

A ROMANTIC PAST

A study of historical romance as a form of  
recreational fiction in public libraries.

Thesis presented for the award of  
Master Arts in Library Studies  
at the South Australian Institute of Technology,  
School of Library and Information Management.

JANUARY 1985

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## ABSTRACT

Recreational fiction is a major component in the collections of public libraries. In the past, there was considerable debate about whether such fiction should be included in public libraries at all. Its inclusion is now taken for granted but there is little discussion amongst librarians of such fiction in theoretical or philosophical terms. This work is an attempt to provide an outline of possible bases for such discussion.

In the first section various approaches to fiction are outlined. Particular emphasis is given to the archetype/myth theories represented by Frye and Campbell, the formula theory of Cawelti and the psychological theories of fiction such as those of Holland and Lesser. Some comparisons are made with Bettelheim's theories of the importance of fairy stories. The sociological approach to fiction, such as the work by Mann, can be helpful in correcting misinformed stereotypes of readers of light fiction which librarians may otherwise accept without question.

Historical romance is taken as an example of recreational fiction and is discussed in the two subsequent sections. The first section deals with the particular problems of dealing with light historical fiction. The development of the historical novel is outlined and some of

the problems of dealing with history in a fictional form are discussed.

The final section deals with historical romance as a form of romantic fiction. The particular features of this area of light fiction are compared with the general statements on fiction dealt with in the first section and with other forms of recreational fiction. From this discussion, it seems that the theories of fiction are applicable to historical romantic fiction although no one theory is sufficient.

It is argued that librarians should be aware of a range of theories of fiction in order to be able to provide a philosophy of fiction provision in public libraries. Although librarians no longer appear to be openly hostile to the inclusion of non-serious fiction, it is felt that until there is a more general awareness of the various ways in which fiction can be analysed and the possibility that popular fiction in fact appeals to the psychological needs of its readers, fiction budgets will be endangered in times of economic recession.

I hereby declare that this thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except when due reference is made to such.

Signed: UP Carmichael

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people have helped me in the preparation of this work and I would like to record my thanks in general to the library staff and users at the Elizabeth Public Library who shared with me their experience of romantic fiction. I would also like to record my thanks to the Elizabeth City Council for allowing me to take unpaid leave to work on this thesis in the early days of its preparation. In addition to these general acknowledgements, there are four people whom I particularly wish to thank.

When I first began to establish the topic of this thesis Mr R. Hosking, Lecturer in English Literature at the South Australian College of Advanced, Sturt Site, was of very great assistance in making me aware of academic studies of popular culture. The importance of these ideas to this study will be evident from a reading of the first section of this thesis.

While I was writing the third section of this thesis, I became aware of the work of Dr C. Thurston in this area and wrote to her requesting an indication of where I might find the published results of the study which I had seen mentioned. Her response was extremely generous, as will be seen from the entries in the bibliography. She not only sent a considerable body of unpublished material but also read the

section on romantic fiction in its first draft and her comments upon that section were most useful in improving the subsequent drafts.

Mrs C. Hatty, Lecturer in Nursing Studies at the South Australian College of Advanced Education, Sturt Site, teaches in the area of psychiatric nursing and I am most grateful to her for reading a draft of this work to comment upon the psychological content.

Acknowledgements of the assistance of spouses are at times a cliché, but special thanks must be recorded to my husband, John Carmichael. Apart from his unfailing and patient support, his comments upon the psychological and historical aspects of this thesis have been both expert and extremely helpful. Without his practical assistance and constant encouragement, I am sure this work would never have been completed.

SECTION ONE.

Light fiction.

## Chapter 1. Introduction.

Because this thesis is the result of about seven year's part time work, this introduction adopts an historical approach to the way in which the topic developed to this stage. It is considered that this approach will explain the text which follows - what I have included and what I have excluded, the way in which research was conducted and a general outline of the text which follows in the rest of the work.

During the time in which I worked in a public library, it became evident that there was an area of fiction with which I was generally unfamiliar, even though it was extremely popular with library users in general. Indeed, authors of whom I had never heard were 'household names' to a large proportion of our readers. As I had previously qualified as an English teacher, my unfamiliarity with an area of fiction in such high demand rather surprised me. Gradually I began to wonder at possible deficiencies in an approach to literature entirely based on 'approved texts'.

Thus I became interested in this 'different' kind of fiction which seemed to live a life of its own in a culture of which I had been largely unaware. My own reading had been largely determined by studies. Other than an occasional detective story, I had read mainly non-fiction (history and biography) and some fiction by well-known authors of the more



literary kind. I had spent much time in academic libraries but had little experience of general public library collections. Since, however, the users of the library in which I worked were avid readers of this fiction, I felt I should pursue the subject in greater depth.

During this time, I discovered from talking with fellow public librarians that there was a considerable body of knowledge about this fiction at one level - what one might call the 'who writes what' kind of knowledge which is so valuable to the librarian in daily contact with general readers. There was, however, little evidence that there existed any theoretical foundation to this knowledge. Indeed, although librarians often read this fiction to help them deal with the queries from their readers, the tone in which it was discussed often seemed rather dismissive or patronising - even from librarians who appeared most concerned with the needs of their users. Bruwer has also noted this reluctance on the part of librarians to seriously discuss the provision of light fiction in public libraries. In his thesis he cites Totterdell as indicating that recreational fiction is consistently ignored by theoreticians of public library practice (Totterdell, B. cited in Bruwer, M. (1982) page 9) and Campbell as talking in terms of an "unofficial conspiracy of silence" about fiction and as the promotion of fiction being seen in terms of professional disloyalty (Campbell, A. cited in Bruwer, M. (1982) page 10). On a more personal note, after the paper given at the Brisbane conference of the Library Association of Australia (Carmichael, L. (1984) ), Bruwer approached me to express his

pleasure in finding someone else who was prepared to defend light fiction and said that while researching his thesis he had encountered some hostility to the inclusion of light fiction in public libraries.

It seems, however, that librarians are prepared to provide light fiction because it is what their readers want but there is little consideration given to why their readers want it. There is little attempt to justify its inclusion on any but pragmatic grounds.

This untheoretical or pragmatic approach to the inclusion of light fiction in libraries is in contrast to a tradition of arguments against its inclusion which at least exhibit an internal consistency. Such arguments suggest that light fiction is harmful, or at least inferior and therefore should be excluded from collections paid for from public monies. To argue that we should include light fiction in our collections even though they are harmful or inferior simply because a considerable proportion of our users desire them and they make our loan figures look respectable seems to be pragmatism of a very cynical nature. I wished to investigate the nature and appeal of light fiction in this light to establish whether or not there were more appropriate ways in which to justify the inclusion of light fiction.

Consequently I began the investigations which have led to this study. The fundamental question was why readers should choose light fiction - and particularly why they should wish to read it in considerable quantities. This, of course, raised the question of how light fiction differed

from other kinds of fiction, especially literary novels.

In seeking answers to these questions, it soon became clear that, in order to focus the study, I would have to restrict the topic to a particular type of light fiction. My personal taste may have led to the choice of detective stories but I realised that there had already been some work done in that area. In addition I wanted to approach the subject with as few preconceptions as possible and to ensure that there was some scope for originality. Certain types of story I did not feel able to tackle. War stories, westerns and thrillers seemed inappropriate to my interests. Historical fiction seemed most appropriate because of my long-standing interest in history. Despite this interest, I had read very little historical fiction. It seemed a popular category and I could approach it with few preconceptions. My impressions were later confirmed by Spiller's study which indicates that historical fiction is indeed a popular category. In the libraries he studied, historical romance accounted for ten per cent of the loans. This was relatively less popular than mystery stories (twenty seven per cent) and romance (twelve per cent), but still a relatively important category in terms of its appeal (Spiller, D. (1980) page 243).

Nevertheless, the choice of historical fiction did pose certain problems. Firstly, this category of fiction raises a question of particular importance - namely, why do readers choose to read historical fiction rather than historical fact? Secondly, historical fiction encompasses a particularly wide tradition. Historical fiction enjoys a

relatively high status with librarians (Bruwer, M. (1982) page 20), at least in some of its forms. This may be because historical fiction, perhaps more than any of the categories, seems to encompass the entire spectrum of fiction from its literary origins with Scott to the work of Barbara Cartland - a name which seems to be associated with all that is bad in terms of light fiction. Her name is frequently cited in conversations about light fiction, even by people who hasten to add that they have never read any of her works.

In part, comments about writers such as Cartland which I heard in the course of my work confirmed my decision to concentrate on historical romance rather than more serious historical novels as far as possible. There seemed to me to be a particular prejudice against romantic fiction. The publishers Mills and Boon seemed particularly to be associated with the questions of light fiction in libraries and to evoke reactions from librarians about limiting their light fiction collections. I began to wonder whether this might have something to do with the fact that the form appealed particularly to women. Even though most librarians are women (Rochester, M. (1982b) page 251), I was aware that women also subscribe - often without realising it - to the basically male definitions of 'culture' and 'acceptability'. This point will be discussed in greater detail in dealing with romantic fiction. Readers of a form which is so generally denigrated obviously do not read it for any 'kudos' which may accrue from being known to read it. Indeed, many readers of romantic fiction are apologetic about their choice of reading matter. If romantic fiction is read in great

quantities, it must be from some inherent satisfaction to be derived from the form itself. As my study progressed, I became more convinced that romantic fiction appealed to women because it fulfilled a need much deeper than was generally believed and I was much relieved to find that other writers shared this view.

Having decided upon the type of fiction I wished to study, I began a course of reading which involved both non-fiction sources on fiction in general and on other specific genres of fiction, such as the detective story, as well as what could be found dealing with historical novels or romantic fiction in general. In addition, historical romances were read as 'primary sources' to complement and add to the insights which could be provided by the studies of other writers in the field. I attempted to read as many types of historical fiction as possible and included the more 'masculine' versions of the category such as the nautical historical fiction of Alexander Kent and so on as well as the very popular 'women's writers' such as Jean Plaidy and Barbara Cartland.

The quantity of historical fiction available is very large, but there did seem to be some differences between British and American historical fiction. Consequently, I limited my reading to British authors although I did not attempt to follow up the question of author's origin further than the details as gleaned from the book itself.

As far as possible, I attempted to choose my fiction in

the way that general public library users do - I did not make a detailed list and a random selection from it but deliberately 'browsed' and made my selection from the books themselves. The significant difference between my choice and that of the general reader was that I particularly tried to choose as wide a range of authors as possible rather than preferring works by the authors that I came to enjoy (such as Norah Lofts). I deliberately chose works that were not to my personal taste, as far as I could tell from the dust jacket. This allowed me to gain an impression of a wider variety of historical romances.

All the fiction books chosen were in the ordinary stock of either the Elizabeth Public Library or the Prospect Public Library and were indicated as being 'historical'. The first of these was the library in which I was working when I began this study. When I took a job in a different area of librarianship, I made use of the public library in my area of residence. The Prospect Public library opened only during the course of my investigations. I did not resort to inter-library loan or reservations because I wanted to retain as far as possible the characteristics of a general, browsing borrower. I feel, therefore, that my impressions of historical romance are founded on the experience that a normal user of public libraries might well share. The list of fiction cited at the end of this work is selective in that I did not necessarily include all the works of a given author that I had actually read. I have also included some works by American novelists which were read at the beginning of my investigations while the bounds of the topic were being

established. The bibliography of fiction is, therefore, a representative sample of the materials which I have used in judging the usefulness of comments of writers who have written about recreational fiction in general or romantic fiction in particular.

In addition to reading historical fiction of as many kinds as possible, I conducted a minor survey of readers of historical fiction at the Elizabeth Public Library. The results of that survey are not included here because the findings could add nothing to the work which has already been done in this field by people much more competent in such research. Indeed, the main purpose of the survey was to let users know that I was interested in the subject of historical fiction of all kinds. In terms of these limited aims, it was very successful. A number of users took the opportunity this represented to talk to me about historical fiction of all kinds, - not only at the time of the survey itself, but for all the rest of the time that I worked at the Elizabeth Public Library. Nevertheless, the findings of this informal survey provided useful background to the reading of this type of fiction. As with the reading program described above, this survey provided a framework of experience within which to judge the non-fiction sources which I read. For the same reason, I conducted a survey of the biographical entries in "Cumulated fiction index". As the results of this survey may be of some interest in themselves, the survey is described and the findings summarised in Appendix One.

In dealing with the topic, I have divided this work into three main sections. The first section deals with

general concepts and theories with respect to light fiction. It is not possible to deal with all the ways in which fiction can be discussed and I have therefore concentrated upon ways which have seemed appropriate to the discussion of the particular kind of fiction in which I am interested and for which my conventional English literary education had so little prepared me. The first section also contains a very brief summary of the arguments for and against the inclusion of light fiction in public libraries. Although this is seen as a minor question since the inclusion of light fiction in libraries is now largely taken for granted, it was not possible to entirely ignore this question. As I have mentioned, although the inclusion is now accepted, it seems to me that librarians must now come to a fuller understanding of the role of light fiction, rather than a simple acceptance. In order to suggest this, it seemed necessary to establish how the present situation may be seen in a wider context.

The subsequent sections are an attempt to apply the general concepts discussed in the first section in relation to historical romance. Because of the problems of trying to deal with this 'hybrid' of the historical and the romantic forms, it was found necessary to divide this analysis into two sections rather than one. The second section deals with the historical novel in general. It is not possible to examine the historical romance without placing it in the context of the historical novel in general because many of the issues raised apply to both the literary genre as a whole as well as to its more popular manifestation. Furthermore,



there are a number of aspects which are particularly applicable to the historical novel which are not addressed to the same extent in general discussions of fiction. An obvious example is the question of the relationship between historical fact and historical fiction. The third section deals with the topic of romantic fiction and although it sometimes refers to romantic fiction with a contemporary setting, it is basically concerned with historical romantic fiction.

To have attempted to deal in one section with historical romance in terms of the general overview of the theories applied to fiction would have been unwieldy, but splitting the topic into three sections has necessitated some degree of repetition and referral between the three sections. This approach was felt to be preferable since it has permitted a more sustained analysis of the specific genre of historical romance in greater depth than would otherwise be possible. If we as librarians are to attain the degree of understanding of light fiction that I have advocated, we must begin with such descriptive analysis of specific genres. Clearly, there remains a great deal to be done in the development of theories applicable to the treatment of light fiction in libraries. This thesis is an attempt to assist in this process by a close analysis of one particular form of recreational fiction.

Chapter 2.  
General comments upon fiction in public libraries.

Fiction is a major component of every public library's bookstock and loan figures - Spiller puts the proportion of loans as high as 60 per cent (Spiller, D. (1980) page 238), a figure also given by Atkinson (Atkinson, F. (1981) page 16). Berelson gives a figure for the proportion of adult reading which may be regarded as light fiction as between 60 and 90 per cent (Stevenson, G. (1977) page 179). At the same time, there seems to be little understanding of fiction of the 'lighter' kind by librarians, as opposed to familiarity with it. This, at least, is the conclusion that one may draw from the relative lack of articles on the subject in the professional literature of librarianship (Spiller, D. (1980) page 238). As a high proportion of librarians have an arts background<sup>1</sup> (Rochester, M. (1982a) pages 146-147) it is probable that many have studied English literature to a relatively high level and yet, as will be shown below, much of the fiction contained in public libraries is not appropriately discussed in ways which are useful for the

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Rochester indicates that of 184 students completing graduate diplomas in librarianship in 1981, 120 held bachelor degrees in Arts and 15 held bachelor degrees in Sciences.

discussion of serious literature. Spiller indicates that 69 per cent of the library users that were questioned had chosen books by category (Spiller, D. (1980) page 250) and that recreational fiction accounted for more than 75 per cent of the fiction that was being returned (Spiller, D. (1980) page 242). This suggests that serious fiction accounts for a relatively small proportion of fiction borrowed from public libraries and so it seems reasonable to ask what similarities and differences there are between the kinds of fiction read and studied as 'literature' and the bulk of loans from public libraries.

Spiller uses Mann's definition of the two types of fiction that is:

serious fiction: writing which challenges the reader's attitudes and beliefs  
recreational fiction: writing which reinforces the reader's attitudes and beliefs. (Spiller, D. (1980) page 241).

They are not alone in seeing the difference in these terms. Gerard, more scathingly, talks of light fiction as 'cloud-cliche-cuckooland' while talking of serious fiction as asking the reader to examine attitudes that he takes for granted (Gerard, D. (1964) page 38). As will be seen below, this method of distinguishing between serious and light fiction has some merits in a linguistic sense. It seems to me, however, that it is impossible to attempt a distinction on the basis of the reader's attitudes to the content in these terms.

In the first place, readers read for many reasons. What

is read as entertainment by one reader may be read for a serious purpose by another reader. I have, in the course of the years in which I have been engaged upon this thesis, read many romantic and historical novels as 'primary source' material and certainly not for the same reasons as the 'genuine' public library user who has come in to look for reading matter without such a need.

In addition, it seems most likely that what is shocking to the assumptions of one reader will be utter conventionality to another. At a simple level, this fact is well known to any librarian who has tried to settle the ruffled feathers of a reader indignant at finding that what was borrowed as a detective story was utterly shocking because it "contained four letter words all the way through". When it is obvious from the condition of the book that it has been borrowed many times without apparent offence, one must assume that many of the readers have not found the content at all shocking. It also seems unlikely that readers can always read what is shocking to their fundamental assumptions about life. If they were able to do so, it would only be if such shocks made little lasting impression and hence had little genuinely educative value. There are, furthermore, many works which are of generally accepted literary merit which are in no way shocking to my fundamental beliefs - such as the works of Jane Austen - while I have had great difficulty in accepting the fundamental assumptions inherent in some of the historical romances I have read. The 'bodice-rippers', for example, have assumed that a woman can learn to love a man who has raped her. To judge literary merit solely by its

capacity to question values, then, would make such judgements extremely subjective and probably open to social class bias.

In addition to the problems outlined, there is also a danger that the kind of distinction made by Spiller and Gerard will degenerate into a conclusion very close to pessimistic = serious literature, optimistic = light fiction. Kister seems to be in danger of doing this when he says

... while the classics are read by a literary minded few, the vast majority of adult readers in England prefer current light fiction to the standard classics or the serious modern novel which, with its jarring, frequently distasteful themes and mood of ugly alienation, is almost completely ignored. (Kister, K. (1967) page 510)

It seems to me that attempts to define light and serious fiction based upon the intention of the writer are on much surer ground - if only for the simple reason that while fictional works are occasionally the result of joint authorship (as in the case of Sergeanne Golon and so on) they usually have only one, known, author in comparison with innumerable, unknown, readers. Thus an author's proclaimed intentions, unless bearing manifestly no relation to the work itself, should form the basis for classifying literature.

John Miles began a review with a statement which neatly summarises the distinction between novels using the 'author's intention' approach;

Two totally different forms of writing exist, both loosely known as novels. There is the kind that explores and offers insights into human experience produced from deep within the writer with creative

originality. There is the other kind, written to a formula to meet proved demand for entertainment with smooth craftsmanship. (Miles, J. (1980) page 25).

The difficulty with any type of distinction is that it suggests that the different types of fiction are clear-cut and mutually exclusive. In fact, it seems much more useful to envisage the different types of writing as a continuum along which individual works can be metaphorically placed closer to one extreme or the other. Cawelti, whose ideas will be discussed more fully later, stresses the idea of a continuum in discussing what he describes as 'mimetic' and 'formula' fiction by indicating that each, to be successful, must include elements from the other type of fiction (Cawelti, J. (1976) page 39).

Indeed, it is not even possible to place the same book in the same category of 'light' or 'serious' over a period of time. There have been innumerable cases of one generation's classic being the next generation's entertainment - if not completely ignored. The case of Scott is an obvious example, given the main emphasis of this work. The reverse situation is also common. Slavitt quotes a British don as saying that in his youth Spenser was read for work and Hemingway for pleasure whereas undergraduates at that time (about 1973) read Hemingway for work and Tolkien for pleasure. Slavitt notes that it would not have been difficult at the time when he was writing to find cases in the United States of America where Tolkien and Vonnegut were assigned texts (Slavitt, D. (1973) page 608).

Radway's attempt to distinguish between light and

serious fiction on the grounds of the language used seems, in some ways, to be a compromise between the views expressed above. She discusses the distinction between the Creative and Empirical uses of language (Radway, J. (1978) page 90). Talking in a linguistic, rather than a literary context, she claims

It is my belief that the texts we traditionally label 'popular literature' or tend to dismiss as 'mass entertainment' are those which choose not to violate conventions, upset expectations or create new forms... These texts are fundamentally referential in that their conservative use of literary and linguistic forms enables the reader to discern automatically the traditionally accepted significance or meaning associated with these forms. (Radway, J. (1978) page 95).

Radway stresses the dual nature of language and literature - each with their conventions and "strategies for reading". Indeed, because creative expression is always initially dependent on empirical expression, which is itself the result of some previously completed creative act, it seems clear that equal status must be accorded to both. (Radway, J. (1978) page 97).

This seems a most useful contribution to the analysis of light fiction as opposed to serious fiction, although the level of analysis of individual works suggests that such a theory is at present more suited to academic analysis rather than to the needs of the practising librarian for a method of assessing light fiction. It seems unlikely that a practising librarian would have the time to engage in the detailed linguistic analysis of individual works. Nevertheless, if more empirical methods for the distinction between light and

serious fiction are to be found, this seems to be a most useful conjunction of the reader-defined and writer-defined methods of distinction.

It is certainly not possible, as it is occasionally suggested, to distinguish between serious and light fiction on the basis that the former deals with reality and the latter with fantasy. Kaupp, for example, clearly indicates that, to be successful, light fiction needs to include elements of confrontation with reality as well as escape from it (Kaupp, P. (1979) pages 240-241). Slavitt also acknowledges the need for a type of reality in light fiction. He implicitly questions the normal librarian's division of books into fiction and non-fiction and discusses a third category - fictionalised fact. Most best-sellers are of this last kind (Slavitt, D. (1973) page 610). Books such as those by Arthur Hailey's "Hotel" and "Airport" are thoroughly researched for accuracy of setting, although his characters have been described as "...cyphers vainly struggling to be stereotypes" (NOVELS AND NOVELISTS (1980) page 152). Realism in setting is not accompanied by realism of motivation and characterisation.

Such 'fictionalised fact' is a particularly relevant category in the discussion of historical fiction since it would include fictionalised biographies of the type written by Jean Plaidy and many others. The question of fact in fiction is more fully discussed in the section dealing with historical fiction. Nevertheless, it might be noted here that



the seeming unreality and predictability of light fiction are in fact not only deliberate but also functional. Cawelti has used the term 'melodrama' in a modern sense to discuss works such as the "Godfather". Mander has used this sense of the word to discuss the popular television series "Dallas" but what she has to say is equally relevant to light fiction. Melodrama involves the heightening and exaggeration of gesture and hyperbolic dialogue as well as conventions of plot and character. Mander argues that

The heightened emotion and exaggerated mannerisms render a world in which representation or verisimilitude is lacking. Yet it is this very quality which allows us to enter not so much the domain of reality as the domain of truth. (Mander, M. (1983) page 48).

The series deals with issues such as the nature of power and

... the central darkness, the inexpressible abyss at the centre of what it means to be human. It is because the moral realm it bespeaks is not visible that the exaggerated and hyperbolic are essential to melodrama. (Mander, M. (1983) page 48).

Despite the difficulties involved in making a distinction between light and serious fiction, those librarians who have written on the subject of fiction in public libraries have usually advocated some kind of distinction. Indeed some have evinced hostility to the inclusion of light fiction in libraries despite - and even because of - its popularity. In "Fiction librarianship" Atkinson provides a summary of the discussion which has taken place in the literature of librarianship for well over a

hundred years. The debate seems to have been particularly prominent in the 1950's and to have assumed less significance as attitudes towards the nature and function of public libraries have changed (Atkinson, F. (1981) page 87). The arguments which have changed little throughout the debate, are summarised by P.G. New. in his article written in 1955 (New, P. (1955) pages 149-153). It seems appropriate to review the major arguments here.

Arguments listed by New against the inclusion of light fiction in public libraries include, firstly, the cost. It is felt that the money spent on light fiction could be put to better use elsewhere. It is argued that public money should not be used to provide entertainment and that commercial provision of light fiction is adequate (New, P. (1955) page 149). Here it should be pointed out that the situation with respect to commercial provision of light fiction is not the same as it was when New argued this - commercial libraries are now almost non-existent (Atkinson, F. (1981) page 16). Book exchanges may be cited as a contemporary, non-library method for the provision of fiction, although Bell suggests that if books such as those published by Mills and Boon were not supplied by libraries, they would be bought (Bell, F. (1974/75) page 210).

This seems to be the librarian's equivalent of 'let them eat cake' - it certainly assumes that readers of light fiction are not also buyers of fiction. This is assumption is questionable in the light of the studies of Mann into the readership of romantic fiction, which are discussed more

fully in the section dealing with that particular form. It is also in contradiction to Spiller's findings that in fact readers who borrow fiction also bought novels. Indeed, some bought books that they knew they would wish to re-read having first read the library copy (Spiller, D. (1980) page 255).

Nonetheless, and especially in times of economic stringency, the financial considerations of the provision of light fiction are important and are exacerbated by the fact that increased expenditure on this form of material leads to increased demand and the establishment of a vicious circle in terms of cost (New, P. (1955) page 149).

In addition to the problems involved with the cost of the provision of light fiction, there are problems of user attitudes. Again, the circumstances in which New wrote are not entirely the same as those which exist now. He felt that the inclusion of light fiction would cause confusion in the mind of library users between the commercial and the public libraries and a lack of appreciation of the differences between them which could lead to a devaluation of the importance of public library provision. He also felt that the public library system of shelving and so on was inappropriate to the reader of light fiction (New, P. (1955) page 149).

Spiller, whose findings on this matter are discussed below, found a preference for indication of category in the case of light fiction (Spiller, D. (1980) page 251). New, on

the other hand, assumes that library shelving practices will be determined by philosophical considerations of the library's function rather than in accordance with users' needs. An attempt on the part of the Elizabeth Public Library to overcome this problem indicated that the views expressed by New were certainly not dead in the late 1970's. The library's shelving of fiction was converted from alphabetical, author arrangement to arrangement by categories, where appropriate. Despite the fact that all catalogue and shelf list entries indicated the category of the book so that a user interested in locating a specific item could still find the title with a minimum of difficulty, we still received a certain amount of criticism (from librarians - not from users ) for adopting methods suitable to a commercial library. The implication of this criticism was that the methods of a commercial library were in some way unsuitable for a public library whereas it seems to me that public librarians should be willing to adopt any methods which seem suited to the basic objective of providing users with the materials which they require. In opening Library Week on 14 September, 1984, M. Young, the Special Minister of State, indicated that public librarians should seize contemporary ways of dealing with contemporary problems (Young, M. (1984) ) and this attitude is not compatible with dismissing suitable means on the grounds of their commercial origins.

New continues the argument against the provision of light fiction in libraries by indicating that if less were spent on light fiction more could be spent in supporting the

publishing of less commercially viable publications and concludes with a survey of the possibly harmful effects of light fiction, which will be discussed more fully below (New, P. (1955) page 150).

In pursuing the positive side of the argument for the provision on light fiction, it is clear that New's sympathies are with the negative argument. As noted above, he dismisses the argument which suggests that public money provides public libraries and should therefore include all kinds of books, including entertainment. New, as one might expect at the time when he wrote, does not mention the use which can be made of light fiction as an aid to the newly literate, which I have discussed more fully in a paper written for the LAA Brisbane conference (Carmichael, L. (1984) ). Treuherz also suggests that Mills and Boon fiction has a place in the retention of literacy skills (Treuherz, T. (1984) page 54). New does suggest that light fiction could be used for other special groups such as the aged (New, P. (1955) page 152). A fuller treatment of the special needs of aged readers and the use of light fiction is offered by Buswell (Buswell, C. (1971) pages 467-476). New does not seem to consider whether this approach is an unsatisfactory response to the special needs of the aged because such treatment expresses an inherent attitude which can be seen as condescending, if not patronising.

New cites the argument that public libraries cannot exclude light fiction without losing completely some readers who do not belong to the special groups allowed light

fiction. Again, his assumption that these readers can be satisfied by subscription libraries is no longer justified (New, P. (1955) page 150). As Treuherz comments, though, that

One senses that the demise of these libraries would not have altered his viewpoint. (Treuherz, T. (1984) page 53).

New perceives the major argument in favour of the provision of light fiction being that it may serve to lead on to something better, although he questions whether it does not, in fact, merely make the choice of the 'better' more difficult. Similarly, he dismisses the argument that the reader of light fiction may be experiencing many of the same benefits as a reader of more serious fiction on the grounds that there are books which are easy to read without being 'brutal or sentimental' (New, P. (1955) page 150).

It may be seen from the above summary that arguments used both for and against the provision of light fiction tend to be based upon the assumption that light fiction is an inferior form of serious fiction. It is assumed that serious fiction is properly included in public library collections but that, because light fiction does not fulfil the same functions, it may be excluded with no evaluation of its own merits. This is often because it is assumed that serious fiction may be beneficial but that light fiction is harmful. Gans identified four major criticisms of popular culture in general which are also a relevant summary of the ways in which light fiction has been seen as harmful;

1. The negative character of popular culture creation. Popular culture is undesirable because, unlike high culture, it is mass-produced by profit-minded entrepreneurs solely for the gratification of a paying audience.
2. The negative effects on high culture. Popular culture borrows from high culture, thus debasing it, and also lures away many potential creators of high culture, thus depleting its reservoir of talent.
3. The negative effects of the popular culture audience. The consumption of popular culture content at best produces spurious gratifications, and at worst is emotionally harmful to the audience.
4. The negative effects on society. The wide distribution of popular culture not only reduces the level of cultural quality - or civilization - of the society, but also encourages totalitarianism by creating a passive audience peculiarly responsive to techniques of mass persuasion used by demagogues bent on dictatorship. (Stevenson, G. (1977) page 198).

At times even the terminology used betrays this basic, negative attitude towards light fiction. Indeed, the provision of light fiction has often been discussed in terms of a "problem" as Whiteman does in talking about pay-collections as a solution (Whiteman, P. (1956) page 548). In some cases the negative connotation of the terminology is even more explicit, such as the use of the term "Trivialroman" by the German writers, Slavitt's (Slavitt, D. (1973) page 608) and Bold's (Bold, R. (1980) page 1138) "Trash" and Kister's "pap fiction" (Kister, K. (1967) page 51). "Sub-literature" has also been used more than once (Atkinson, F. (1981) page 10), (Anderson, R. (1974) ). In a more general context, Cawelti notes the tendency for formula fiction to be described in terms of "pejorative opposition" such as "lowbrow culture" as opposed to "highbrow culture" (Cawelti, J. (1976) page 13).

At times the attitude to the form of fiction is even

transferred to the reader in such a way that a reader of serious fiction may be described as a "quality reader" (Steinberg, H. (1972) page 752). Sometimes this negative attitude to readers (and writers) becomes apparent in the discussion of the appeal of light fiction. Slavitt may again be quoted:

Baldly shorn of the brand names and the hypertonic prose, the ideas of the hacks (and of their audiences) amount to an egalitarian snarl, not from or even on behalf of the truly deprived, but on the part of the middle class. (Slavitt, D. (1973) page 610).

It should be pointed out that Slavitt is discussing the 'best-seller' as opposed to the more general work of light fiction. Nye (Nye, R. (1970) page 54) discusses the distinction between 'best sellers' and 'popular fiction' more fully, but essentially light fiction achieves its popularity with little fanfare and almost none of the publicity which accompanies the best-seller. A similar sentiment, however, is expressed by Leavis who talks about popular writers who

... work upon and solidify herd prejudice and ...  
debase the emotional currency by touching grossly on  
fine issues. (Leavis, Q. (1965) page 65) 2

It can be seen from these comments that light fiction is seen as particularly harmful on aesthetic grounds. As Hatt comments;

...the aesthetic doctrine... rests on the assumption

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Wherever the name Leavis appears in the text, it should be read as Q.D. Leavis unless otherwise stated.



that the reader takes something away from the reading act: that his sensibilities are refined and sharpened, his response to life conditioned in some measure by his reading experience. The assumption of a direct connection between literature and life is all pervasive. Crudely, good reading is supposed to be good for you...

If most literary criticism rests on the assumption that good reading is good for you, then the corollary of that assumption is that bad reading must be bad for you. (Hatt, F. (1976) pages 85-86).

Hatt questions the initial assumption on the grounds that many of the war criminals prosecuted after World War 2 were in fact 'cultured' men in terms of their reading and lifestyle (Hatt, F. (1976) page 85).

The views of Q.D. Leavis, supported by F.R. Leavis and Denys Thompson, have become the 'received wisdom' in this area and it has been widely held that reading popular fiction blunts the readers sensibility and discourages discrimination (Hatt, F. (1976) page 86). The social consequences of the Leavis emphasis upon 'sensibility' are seen when her views are carried to their logical conclusion. Society, as distinct from "the herd" is defined as

a select, cultured element of the community that set the standards of behaviour and judgement, in direct opposition to the common people. (Leavis, Q. (1965) page 163)

Thus;

If one accepts the argument [quoted from F.R. Leavis] that 'In any period it is upon a very small minority that the discerning appreciation of art and literature depends: it is only a few who are capable of unprompted first-hand judgement... The accepted valuations are a kind of paper currency based upon a very small proportion of gold. To the state of such a currency the possibilities of fine living at any time bear a close relation', then it becomes evident that the individual has a better chance of obtaining access to the fullest (because finest) life in a community

dominated by 'society' than in one protesting the superiority of the herd. (Leavis, Q. (1965) page 163).

In my opinion, this kind of attitude is not a strong argument for the assumption that sensibility in the area of literary criticism leads to sensitivity in life as a whole and indeed I would go so far as to say that I find the attitude, and especially the language in which it is expressed, deeply offensive. It certainly does not suggest that Leavis' own reading had taught her 'sensibility' in any sense other than academic literary criticism.

Consequently, I believe it is unfortunate that a number of librarians who have written on fiction in libraries seem to have followed the Leavis model with respect to light fiction. Bell, for instance, claims that it is evidence of the lack of knowledge of fiction by librarians that some have not read "Fiction and the reading public" (Bell, F. (1974/75) page 210) and Kister believed that her views were still valid when he wrote in 1967 (Kister, K. (1967) pages 510). Worsley (a sociologist, not a librarian) does not specifically mention Leavis by name, but it could well be the attitude quoted above from Leavis to which he is referring when he claims

The public library service has been able to resist ... standardizing commercial influences. It has, perhaps, resisted paternalist cultural assumptions less well . (Worsley, P. (1967) page 267).

Leavis' work, however, is not without its critics from other writers. Dalziel indicates that Leavis' statements on the nineteenth century are based on an unrepresentative

sample of materials from that period (Dalziel, M. (1957) pages 175-176). In addition Mann notes that her views are not really appropriate for a study of light fiction because her

book begins by claiming to be objective but rapidly becomes a polemic against 'popular' literature in which authors such as Rudyard Kipling, Arnold Bennett and Gilbert Frankenau all come under her lash. (Mann, P. (1971) page 161)

A fundamental reason for this inappropriateness is her confusion of the value of reading with the amount of effort involved (Lesser, S. (1960) page 5).

On the whole, then, it is likely that librarians, with their predominantly Arts background training, have tended to see fiction in terms of literature. Because of the frequency with which writers in librarianship sources have quoted her, the views of Leavis and her followers have predominated in the literary approach. No views could be more inappropriate for the consideration of light fiction in public libraries. Studies based on such literary criteria are as inappropriate for judging light fiction as criticisms of Gilbert and Sullivan for lack of social realism or, for that matter, criticisms of avant garde, experimental theatre for lack of charm and story line (Mann, P. (1971) page 161).

As noted above, Atkinson feels that the debate about light fiction in libraries has lost much of its heat since the 1950's. As evidence of this one might cite the recent paper by C.W. Robinson;

There are two things wrong with librarians. They don't think where their money is coming from, so they don't spend enough on books, and then they buy the wrong books. Librarians can't bear to pass up that English poetry of the 19th century because they're building a collection in that area or they liked poetry at school. And who gets cheated? The hundreds of taxpayers waiting to read 'Chesapeake' or 'Thornbirds'. (Robinson, C. (1982) page 229).

It is interesting to see this attitude in the professional literature as it indicates the passing of the distastefully elitist Leavis views. It is worth noting, though, that little of the study of fiction from other points of view is quoted in the literature written by librarians. Treuherz emphasises that Very little has been written about popular fiction in the library. (Treuherz, T. (1984) page 53. Emphasis in the original).

This can also be seen in the article by Wagers (Wagers, R. (1981) pages 342-352) who has written on the influence of popular culture studies on library selection procedures. He cites only one source from the literature of librarianship and that source also relies mainly on non-librarianship sources.

It seems likely that this lack of evidence of non-literary sources in the literature of librarianship results from ignorance of other views rather than lack of interest in them. The rest of this section will attempt to provide an overview of methods which have been used in looking at fiction (light as well as serious) and which have more to offer librarians in their evaluation of fiction than the views which seem to have been abandoned. At the moment there

seems to be no explicit theoretical basis to the discussion of light fiction by librarians - a lack which may seem unimportant in a practical situation but which is very important for a discussion of light fiction in more general terms. Such a theoretical basis for discussion seems particularly important as a means of assessing and justifying priorities in times of economic stringency. In this context, the comments of Mr Chapman on the paper given at the 1984 LAA conference may be of some interest. He said that after Robinson's paper in the previous biennial conference, from which I have quoted above, there were some comments that Robinson had "sold out to the pulp fiction publishers" and that my paper, which discussed the ideas which are outlined in the following sections, was useful in presenting some philosophical background to the attitude expressed by Robinson. The usefulness of a philosophical background to the practising librarian's position with respect to popular fiction was appreciated by one librarian who came up after the paper to express her gratitude in having something to use in discussions with her council.

Consequently, some of the various ways which may be used to examine light fiction will be discussed at some length in the following sections. There are certainly other ways in which light fiction in libraries can be discussed and justified. Because the basic interest of this thesis is in the subject of the inclusion of light fiction in public library collections in terms of their use by general readers as recreational reading, the subject of the inclusion of

light fiction as 'primary' source material for historians, sociologists and other students of mass culture in its various forms will not be discussed. Although this is a very important use of light fiction, the justification of its inclusion on these terms has little relevance to its inclusion in the sense which is of interest in this work. It is also beyond the scope of this work to examine all the different varieties of English literary criticism with respect to their usefulness in the discussion of light fiction. The varieties of literary criticism are numerous and to engage in an extended discussion of them all would require more time and space than is available in this work. They are briefly outlined by Holman (Holman, C. (1972) pages 130-142). I have discussed the Leavis tradition because that seems to be the approach most frequently used in the discussion of recreational fiction in the literature of librarianship. There may well be other ways of looking at light fiction which have been inadvertently excluded, but the following sections deal with those methodologies which, in the course of my reading, appeared to be the most appropriate in the discussion of historical romantic fiction. These theories seemed to explain the appeal of such fiction in terms which were consistent with my own experience with both readers of romantic fiction and the formula itself. They provide a means of understanding recreational fiction upon its own terms rather than in terms appropriate to other forms of fiction.

### Chapter 3. Archetype theory.

Having been very critical of the literary tradition of the Leavises with respect to its use in discussing light fiction, it seems appropriate to examine in some detail other literary traditions which are still concerned with an analysis of the work based upon the content of the book itself but which are not so heavily concerned with judging the book against an external standard such as 'sensibility'. Indeed Frye, whose theories will be examined in this section, explicitly questions the idea of the 'public critic' who exemplifies

... how a man of taste uses and evaluates literature and thus [shows] how literature is to be absorbed into society. (Frye, N. (1957) page 8).

on the grounds that such a critic can only reflect his own personal views and the prejudices of his own age. Frye, for example, is more concerned with the assessing of the universal elements within each work.

Frye tends to discuss the universal element in terms very reminiscent of Jung's theories of "myth" and "archetype" and he emphasises both the relevance of his theory to literature of all kinds and the fact that looking at the universal aspects of materials does not preclude evaluation when he says

We have associated archetypes and myths particularly with primitive and popular literature. In fact we could almost define popular literature, admittedly in a

rather circular way, as literature which affords an unobstructed view of archetypes. We can find this quality on every level of literature: in fairy tales and folk tales, in Shakespeare (in most of the comedies), in the Bible ...in Bunyan, in Richardson, in Dickens, in Poe, and of course in a vast amount of ephemeral rubbish as well. (Frye, N. (1957) page 116).

It is because archetypes are most evident in highly conventional forms that Frye gives many examples from popular fiction - in the same way as a musician might explain counterpoint by referring to "Three blind mice" rather than a Bach fugue (Frye, N. (1957) page 104). In the same way, a simple example of the archetype may be the dark and the fair heroines of nineteenth century novels. If both are involved with the same hero, the dark heroine must be removed or be discovered to be the hero's sister if the story is to end happily because the dark heroine represents something which is forbidden (Frye, N. (1957) page 101).

Frye proposes that literature may be classified in terms of the power of the hero. In myths, the hero's power is superior in kind to that of other men and their environment - the hero is a divine being. In romances, the hero is a human being, but with power superior in degree to that of other men. The hero in such a form may receive divine assistance or possess magic weapons as symbols of this superior power. In the high mimetic mode of the epic and tragedy, the hero is superior to other men but not to his environment. He is a leader of men, but not fundamentally different from them. In the low mimetic mode of most comedy and realistic fiction, the hero is neither superior to other men nor to his environment and in the ironic mode, he is inferior in power



or intelligence (Frye, N. (1957) pages 33-34).

This classification by hero is intermixed with a classification based on the four 'mythoi': comedy, tragedy, romance and irony/satire. These are viewed by Frye as two opposed pairs;

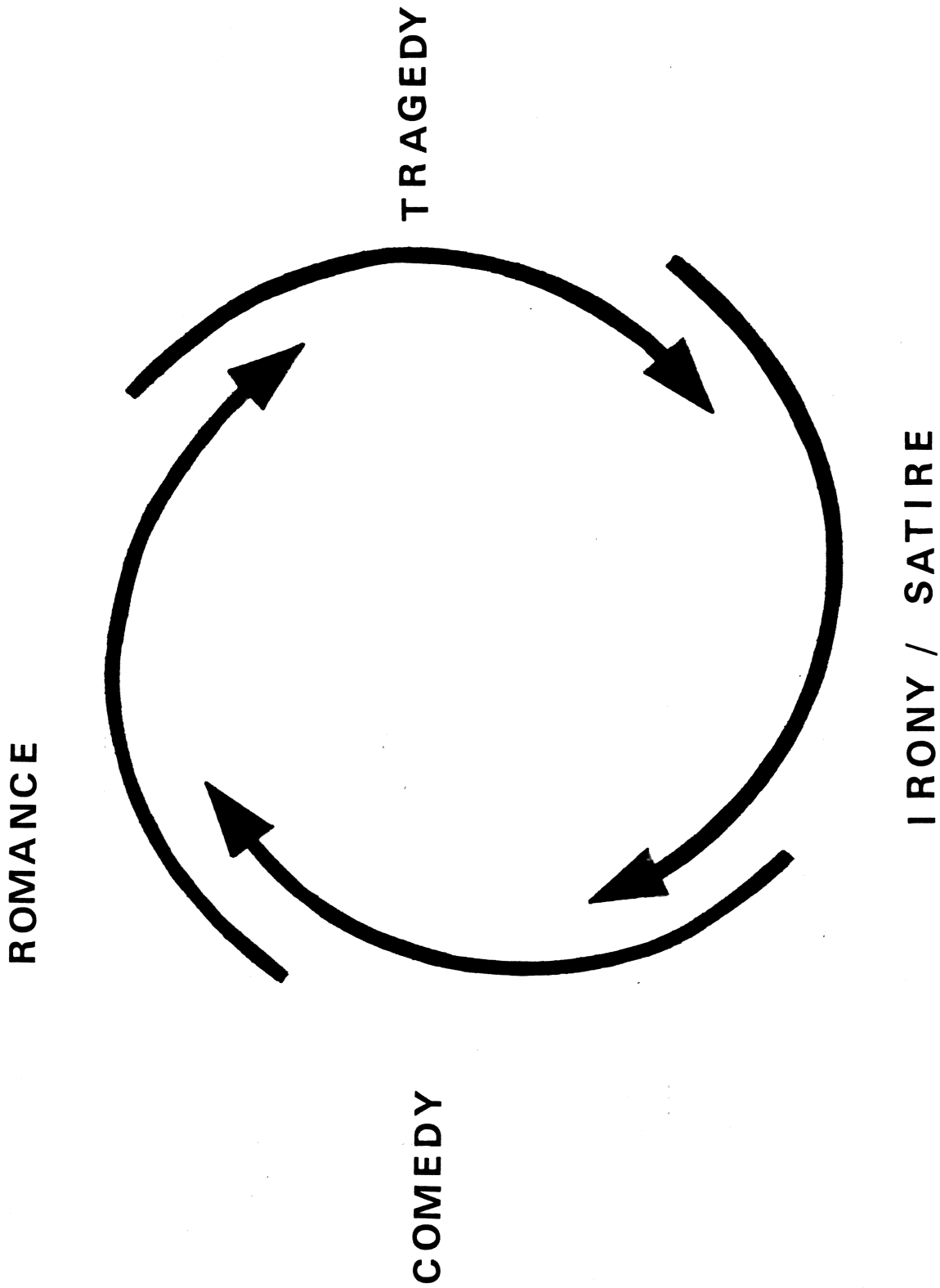
Tragedy and comedy contrast rather than blend, as do romance and irony, the champions respectively of the ideal and the actual. On the other hand, comedy blends insensibly into satire at one extreme and into romance at the other; romance may be comic or tragic; tragic extends from high romance to bitter and ironic realism. (Frye, N. (1957) page 162).

These four plots which, taken as a whole, tell the one story of man's quest for his human identity, are shown diagrammatically by Sloan (see Diagram One) (Sloan, G. (1975) page 30) who also illustrates the various types of story using examples from children's fiction. Her outline provides a useful summary of Frye's theory in this area and may usefully be paraphrased below.

As will be shown in the later section dealing with romantic fiction, there is some confusion in the present use of the word 'romance'. Frye and Sloan, however, tend to be using it in the classical sense of the word. The story of romance is one in which wishes come true and good triumphs over evil. Variations are possible, but, in general, the romance follows a 'quest' pattern which is cyclical and involves three stages; a dangerous or marvellous journey, a test or ordeal, and a return to where the story began. Such stories are clearly exemplified by Odysseus and Beowulf

DIAGRAM 1.

FRYE'S MYTHOI



Source: (Sloan, G. (1975) page 30).

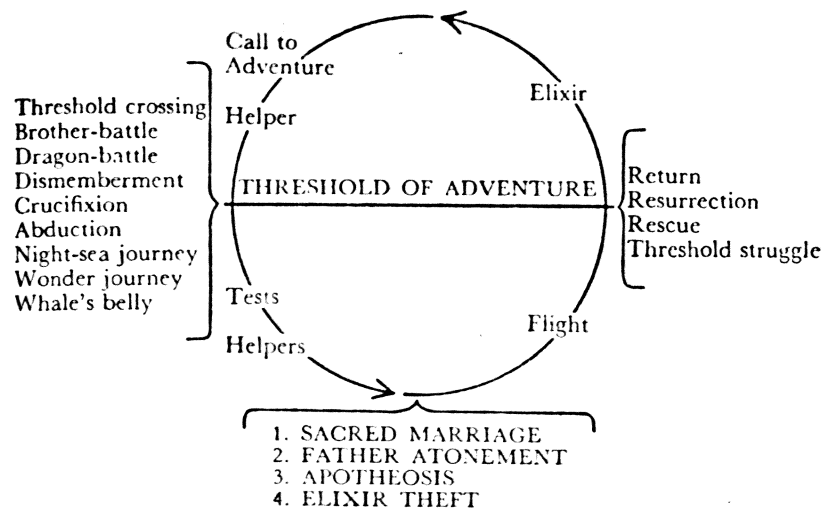
(Sloan, G. (1975) page 30). Campbell has also analysed the pattern of the quest in a more elaborate way. This is also represented diagrammatically (see Diagram Two) (Campbell, J. (1968) page 245).

The quest is more than adventure for its own sake. It is associated with goodness and ideals and thus has a deeper significance - as in the case of Beowulf's intention to kill the monster ravaging the kingdom. Although the quester may bring back from his adventure a tangible reward, such as a bride, the more important outcome is the hero's discovery of his own identity, having confronted the darker side of his own nature, perhaps in the form of a monster (Sloan, G. (1975) page 31). As noted above, the hero of romance may be superior in kind to other men - often having supernatural assistance. The characters of romance do not tend to be very realistic - they are either good or bad, the rescued maiden or the wicked witch (Sloan, G. (1975) page 31). Romance is a popular form for children's literature - both in its classic form as described above and in more realistic modern versions. These modern versions include stories of children facing their personal 'rite of passage' and works for younger children such as "Peter Rabbit" and "Where the wild things are" (Sloan, G. (1975) pages 33-35) which at one level also deal with the emotional growth of the young protagonist through the experience of an 'ordeal'.

If romance deals in hope and "tells of dreams and how they are made to come true" (Sloan, G. (1975) page 35), tragedy explores the limits of man's power in this respect.

DIAGRAM 2.

CAMPBELL'S MONOMYTH



Source: (Campbell, J. (1968) page 245)

The central character is again a hero, but in tragedy he suffers defeat and death. Another kind of tragedy, of particular relevance to children's fiction, is the story of the loss of innocence, such as a child's coming to terms with the significance of death (Sloan, G. (1975) page 35). In other versions of the tragic story, the hero willingly takes the role of the scapegoat, to purge his society of evil by his willing sacrifice on their behalf. Such stories may, indeed, take the form of biographies of men such as Martin Luther King. As this would suggest, tragic heroes may be relatively lifelike, especially in stories in which the tragedy consists in the struggle of the hero against forces which are beyond his power. Unlike irony, tragedy does not leave the reader with a sense of hopelessness for, despite the death or suffering of the hero, he displays the highest of human qualities which we can admire in defeat as much as in victory (Sloan, G. (1975) pages 36-37).

Satire and irony are firmly based in the real world and reflect the discrepancy between what is and what ideally ought to be. Satire is an attempt to change the situation - often using bitter ridicule. Irony, on the other hand, details human limitations. Both often appear as a parody of the themes and archetypes of romance although the hero is not larger than life but subject to the limitations of his human condition. Quests are often unfulfilled or without goals - such as in the case of "The Gingerbread man" whose quest is cut short when he is eaten (Sloan, G. (1975) pages 37-40).

Satire is a form which is difficult for children to grasp - although they are aware of the satirical element of "The Emperor's new clothes", they miss the satire of "Gulliver's travels" and "Alice in Wonderland". Ironic stories are sometimes understood in terms of parodies of romance. Sloan, in discussing children's literature makes a point which is also relevant to the debate about 'serious' and 'light' fiction when these are taken as meaning 'pessimistic' and 'optimistic';

Ironic stories reveal a very bitter picture of human existence: the contrast between ideals and reality. Today many people believe that children's literature must reflect life as it is and not see it through the rose-coloured glasses of romance and comedy. There is some merit in this view, of course, but irony and satire do not present the whole story of man's experience any more than romance and comedy do. Irony, in fact, proves to be romance turned upside down, the nightmare instead of the dream. That they are the two sides of the one coin is proof that we need them both. Implicit in the ironic story is the dream of how things 'ought to be'. (Sloan, G. (1975) page 40).

Turning to the last section of the wheel, comedy should not necessarily be thought of as only stories which are funny or humorous. The central theme of comedy is rebirth or renewal. The hero must overcome obstacles before attaining the object of his desires. The obstacle may be in human form. There is a movement in comedy from an old order to a new society - and everyone must be included in that new order in the end, even the Scrooges are renewed and redeemed. Any means may be used to achieve this end in comedy - its improbability is accepted because the audience recognizes that the only possible ending to comedy is a happy one. Cinderella's story is typical of the comic pattern and indeed

the comic form is favoured by writers for children. More modern examples include "Charlotte's web" and "The 500 hats of Bartholomew Cubbins" (Sloan, G. (1975) page 40-42). Should it be felt that the original, violent ending to the Cinderella story is not suited to a comic form, Bettelheim indicates that it is unwise to 'bowdlerize' fairy stories as even the frightening and violent elements are necessary. A recent article on Bettelheim's theories specifically mentions this element in connection with the Cinderella tale. The mutilation that the step-sisters inflict upon themselves is seen as an indication of how ruthlessly they pursue their selfish aims. This is not only unsuccessful, but seen as fitting retribution since

Unlike adults, children are not interested in the gray areas of justice ... 'The punishment for the bad guy must equal the crime,' even if it offends adult sensibilities. ( F. Schmadel-Heard cited in Meer, J. (1984) page 21).

Returning to Frye's theory, then, it is again "is a way of looking at literature in a way which is not bound by the conventions of a given age (Jameson, F. (1972) page 142). Forster achieves a similar end by imagining all novelists at work together in a circular room to avoid classification by chronology - the first crime of the pseudo-scholar (Forster, E. (1962) pages 18-21).

In the context of this study, however, a more important advantage is that such theories can be used outside of the normal range of literature. Before the publication of Frye's book, archetypal theory had been used by Fiedler in an

attempt to understand the significance of comic book heroes;

... the comic books with their legends of the eternally threatened metropolis eternally protected by immaculate and modest heroes...are seen as inheritors, for all their superficial differences, of the inner impulses of traditional folk art. Their gross drawing, their poverty of language cannot disguise their heritage of aboriginal violence, their exploitation of an ancient conflict of black magic and white. Beneath their journalistic commentary on A-bomb and Communism, they touch archetypal material: those shared figures of our lower minds more like the patterns of dream than fact. ... In a society which thinks of itself as 'scientific' - and of the Marvellous as childish - such a literature must seem primarily children's literature though, of course, it is read by people of all ages. (Fiedler, L. (1972) page 459).

More recently, similar theories have been used in analysis of popular materials such as "Star wars" (Collins, R. (1977) pages 1-10) and "The Wizard of Oz" (Schuman, S. (1973) pages 302-304). It is possible to apply even Campbell's more elaborate version of the "monomyth" to Barbara Cartland's novels. The question of formulas in romantic fiction is discussed in greater detail in a later chapter. It is sufficient at this point to say that, in general terms, Cartland's books deal with the adventures of a very young heroine meeting an older hero whom she marries. Before comparing this formula with that of Campbell's monomyth it is necessary to quote his elaboration of the diagram mentioned above at some length;

The mythological hero, setting forth from his commanday hut or castle, is lured, carried away, or else voluntarily proceeds, to the threshold of adventure. There he encounters a shadow presence that guards the passage. The hero may defeat or conciliate this power and go alive into the kingdom of the dark (brother-battle, dragon-battle, offering charm), or be slain by the opponent and descend in death (dismemberment,



crucifixion). Beyond the threshold, then, the hero journeys through a world of unfamiliar and yet strangely intimate forces, some of which threaten him (tests), some of which give magical aid (helpers). When he arrives at the nadir of the mythological round, he undergoes a supreme ordeal and gains his reward. The triumph may be represented as the hero's sexual union with the goddess-mother of the world (sacred marriage), his recognition by the father creator (father atonement), his own divination (apotheosis), or again - if the powers have remained unfriendly - his theft of the boon he came to gain (bride-theft, fire-theft); intrinsically it is an expansion of the consciousness and therewith of being (illumination, transfiguration, freedom). The final work is that of the return. If the powers have blessed the hero, he now sets forth under their protection (emissary); if not, he flees and is pursued (transformation flight, obstacle flight). At the return threshold the transcendental powers must remain behind; the hero re-emerges from the kingdom of the dead (return, resurrection). The boon that he brings restores the world (elixir). (Campbell, J. (1968) pages 245-246).

In order to look at the Barbara Cartland formula in terms of this myth, it is, of course, necessary to follow the story from the point of view of the heroine. The hero seems to be more appropriately seen in terms of the adventure although cynics may prefer to see him as the boon to be won. At the beginning of the story, the heroine will be removed from her normal environment by a journey or a disguise. Fairly shortly, she will meet the hero but there will be some impediment which may be seen as Campbell's "shadow presence that guards the passage". Such an obstacle may be the existence of another woman, the hero's unacceptable personality or life-style or, in the case of the heroine in disguise, the fact that the hero does not know the 'real' heroine.

Obviously, in the Cartland formula, the heroine at this point does not die as Campbell's hero may. She may, however,

especially in the 'disguise' version, marry the hero at this point. This will remain a platonic marriage of convenience and in this way the heroine may be regarded as 'slain' to her former self.

Even if the heroine is not married to the hero at this point, they will be thrown together by circumstances and the adventure will begin in earnest. In the Cartland formula, the heroine is likely to receive what may well be called 'magical' help from her innocence and femininity. She will, with the aid of these seemingly meagre tools, overcome the obstacle of other, more worldly women or achieve the transformation of the hero from an unacceptable to an acceptable suitor. This may simply be a matter of discovering that he was, in fact, an acceptable suitor whose qualities had been hidden. The heroine will also pass 'tests' such as being wrongly accused of some misdeed or in being able to see the qualities in the hero which have remained hidden from everyone else.

The triumph, in a Cartland novel, is never sexual union in any explicit sense. At a simple level, it is the first kiss between the hero and the heroine or the first 'mutual' kiss. At a symbolic level, this is, in fact, a declaration in which the hero accepts the heroine's validity in her own right and acknowledges that she, with her innocence and feminine skills, is indispensable to his happiness and well-being. This point will be dealt with in greater detail in the section dealing specifically with romantic fiction, but in

this context it is sufficient to point out that this declaration is not much different from Campbell's 'illumination' or 'transfiguration'. Indeed, we might see this point of the story, in Jungian terms, as an animus/anima reconciliation. The marriage of the hero and heroine is not, I believe, as important to the climax of this type of story as the popular stereotype would have us believe. Its relative unimportance is surely suggested by the fact that it can occur quite early in the story.

From this high point, the story begins the "return" which, as in the Campbell model, may be easily attained ("emissary") or as a result of further adventures ("flight"). It is at this point that the hero and heroine will marry if this did not take place at the beginning of the story. If a marriage of convenience has existed throughout, it will be transformed into a true marriage. As the reader is not allowed past the first glow of the relationship, it is possible to see an analogy with Campbell's comment that 'transcendental powers must remain behind'. The couple will now leave the special realm of lovers rather than "the kingdom of the dead". The 'boon' which is brought back is a special, fulfilled relationship - marriage.

The ending may be a cliché, but it is used in all sincerity. It is not insignificant that marriage is the archetypal symbol of the establishment of a new, reborn society. Indeed, it is used in the Book of Revelation to symbolise the eventual happy ending for mankind (Sloan, G. (1975) page 43). Although it may seem to have only personal

significance for the Cartland hero and Robert Hale heroine, there is undoubtedly behind it a feeling of more 'spiritual' importance. This relationship between romantic fiction and spirituality will be dealt with in greater detail in the section dealing with romantic fiction.

This analysis, although written with Barbara Cartland's work in mind, would also be applicable to many other works of historical romantic fiction - especially the Mills and Boon historical series and historical romance of the type published by Robert Hale. It is not to suggest, however, that because these works have features comparable with the great classic romances that they are on a par with them by any literary criteria. We shall return to this analysis in the section dealing with romantic fiction but it is included here as a particular illustration of Campbell's theory in discussion of a form of light fiction.

To return to the wheel of Frye's four mythoi which was described above, it is obvious that romantic fiction of this type tends towards romantic comedy. Indeed, the comparison of some types of historical romances with a comedy of manners has been noted (Dicks cited by Dahlin, R. (1981) page 38). This formula, however, represents only one of the different types of historical romance. These different types will be discussed more fully in the section dealing with romantic fiction. Tragic romantic fiction is certainly a possible formula. Fictionalised biographies of women such as Anne Boleyn and so on could hardly be anything else.

Chapter 4.  
Formula theory. 1

The 'myth/archetype' model for the analysis of fiction of all types which was discussed in the previous chapter has obvious advantages, but it is not without its critics. Kuklick, for example, claims that this model of analysis is based on the assumption of a 'collective mind' in which the myths and symbols reside but which is separated from an external reality. Kuklick feels that myths and symbols represent generalized concepts which describe certain patterns which re-occur in writing;

Insofar as it explains anything, the myth-symbol approach simply indicates that a group of persons has a tendency to express itself in patterns. (Kuklick, B. cited in Cawelti, J. (1974) page 3).

For Cawelti, the resolution of this problem lies in replacing the concept of myth with the concept of 'poetic structures'. This is seen as a more easily defined concept, avoiding the necessarily vague implication of a realm of 'superpersonal ideas' (Cawelti, J. (1974) pages 3-4). In addition, Cawelti feels that

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Throughout this work, the plural of formula is given as formulas rather than formulae since that is the version of the plural used by Cawelti. Since his version of the theory is the most widely known, I have adopted his

... to connect a mythical pattern with the rest of human behavior requires tenuous and debatable assumptions, while the relation between formulas and other aspects of life can be explored more directly and empirically as a question of why certain groups of people enjoy certain stories. While the psychology of literary response is certainly not without its mysteries, it seems safe to assume that people choose to read certain stories because they enjoy them. This is at least a straight forward if not simple psychological connection between literature and the rest of life. (Cawelti, J. (1974) page 4).

In this respect, the more concrete approach advocated by Cawelti probably has more direct interest for the practising librarian. It is not insignificant that Wagers in his article dealing with the relationship between popular culture studies and public library selection procedures basically discusses variations of the formulaic theory (Wagers, R. (1981) pages 195-197 +204). The particular significance of the theory is that it provides the framework for an analysis of particular works within their formula which may help in the prediction of the popularity of a given book. This has an obvious practical benefit for the fiction selector.

In order to do this, of course, the theory must move beyond the simple concept that stories fall into certain categories. Cawelti's work does, indeed, go beyond this in an attempt to examine what makes a particular work successful within its formula and how particular formulas make their appeal to the reader. Because of the importance to librarianship of Cawelti's theories, it is of some value to provide an overview of them in some detail.

Literary formulas are of two types. The first type includes conventional images or cultural stereotypes such as the nineteenth century convention of the 'pure' blonde heroine and the sexy brunette. The fact that such stereotypes are dependant upon the culture in which they exist is indicated by the reversal of the image of the blonde in twentieth century writing (Cawelti, J. (1976) page 5). The second type of formula refers to the plot type. Plot patterns are less dependant upon their cultural context - certain types of plot seem to appeal to different cultures and different ages. This is, of course, an assumption which is central to the archetypal/mythic theories as well as to Cawelti.

In fact, popular story types (the 'category fiction' which public librarians deal with in such quantities) embody both types of literary formula.

To create a western involves not only some understanding of how to construct an exciting adventure story, but also how to use certain nineteenth- and twentieth-century images and symbols such as cowboys, pioneers, outlaws, frontier towns, and saloons along with appropriate cultural themes or myths - such as nature vs. civilization, the code of the West, or law and order vs. outlawry - to support and give significance to the action. Thus formulas are ways in which specific cultural themes and stereotypes become embodied in more universal story archetypes. (Cawelti, J. (1976) page 6).

Thus it is important to realise that even if a story embodies a formula which is of archetypal appeal, it must be 'fleshed out' in ways that are appropriate to the culture of

its time and place if it is to be successful. An adventure story must have a central character who can be conceived in a heroic way. Thus, in our society, there are not many adventure stories about caretakers, plumbers and so on (Cawelti, J. (1976) page 7).

This point becomes particularly important in understanding the role of cultural values expressed in popular fiction. In this context, Cawelti discusses the pervasive racism of espionage stories written in the inter-war years, such as that of John Buchan and others. They reflect in an extreme form a racism that was common at that time. As Cawelti indicates;

It is tempting to interpret these stories as reflections of a virulent racism on the part of the British and American public. There is no doubt some truth in this hypothesis, especially since we can find all kinds of other evidence revealing the power of racist assumptions in the political attitudes and actions of this public. Yet few readers who enjoyed the works of Buchan and Rohmer were actually motivated to embark on racist crusades, for it was in Germany rather than England and America that racism became the dominant political dogma. (Cawelti, J. (1976) page 31).

It is further evidence of the distinction between attitudes to fiction and attitudes to real life that Buchan's own non-fiction and autobiographical writings provide much less evidence of racism than his fiction (Cawelti, J. (1976) page 31). Cawelti argues that much of the racism is included for dramatic rather than propagandist reasons. Audiences can enjoy spy films with ideological implications ranging from reactionary to liberal, indicating that they are capable of tolerating, at least on a temporary basis, ideologies which



are not their normal ones 'for the sake of enjoying a good yarn' (Cawelti, J. (1976) page 32). On the other hand, there must be a fundamental agreement between the audience and the writer - they must share a 'network of assumptions';

This 'network of assumptions' is probably an expression, first, of the basic values of a culture, and on another level, of the dominant moods and concerns of a particular era, or of a particular subculture. That Buchan is still enjoyed with pleasure by some contemporary readers indicates that there are enough continuities between British culture at the time of World War I and the present day to make it possible for some persons to accept Buchan's system of possibilities and values at least temporarily for the sake of the story. That Buchan is no longer widely popular, however, is presumably an indication that much of the network of assumptions on which his stories rest is no longer shared. (Cawelti, J. (1976) pages 32-33).

This is a particularly important concept for librarians to understand in evaluating popular fiction. Firstly, it has important implications for the evaluation of the likely popularity of a given work. Secondly, it is something of a counter to the argument that popular fiction is harmful because of the values which it embodies. It seems unlikely that the effects are quite as simply causative as proponents of this view would suggest.

If the satisfaction of reading formula fiction is not derived entirely from shared values, we must look elsewhere for the nature of the appeal of formulas. Cawelti looks to the work itself. He takes the two aspects of formulaic structures which have been generally condemned (their standardization and their 'primary relationship to the needs of escape and relaxation') and explores the implications of these aspects in aesthetic terms in order to be able to

consider formulaic writing in its own terms (Cawelti, J. (1976) page 8).

Standardization is not now highly regarded as an artistic quality and yet conventions are not limited to popular fiction. Artistic communication would be impossible without some conventions. In a linguistic context, Radway emphasises that this is true even for a creative use of language (Radway, J. (1978) page 97). Conventions (both linguistic and stylistic) are, however, more important in formula fiction. The conventions, indeed, help the audience to achieve satisfaction through the work by providing a 'basic emotional security in a familiar form' (Cawelti, J. (1976) page 9).

In discussing the relationship between originality and adherence to the formula, Cawelti employs a most useful image - that of our consideration of a performance in the role of Hamlet;

... we are most impressed by it if it is a new but acceptable interpretation of the part. An actor who overturns all our previous conceptions of his role is usually less enjoyable than one who builds on the interpretations we have become accustomed to. But if he adds no special touches of his own to the part we will experience his performance as flat and uninteresting. (Cawelti, J. (1976) page 10).

A similar treatment is required for the treatment of the stereotyped characters of formula fiction. There are certain types of character that we expect to find in a detective story or in a western. The art of formula fiction writers lies in attributing new elements or unexpected facets

to the characters with whom he/she is dealing. There is a danger, however, that if a character is allowed to become too complex, the other elements of the formula story may not be able to cope and the work will 'fall between two stools'. It will be neither satisfactory as formula fiction nor will it have sufficient complexity to be treated as 'mimetic' fiction (Cawelti, J. (1976) pages 11-12).

This complicated interplay of originality and stereotype or formula is summarised in the idea that

... the real difference between mystery or adventure stories and "serious" literature [is] that the latter [works] toward the representation of universal characters and situations while the former [reaches] its highest success by creating something unique. At first glance, this observation seems contrary to the formulaic emphasis on conventional structures. Nevertheless, we do value a certain kind of uniqueness in formulaic literature precisely because the type is so highly standardized. (Cawelti, J. (1976) page 12).

Again, this approach seems particularly useful for the analysis of formula fiction from the point of view of the public librarian. Cawelti's approach goes some way towards providing a more relevant mode of aesthetic analysis than the more traditional approaches of literary criticism while not failing to provide a method of distinguishing between serious and light fiction. This can be the case if one adopts the archetypal/mythic model which places greater emphasis on the similarities between all works. Although it is not helpful to judge all fiction against an external ideal, as Leavis would do, it is not entirely helpful to suggest that all works are essentially the same story or one of a limited

number of myths as Frye and Campbell do. Some method of evaluation in qualitative terms is helpful in selecting from a group of works those which should be included in a library collection.

In making distinctions, however, Cawelti is very careful to avoid terminology which makes implicit judgements about the relative values of the two types of fiction and opts for the terms 'mimetic' and 'formulaic'. Cawelti indicates the difference between them by saying

The mimetic element in literature confronts us with the world as we know it, while the formulaic element reflects the construction of an ideal world without the disorder, the ambiguity, the uncertainty, and the limitations of the world of our experience. Of course, the mimetic and the formulaic represent two poles that most literary works lie somewhere between. (Cawelti, J. (1976) page 13).

In order to achieve their aims, formulaic works tend to stress 'intense and immediate kinds of excitement' (Cawelti, J. (1976) page 14) - typically actions involving danger and/or sex. Thus the reader is presented with vicarious danger and excitement within a structure which offers fundamental security that things will end as we want them to. This paradox is, for Cawelti, the essence of the experience of escape (Cawelti, J. (1976) page 16). This experience, however, is found in various types of stories - Frye's four mythoi, and the various categories described by Spiller (Spiller, D. (1980) pages 238-266) and Bruwer (Bruwer, M. (1982)) in their analyses of recreational fiction in public libraries.

In an attempt to explain the specific appeal of the various manifestations of formulaic fiction, Cawelti talks in terms of 'moral fantasy';

We might loosely distinguish between formula stories and their "serious" counterparts on the ground that the latter tend toward some kind of encounter with our sense of the limitations of reality, while formulas embody moral fantasies of a world more exciting, more fulfilling, or more benevolent than the one we inhabit. (Cawelti, J. (1976) page 38).

Again, there is no clear delineation between 'mimetic' and 'formulaic'. Formulaic works may not entirely leave the realm of the credible or they will not be a satisfactory vehicle for escape on the part of the reader. Mimetic works often contain an element of moral fantasy (Cawelti, J. (1976) pages 38-39).

In addition, a distinction is made between moral and material fantasy. "Alice's adventures in Wonderland" is an example of a material fantasy. The world of Alice is not subject to the same physical laws of time and space as the world we know, and yet the characters behave in ways which are still governed by "the general truths of human experience" and the fantastic characters can still be used to make satiric comment upon human nature. A James Bond adventure, on the other hand, exists in a world materially much similar to our own. The main protagonist, however, is not realistic in terms of human capacities as we know them in real life and in fact is the embodiment of a moral fantasy (Cawelti, J. (1976) pages 38-39). The moral fantasy in this case, of course, has little to do with what would normally be

associated with 'moral' behaviour.

Cawelti examines the moral fantasies inherent in a number of types of formulaic fiction. Useful as these may be, in this context I will limit discussion to his analysis of romantic fiction. As the discussion of romantic fiction is treated in much more detail elsewhere, I will limit the discussion here to very general terms.

According to Cawelti,

The moral fantasy of the romance is that of love triumphant and permanent, overcoming all obstacles and difficulties. (Cawelti, J. (1976) pages 41-42).

In mimetic fiction dealing with a love relationship, such as "Romeo and Juliet", their love is doomed because of the intensity of their passion. Because it cannot continue to exist in the fictional situation described, it is dramatically necessary to bring about the death of one or both of the lovers. In "Love Story", however, it is not the intensity of the relationship or its inability to overcome obstacles that results in the death of one of the protagonists. The death is therefore not tragic but sentimental - we do not see the basic conflict between love and other needs but simply feel sad that something perfect cannot continue (Cawelti, J. (1976) page 42).

As we will see in the section dealing with romantic fiction, it is not possible to see current romantic fiction

in terms of one formula. Cawelti himself suggests that there is more than one formula in which romantic fiction may be manifest (Cawelti, J. (1976) page 42). On the other hand, the moral fantasy that "All you need is love" is an ancient and honourable one - not to say, in a broader sense than romantic love, the basic philosophy of the Christian life;

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you. (John 13:34).

There is some validity in Cawelti's claim in that almost universally, formulaic romantic fiction ends with some resolution in terms of a love relationship. In the Cartland formula referred to above, the formulaic ending with a fulfilled marriage is certainly an essential part of the plot, whatever obstacles are strewn in the path of the lovers. This is not always the case with romantic formulas, however - fictionalised biographies, for example, often end with the death of the heroine.

Cawelti's theories, then, are not easily applied in the case of the type of fiction of most interest to this work. Cohn discusses the difficulty of applying Cawelti's theory to romantic fiction, in particular to the work of Mary Roberts Rinehart. Romantic fiction writers work within a much less conventionalized form of writing than, for instance, writers of detective stories. Even unhappy endings are permissible. Nevertheless, a 'contract' of sorts exists between the writers and readers of romantic fiction - as it does for all formulaic fiction. In the case of Rinehart, Cohn describes

... a contract promising escape but simultaneously affirming the moral status quo. (Cohn, J. (1977) page 583).

Useful as Cawelti's concept of moral fantasy is as a starting point for an analysis of romantic fiction, there are, nevertheless, themes which seem equally important in romantic fiction which are discussed in more detail elsewhere. To suggest that the appeal of romantic fiction can be seen solely in terms of the moral fantasy described by Cawelti might be to ignore some of the more fundamental needs to which this genre appeals in terms of the identity of its readers.

I have claimed at the beginning of this overview of Cawelti's theory that it is particularly appropriate for use by public librarians in the practical area of book selection because it deals with the differences between serious and light fiction in a way that does not offer implied judgements of inferiority on formulaic fiction. In concluding, I should point out that while this may be useful for librarians in their present state of dealing with the issue of light fiction in libraries, this aspect of Cawelti's theory was questioned by Feldman, who feels that the differences between elite art and popular art are unimportant (Feldman, D. (1975) page 385/33).

Even so, Feldman does not entirely reject Cawelti's theory but suggests its refinement by adaptation of some of the methods of Russian formalism. The Formalists claim that we read prose, for the most part, with minimal attention. The purpose of art is to make the reader notice. This seems to be related to Radway's theory of the creative and



empirical use of language in serious and light fiction which has been mentioned above. Using a theory based on that of the Russian formalists to notice what is 'different' about the formula of a Perry Mason novel, it is possible to spot the solution to the mystery for it is in the deviations that the formula achieves its originality (Feldman, D. (1975) page 392/40 and pages 395/43-398/46). It may be relevant to note, in this context, that my husband has observed that my predictions of the ending of television dramas have become more accurate over the time that I have been working on this thesis.

It is interesting to note that Feldman's article was written before the publication of Cawelti's book "Adventure, mystery and romance" and (from the evidence of the footnotes to Feldman's article) the two authors were in communication. The criticisms that Feldman made of Cawelti's earlier works seem less applicable to the later book. Nevertheless, Feldman's specific points about the application of Russian formalism to popular literature are very interesting from the point of view of the reader of popular fiction. While of interest in that context to librarians, they are of less direct importance to the practising librarian's need for a theory of popular literature. As with Radway's theories, with which Feldman has much in common, the level of analysis of individual texts is more suited to the needs of scholarship than to the needs of practising librarians.

## Chapter 5. Sociological approach.

Whereas the literary approach to light fiction involves looking at an individual work to analyse it in the context of other works of a similar or different kind, the sociological approach examines light fiction in the context of social factors. Sociologists are interested in questions such as who reads light fiction, how it is obtained and so on. This approach is therefore of considerable interest to the public librarian in providing information about the readers of recreational fiction. Such research is usually out of the question for the practising librarian because of constraints of time and resources in which to conduct statistically valid research and it is therefore valuable for librarians to be aware of the contributions of sociologists in this area. As we shall see in the section dealing with romantic fiction, sociological research can go some way to correcting the impressionistic stereotypes which would otherwise form the basis of our actions. Such modifications to stereotypes are likely to stem from the sociological approach because of its particular ability to study the interactions between a work of fiction and the characteristics and needs of its readers.

The work of Professor Mann in England is of particular relevance to this thesis since the combination of his work with the publishers Mills and Boon reflects his special

attention to romantic fiction and his interest in libraries coincides with the particular interests of this work. This research is, however, discussed in considerable detail in the section dealing specifically with romantic fiction. Similarly the investigations of Thurston in the United States are discussed in that section and will not be elaborated here except to comment that her research is not so directly concerned with the provision of romantic fiction through libraries.

The sociological approach seems to be particularly favoured by the German writers. Kaupp reviews a considerable body of German research into light fiction. Much of this may be described as broadly sociological in perspective, although other approaches are used to describe its appeal and so on (Kaupp, P. (1979) ).

Nusser's title, which may be translated as "Novels for the lower classes" implies something of a sociological approach by referring to the social class of readers rather than the type of fiction studied (Nusser, P. (1973) ) and indeed he does begin his work with an analysis of the readers of this type of fiction by age, education, occupation and so on (Nusser, P. (1973) pages 7-8). Indeed, Nusser's thesis is that the particular characteristics of the plots, characterisation and treatment of subject matter are of particular importance to the working class readers to whom they appeal. He sees romantic fiction, for example, as having an emphasis on security in terms of money and position

which is particularly explicable in the light of the insecurity of working class readers in both areas (Nusser, P. (1973) page 49).

In addition to studying the readers of light fiction, Nusser attempts an analysis of the characteristics of the different types of light fiction. In this he adopts a version of the formulaic approach discussed above, although without the same level of theoretical background as Cawelti. Nutz also adopts this simplified formulaic approach to the analysis of light fiction. The latter writer is explicitly sociological in his approach, referring to it as 'literary sociology' (Nutz, W. (1966) ). His emphasis is on the content of works of light fiction in terms of language, characterisation and so on. In addition he reports interviews with fourteen authors of this kind of fiction - four women and ten men (Nutz, W. (1966) page 86).

Of special interest from a sociological point of view is the work by Spiller. Although he is a librarian, the approach that he has taken to the study of light fiction in libraries has been basically a sociological one. Although I have questioned the definition of light fiction as opposed to serious fiction at the beginning of this section, I feel that his separation of the two general types and categorisation within the two types is a useful device for the study of user behaviour in selecting fiction reading within libraries. It is far more difficult to define the terms 'light' and 'serious' fiction than it is to recognise them. This is

partly because publishers often give genres distinctive appearances and indeed, as with Mills and Boon, the publisher itself indicates the category. There are, of course, 'borderline' cases and these are where problems of definition arise, but on the whole there are few problems in recognising what the publisher (and presumably the writer) intend to be taken as 'formula' fiction. Spiller indicates that where there was any doubt, the book was taken to be 'serious' rather than 'recreational' and stresses that 'serious' is not taken as being equated with meritorious (Spiller, D. (1980) page 241).

It is interesting to note that in some ways the users of public libraries, consciously or subconsciously, also make distinctions between the different types of fiction. Spiller indicates that respondents preferred to buy "fiction of a lasting nature" rather than borrow it (Spiller, D. (1980) page 243). In addition, that "sizeable minority" of public users who borrow books for other people are often aware of categorisation (whether formally applied in the library or not) and can use that as a basis for assessing whether it will be of interest for the user for whom it was intended (Spiller, D. (1980) page 244).

Incidentally, it was the plight of such users at Elizabeth which was one of the factors causing us to decide upon shelving by category. We found that the library lists advocated by Spiller (Spiller, D. (1980) page 244) were only useful to a limited extent because the recommended authors seemed always to be "on loan" whenever someone attempted to

use the lists while other books of the same kind were not borrowed so often. The lists, in fact, only added to the frustrations of users attempting to find a given category of fiction by an author whose work was not already known to them.

In discussing the question of categorisation on the shelves, Spiller provides a useful review of the attitudes expressed by readers in his survey. Only those who read 'category' fiction were asked, but of those a majority preferred the idea of fiction being categorized. Approximately 59 per cent were in favour and 25 per cent against with 16 per cent expressing no preference (Spiller, D. (1980) page 251).

This is the kind of research which is often beyond the resources of the practising public librarian, especially in terms of the time required to set up a study and compile the results. It is therefore particularly useful that research such as this should be published in an area of such need for practising librarians. We are often forced to make decisions based upon impressionistic evidence which may or may not be confirmed by a sociological approach. If some of Spiller's findings seem to be only telling public librarians what they could already have guessed, it should be remembered that Mann and Thurston have both questioned the popular stereotype of the reader of romantic fiction. The sociological approach to fiction is, then, a particularly valid one for providing evidence upon which theories of fiction librarianship can be more soundly based.

At a more serious level, the attitudes of librarians to light fiction will influence public library policies. It is essential, therefore, that our attitudes be analysed for implicit assumptions which cannot be supported by more objective evidence. Stevenson cites the research of Gans into the more general area of popular culture in this context;

Gans's consideration of the evidence of the effects of mass media popular culture led him to the conclusion that "a sizeable difference exists between the media effects postulated by the critics of mass culture and those discovered by empirical research. As a result, it would appear that the critics are making unwarranted inferences about the extent, intensity, and harmfulness of media effects". (Gans, H. cited in Stevenson, G. (1977) page 205).

If popular culture cannot be shown to have harmful effects, the grounds for its exclusion from public libraries are seen to be based more upon a philosophical assumption that libraries should promote high culture to the exclusion of others. This view, however, is incompatible with the view that

... the public library is based on democratic principles which leave to the individual the right to respond to, and interact with, the world through whichever symbol systems are appropriate to personal and social needs, as determined by the individual. And this is a dimension to life which may be clearly beyond the realm of legitimate government intervention. (Stevenson, G. (1977) page 223).

Since public libraries deal with public money, the unbalanced provision of one type of culture may even be seen as "a misuse of public funds and a betrayal of public trust"

(Stevenson, G. (1977) page 223).

Clearly, the questions raised by Gans are of fundamental importance in the development of public library policies. They are questions about the very roles and functions that the public library plays in the society in which it is based. Although I have referred to this very loosely as a 'sociological' approach, in fact research from a wide variety of areas is applicable to these questions. In addition to the areas with which this section deals, Stevenson indicates that research into popular culture has been from the fields of mass communication, journalism, cultural anthropology and history (Stevenson, G. (1977) page 202). It is, however, probably significant that in his bibliography of more than one hundred and sixty items the ratio of sources from the literature of librarianship to those from other areas was 2:45. Even this ratio includes works of a fairly general nature. It is clear that this aspect of "Advances in Librarianship" still owes much to the other disciplines.



## Chapter 6. Psychological approach.

As mentioned at the end of the last section, there are many contexts in which popular culture in general and light fiction in particular can be studied. It does not seem desirable, however, to leave this general discussion of theories of fiction without some discussion of the role of the psychological approach to fiction. If for no other reason, it seems important because almost everybody who discusses light fiction seems to resort to some sort of psychological theory in discussing the appeal of light fiction. This may be simply a reference to the need for escape in a stressful world (Kaupp, P. (1979) page 239), or it may be a more sophisticated analysis of the need for myths and symbols such as Campbell's statement that

There can be no question: the psychological dangers through which earlier generations were guided by the symbols and spiritual exercises of their mythological and religious inheritance, we today (in so far as we are unbelievers, or, if believers, in so far as our inherited beliefs fail to represent the real problems of contemporary life) must face alone, or, at best, with only tentative, impromptu, and not often very effective guidance. This is our problem as modern 'enlightened' individuals, for whom all gods and devils have been rationalized out of existence. (Campbell, J. (1968) page 104).

In addition to these general concepts of the appeal of fiction, psychological theories are applied to the analysis of individual works of fiction. This is the case in Sullivan's article "Fairy tale elements in 'Jane Eyre'" in

which the author discusses the likely psychological appeal of the inherent fantasy of Jane Eyre to both its readers and to Charlotte Bronte (Sullivan, P. (1978) page 72).

In addition to these isolated comments in works which fundamentally apply other theories to the analysis of light fiction, there are a number of works which seek to place the study of light fiction into a psychological context. These will be discussed more fully below.

As will be seen in more detail in the section dealing with romantic fiction, light fiction is often discussed in terms of dreams and fairy-tales. Indeed these are often used as terms of disparagement. Consequently it is not surprising that the psychological theories which seem to have been of most use to the discussion of this type of fiction have been those of Freud and Jung since these are the psychologists who have placed most emphasis upon the interpretations of dreams and fantasies. Indeed Campbell's point, quoted above, may be compared with Jung's statement that

... in this scientific age, the psychiatrist is apt to be asked the questions that once belonged in the domain of the theologian. People feel that it makes, or would make, a great difference if only they had a positive belief in a meaningful way of life or in God and immortality. ... From time immemorial, men have had ideas about a Supreme Being (one or several) and about the Land of the Hereafter. Only today do they think they can do without such ideas. (Jung, C. (1964) page 87).

Both early psychologists are now given little coverage in undergraduate courses in psychology in Adelaide, according to

the experience of a recent graduate majoring in psychology who studied the subject at both of the universities in this state. The present philosophy of psychology demands a more empirical approach. And yet their work has had a very great impact on the way twentieth century understands itself. Concepts such as 'repression', 'ego' and 'complex' are part of the vocabulary of the educated public with no special studies in psychology. This may be indicated by their inclusion in their psychoanalytical meanings in a general dictionary published by Paul Hamlyn (Encyclopedic world dictionary, (1971) ). It seems impossible, then, to ignore their contribution to our understanding of fiction, however they are regarded by specialist psychologists. Indeed, a letter in response to an article which was critical of Freud's ideas indicated that

Despite E.M. Thornton's dim view of Sigmund Freud's ideas ... psychotherapists are indebted to him beyond measure. (Gunderson, E. (1984) page 5).

The comparison between romantic fiction and fairy stories is discussed elsewhere in more detail, but in this context, the work of Bettelheim is of particular interest to the student of light fiction because he deals with the particular relevance of fairy stories for children. Some of his findings may also be relevant to the readers of light fiction.

Bettelheim argues that children need to be able to make some meaning of life (Bettelheim, B. (1976) page 3), as we

have seen is also the case for adults. He claims that much of this meaning is derived from fairy tales which

Through the centuries (if not millenia) during which, in their retelling, fairy tales became ever more refined, they came to convey at the same time overt and covert meanings - came to speak simultaneously to all levels of human personality, communicating in a manner which reaches the uneducated mind of the child as well as that of the sophisticated adult. Applying the psychoanalytic model of the human personality, fairy tales carry important messages to the conscious, the preconscious and the unconscious mind, on whatever level each is functioning at the time. (Bettelheim, B. (1976) pages 5-6).

It may not be too far-fetched to postulate that this can be related to Cawelti's formula theory which was discussed in a previous section in a way which suggests that formulas may also evolve into a form which offers readers similar satisfactions, albeit the formula is a somewhat blunter tool than the single story refined and honed to its purpose through the centuries. Nevertheless while children find it acceptable, if not desirable, to hear the same story over and over again, adults require a modicum of novelty in the retelling. Bettelheim's theory of the multiple layers of latent content inherent in fairy stories would, however, partially explain why readers of a formula will read essentially the same story again and again in different guises.

Furthermore, in relating Bettelheim's theory to models that have been discussed before, he makes use of concepts reminiscent of the views expressed in the section dealing with archetype / mythic theories of light fiction. He is

particularly close to Campbell's view of the 'monomyth' when he says

What happens to the heroes and heroines in fairy tales can be likened ... to the initiation rites which the novice enters naive and unformed, and which dismiss him at their end on a higher level of existence undreamed of at the start of this sacred voyage through which he gains his reward or salvation. Having truly become himself, the hero or heroine has become worthy of being loved. (Bettelheim, B. (1976) page 278).

Again, this can be related to the analysis of the Cartland formula, which was outlined in that section.

Bettelheim, however, does point out the incompleteness of this kind of story (from a psychological point of view) in dealing with a mature love relationship. Such stories as Snow White and Cinderella deal with the beginning of a relationship but do not provide any assistance with the concept of the growth necessary to sustain it. Bettelheim sees the function of stories such as Beauty and the Beast as providing guidance to the child in this area. The message implied by such a story is that women must overcome a feeling that sex is 'beastly' if the relationship is to provide satisfaction and fulfilment for both partners (Bettelheim, B. (1976) page 295). If one is to suggest a formula from romantic fiction which would fulfil this aim, using the formulas which are discussed in the section dealing with romantic fiction, one might suggest the 'sensual / historical' as here, to, the reader is encouraged to review sexual attitudes. The 'bodice ripper' might also be seen as an attempt to fulfil similar functions, although it may be a

less successful one. This question is also dealt with more fully in the later section.

A similar role - that is, the explanation to the unconscious of the importance of personal development in a mature love relationship - is expressed in stories such as Bluebeard. In this kind of story,

Despite all warnings about the dire consequences if she tries to find out, woman is not satisfied with remaining ignorant about sex and life. Comfortable as an existence in relative naivete may be, it is an empty life which must not be accepted. Notwithstanding all the hardships woman has to suffer to be reborn to full consciousness and humanity, the stories leave little doubt that this is what she must do. Otherwise there would be no story: no fairy story worth telling, no worthwhile story to her life. (Bettelheim, B. (1976) page 295).

For adult women, such a function may be inherent in the classic gothic formula. It may be significant that Sullivan has used both Beauty and the Beast and Bluebeard as models in her analysis of "Jane Eyre" in terms of a fairy tale (Sullivan, P. (1978) pages 62-62). The message to the subconscious of the reader is fundamentally the same and indeed the Beauty and the Beast theme may be seen as a specific form of the Bluebeard theme.

It is interesting that Holland, who adopts a psychological approach to the study of adult literature, has nevertheless compared the appeal of fiction to that of play for children. He claims that

Both play and literature can be understood as ... first letting a disturbing influence happen to us, then, second, mastering that disturbance. (Holland, N. (1968) page 202).

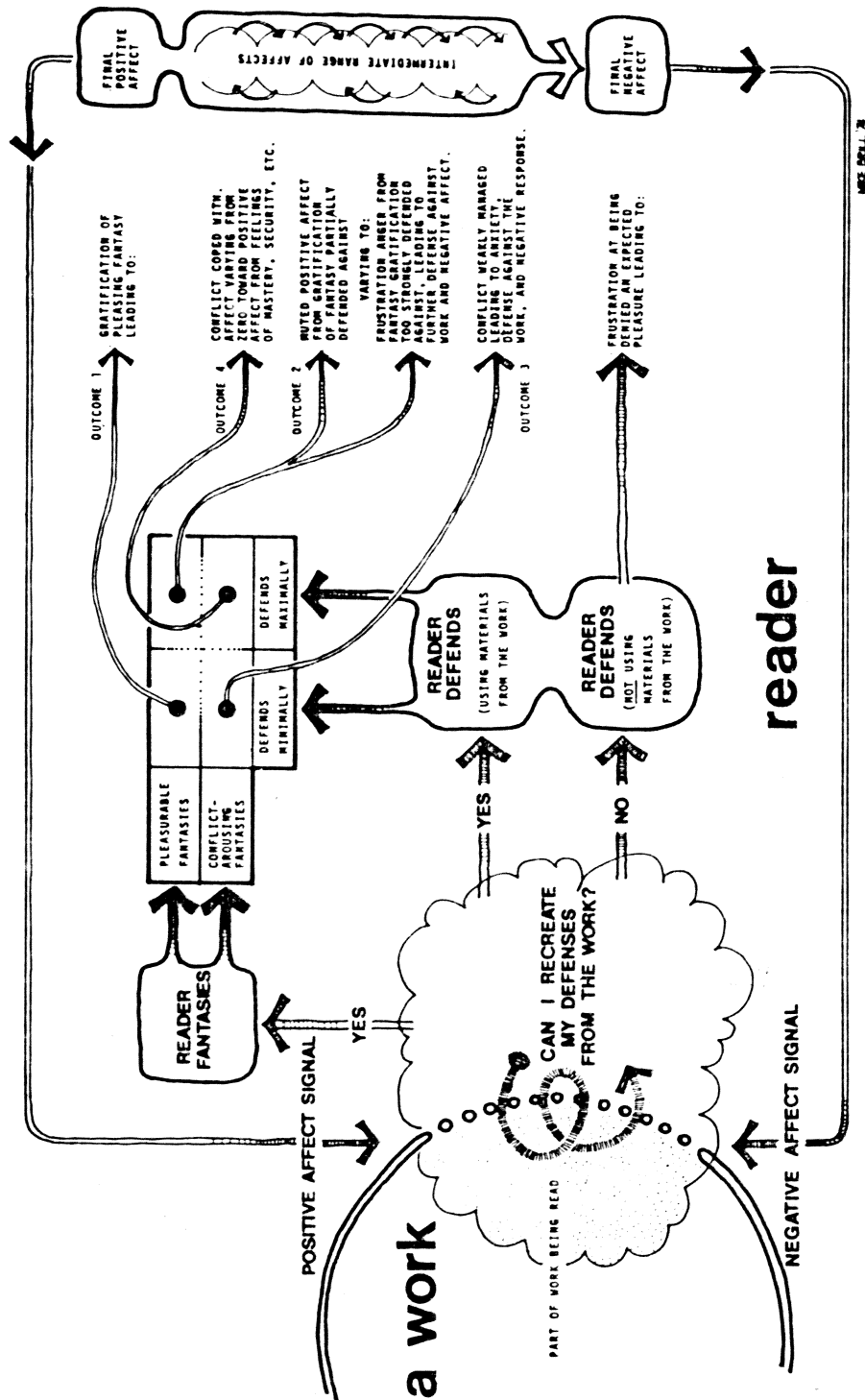
Holland's approach is explicitly Freudian. He has provided us with a diagrammatic representation of the way we approach fiction in psychological terms (Holland, N. (1975) page 295 - see Diagram 3) and also indicates the importance of anticipation in our relation to reading by presenting an extract as historical fact and then indicating that it is actually a quotation from a historical novel. The questions which occur to the reader when the passage is taken as fiction no longer matter when its fictional nature is accepted before reading. We do not apply 'reality tests' to fiction in the same way as we do to what is presented as fact (Holland, N. (1968) page 68). There is an obvious similarity between this and Coleridge's famous "willing suspension of disbelief", but the mechanism of reading is as yet little understood and work such as Holland's is valuable in this context.

Holland's point can be seen as relating to Cawelti's theory of formula fiction and especially to his comments about shared networks of belief, which are discussed above. Furthermore, Holland also confirms Cawelti's concept of 'moral fantasy' when he says that

In effect, the literary work dreams a dream for us. It embodies and evokes in us a central fantasy; then it manages and controls the fantasy by devices that, were they in a mind, we would call defenses, but, being on a page, we call 'form'. (Holland, N. (1968) page 75).

DIAGRAM 3.

HOLLAND'S APPROACH TO FICTION





It should be pointed out that in a later work Holland changed the emphasis of this a little to place more stress on the role of the interaction between the book and the reader;

Processes like the transformation of fantasy materials through defenses and adaptations take place in people, not in texts. They require a mind, either the writer's or the reader's. (Holland, N. (1975) page 19).

Holland, as indicated by the diagram referred to above, stresses the role of the reader's mind rather than that of the writer.

Holland is of particular interest to this study because he is critical of the basic techniques of literary analysis. In "The Dynamics of literary response" he indicates that his early critical career was influenced by the "New Criticism" (Holland, N. (1968) page xi) - a later development in the course of English literary criticism than the tradition followed by the Leavises (Holman, C. (1972) page 349). New criticism concentrates on

...close examination of particular texts for plot parallels, repeated images, figures of speech, structure, myths, points of view, and so on ... And yet, if my own experience holds true for other critics, we all discovered in our different ways that literary works, even of a very crude kind, had an almost unbelievable fineness of form and structure. (Holland, N. (1968) pages xi-xii).

In a later work, Holland more specifically challenges the assumptions of such literary analysis;

To analyze the text in formal isolation as to 'words-

on-a-page', (in the old formula of the New Criticism) is a highly artificial procedure. A literary text, after all, in an objective sense consists only of a certain configuration of specks of carbon black on dried wood pulp. When these marks become words, when those words become images or metaphors or characters or events, they do so because the reader plays the part of a prince to the sleeping beauty. He gives them life out of his own desires. When he does so, he brings his lifestyle to bear on the work. He mingles his unconscious loves and fears and adaptations with the words and images he synthesizes at a conscious level. (Holland, N. (1975) page 12).

For these reasons, Holland's views are particularly interesting in the context of this study which is an attempt to provide a method of looking at light fiction which is more relevant than the literary characteristics of the work in itself.

Lesser has also related the psychological approach to the literary approach. He claims that despite the objections which are raised to the inclusion of any empirical knowledge in the study of literature (Lesser, S. (1960) page 294), the use of psychological insights seems inevitable. If this is not done by referring to psychological theories of behaviour it will be done tacitly - depending on "homespun, 'common sense' psychology, however inadequate or even erroneous it may be" (Lesser, S. (1960) pages 296-297). I have commented above on the seeming inevitability of some kind of psychological approach being used whenever an analysis of the appeal of light fiction is attempted, and this would seem to bear out Lesser's statement. Again, Lesser places special emphasis on Freudian psychoanalysis and variations on it (Lesser, S. (1960) page 297).

Lesser is usually speaking about serious fiction, but again he has some correlation with Cawelti's theory of 'moral fantasy' as well as touching on Holland's idea of fiction assuming the same function in adults that play has in children;

There is a sense in which we must accept responsibility for the fiction we enjoy, just as we accept responsibility for our fantasies and dreams. No less than our own psychic productions the reading of fiction permits us to deal with the past events of our lives and our hopes and fears for the future - and to deal with them actively, re-enacting troublesome experiences until the pain or other emotion they aroused has been assimilated: acting out, with such intensity that affects are discharged and tensions relieved, experiences which give shape to our wishes and dreams. It makes surprisingly little difference that the fantasies embedded in fiction have been conceived by others. The explanation, of course, is that - in most cases quite blindly but none the less purposively and efficiently - we search out stories whose fantasies have relevance for us. (Lesser, S. (1960) page 239).

Lesser feels that we respond to fiction at three levels. These are, firstly, the subject matter or the manifest content of the story. Books chosen solely for the subject matter may not be totally satisfactory to the reader but the reader must be interested in the content at some level in order to allow the other, subconscious, parts of the mind to relate to the other aspects of the work. The manifest content of the work is, on the whole, understood by the conscious mind, which feels no need to deny the needs that are satisfied at this level. The reaction is a somewhat complex one, however (Lesser, S. (1960) pages 204-206).

The second factor affecting our response to fiction is

its form. Form, among other things, communicates the manifest content to us. Lesser feels that we become aware of certain external features of the form, although on the whole formal features are 'self-effacing' (Lesser, S. (1960) pages 206-207). This may seem to contradict the views of Radway and the Russian formalists, cited above, that form aims to make itself noticed. It is likely that those writers are more concerned with the external factors of style which Lesser feels are consciously observed. This seems especially likely as Radway is particularly concerned with linguistic factors.

The third factor which Lesser feels affects our response to fiction is in some ways a combination of the factors of content and form which he refers to as "texture". Lesser feels that the importance of this aspect of our response to literature is particularly easy to observe when we read a book which is above or below our level of 'sensitivity' - or, to be more accurate, our range of levels since we are capable of enjoying a wide range of materials. Lesser suggests that this may account for the intemperateness of language which has been used in the discussion of fiction which is not to our taste;

... we may be willing to read a subtler or simpler story than we normally enjoy if we feel it has something especially significant to say to us. But while the boundaries of our band of sensitivity are fluid, we know very well when we have gone outside them. We are incapable of enjoying books above or below the band, and very often have strong negative feelings about them. (Lesser, S. (1960) page 208).

A story presenting issues in too clear cut a manner may offend our sense of the complexity of the world we know and we may disassociate ourselves from it. We are less likely to be willing to claim a book is above our level of 'sensibility' and may refer to such books as "precious, or oversubtle, or overanalytical" (Lesser, S. (1960) page 209). Examples of this were given above in looking at the way in which librarians have talked about fiction in public libraries.

Lesser provides a further suggestion for the degree of hostility which has been observed in the statements about types of fiction not to the taste of the commentator when he makes the analogy that choosing one's reading matter is similar to the process of choosing one's friends. He claims that this is a matter of choosing people whose minds seem to have the same 'texture' in the sense that he has been using the term (Lesser, S. (1960) page 209).

The importance of texture to the appreciation of a work of fiction is related to the importance of the relaxation of the ego in the reading of fiction;

A story we find oversimple is likely to yield its secrets too easily to the conscious mind, or even permit unconscious processes of response to come to light. A story we find difficult and rarefied is unlikely to stimulate much pleasurable perception, conscious or unconscious. It would be an error to suppose that the unconscious mind would come to the aid of the intellect in achieving an understanding of a story beyond its particular range. The unconscious may perceive things hidden from the consciousness for emotional reasons, but in no other respects are its powers of comprehension superior to those of the mind of which it is a part. (Lesser, S. (1960) pages 209-210).

Lesser continues that it is consistent with a normal tendency in psychic life to secure satisfactions with as little effort as possible that, in selecting fiction, we tend to choose from the lower end of our personal range of sensibility. Lesser feels that we can encourage readers to read more complex fiction and that, if this is not "carried to self-defeating lengths", a taste for more mature and more rewarding fiction can be encouraged (Lesser, S. (1960) page 211).

This has obvious parallels with the theory of athletic performance and the importance of training. Lesser is talking specifically about the needs of literary students and I am not convinced that his views on this matter are entirely relevant to the needs of public library users. The reading of serious fiction is in many ways a specific interest, like sport and knitting. While public libraries can regard it as being in the public interest to display "Life be in it" posters to encourage library users to make full use of the physical and intellectual resources available to them, I would be worried if a public library chose to exclude books on knitting because sport is "better for you". This is, however, what librarians have seemed willing to do in the case of the debate about the exclusion of light fiction, or light fiction of certain types, from public libraries.

## Chapter 7.

Summary of ways in which light fiction may be discussed.

From the sections above we have seen that there are a number of ways in which light fiction can be discussed. There are other ways which might be included but the ones outlined seem to have special relevance in terms of the discussion about light fiction in public libraries.

There is considerable inter-relation between the various theories so that they often complement one another or provide further perspectives on the topic - as for example Campbell's more elaborate structure of the 'monomyth' complements Frye's analysis of the four mythoi or the way in which the psychological theories discussed can be seen as providing a more detailed explanation of the appeal, in psychological terms, of the formula theories described by Cawelti. It seems unlikely that such a complex subject as fiction will ever be entirely encompassed by one coherent theory since there are so many different aspects of the general subject which can absorb our interest. Nonetheless, I feel that it is extremely important that these general theories of fiction be taken into account by those librarians responsible for decisions about the inclusion of fiction in libraries.

Because the subject of fiction is such a broad one, I have endeavoured to follow this general outline with a more

specific study of one particular type of fiction - romantic historical fiction in fact. A more detailed analysis of this type of fiction will allow the use of the theories outlined above to be shown in their specific application. There we will see that although the general theories of fiction discussed in this section can be usefully applied to romantic fiction, it is necessary to adapt or extend these theories in dealing with specific genres of light fiction.



SECTION TWO.

Historical fiction.

Chapter 8.  
Definition of historical fiction.

The purpose of this section is to provide some definitions of what is meant by the term "historical novel" and to outline the background and development of the genre, its appeal and the particular problems involved in its execution in order to provide a background against which statements elsewhere on historical romance in public libraries may be understood. It is an attempt to outline the particular difficulties which arise in discussing historical fiction in general.

In addition, there will be some analysis of the particular appeals of historical fiction which may be compared and contrasted with the general appeal of fiction and with the particular appeal of romantic fiction which are dealt with in other sections.

Although it is important to attempt some definition of what is meant by historical fiction, this cannot be dealt with in a great deal of depth here for, as Sheppard notes, the definition of historical fiction presents a number of problems that may not be immediately obvious (Sheppard, A. (1930) page 12) He then outlines the problems and attempts at solutions (Sheppard, A. (1930) pages 12-16) and it is not necessary to reproduce them all here.

Definitions used have varied from the very broad one employed by Baker in his selection of titles to be included in his book;

The word 'historical' has been given a wide interpretation, so as to embrace stories that in any way whatsoever portray the life of the past, even although actual persons and actual public events have no place in them. (Baker, E. (1914) page vii)

to the extremely narrow one attributed to Balzac by Lukacs;

The only possible novel about the past was exhausted by Walter Scott. This is the struggle of the serf or citizen against the nobility, of the nobility against the Church, of the nobility and the Church against the Monarchy. (Lukacs, G. (1962) page 83).

Of these extremes, the former is of more use for the general purposes of this discussion than the latter. But even a number of the broader definitions cited by authors whose works are the basis of this chapter have made statements to indicate that the 'lighter' type of fiction in which this work is basically interested is specifically excluded from their consideration. Baker himself, whose broad definition I have quoted above, goes on to say that "...melodrama masquerading as historical can be left out of account..." (Baker, E. (1914) page viii) Sanders, in discussing the works of Lukacs, points out that the latter's

... bias towards 'social realism'... properly excludes the escapism of a novelist like Harrison Ainsworth...[my omissions]. (Sanders, A. (1978) page 10).

These implicitly qualitative definitions of what constitutes historical fiction are a warning that in the following remarks upon the subject the authors cited would

not necessarily see their comments as applicable to light fiction. Nevertheless, these views are useful for an understanding of historical fiction in general and so these writers have not been excluded from the following discussion.

As well as the implicitly qualitative definitions that are often used with respect to historical fiction, some sources specifically exclude fictionalised biography of significant historical personages from their discussions. Saintsbury, for example, lists this as one of the mistakes that historical novelist may make, although warned against it by Scott and by "...all the better critics..." thereafter (Saintsbury, G. (1923) page 18).

Lukacs provides some convincing theoretical arguments against fictionalised biography as a literary form. Great men arise in history as a result of conditions that are beyond the control of individuals. The fact that a particular person happens to fill the need is largely a matter of chance. The French Republic had need of a military dictator in the late 18th and early 19th centuries and Napoleon took the part. Had he not another would have arisen because the circumstances demanded it. Chance determined that in this particular case it should be this one man;

Belletrist biography, the biographical form of the historical novel sets itself - whether it likes or not - the insoluble task of reducing this irreducible element of chance. It is the personality of the man portrayed which is to be the guide to his special calling, his biography will provide the inner,

psychological proof of his calling. As a result the character is inevitably exaggerated, made to stand on tiptoe, his historical calling unduly emphasized while the real objective causes and factors of the historical mission are inevitably omitted. (Lukacs, G. (1962) page 314).

While this may certainly be the case for fictionalised biographies of men such as Napoleon, Caesar, Augustus and Cromwell, whom Lukacs also cites as examples of this problem (Lukacs, G. (1962) page 314) I am not convinced that it is always the case. In the case of the absolute monarch, for example, the element of chance is in the birth of the prince but his personality may assume great importance in its own right. One may question, for example, what the fate of Russia may have been had the last Tsar and Tsarina of that country not been the particular individuals that they were. In cases such as this, and where other important factors are not ignored, the fictionalised biography may have considerable interest in providing a 'rounded' picture of the people involved in a way that would be beyond the scope of the traditional biographer. From the minor study of "Fiction Index" which will be discussed elsewhere it seems that people who could be described as of royal or noble birth accounted for thirty six percent of the fictionalised biographies listed. Political and military biographies accounted for only sixteen percent. This would suggest that fictionalised biographies tend to be about subjects who are the most suitable type of subject in terms of the discussion above.

Nevertheless, whichever point of view is maintained with respect to the validity of the inclusion of real people of some historical importance as central characters in

historical fiction, the point remains that this is a common form of modern historical fiction. This form is even used by such a respected writer as Robert Graves in his 'literary' historical writings such as "I, Claudius". Lukacs himself acknowledges that important modern historical novels show a tendency towards the biographical approach (Lukacs, G. (1962) page 300).

Despite the embargo that is sometimes placed upon the inclusion of important historical personages as main characters in the narrative, some definitions insist that in order to be regarded as 'historical' the novel should include some mention of real events or real people. Matthews, for example, writes that

A tale of the past is not necessarily a true historical novel: it is a true historical novel only when the historical events are woven into the texture of the story. (Matthews, B. (1901) page 21).

This would exclude from the category of historical novels those books set in the past but which do not actually relate to real people. Matthews cites as examples of works thus excluded from his definition of historical novels works such as the "Scarlet letter" and the "Bride of Lammermoor". He justifies their exclusion on the grounds that they do not rely for their attraction upon the historical scene or character (Matthews, B. (1901) page 21).

Nield agrees with Matthews on the exclusion of works which merely "... give the general atmosphere of the

period..." (Nield, J. (1929) page xviii) [emphasis in the original] and again he cites the "Scarlet letter" as one of the works which must therefore be excluded. Nield, however, provides a category of 'semi-historical' fiction to include these works (Nield, J. (1929) page xviii). As will be seen in dealing with the sub-genres of romantic fiction, this type of historical fiction accounts for a significant proportion of historical romance.

Because of the type of fiction that is the interest of this study, a much simpler definition is required rather than those discussed above. For my purposes, Holman's definition of historical fiction is probably sufficient. He defines it simply as

Fiction whose time setting is in some period other than that in which it is written. (Holman, C. (1972) page 254).

The only restriction that this places on the inclusion of a novel into this category is that the story should be deliberately set in the past (Butterfield, H. (1924) page 5).

This may at first sight appear to be an unnecessary statement, but books such as "Tom Jones" may be very profitably used by contemporary readers as 'primary' historical documents providing an indication of the thought, manners and costume of its time. Although this is a valid and 'historical' use of the novel, it does not make it an historical novel. In the public library in which I worked

fiction was categorised and historical fiction was one of the categories employed. We used the criterion of "intention" proposed above but sometimes had to justify that position against the claims of readers that novels such as "Tom Jones" should be included in that category. In that case it used to be argued that if we employed such a definition, we would, after a certain amount of time, have to re-classify almost all the other categories of fiction as 'historical' as the manners and customs that they described ceased to be those of contemporary society.



Chapter 9.  
Historical and literary background to the historical novel.

Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832) is, with some justification, regarded as the originator of the historical novel, but there were a number of necessary preconditions that had to be fulfilled before his innovation became possible. Before establishing the validity of claims for Scott's status as the originator of the genre, these preconditions will be outlined.

Both general and literary considerations are important in this context. Firstly, for example, it was impossible for the historical novel to develop before the concept of 'history' as we know it had been established. It is not necessary in this context to investigate fully the question of "What is history?" - E.H. Carr has written a small book on that topic (Carr, E. (1970) ). It will suffice here to point out that in earlier writers of 'historical' works there was little emphasis on the critical appraisal of evidence that is expected today. Indeed, in the eighteenth century, little history was read (Saintsbury, G. (1923) page 13) and many of the early writers wrote what would today be regarded as fiction (Saintsbury, G. (1923) page 7). This lack of concern for accuracy is quite clearly shown in Shakespeare's historical plays. "Julius Caesar" would have originally been performed in Elizabethan dress (Finkel, G. (1975) page 23) not for any of the reasons for which a modern director might

decide to produce it in modern dress (or the style of any other period) but simply because it would not have mattered to the audience what the characters wore.

This situation began to change in the eighteenth century when a modern vision of history as a more scientific endeavour began to be formulated. Scott occasionally indicated in his writings that he was influenced by ideas developed in the eighteenth century with regard to the study and the very nature of history (Fleishman, A. (1971) page 24) and indeed Rance claims that Scott's views on history belong to the eighteenth century (Rance, N. (1975) page 22).

So successful was the movement that by the nineteenth century history as a study had assumed some importance. Sanders claims that.

The nineteenth century was an acutely historical age; it believed in the efficacy of the study of the past; it avidly collected relics and art of the past; and it rejoiced, just as Carlyle did, in the idea of being enveloped by Time, past, present and future. (Sanders, A. (1978) page 1).

Part of the reason for this change was the widespread spirit of scientific enquiry generally described as the Enlightenment. Interest in all areas of life led to a renewed interest in old things. Relics of the past that had previously been valued only at their practical and intrinsic worth came to be valued in themselves for their antiquity. Ruins had previously been regarded as convenient quarries of ready-cut stone for new buildings, but by the latter part of

the seventeenth century they were prized to the extent that wealthy men might have 'ruins' built to enhance their grounds (Finkel, G. (1975) page 24).

The antiquarian interest in relics is reflected in the literary tradition of the Gothic novel, with which it shared some similarities. In essence, although the Gothic novel dealt with the past, it was a past of no definite period - 'medieval' in the vaguest of senses. Their location is as little defined as their temporal setting and so they lack the sense of time and place which is essential to the true historical novel; even those which do not deal with real people and events must achieve a sense of a real time and place. In this way it reflected the collection of relics without necessarily placing them in an historical context.

The relationship between the attachment to physical relics and the taste for Gothic fiction is brought out by Fleishman. William Harrison Ainsworth (1805-1882), in fact a successor to Scott, wrote in the Gothic tradition (Sanders, A. (1978) page 17) and Fleishman regards the affection of Ainsworth and his readers for noble heroines as

... the emotional equivalent of their nostalgia for the noble relics of the past. (Fleishman, A. (1971) page 33).

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, certain events gave the study of history a new direction. For a variety of reasons the concept of a national identity began to take a firmer shape. Lukacs sees the resistance to

the expansions of Napoleon's regime as one of the causes of this growing nationalism and points to the peak of conscious historicism after the fall of Napoleon (Lukacs, G. (1962) pages 24-25). Fleishman also relates the rise of nationalism to the growth of Empire, although he declines to speculate upon which was the cause and which the effect. Fleishman also points to the speed of change to which society was being subjected at that time. He sees the disturbances caused by the Industrial Revolution as being a factor in explaining the growth of reverence for a lost past (Fleishman, A. (1971) pages 28-29).

For a variety of reasons, then, man became aware of the past in a different way than had previously been the case. Instead of perceiving the past as a static collection of relics and ruins - of interest but of no relevance to the present day - the past came to be seen as a source of inspiration for the present and for the future. Analysis and evaluation became the historian's tools, supplementing the earlier practice of recording events. Furthermore, both historical activity and antiquarianism were widespread in nineteenth century England. During this time many Learned Societies were founded and the Public Record Office was established to conserve documents which in earlier times had often been left in neglect (Fleishman, A. (1971) page 29). This interest in history, then, became sufficiently widespread to fulfil the second of the criteria suggested by Saintsbury as necessary precedents for the development of the historical novel. He writes that

The attraction of historical subjects in fiction, for the writer to some extent and still more for the reader, depends entirely upon the existence of a considerable body of written history and on the public acquaintance with it. (Saintsbury, G. (1923) page 3).

The particular period which interested historians and readers above all others in the nineteenth century was the Middle Ages. To Lukacs, this trend reflects the reactionary Legitimism which followed the downfall of Napoleon - a desire to return to the ideological immobility represented by that period (Lukacs, G. (1962) page 26). In England there was a revival of interest in the Medieval Romances and, as noted above, the Gothic novel which enjoyed a vogue both before and after the development of the true historical novel. These trends also reflected the nineteenth century's interest in the Middle Ages (Fleishman, A (1971) page 29) although the tendency was not merely a literary one;

The mental climate represented by the Gothic Revival in architecture, the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in art, Disraeli's Young England movement in politics, and the Oxford Movement in religion taken together makes Victorian England the age of medievalism. (Fleishman, A. (1971) page 29).

In addition to the general historical circumstances described above, certain literary precedents should also be described. Among these, the Gothic novel, which has already been mentioned, is the most obvious. It shares with the historical novel a particular interest in the past, although historical elements have been used in English fiction from the time of the picaresque novels (Fleishman, A. (1971) page 20).

Another important literary precedent to the historical novel appeared in the eighteenth century in the form of the realistic social novel. This type of novel was intended to portray events with some attempt at a 'true to life' approach but it accepted the situation as it was and did not attempt to explain or question how things had come to be as they were (Lukacs, G. (1962) page 19). The 'social novel' was, therefore, an important forerunner to the historical novel because it drew attention to a concrete time and place. It created a 'spatio-temporal' sense that was essential to the development of a more specifically historical awareness (Lukacs, G. (1962) page 21).

Any discussion of nineteenth century literature must be incomplete without some mention of the Romantic movement. To some extent, this was brought about by the same general conditions which brought about the interest in history itself;

The Romantic Period came into being during the Napoleonic Wars, and flourished during the painful economic dislocations which were their aftermath. (Holman, C. (1972) page 464).

Scott grew up in the time when the Romantics were at their most influential (Raleigh, W. (1919) page 277) and it seems likely that the growth in the study of history in itself would not necessarily have resulted in the development of the historical novel without the special impetus provided by the Romantic movement. Butterfield says that "Romanticism is at bottom a sigh for the things that perish" (Butterfield, H.

(1924) page 10). History is, by its very nature, about the things that have gone before and the combination of Romanticism and realism is easily accomplished by the setting of a story in the past. Thus

Historical novels are born of a romanticism of a kind; but they are a romancing around objects and places; they have a basis in reality and their roots in the soil. (Butterfield, H. (1924) page 41).

The importance of the historical novel to the Romantic movement may be indicated by the fact that the date of the death of Sir Walter Scott (1832) is sometimes used as the boundary for the "Age of the Romantic Triumph" in England (Holman, C. (1972) page 11).

The attraction of the historical novel for the Romantic imagination lies partly in an intense response to the world of the past, but also in the Romantic tendency to wish to withdraw to a world of its own creation. The relation of the historical novel to the Romantic movement, therefore, does not cease with the emergence of "Waverley" for

A study of the historical novel could become a survey of the modulations of Romantic art throughout the nineteenth century and down to the present. (Fleishman, A. (1971) page 16).

In discussing the literary precedents of historical fiction, perhaps some mention should be made of the relationship between the historical novel and historical drama since historical drama has a long history and historical novels are not yet two hundred years old.

Historical drama deals with history in a fundamentally different way and so did not rely for its development upon the existence of those preconditions discussed above which were essential to the development of the historical novel.

Lukacs discusses this question in great detail and a brief outline of his argument should suffice to indicate the fundamental difference between the two literary forms, despite the similarity of their interest in events of the past. In drama, the great conflicts of history must be reduced to their essentials and portrayed in broad terms by the use of the so-called "world historical individuals". The epic, on the other hand, which may be regarded as having some similarities with the historical novel, must portray events in greater depth and with more abundant detail to make a more complete picture of the world in which the conflict is taking place so that the reader may perceive the impact of the events portrayed upon the individual who should not be one of the main protagonists of the events that are described but a "maintaining individual" (Lukacs, G. (1962) pages 139-150). That is to say,

... the novel is more historical than drama. This means that the historical penetration of all the manifestations of life must go deeper in the novel than in drama. The novel counters the general historicism of the essence of a collision with the concrete historicism of all the details. (Lukacs, G. (1962) page 151).

Consequently, although historical drama is a literary precedent of the historical novel in some ways, the differences are such that it cannot be seen as an important



forerunner. The historical drama of Shakespeare, for example, flourished at a time when the concept of history as such was not understood in its present meaning.

Having asserted that Scott was, in fact, the inventor of the historical novel in its modern form, the reasons for this assertion should be outlined. Scott was not the first to set his stories in the past, even in non-dramatic literature. Indeed, a great number of authors from the time of Cervantes had done so and Sheppard in fact refers to "Don Quixote" as a 'semi-historical' novel (Sheppard, A. (1930) page 35) and calls Cervantes an "historical novelist or very nearly one" (Sheppard, A. (1930) page 14). Within the English literary tradition, Defoe also came close to writing an historical novel (Saintsbury, G. (1923) page 11) and later, with the Gothic writers, the approach became a literary movement rather than the action of a single writer.

"The Castle of Otranto" by Horace Walpole (1717-1797) is generally taken to be the first truly Gothic novel (Holman, C. (1972) page 244) and Saintsbury describes this work as "... in essence a Historical Novel with the history omitted" (Saintsbury, G. (1923) page 13). Sheppard is even more critical of this title as a 'historical' work -

"The Castle of Otranto" professes to describe Italy in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, but is even less than a guess at the truth. (Sheppard, A. (1930) page 39).

This criticism of the first of the Gothic novel writers

is also made of subsequent writers in the field. Sir Walter Raleigh asserts that the work of both Walpole and Mrs Ann Ward Radcliffe (1764-1823) lack any actual historical allusions or personages despite their illusion of antiquity (Raleigh, A. (1919) page 278) and in a general comment upon the predecessors of Sir Walter Scott claims that they

Chose a century as they might have chosen a partner for a dance, gaily and confidently, without qualification or equipment beyond a few overworn verbal archaisms. (Raleigh, A. (1919) page 279).

Important as the Gothic writers were, then, in setting the scene for the historical novel by creating a reading public with a taste for novels about the past, they fell short of actually writing about a 'real' past and so cannot be seen as historical writers in the modern sense.

Maria Edgeworth (1767-1849) took the development of the historical novel one step further with the publication of her "Castle Rackrent" in 1800. This was written as if by an old steward about the ruin of an eighteenth century family of landlords. Rance claims that this was the first novel to go beyond the costume of the past in an attempt to relate to character (Rance, N. (1975) page 20) and Scott himself acknowledged his literary debt to Edgeworth in the postscript to "Waverley" (Rance, N. (1975) page 20). Scott himself, however, took the development of the historical novel the vital stage further and wrote from the point of view of the past as the essential precursor of the present. Edgeworth, although writing of the characters of the past, had regarded

them as curiosities (Rance, N. (1975) page 21) . In this, an analogy may be drawn between the writers of fiction of the past and the emerging study of history as we know it. If Scott represents the modern historian, Edgeworth represents the antiquarian tradition which was its immediate forerunner.

In supporting the assertion that Sir Walter Scott 'invented' the historical novel, it may be of interest to point out that although he did acknowledge his debt to the precedent of "Castle Rackrent" he was convinced of the novelty of his own writing. He saw his approach to history as different from that of the Gothic and the 'silver-fork' schools of writers and, fearing that this different approach might not be well received, he at first concealed his identity as the writer of "Waverley" (Fleishman, A. (1971) pages 23-24).

The novelty of Scott's approach to history in his fiction was not simply in his conscious reference to actual people and events in his novels. Scott was also the first writer of fiction to describe his characters as moulded by the forces of the history that he portrayed (Raleigh, A. (1919) page 4). In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, novels with historical themes may have portrayed the external costumes and so on appropriate to the period of the setting, but the psychology and manners of the characters were contemporary with those of the writer's own time (Lukacs, G. (1962) page 19).

As well as portraying the period from its own

perspective, Scott was also the first writer of fiction to write about his own national history from a popular point of view. Prior to Scott's work, the only point of view that had been expressed in novels was that of the ruling class (Lukacs, G. (1962) page 19).

Scott's reputation as a writer is not now as high as it once was. At one stage he was very highly regarded and even compared with Shakespeare (Sanders, A. (1978) page ix). Nevertheless, he had considerable influence upon the authors who came after him although, as Rance points out, there was no 'school' of Scott and indeed those writers who did attempt to imitate him often imitated his worse works rather than the better ones (Rance, N. (1975) page 38). The historical romance enjoyed a vogue for some time, but by the end of the nineteenth century the fashion had, to some extent, changed. This is clearly indicated by the amount of historical fiction included in the outline of popular fiction listed by Leavis and included as an Appendix to this chapter (See Appendix 2).

This listing also indicates that the early esteem in which historical fiction was held diminished somewhat. "Waverley", although started in 1805, was not published until 1814. By the 1860's, Scott was denigrated and the historical novel condemned as being 'untrue' (Rance, N. (1975) page 62). In fact, more historical romances were published between 1870 and the Great War than in the previous fifty years (Rance, N. (1975) page 62) and historical novels have continued to be

written and read, but critical interest in the genre has declined. Fleishman feels that

It is the proliferation of popular sensationalism in historical guise that leads ... to the exclusion of the form from sustained critical examination. (Fleishman, A. (1971) pages xiv-xv).

A detailed discussion of the successors to Sir Walter Scott and the decline of critical notice of the genre is beyond the scope of this work. It is dealt with in some detail by Rance, Fleishman and Sanders. It is sufficient to point out here that the role that Scott had performed in providing 'sugar-coated' history had to some extent been taken over by the popular historians such as Macaulay (Rance, N. (1975) page 62) and that the genre suffered from a surfeit of unskilled practitioners. Fleishman says of the later Victorian period that

This was... the period in which almost every major Victorian novelist felt called upon to attempt the historical novel; perhaps because the standard of their contemporaries was so poor, these attempts were for the most part unsatisfactory, and were not repeated. (Fleishman, A. (1971) page 36).

Chapter 10.  
Appeal of historical fiction.

Historical fiction can appeal to the reader in two fundamentally different ways; as a form of fiction or as a form of history. Its appeal as a form of fiction will be touched on only in passing as the general question of the appeal of fiction is dealt with in more detail elsewhere. This section is mainly concerned with the unique aspects of a form which is a combination of fiction and history.

In looking at the appeal of historical novels as a form of fiction, it may be of some interest to quote from Sheppard Guy de Maupassant's comment;

'The public,' he says, 'is composed of several groups whose cry to us writers is  
'Comfort me'  
'Amuse me'  
'Touch me'  
'Make me dream'  
'Make me laugh'  
'Make me shudder'  
'Make me weep'  
'Make me think'. (Sheppard, A. (1930) page 195).

All of these can be done by the historical novel as well as by any other form of fiction. Indeed, the first was a particularly strong attraction at the time when the historical novel first came into being, a need that was in part fulfilled by the romances of William Harrison Ainsworth (1805-1882) and G.P.R. James (1799-1860) who flourished in the 1830's and 1840's and of whom Rance writes

... there was a demand for the kind of escapism which they provided. A dreamy, romanticised past was an antidote for the Chartist-ridden present; while the notion that, through manifold changes of costume, characters remarkably like middle-class Victorians had dominated events, must have instilled confidence to face modern convulsions. (Rance N. (1975) pages 38-39).

As we have seen in the background to the development of the historical novel, the very impulse to the study of history was, in itself, a searching for the security represented by the relative immobility of the Middle Ages. Lukacs says of Scott that

He finds in English history the consolation that the most violent vicissitudes of class struggle have always finally calmed down to a glorious 'middle way'. (Lukacs, G. (1962) page 32).

and if this is comforting to the author himself, it seems likely that the author's popularity was a reflection of the extent his works fulfilled a similar need in his audience.

Nield (Nield, J. (1929) page xix), Sheppard (Sheppard, A. (1930) page 231) and Butterfield (Butterfield, H. (1924) page 51) have all commented on the appeal of familiarity in the case of the novel which deals with the past and this related to the desire to escape from the modern world. The function of 'escape' in the appeal of fiction in general is discussed elsewhere but escape in a historical novel takes a particular form. This is perhaps best indicated in Cam's quotation from Raymond, who feels that the appeal of the historical novel may rest upon

... a suppressed desire to escape from the complexities and responsibilities of the contemporary world into one that is something 'morally sealed off and set apart from the struggle of our lives' - something that deals with 'a finished thing, a completed process'. (Raymond, J. cited in Cam, H. (1961) page 3).

In terms of Cawelti's concept of a 'moral fantasy', the appeal of the historical novel may have something to do with the ubiquitous belief in 'the good old days' - that things were somehow better and society more ordered in the past. This view is not limited to the readers of fiction. Leavis, for example, bases her assumptions on the better taste exhibited by popular readers before her own generation.

Seemingly contradictory claims for the appeal of historical fiction are made on the grounds of its relationship to actual events. Sanders claims that the long-lived appeal of some of William Harrison Ainsworth's novels rested upon his intellectual slowness and through the similarity of the images that he presented to those of Hollywood films of the 1930's (Sanders, A. (1978) page 45). Matthews, on the other hand, saw the appeal of historical fiction in its aureole of 'pseudo-sanctity' and its purporting to be more instructive than other forms of fiction (Matthews, B. (1901) page 26). Some resolution of this seeming dichotomy may be found in Cohn's article on the way in which television portrays history in a popular way. Cohn stresses that there is a formulaic approach to the presentation of American history in documentary programmes such as those presented by Alistair Cooke. The programmes are presented along similar patterns and present the



'official version' of the American past;

Americans are comfortable with Cooke's interpretation, partly because they believe it to be true, but mostly because it is familiar. What they applaud then, is their own familiarity with what they see and hear. The positive reaction to Cooke's 'America' is not unlike that of the symphony audience who should [sic -i.e. shout ?], cheer and stamp their feet after their favourite conductor has led the local orchestra through yet another performance of Stravinsky's 'Firebird Suite', parts of which everyone in the audience knows by heart. The movements and the musical motifs and themes are familiar. So are Cooke's. (Cohn, W. (1976) page 282).

Cohn's analysis brings out not only the strong relationship between what is comforting and what is familiar, which has been seen as a general characteristic of popular literature, but it also indicates the close relationship between historical fact and historical fiction. In early writings of a historical nature there was very little distinction made between what we would now call fact and fiction. Early writers who have long been regarded as reporting legends have occasionally been shown to have at least a basis in fact. The example of the Turin shroud is a case where a number of legends have been subjected to modern scrutiny to establish whether there is any basis for accepting them in a more literal sense than has been the case in the past. In addition, Cam and others have observed that the borderline between 'historical romance' and 'romantic history' is by no means a rigid one. Reading 'non-fiction' by Barbara Cartland is very like reading historical fiction by writers such as Jean Plaidy and indeed, one of Barbara Cartland's non-fiction works ("Diane de Poitiers") was included in "Cumulative fiction index". In the 1830's and

1840's, at the same time as the historical novels were creating a market for historical materials, Carlyle and Macaulay began to produce popular historical works and the fiction of Edward Bulwer-Lytton (1803-1873) was reviewed as history rather than as fiction because his many appendices and allusions gave the impression (albeit falsely) of scholarship (Rance, N. (1975) pages 43-44). Later, William Makepeace Thackeray (1811-1863) was influenced in his writing by Macaulay's essay "History", which urged historians to follow Scott's lead in making history a living force (Rance, N. (1975) page 55).

This, then, leads us to a consideration of the relationship between history as a scholarly study and historical fiction, which should at the same time indicate the appeal of historical fiction as a form of 'historical study'.

In essence, the major difference between the serious historian and the historical novelist would seem to be in the area of imaginative freedom. The historical novelist is free to use a greater amount of imagination in his approach to people and events of the past than the respectable historian would consider appropriate. Sheppard discussed this difference through the imagery of trespassing;

Historical Fiction deals imaginatively with the Past and can follow paths where Trespass Boards confront the pedestrian historian. The novelist has a wider range; he may set foot in the preserves of history, but on one condition: he may not make his habitation there, or may only build if part of his house stands within the

demesne of the imagination. (Sheppard, A. (1930) page 15).

This freedom allows the historical novelist to deal with people who have never existed, or about whom the historian has too little information to draw any conclusions. Because the records of the past have tended to deal with only certain kinds of people, the monarchs and their courts, statesmen and politicians and great leaders of armies for example, the historian is often not free to deal with the shopkeepers, tailors and farmers of the past as other than "movements of popular feeling", "mobs" and other groupings that have made their impression upon the historical scene (Sheppard, A. (1930) page 338).

Because the historical novelist is free to deal with fictional characters - perhaps invented to portray or represent the large groups of men with whom the historian must deal - the novel can come closer to the emotional response of its readers (Sheppard, A. (1930) page 15). Butterfield illustrates this point by the example of the politician who, in trying to explain a particular action to his electorate, may use an individual family as an example to illustrate the effects of the proposal in order to bring the idea home to his audience (Butterfield, H. (1924) page 31).

The historical novelist is not only freer to choose different kinds of people about whom to write, he is also free to write about them in quite a different way from that in which a historian would normally write. Even where a

character in a novel may be intended to represent an historical movement, he must be, first and foremost, of interest as a person. As Butterfield points out,

The novelist sees the whole of life, and he goes one further, and one better than the scientific historian in that men are to him (as they are to themselves) ends in themselves, not merely means to an end and links in the chain of history. A man may lose himself in politics or mathematics but to the novelist it is still the man that matters. (Butterfield, H. (1924) page 71).

The historical novelist, then, acts as a reminder that history is about people (Cam, H. (1961) page 7), (Sanders, A. (1978) page 4) but, more than this, in the historical novel moments are captured in their total complexity rather than simply from the point of view of their historical significance (Butterfield, H. (1924) page 72). This freedom to penetrate deeper into the 'here and now' of the past gives the historical novelist greater scope to give detailed attention to the costume and manners and way of life of the people about whom he is writing in a way that the ordinary historian cannot do (Sheppard, A. (1930) page 234), unless he specifically chooses to devote his attention to the history of costume or furniture and so on of a specific age.

The historical novelist may, furthermore, express his freedom from the constraints of ordinary history by taking a partisan approach to the problems of the period about which he is writing (Cam, H. (1961) pages 9-10). The historical novelist can write from the point of view of a protagonist on one side of, for example, the Cromwellian Civil War, without attempting to give the point of view of the other side. It

is, of course, impossible to write about anything completely without bias and this is especially true of a subject such as history which so often deals with causes which arouse profound emotions in the human spirit. Nevertheless, the serious historian must make an honest attempt to present the evidence for and against all points of view before coming to his own conclusions. This constraint is not placed upon the writer of historical fiction.

All of the freedoms described above give the historical novelist a greater opportunity than the serious historian to create a much deeper impression of the events and people that have lived in the period that he has chosen for the setting of his story. From this deeper impression, the historical novelist may create in his readers a love of history that may extend to the serious historian's treatment by stimulating in the reader a desire to know more about the people and events portrayed (Cam, H. (1961) page 7), (Nield, J. (1929) page xxvi). Whether this is the case or not, it is certainly true that historical fiction may appeal to the general reader who is interested in history but does not feel like adopting a scholarly approach to the subject.

In discussing the greater freedom of imagination that is available to the historical novelist, it should not be assumed that the historian is unable to make any use of imagination in the writing of serious history. Indeed the distinction between history and historical fiction, as mentioned above, is quite blurred. To a large extent the novelist's greater freedom is a matter of degree. This may

lead us on to the question of the relationship in historical fiction between 'truth', 'facts' and 'fiction'. The relationship is often discussed in connection with the distinction between serious and light fiction, but it is of particular importance in the case of the historical novel because in this genre it is often the case that

'The events and situations are assumed to be accurate because being "historical" they must of necessity be "true". And as the "facts" of history are true, so, in a different sense, are the insights (read "symbolic truth") of the novel'. (M. Thelwell cited in Fleishman, A. (1971) page xi).

If the question of "What is History?" could occupy a small book, the question of "What is Truth?" could occupy us for a lifetime. It must be sufficient here to say that the concept of truth here is used in a legal sense rather than in a philosophical sense - i.e. truth is taken as meaning that which is likely to have been the case, taking into account the balance of probabilities. Obviously, this particular question only arises in the case of those novels which deal with historical events and people.

The historical novelist encounters a particular problem in relation to the reporting of events as they really happened - even if we allow, for the sake of simplicity, that we can know what 'really' happened. The way that things actually happened is not always, perhaps not often, the way that they should happen from a literary perspective. They do not have the inner consistency and pattern that makes for an interesting story and the historical novelist, as any other

kind of novelist, is concerned with the artistic unity of presentation. The problem is encountered not just in the work of the historical novelist. All of those who wish to present the past in any artistic form may face the same problem. The makers of the film "Chariots of fire", for example, were forced to invent dissension and to make some minor changes to add dramatic tension to the life of Eric Liddell (Magnusson, S. (1981) page 11).

Novelists, historical and other, also face the problem that what happens to be true may not actually be credible in the setting of a novel. Edmund Blishen in a talk that he gave on children's books gave an example of this problem which occurred when he visited a relative in Canada. At the relative's office, the secretary was reading an article in the newspaper about the visiting author and turned to the Canadian Mr Blishen to ask if the subject of the article, having the same rather unusual surname, was a relative. Upon the query, the Canadian Mr Blishen was able to introduce the English one. As the author commented, this was all perfectly "true", but he would never dare to put that incident into a book - it is simply too heavy a reliance upon coincidence to be acceptable in a literary context.

Even in history,

Truth is stranger than fiction and some of the most incredible episodes that have been found in novels have been those which an author has too foolishly taken straight from life. (Butterfield, H. (1924) page 21).

and the above comments would seem to indicate that Cam shows

a lack of understanding of this fundamental difference between history and historical fiction and their relation to historical data when she writes that one of the earliest thrills of historical fiction is being that of 'catching the author out', "the first taste of blood in the savage game of criticism" (Cam, H. (1961) page 6).

The dangers inherent in the too literal inclusion of materials simply because they happen to be true does not exempt the historical novelist from exhibiting a respect for the truth. To quote Fleishman;

Whether his preference is for realism or romance, Kitsch or high art, the reader of historical novels is also likely to demand some sort of truth from them, if only to praise or blame on the grounds of 'accuracy', or faithful recording of presumably established facts. (Fleishman, A. (1971) page 4).

There have been some revealing images used in describing the relationship of historical novels to the historical facts that they describe. Sheppard describes a work as having

... a thread of historical truth running through it like a string through barley sugar. (Sheppard, A. (1930) page 32).

George Finkel describes his own historical fiction as

... a superstructure of fiction on a skeleton of fact. (Finkel, G. (1975) page 25).

A particularly useful image to describe the difference between the historian's and the historical novelist's use of



imagination as opposed to proven fact is found in Fleishman;

We might compare the historical novelist to the restorer of a damaged tapestry, who weaves in whole scenes and figures to fill in the empty places which a more austere museum curator might leave bare. But if the insertion is made on the basis of sympathy, experience, and esthetic propriety, it can lend revived expressiveness and coherence to the tapestry. (Fleishman, A. (1971) pages 6-7).

The result of these different uses of imagination is that the historian uses his imagination to fill in the gaps in his information for his own understanding whereas the historical novelist fills in the same gaps for his readers' understanding (Butterfield, H. (1924) page 23).

A particular kind of departure from the "truth" which is of special concern to the writer of historical fiction is the problem of anachronism. In this context, anachronism can refer to the types of blunders that may happen from a lack of knowledge of the past, but it may also refer to the deliberate use of anachronism by the author in order to make the work comprehensible, or for some other reason.

A particular area in which this deliberate anachronism may be necessary is in the area of dialogue. A work that is set in the distant past could not be both comprehensible to modern, non-specialist readers and authentic to the way in which the protagonists of the story would actually have spoken. In this case the historical writer must opt for a form of dialogue that is modern enough to be familiar to his audience and which at the same time manages to convey adequately the atmosphere of the time in which the story is

set (Sheppard, A. (1930) pages 211-212). Sir Walter Scott's solution to the problem was to adopt

'...the style of our grandfathers and greatgrandfathers, sufficiently antiquated to accord with the antiquated character of the narrative, yet copious enough to express all that is necessary to its interest and to supply that deficiency of colouring which the more ancient times do not afford'. (Raleigh, W. (1919) page 282).

In addition to the 'atmospheric' aspect of anachronism in the language of historical novels, the historical writer must avoid specific anachronisms of language such as Sheppard's example of the first Queen Elizabeth "...puffing like a railway engine" (Sheppard, A. (1930) page 214).

In the past, much has been made of the 'untruth' in historical novels. Cam quotes G.H. Lewes who wrote in 1846;

'To judge from the number yearly published, one may presume that there is a great demand for historical Romances; and to judge from the quality of those published, one may suppose the reader very good natured, or very ignorant, or both. We believe the are both'. (G. Lewes cited in Cam, H. (1961) page 3).

As we have seen above, this attitude to 'mistakes' may be rather a harsh analysis of the historical novel. Even allowing, however, for the problems of dealing too exactly with the truth in fiction, Ward's comments on the present standards of accuracy in historical fiction are reassuring. He claims that

The use of history in historical novels has now reached such a level of professional competence that I have devoted no space at all to complaints of inaccuracies, misrepresentations, anachronisms and distortions. The increase in the historical profession and the rise of a well-educated reading public have largely done away with the novelist's licence to treat the past as he

pleased, disdaining the historian's rigorous standards and disciplined conclusions. (Ward, J. (1975) page 41).

Before passing from this discussion of the nature of truth in historical fiction it may be worth considering the problems of whether complete accuracy is possible, even if it were not sometimes to 'adapt' the facts in the interests of the presentation of a fictional account. Matthews in particular questions whether it is possible for any writer to step outside of his own country or time (Matthews, B. (1901) pages 12-16) and claims that

The historical novel cannot help being what the French call voulu - a word that denotes both effort and artificiality. The story-teller who deals honestly with his own time achieves, without taking thought, a fidelity simply impossible to the story-teller who deals with the past, no matter how laboriously the latter may toil after it. (Matthews, B. (1901) page 20).

The point at which Matthew's criticism would seem to be most apt is in the area of anachronism most easily perpetrated and most easily unnoticed by the reader - the endowing of characters of the past with the psychology of contemporary times (Cam, H. (1961) page 8). The difficulty of avoiding this is perhaps illustrated by the quotation from Percy J. Brebner which Baker cites;

'My aim has been, not so much to write a story wrapping up history - the powder in the jam - but to depict and live in the period; to know in fact nothing of what happened after the period of the story. As an example, if I have a story of the times of Austerlitz, I should be ignorant of the fact that Napoleon was presently to meet defeat at Waterloo' (P. Brebner cited in Baker, E. (1914) page xi).

The problems described above undoubtedly make the creation of historical fiction an extremely difficult task and so in looking at the relationship between historical fact and historical fiction it may be fair to ask whether there are any area in which fiction may be superior to serious history in its ability to portray the past.

Macaulay and Kipling may be expressing the extreme of the view that this is the case when they say that

'Facts are the mere dross of history'. (Macaulay cited in Rance, N. (1975) page 37)

and

'Fiction is truth's elder sister... No-one in the world knew what truth was till someone had told a story'. (Kipling cited in Sheppard, A. (1930) page 29).

but the important role of fiction as a way of understanding should not be ignored. The advantages of fiction as a way of understanding history may be summarised by saying that if the study of history is the study of causes, then historical fiction is the study of effects (Sanders, A. (1978) page x) or that the historian uses his imagination to fill in gaps for himself whereas the novelist's imagination may help the reader to fill in the gaps left by the data (Butterfield, H. (1924) page 23). In discussing this question, Ward presents an interesting example of the way in which the historical novelist and the serious historian may work together. Historians have been unwilling to attempt a conventional history dealing with the way in which the loss of the Empire has affected the British people because of the breadth and complexity of the problem. A novel about a family with some in the army, some in the colonial service, some in

administration or the law and so on could perhaps present the problems that the historian would like to deal with. Ward concludes;

A brilliant novel could be written, that would tell us how people and institutions in Britain reacted to the loss of the empire. As a professional historian I would use it as a source and praise its achievement in illuminating a great question, but also distrust it because there would be no systematic relationship between the evidence and the conclusions and there would be no clear account of sources that I could consult for myself. The novel would have all the deficiencies of the historian's inevitable subjective attempt to use evidence and would lack the virtues. (Ward, J. (1975) page 33).

In conclusion, historical fiction developed in the nineteenth century as a result of the growth of historicism, nationalism and Romanticism which led to the achievement of Sir Walter Scott in the creation of the distinct genre known as the 'historical novel'. The question of what the historical novel is is actually a surprisingly complex one since many different interpretations have been made - partly because of the many different kinds of literature that have been called 'historical' and partly because of the complexity of the relationship between historical fact and fiction. Historical fiction was initially perceived as a high literary achievement but subsequently fell into some degree of disrepute. Nevertheless, as a genre, the historical novel has survived and is constantly making contributions to both literature and to the study of history. Because of the serious literary origins of historical fiction and its relationship with factual history and biography, it is perhaps not as surprising as Bruwer suggests that readers of historical fiction (which is distinguished from romantic

fiction in his thesis) are generally speaking readers with quite broad reading tastes. He compares borrowers of science-fiction, westerns, mysteries, romances and historical fiction and found that readers of the last category borrowed works in more categories of fiction and also more works of non-fiction than readers of any other of the categories investigated (Bruwer, M. (1982) pages 108-109). The form in itself draws upon numerous elements for its appeal and its obvious connections with other types of both fiction and non-fiction works would suggest that readers would find works of interest to them in other areas of the public library's collection.

The popularity of historical fiction in public libraries has been discussed in the previous section and some of the reasons for its appeal as a form of history have been discussed in more detail above. The appeal of historical fiction as a form of fiction has been implicitly described in a general way in the first section of this work. The following section will attempt an analysis of the reasons for the appeal of historical romance in terms of its appeal as a form of romance.