers. In the introduction to the 1973 survey report, he describes romance readers:

After nearly five years of contact with romantic novels I now feel that it is possible to write with some assurance about their readers. If one may sum them up in a word, they are "Everywoman"
²

In other words, Mann found that there was a considerable range in the social characteristics of the women reading Mills & Boon romances and that romances appeal to a broad cross-section of the population. See Appendix IV for more details and criticism of this study.

Consumer research surveys are a regular part of Harlequin's operations in North America and they indicate that here, as in England, romance readers are scattered throughout the population. The company has constructed profiles of 1) the North American English speaking female population, 2) the Harlequin reading population and 3) the Harlequin buying population. (There are approximately twice as many readers as buyers due to extensive loaning and borrowing of books, which is typical of the paperback book industry.) According to David Sanderson, the profiles of these three groups are identical for characteristics like age, family income, employment status, marital status, geographical location, and so on. For example, he said that 22 per cent of the female population is between the ages of 25 to 34 and 22 per cent of the Harlequin readers

and buyers are between these ages; 17 per cent of the United States population lives in the Southwest and 16 per cent of the United States Harlequin reading and buying population lives there. The only difference, Sanderson stated, was that the number of Harlequin readers graduating from college was "very slightly lower", a less than two percentage points difference, than the national average. Otherwise, as phrased by Sanderson: "To make a long story short, our reader is Mrs. Johnny Q. Public."

The twenty-four women I interviewed, although exhibiting a range of characteristics, are not absolutely representative of Harlequin readers or the female population. Compared to the Canadian female population, my group under-represents young women and over-represents older women.* My group also under-represents women who are single, divorced, or separated. It therefore over-presents widows and married women. Three-quarters of the women I interviewed were

* This and all of the following comparisons are from *Women in the Labour Force: Facts and Figures*, (Labour Canada, Women's Bureau, 1975).

Age range	<u>Ages of Interviewed Readers</u>	
	Number of Women	
14-24		4
25-34		5
35-44		4
45-54		5
55-64		1
65+		5

married.* All of the married women had children, usually two or three. Three-quarters had children still living at home.

The majority of my group of readers had secondary level education.** As Sanderson noted for Harlequin readers in general, my group had slightly less university experience than the Canadian national population. As for occupational status, the single women were either working in the labour force or attending school. None of the widows and very few of the married women were in the labour force. Two married women worked part-time and one worked full-time. This is a considerable under-representation of working married women since over a third of married women in the general population are in the labour force.***

* Marital Status of Interviewed Readers

Status	Number of Women
Single	3
Married	18
Widowed	3

** Educational Levels of Interviewed Readers

Level	Number of Women
Less than Grade 12	11
Grade 12	7
Higher education, non-university	4
University	2

Most of those with less than Grade 12 education were over 50 years old. All but one of those with higher education were under 30 years old.

*** There are a couple of reasons for this shortage of married working women in my group. First of all, it was difficult to contact working married women and to schedule interview time. I did "stake out" the bookstore

Inspite of their current non-working status, almost all of the married and widowed women had been in the labour force at one time or another. Only one young woman who was married and a mother at the age of fifteen years old had no occupational experience. The other readers worked or had worked in five basic occupational categories: clerical, product fabrication, service, product processing, and teaching. They slightly under-represent the clerical and teaching occupations and considerably over-represent the manual occupations of product processing and fabrication.*

during likely non-working hours and days, on lunch hours, in the evenings, and on weekends in an attempt to get in touch with working women but this was not successful. All three of the working married women I talked to were referrals from my acquaintances or other readers. Secondly, not only were the married readers I did contact in the bookstore not working in the labour force, but most of their friends and relatives they referred me to were not working either. This contributed to the difficulty in finding working women. It may be that these Harlequin readers either get their books from other readers, have subscriptions, or buy their books when they are grocery shopping, not having the time to make a special bookstore stop.

* Occupations were categorized and classified using Canadian census definitions.

<u>Occupations of Interviewed Readers</u>	
Type	Number of Women
Clerical	10
Product Fabrication	5
Service	4
Product Processing	3
Teaching	1

Part of the skewing is due to the disproportionately older ages and lower educational levels of the women in the product fabrication and processing categories. These women

Finally, the other social characteristic of the women readers that was noted was race and nationality. All of my interviewed women were white with the exception of one black woman. Eighteen of the women were Canadian and/or of British descent with the remaining five of European descent.

To assess this group compared to Harlequin's North American reading population, one may note that although this is a small group, there is a fair range of social characteristics. Nevertheless, the group is over-represented by older women, married and widowed women, and women who are not working in the labour force.

One suggestion for future research concerns the selection of a reader sample. Ideally, a sizeable

were often working in the manual occupations during and because of World War II.

Another contributing factor is that they live in Hamilton, a predominantly working class, steel manufacturing city. This is also revealed in the married womens' husbands' occupations. The husbands are spread out in more occupational categories than the women but the largest category is product fabrication, with five out of fifteen working husbands. Four of these five are steel workers.

Occupations of Interviewed Readers' Husbands

Type	Number of Husbands
Product Fabrication	5
Retired	3
Engineers	3
Service	2
Administration	2
Transportation	1
Construction	1
Other Crafts	1

representative sample of Harlequin readers should be drawn. Obtaining this sample is problematic, but a two step approach might be used. First, a randomly mailed questionnaire could be used to identify Harlequin readers in the population. This could alleviate reliance on the company as a source of information about readers. It could also avoid the possible bias created in using a specific place of contact like a bookstore, as a source of readers. Secondly, one could draw a quota sample from these respondents to be interviewed in depth. A stronger representative sample would generate more reliable and generally applicable data for analysis.

Characteristics of Harlequin Reading

According to Harlequin's 1976 advertising campaign in *The Progressive Grocer*: "The average Harlequin reader buys 72 of our books each year."³ This North American rate is higher than the British consumption of 48 to 60 books a year reported by Mann.⁴ Harlequin Enterprises was interested in women's ownership of Harlequins and held a collector's corner contest in their magazine asking women to write and describe their collections. Hundreds of women replied and sent pictures. Some 225 readers had more than 1,500 Harlequins each while the "winner" had 2,465 Harlequins in her library. These women spend hours not only reading ("one reader realized that she had put in 5,724 hours of

enjoyable reading")⁵ and re-reading ("I have read some of the books as many as ten times.")⁶, but also organizing their collections--arranging their bookshelves, filing and cross-filing index cards on the books and magazines, working out rating systems, etc. This is in contrast to my group. The women I interviewed did not own many Harlequins because they exchanged the books they had read for others. They had a constant turnover of Harlequins. However, there were four women who had collections of 150 books or more, and one of these had over 1,000 in her collection.

My readers read varying numbers of Harlequins. The reader who regularly read the most read sixty Harlequins a month while the reader who read the least read only two a month at best. Most of the readers read between twelve and sixteen a month. At the time I interviewed them, all of the women had been reading Harlequins for at least two years, some for as long as twenty years. Readers averaged nine to ten years of Harlequin reading.

The number of Harlequins regularly read depends on a number of factors including family, occupation, age, health, and season. The reading time of the elderly, or women temporarily or permanently confined to bed or to the home, or those shut in by inclement weather is increased. Women with husbands on business trips or on night shifts relate that Harlequins fill in time for them while their

husbands are away. Women report that they carry Harlequins with them in their handbags to read while they are waiting for doctors, dentists, children, buses and subways. Women read Harlequins, then, in snatches and binges. One woman reports that she has read up to four Harlequins in one day while another takes a month to read that many. One woman read them every day while another reads them only on weekdays or during the winter.

Since there are more readers than buyers, readers obviously obtain their books from sources other than Harlequin Enterprises. One key source is other women. Many women readers are introduced to Harlequins by friends and relatives. This was true of two-thirds of the women I interviewed. The reader network is extensive. Harlequins are a family affair as readers tell of grandmothers, mothers, daughters, sisters, and aunts reading Harlequins. Women are introduced to Harlequins by family and friends and in turn introduce other family members and friends to Harlequins in an ever widening circle of Harlequin readers.

From the letters and survey, it is apparent that Harlequin readers also get their books from garage and yard sales, through contacts in card, bingo, and ceramic clubs and classes, from responses to newspaper advertisements they place for specific Harlequins they want, and from libraries. My readers usually bought their Harlequins

used and borrowed them from the library or other women.

The source seems to depend on the extent of the woman's interest in Harlequins, the amount of time and money she can spend, her health, age and geographical location. Elderly or bedridden women who cannot get to stores to buy Harlequins, women who live in small towns, in the country, or in remote areas where Harlequins are not readily available, and women who are too busy to shop for Harlequins on the stands come to rely on Harlequin's subscription and mail order departments. For others, however, who have the time and energy, hunting for Harlequins becomes a hobby.

Another aspect of Harlequin readers that should be mentioned is the other kinds of reading that they do. Reader's letters mention this only occasionally but once in a while a reader will indicate that she does read books other than Harlequins. Most of these references are negative. "Best sellers" are considered by these Harlequin readers to be sordid, cynical, and depressing. Readers prefer the clean and cheerful Harlequin and some readers write that they never read anything else.

The women I interviewed, however, did read other material; in fact, only two women did not. Many of the women described themselves as "readers", and said they read anything. The women mentioned reading other

romances--the reading category which predominated, westerns, mysteries, historical novels, travel books, best sellers, non-fiction, newspapers and magazines. One woman commented that she even read medical texts and the dictionary.

Reading, and certain reading Harlequins, is their main leisure activity in many cases. When I asked the readers what they would be doing if they were not reading Harlequins, seven of the readers drew a total blank initially. They could not think of anything. Several of the readers never did come up with an alternative to Harlequins other than walking the floor or being bored, sitting doing nothing. Some of the alternative activities that were mentioned, in order of frequency, were sewing and needlework, television, reading something else, various crafts and hobbies, and visiting.

One can see from the above that there is a considerable investment in time, energy, and money in Harlequins for Harlequin readers. The main question, of course, is why so many women read so many Harlequins. The answer to this question lies in the three structures--corporate, class, and sex roles--that are the core of this society and its culture.

Corporate Structure

Although in the past, women have played an important role in the formation of Harlequin Enterprises, at present

their position in Harlequin's corporate structure is peripheral. However, women remain the consumers and consumers are an essential consideration of any corporation.

Chapter I noted that corporations try to create demand for their products in order to survive and grow, but they must also respond to the demand for specific kinds of products by customers. Harlequin Enterprises has very successfully done both. First of all, it has stimulated demand. Harlequins are cheap and plentiful. Women know about them due to Harlequin's extensive advertising campaign, the give-away programs, and the books' wide distribution. The Harlequin imprint is trusted because of editorial uniformity. These factors facilitate Harlequin reading. Secondly, Harlequin Enterprises has responded to demand. Through experimentation and research, it has discovered the formula and tone that women readers want in their romances and it produces these over and over with great consistency. There are five basic features of Harlequins that appeal to women readers and that are, therefore, a standard part of any Harlequin novel. Harlequins are clean, light, romances with interesting settings and happy endings that have a quality upon which one can rely.*

* Oddly enough, when I asked the women readers what appealed to them about Harlequins, none of them said, "romance". I think this aspect of Harlequins was taken for granted and considered too obvious to mention. I will discuss the attraction of romance for women readers in the sex role structure section of this chapter.

First of all, Harlequins are "light reading".*

This is the the most common response from the readers when they were asked what they liked about Harlequins. Two-thirds of the women mentioned this quality. Harlequins are written in a style that is fast paced and easy to read. They are absorbing, yet relaxing. Because of the relatively short length and easy style, women can pick up a book and read sizeable portions of the book or even the entire book in one sitting which gives them a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment. As one of the young readers I interviewed bluntly phrased it: "They're very enjoyable. I like reading them. They don't take too much time. They don't take too much brainwork." An older widow agreed: "They're light reading. And you can put it down. Like I'll read for a few minutes at night, maybe a half hour, then I can put it down.... The next day I can pick it up and carry on.... It's not too deep."

One of the main reasons readers can do this is

* Although most women, when they say Harlequins are "light reading", mean that they are easy and relaxing, some women like Harlequins because they are literally light reading. For example: "At the onslaught of rheumatoid arthritis, when I couldn't hold anything because my hands were so crippled, I found Harlequins! Somehow when I could hold nothing else, I could hold a Harlequin romance." *Harlequin*, V (No. 11), p. 5. Another reader also with arthritis writes the same thing: "The books are easy to hold when lying in bed and are certainly entertaining. I get so involved, I forget my arthritis and other handicaps." *Harlequin*, V (No. 3), 4.

because the books are formula fiction. This is a trait that is valued by the readers. For example, a housewife and mother said: "They're very predictable which is good too, isn't it? You know what you're buying." Harlequins' formula ensures a good buy and an easy read. Another reader similarly explains why she likes Harlequins:

I've always been a reader.... I could go through maybe four or five novels in a weekend, like hard-covered ones, thick ones, you know. And when I had the kids, I never could.... You can't get back into those books because I'm the type that once they pick up a book they can't put it down and nothing annoys me more than you've got to get supper on the table or someone's crying to have their diaper changed or something. So they're smaller, they're compact. They're light reading so that for me, at least, I can put them down and pick them up, maybe a day or so later and I can remember it. It's not something that's really deep. It's just.... I just find them enjoyable, that's all.

The process of reading Harlequins, therefore, is basically effortless and stress-free. One does not get upset about not being able to finish the story to find out how it comes out because one knows the end already. One's reading can be interrupted innumerable times and there is little frustration because one never loses the drift of the story. One can always pick the book up again and continue easily.

The contents of Harlequins, as we have seen previously, are as stress-free as the process of reading them for Harlequins mandatorily have happy endings. Readers

indicate in the letters and interviews that this aspect of Harlequins is very important to them. Harlequins cheer readers up and make them feel good. One reader comments:

I just think that little bit of feeling good makes you [read a Harlequin]. 'Cause you look at the news, there's nothing good on the news. They only give you news of a disaster...or an earth-shattering thing. You look at your kids. They're dirty and grimy. You have to keep constantly...doing your job for them and your husband...and the whole thing is so tedious that just this little bit that I guess you find in it...drives you back. I know when I pick it up, it's not going to leave a bad taste in my mouth. Like say I can read something about the Second World War or Nazi Germany.... I have to force myself to read that, like I have to be really desperate for something to read before I read that because I don't like the down feeling. Yet I know...that's happened and it's reality whereas this is not reality. In essence, you're reading fact against fiction and you're choosing the fiction.

Women write to Harlequin about their states of depression caused by daughter's marriages, illnesses, lonely birthdays, deaths, and other personal incidents. They thank Harlequin for the romances which distracted and cheered them. For example:

I am twenty-five, a wife and mother. Sometimes like so many other people, I get low in spirits. Maybe from reading the paper, from an encounter with someone hateful, whatever. I can pick up one of her [Essie Summers, a Harlequin author] books and see the goodness staring out at me. The heroine makes me feel it's a lovely world, people are good, one can face anything and we are lucky to be alive. What a wonderful feeling!.... And if it wasn't for Harlequin, I'd never know this uplift. You touch my life in many ways.

Your books stand for decency and beliefs.

That's rare these days. Keep it up.⁷

One can see from this quotation that not only happiness but also decency is praised. One half of my readers said that they liked Harlequins because they were clean and happy. Harlequin readers want clean stories, not "smutty garbage". Readers write that they feel comfortable leaving their books around for their teenage daughters to see and read, knowing the girls will not be exposed to "questionable morals". One high school biology teacher wrote, saying she loaned her Harlequins to twenty girls in the school because "I can loan the books serenely confident that they will not be learning biology of the wrong kind."⁸

The final aspect of Harlequins that appeals to women readers is the settings. Half of my readers mentioned this feature of Harlequins. For North American women, the settings are usually foreign and "exotic", as described in a previous chapter. Readers often choose to read specific authors and books on the basis of the settings they feature. (Australia and New Zealand seem to be favourites.)

The readers feel that while they are enjoying themselves, they are also learning about the countries, the people, and their customs. They are proud of their "knowledge" and sometimes justify their Harlequin reading to outsiders or skeptics in the name of education. For example,

one woman's family was having an argument about whether there were tigers in Africa. The woman maintained there were not because she had read it in a Harlequin, and the encyclopedia proved her correct. She triumphed in the dispute because of Harlequins.⁹ Another woman relates that her family had Australian visitors and she was able to display knowledge of Australia acquired from Harlequins. She concludes: "I feel after last evening with our Aussie friends, my family will not rib me anymore when they see me reading my Harlequins...."¹⁰ The "knowledge" acquired in Harlequins is often stereotypical and superficial, consisting of trivia like the British speak of biscuits and jelly instead of using the American terms, cookies and jello. However, readers find the descriptions of the countries interesting and informative.

Harlequins make readers feel as if they were in the setting of the story and in fact, occasionally readers do go to the places mentioned.* Some use Harlequins as a guide on their travels, stopping to see sights that Harlequin authors have described. On their return, they write to Harlequin about their trips, about Harlequins' accuracy, about how they are looking forward to re-living their experiences by reading more Harlequins set in the

* Approximately 10 per cent of the letters describe the readers' travels.

countries they visited.

To summarize, the women readers' positions as consumers in Harlequin's corporate structure mean that Harlequin's product has been geared towards their preferences. Harlequin's policy has been to respond to women's desire for clean, light, entertaining romances and, to the best of their ability, to extend that demand. To a large extent then, women read Harlequins because Harlequin Enterprises supplies the product that women want.

The significance of this for hegemony lies in the fact that these women readers consent to Harlequins which have been shown to be ideological in form and content. Readers are not simply passive dupes of Harlequin Enterprises' sales campaigns. No matter how aggressive the campaign, Harlequins would not sell to the extent they do if there was not pre-existing or independent acceptance and demand for the romances. Harlequin Enterprises does articulate, heighten, and shape that demand but it does not, can not, force its products on readers without their consent and purchase. Readers, therefore, actively contribute to the production and content of Harlequins. By doing so, they help reproduce ideology. To further explore, why women want Harlequins, we must turn to class and sex role structure.

Class Structure

Corporate and sex role structure are more significant factors than class structure in explaining who reads Harlequins and why they read them. Nevertheless, there are two aspects of class structure that are relevant. One of the concomitants of class is educational level. It is widely acknowledged that educational achievement is closely related to class position. Wilfred Martin and Allan Macdonell point out that Canada is no exception. "There is considerable evidence on the Canadian scene to demonstrate that educational opportunities are enhanced the further up the social stratification hierarchy one happens to be located."¹¹ Most of the women reading Harlequins are not located at the upper levels of the class hierarchy. They are predominantly working or middle class, and their education opportunities and achievements would be limited by their class position. Their educational opportunities would be further limited by their sex, for women have traditionally excluded themselves or have been excluded from higher education.* Class and sex limitations mean that Harlequin readers have average or below average educational levels.

*This may be changing now, but of course, many Harlequin readers received their education prior to the women's movement and attempts to redress the inequality in the educational system.

Inspite of their educational levels, however, many women are "readers". We have seen that publishing companies acknowledge this and this is true of the women I interviewed. Now, if one is a "reader" but does not have higher education, what does one read? It is likely that one reads something relatively easy and "light", yet something that is not insultingly simple, something that offers some challenge with a hint of educational value. In other words, for many women, one reads Harlequins.

Harlequins' writing style is smooth and easy but because the books glamorize settings, fashions, food, and people, the Harlequin vocabulary is quite extensive. In addition, Harlequin authors are fond of sprinkling the novels with foreign words and phrases ("Cara mia, ti adore.") As a result, the readers can both easily understand the books and learn from them. Thus an Italian-born woman told me that Harlequins helped her learn and improve her English. Mann's study cites a reader in Pakistan reporting the same use of Harlequins. According to several reader letters, school-age girls use Harlequins as material for book reports and plays, or for developing reading skills:

My younger sister was having trouble at school because of her poor reading. She just couldn't sit down with a book long enough to improve her reading. Then one day she came by my house and picked through my Harlequins.

For the first time, she read a whole book through at one sitting. And this was the start she needed. Now my parents can't make

her put down her books. Her book reports at school are excellent, and her teacher can't understand how she's improved so quickly.¹²

The educational level of readers which is related to their class background and sex is compatible with Harlequins and is an additional factor that explains the accessibility and popularity of Harlequins.

Another factor associated with class is income levels. One aspect of class inequality is income disparity, with the upper class having much higher incomes than the middle or working class. Since my readers are middle and working class, they are at the middle to lower end of the income scale. Most of my readers are married and have dependent children. Because most are full-time housewives and mothers, they and their families are supported by a single wage earner, their husbands. They probably do not have much money to spend on entertainment. Harlequins supply entertainment cheaply. This is particularly evident when one remembers that the readers I interviewed bought used Harlequins or borrowed them.* Therefore class-related elements facilitate Harlequin reading. The most important factor, however, is sex role structure.

* One could buy four Harlequins for a dollar at the used bookstore. Frequently, there were sales when eight Harlequins could be purchased for a dollar. In addition, one could get discounts for trade-ins. Compare this cost to the cost of a movie: approximately 25¢ for a Harlequin, approximately \$4.00 for a movie for one person.

Sex Role Structure

Harlequins are above all romances. They are about love, courtship, and future marriage. It is not surprising that women read romances because an emphasis on the importance of love has been a part of their feminine sex role socialization. Constantina Safilios-Rothschild notes:

Women...according to traditional notions of femininity, have been socialized into wanting to fall in love and to capitalize on love feelings. Because their sensitive, emotional, and nurturing character is supposed to be compatible with love, women are seen as being more inclined to love, more faithful, possessive, and dependent on the man. They value romance and affection.... Women become the love experts.¹³

Yet women are caught in a contradiction. Although they learn to desire love, they also learn that they cannot afford to rely solely upon love as the basis for marriage partner selection. Women have traditionally been dependent upon their husbands, and as long as they remain so, they must marry men who will adequately provide them with income, identity, and status. How does one reconcile the contradiction between spontaneous love and a calculated marriage? One consciously or unconsciously learns to manipulate feelings, to fall in love with "the right man".

This is what always happens in Harlequins: the heroine falls in love with "the right man". The portrayal of this fortuitous event must partially constitute their appeal to the Harlequin readers who are or who are going

to be full-time housewives and mothers. For many women in this position, the ideal state would be to be in love and married to a man who fulfills the masculine sex role stereotype of successful, bread-winning, decent family man who would complement their own role of housewife and mother. The Harlequin hero is precisely this kind of man; he plays by the rules, traditional rules which women understand and many are willing to accept. A recent article in *Ms* talks about "the lure of the right" in reference to the Total Woman movement but it could equally apply to Harlequins:

Rules. Living in a world she has not made and does not understand, a woman needs rules to know what to do next. If she knows what she is supposed to do, she can find a way to do it. If she learns the rules by rote, she can perform with apparent effortlessness, which will considerably enhance her chances for survival. The Right, very considerably, tells women the rules of the game on which their lives depend. The Right also promises that, despite their absolute sovereignty, men too will follow rules.¹⁴

The vision of an ordered, protected, loving world and home is an appealing image, and Harlequins feature that image.

Maureen Moore also links the position of women in society to the portrayal of love in Harlequins. Her main argument is "that women suffer deprivation and are interested in romantic love, that women seek an ecstatic union with a superior man as compensation for lack of status and identity." She continues:

The concept of romantic love is related to its social setting in which sexual inequality exists and is justified by the belief that men are superior to women. Love in the books endows this inequality with a romantic mystique.¹⁵

Sex role inequality and the contradiction between love and economic considerations it forces women into in reality is smoothed over in Harlequins. There are no jarring notes because the books portray women spontaneously falling in love with "the right man" who just happens to be prestigious and wealthy. Harlequins do not confront women readers with any unpleasant recognition of the possible insecurity of their dependent position or the fact that they are not free to marry for the love they value so highly. One woman told me that she liked Harlequins because they were an escape from unhappy realities. "I know these things go on, but I just don't want to know about them. Maybe that's not a good way to be but I like to think pleasant, happy thoughts." Harlequin's portrayal of love allows women to do just that.

Moore notes that it is significant that the portrayal of love and marriage in Harlequins stops short of marriage. She comments:

The reality of marriage is not suggested by books in which the man is of such high status as to offer luxury to his bride. The process of 'dwindling into a wife' is not explored.¹⁶

Again, this is a reflection of women's lives in reality. Courtship and early pre-child-rearing years of

marriage have been shown to be one of the happiest periods in a woman's life.¹⁷ Harlequins focus on this stage in the life-cycle in which women enjoy the greatest amount of freedom, independence, power, and equality that they will have until post-child-rearing years. This is a stage that women look forward to if they are young and single, and enjoy retrospectively if they are older and married or widowed. It is understandable that women like to read about it in fiction as well. Thus the themes of Harlequin Romances are consistent with women's socialization and social position in our society.

Harlequins also fit into women's lives on an everyday level. The largest single group of Harlequin readers are married women with children, most of whom are full-time housewives. Blending housework and mothering, their lives are often tedious, hectic, prone to interruption, and isolated. Harlequins fit into and are antidotes to this kind of life. They are relaxing, absorbing, and exciting; interruptions can be tolerated because the story is predictable; and Harlequins can provide readers with a sense of participation and community with the characters, with Harlequin Enterprises, and with other readers. These points will be elaborated.

Women build short Harlequin reading periods into their working days when children nap, play, watch television

or go to school, in order to take a break in their routine.

One reader stated:

It's something you do when you're sitting out and your kids are in the backyard or when you're going to the beach, when you've got a spare minute. I got in the habit, for instance, my kids would eat their lunch and they'd want to watch The Flintstones and that drives me right up the wall, eh? And on a day like this, I wouldn't mind sitting with my second cup of tea. I'd read from twenty minutes to a half hour. It would be the first time I sat down since I got up and I look forward to it.

One cannot easily read a complex novel, a "deep" novel in short twenty minutes to a half hour snatches which are also likely to be interrupted by children. Harlequin's light formula allows women to read them in these circumstances.

In addition, Harlequin takes the woman's mind off her work, off all the disparate tasks she must deal with every day. Harlequins help her to be patient and even-tempered by allowing her to be absorbed but not too absorbed in the books. A housewife and mother relates:

Well, it does take you away from your dishes and your kids hollering at you. It gives you something to think of...and you can put them down and you can come back to it. There's an awfully lot of new words that you learn which you wouldn't be coming into contact with your children and if your husband, like maybe he's working two jobs..., so you are kind of cornered by all these kids all day long and these bring in a new vocabulary at least.

A Harlequin takes you away and you don't have to listen [to your children].... You can have more patience with them if your mind is occupied someplace else.

Readers write that they read Harlequins while they

fold clothes, cook, and feed the baby. Women's lives as housewives and mothers encourage dispersal of concentration. Women do not concentrate on the immediate task at hand; they daydream and their minds wander. According to Ann Oakley:

All these stands of thought fulfil a latent function for the housewife. They enable her to get housework done; thinking about something else is a weapon deliberately employed in the attempt to combat boredom.... In this sense, daydreaming is purposeful-not merely a random response to a superfluity of mentally unoccupied time.¹⁸

Furthermore, the daydream in Harlequins is directly related to and reinforces women's work in the home. If women are tempted to see their lives as humdrum, Harlequins may convince them that this is not so or should not be so. As one reader wrote:

You know, to be perfect honest, I thought my life was humdrum and dull. I now feel so differently! There is romance all around. I just became too self-centered. I needed something to take me away for a while so I could see things more clearly.

So dear Harlequin, I have you to thank for so much enjoyment and even education! You really have a very faithful reader in me!¹⁹

Since Harlequins focus exclusively on individuals, readers are not encouraged to link their personal lives and problems to women's position in the home and society. Instead, they are encouraged to examine their own attitudes and to adapt.

Harlequin may not only help women to perform their

homemaking tasks by alleviating boredom, but may also give them ideas about how to be homemakers, indirectly in the novels and more directly in the magazine. Helena Lopata, in her study of housewives, found that housewives were increasingly relying on secondary, abstract, depersonalized sources for information on how to perform the homemaker role. These sources included magazines, books, radio, television, and mass communications. In general, they learned about sewing and fashion, cooking, child care, and housework, with very young urban housewives mentioning fashion and sewing the most.²⁰ As we have seen, *Harlequins* particularly delve into fashion and cooking with less but nevertheless some attention paid to child care and housework. *Harlequin* readers write, saying they have learned from the cooking articles in *Harlequin*. They report that their cooking has improved, that trying out the *Harlequin* recipes makes cooking fun and interesting, and that their families approve of and request the new recipes. Women readers also praise the crafts, needlework and beauty sections in *Harlequin's* magazine. Thus some women may partially rely on *Harlequins* for information or for an image of what homemakers should do or be.

As mentioned previously, the circumstances that women other than full-time housewives find themselves in also reinforce *Harlequin* reading. Elderly women who

cannot get about easily, women who are forced to be idle for health reasons, women whose children have left home and who are suddenly faced with large blocks of empty time, or women who are widowed and left bereft of their husbands' companionship turn to Harlequins to fill in time, to take their minds off their troubles, and to be entertained. As light reading, Harlequins are easily blended into even the most diverse range of readers' lives.

Harlequins supply support. Women readers find that they are not alone when they read Harlequins. They may be isolated in the home with minimal social contact with others, but Harlequins provide them with a symbolic and even literal community of friends. Women readers often write that they consider the Harlequin books to be friends: "I consider them to be my friends, as they cannot ever argue nor talk back"²¹ "When the mailman leaves them at my door I feel as though some very dear friends have come to call."²² They also come to think of the characters in the books as friends: "I especially like Mary Burchell's way of having her characters make guest appearances in subsequent books. It makes them seem like old friends you can enjoy meeting again."²³ "My sister and I discuss her [Essie Summers] characters as if we personally know them."²⁴ In addition, they perceive the company and its staff as friends:

I enjoy your books, but sometimes I feel I should spend the time more productively. Then when they arrive and I open the magazine and read the editor's letter plus all the others, I get the warm feeling that I'm dealing with friends. Then I think it's all worthwhile.²⁵

Readers find a community of friends with similar interests exhibited in readers' letters and take comfort in this:

Someone who is confined to home gains comfort from knowing that so many others are reading and learning and enjoying the same things. Although you will never meet them, it is a nice thought that if you did you would have so much to talk about.²⁶

Sometimes readers do meet, however. The letter section in *Harlequin* features letters from readers who have met other readers in the hospital, on a cruise, in bookstores, and so on. One woman, for example, wrote about a bookstore owner who decided to specialize in Harlequins and opened up a special "Romance Room":

The happy conversations and sharing that emanate from our "Romance Room" have become a part of my life and, in truth, has made my life more complete and meaningful.

I salute Mr. M and the "Romance Room" (and of course my friends at Harlequin)!²⁷

Harlequins, then, provide an opportunity for social contact with others. Some women talk to others about the Harlequins they have read. One with a 1,550 book collection writes that she passes her books onto her friends and that: "They have started to share my love and enthusiasm for your clean and wholesome books, and now we hold many a discussion on favorite authors and story lines."²⁸ Another

declares: "I always have Harlequin friends--and we run our own book exchange."²⁹ When I asked the readers I interviewed whether they talked to anyone about Harlequins, just over half said that they did. However their conversations seemed to be brief and general--where to get Harlequins, who were good authors, which were favourite stories and which were not so good, etc.

Most women readers probably do not talk about Harlequins in detail so much as simply exchange them and use them as part of neighbouring or family relations. An interesting case I encountered illustrates this. I interviewed one woman with whom I made contact in the bookstore and she referred me to two other readers who lived on the same street. She was a loyal reader of Harlequins. When I interviewed her neighbours, however, I found that although one liked Harlequins well enough, another detested them. The loyal reader would pass her Harlequins on to this neighbour who would keep them for a time and then return them, usually unread, without saying anything to the loyal reader. The neighbouring relationship was apparently more important to this woman than the deception and her obvious distaste for Harlequins.

Lopata comments on the importance of neighbouring for women:

Neighboring has been or is becoming a significant activity for many respondents, helping to solve

the problem of loneliness and providing opportunities for the exchange of homemaking knowledge and the alleviation of anxieties felt in the role of mother, bringing the pleasure of adult companionship and leisure-time interaction. Also important to many women is friendship with selected individuals or couples begun in a variety of ways and gradually developed into more intimate and "fun-sharing" relations.³⁰

Exchanging Harlequins can be one link in the neighbouring chain between women, thus Harlequins assist in providing a pseudo and/or real community for some women readers.

What can be concluded in reply to the question: why do women read Harlequins? The answers lie in the basic structures of our society. As a part of corporate structure. Harlequin Enterprises must make a profit, they do so by selling books, and their books sell because they are designed to appeal to readers. In addition, Harlequin has made the books easily recognizable, available, and affordable. The second factor is related to class structure. Harlequins are compatible with readers' educational and income levels which are tied to their social class positions. The final and most important element is sex role structure. Harlequins speak to women by reflecting their lives "through a glass lightly". Harlequins offer reassuring legitimations for women's positions in society. In addition, women read Harlequins not only because the content of the books is an appealing ideology, but also because the standard format of the books is adaptable to the structure of women's work

in the home.* This analysis suggests that the hegemonic process is circular. Women's positions within our society create the "need" for Harlequins and Harlequins, in turn, reinforce the legitimacy of women's positions.**

My research has been directed to the largest single group of Harlequin readers--full-time housewives and mothers. Additional research needs to be done on other women readers, particularly young unmarried women and working women. The structure of their lives is different and therefore, they may read Harlequins for other reasons. Different socio-psychological dynamics may be in operation. With these women, one could also extend the analysis of the relationship between Harlequins and women's positions in the home to their positions in the labour force as well. This would further contribute to an understanding of the hegemonic

*There are similar kinds of literature for men which can also be explained by the structure of their lives and socialization patterns, for example, westerns, adventure, or science fiction. However, these are also read by women. Women cross-over into "men's fiction" more than men cross-over into "women's fiction", that is, romance. This follows a consistent pattern in our society in which women are allowed access to what Shulamith Firestone has called "male culture", but men are forbidden or do not care to have access to female spheres of culture which have less prestige.

**This is not a completely smooth functioning process. There are strains which are difficult to contain and which give rise to oppositional ideologies. However, the conflicts are ignored or resolved in Harlequins, and Harlequin readers seem to accept the dominant ideology instead of an oppositional ideology.

functions of Harlequins for different groups of women.

The Effect of Harlequins

Effect is an issue that needs to be explicitly considered with reference to the hegemonic process. Hitherto in the literature, there has been an implicit assumption that ideological formulations do have an effect in that they secure the consent of "the great masses of the population". However, research is needed to verify this and to determine what factors and conditions affect the impact of ideology.

My study of Harlequin readers was undertaken with the objective of ascertaining who reads Harlequins and why women readers like them. It was not specifically geared towards determining how readers are affected by them. Nevertheless, the interviews did include some exploratory questions on effect which, in conjunction with other information collected on readers, enable some tentative statements about effect and suggestions for further study. Readers' responses will be discussed in the context of three major theories about the effects of media: catharsis theory, learning theory, and reinforcement theory.³¹ These theories will be described and their applicability to Harlequin readers' responses will be analyzed. In addition, the implications these theories have for hegemony will be discussed.

Catharsis theory maintains that the media provide vicarious experiences for people, that these experiences are "drive-reducing", and that viewers or readers are consequently not likely to live out the experiences in reality because they have participated in them in their imaginations.³² This vicarious participation is a substitute for action. The effects of media, therefore, are that they prevent the kind of behaviour that they portray. This perspective has usually been applied to the study of violence in the media or pornography, but Molly Haskell, a film critic, has extended it to women's rape fantasies which are more closely related to Harlequins. Harlequins could be considered to be rape or domination fantasies since as we have seen, males are dominant in them; sexuality is often violent; and occasionally a rape within the bonds of marriage will take place.

Haskell argues that there has been a long-standing misunderstanding about the significance of women's rape fantasies. She maintains that "rape fantasies" do not really feature rape at all because the woman fantasizer is in charge of the fantasy; she chooses the setting, the rapist, and the rape act. The rapist is acting not out of hostility but out of desire, and the act is an affirmation of the woman's sexuality, not a violation of it.

In addition, Haskell says, rapes are not actually

desired by the fantasizer:

Nor are they--it is here that the term "wish fulfilment" has led us astray--blueprints for reality; rather, they have a full and complete life of their own, in a realm of existence quite separate from reality.³³

In fact, the fantasies assist women in overcoming their fears of actual rape and allow them to gain "psychological ascendancy" over it. Instead of perpetuating women's subordination, rape or domination fantasies allow them to escape domination and to reconcile conflicting demands placed on women to be both passive and strong, sexual and asexual, good and bad.

Haskell relates the popularity of domination fantasies to the growth of the women's liberation movement in the later 1960's. For women faced with new demands for achievement yet still in the grips of the old demands for "femininity", "fantasies of domination provided a release from the new burdens of independence without one's having to actually compromise that independence."³⁴ Haskell concludes that: "I think it is precisely those women who are not confined to subordinate or masochistic roles who enjoy fantasizing the opposite--the road not taken or transcended."³⁵

In this view, the effect of Harlequins would be a liberating one, consistent with the women's movement. Women's reading about domination enables them to transcend

it. There would be no direct transference of behaviour patterns from Harlequins to readers' lives. Harlequins would be kept imaginatively separate. One can see that catharsis theory is antithetical to the assumption that the images in Harlequins are a legitimating ideology which results in readers' acceptance of that ideology. The notion that reading Harlequins is a radical or libertaing act is intriguing and the support for this theory will be examined.

There would initially seem to be some support for Haskell's version of catharsis theory. First of all, Harlequins did experience a surge of popularity in the late 1960's and early 1970's when the women's movement flourished. It is possible that the growth of the one is related to the growth of the other. Women could be reading about traditional sex roles, love, and marriage to balance the new emphasis on androgyny and open marriage.

Secondly, if Harlequin readers are typical of the general North American female population, then there are increasing numbers of married Harlequin readers who are participating in the labour force.* The fact that more women and more Harlequin readers are working and earning

* Although I was unable to interview many of these women, there were letters printed in the Harlequin magazine from this group of working wives and mothers. In addition, Harlequin Enterprises considers the group to be large enough to create an advertisement geared specifically towards them.

incomes may mean that they are also increasingly powerful and less dominated since money is a key source of power in our society. Dair Gillespie has pointed out that power within the family is also a function of income and that: "Women who work have more power vis-a-vis their husbands than do nonworking women...."³⁶ For these working Harlequin readers, subordination may increasingly be "the road not taken", so Haskell's theory may be valid for some Harlequin readers.

Finally, Harlequins may be seen by readers to be "a realm of existence quite separate from reality". This would coincide with Haskell's perceptions of rape fantasies. One Harlequin reader stated:

I think of them [the characters in Harlequins] as being cardboard or movie style, eh? And you know, you enjoy them because they're that and because your life is different and because you are different. Well, maybe they're ideals, eh?

When I asked the readers how their lives compared to the heroine's life when they were the same age, readers indicated that there was no comparison. Only three readers said that there were some similarities.

Inspite of these concurrences with Haskell's theory, however, there are also serious drawbacks. One must remember that full-time housewives and mothers are the largest single group of Harlequin readers and it is certainly questionable that they are all "liberated women" who read Harlequins

as compensatory domination. Their very social position ensures that they will be at least economically dependent. Since money is related to power, they are also likely to be relatively powerless. In other words, they probably do not read Harlequins to compensate for their powerfulness. Furthermore, the traditional portrayal of women's positions in the home in Harlequins is not the opposite of reality. Instead, it is a glamorized, parallel version.

My interviews with full-time housewives and mothers revealed that these Harlequin readers were traditional in their positions and attitudes. They do not see themselves as feminists or "women's libbers", as they were more likely to put it. They were content with living traditional lives.

A certain amount of caution should also be exercised in applying catharsis theory to working women. Labour force participation is not a sure sign of equality or independence because the labour force is characterized by inequality, as we have seen. Again, Harlequin's portrayal of women's work in the labour force is not diametrically opposed to women's work in reality, but is an exaggerated and glamorized version. Combined, these reservations indicate that, although it is possible that some women may read Harlequins as antidotes to their non-traditional lives, it is unlikely that the majority of Harlequin readers do so.

Learning theory argues the opposite of catharsis

theory. Its proponents, most notably Albert Bandura and Richard Walters, argue that people can learn from the media and will model their behaviour after the behaviour to which they are exposed.³⁷ The characters act as role models for the viewers or readers. This occurs more in some circumstances than others. The behaviour has to be perceived, understood, and accepted before it will be utilized. On the whole, however, the effect is that the behaviour read about or seen is reproduced rather than transcended.

Jerome Singer's work on daydreams is also applicable here. Harlequins are akin to daydreams as they are fantasies which require some filling-in effort on the reader's part. Readers like the books because they "like to read a book that leaves something to the imagination,"³⁸ and comment that "To read through a Harlequin Romance is like creating a movie in my imagination."³⁹

Singer posits that daydreaming and fantasizing are normal and common behaviours. He believes that daydreaming can be useful to people:

Some, of course, simply divert us and lower the level of tension and distress occasioned by a frustrating or anger-provoking circumstance. Others may provide us with an alternative environment to one that is boring.... But to some extent, daydreams also represent rehearsals for future actions. They may suggest new and alternative ways of dealing with situations.... In the course of fairly extensive fantasizing we may also encourage

ourselves to further action in the pursuit of a particular goal. In this sense, our daydreams can actually have motivational characteristics....⁴⁰

People model themselves after and learn from the images found in their daydreams. Singer maintains that research has shown that many fantasy themes are lived out by people during the course of their lives. Learning theory, therefore, is compatible with the assumption that ideology has an effect on individuals.

One can use this perspective to consider the effect of Harlequins. The previous analysis of content has shown that, if Harlequins motivate women to model their behaviour after the heroines, they encourage their readers to work in the labour force and to enjoy their jobs for a time, to travel and to explore new worlds, but more singlemindedly, they encourage women to fall helplessly in love, to quit their jobs, to marry and to face marriage with the firm belief that their marriage and love will last forever, that their husbands will always be there to take care of them, and that nothing is more important than their love. Women who are already housewives may be encouraged by Harlequins to experiment with different recipes, sew or purchase the latest fashions, learn attractive make-up techniques, or buy new furniture. At all times, women will remain within the confines of traditional sex roles.

Like catharsis theory, learning theory also has

some plausibility with respect to the effect of Harlequins on readers. Some women indicate that they do model some of their behaviour after Harlequins. For example, they travel to the places where Harlequins are set; they cook the foods that Harlequin characters eat; and one woman I talked to named her baby after a Harlequin character. When I asked the readers directly if they had learned anything from Harlequins, the majority, 59 per cent, said yes. This learning, however, seemed to be about things, rather than behaviour or attitudes. Most said they learned about different countries or new words. In this context, only one mentioned an attitude; she said she learned what she had missed by getting married early.

In response to the question: Have Harlequins made any changes in your life?, a third of the readers said yes. They replied that Harlequins made them want to read all the time and to travel. Harlequins cheered them up when they were depressed. Harlequins made them more romantic and made them wish their husbands were more masterful. These effects involve attitude changes.

Another effect question drew a 43 per cent positive response along with some examples of how readers have been affected by Harlequins:*

* The question referred to is question number twenty-five of the reader interview schedule found in Appendix II.

Yes, I would say that when I read I am quite absorbed in the characters.... And if we're at a critical stage in the story then I can get up from reading and be quite snarky with my family. And it took me a while to analyze just what was happening, but now I find that I say to myself, "Well, okay, let's just leave the book alone, eh?"

Yes, it does affect me.... Say I've just finished a book and you've got a good feeling.... You know he [her husband] can wreck that high kind of quickly ...by not coming across the way I figured he should and then...you realize what a dummy you were to let it go, to let it affect you....

Nevertheless, learning theory, like cathar~~is~~ theory, has its limitations in describing the effect of Harlequins. The majority of readers on two of the three effect questions denied any effect. By and large, readers maintain that reading Harlequins has not made any changes in their lives nor has it affected their attitudes.* Learning theory, therefore, has limited explanatory value with reference to Harlequin's effect on readers. This could have serious implications for the process of hegemony. Does this mean that ideology has no effect? I do not think that we have to reject the notion that ideology in general and specifically in Harlequins has some kind of effect on individuals. However, we do have to revise our notion of the kind of effect that results. Rather than direct effect, it is likely that

* One could perhaps discount their claims in view of the consistency between Harlequin's portrayals of women's traditional roles and the readers' own traditional positions as wives and mothers, but it would be difficult to prove that the readers were being misleading or were mistaken about Harlequin's effect on them.

the "effect" is more subtle and difficult to detect in any one incident of ideology. The ideology which supports the capitalist system is pervasive in our society. It is undesirable and, indeed, impossible to separate a specific instance of it (Harlequins in this case) from the larger social context. An example illustrates this: suppose research revealed that Harlequin readers were ardent consumers. We have seen that Harlequins glamorize consumerism. Would this mean that readers are imitating Harlequins? Are they directly affected by them? Perhaps this is the case, but how could one possibly attribute this solely to Harlequins when consumerism is an essential part of North American society as a whole? A sound theory must take this into account.

The final theory about effect, reinforcement theory, does acknowledge the relationship between media, society, and effects. This theory basically argues that there is no direct or independent effect of media. Viewers or readers come to the media with already formed values and attitudes, and their perceptions of the content and "message" of the media will be shaped by those pre-existing assumptions.⁴¹ There are many influences on people's attitudes and behaviour and the impact of the media cannot be examined apart from a consideration of the large social context.

Of the three media-effects theories, reinforcement

theory is the most consistent with the theoretical framework of this study. The underlying theoretical question has been: how does capitalism reproduce itself? The answer has been: through the hegemonic reproduction (material and ideological) of the forces and relations of production. This process is evident in almost every aspect of society. Carl Boggs explains:

By hegemony Gramsci meant the permeation throughout civil society--including a whole range of structures and activities like trade unions, schools, the churches, and the family--of an entire system of values, attitudes, beliefs, morality, etc. that is in one way or another supportive of the established order and the class interests that dominate it. Hegemony in this sense might be defined as an 'organizing principle', or world view...that is diffused by agencies of ideological control and socialization into every area of daily life.⁴²

Boggs does not include the entertainment industry but it has been argued in Chapter I that this aspect of society is increasingly important and must be included in the study of hegemony. Reinforcement theory accepts this argument that the entertainment industry is integrally related to other structures in society which also produce ideology.

What does this mean in terms of the effect of Harlequins? It means that Harlequins are not singlehandedly responsible for the ideological maintenance of capitalism and that we should not expect a marked direct effect. Readers do not come to Harlequins "tabula rosa". We have already

seen that in their own way, Harlequins repeat the dominant ideology. Readers have been exposed to this ideology long before they begin to read Harlequins. They are not exposed to anything new, so one should not expect a new effect.

In addition, there is the factor of reader self-selection. Women readers who accept the dominant ideology, particularly the aspects concerning sex roles, marriage, and the family, will like and choose to read Harlequins which will, in turn, reaffirm those beliefs. Thus those readers' pre-existing attitudes and Harlequins' portrayals are consistent with each other and both are consistent with the dominant ideology. Women who do not accept this ideology do not generally choose to read Harlequins or else read them critically. When we apply reinforcement theory to Harlequins, then, we see them as part of a larger culture and conclude that the portrayals in Harlequins reinforce the values that the readers bring with them to the romances, that is, the dominant ideology. This theory is the most reasonable explanation of the effect of Harlequins, and is consistent with the concept of hegemony.

Although the concept of hegemony is very useful in understanding reproduction and effect, it also has a weakness which should be corrected. If you will recall, Gramsci spoke of securing the consent of "the great masses of the population". This is an overly simplistic view

of the individuals and groups who comprise society. Refinements must be made concerning how these individuals and groups are similar, how they differ, and how these differences and similarities affect their relationship to the dominant ideology. Some specific suggestions will be made here with reference to Harlequin readers.

Harlequin readers are not a uniform, amorphous mass. Harlequin Enterprises recognizes this and gears their advertising toward different groups of readers--older women, mothers, working mothers, young women, etc.*

* Reinforcement theory accepts Harlequin Enterprises' emphasis on age as a possible distinguishing factor. It suggests that young people are more likely to be influenced by the media than older people. This seems to be a reasonable statement. One might expect pre-teens, teenagers, and young women to be more affected by Harlequin because they may not know what to expect in their lives and relationships and may accept Harlequins' portrayals of strong prosperous men and ecstatic love. As one teenage reader told me: "I keep hoping that if it happens in books, it can happen to me, so you just keep hoping and hoping." It is probably more difficult for older women who are married and who have children to maintain their romantic visions of men, love, and marriage.

My interviews with readers offer mixed support for the age distinction for effect. On one of my effect questions, all but one of the seven readers who were under thirty years old said that Harlequins affected their behaviour or expectations, whereas all but one of the seven oldest readers said they were not affected by Harlequins. The young women constituted two-thirds of all those who said they were affected in response to the question. This would seem to support the contention that younger readers are more easily affected.

However, when I asked the women if they would like to be married to a typical Harlequin hero, five of the seven youngest women said no while five of the seven oldest women said yes. These answers are not necessarily

This kind of distinction is important but it may not be the most fruitful approach to an understanding of effect. Instead, for this purpose, it may be best to divide readers into three broad categories: keen, casual, and critical readers. The explanations of effect for these categories may vary. The evidence supporting catharsis theory, learning theory and reinforcement theory will be reconsidered in the light of these categories.

The keen reader is a woman who will proudly declare herself to be "hooked" on or "addicted" to Harlequins. She is the person who most likely owns a vast collection of Harlequins and who is largely dependent upon them for entertainment. She is such a fan that she can find nothing wrong with Harlequins and loves every one of them. The keen reader will probably have a subscription to ensure her supply which she may supplement with used back copies from second hand bookstores. Her "addiction" may intrude upon her work or interfere with her family relationships. The following three women are examples:

My friends and I cannot adequately express our love of your books. They are so much a part of my life that I cannot imagine not always having one to read.⁴³

I can hardly wait for each shipment to arrive

contradictory, but they do indicate that there may not be a hard and fast connection between age and effect. Further research is necessary to examine the importance of this variable.

and while I always promise myself to read more slowly and enjoy the books longer, my resolve always weakens and I devour them in less than a week.⁴⁴

I was introduced to your marvelous books at our local library. I read them all and started buying out the stock at the drug store before I joined your club. I cannot get enough of them!

The children dread the day the books arrive because I sit right down and go through them, sometimes into the night. My husband declared me an addict.

My last child is now in school and I'm immersed in these romances....⁴⁵

It is difficult to estimate what proportion of the Harlequin reading population keen readers represent but I would estimate that they are a minority of perhaps 10 to 20 per cent. When I asked my twenty-four women if they considered themselves to be "hooked" on Harlequins, thirteen of them said yes and another five replied that they were not but had been or could be or could certainly understand being "hooked" on them. However, most of these women, inspite of their avowed "addiction", were not immersed in Harlequins. There were only two women that I interviewed that I would classify as being keen readers, although others were border-line.

One of these keen readers was a single, twenty-three year old black woman from Trinidad who worked as a visiting homemaker. She read about forty Harlequins a month. When I asked if reading Harlequins had made any changes in her life, she replied yes, that "whereas

normally I would look to go out, now I don't. I prefer to stay at home and read. I stay home all the time and read, every spare moment that I have, that's what I do." Harlequin reading had also affected her perceptions of men. She wanted to marry a man like a Harlequin hero and said:

You find that whenever you meet a guy, you kind of measure him up and if you find him wanting, like what Mr. Harlequin is, then you say, "He's not for me." There's a better guy along, so you don't pay him very much attention.

The other woman was a thirty-eight year old housewife and mother of a teenage daughter. She read sixty Harlequins a month. She told me it took her about four hours to read one, which means that she was putting in eight hour days every day of the week reading Harlequins. She was very enthusiastic over Harlequin heroes and thought they existed in real life. She shared some of her Harlequins with her daughter, friends, and even her husband. She was working on a Harlequin collection and had about 180 books. The number of hours she daily spent on Harlequins, the Harlequin filled bookcase which was the first thing one encountered when one entered the house, and the woman's enthusiasm for Harlequins readily classify her as a keen reader.

The theory that may best describe keen readers is learning theory. There does seem to be a direct effect

on this minority of Harlequin readers who change their attitudes or behaviour as a result of their Harlequin reading. This change is probably consistent with pre-existing values and patterns of behaviour but is, nevertheless, a direct effect. The evidence that I found which would support learning theory came from my interviews with borderline or keen readers.

The second category of readers is the casual readers and these women constitute the majority of Harlequin readers. They use Harlequins as a leisure activity which is indulged in only as a short break or after their work is finished. They may thoroughly enjoy Harlequins but reading them does not alter their daily schedules. They do not want to be married to a Harlequin hero who is seen as too handsome, too rich, or too perfect. They are satisfied with their husbands if they are married. They recognize Harlequins to be fantasy material. They are positively disposed to the books and agree with Harlequins' images and philosophy, but may have some suggestions or criticisms to make. They may be either subscribers or individual buyers and borrowers of Harlequins.

I found that reinforcement theory is most applicable to the majority of readers in my group who are casual readers. These women read Harlequins moderately and the effect of reading them is probably moderate reinforcement

of pre-existing values. One should keep in mind that, although moderate or covert, this is still an important effect because the reinforcement of ideological legitimations is necessary for the maintenance of the capitalist system.

The final group of readers, a small minority of perhaps 5 to 10 per cent, are the critical readers. These are women who do not really like Harlequins at all, and who think they are trash, or women who like Harlequins against their better judgment. In both cases, women readers are critical of Harlequins. They do not read many Harlequins and sometimes only read them as a last resort when they feel like reading but have run out of other reading material. They may buy one occasionally but more likely borrow copies from others. Sometimes after reading a few, they may stop reading them altogether or simply read them infrequently. I interviewed two readers who fit this category.

Catharsis theory seems to apply most to critical readers. Readers who are critical of Harlequins dismiss the books, the images, and messages in them in total or in part. Therefore they are not likely to imitate the characters in Harlequins. In fact, they may live lives or believe in values diametrically opposed to Harlequins. In these cases, women probably do read Harlequins as "the road not taken". Harlequins may give critical readers "psychological ascendancy" over the conflicts women experience

between the traditional femininity portrayed in Harlequins and the more modern demands of womanhood.* Critical readers can come away from the books feeling superior to the books, the authors, and the characters. This may be part of the reason why they read them when they do. Harlequins are paper-tiger versions of traditional sex roles, love, and marriage which are fairly easily challenged and conquered by women who disagree with the content or at least the manner in which the content of Harlequins is presented.

One concludes that the effect of Harlequins may be different for different types of readers. All three theories of effect have been found to have some validity, depending on the type of reader. Learning theory can describe keen readers' responses; reinforcement theory can explain the effect of Harlequins on casual readers; and catharsis theory can be applied to critical readers. Overall, casual readers are the predominant group of Harlequin readers and reinforcement theory is the most generally applicable theory.

Further research is necessary to explore the possibility that the type of reader may have an effect on how they interpret and respond to the ideology in Harlequins. I have suggested a way of categorizing the readers which

* Another possibility, however, is that the books may heighten the conflict for women readers rather than easing it.

is based on how they approach Harlequins. Additional research could extend this by analyzing what factors affect whether women are likely to be keen, casual, or critical readers. This might lead back to socio-economic factors which could be tied into the basic structures of our society. If not, it could lead to an interesting revision of the concept of hegemony, perhaps with more emphasis being placed on psychological mechanisms.

In addition, I asked readers primarily about their socio-economic backgrounds and Harlequin reading. In order to make broader assertions about the coincidence of attitudes and behaviour in society, the romances, and readers, one would have to considerably expand the interviews to include questions on class, corporate, and sex role structures. For example, one could ask questions which would solicit responses about the readers' perceptions of their own social class, the typical characteristics of the different social classes in society, the role of corporations in our society, the readers' own work and the kinds of work that women typically do in the home and the labour force. One could probe to determine whether there were differences between the women's attitudes and behaviour, their perceptions of reality, and Harlequins' portrayals. One could explore how the women readers dealt with these differences if they occurred. Generally speaking,

the interviews should try to ascertain how women readers make sense of their lives, society, and Harlequins. This information could enhance our understanding of the effect of ideology, the relationship between fiction and society, and the relationship between women's lives and the ideological legitimations of women's position in our society.

The general implication of the discussion of effect is that studies of hegemonic reproduction must take the differences as well as the similarities of the population being studied into consideration. A "mass man" concept may obscure important factors which affect the reception of ideology. This further means that studies of hegemonic reproduction should no longer assume effect. Instead effect must become a subject of investigation in order to develop a more comprehensive understanding of if and how ideology becomes realized in people's everyday lives.

Conclusions

This chapter has analyzed Harlequin readers. It indicated that there is a wide range of women who read Harlequins, although the largest single category is full-time wives and mothers. It was argued that women's reading of Harlequins is encouraged by the three structures that have been the focus of this study of the Harlequin phenomena within North American society--corporate, class, and sex role structure.

Briefly, a requirement of corporate structure is profitability. Harlequin Enterprises, in its quest for profitability, has created a product which appeals to women who, thus, buy Harlequins. We have seen that this product is ideological in form and content. Therefore, Harlequin Enterprises and women interact in the production of both a material product and an ideology. This is hegemony in action.

One's position in the class structure in our society determines one's income and educational levels, among other things. Working and middle class women partially read Harlequins because the romances are compatible with their education and income. Interestingly enough, the books downplay the importance of education in the characters' lives and the heroines, with whom readers are to identify, have low incomes (until they marry). This minimizes any possible conflict between readers and heroines, between readers and Harlequins. In addition, we have seen in the previous chapter how the portrayals of class in Harlequins legitimize unequal class structure. Harlequin readers are a part of this structure which is reproduced within Harlequins and which encourages their reading of Harlequins.

Finally, sex role structure is a major factor affecting women's reading of Harlequins. Chapter IV revealed that Harlequins glamorized women's lives in our society.

Harlequins feature an appealing image of women's work in the home and in the labour force as well as their relationships. Women like to read this happy version of their lives. Furthermore, the style and format of Harlequins is adaptable to the reading times and conditions available to women. Harlequins enable women to adapt to their situations which, in turn, facilitate Harlequin reading. These situations or positions are part of sex role structure which is an integral aspect of capitalism.

This chapter also examined the issue of the effect of Harlequins. It was suggested that the main effect of Harlequins is the reinforcement of readers' pre-existing traditional attitudes and behaviour. Three categories of Harlequins readers were proposed--keen, casual, and critical--and the possible effects of Harlequins for each category of reader were outlined. It was emphasized that the effects of Harlequins and the whole media-entertainment industry must be analyzed within the larger socio-economic context.

Chapter V concludes the investigation of Harlequin Enterprises, Harlequin Romances, and Harlequin readers. The findings of this investigation will be summarized and discussed in the final section, the Conclusions.

CONCLUSIONS

Three theoretical questions were discussed in Chapter I: How does North American capitalist society reproduce itself? How does it reproduce itself through fiction, or what is the relationship between fiction and society? What are the positions of women in our society and how are they reproduced, particularly through romantic fiction? These questions have guided this study of Harlequin Enterprises, Harlequin Romances, and Harlequin readers. Now we can return to them to discuss the general findings of this study and the research directions in which they lead.

The Reproduction of Capitalism

The hegemonic reproduction of capitalism involves the material and ideological reproduction of the forces and relations of production, or corporate and class structures. Previous studies of capitalist reproduction have focused on the hegemonic function of institutions like the family, religion, and schools. My study has shown that this analysis can be and should be extended to the media-entertainment industry as well.

Cees Hamelink in his book, *The Corporate Village*, argues that research efforts should be increased in this area because more and more people are being employed in

and exposed to the media sectors of the economy which are "an integral part of the politico-economic structures within which they operate."¹ He points out that:

culture as a product has become an industrial commodity mediated by the cultural structures that are controlled by corporate industry. As commodity, culture reflects the value configuration of the corporate industrial system.²

There is, therefore, tremendous ideological power as well as economic power at stake. My study has shown this conjunction of material and ideological reproduction within Harlequin Enterprises. It adds further support to the notion that "economic base" and "ideological superstructure" are not two distinct phenomena. Instead, they are inseparable.

The significance of the media-entertainment industry is heightened when one realizes that a few large corporations in this field, such as Harlequin Enterprises, are penetrating the world with their products. Jaffre Dumazedier expressed his concern about this phenomena:

Patterns of leisure especially are being determined less and less by local experience alone, and more and more by messages coming from the civilization that appears to be the strongest, the richest, and the most prestigious... Henceforth, a dangerous social mimicry will threaten to determine the cultural life of every country, each one imitating ...the beneficent or malignant aspects of leisure à l' américaine.³

Cultural "leveling" may be one result, but the larger socio-political consequences must be emphasized

as well. Through its corporations' material-ideological products, a nation's hegemonic process is extended beyond its borders into other nations. Thus, the media-entertainment industry is important on an international scale in addition to a national and individual level. Further research should be directed towards understanding the complexity of capitalist society in a global context. This research may also reveal possible sources of conflict and change within this larger context.

The Reproduction of Capitalism Through Popular Fiction

Scholars studying the relationship between literature and society have moved away from the view that fiction directly and accurately reflects society to the position that fiction is a combination of culturally transcending literary elements and culturally specific images which reinforce existing social formations. My study lends support to the latter conceptualization. Harlequin Romances do not reflect reality. Instead they are ideological in that they reinforce the beliefs and values that are the expression of the interests of those who own and control the means of production. They contain plot elements and themes which are not specific to capitalism, but, on the whole, they provide legitimations of the capitalist system which produces them.

My study has added to the understanding of the

relationship between fiction and society by showing how consumers and the corporate producer affect the form and content of the fiction produced. Both of these agents create and respond to the demand and supply of popular fiction. The fiction that is produced is a result of this interaction. My research suggests that exploring the relationship between corporate producer, market, and product can further reveal how the hegemonic reproduction of capitalism is realized through fiction.

The Reproduction of Capitalism Through
Popular Fiction For Women

This study began by noting that, inspite of attempts to change, women's inequality in our society has persisted. It was then argued that the main reason for this is that women's subordination is functional for capitalism. Women perform essential services in the areas of public production, private production, and personal life which contribute to the maintenance of the socio-economic system. There are not only structural mechanisms but also ideological legitimations that perpetuate inequality. In our society, there is still acceptance or at least tolerance of the conditions and beliefs that give rise to and reinforce sex role inequality. This is partially evident in the widespread popularity of romantic fiction like Harlequin Romances, which have been shown to be legitimations of

traditional sex roles. This study reaffirms that romantic love, as portrayed in Harlequins, is a conservative ideology which ties women to subordinate roles in their personal relationships, in the home, and in the labour force.

However, this finding leaves an important issue unresolved: when women buy the romance novels, do they also automatically "buy into" the ideology contained within them? This is an issue with which previous studies have not dealt and my study of readers is only a beginning of this essential analysis. Nevertheless, it does contribute to our understanding of the dynamic relationship between sex role structure, the legitimations of it within romantic fiction, and women readers by showing how the structure of women's everyday lives facilitates their reading of this type and form of fiction. There is structural conduciveness that encourages women's acceptance of the romances and possibly the ideology within them.

In spite of this conduciveness, one must still be cautious about attributing ideological effect to romantic fiction. Further research on effect is necessary but it must be broadly conceived. This study indicates that research on the effect of romantic fiction must not be formulated in narrow terms like a singly caused, direct, or immediate effect. This ignores the social context in which ideological forms are produced and consumed. It

conceals the inter-relatedness of various institutions and ideology in our society.

In addition, this study has led to the recognition that the passive "mass man" conception of the population in general and the media audience in particular must be revised, for it obscures possible bases of differentiation among these larger groups. This may overlook different responses to ideology and give a false impression of the pervasive acceptance of the dominant ideology. Additional research could, therefore, focus on possible sources of change and conflict as well as consensus.

To conclude, this study has analyzed Harlequin Enterprises, Harlequin Romances, and Harlequin readers. It has argued that Harlequin Enterprises, its products and their contents, and its consumers' receptivity are a part of and reinforce the existing socio-economic system. Its main contribution has been its structural approach to the investigation of the hegemonic reproduction of capitalism through popular fiction for women.

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APPENDIX I

Harlequin Enterprises has been publishing books since 1949 and by mid-1976 had published nearly 2,000 titles. A catalogue of books, published on the occasion of their twenty-fifth anniversary, was obtained from Harlequin Enterprises. It listed all of the books published, in order, by author, title, number, and year published. This Harlequin book population, however, included books other than romances. Since I was only interested in their romance publications, the population was narrowed to the books published from January of 1964 to June of 1976. The year 1964 was chosen for several reasons. First, although the first Mills & Boon romance published by Harlequin was released in 1958, it was in 1964 that Harlequin switched to an exclusively Mills & Boon offering. Secondly, 1964 was also the first year that Harlequin began regularly publishing eight Harlequins per month, although this has subsequently been altered to six Harlequins per month.

Although there were other romance series published by Harlequin during this time, none of them spanned a comparable length of time. In addition, some of them were duplications and combinations of the original Harlequin romance series, like Golden Library, Omnibus, Romance

Treasury, and Collector's Editions. The Harlequin Presents series was not only a newcomer but there were relatively few of them published per month compared to the Harlequins. Again, this has subsequently changed. There are now equal numbers of Harlequins and Harlequin Presents published each month. However, the sample was drawn only from the regular Harlequin series.

Initially, a sample of one hundred Harlequins was selected, using stratified random sampling techniques. In order to get a spread of Harlequins over the year, each year's books were divided into four three-month stratum (January-March, April-June, July-September, October-December) and two books were randomly selected from each strata.

The books were fairly easily obtained in spite of the fact that some of them had been published some twelve years previously. The books were obtained from Harlequin's stock on hand, re-printed editions, and from an used book store. These books were read in order to develop appropriate coding categories. Categories were developed, and the books were read a second time, this time they were coded as well. It soon became apparent, in light of the number of books and coding categories, that the sample size was unnecessarily unwieldy. The first read-through had revealed the homogeneity of the books, so it was deemed practically and methodologically adviseable to cut the sample size.

Using systematic sampling procedures, the initial sample was reduced in half to fifty books and the analysis was done with this smaller sample. The following is a list of the books included.

Book Sample			
Number	Author	Title	Month, year published
800	Rosalind Brett	<i>Sweet Waters</i>	February, 1964
815	Rosalind Brett	<i>Young Tracey</i>	April, 1964
843	Kathryn Blair	<i>A Nurse at Barbazon</i>	August, 1964
880	Esther Wyndham	<i>Once You Have Found Him</i>	December, 1964
892	Juliet Armstrong	<i>The Local Doctor</i>	February, 1965
921	Violet Winspear	<i>Desert Doctor</i>	June, 1965
948	Anne Weale	<i>Islands of Summer</i>	September, 1965
973	Sara Seale	<i>Time of Grace</i>	December, 1965
999	Joyce Dingwell	<i>Greenfingers Farm</i>	March, 1966
1004	Betty Beaty	<i>The Path of the Moonfish</i>	April, 1966
1042	Marjorie Norrell	<i>Promise the Doctor</i>	September, 1966
1071	Elizabeth Hunter	<i>Spiced With Cloves</i>	December, 1966
1096	Sara Seale	<i>Cloud Castle</i>	March, 1967
1116	Amanda Doyle	<i>Play the Tune Softly</i>	June, 1967
1135	Dorothy Rivers	<i>There Will Come A Stranger</i>	August, 1967
1160	Joyce Dingwell	<i>The Boomerang Girl</i>	November, 1967
1185	Juliet Shore	<i>When Doctors Meet</i>	March, 1968
1207	Eleanor Farnes	<i>The Young Intruder</i>	May, 1968
1233	Hilda Pressley	<i>A Love of Her Own</i>	September, 1968

Number	Author	Title	Month, year published
1255	Margaret Malcolm	<i>Little Savage</i>	November, 1968
1268	Nerina Hilliard	<i>Dark Star</i>	January, 1969
1308	Amanda Doyle	<i>A Mist in Glen Torran</i>	June, 1969
1327	Hilda Pressley	<i>More Than Gold</i>	August, 1969
1355	Kay Thorpe	<i>Rising Star</i>	December, 1969
1382	Mary Burchell	<i>To Journey Together</i>	March, 1970
1396	Gwen Westwood	<i>Bright Wilderness</i>	May, 1970
1429	Hilda Pressley	<i>The Man in Possession</i>	September, 1970
1450	Lucy Gillen	<i>Heir to Glen Ghyll</i>	December, 1970
1469	Hilda Pressley	<i>To the Highest Bidder</i>	February, 1971
1498	Betty Neels	<i>Fate is Remarkable</i>	June, 1971
1520	Elizabeth Hoy	<i>Into a Golden Land....</i>	August, 1971
1550	Mary Whistler	<i>Pathway of Roses</i>	December, 1971
1567	Mary Burchell	<i>Do Not Go, My Love</i>	February, 1972
1595	Anne Hampson	<i>Gold is the Sunrise</i>	June, 1972
1619	Ruth Clemence	<i>Happy With Either</i>	September, 1972
1647	Hilda Nickson	<i>The Sweet Spring</i>	December, 1972
1672	Anne Hampson	<i>The Rebel Bride</i>	March, 1973
1680	Violet Winspear	<i>The Rapture of the Desert</i>	April, 1973
1708	Stella Francis Nel	<i>Golden Harvest</i>	August, 1973
1723	Jane Donnelly	<i>Rocks Under Shining Water</i>	October, 1973
1754	Lucy Gillen	<i>The Pretty Witch</i>	February, 1974
1787	Eleanor Farnes	<i>The Runaway Visitors</i>	June, 1974
1812	Dorothy Cork	<i>A Promise to Keep</i>	September, 1974

Number	Author	Title	Month, year published
1838	Jan Anderson	<i>Master of Koros</i>	December, 1974
1854	Essie Summers	<i>Through All the Years</i>	February, 1975
1879	Mary Wibberley	<i>Dark Viking</i>	May, 1975
1909	Kay Thorpe	<i>The Shifting Sands</i>	September, 1975
1920	Roumelia Lane	<i>Harbour of Deceit</i>	October, 1975
1952	Joyce Dingwell	<i>Corporation Boss</i>	February, 1976
1975	Sue Peters	<i>Clouded Waters</i>	May, 1976

The coding categories emerged from the novels and theoretical framework and there were three general units of analysis chosen: 1) item: plot, setting, 2) characters: hero, heroine, rival man, rival woman, and 3) themes: corporate, class, and sex role structure related themes. This information was recorded on two sets of system analysis cards. The following are the coding categories used.

Character Categories

1. Harlequin, identification
2. Book card, character card

Role in Story

3. Hero/heroine/rivals

Personal Characteristics

4. Sex
5. Age-adolescent, 14-19
6. Age-young adult, 20-25
7. Age-mature adult, 26-40
8. Marital status-married, single
9. Marital status-divorced, separated or widowed
10. Residence
11. Residence-more than one, specify
12. Living arrangements
13. Religion, prayer or God mentioned
14. Physical features
15. Personality

Social Origins

16. Nationality-citizenship, specify
17. Race (in their terms), specify

Socio-economic Status

18. Education-0-high school
19. Education-higher education, apprenticeship of skilled or technical nature

- 20. Education--higher education, college
- 21. " " -other, specify
- 22. Occupation--ownership, top management of large business or industry
- 23. " " -professional
- 24. " " -small shop keepers, farmers
- 25. " " -semi-professions, lower administration, management
- 26. " " -white collar, clerical
- 27. " " -skilled, semi-skilled manual
- 28. " " -unskilled manual
- 29. " " -unpaid labour, specify
- 30. " " -other, specify
- 31. " " -not working during all or part of story
- 32. Career pattern--never enters labour force
- 33. " " -never leaves labour force or anticipates doing so
- 34. " " -interrupted pattern
- 35. Property owned--productive property, invested capital
- 36. " " -major consumer goods--home, car, boat, jewelry, furs, etc.
- 37. " " -none
- 38. Social Class--Upper
- 39. " " -Middle
- 40. " " -Working
- 41. Social mobility--upward
- 42. " " -downward

Relationships

- 43. Family--parents

- 44. Family--siblings
- 45. " " -step-relatives
- 46. " " -character's spouse
- 47. " " -character's children
- 48. " " -other close relatives
- 49. Friends--of the same sex
- 50. " " -of the opposite sex
- 51. Main Character relationships--with love rival of same sex
- 52. " " " -with love rival of same sex, if more than one rival
- 53. " " " -with love object of opposite sex, excludes relationship between hero and heroine
- 54. " " " -relationship between hero and heroine

Attitudes and Values

Interpersonal Attitudes

- 55. Love and marriage
- 56. Family
- 57. Women as a sex or types of women
- 58. Men as a sex or types of men
- 59. Sexuality
- 60. Sex role equality
- 61. Aging
- 62. Children
- 63. Other attitudes

Corporate Attitudes

- 64. Work

- 65. Money and financial matters
- 66. Working class and middle class
- 67. Upper class
- 68. Racial or class equality
- 69. Other attitudes

Behaviour

Male/female relationships

- 70. Character initiates physical contact between male and female
- 71. Physical contact initiated is forceful, violent, or against the other's will
- 72. Character threatens, verbally or by his/her manner, forceful or unwanted contact
- 73. Character is recipient of unwanted, threatening, physical contact
- 74. Character is first to admit love verbally to his/her loved one
- 75. Character tries to "read" or interpret another's person's motives, emotions, situation, etc.
- 76. After character recognizes that they want the other person, they take action to remove barriers between or to further the relationship between him/herself and his/her loved one, specify
- 77. Character is successful in his/her efforts

Problem-solving Ability

- 78. Character acts or perceives "instinctively," "naturally," "intuitively," etc.
- 79. Character makes social inferences from physical appearances
- 80. Character is familiar with territory, setting, or work of story
- 81. Character's competencies, skills
- 82. Character gets into difficulties, accidents, awkward situations, etc.
- 83. Character is rescued, assisted by others
- 84. Character rescues, aids, assists others in trouble

Social Responsibility

- 85. Character performs acts of compassion, chivalry, good neighborship, etc.
- 86. Character holds community leadership positions

Hero-heroine Marriages

- 87. Reason for marrying
- 88. Character is in charge of finances, major decisions
- 89. Character continues his/her work after marriage
- 90. Sexual interaction
- 91. Other

Book Categories

1. Harlequin, identification
2. Book card, character card

Setting

3. Developed country, undeveloped country, specify
4. Both, specify country and reason
5. Urban, relatively non-isolated; rural, relatively isolated
6. Both, specify and reason why
7. Modern, comfortable; primitive, rugged
8. Both, elaborate
9. Setting from which there is easy escape on one's own;
 setting which is difficult to leave on one's own
10. Both

Basic hero-heroine contact

11. Woman and man meet in the course of his/her work
12. Woman and man meet through his/her family
13. Woman and man meet as neighbors or townspeople
14. Woman and man meet in their social world, through friends, clubs, etc.
15. Woman and man are spouses or ward and legal guardian
16. Other

Everyday life and tasks

17. Food, food preparation
18. Homes, house-keeping, home furnishings
19. Personal props--clothing, make-up, hair-dos, etc.

20. Consumer goods--cars, jewelry, boats, etc.

21. Locale--scenery descriptions

Specific Plot

22. Summary

General Plot

23. Hero and heroine do not realize they are in love until the end of the book.

24. Hero and heroine are in love or grow to love each other but are not aware of the other's love for them. They think that the other is in love with a rival male and/or female.

25. Hero and heroine are in love but a major obstacle is his or her responsibilities to his or her family.

26. Same as above but the obstacle is his age.

27. Same as above but obstacle is his or her career demands.

28. Hero and heroine are attracted but fight attraction because of erroneous information about the other which casts doubt upon that person's character.

29. Other

Plot mechanisms

30. Coincidence, fate

31. Evesdropping

32. Mistaken identities

33. Accidents

34. Interference by others

35. Weather

36. Social barriers

37. Age differences

38. Other

Removal of final obstacle between hero and heroine

39. Fate or accident

40. Interference of others--throwing hero and heroine together, revealing information, advising, etc.

41. Hero's initiative, specify

42. Heroine's initiative, specify

43. Other

Portrayal of others

44. Non-white races

45. Working and Middle class

46. Upper class

47. Aged

48. Women, men

49. Other

Themes

50. Biological extremes

51. Social inferences from ascribed physical characteristics

52. "Natural" or "instinctive" behaviour

53. Portrayal of romantic love

54. Portrayal of Harlequins, romantic fiction, or light fiction

55. Portrayal of corporations, business procedures

56. Sexual innuendoes

57. Other

APPENDIX II

The following questions were used in an open-ended, taped interview in the reader's home, with one exception and that interview took place in a back room at the bookstore. These same questions and the same order of questions was used for all respondents. Non-directive probes were used to solicit more information when it was felt necessary or rewarding.

The interview was prefaced by a brief explanation on my part of why I was doing the study and what to expect in the interview. My explanation, again, was intended to break down any social distance between readers and myself, and to defuse any possible defensiveness that the women might feel about reading Harlequins. In the preface remarks, I explained that I had grown up reading romances and when it came time to choose a topic of study, I had decided to "combine business with pleasure" and study Harlequins.

There are four sets of information that the questions were designed to elicit: socio-economic background of the readers, characteristics and conditions of Harlequin reading, what the readers like about Harlequins, and what effect reading Harlequins have on them.

Interview Questions

1. What is your name?
2. How old are you?
3. Are you married, single, divorced, separated, or widowed?
4. Do you have any children?
 - a. How many?
 - b. How old are they?
 - c. Are they living at home?
5. What is the highest level of your education?
6. What is your occupation?
 - a. If a housewife now, did you ever have a job outside the home?
 - b. What kind of work did you do?
 - c. When was that?
 - d. Do you plan to have a job outside the home in the future?
7. What is your husband's occupation?
8. What is your nationality?
9. How many Harlequins do you read a month?
10. How many do you own?
11. How do you usually obtain your Harlequins?
12. Do you also read Harlequin Presents? Harlequin Magazine?
13. Do you do any other sorts of reading?
14. How were you first introduced to Harlequins?
 - a. When?

15. When do you read Harlequins usually?
16. What would you probably be doing if you didn't read Harlequins?
17. Do you have any favourite Harlequin authors?
 - a. Who?
 - b. What is it about their stories that you like?
18. Are there any Harlequin authors that you don't like?
 - a. Who?
 - b. What is it about their stories that you dislike?
19. Would you recommend Harlequins to your friends?
20. Do you talk to anyone about Harlequins?
21. What is it about Harlequins that appeals to you?
22. Is there anything about Harlequins that you would change?
 - a. What?
 - b. Why?
23. Many readers write to Harlequin and say "I'm hooked" or "addicted" to Harlequins. What do you think they mean by that?
 - a. Does it apply to you?
24. Has reading Harlequins made any changes in your daily life?
 - a. In your attitudes?
 - b. Have you learned anything from Harlequins?
25. Let me tell you a story about something connected with a Harlequin that happened to me. I'd like your reaction. I had been reading a Harlequin by Betty Neels and the hero in it was Mr. Nice Guy. He was very generous and was always giving the heroine lots of attention and presents. This was around Valentine's Day and on Valentine's Day I invited my boyfriend over for dinner. We've been together for a long time so we're

not in the first flush of romance but I decided to set up the atmosphere anyway. I made a nice dinner, had candles, wine, and music. Well, he didn't bring me a present or even a card and I got angry with him. I don't think I would have gotten angry if I hadn't been reading that particular Harlequin in which the hero had been so considerate. Have you ever had a similar experience?

26. Would you like to be married to a typical Harlequin hero?
 - a. Why or why not?
27. Most of the heroines in the Harlequins are in their late teens or early twenties. When you were their age, how did your life compare to theirs?
28. What does your husband think about Harlequins or your reading Harlequins?
 - a. Has he ever read one?
29. Is there anything you would like to say about Harlequins that I haven't asked?

APPENDIX III

The following appeal for readers was given to Harlequin purchasers at the Book Mart in downtown Hamilton in the form of a mimeographed note.

HELLO,

My name is Maggie Jensen. I'm a student at McMaster University and I am doing a study of Harlequin romances. I would like to talk to you about Harlequins--how often you read them, where you usually get them, what you like about them, etc.

If you are interest in being interviewed, please call me at 523-1694 in Hamilton, or leave your name and phone number at the cash register desk and I will contact you. I would greatly appreciate your assistance.

Thank you,

Maggie

The note was purposefully constructed to be casual; the questions that were mentioned were non-controversial and straight forward; and there was no reference to the fact that this would be research for a doctoral dissertation. I might have attracted women by the idea of the prestige that would be involved in being a part of advanced educational level research, but I was more concerned that this might put readers off. Most Harlequin readers are aware that light romance books are often considered to be

"trash," (In fact, many of my readers' husbands, other relatives or friends thought this according to the readers I interviewed), and I did not want my educational level to create a social distance between the women and myself that might intimidate them. This caution proved to be warranted as a few women, when I later approached them in the bookstore after the response to the note was minimal, demured on the grounds that they did not know anything about the subject. One woman told me that I would not want to interview her as she did not have much education. When I personally asked women in the store to consent to be interviewed, I used the same approach as the note, and this was more successful generally.

APPENDIX IV

Mann gives some breakdown on occupation, education, and the number of children of his readers, and compares them to the general English population in terms of age and marital status. The majority (61 per cent) of the English romance readers studied were between the ages of 19 to 44 years old, an over-representation compared to 40 per cent of the population in this group. Women aged 45+ were about equally under-represented in the Mills & Boon ranks with teenagers being represented about proportionately. Mann noted that nearly half of the new readers in 1973 were under the age of 24 years old and that there was a slight downward shift in the ages of the romance readers.¹

In terms of marital status, 60 per cent of the readers were married compared to 63 per cent of the general population; a third were single compared to 23 per cent of the population; and the rest (6 per cent and 2 per cent respectively) were widowed or divorced compared to a total of 14 per cent in these two categories in the general public.² Mann comments that: "As the romance readers are younger overall than the national female population, it is not surprising that they have fewer widowed and divorced women than the national population."³ This would apply to the greater number of single women too. Most

of the readers who were married also had children. Forty-five per cent of all the readers were married women with children at home and over 25 per cent of the readers had children under 11 years old.⁴

Slightly over half (52 per cent) of the Mills & Boon readers worked in the labour force either full-time or part-time. A third were full-time housewives; 13 per cent were housewives with full-time jobs; another 17 per cent were housewives with part-time work. Twenty-two per cent of Mann's sample were unmarried with jobs; 6 per cent were students; and 7 percent were retired, with 2 per cent uncodeable.⁵

Of those readers who were employed outside the home, they were concentrated in typically female-dominated sectors of the labour force: clerical-51 per cent, sales-11 per cent, service-6 per cent, and manual-19 per cent, with the remainder spread about equally between nursing, the professions, and technical level positions.⁶

A final characteristic that Mann looked at was age at completion of full-time education. Mann concludes that Mills & Boon readers are a "good cross-section of the female population", with age of completion varying from under 14 years old to 21 years old and over.⁷

I have summarized some of the characteristics of the Mills & Boon readers as outlined in Mann's study. There

are so many problems with the report of the study that it does not warrant extensive consideration. First of all, the study was done in collaboration with Mills & Boon and this collaboration reveals itself in the style in which the report is written and in the way in which data is presented and interpreted.

Mann's report is clearly a proselytizing device. This is obviously revealed in some of the "issues" that Mann addresses. For example:

THEY SAY...

That readers of romantic fiction always buy their books in paperback editions so there is no need to provide the hardback editions in public libraries.

WRONG!⁸

THEY SAY...

That romance readers are well enough provided for at libraries already.

WRONG!⁹

Therefore, one must be wary of the explicit and possibly implicit biases in Mann's study.

Another grounds for caution is that Mann uses key terms that he never defines and categories that are vague and possibly useless. There are other unclarities as well. For example, in one section he includes a chart indicating the number of children at home, but it is never clear whether the percentages refer to all readers in general, to married readers only, to readers with children only, etc.

Many of these lapses are because the report is not written for an academic audience and perhaps should not be attacked on that basis; others, however, are inexcuseable.

Footnotes

¹ Peter Mann, *A New Survey: The facts about romantic fiction* (Mills & Boon Ltd, 1974), p. 7.

² *Ibid.*, p. 8.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 8, 9.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

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