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“I’m a Nurse, Not a Woman”: The Historical Significance of the UWM Nurse Romance Novel Collection

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“I’M A NURSE, NOT A WOMAN”:

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by

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis seeks to promote future collection and preservation of popular culture resources at academic libraries by demonstrating the research potential and instructional value of a particular collection—the Nurse Romance Novel collection, held by the UWM Special Collections department. The study examines the history of American nursing and the history of romance fiction, raising questions about the role mass media and popular culture played in the professionalization of nursing and in the construction of dominant ideologies about gender roles in twentieth century America. This study treats romance novels as both consumer goods and as narratives, analyzing not only their literary content but also contextualizing their production, consumption, and aesthetic conventions within the historical time period of the 1940s to 1970s. Romance fiction about nurses offers one lens through which scholars can investigate how mass media participated in society's debates about women, work, care giving, domesticity, and marriage.

To my mother,

Andrea Monicken R.N.—

the nurse heroine in my life.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AMA	American Medical Association
ANA	American Nurses Association
BSN	Bachelor of Science in Nursing
IASPR	International Association of Scholars of Popular Romance
JPRS	Journal of Popular Romance Scholars
NLN	National League for Nursing
NLNE	National League of Nursing Education
NRA	National Recovery Act
OPAC	Online Public Access Catalog
OWI	Office of War Information
RN	Registered Nurse
RWA	Romance Writers of America
US	Unites States of American
UWM	University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

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Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore the potential of romance novels as objects of historical preservation and analysis. By examining the history of their production and consumption as well as exploring their narrative content in relation to the historical context of their publication, I seek to demonstrate that popular romance offers scholars nearly limitless lines of inquiry. The books in the Nurse Romance Novel collection held by the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee's (UWM) Special Collections department were published during the middle decades of the twentieth century and their narratives are approximately contemporary to their publication. This collection can, therefore, represent the broader genre of twentieth century popular romance fiction. But, their distinct focus on female nurse-protagonists and the narrative context of nursing offers an opportunity to explore specific themes about women, work, care giving, domesticity, and love.

Both romance novels and the nursing profession are gendered and stereotyped in American culture. There is no shortage of scholarly work about mass media representations of nursing nor of literary histories tracking the bad reputation of romance novels. In both cases, most of these are highly generalized investigations and the two fields have remained distinct. Romance fiction about nurses offers a more specific lens to explore the intersections of popular culture, mass media, and women's history. The Nurse Romance Novel collection consists of romances belonging to a particular style (sweet category romances), which were most popular during a specific

time period (1940s-1970s).[1] Limiting this study to this specific set of nurse romance novels allows for a deeper investigation into stereotypes about nursing and workingwomen during this particular era and as represented by one distinct form mass media. This thesis analyzes nurse-themed romance novels as primary sources for understanding mass media representations of women navigating their roles in society and responding to contemporary social and political issues. Throughout, I ask how these representations might inform historical interpretations of gender and domestic ideologies during the twentieth century.

The selection of nurse-themed romance novel may seem curiously specific. Of all the types of work that women have undertaken, why examine nursing? Of all the forms of mass media that can be examined for their portrayal of women, why romance novels? First, while the development of formal nurse training began in the eighteenth century, the professionalization of nursing and its exponential growth largely occurred over the course of the twentieth century. Despite conflicted post World War II attitudes about women in the workforce, women dominated the nursing profession—and still do. As a result, the nurse became a fascinating subject for mass media. It is not surprising that romance novels, seeking to reach a female audience with adventurous tales of career women, would take on the nurse as their protagonist. But professional nurses have often asserted that the image of the nurse in popular culture is superficial, even harmful to the reputation of real nurses. These nurse-themed romance novels are a site of tension between readers who romanticized nursing through the novels and the lived

[1] For more on category romances and sweet romances see Wendy Crutcher, "Category Romance," in *Encyclopedia of Romance Fiction*, ed. Kristin Ramsdell (Santa Barbara: Greenwood, 2018), 39-42, and Therese Dryden, "Sweet Romance," in *Encyclopedia of Romance Fiction*, 358-359.

experiences of real nurses. That tension itself is an opportunity to investigate cultural conflict over the roles and representation of women in the workplace.

Many women entered the job market through nursing; a smaller number of women did so through writing. Romance novels are artifacts of popular culture that are largely written by and about women. Most simply, they are evidence of the material production of women, for women, in an era when men produced most media forms. This makes them unique source material for women's history. But, while women most often authored the texts, male-dominated publishing houses maintained editorial and marketing control.[2] The books can be understood as a marketable product whose texts were negotiated between male publishers and female writers. Though writing is a creative endeavor, the final form of a book is determined by a firm with economic incentives, therefore, these books cannot be understood outside of financial interests.

Romance novels were mass-produced and mass-consumed for decades through the twentieth century. Since their introduction they have dominated the market in paperback sales and continue to do so today. The romance genre, despite public ridicule as trashy and formulaic, maintains a firm hold on readers' attention and pocketbooks. Romance novels are cheap and easy-to-read. Their ubiquity and accessibility to readers of all types underscores their influence on popular culture and scholars should study both the history of that medium and the messages conveyed through that medium.

[2] Despite publishing houses being run by men, anecdotes abound about the editorial influence of the wives of Mills & Boon and Harlequin executives. This will be discussed more in chapter two.

Books have a life cycle like any other consumer product; they are manufactured, brought to market, bought, consumed, and disposed of. When publishers first started selling paperback novels, they were not intended to be durable—they were marketed to consumers as disposable goods.[3] Mass-market paperback novels have a recognizable form: small, cheaply made paperbacks with cover illustrations that conform to particular aesthetics. The development of the paperback as a mass-market form began in the 1930s thanks to certain technological innovations and historical circumstances that gave rise to the paperback revolution.[4] The physical forms of mass-market paperbacks became more refined through the decades, with different genres of literature taking on their own unique aesthetics.[5] Our own present-mindedness assumes the omnipresence of books; they have become commonplace items in most US households, and it is relatively easy and inexpensive to amass large personal libraries. This development, however, only took place over the last century and is related to the larger phenomenon of post-World War II consumerism in the United States (US). The growing popularity of

[3] Louis Menand, "Pulp's Big Moment: How Emily Bronte Met Mickey Spillane," New Yorker, December 29, 2014, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/01/05/pulps-big-moment.
[4] For concise articles about the history of paperback publishing see, Oliver Carlett, "A Short History of Paperbacks," *IOBA Standard, The Journal of the Independent Online Booksellers Association* (December 6, 2001), https://www.ioba.org/standard/2001/12/a-short-history-of-paperbacks/; or Andres Liptak, "The Rise of the Paperback Novel," *Kirkus* (January 15, 2015), https://www.kirkusreviews.com/features/rise-paperback-novel/. For more comprehensive histories see, Kenneth C. Davis, *Two-Bit Culture: The Paperbacking of America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1984); or, chapters four and five of *The Enduring Book: Print Culture in Postwar* America, eds. David Paul Nord, Joan Shelley Rubin, and Michael Schudson, vol. 5 of *A History of the Book in America,* edited by David D. Hall (University of North Carolina Press, 2009), http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9781469625836_nord.
[5] Davis, *Two-Bit Culture.*

romance novels as consumer items for women took place in the context of other postwar changes in the economy, class structures, and family dynamics.[6]

Because nurse-themed romance novels are a gendered product with mass reception that became popular amidst ideological changes in the United States, I situate my investigation in an interdisciplinary framework, relying upon not just historical scholarship but also media studies, literary analysis, popular romance studies, and feminist approaches to each of those. I begin by orienting my readers to the historical context of the twentieth century particularly as it relates to women and the profession of nursing. The prevailing historical approach to the postwar period has focused on the "conservatism-and-constraints" faced by women.[7] The history of nursing demonstrates that gender ideologies did create barriers to women's full participation in the workforce but nurses through the twentieth century also fought for workers' rights, professional autonomy, and increased educational opportunities. Their struggles demonstrate that many women resisted the patriarchal status quo and that historical approaches that focus solely on the conservatism of the era fail to account for the diversity and complexity of women's experiences. Many historians today are engaged in a "revisionist endeavor," which aims to "subvert the persistent stereotype of domestic, quiescent, suburban womanhood, and to generate new histories of a complicated era."[8] My

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[6] Jayashree Kamble's dissertation,"Uncovering and Recovering the Popular Romance Novel," (PhD diss., University of Minnesota, 2008), situates the literary and material form of popular romance novels in the historical context of the twentieth century.
[7] Joanne Meyerowitz, Introduction to *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960*, ed. Joanne Meyerowitz (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 3.
[8] Meyerowitz, *Not June Cleaver, 2-3;* see also Maureen Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender, and Propaganda during World War II* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984).

observations of the Nurse Romance Novel collection support this current trend in historical approaches; the novels are expressions by and about women, multifarious in their descriptions of the sociocultural context and the protagonists' understanding of her place within it.

In chapter two I will provide a history of romance fiction, its place in the paperback revolution of American, and its importance to women's history. I will also describe the growing field of popular romance studies and how critical romance studies have evolved alongside feminist discourses over the past half century. In chapter three I will introduce my readers to the Nurse Romance Novel Collection, addressing its place in the Special Collections department, explaining how these novels fit within the genre of popular romance, and suggesting methods for analyzing them historically as a collection. Chapter four narrows my analysis to individual titles, selected as representatives of novels published in particular decades. I move chronologically by decade from the 1940s to the 1970s and interrogate each novel's representation of marriage or love, nursing as a profession, and the place of work in women's lives. In addition, I highlight how individual novels present additional personal and social issues for their protagonists to navigate; couched between scenes of dramatic love triangles, the novels comment on real and often serious issues: death, grief, racism, gentrification, and even labor organizing. I argue that these nurse-themed romance novels portray women and nurses in ways that are far more nuanced and complicated than many imagine. Despite having happy endings that frequently depend upon an engagement, the novels do not prescribe marriage and motherhood. I will show that the way the protagonists of these novels navigate their identities as women and workers suggests

that mass media forms like romance novels were engaged in representing a multitude of options for women's place in society. The narratives mirrored the realities of a society in ideological conflict.

In chapter five I describe the process of creating an accompanying digital exhibition for the Special Collections department. The digital exhibition serves as a venue to raise research questions beyond the scope of this thesis. The exhibition juxtaposes the Nurse Romance Novel collection with nonfiction resources of the UWM History of American Nursing Collection and suggests instructional possibilities for UWM academic programs. Though complimentary to this thesis, the exhibition has the additional goal of promoting use of the collection for academic instruction and primary source literacy instruction.

This thesis and the digital exhibit evaluate the Nurse Romance Novel collection as a resource to our academic community. As the number of scholars interested in popular romance studies grows, academic institutions will need to assess whether their institution's collecting policies should extend to popular romance. Interest in popular romance by academic departments and students will help determine whether revising these collecting policies to be more inclusive of popular romance is justified. But, it won't only be decisions about popular romance that academic libraries, special collections, and archives face. The consumerism of the twentieth century saw the creation of many forms of serialized resources and popular culture: magazines, comic books, pulp fiction, and video games, to name a few. Though these things were not necessarily intended to become collector's items, the novelty and nostalgia of them nevertheless inspired many baby boomers to do just that. As the boomer generation retires and downsize their lives,

they will be seeking new homes for their beloved collections. Libraries and archives have expended tremendous time, energy, and money on adapting to the *digital age*, but the historical record of the twentieth century is largely made up of analog cultural forms. For now, these cultural resources are privately treasured and stored in family homes but that will change very soon. Librarians and archivists need to prepare to make decisions about the research potential and value of these types of cultural records to their institutions. It is not enough to collect and preserve these resources; librarians and archivists need to learn to engage them as tools for teaching and learning. They will need to develop their own literacy of popular culture to incorporate these collections as part of their pedagogical toolbox.

Popular romance fiction has relevance to historical interpretation and therefore to academic collections as well. I argue that these nursing-themed romance novels provide insight into cultural communications about the role of women and nurses and use the collection to demonstrate some of the methods that can be used to incorporate poplar romance into historical scholarship. My historical investigation is just one example of how these resources may be used, but scholars from any number of disciplines can find useful categories of analysis. I encourage librarians and academic faculty to use these types of collections in their instruction. These novels might just as easily be taken up by art students investigating the influence of book cover illustrations on the aesthetics of an era, or economics students interested in the buying power of women, or sociology students investigating how products get branded according to race and gender—the possibilities are endless. Through popular romance fiction, and popular culture resources generally, librarians and instructors have an opportunity to

model interdisciplinary research or even develop transdisciplinary pedagogies. Most importantly, popular romance fiction is really fun and approachable for students; it's hard to overstate the benefits of using primary source materials that can delight and entertain while inviting serious interrogation.

Chapter One
Nurses in American History and Mass Media

The rise of mass-market novels written by and for women occurred after World War II, a time period that has predominantly been described as socially conservative, especially in regards to the sexual division of labor and gender expectations. Women, who had joined the workforce in large numbers and filled the jobs of men during the war were summarily dismissed and encouraged to refocus their energy on the domestic sphere when male soldiers returned from war. However, some professions—teaching, nursing, and clerical work— were still acceptable for women, at least until or unless those women married. More recently, scholars have asserted that previous histories over-generalized conservative, domestic ideologies of the post-war years. Scholars have also expressed concern that these original historical interpretations were based upon limited research of mainly white, middle-class women. Nurses in that time were primarily white and middle-class women, a fact that raises questions about the strength of these social prohibitions against women's wage work while also suggesting that nursing was an exceptional case. The naturalization of nursing as women's work made it a viable option for women who weren't willing, or financially unburdened enough, to be relegated to the domestic sphere alone. And yet, it was partly because nursing was so closely linked to domestic care that the profession struggled to establish itself as a field requiring skill, expertise, and whose practitioners deserved autonomy and recognition.

In this chapter, I will provide an overview of the historical context of the twentieth century, paying particular attention to the history of nursing and the socio-cultural communication about women and their roles in society. Additionally, I will discuss mass

media representations of nurses through this time period, which reflected the tensions arising from dependency on female labor in a society that discouraged it. Stereotypes about nurses and ideologies about women were mutually reinforcing and often limiting to both nurses and women; but they were not monolithic. Nurse historians today are rewriting the history of their profession to better reflect the research, advocacy, and organizing that nurses conducted as they sought to establish educational standards and professional practices.

Though nursing-themed romance novels were primarily published between the 1940s and 1970s, a review of the nineteenth century origins of professional nursing work will help explain the origins of nursing stereotypes, why nurses have been associated with conflicting archetypes like angel, martyr, virgin, and whore, and the relationship between nursing and women's ongoing struggle for equality.[9] According to Professor Patricia D'Antonio, who is a nurse and historian, "the history of nurses and nursing is illustrative of broader themes in the history of women, medicine, work and family."[10]

American Nursing History and the Image of the Nurse, pre-World War II

Nursing in the United States was not a profession until the latter half of the nineteenth century. Prior to the turn of the century, most caretaking occurred in the

[9] For an in-depth cultural analysis of nursing archetypes through history, from ancient mythology to the contemporary period see, Elizabeth Ann Robinson, "Remembering the Soul of the Nurse: A Cultural and Archetypal Study," (PhD diss., Pacifica Graduate Institute, 2011).

[10] Patricia D'Antonio, *American Nursing: A History of Knowledge, Authority, and the Meaning of Work* (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press: 2010), xvii.

home; hospitals were uncommon and "remained dangerous and dirty places."[11] Hospital nurses and nurses for hire were rare and the few among them received no medical training and were often people who couldn't find employment elsewhere. Nurses were both men and women whose reputations were not at risk for being in close contact with male bodies—those of lower classes and prostitutes. For this reason, stereotypes and literary depictions of nurses as this time depicted them as the dregs of society. For example, Charles Dickens' nurse character Sairey Gamp who appeared in his picaresque novel *Martin Chuzlewitt*, serialized between 1842 and 1844, was abominable—drunk, deceptive, and self-serving.

Through the early and mid nineteenth century, however, midwifery did depend upon skilled women. Midwives and upper class women who needed to perform more specialized homecare occasionally had the opportunities to attend lectures or short courses on particular topics. There were two medical schools for women but there were no formal training programs for nurses.[12] During the Civil War (1861-1865), more women began to serve in hospitals to help care for the many injured and sick as well as to perform custodial duties. For the most part, this type of service was still considered immodest for women.

Following the Civil War, women began to organize to demand professional training programs. They recognized that the work necessitated specialized training to be more effective and the precedent had already been set over in England. Florence Nightingale's secular school for female nurses opened its doors in 1860. In addition to

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[11] Susan Gelfand Malka, *Daring to Care: American Nursing and Second-Wave Feminism* (Champaign, Illinois: U of Illinois P, 2007), 1.
[12] Philip A. Kalisch and Beatrice J. Kalisch. *American Nursing: A History,* 4th ed. (Philadelphia: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins, 2004), 60.

nursing, Nightingale studied statistics and sanitation, published prolifically about her research, and lobbied for social and healthcare reforms. Her influential work in establishing training programs reached the United States. Florence Nightingale is often credited for igniting the movement that transformed nursing into "respectable paid labor" for women of the middle and upper classes.[13] Though Victorian ideas of femininity and the ideal women advocated separate spheres for women, Nightingale carefully described the traits of a nurse to align perfectly within these Victorian beliefs. In doing so, she limited the emerging occupation of nursing to women, but also prescribed strict Victorian conventions to the practice of nursing.[14]

Nightingale believed that nurses were meant to support the spiritual and moral health of patients, while medicine and the treatment of physical ailments was the task of physicians. Nurses needed to exhibit all the traits of the ideal woman: self-control, subservience, mild temperament, obedience, honesty, delicacy, maternity, faith, and morality. Nightingale advises that, "she [the nurse] must, I need not say, be strictly sober and honest; but more than this she must be a religious and devoted woman; she must have a respect for her own calling, because God's precious gift of life is often literally placed in her hands; she must be a sound, and close, and quick observer; and she must be a woman of delicate feeling."[15] Middle class and upper class Victorian women could support nursing as a woman's profession precisely because it created a venue through which they demonstrated their own commitment to ideal womanhood through self-sacrifice while imparting Victorian virtues and morality to the lower

[13] Malka, *Daring to Care*, 1.
[14] Malka, 3-6.
[15] Florence Nightingale, *Notes on Nursing: What It Is and What It Is Not* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1860), 125-126.

classes.[16] Historian (and former nurse and nursing instructor) Susan Malka argues, "Nightingale's identification of nursing with Victorian ideals of respectable womanhood provided an ideological basis for the total feminization of nursing…"[17] The gendering of nursing guaranteed hospitals had an affordable labor force with which to support their physicians as male nursing would have required higher pay.

The "Nightingale Tradition" didn't just gender nursing it also circumscribed it as the domain of white, middle-class women. In the United States, the Victorian ideals of womanhood were compatible with racist ideologies that were systematically built into society's institutions during Reconstruction. From the 1850s to the 1880s nursing "reformers faced the formidable task of changing public ideas about the status of nursing as a menial occupation for unskilled laborers into a respectable vocation for educated women."[18] As nursing underwent this reformation it became a mostly white endeavor.[19]

Women writers in the Victorian period alternately encouraged and struggled with the new notion of nursing as a virtuous undertaking for the ideal woman. Catherine Judd, Victorian literary scholar, argues that the nurse became a "pivotal cultural icon of the

[16] Malka, *Daring to Care*, 3-6.
[17] Malka, 4.
[18] Keaghan Kane Turner, "In Perfect Sympathy: Representations of Nursing in New Woman Fiction" (PhD diss., University of South Carolina, 2006), 16.
[19] Exploring the intersections of race, immigration, and nursing is beyond the scope of this thesis. For American nursing history through the lens of black women, see: Hine, Darlene Clark. *Black Women in White: Racial Conflict and Cooperation in the Nursing Profession, 1890-1950*. Blacks in the Diaspora. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1989; or, for essays that discuss the intersections of immigration, nurses of color, and nursing see: D'Antonio, Patricia. *American Nursing: A History of Knowledge, Authority, and the Meaning of Work.* Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press: 2010.

mid-Victorian era."[20] In the character of the nurse, Victorian writers expressed "political and social anxieties—especially concerns over class conflict, public health, the Woman Question, female heroics, and the construction of middle-class sexuality."[21] Nursing afforded women a rare position of power over men and early Victorian writers expressed discomfort with the new gender dynamics by developing an erotic trope of the nurse and her patient. Later, New Woman fiction adapted the nurse character to promote the social reforms important to Victorian women: they combatted inappropriate sexuality, disease, and other moral ills through their nursing practices.[22] Female writers combatted the early negative portrayal by focusing on the ministerial nature of nursing and developing their own trope of the nurse as angel. Overall, fictional portrayals of professional nursing in the late nineteenth century portrayed it as an extension of domestic duties, rarely mentioning medical duties. Women's fiction portrayed the endeavor of middle class and upper class women to increase their participation in civic and political life without sacrificing their symbolic roles as moral guides and protectors of the domestic sphere—nursing was suitable to these aims. Professor Keaghan Turner writes, "the nurses in New Woman fiction (and eventually their suffragette heirs)—more than any other body of female characters—represent the predicament of the modern woman as she negotiated the pressures to be usefully and gainfully employed but to

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[20] Catherine Judd, *Bedside Seductions: Nursing and the Victorian Imagination, 1830-1880* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 7.
[21] Judd, *Bedside Seductions,* xii.
[22] The New Woman was a popular term used at the end of the nineteenth century used to describe a woman who was intelligent, independent, and self-supporting. The New Woman came to be a cultural icon and represent an ideology of social change for women, but was also a target of ridicule. New Woman fiction is less a genre of it's own so much as a number of works that appeared in many genres which presented a social documentary of heroines navigating the emerging urban and modern world and which tested the definition of womanhood.

remain feminine and maternal."[23] At first, the ministering angel nurse served this purpose, but women discovered that the sentimentalization of nursing worked against them in gaining respect and authority in their positions. Nightingale had actually argued against sentimentality, especially for hospital nursing, promoting instead that nurses exhibit a practical and distant attitude in all situations.[24] As New Women writers became increasingly outspoken in their feminism their nurse characters functioned to promote women's capacity outside the home by placing their characters in institutional settings and emphasizing their "emotionally restrained professionalism."[25] These literary shifts parallel the shifts in healthcare approaches generally at the turn of the twentieth century shifts which increasingly focused on moving the care of sick and injured from the home to the hospital and relying upon scientific methods.

Nurse training programs began to formalize in the late 1800s and early 1900s across the United States. "Between 1890 and 1900 the number of nursing schools increased from 132 to 549, and by 1909 the number of schools in existence was 1,906."[26] As cities built more and more hospitals, nurse-training programs also became more numerous in order to support the growing hospital industry and ensure staffing. Nurse education and training was conducted at hospital training programs. The first was the Training School for Nurses attached to Bellevue Hospital, which opened in 1873. These training schools were modeled off of the principles of Florence Nightingale, and focused on professional training and standards of care, compassion, cleanliness and

[23] Turner, "In Perfect Sympathy," 1-2.
[24] Turner, 183.
[25] Turner, 4.
[26] Linda Polk Bass, "Professional Socialization in Nursing Education Between 1900 and 1975" (PhD diss. University of Texas at Austin, 1994), 65.

hygiene. Nightingale's notions about nursing continued to have influence well into the twentieth century but even after abandoning them, "nursing's identity continued to depend on each era's notion of proper womanhood."[27] At the start of the twentieth century though, the quasi-religious associations of nursing hindered its development as a profession; though nursing was a job that required a license and training, it was promoted as a "calling" for which women were motivated by their desire to "serve." Nursing was not necessarily seen as a long-term career and nurse training was regarded as valuable for its applicability to "building ideal feminine characteristics for motherhood."[28] These perceptions were taken advantage of by the growing hospital industry, which sought to control costs, and who relied upon student nurses to staff their hospitals.[29] Most graduate nurses worked in private duty settings and nursing leaders and educators became involved in the progressive and social reform movements by pioneering nursing opportunities in nontraditional work settings such as settlement houses. More radical feminist nurses took on advocated suffrage and birth control education as vital to nursing practices.[30] Most nurses at this time worked to provide themselves some financial stability and independence; private duty nursing, for example, provided a means for single women to both work and travel, giving them opportunities to experience life in various places around the country and even abroad that many other women did not enjoy.[31]

[27] Malka, *Daring to Care,* 4.
[28] Malka, 4.
[29] Bass, "Professional Socialization," 66.
[30] Bass, 67-68.
[31] D'Antonio, *American Nursing*, 58.

Regardless of social perceptions or the attitude of hospital administrators, nurses and especially nurse educators sought to develop educational and professional standards. Hospitals devised their training programs individually, which nurses felt lacked consistency for professional preparation but also meant that working and living conditions for student nurses varied incredibly and many were subjected to unfair labor practices. Nurses formed numerous professional organizations, educational standards organizations, and alumnae associations; hospital training programs also created councils to oversee the relationship between the nursing school and the hospital. The American Nurses Association was formed in 1911.[32] Nurses also advocated for state registration laws to establish fixed professional standards.[33] North Carolina was the first state to pass a nursing registration act in 1903, other states soon followed, though they each had their own minimum educational standards by which they registered nurses. In time, the passage of state registration laws helped to reign in the hospital programs and develop both educational standards and professional guidelines.[34] The struggle to attain professional status was not unique to nursing, Malka explains, "historians and sociologists agree that the professions and the process professionalization constituted one of the essential building blocks of twentieth century America."[35] Unfortunately, some of the standards and attitudes adopted in this movement toward professionalization ultimately slowed down the progress of feminism more generally; not only did professional status divide women by educational background and class status but the

[32] Bullough and Bullough, *The Emergence of Modern Nursing*, 2nd ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1969),152.
[33] Bullough and Bullough, *The Emergence of Modern Nursing*, 152.
[34] Bass, "Professional Socialization," 65-78.
[35] Malka, *Daring to Care,* 6.

nursing profession also conceded agency to medical hierarchies that placed doctors, and men, in power.

The education of the nurse during the early twentieth century was devised according to cultural beliefs about gender differences. The *professional socialization* of the nurse was as important if not more so to her education and training than medical procedures. Bass defines professional socialization as the "processes by which an individual acquires the knowledge, skills (cognitive, affective and psychomotor), values, and attitudes of a professional subculture."[36] Likewise, the term *professional development* was used to refer to the "activities and components during the educational experience involved in learning how to think, look, and behave like a professional nurse."[37] Until 1937, aspects related to professional socialization and professional development were taught under the category of ethics. Whereas today nursing ethics prioritize human rights and dignity, accountability in decision making, and legal concerns, nursing ethics textbooks until the middle of the twentieth century focused on demeanor and manners as much as personal values. Textbooks still featured Nightingale's recommendations that nurses should be obedient, quiet, orderly, cheerful, and patient. For example, the book *Nursing Ethics,* written by nurse educator Isabel Hampton Robb and first published in 1900 (with numerous reprints for several decades), stressed rules of conduct, hospital etiquette, manners, dress, and personality as key

[36] Bass, "Professional Socialization," 7. These processes are both formal and informal. Formal processes are structured and intentionally designed activities or occurrences meant to convey the knowledge, skills, and/or values about professional mores; informal processes are unstructured and often non-deliberate activities or occurrences whereby the learning about professional mores takes place on an unconscious level. People who are exposed to these processes usually assimilate the attitudes of the professional subculture. For more, see chapter two of Bass' "Professional Socialization," 26-54.
[37] Bass, 8.

components in the training of nurses, fastidiousness in personal hygiene and appearance, self-control, discretion, deference to authority.[38] Robb's *Nursing Ethics* goes so far as to instruct student nurses how to achieve control over the facial expressions, voice, and emotional reactions, encouraging them to practice a "voice that is uniformly even, quiet, low but distinct, sweet but firm, with a cheery strain in it, that encourages and makes the patient feel better in spite of himself."[39] The hierarchical structures of hospitals put student nurses (also called *probationers*) at the bottom, subject to not just doctors but also the female nurse administrators who supervised the students. Obedience was non-negotiable. In *Nursing Ethics,* Robb advises, "Above all, let her remember to do what she is told to do, and no more; the sooner she learns this lesson, the easier her work will be for her, and the less likely will she be to fall under severe criticism. Implicit, unquestioning obedience is one of the first lessons a probationer must learn, for this is a quality that will be expected from her in her professional capacity for all future time."[40] Despite stressing the importance of developing the content and character of young student nurses, nurse educators also sought to imbue these women with a feeling of competence; a focus on discipline and obedience was not just about hospital hierarchies but about teaching nurses to remain calm through chaos and rely on clinical procedure. Some scholars, like Patricia D'Antonio, argue that although the training focus on discipline, loyalty, and obedience contributed to the subordination of nursing, it also positively functioned to create "an

[38] Bass, 87-106.
[39] Isabel Hampton Robb, *Nursing Ethics: for Hospital and Private Use* (Cleveland: E.C. Koeckert, 1912), 76-77.
[40]Robb, *Nursing Ethics: for Hospital and Private Use*, 57.

internalized and fairly stabile conceptualization of a strong nursing identity."[41]

Nurse characters in literature modeled the ideal nurse in accordance with the actual social and ethical standards of the time. Professor D'Antonio's analysis of early twentieth century literary nurses describes a woman whose traits are always perfectly balance between likeability and assuredness, compassion and professionalism. The protagonist is portrayed as "supremely competent, cool, and in absolute control of the clinical moment" and it is only when the protagonist is outside of her professional environment that the reader is shown the emotional toll of the nurse's work and she is humanized.[42] The nurse character is romanticized and expressed the work life desired by nurses without revealing the realities of nurse training programs and nursing work life; instead, readers are treated to the nurse as the embodiment of the ideal—competent, kind, steadfast to physician superiors, respectful to the families of her patients but outspoken with her medical advice.[43]

The emotionally restrained nurse character grew even more exaggerated during and following the First World War. In war propaganda, the image of the selflessly devoted angel resurfaced alongside a new trope of the nurse martyr. Biographies of the British nurse Edith Cavell, who was tried and executed for treason in Germany for helping soldiers escape from occupied Belgium, were incredibly popular and inspired numerous film adaptations. Women joined the war effort as nurses in the Army Nurse Corps and Navy Nurse Corps or the through the American Red Cross Nursing Service.

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[41] D'Antonio, *American Nursing*, xv. For an extended discussion of how nursing leaders sought to develop new ideal standards of training by balancing medical content with professional socialization, see chapter two, "Competence, Coolness, Courage—and Control," in *American Nursing*, 28-53.
[42] D'Antonio, *American Nursing*, 55.
[43] D'Antonio, 54-55.

Wartime nursing put women on the frontlines and demanded they provide medical care beyond what was permitted in hospitals back home.

Through the war, nurse novels featured female heroines who were not only professional trained, competent nurses but who deftly navigated the emotional dynamics of trauma and loss by maintaining relational distance from their patients. Novels about war nursing demonstrated that "the war made manifest what professional nurses already knew about efficient, effective care taking and so ushered in the abandonment of sentiment in favor of the repression of sympathy."[44] Sentimental nurse characters served as warnings; non-romantic personal attachments could cause despair in the face of so much fatality, while romantic attachments threatened a nurse's professional authority or, even worse, her honor as a women. Turner argues that a common literary theme in nurse fiction novels about the war was the danger that came from a nurse allowing her soldier patient to see her outside her uniform, "now that her patient has known her as a 'charming girl-companion' in 'civvy clothes,' she is seen no longer as the dutiful nurse but as an attractive and available woman."[45] The uniform indicated that a nurse's professional identity was mutually exclusive from her identity as a woman.

Following the war, the 1920s was marked by an increase in conservatism and President Harding's push for a "return to normalcy" seemed to call for a turn away from reform-minded activities.[46] Protectionist economic policies fostered big business, labor unions struggles to grow their members, and social conservatism was seen in the immigration limitations acts, the prohibition of alcohol, a fear of communism, and the re-

[44] Turner, "In Perfect Sympathy," 223.
[45] Turner, 250.
[46] Bass, "Professional Socialization," 118.

emergence of the Ku Klux Klan.[47] But, women also gained the right to vote nationally, though failed to secure the Equal Rights Amendment. Though more women were entering the workforce, it was largely in non-professional positions and within professional positions women made less money and saw fewer promotions than men. Plus, the advertising industry aimed to encourage women laborers to return home after World War I ended. As Bass argues, "new female-targeted advertising industry during this period began to re-create traditional roles and images surrounded by modem electrical appliances and transformed by fashionable clothes and numerous beauty products encouraged domesticity among women after World War I."[48]

But the nursing profession continued their efforts to improve the status of nursing and address problems faced by nurses. Organizations such as the National League of Nursing Education (NLNE) and the American Nurses' Association (ANA) tried to address the issues such as the decline in private duty assignments and unwillingness of hospitals to staff graduate nurses despite staffing shortages in the face of increasing hospital numbers.[49] When public health nursing increased, nurses found their new roles required additional training and nursing organizations responded by creating post-graduate opportunities for continued education. They formed numerous committees to evaluate hospital-training programs and the status of nursing education. Their studies revealed that about half of nursing students were age eighteen or younger, the hospitals required a 56-hour week on top of coursework and study, and more than sixty percent

[47] Bass, 118-121.
[48] Bass, 125.
[49] Bass, 126-128; D'Antonio, *American Nursing*, 64.

of the hospitals had no graduate nurses on floor duty to assist students.[50] Committees and professional organizations argued that hospitals should be staffed with graduates, nursing students should be allowed to focus on their coursework and education, and that nursing education needed both public and private support more consistent with other professional education programs.[51] There were few changes initially to nurse training or education as a result of these studies, but nursing organizations persisted in their advocacy about these issues for decades.[52]

National organizations for nurses published voluminously on matters related to curriculum at this time. Though some baccalaureate programs were created in the twenties, hospital training programs continued to graduate the most nurses. Hospital training programs were crafted to mold nurse's character as much as train them in healthcare procedures: students lived in residence halls, their personal lives were closely monitored by a nurse superintendent, and the community aspect helped foster a sense of sisterhood and unity among the student nurses. As Malka writes, "The nurses' residence helped in establishing, shaping, and controlling the group identity of nursing. It symbolically proclaimed the nurse's total commitment, dedication, and purity."[53]

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[50] Bass, "Professional Socialization," 133.
[51] Bass, "Professional Socialization," 134.
[52] A few exceptional cases arose out of these studies, however. For example, Yale University used the reports generated by the Committee for the Study of Nursing to create its own nursing school, which required students to not only have two years of college work prior to admittance but then also complete two years of liberal arts education, two years of professional education, and one year of specialization at the nursing school; upon successful completion, Yale conferred both a bachelors degree and a diploma in nursing. Yale quickly transitioned this to a Master of Nursing degree program and several other universities developed similar programs that blended academic studies with professional training. See Bass, "Professional Socialization," 135-136.
[53] Malka, *Daring to Care*, 27.

Nursing education and socialization still focused on hospital hierarchies, interpersonal dynamic with patients and doctors, and the nurse's personal habits and personality. Ethics textbooks focused on the personal virtues of the nurse, such as "loyalty, truthfulness, duty, and obedience."[54] Institutional loyalty meant strict observance to hospital rules and regulations and obedience to authority, namely doctors, was associated with patient care and even their increased recovery.[55] Ethics textbooks imparted the need for absolute confidence and accuracy in reporting on patient health and also described external factors that indicated professionalism: hygiene, personal appearance, mannerisms such as the "poise" of the nurse, and respect for the uniform.[56] Uniform elements and details, such as the cap, collar, pin, and apron, varied depending upon a nurse's status within her training program. Hospital training programs, which required residency in hospital dorms, regulated and carefully observed the social life of their female students. Notably, marriage was also prohibited during the hospital training program. Graduate nurses, however, married sooner after their training than in previous eras. On the occasion of its 50-year anniversary in 1938, the St. Luke's Training School in New York solicited the work histories from all sixteen hundred of their graduates since their program's opening in order to share the accomplishments of the school. All but thirty-six of the graduates participated, which may indicate the degree to which women had internalized their professional identities and appreciated their

[54] Bass, "Professional Socialization," 14.
[55] Bass, 145-146.
[56] Bass, 149-150. The uniform's meaning was that it communicated the character of the nurse, therefore, ethics textbooks included detailed instructions on the care and cleaning of it as well as personal grooming regulations in regards to hairstyle, makeup, and jewelry.

opportunities.[57] The majority of graduates before the turn of the twentieth century remained unmarried, yet the number of nurses who married and left nursing increased in each subsequent decade in addition to the duration of work years before marriage decreasing each decade.[58] Graduates from earlier eras had spent several years in private nursing before returning to work in hospitals as supervisors, administrators, or teachers; by the 1920's interest in private nursing had weakened. D'Antonio recounts that one female physician indicated in her speech to the 1924 graduating class of St. Luke's that nurses now preferred the more exciting roles offered in hospitals and the prestige and responsibility of administrative and supervisory positions at hospitals.[59]

Following the stock market crash of 1929, the Great Depression saw countless Americans out of work. Nurses, too, struggled to stay employed; the demand for private nursing plummeted and hospitals as well as public and private health care agencies facing budget constraints laid off nurses in great numbers.[60] The federal government enacted numerous legislations that created programs, services, and social reforms meant to put Americans to work, build infrastructure, alleviate the farming crisis, and protect citizens in times of unemployment, sickness, or in old age: the Civilian Conservation Corps, the Civil Works Administration, Works Progress Administration, the National Industrial Recovery Act, the Agricultural Adjustment Act of the New Deal. The Second New Deal brought the Social Security Act of 1935, the National Labor Relations Act, the Fair Labor Standards Act. Unfortunately, New Deal legislation didn't equally extend support to working women as men; the National Recovery Act (NRA), for

[57] D'Antonio, *American Nursing*, 60-61.
[58] D'Antonio, 61-62.
[59] D'Antonio, 62.
[60] D'Antonio, 72.

instance, allowed industries to pay female workers less than male workers in similar jobs.[61] Though schools suffered from lack of funding, the realities of unemployment encouraged many young people chose to stay in school longer through secondary-school and university.[62]

During the 1930s, and especially through the Great Depression, magazines ran stories that encouraged women to place family before any personal aspirations and portrayed working wives negatively. Self-abnegation and a patient stoicism were idealized in female characters. Popular fiction during this time did feature female characters with jobs, intelligence, and an independent streak but these traits were portrayed as acceptable in single women; romance and adventure stories encouraged women to pursue careers but not at the expense of marriage or motherhood. Female characters who insisted on maintaining their jobs after marriage or of upstaging their husband's careers became selfish villains, often meeting their demise.[63] Heroines of romance fiction lived lives of leisure and glamour, with creative pursuits like painting, music, or performance as opposed to maintaining careers.[64] The moral of the stories "suggest that female self-actualization and independence were incompatible with harmonious family life."[65]

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[61] Bass, "Professional Socialization," 181.
[62] Bass, 175-176.
[63] For more see the section titled, "Fiction before Pearl Harbor," in Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender, and Propaganda during World War II* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984), 65-72.
[64] Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter*, 48.
[65] Honey, 146.

American Nursing History and the Image of the Nurse, during World War II

US entry into the World War II reversed the nursing unemployment problems; during World War II, nearly seventy-six thousand nurses served in the armed forces. The war increased the demand for nurses in all sectors: civilian hospitals, armed forces, public health, and also created new positions serving industries. The increased demand brought to light that the Great Depression had severely impacted nursing education. Though federal aid programs had created a few public health nursing initiatives during the Depression, thousands of nurses were unemployed and nearly half of hospital diploma programs closed their doors.[66] When the possibility of war looked more inevitable, professional organizations such as the Nursing Council of National Defense acted quickly to determine the role of nursing would play in defense and how to best fill the coming need; when war was declared in 1941, the organization became the National Nursing Council for War and coordinated with the federal government to recruit nurses, students, and determine how to distribute needed nurses to different sectors.[67]

War propaganda efforts were quite successful with over forty percent of active registered nurses volunteering service to the American Red Cross and over one hundred thousand nurses certified to the Army or Navy Nurse Corps.[68] Federal funding was for the first time allocated to hospital training programs for nurses and the United States Cadet Nurse Corps was developed, which provided direct grants to training programs with nurses committed to serving the war effort. Aside from the achievement

[66] Bass, "Professional Socialization," 184-192.
[67] Bass, 188-190.
[68] Bass, 191.

of nursing training funding, one of the lasting effects was the creation of the Division of Nurse Education within the United States Public Health Service.[69]

World War II helped alleviate a lot of the financial devastation to the country overall but brought no fewer traumas than the economic depression. “Approximately fifteen million Americans served in the armed forces, while sixty million worked on farms and in factories to produce goods and materials for the war effort… Between 1940 and 1945, the number of women in the workforce increased from fourteen to nineteen million.”[70] Population distributions changed as people in Middle America moved to coastal cities for the work opportunities presented by war industries.[71]

Mass media entertainment of all types grew enormously during this time, providing alternately escape from the reality of war and the propaganda to support it. The Office of War Information (OWI) was established in the summer of 1942 to help direct how the media would disseminate information in order to serve the war effort.[72] While the OWI campaigns communicated official reports and information to news media, they collaborated with magazines and fiction publishers to communicate the importance of home front work for women and to combat stereotypes about working women.[73] The Magazine Bureau developed a Magazine War Guide that suggested the ways that fiction writers could portray their characters supporting the war effort and how to weave government regulations into the story plots of their adventures and romances.[74] “To effectively communicate propaganda goals to pulp writers, [The Magazine Bureau]

[69] Bass, 195-196.
[70] Bass, 177-178.
[71] Bass, 178.
[72] Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter*, 28-29.
[73] Honey, 41.
[74] Honey, 42.

established a New York office where a supplement was put together by a staff familiar with mass market formulas. Pulp writers were put in charge of writing the supplement, which provided sample plots illustrating ways popular fiction could support campaign goals."[75] In 1942, mystery writer Rex Stout formed the Writers' War Board as well, which helped link writers to the OWI; the Writers' War Board "worked so closely with the OWI that it was frequently mistaken for a government agency."[76]

In her book *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender, and Propaganda during World War II*, Maureen Honey goes beyond describing the entry of women into male jobs during World War II to raise the question of "why the media's legitimation of female entry into male work failed to supplant the traditional image of women as homemakers…"[77] Honey explains that "[s]cholars disagree over the long-term impact of World War II on women's role in American life and over whether the war period should be characterized as a time of continuity or of dramatic change in definitions of woman's place."[78] She looks to wartime fiction, advertising, and propaganda to investigate the contradictory images of women in the early 1940s with an aim to understand "how those images could expand and contract public conceptions of woman's place within such a short period of time without confusing or alienating the population and without more seriously challenging the conservative ideology behind the sexual division of labor."[79] Honey believes that popular fiction during the war, which was meant to mobilize women into the labor force, framed both the need and their working female characters in a

[75] Honey, 44.
[76] Honey, 45-46.
[77] Honey, 1.
[78] Honey, 2.
[79] Honey, 3.

carefully scripted way that related both to traditional values. For example, the woman worker as a "soldier-oriented, self-sacrificing martyr" is recognizable in its traditional form of the woman as "supporter of husband" and "paragon of virtue" for her family.[80] Essentially, "war work became a vehicle for women to shoulder their civic and moral responsibilities as good citizens rather than a way to become more independent and powerful."[81] The popular fiction propaganda made sure to still portray women and families as vulnerable to the enemy and in need of protection while using images of women and children as symbols of the peace to come. As Honey argues, "They came to stand for those cherished qualities that had been snuffed out by carnage and danger: innocence, gentleness, idealism, continuity, and safety."[82] Despite the OWI's careful construction of working female heroines, women's realities in active duty and home front service required they set aside their delicate and cherished qualities.

Nurses were caught between contradictory demands: providing life-saving medical care and being a psychological balm by fulfilling archetypal roles. Nursing in armed forces during wartime looked a lot different than nursing in hospitals during peacetime. The traditional hospital hierarchies were made more flexible in war nursing, nurses carried out their work with more autonomy, and in the face of emergencies they gained expertise and technical skills by performing procedures ordinarily reserved for doctors.[83] But nurses also provided more than much needed medical service; the nurse was a surrogate for soldiers' mothers, sisters, and sweethearts. This ambiguous role

[80] Honey, 6.
[81] Honey, 6.
[82] Honey, 7.
[83] Malka, *Daring to Care*,14.

was perceived as important enough that the military rejected male nurses during World War II.[84]

Meanwhile, nurses were still pressing ahead in their battle to develop professional recognition and autonomy. Part of these efforts, nursing education had started to distance itself from stereotypes by adopting curricular language that was considered more modern. In 1937, the NLNE revised their professional development recommendations for schools of nursing and published a new version of *A Curriculum Guide for Schools of Nursing.* The new guide suggested that instead of teaching an ethics course at the beginning of the curriculum, nursing education programs devise a two-course system that would cover the necessary *professional adjustments* faced by beginning student nurses and those faced by graduating nurses.[85] Other than the change in terminology, Professional Adjustments I courses largely covered the same concepts as the old ethics courses but Professional Adjustments II courses covered the nurse's transition from training programs to her professional organization, with special topics on career development and professional etiquette.[86] This 1937 guide remained the most widely used until the early sixties, with only minor revisions.[87]

Though the content of professional adjustments courses was fairly similar, the new "philosophy of adjustment" emphasized a different approach and reasoning. The adoption and demonstration of specific characteristics would indicate the student's level of self-awareness and ability to thrive in her future career. Rather than being in-born

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[84] Malka,.
[85] *Professional adjustments* was a term adapted from the field of psychology. See Bass, "Professional Socialization,"199 for more information on the development of this concept.
[86] Bass, 201.
[87] Bass, 11.

virtues or behaviors drilled into her in a military-like fashion, these characteristics were to be fostered over time and demonstrated the nurse's personal and professional growth over the course of her training. The thirteen characteristics of a "well-adjusted nurse" were delineated in the curriculum guide as follows:

1. She is healthy, mentally and physically.
2. She is mentally alert.
3. She is technically competent.
4. She is dependable.
5. She inspires confidence.
6. She is resourceful.
7. She is well poised.
8. She is considerate of others.
9. She is cooperative.
10. She is agreeable.
11. She is cultured.
12. She derives personal satisfaction from her work.
13. She has a sense of social and professional responsibility.[88]

The adoption of these characteristics meant that a nurse was reflective, had learned to problem solve, and was more likely to be successful. Textbooks for the second course on professional adjustments still emphasized strict adherence to hospital policies and procedures and obedience to physicians yet they also advised consulting with superiors (discreetly) concerns regarding policies, working conditions, and physician malpractice.[89] External factors in professional adjustment were still understood by such things as the adoption of proper poise and respect for the uniform. The proper poise, for example, included a cheerful attitude, a pleasing voice, excellent posture, demonstration of culture, and gracious manners in addition to respecting more specific

[88] National League of Nursing Education, *A Curriculum Guide for Schools of Nursing*, 2nd rev. ed. (New York: National League of Nursing Education, 1937), 593.
[89] Bass, "Professional Socialization," 208-211.

elements of hospital etiquette, such as standing when a physician entered the room.[90] Students were still taught the history and tradition of the uniform—the white cap stressed as the most sacred element. As one textbook author writes, “What would a nurse be without a cap? She would neither feel like nor look like a nurse. The nurse's cap is the symbol o f her professional standing and she is more proud of that little white cap than of any other symbol of her profession.”[91]

Students were still required to live in the hospital dormitories and marriage was prohibited during training. Once the United States joined the war, however, the strict ban on marriage was unofficially lifted; student nurses could gain permission by petitioning both the dean of the school and the director of nursing at their clinical setting. Married students were still required to live in the dormitories so as not to disrupt their education or service to the hospital. Of course, most of these exceptions were given for students whose husbands were in the service and so the living requirements were generally unchallenged.[92]

The nursing curriculum demonstrates that while the profession was striving to attain more agency and autonomy for its workers the cultural climate still expected women to adhere to rigid gender expectations. Students were (cautiously) advised to speak up in their clinical practice when they had concerns at the same time they were required to gain permission to marry. These contradictory messages regarding authority echoed those created by the OWI literature, which defined, “a new image of women that

[90] Bass, 214-17.
[91] Dietz, *Professional Adjustments*, 46.
[92] Bass, “Professional Socialization,” 227-28. One curious addition to the policy exception on marriage was that student nurses even had to request permission in order to stay off-campus with their husbands while he was on leave.

focused on the competence and intelligence they could bring to a challenging career they had not previously considered to be within their scope," but also dictated precisely which occupations were appropriate.[93] And while wartime adventure fiction and romances sometimes even portrayed female characters as the managers of wartime businesses they were careful to describe these positions as temporary.[94] Narratives were carefully constructed in order to imply "that while women were capable of shouldering male responsibilities it was desirable that they do so only when a man was not available for the job."[95] Signaling female empowerment was not the goal of war propaganda; instead, it emphasized women's subordination of self to a greater cause in order to minimize any interpretation of female power or independence. In OWI fiction, women who failed to fulfill their patriotic duty lost the respect of men while those who cheerfully accepted their war worker role were rewarded with romance.[96] Of course, for nurse characters, these romances were with men who had also dutifully responded to the call. The effect of war literature on the image of the nurse was a revival of stereotypes, especially the nurse as selflessly devoted sweetheart, and the immensely powerful nurse as angel archetype.

[93] Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter*, 49.
[94] See Honey, "The Impact of Propaganda on Romances of the War Years," in *Creating Rosie the Riveter*, 72-97.
[95] Honey, 76.
[96] Honey, 77.

American Nursing History and the Image of the Nurse, post -World War II

As World War II came to an end, the OWI changed course and crafted literary formulas meant to encourage women back into the home. They devised new stories that emphasized a nostalgic view of the family. Honey explains:

> Women became the chief heralders of peace just as they had been the militant home-front fighters in battle. The desire for rest, tranquility, comfort fed easily into the depiction of women in a traditional helping role, and they were idealized as healers who would salve men's wounds while nurturing the generation that would harvest the rich fruit of postwar prosperity.[97]

The number of workingwomen characters fell drastically from August 1945 to March 1946; female characters who continued to filled the jobs that real women were channeled back into—nursing, teaching, and clerical positions. "The domestication of the war-working heroine was most marked in stories wherein women who had performed competently in challenging war jobs were shown yearning for domesticity."[98] Despite the efforts of the OWI many women weren't interested in this new ploy. As John Cawelti explains, the impact of literature on readers can be limited because imagined worlds can function differently than reality, "our experience of literature is unlike any other form of behavior since it concerns events and characters that are imagined. Reading about something is obviously not the same thing as doing it."[99] So, as Honey points out, regardless of what war propaganda sought to communicate to women about their motives for joining the war effort and what their roles would be when the war was over "economic incentives and the fulfillment of doing skilled work exerted a greater influence on women who had advanced during the war than did propaganda or private

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[97] Honey, 216.
[98] Honey, 97-8.
[99] John Cawelti, *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 23.

fantasies."[100] In fact, government agencies researched women's attitudes about work and their results indicated that many women did not want to give up their jobs after the war; in war production sectors, as many as seventy to eighty percent of women indicated a desire to keep their position after the war.[101] Nevertheless, women were laid off disproportionately from numerous industries when the war ended and the total number of women in the labor force decreased from thirty-six percent in 1945 to twenty-eight percent in 1947, a percentage scarcely higher than those from before the war.[102] Nurses were largely spared from the lay-offs, in part because of the booming hospital industry.

Ideas about healthcare had transformed; hospitals had become central to care, private insurance companies expanded, the American public began to conceive of healthcare as a right, and the government increased funding to hospitals. Private duty assignments were more of an exception than ever before and nursing became primarily a hospital job. Civilian hospitals were ready to hire the thousands of military nurses who would need a job at the end of the war. But nurses weren't eager to return to hospitals. Bass argues, "they had carried considerable responsibility in their army and navy positions. In fact, one survey revealed that only one in six nurses expected to return to their previous positions. Poor pay for hospital nurses compared to industry nurse, physician office, or in non-nursing jobs also contributed to shortages in nursing. Although nurses had achieved the status of 'professional' they did not feel that they

[100] Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter*, 11.
[101] Bass, "Professional Socialization," 182-183; Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter*, 23.
[102] Bass, 182-183

were treated accordingly by physicians, hospital administrators, or the public."[103] As hospital employees nurses were supervised by an administration and subordinate to doctors. Hospitals hierarchies were rigid and traditional, as were the daily rituals and routines played out by employees. For example, nurses were expected to stand in the presence of doctors, relinquish their chairs to doctors, hold the door open for a doctor and carry his medical charts.[104] A nurse was expected to address a doctor by his title while a doctor could use a nurse's first name. These sorts of formal behaviors were also prescribed within the hierarchies of nurses. Nursing aides, licensed practical nurses, and student nurses were expected to show deference to registered nurses, who in turn were subordinate to the supervising head nurses of departments and the directors of a hospital's nursing school. Malka explains the ideological contradiction: "nurses received one message from society that encouraged them to work at a job that valued and often encompassed domestic chores in a culture that promoted the domestic ideal; yet, this same society discouraged women from working for wages and devalued work that resembled domestic service."[105] Hospitals failed to recognize that nurses, especially military nurses, had skills and experiences beyond what they were permitted to perform.

In 1945, nurses still had two options for training: a hospital diploma program or, a baccalaureate program. At that time, only five percent of nursing students chose the baccalaureate option.[106] While hospital training schools were still the most attended, attendance at baccalaureate programs did increase steadily throughout the fifties and sixties. Overall, most of the education and training during this era was similar to and

[103] Bass, 242.
[104] Malka, *Daring to Care*,16-18.
[105] Malka, 14.
[106] Malka, 26-27.

utilized the same curricular guidelines and textbooks as had been used since the 1937 curricular changes. At this point in history, a generation of women had grown up reading influential career romance stories, many of which features wholesome and adventurous nurse heroines. The most famous of these was the Sue Barton series by Helen Dore Boylston, published between 1936 and 1952, and the Cherry Ames series, by Helen Wells and Julie Tatham, published between 1943-1968. These nurse series were written for an adolescent female audience with an aim to explain different pathways of nursing career while providing a model of the ideal nurse. While the protagonists are remarkably independent and career-centric—they defer romance for nursing. Adrianne Finlay argues that the novels figuratively disembody these young nurse heroines thus signaling to young women that the higher calling of nursing would require sacrificing a life as a woman, wife, or mother. Despite representing nursing as career that limited romantic opportunities, the tales of adventurous world travel inspired countless young women to join the profession.[107]

Professional associations sought to increase educational programming and specialty training. Specialization in the forties and fifties was mostly a matter of attaining educator, supervisor, or administrator status, but even these roles "lacked any formal education beyond basic nurse training in a hospital diploma program."[108] There were of

[107] For more about the influence of career stories on young women and more specifically the representation of nursing, see Adrianne Finlay, "Cherry Ames, Disembodied Nurse: War, Sexuality, and Sacrifice in the Novels of Helen Wells," *Journal of Popular Culture* 43, no. 6 (2010), https://doi-org.ezproxy.lib.uwm.edu/10.1111/j1540-5931.2010.00795.x; or, Deborah Philips, "Healthy Heroines: Sue Barton, Lillian Wald, Lavinia Lloyd Dock and the Henry Street Settlement," *Journal of American Studies* 33, no. 1 (1999), https://doi-org.ezproxy.lib.uwm.edu/10.1017/S0021875898006070.
[108] Malka, *Daring to Care*, 24.

course nurses who had clinical specialties, but again, these nurse specialists primarily gained their clinical expertise through on-the-job training as opposed to a university credentialing—this continues up until the seventies.[109]

Despite the fact that becoming a registered nurse required three to four years of education or training, nurses were paid less than either factory workers or teachers; general duty nurses in 1955 made roughly $70 less per month than both factory workers and secretaries.[110] Nurses had few worker rights or protections and the Labor Management Relations Act of 1947 exempted non-profit hospitals from any obligation to collective bargaining. Nurses felt they needed to advocate for their profession more efficiently by creating two distinct national nursing organizations: one to focus on legislative programs and lobbying and another to focus on the development of nursing education and continued professionalization of the field. Thus, in 1952, the National League for Nursing (NLN) was created by combining the National League of Nursing Education (NLNE), National Organization for Public Health Nursing, and the Association for Collegiate Schools of Nursing.[111] The NLN took on the task of accrediting nursing schools.

That same year, Columbia University introduced the concept of two-year, associate degree nursing program carried out at junior college or community college and a curriculum composed of half nursing classes and half general-education classes, with clinical experiences gained in the community.[112] These programs helped to increase the availability of trained healthcare providers to hospitals, but were more

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[109] Malka, 24-25.
[110] Malka, 25; Kalisch and Kalisch, *American Nursing,* 430.
[111] Bullough and Bullough, *The Emergence of Modern Nursing*, 211-13.
[112] Malka, *Daring to Care*, 29.

accessible because they were cheaper and could be completed in less time. These programs "attracted populations previously underrepresented in either diploma or BSN programs. These new students included older women, married women, women with children, blacks, men, and members of the working class."[113] The NLN formed the Committee on Coordination of Curriculum Study and Development in order to ensure nursing curriculum was consistent across local, state, and regional levels as well as to delineate curriculum objectives for the various level of nursing education; separate councils addressed the diploma, baccalaureate, and associate degree programs.[114] As in decades prior, studies on the status of the profession and the status of nursing education revealed that despite the addition of federal funding for nursing education that had begun during the war, overall, nursing education programs were not receiving the same support that other education programs did. Nurses reported that they still lacked authority to carry out their duties and nursing educators reiterated their concerns about hospitals taking advantage of student labor.

Nursing in the mid-sixties through the seventies reflected the broader themes of what Bass has identified as "era of turbulence and social change." The country saw citizens, especially of the younger generation, organize against legal, social, and economic inequalities faced by women and black Americans and publically criticize US foreign policies and interventions. Nurses, too, were sick of recommending changes in healthcare policy and nurse training; in the sixties, they demanded it. During this time period, nursing education underwent extreme changes, while hospital nurses staged

[113] Malka, 32.
[114] Bass, "Professional Socialization," 12-13.

labor protests, and the ANA demanded legislative changes, and finally achieved success in gaining states to recognize their autonomous status in the healthcare field.

In 1965 the American Nurses Association published a policy paper calling for nursing education to move from the hospital to institutions of higher education.[115] Baccalaureate programs in that year still counted for less than seventeen percent of nursing programs and less than twenty-three percent of new graduates.[116] Curriculum at hospital training schools moved away from teaching professional development in its traditional forms and highlighted, "a more participative or democratic character to the professional development content than in earlier sources," in addition to adopting "student's rights and responsibilities" guidelines, which opened up the possibility for students to inquire and express opinions more than ever.[117] Policies were developed for students to get involved in curriculum development, curriculum evaluations, and teaching evaluations.[118] Though the classroom teaching and textbooks encouraged more democratic atmosphere, in clinical settings nurses still did not talk back to doctors and largely relied upon communicating with their instructors or nurse supervisor if they were unclear about a direction or had concerns. The exception was students at baccalaureate programs who were being taught not to put the doctor on a pedestal.[119] Value-expectations like obedience and discipline were still mentioned in textbooks, but were presented in regards to responsibility, accountability, and teamwork. What did not change, however, was that manners, hygiene and health, and the uniform were still

[115] Malka, *Daring to* Care, 7-8.
[116] Malka, 29.
[117] Bass, "Professional Socialization," 288-89.
[118] Bass, 288-89.
[119] Bass, 314-15.

considered vital external factors to professional development and there were still strict regulations about details like hairstyle, skirt length, and the wearing of jewelry.[120] While married students were not barred or dismissed, it was still highly discouraged while in training.[121] Student living arrangements were more flexible, though most still resided in dormitories of the hospital school or college.[122]

Academic year 1972-1973 was the first year that admissions to baccalaureate programs exceeded diploma programs.[123] Changing the primary educational context from the hospital to the collegiate setting affected both formal education as well as informal preparations like professional socialization. In effect, students spent less time at the hospital, living with other nursing students, and interacting with instructors and medical professionals. More time was spent in classrooms than in clinical practice, and the focus was on education over service or work. But, this also meant nurses had opportunities to do their clinical experiences in non-hospital settings or specialty settings. Courses spent less time on "professional adjustments" in favor of teaching medicine. As Kalisch and Kalisch summarize:

> "Nursing education became increasingly integrated into academic settings during the late 1960s and early 1970s. The pool of nurses with baccalaureate degree from high-quality college and university programs grew steadily….Nursing became deeply involved in theory development and testing and clinical research. A growing pool of well-educated nurses held powerful, well-paid, policymaking positions in health care service and educational institutions as well as in state and federal government agencies. As nursing matured, a growing segment of the profession saw itself as entirely different from the nurse of the bygone era: the dedicate, physician-dominated graduate of the past who accepted the wide-spread assumption that nursing was a lesser profession than medicine and entirely subservient to it."

[120] Bass, 292; 307.
[121] Bass, 303; 308.
[122] Bass, 304-05
[123] Bass, 4.

As for professional developments in the field, nursing roles expanded and the educational programs worked to better equip nurses for specialized and advanced roles. Nurses' roles expanded in the 1970s through the development of positions such as the nurse clinician and nurse practitioner; in these roles nurses functioned independently or in collaboration with physicians instead of underneath them while often also performing functions that had traditionally been the physician's domain.[124] But hospitals and doctors struggled with nurses now demanding to be treated as an equal partner in the care of the patients.[125] Advanced nursing degrees became more attainable by the seventies on account of several pieces of federal legislation that provided grants, scholarships, and low-interest loans for nurses to return for master's degrees. State professional associations demanded revisions to states' definition of nursing practice, seeking revisions to distinguish the nurse's independent functions and to include the expanded and advanced roles they were now filling.[126] The first state to do so was New York in 1973 and other states soon followed.

While the ANA was active in studying nursing issues and lobbying for change, they had traditionally not favored the methods of labor unions to achieve change. In 1966, the California Nurse's Association went against the ANA and organized mass resignations and mass strikes to demand better salaries. Knowing that without the ANA California nurses would join outside labor unions, the ANA quickly got on board and "launched an aggressive campaign to organize the nation's 800,000 registered

[124] Kalisch and Kalisch, *American Nursing,* 421-22.
[125] Bass, "Professional Socialization," 284-85.
[126] Bass, 286-87.

nurses."[127] Their first agenda item was getting Congress to repeal the exemption provided to non-profit hospitals in the Taft-Hartley Act, which protected hospitals from the obligation to bargain collectively. This had been a goal of the ANA since the 1949 when the exemption became law; they achieved their goal in 1974.[128]

Through the seventies and eighties, the field of nursing developed their own theories of nursing marking nursing as both autonomous profession and a distinct academic discipline.[129] Increasing specialization within nursing, the use of feminist frameworks, and the development of advanced education programs in nursing all combined to assert nursing as an autonomous field and fight the paternalistic doctor-nurse hierarchies within both clinical and academic settings.[130]

By the 1980s nurse practitioners were gaining the authority to prescribe, most often through dependent authority with a physician but some states, such as Oregon and Washington, gave nurses independent prescriptive authority by 1983.[131]

Nursing, like so many jobs and fields, underwent professionalization in the early twentieth century; in the 1970s it underwent a second-wave of professionalization. The first professionalization was vital, but as Malka argues, it actually slowed down the progress of both feminism and nursing; by permitting ideas about nursing to be associated with narrow ideals of femininity, women of different racial, ethnic, and class backgrounds were divided.[132] In the 1860s American society opened up to the idea that women might labor in certain professions, but a century later, women were ready to

[127] Kalisch and Kalisch, *American Nursing,* 432.
[128] Kalisch and Kalisch, 430-33.
[129] Malka, *Daring to Care,* 8.
[130] Malka, 8.
[131] Kalisch and Kalisch, *American Nursing,* 424-25.
[132] Malka, *Daring to Care*, 6.

redefine their role in the workforce again. The advancements in the field of nursing were influenced by the women's movement. As Malka writes the "revitalized women's movement acted as a force for radical change by reconstructing attitudes regarding women and work and women and education."[133] At first, feminists clashed with the profession of nursing; the traditions and conventions of nursing appeared contradictory to the requirements of feminism. But nurses sought to reject those conventions and saw the aims of feminism as cohesive to their own aims of redefining and restructuring the profession.

Nurses fought in the second half of the twentieth century to encourage "expertise, scholarship, autonomy, authority, and professionalism."[134] In 1976, Jo Ann Ashley published the book *Hospitals, Paternalism, and the Role of the Nurse*, which explored the pervasive gender and class bias in the healthcare industry.[135] Ashley, who was a nursing scholar, educator, and activist, urged the nursing field to assess its goals and work to overcome biases; she was among the first to start connecting the nursing profession to feminist discourses. Leaders like Ashley demonstrated that equality feminism could provide the frameworks of analysis that nursing leaders needed to address gender subordination in the field of nursing and gave nurses the "language, rationale, and strategy" they needed to "construct a future free from the traditional nursing modes of deference, obedience, and subordination."[136] Second-wave feminism helped nurses disentangle Nightingale's Victorian ideals from the profession but the

[133] Malka, 1.
[134] Malka, 1.
[135] Jo Ann Ashley, *Hospitals, Paternalism, and the Role of the Nurse (*New York: Teachers College Press, 1976).
[136] Malka, *Daring to Care,* 5.

nurses today still fight mass media representation that is influenced by the age-old stereotypes and archetypes.

The Importance of Nurse Stereotype, Archetypes, and Mass Media Portrayals

Longstanding stereotypes imagine nurses as a complicated amalgamation of both chaste and erotic. Nurses attend to the physical care of patients; at times in history when the touching between sexes was more carefully guarded, nurses necessarily transgressed this boundary. And yet, nurse uniforms through most of the twentieth century were cool, white, and highly starched to communicate cleanliness and orderliness, while evoking a sense of chastity and religiosity. There are many discrepancies and contradictions found in the nursing image: the nurse can be angelic, virginal, and heroic but also cold, condescending, even a villain. Robinson notes, "the nurse is desired and feared. She represents the affirmation of life as well as the reality of death."[137] The most basic and pervasive and persistent stereotype since the nineteenth century is based upon a presumption of sex-role specialization—that nurses are all female. By creating an ideology of nursing—supported through symbols, myths, and rituals—beliefs about nursing now seem natural and inevitable, lacking a developmental history. Since nursing was defined as a woman's profession, "the ideology of nursing has sought to confine the behavior and identity of half of humanity within strict limits—the supposed nature of woman. Ideology uses the fabrication of images and the processes of representation to persuade us that nurses are who and what they are because that is who and what they should be."[138] The history of the

[137] Robinson, "Remembering the Soul of the Nurse,"191.
[138] Kalisch and Kalisch, *The Changing Image of the Nurse,* 2.

nursing profession in America demonstrates how nursing ideology has at times benefitted women and at other times limited the profession's development. Today, the stereotypes of the nurse no longer serve the profession and most nurses seek to reject them. Malka argues that "most nurses do not like the angel metaphor... it idealizes difficult work that has low wages, long hours, and is under the cover of self-sacrifice, which is actually quite demeaning, sentimentalizing, and trivializing of the reality of nurse's work"[139] Nurses have stepped into the role of historian in order to interpret their history in a way that better represents both it's struggles and triumphs.

Nursing historians explore the ways that political and economic situations impacted nursing, the impact of nursing on American society, and how changes in nursing education and health care systems affect the health of the nation. They are interested in the interaction of nursing, politics, and culture. Scholars across disciplines have studied the nurse as an archetype in fiction, investigated the stereotypes about personality traits of nurses, and done in depth analyses about the socialization of the nurse through history. [140] Many nursing scholars focus on the history of the profession's representation in popular culture both in history and today.

Scholars have sought to learn how the image of nurse in the popular imagination has changed over time and how it affects the reputation of nurses and actual healthcare delivery. For these nurses and scholars, the stakes are very real. Kalisch and Kalisch write, "how the mass media portray nursing affects the politics of human resource

[139] Robinson, "Remembering the Soul of the Nurse," 198.
[140] As already examined, Bass, "Professional Socialization," and Turner, "In Perfect Sympathy,"; but also see, Randy E. Gross, "Warmth and Competence Traits: Perceptions of Female and Male Nurse Stereotypes," (PhD. diss. The City University of New York, 2017); or, Robinson, "Remembering the Soul of the Nurse."

allocation, development, and utilization. Mass media portrayals of nursing also influence public opinions and desires, which in turn influence the course of nursing."[141] These scholars analyze the media's impact on nursing as a profession throughout American history, in part as a "barometer of public opinion."[142] For the most part, these studies have been carried out by nursing scholars with an aim to improve the image of the profession as a technical and necessary field within healthcare. As one nurse states, "There are more than 2.5 million registered nurses in the United States who provide more hands-on care daily to individuals than any other health care profession, yet nurses are left out of the public picture and the image of nurses remains that of inaccurate stereotypes."[143] Suzanne Gordon, in her assessment of mass media portrayals of nurses believes that they undermine the public's understanding of nurse's clinical roles and expertise. "RNs are either largely invisible or depicted in ways that trivialize, sentimentalize, or sometimes even demonize them."[144] Across nurse representations in children's stories, adult fiction books, TV shows, and movies she concludes that nurses are portrayed as merely the secretaries or the hospital or the helpers of the doctor. Gordon also worries that the contemporary media reinforces a social trend that accepts independent and intelligent women so long as they emulate men. She names this the "dress-for-success feminism" phenomenon:

> the woman who moved into traditionally male fields of endeavor and advanced because she became as individualistic, competitive, autonomous, and

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[141] Kalisch Kalisch, *The Changing Image of the Nurse,* x.
[142] Kalisch and Kalisch, *The Changing Image of the Nurse,* 7.
[143] Eileen Meier, "The Image of a Nurse—Myth vs. Reality," *Nursing Economics* 17, no. 5 (Sept 1999): 274.
[144] Suzanne Gordon. *Nursing against the Odds: How Health Care Cost Cutting, Media Stereotypes, and Medical Hubris Undermine Nurses and Patient Care* (Ithaca, N.Y.: ILR Press, an Imprint of Cornell University Press, 2005), 149-50.

> materialistic as any man. Socialized in a "masculine world," these women often joined men in looking down on women who remained in traditionally female fields like nursing, teaching, and social work. While women climbing the ladder may have hit a glass ceiling, women still doing women's work were crashing against a shatterproof roof of class and gender prejudice in jobs that were poorly paid, and in which they were poorly treated. Moreover, they now had to deal with the scorn of those liberated women who looked down on the work they performed.[145]

This phenomenon gets played out on television programming and in movies through successful and ambitious female and minority characters who are doctors and medical students, but never a nurse.[146] Even news media, hospital advertising and publications, and recognition ceremonies held by hospitals for nurses focus on traditional stereotypes about nursing, describing their cheerful and selfless work ethic or referring to them as "angels." Gordon criticizes public campaigns by hospitals that pay lip service to nurses with billboards that thank nurses for their "courage, strength, dedication, commitment, talent, unselfishness, and more commitment" without ever mentioning their "brains, intelligence, skill, expertise, judgment, technical, or medical know-how, or even compassion and caring."[147] While nurses have made significant accomplishments in gaining authority and respect within their actual practice, public messaging still resorts to Nightingale's feminine virtues. Gordon's recommendation is that nurses learn how to talk to the press and that they develop a "practice narrative" that describes the activities and contributions of clinicians. The narrative "would explain why nurses are educated not born, why they need social resources to do their work, why they need good working conditions and decent collegial relationships, and why they

[145] Gordon, *Nursing against the Odds,* 166.
[146] Gordon, 166-67.
[147] Gordon, *Nursing against the Odds,* 178.

need authority within their institutions."[148] For these nurses and nursing scholars, the significance is not merely about their reputation, but about controlling the cultural narrative around nursing from within the profession in order to gain the support and resources they need to succeed.

The goals of these scholars are commendable and their arguments persuasive. They have taken a wide array of scholarly approaches to understanding popular representations of nurses, including sociology, psychology, literary theory, and media theory. But few of them take into account popular romance fiction. Instead, their focus has been on television programs, movies, and literary fiction. Even literary critic Leslie Fiedler, whose book *Tyranny of the Normal* includes a chapter about the archetypal associations of the nurse in literature claims that after Ernest Hemingway's portrayal of a passive Nurse Catherine Barkley in *A Farewell to Arms* (published 1929) American culture failed to produce any nurse-protagonists until the Counter Culture of the late sixties rebirthed the stereotype of the tyrant nurse in Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* .[149] Though Kalisch and Kalisch devote an entire book to analyzing popular representations of the nurse in *The Changing Image of the Nurse,* they neglect popular romance novels. Romance fiction has been one of the highest selling genres of literature for over a century yet scholars across disciplines don't account for its significance—a trend lamented and discussed at length by scholars of popular romance. If, as Kalisch and Kalisch argue, "entertainment fare does more than merely entertain: it communicates information about the social structure and shapes attitudes about

[148] Gordon, *Nursing against the Odds,* 204.
[149] Leslie Fiedler, *Tyranny of the Normal: Essays on Bioethics, Theology and Myth* (Boston, MA: Godine, 1996) 121-35.

ourselves, others, and the world at large," then the representation of nurses in works that have received some of the highest rates of readership should be considered. This thesis seeks to fill that gap by addressing the stereotypes and archetypes that fill the pages of nurse-themed romance fiction.

Chapter Two
A History of Romance and Romance Scholarship

The British publisher Mills & Boon may have initiated critical studies on romance novels; for their sixtieth anniversary in 1969, they commissioned sociologist Peter H. Mann to conduct a study of reader preferences.[150] A year later, in *The Female Eunuch,* Germaine Greer chastised romance novels for promoting traditional views of marriage and monogamy—institutions she critiqued as patriarchal, capitalist and thus complicit in severing women from their own sexuality and power. In 1972, Kathleen Woodiwiss's novel *The Flame and the Flower* became a bestseller and ushered in the new subgenre of the sweet savage romances, also known as *bodice-rippers*. The sweet savage romances departed from the wholesome conventions romances had followed in decades past; they narrated scenes of sexuality, sometimes portraying the female protagonist claiming her own desire but other times depicting scenes of male aggression and sexual coercion. When Greer made her critique, it was against the sweet category romances. Greer opened the door for feminist objections to romances and after the arrival of the brand new sweet savage style, feminists saw two targets: sweet romances for promoting patriarchal traditions and sweet savage romances for sanctioning sexual violence. A decade after Greer's critique, literary and cultural studies scholar Janice A. Radway published her own critique of romance novels in *Reading the Romance* (1984). Radway wove feminist objections to romance novels with literary analysis using reader-response criticism. Through *Reading the Romance*,

[150] Sarah S.G. Frantz and Eric Murphy Selinger, introduction to *New Approaches to Popular Romance Fiction: Critical Essays* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2012), 15.

Radway introduced romance novels as a category of literature worthy of serious study in the academy.

Many people have a vague awareness of the arguments against romance novels made by Germaine Greer in *The Female Eunuch* and by Janice Radway in *Reading the Romance* because they are familiar with claims such as that romance novels encourage traditional gender stereotypes and promote patriarchal attitudes towards women.[151] Even those not studying literature or gender studies are familiar with claims of second-wave feminism because they have become naturalized in our social discourse about women's reading habits. Like Betty Friedan's arguments in *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), the critiques of feminists in the 1970s and 1980s were based in cultural theory and psychotherapy; they were socially and emotionally powerful—if not methodologically sound—to women organizing to overcome gender oppression. Friedan's arguments became naturalized into general perceptions about what life was like for women in the twentieth century and Greer' and Radway's arguments informed ideas about what romance novels are and how they affect women readers. But many people have not read these texts; they have accepted these perceptions based upon inherited interpretations, many of which distort and misapply their arguments. For example, scholars know that romance novels propagate patriarchy just as they know that ladies' magazines fostered women's entrapment in suburban housewifery. Mallory Jagodzinski, scholar of American and popular culture, illustrates further when she explains:

[151] Julie M. Dugger offers a concise summary of Radway's *Reading the Romance* and its continued influence on romance scholarship in her article "'I'm a Feminist, But…' Popular Romance in the Women's Literature Classroom," *Journal of Popular Romance Studies* 4, no.2 (October, 2014).

> Nearly everywhere I go as a scholar, people know *Reading the Romance* – or, at least, they know bits and pieces of the work. Peers, colleagues, and even professors make comments about romance novels, patriarchy, and bored housewives and wait for me to make my own dismissive comments about the genre.[152]

Friedan, Greer, and Radway voiced deep fears in society, which made lasting impressions on both scholars and the public, but Radway implores her readers to remember that her work is the "product of a very particular historical moment."[153] *Reading the Romance* reflected the concerns of second-wave feminist scholars who grappled with the content and imagery of bodice-rippers while Greer contested all forms of romanticism that promoted heteronormative monogamy, of which romance fiction was just one example. The problem, as Ms. Jagodzinski notes, is that "the historical moment captured by *Reading the Romance* is often taught in the academy as the *contemporary* moment, both for the romance genre and for its readers."[154] Over the past 30 years, neither romance novels nor the scholarship about them have remained static.

This chapter will take a look at the origins and evolution of the romance genre as well as the genre's reception and reputation through various time periods. It will discuss historical biases and their connection to the genre's relationship to women readers and authors as well as the genre's incredible growth in the twentieth century, thanks to the development of paperback and mass-market publishing in the United States. This chapter will also summarize the development of the field of popular romance studies, providing an overview of the variety of methodologies romance scholars have used to

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[152] Mallory Jagodzinski, "We've Come a Long Way, Baby: Reflecting Thirty Years after *Reading the Romance," Journal of Popular Romance Studies* 4, no.2 (October, 2014): 1.
[153] Janice Radway, new introduction to *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature,* 2nd ed. (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1991), 1.
[154] Jagodzinski, "We've Come a Long Way, Baby," 1.

analyze the genre's influence on both literature and society, and the ensuing debates over the impact of romance on readers. By offering a history of the genre and descriptions of its form, I offer a corrective to the frequently partial and/or biased views that many people have about romances. This is important so that readers understand the types of materials that I use during my primary source analysis as well as the approaches of contemporary romance scholars that inform my own methods.

Romance as Literary Genre

The romance genre of literature is as broad as any other fiction genre. The historical romance paperbacks stocked in wire racks at grocery stores and featuring cover illustrations of corset wearing heroines and muscular men with half open shirts are likely what comes to mind when romance novels are mentioned. But these types of romances didn't become popular until the late 1970s; the history of the genre is much older than that. To liken all romance novels to bodice-rippers and *historicals*, as many critics do, ignores the diversity, history, and influence of the genre.

Though many literary histories situate the start of the romance after the development of novel fiction, romance scholars trace its origins much further back in history. By defining romance in its broadest sense as a story that "focuses on what is depicted—an idealized world—and how—non-mimetically—and on that depiction's status in the minds of authors and readers—fantasy," literary scholar Pamela Regis demonstrates that many narratives through history could be called romances.[155] Both Regis and Kristen Ramsdell, also a literary scholar and librarian, believe that romance

[155] Pamela Regis, *A Natural History of the Romance Novel (*Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 20.

novels grew out of the epic traditions and still share elements with the ancient Greek comedy.[156] In her book *A Natural History of the Romance Novel,* Regis demonstrates that romances simply modify the *Greek New Comedy* for contemporary taste and adapt some of its conventions to allow for female protagonists. Modern romance novels still follow the same basic pattern. The oppositional forces that Greek male heroes face are of course different than those that female heroines in romance novels face, but in both types of stories the protagonist must overcome this conflict to ensure a satisfactory ending. And, speaking of the happy ending, both genres depend upon an ideal, albeit vaguely defined, world at the end in which a happy couple will go on. Both genres ultimately depend upon a protagonist who is at first limited by the world around them and after some struggle, achieves freedom, even if limited.[157]

The Middle Ages, too, had romances. In this period, a romance was "a popular tale that centered around a theme of adventure and love."[158] Arthurian legends, chivalric quests, and French courtly loves tales are all prime examples. The romance genre in the form we recognize today developed in the middle of the seventeenth century with the emergence of the novel. The term *novel* was used to distinguish stories that described contemporary life as opposed to fantasy worlds. Both authors and literary theorists have long found the distinction murky and argued the subjective nature of the categorizing a text as realistic or imaginative. In fact, designating writings to one type or the other has a contentious history, "For example," Regis tells us, "romancers

[156] Greek comedy has an established pattern in which a young man desires a woman but there is an oppositional force that must be overcome before the two can marry.
[157] Regis, *A Natural History of the Romance Novel,* 27-30.
[158] Kristin Ramsdell, *Romance Fiction: a Guide to the Genre,* 2nd ed. (Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited, 1999), 5.

Hawthorne and Melville used the distinction to assume the aesthetic high ground; they looked down upon the mere 'novelists' in the area below."[159]

Regis argues that both scholars of the novel and scholars of romance misunderstand the interconnectedness of the two forms; romance scholars have downplayed the genre's connection to the emergence and rise of the novel, while scholars of novels tend to not give enough attention to the romance novel as a part of the tradition.[160] Regis demonstrates that in fact, the history of the romance novel in eighteenth and nineteenth century England follows the same trajectory as novels more broadly and that many romances are a part of the canon of English classic novels.[161] Both Regis and Ramsdell identify Samuel Richardson's novel *Pamela: or Virtue Rewarded* (1740) and his subsequent novel *Clarissa Harlowe* (1747) as the catalysts of the contemporary genre.[162] *Pamela* reimagined prose writing by focusing on character development and just one action to drive its plot—a courtship. This novel was the first English bestseller with five editions printed in its first year.[163]

The popularity of the romance novel in the middle of the eighteenth century is attributed to its characters, who navigate the same social transformation facing their readers. Regis writes, "The romance novel steps forward as a dominant genre in

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[159] Regis, *A Natural History of the Romance Novel,* 21.
[160] Regis*,* 53.
[161] Regis identifies and analyzes five romance novels for their adherence to the Augustan, Romantic, Victorian, and Edwardian styles. Regis combines traditional formalist techniques with reader-response criticism and contextual analysis. By selecting novels that were both immensely popular when published and which still hold a place in the contemporary canon, Regis makes a defense for literary history to re-evaluate the importance of romantic fiction. *A Natural History of the Romance Novel,* 53-55.
[162] Ramsdell, *Romance Fiction: a Guide to the Genre,* 5.
[163] Regis, *A Natural History of the Romance Novel,* 64.

English letters at a time of changing values and practices concerning courtship and marriage."[164] Individualism was gaining acceptance as a valuable trait and companionate marriages were becoming more common, but English law still required—until the late nineteenth century—that women forfeit all economic and property rights to their husbands. The heroines of romance novels reflected the experiences of women in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Heroines faced difficult decisions between conforming to familial expectations or asserting their individualism; romance plots centered around a courtship arising from attraction and affection, instead of marriages of duty or convenience; and heroines grappled with their decision of who to marry, knowing it would irreversibly alter their legal and financial standing. Women were caught in a complex social system that simultaneously permitted them to pursue liberty and love, but then required they relinquish their means to liberty upon marrying. "Courtship," then, "became a battleground for the working out of these sometimes conflicting values."[165] Heroines in romance demonstrated the many ways that women dealt with their new realities; it is no wonder that romance novels continued to gain popularity at the same time that they aroused the suspicion of many others.

Scholars like Belinda Jack, author of *The Woman Reader,* maintain that prejudice against romance fiction is due to its appeal to women readers and a generalized opposition to female literacy throughout Western history. She writes,

> Women's access to the written word has been a particular source of anxiety for men — and indeed some women – almost from the very beginning. Through the centuries there have been many and various attempts to control literacy or access to reading material and, of course, counterforces, such as the vigorous individual and collective campaigns to promote women's literacy and free access

[164] Regis, 55.
[165] Regis, 59.

> to books, which in some parts of the world, remain the *sine qua non* of women's greater social and political equality.[166]

But, perhaps because of its strong female character development, fiction more so than any other writing has been associated with licentiousness. In fact, popular historian and author Bill Bryson recounts that during the 18th and 19th centuries doctors often recommended that women suffering from impure thoughts immediately remove from their routines any stimulating forces such as "spicy foods and the reading of light fiction...Light fiction was commonly held to account for promoting morbid thoughts and a tendency to nervous hysteria."[167] This wariness about fiction reading and its effects on women is best exemplified in the writing of doctors themselves. Take for example, the words of Dr. Mary Wood-Allen, who in 1898 advised:

> Girls are not apt to understand the evils of novel-reading, and may think that it is only because their mothers have outlived their days of romance that they object to their daughters enjoying such sentimental reading; but the wise mother understands the effects of sensational reading upon the physical organization, and wished to protect her daughter from the evils thus produced. It is not only that novel-reading engenders false and unreal ideas of life, but the descriptions of love-scenes, of thrilling, romantic episodes, find an echo in the girl's physical system and tend to create an abnormal excitement…[168]

Of course, American society has outgrown its views that women should be kept from reading and women are free to read from any genre they desire. According to Jack, "The revolutionary moment, for the woman reader, comes in those parts of the world where women were both able to read, and had access to a significant range of material. In many cases what mattered most was to be able to use libraries."[169] Most libraries in

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[166] Belinda Jack, *The Woman Reader (*New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 1.
[167] Bill Bryson, *At Home: A Short History of Private Life* (New York: Anchor Books, 2011), 389.
[168] Mary Wood-Allen, *What a Young Woman Ought to Know* (Philadelphia: 1898), 124.
[169] Jack, *The Woman* Reader, 1.

the eighteenth century were subscription-based, meaning content was limited and membership restricted to those of means. But in the nineteenth century, a movement for the creation of public libraries gained favor. By the end of that century, philanthropists were helping to fund public libraries across the United States.

Through the eighteenth and nineteenth century, horror gothic novels and romantic gothic novels were among the most popular genres of literature in American and England. Anne Radcliffe, who had pioneered Gothic fiction was one of the most financially successful writers of the late eighteenth century—no small feat for a woman at the time. The more sentimental Gothic novels had plots imbued with adventure, suspense, and danger; these novels would influence later female writers such as Jane Austen and the Brontës.[170] The popularity of the sentimental Gothic novels continued well into the nineteenth century at which point Sir Walter Scott ushered in another fad and subgenre of romance fiction, the historical. Historical romances have seen periods of more and less popularity, but overall have remained a strong subgenre even through the contemporary period. Ramsdell explains that as the historical romance novel gained popularity in the early nineteenth century, American readers increasingly sought out those novels that centered on American settings. The 1820s saw the rise of the Domestic Sentimentalists, a group of female romance writers. The works of these women came to dominate the market by the 1850s; in fact, their popularity was great enough to draw the ire of Nathaniel Hawthorne who called them "scribbling women."[171] The popularity of these female writers was helped along by the fact that more people

[170] Ramsdell, *Romance Fiction: a Guide to the Genre,* 6.
[171] For the names of some of the more popular authors and Hawthorne's verbatim critique, see Ramsdell, *Romance Fiction: a Guide to the Genre,* 6.

than ever had access to books. Reading was extolled as a civic good and promoted for self-improvement; public libraries became widespread at the same time that technical innovations in printing and papermaking enabled publishers to increase production while decreasing prices for consumers. Publishing houses found it possible to increase their title lists and take chances on new authors and genres. As they did so, romance subgenres proliferated. Despite book prices lowering and production volume increasing, books were still not cheap enough to become a mass medium. Most bookselling was done through mail order, book clubs, specialty gift shops, and through independent bookstores. Buyers were not accustomed to browsing many titles as we are today. Wholesalers distributed to booksellers and there were only a few thousand bookshops in the US. According to Kenneth C. Davis, "In two-thirds of America's counties, there were no bookstores at all."[172] As Davis explains, book clubs reached hundreds or thousands of readers, but usually only one title was available per month and they were generally still as expensive as other hardcover books.[173] Instead, dime novels in short paperbound series as well as story papers and weeklies became incredibly common formats for all types of popular fiction. These formats were more affordable than traditional books for the growing number of readers of lower socio-economic means.

In the early twentieth century, contemporary romance novels became popular for their primarily domestic settings and inspirational tones. Additionally, romance writers

[172] Kenneth C. Davis, *Two-Bit Culture: The Paperbacking of America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1984), 16.
[173] Davis, *Two-Bit Culture*,16-17.

even started catering to adolescent and young adult readers.[174] For example, romance novelist Lucy Maud Montgomery wrote the *Anne of Green Gables* series and is now seen as one of the forerunners of contemporary Young Adult (YA) Romance because she focused on "teenage concerns related to growing up and falling in love."[175] Even as new subgenres continually appeared, older forms like the historical romance saw renewed popularity during particular decades. For example, Ramsdell attributes the resurgence in popularity of the historical romance during the 1930s and 1940s to the Great Depression and World War II, which inspired readers to seek stories that allowed an escape to another time and place.[176]

Shortly before World War II, the publishing world was turned on its head when Allen Lane of Penguin Books in London published a set of paperback books, priced them each at just six pence, and promptly sold thousands. That was in 1935. Just a few years later in New York, Robert DeGraff did the same with what he called Pocket Books. DeGraff selected ten titles to publish in paperback format, small enough to fit in a pocket, and priced at just 25 cents a copy. Paper book covers were not a new invention, in fact "They [paperbacks] date back to the sixteenth century, and paperbacking has been the ordinary mode of book production in France, for instance, for centuries."[177] But paperback publishing on a major scale had been attempted several times in England and the US during the nineteenth century without much success. What Lane and DeGraff did differently was alter methods of distribution and marketing; they catered to

[174] Ramsdell, *Romance Fiction: a Guide to the Genre,* 7.
[175] Ramsdell, 7.
[176] Ramsdell, 8.
[177] Louis Menand, "Pulp's Big Moment: How Emily Bronte Met Mickey Spillane," *New Yorker*, December 29, 2014, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/01/05/pulps-big-moment.

the general public in every way, from the selection of titles they printed, to the small and colorful form of the books, to the retailers they selected to stock their product. With only twenty-eight hundred bookstores in the United States in 1939, De Graff knew that moving large numbers would be difficult unless he found alternate distribution channels, so he installed them anywhere and everywhere that magazines were already being sold: drugstores, cigar stores, newsstands, train and bus stations.[178] He designed the paperback book to fit inside wire racks for display and the racks, too, were designed to fit the smaller retailers. By distributing these books to the same vendors as magazines, and pricing them affordably, DeGraff opened up book buying to the wider public and encouraged potential buyers to browse colorful covers and buy on impulse. He also hired an ad agency to write an ad for the newspaper to come out the same day he started his test-run. The ad read, "These new Pocket Books are designed to fit both the tempo of our times and the needs of New Yorkers… They're as handy as a pencil, as modern and convenient as a portable radio—and as good looking."

The mass-market paperback made changes to the social, cultural, educational, and literary life of Americans. It may not have been an entirely new medium, but the changes in format were significant enough to affect how books were sold, consumed, and now cast aside after reading. The paperback format radically altered how people thought about books and about reading. Today, we make little distinction between trade paperbacks and mass-market paperbacks because both formats are ubiquitous, but mass-market paperbacks emerged first and higher-end trade paperbacks followed after a couple decades. "Suddenly, a book could reach not hundreds or thousands of readers

[178] Menand, "Pulp's Big Moment."

but millions, many of whom had never owned a book before."[179] Additionally, the new paperback format allowed for more privacy in regards to the content of the book; readers could remove the covers of controversial books and no one was the wiser that they were reading *Lady Chatterly's Lover* or *The Story of O*.

World War II only helped increase the popularity of these mass-market paperbacks. Thanks to collaboration between publishing companies and the United States government, service people were provided paperbacks for free during the war. The effect of these *Armed Service Editions* was lasting as Americans developed a habit of both reading for pleasure and becoming comfortable with the idea of books as cheap, disposable commodities. During and immediately after the war, paperback publishing gained swift momentum. Avon began publishing in 1941, followed by Popular Library (1942), Dell (1943), Bantam (1945), New American (1948), Harlequin (1949), Pyramid (1949), Fawcett (1950), Ace (1952), Ballantine (1952).

In 1947, 95 million paperbacks were sold in the United States alone.[180] At first, in the rush to bring product to market, paperback publishers produced books that all had a similar pulp aesthetic, regardless of genre—this aesthetic is now seen as a midcentury art form in its own right. "Paperback publishers made no effort to distinguish classics from kitsch. On the contrary, they commissioned covers for books like 'Brave New World' and 'The Catcher in the Rye' from the same artists who did the covers for books like 'Strangler's Serenade' and 'The Case of the Careless Kitten.'"[181] Paperbacks were a form of cheap leisure and advertised in a similar manner as other mass entertainment

[179] Davis, *Two-Bit* Culture, xii.
[180] Menand, "Pulp's Big Moment."
[181] Menand, "Pulp's Big Moment."

like movies or TV. Cover art and captions sensationalized the work, often obscuring the true plot. Publishers set record high volumes for their initial print runs. For example, Pocket Books' initial print runs began at 100,000 copies, Signet's at 200,00, and Fawcett's Gold Medal Book imprint began their print runs at 300,000 copies.[182] The market quickly became saturated with both publishers and new genres. In response, publishers started to specialize in specific genres once again. Several publishers discovered romance fiction was lucrative and tried to corner the market with fiction directed to a female readership, namely Avon and Harlequin. Other early publishers of paperback romance novels were Bantam, Popular Library, Pyramid Books, Fawcett, and Dell.

Popular Library originally focused on primarily mysteries and westerns when they began in 1942. They produced books of cheap quality and relied on gaudy cover art attract male readers, as many paperback publishers did. By the end of the fifties, however, they saw the most success with romance titles and accordingly adjusted their title selection and marketing tactics to cater to women readers. Bill Pronzini, writer and prolific popular fiction anthologist, explains "The cover art was designed to appeal to women; the appearance of each book was softer, more pleasing to the eye. The gaudy masculine titles and cover blurbs of the fifties disappeared."[183]

Popular Library wasn't the first publisher to realize the importance tailoring their product's packaging; Avon Books (founded 1940) was the first publisher to focus on artful cover illustrations. They did so in order to create a clearer distinction between their

[182] Menand, "Pulp's Big Moment."
[183] Bill Pronzini, "Popular Library," in *Mass Market Publishing in America,* ed. Allen Billy Crider (Boston: G.K. Hall & Co., 1982), 238.

publications and those of Pocket Books after DeGraff took them to court for mimicking their book designs. Avon was first known for mystery titles but by the 1950s they tended toward racier material and became known for their suggestive covers, "which pictured romantically idealized heroes and heroines in a lush color style, often with more than a hint of violence in the poses or situations."[184] Avon was also successful because they moved product quickly—they estimated the half-life of any one title to be three months and if a title sold less than 50 thousand titles, Avon dropped it from their list.[185]

For several decades starting in the forties, numerous minor publishing companies cropped up, each vying for a slice of the paperback market while major publishing houses fought to maintain market control with ever expanding title lists. Many small publishing houses, such as Croydon, only lasted a decade or less in the industry. Some focused on reprints, others on originals, yet nearly all of them experimented with the *sex sells* approach whether by publishing erotic literature or using visual innuendo on their covers even when a book's content had little to do with sex, love, or lust. Some publishers only sold their erotic publications via mail order but most stocked these titles at in-person retailers.[186] Another short-lived publisher, Handi-Books, published about 150 titles from 1942 until 1951, mostly mysteries, westerns, and "light sex romances."[187] Among their writers were Peggy Gaddis and Carolina Lee, now known to both be pen-names for Peggy Dern, who would go on to also write popular romance fiction including

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[184] Walter Albert, "Avon Books," in *Mass Market Publishing in America,* ed. Allen Billy Crider (Boston: G.K. Hall & Co., 1982), 19.
[185] Albert, "Avon Books," 19.
[186] Charlotte Laughlin, "Croydon Publishing Company," in *Mass Market Publishing in America,* ed. Allen Billy Crider (Boston: G.K. Hall & Co., 1982), 80.
[187] Bill Pronzini, "Handi-Books" in *Mass Market Publishing in America,* ed. Allen Billy Crider (Boston: G.K. Hall & Co., 1982), 134.

many nurse-themed romances. Men and women alike enjoyed tales of love and adventure but there was a big difference between the contemporary romances marketed to women and the contemporary fiction marketed to men. When Monarch Books published a title designated as *contemporary fiction*, it was understood as "a euphemism for 'sex-oriented'."[188] These were mostly male-authored books with salacious content intended for male readers.

The American public largely welcomed the major cultural shift that afforded people of all kinds to enjoy books as mass media entertainment. But in times of social and cultural transition there is always resistance, too. The fact that sexually suggestive book covers were displayed openly at retailers of all sorts and prurient literature was available for cheap and easy purchase was too much for some people to take. Book retailers bore the brunt of early censorship efforts and often just gave in to their demands. These retailers were not large bookstores but newsstands and drugstores that didn't even select the titles they stocked. Censors quickly moved their attack to the publishing houses. The House Select Committee on Current Pornographic Materials, commonly known as the Gathings Committee, came hot on the heels of the House Un-American Activities Committee. Publishers were investigated for their contribution to moral degeneracy as the film and TV industry faced investigation for spreading communist ideology. While some moralists objected to particular authors, titles, and

[188] Bill Pronzini, "Monarch Books" in *Mass Market Publishing in America,* ed. Allen Billy Crider (Boston: G.K. Hall & Co., 1982), 179.

narrative content but often it was simply a matter of the images and captions of the book covers.[189]

Romance novels escaped the ire of censors because their aesthetics and storylines were mild-mannered. Harlequin, for example, was respected for its *good taste.*[190] Their selection of romances was decided by Mary Bonnycastle, the wife of one of the founders, who read and edited every submitted manuscript to ensure that "they did not transgress her rigorous standards of good taste."[191] While Avon focused on erotic romances, Harlequin focused on more "demure contemporary romances with exotic scenarios"[192] In the late sixties, Harlequin decided to approach selling their romances in the same way that other companies sold their products, by building the line as a brand name instead of trying to market particular authors and titles. Davis explains, "with the Harlequins, it was not individual books that were being sold but a dependable,

[189] For a quick summary of book censorship and anti-obscenity measures in the United States during the middle of the twentieth century, see Kenneth C. Davis, "The Lady Goes to Court," chap. 8 in *Two-Bit Culture: The Paperbacking of America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1984).
[190] When Jack Palmer and Richard Bonnycastle founded Harlequin in 1949, the company published a wide variety of paperback reprints. The company published only a few romances in their first years of business. Ruth Palmour and Mary Bonnycastle, Richard Bonnycastle's secretary and wife, respectively, identified the market potential of romances. They noticed that nurse romances, in particular, sold better than any other titles and suggested that the company could increase its profits by specializing in them. At first, Mary edited manuscripts and made selections based on her own tastes. Soon, both women took on more active business roles. When Ms. Bonnycastle discovered Mills & Boon's romances she knew that their wholesome nurse romances were a good fit for Harlequin. In 1957 Ms. Palmour initiated negotiations with Mills & Boon to gain reprint rights for North American distribution. This contract was responsible for building the Harlequin empire. See Paul Grescoe, *The Merchants of Venus: Inside Harlequin and the Empire of Romance* (Vancouver: Raincoast Books, 1996), 15-40; John Markert, "Harlequin Books: Cupid's Publisher," in *Encyclopedia of Romance Fiction*, ed. Kristin Ramsdell (Santa Barbara: Greenwood, 2018), 114.
[191] Paul Grescoe, *The Merchants of Venus,* 15.
[192] Davis, *Two-Bit Culture*, 363.

consistent formula, quickly identifiable to a loyal group of readers."[193] Their strategy worked because "Harlequins went from nowhere to second place in sales (behind Bantam) in 1979."[194] Harlequin employed many gimmicks to get readers hooked on their romance lines, such as including free copies of books in boxes of laundry detergent. They also advertised their romance lines on television. TV commercials stressed the idea of the romance novel as an escape from reality by showing images of women reading in bed and declaring that they are about to pull their "disappearing act" into what Harlequin coined, "the wonderful world of Harlequin Romances."[195] Harlequin dominated the romance genre until about 1980.[196] At this point, Harlequin's American distributor, Simon and Schuster / Pocket Books, decided to get in the game too. They ended their contract with Harlequin to start their own line of romance called Silhouette. Silhouette was advertised on television and became a major competitor of Harlequin in just two short years. Other mass-market paperback publishers quickly followed suit, each launching their own lines of romance fiction and working to build brand loyalty among their readers.

At its outset, the paperback publishing industry was aimed to male consumers. Kenneth Davis states, "The paperback had begun as an essentially male-oriented business—who, after all, passed the newsstands, airport terminals, and cigar stores more often during the forties and fifties?—with the heavy emphasis on hard-boiled

[193] Davis, 363.
[194] Davis, 364.
[195] Tania Modleski, *Loving with a Vengeance: Mass-Produced Fantasies for Women*, 2nd edition (New York: Routledge, 2008), 28-29.
[196] Markert, "Harlequin Books: Cupid's Publisher," 116.

mysteries, Westerns, and thrillers."[197] But, of course, despite marketing intentions directed towards men, women were interested in reading and bought paperbacks. In fact, as Davis explains, "they gradually equaled and then surpassed men as paperback buyers."[198] Sellers began stocking supermarket shelves with paperbacks so that they were available in locations where women were the primary shoppers and publishers started pushing titles they thought would appeal to female readership. Paperback novels became a substitute for the light fiction that was disappearing from women's magazines.[199] Women also began to enter the field as editors. For example, Leona Nevler became an editor at Fawcett books and pushed romantic suspense novels. Bantam had had a female editor since 1949, Grace Bechtold, who also brought forth romance novels. "Bantam had also had numerous successes in the sixties with a category called nurse books, soap opera stories with a hospital setting."[200]

While Ramsdell asserts that the modern Gothic novel was established and exemplified by Daphne Du Maurier's *Rebecca,* published in 1938, the subgenre of the modern Gothic did not become dominant until a couple decades later in the 1960s, about the same time as the Romantic Suspense. Before the twentieth century, Gothic fiction had been more serious works by writers such as the Brontë sisters but their new form was far from its origins. Davis explains, "Without the stylistic sensibility or thematic seriousness of [the earlier classics], the Gothic was essentially a packaging phenomenon. Every Gothic romance came in exactly the same format, give or take a

[197] Davis, *Two-Bit Culture,* 361.
[198] Davis, 361.
[199] Davis, 362.
[200] Davis, 362.

few alterations."[201] Despite the formulaic presentation of both book and text, the genre was a "proven moneymaker through the late sixties."[202] Other romance categories also proved popular, including the Regency, Victorian and contemporary romances. It was also during this decade [the 1960s] that the term 'young adult' was devised by the publishing industry as a sales device."[203]

Through the sixties, paperback romances were still largely tame in their content. It wasn't until the resurgence of the historical romances in the 1970s that romances became more erotic. These new historicals brought themes of sweet savagery, passion and torment to their readers; this was the start of the "bodice ripper" scenarios that people now typically associate with the genre. Contrary to expectation, Playboy Press, who joined the paperback scene in 1974, was more successful with the more mild-mannered romantic sagas written for female readers than it was with actual paperback erotica. The Stonewall Riots (1969) and the Gay Rights movement helped launch Gay Romance into mainstream popularity during this time period, too.[204] Then, in 1979 the Romance Writers of American organization was established, bringing with it scholarly discussion about the genre, literary histories, and debates about essential elements to the genre. Conferences and scholarly writing has grown exponentially since then and the study of popular romance is burgeoning as an independent field.

Twentieth and twenty-first century romance novels share in common essential narrative elements with those of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, but the heroine and the challenges she faces adapt to changing social trends. Heroines of the twentieth

[201] Davis, 362.
[202] Davis, 362.
[203] Ramsdell, *Romance Fiction: a Guide to the Genre,* 9.
[204] Erotic pulp novels with LGBT content had been around for decades before this.

century had a more secured a sense of self, often achieved through work. As women's economic and property rights were no longer threatened by marriage, any concerns protagonists had about marriage were internal. In later twentieth century romances, the primary barrier to the courtship often was the hero himself, who the heroine had to tame or heal before their happy ending became possible. [205] The male suitors in romance novels of the seventies and eighties could be emotionally distant or cruel in the beginning and some authors wrote erotic scenes featuring coercive and aggressive sexual relations. Most readers didn't seem to mind; after all, the heroine always managed to domesticate her man in the end. Neither the sexually explicit nor sexually aggressive content affected sales. Like the erotic pulps and gaudy covers of decades past, these elements seemed to titillate consumers all the more. But, just as paperbacks had incensed a few outspoken censors in the fifties, bodice-rippers also faced critique from a few. Feminist condemnation of the genre as a whole forever changed the reputation of the romance novel in the minds of the American public and the scholarly community.

Popular Romance Studies Rescues Romance from its Bad Reputation

Now that the history of romance novel has been explained, the question still remains why it is significant to history as a discipline. Regardless of prejudice against the writing quality, style, and content the genre has played a major role in the history of books and reading and therefore in the lives of ordinary people. It has been a wildly popular genre since *Pamela* was published in 1740. The explosion of the genre into so

[205] Regis, *A Natural History of the Romance Novel,* 206.

many sub-genres speaks to its literary prominence through the centuries. As Dixon explains, during the Great Depression of the 1930s, while most publishers struggled to stay in operation, Mills & Boon prospered by dropping all other genres and concentrating on romance fiction.[206] In the twenty-first century, nearly 56% of all mass-market and trade paperback novels sold in North America were romance novels with sales at roughly one billion dollars.[207] In 2014 when HarperCollins sought to acquire Harlequin, it cost them 450 million dollars.[208] Dixon contends that given romance's enduring mass appeal, "it remains one of the most important cultural artefacts of our time, the favoured reading matter of millions of women in the western world."[209] Historian James Allen concurs that scholars should be interested in more than just high literature. He laments that historians tend to use only the most well-known works to the exclusion of works that, while lesser known—or in the case of romances, well-known but lesser accepted—can provide better historical description. He explains, "But why should the great novelist be any less biased an 'historian' than the lesser talent? After all, the genius is literary, not historical."[210] He goes on to note that literary reputation is neither stable nor universal. Furthermore, "Studying only an elite canon limits the social historian to evidence provided by aesthetically sophisticated but class-bound

[206] Jay Dixon, *The Romance Fiction of Mills & Boon 1909-1990s* (London: UCL Press, 1999), 17.
[207] Regis, *A Natural History of the Romance Novel,* xi.
[208] Maya Rodale, *Dangerous Books for Girls: The Bad Reputation of Romance Novels Explained*, (Self-published, 2015), 11.
[209] Rosemary Auchmuty, foreword to *The Romance Fiction of Mills & Boon 1909-1990s*, by Jay Dixon, (London: UCL Press, 1999), xi.
[210] Allen, "History and the Novel: Mentalité in Modern Popular Fiction," *History and Theory* 22, no. 3 (October 1983): 238, https://www.jstor.org/stable/2504982.

observers."[211] English Professor Julie Dugger also rejects the presumption that high culture is more valuable:

> The world of high culture has its own forms of oppression, as does the world of academic research, and critics and professors are no more immune to the influence of patriarchy than are mass-market publishers. And here we might pause to consider how an emphasis on individualism has affected the way high-culture literary institutions define authorship, and correspondingly how they define good literature. We value originality in literature partly because, despite literary criticism's present-day emphasis on historical and cultural context, we still think of the best literary works as the products of exceptionally talented individuals….If girl-meets-boy, girl-hates-boy, girl-loves-boy is a clichéd plot (romance), so too is wife-is-unfulfilled, wife-rebels, wife-dies (*Madame Bovary, Anna Karenina, Revolutionary Road*, "To Room Nineteen," etc.). Indeed, it might be said that both narrative paradigms are merely opposite sides of the same modern Western relational coin: one utopian and one dystopian, and both entirely derivative.[212]

There is no shortage of research material available if one studies popular romance and its writing quality, style, and narrative content constitute literature that is more accessible to the average reader.

Despite the fact that the genre outsells all others, "popularity…does not mean acceptance" and it struggles with a bad reputation."[213] Readers know that these novels have not gained acceptance from critics and scholars; many readers confess embarrassment about reading them and have reported in surveys that they would cover a romance if they were going to read it in public.[214] This raises some interesting questions about how literature is characterized and regarded: what does it mean to gain social acceptance; how does literature come to be legitimized; who is the authority on these matters? Vassiliki Veros uses the terms *cultural capital* and *economic capital* to

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[211] Allen, "History and the Novel," 239.
[212] Dugger, "'I'm a Feminist, But…'," 12.
[213] Regis, *A Natural History of the Romance Novel*, xi.
[214] Regis, xi.

discuss these issues when he argues, “romance fiction creates vast amounts of economic capital as it is commercially successful, yet it lacks cultural capital evidenced through the lack of literary reviews, social criticism and lack of [library] collection.”[215] Regis notes for example, that during a ten-week period in 1997 eight different romance novelists made it onto the *New York Times Book Review*’s Best Sellers List, but not one romance novel was ever actually reviewed during that time period.[216] The genre is regarded not just as salacious and formulaic, but the quality of writing is disrespected when people exclaim that they could easily write their own romance novel over the winter break.

Professor Rosemary Auchmuty also explains that “as ‘popular culture’ they are fair game for literary dismissal; as books for women they invite condescension and ridicule.”[217] Auchmuty again raises the question: how do scholars determine what is valid for serious inquiry? In the case of romance novels, she believes there it precisely because of their popular nature that romance novels are contested as a source. Auchmuty also interrogates its exclusion as a source that is by and about women. Contemporary scholars have been challenging traditional methods of inclusion and exclusion. More historians than ever now take popular culture as seriously as their peers in media and cultural studies; they are also beginning to recognize romance novels, the material production of women, as source material for women’s history.

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[215] Vassiliki Veros, “A Matter of Meta: Category Romance Fiction and the Interplay of Paratext and Library Metadata,” *Journal of Popular Romance Studies* 5, no.1 (August, 2015): 3.
[216] Regis, *A Natural History of the Romance Novel*, xi.
[217] Auchmuty, foreword to *Mills & Boon,* ix.

In the same way that feminist scholars have reexamined traditional understandings of the postwar era in American history so too have many reexamined the significance and interpretation of romance literature. As a field, popular romance studies is still developing and trying to gain traction in the academy. The Romance Writers of America (RWA) organization was established in 1979 and encouraged the beginnings of scholarly discussions about the genre, the publication of initial literary histories, and debates about essential elements. As noted in the opening of this chapter, the first wave of romance scholar in the 1980s were literary critics who engaged popular romances with feminist criticism and concerns about reader response to narrative content. Shortly before Radway's text was published, another prominent critic, Tania Modleski, published *Loving with a Vengeance*. Modleski's investigation took a psychoanalytic approach to assessing women's needs and desires as represented by female characters in romance novels. In Harlequin romance novels she saw heroines who "achieve happiness only by undergoing a complex process of self-subversion" and believed that through literary devices, readers were enlisted to "participate in and actively desire feminine betrayal."[218] Modleski's concern was that women's fantasies, as revealed in popular culture, demonstrated that women had normalized misogyny and that their enjoyment in romance fiction and fantasy was a strategy to "adapt to circumscribed lives and to convince themselves that limitations are really opportunities."[219] Her criticisms went so far as to claim that "romances not only reflect the 'hysterical' state, but actually, to some extent, induce it."[220] Modleski, Radway, and

[218] Tania Modleski, *Loving with a Vengeance,* 29.
[219] Modleski, *Loving with a Vengeance, 30.*
[220] Modleski, *49.*

other first wave scholars were troubled that romances naturalized women sacrificing their careers to marriage and family; their works have since been critiqued as antagonistic and prone to selection bias.[221]

In the 1990s scholarship was mostly in the form of literary histories, genre guides and reader's advisory works. Second wave scholars of the nineties started to reject the claim that romance novels are "powerful enough to relegate women to patriarchy and marriage."[222] Jay Dixon, who wrote a history and cultural analysis of the Mills & Boon novels asserts that the novels create a possibility for resistance to patriarchy from within established institutions. The academic disputes came to a boiling point in the 1990s with feminist literary scholars battling readers, writers, and media scholars over the danger of popular romance. Writers and readers, too, were offended by assertions made by academic critics. Heather Schell explains, "romance novelists, newly organized and proud to see themselves as women whose writing made other women happy, found themselves not only criticized for causing harm, not only pitied as victims of false consciousness, but erased as novelists… For a romance novelist reading one of these early works on popular romance, the clear impression is that these scholars saw romance novelists as interchangeable cogs in a machine generating undifferentiated and potentially harmful mass culture…"[223] Jayne Ann Krentz, who is both a romance writer and academic, tried to bridge the divide with her publication of *Dangerous Men and Adventurous Women: Romance Writers on the Appeal of Fiction* (1992). Romance

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[221] Sarah S.G. Frantz and Eric Murphy Selinger, introduction to *New Approaches to Popular Romance Fiction: Critical Essays* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2012), 8.
[222] Regis, *A Natural History of the Romance Novel,* 13.
[223] Heather Schell, "Love's Laborers Lost: Radway, Romance Writers, and Recuperating Our Past," *Journal of Popular Romance Studies* 4, no.2 (October, 2014): 3.

readers responded to the accusations by becoming an incredibly social and outspoken group. In the nineties, more homes had Internet access and avid readers took to blogs and websites to discuss the genre with one another as well as with writers. This has developed into a very active online romance community with readers, writers, and scholars interacting on a global scale. Scholars and writers often rely on fans for their wealth of knowledge, which extends far beyond plot lines but also includes the history of the genre and industry trends. [224] Yet, the field of romance studies still suffered from a lack of peer-review and because of this many studies tended to generalize, make inappropriate comparisons across genres or time periods, and neglected to interrogate novels or novelists individually.[225] During this second-wave, American scholars talked about the need for new approaches, single-author studies, and diversity but failed to collaborate across disciplines or national boundaries.[226]

In the 2003 Pamela Regis refreshed romance studies when she published *A Natural History of the Romance Novel,* which refuted the practice of distinguishing between classic romance literature and popular romance fiction. Rather than describing the genre as formulaic, Regis also outlined a method for defining the genre based upon key narrative elements while emphasizing that the variations in their execution and style are the key to holding a reader's interest. In her view, common sense would tell us that if readers already know the ending of a novel, they must be reading for something other than the end. Regis believes that readers are more interested in the process of all that

[224] Jagodzinski, "We've Come a Long Way, Baby," 2.
[225] Frantz and Selinger, *New Approaches to Popular Romance Fiction*, 6.
[226] Frantz and Selinger, 7-8.

comes before: what obstacles face the heroine, the barriers that prevent the relationship, how the heroine and male protagonist face that barrier and finally overcome it.[227]

Until very recently, most romance scholars were women. Yet, most work about the history of publishing, paperbacks, and popular fiction more broadly tend to be written by male scholars. Ironically, histories and studies about popular fiction or pulp acknowledge that the romance genre has the highest volume of production and highest sales, but rarely make more than this passing mention to it. Romance scholars Sarah Frantz and Eric Selinger, question why scholars didn't examine "the interplay between convention and innovation in specific romance novels and across the careers of particularly accomplished novelists in the genre" in the same way they did for other forms of genre fiction such as adventures, mysteries, or westerns.[228] It is my view that the innovation of the paperback novel (and the accompanying changes in marketing, sales, and distribution) and the romance novel were mutually beneficial to each other and that the rise in popularity of both owe a great deal of credit to one another.

In 2005 the Romance Writers of America (RWA), a national nonprofit association for romance writers, began an Academic Research Grant program and early winners of the grant used it to create platforms for scholars to collaborate, communicate, and research more effectively, such as an online Wiki bibliography of romance scholarship, the RomanceScholar listserv, a collaborative online blog called Teach Me Tonight, and the International Association for the Study of Popular Romance (IASPR). The IASPR has gone on to establish the *Journal of Popular Romance*, which is not only open-source but also double-blind peer reviewed. The development of JPRS and IASPR

[227] Pamela Regis, *A Natural History of the Romance* Novel,14.
[228] Frantz and Selinger, *New Approaches to Popular Romance Fiction*, 6.

speaks to the connections being made between the academy and the communities of romance readers and writers as they come together in the production and sharing of scholarship that focuses on critical approaches, interdisciplinary frameworks, and collaborate international collaboration instead of debating the age-old question of whether the merry-go-round rehashing the age-old debate on whether romance novels are empowering or oppressive to women. The field is just starting to produce essays and monographs that read for the innovation within novels as opposed to reading for their adherence to convention and to treat novels or novelists individually instead of generalizing the genre. Anthologies produced by scholars such as Sarah Frantz, William A. Gleason, and Eric Murphy Selinger have edited recent anthologies that seek to demonstrate the complexity and diversity of popular romance with essays that treat genres or historical periods with the specificity while also addressing a greater range of social and political issues.[229] New romance scholars perform intersectional and interdisciplinary studies while mining the novels for their treatment of topics as wide ranging as LGBTQ communities, race, transnationalism, aesthetics, patriotism and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), the relationship between publishing and capitalism, and what it means for a creative work like writing to be engaged in mass production and consumption.[230]

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[229] See William A. Gleason and Eric Murphy Selinger, eds., *Romance Fiction and American Culture: Love as the Practice of Freedom?* (London: Ashgate, 2016), and Sarah S.G. Frantz and Eric Murphy Selinger, *New Approaches to Popular Romance Fiction: Critical Essays* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2012).

[230] See for example, Kecia Ali's essay, "Troubleshooting Post-9/11 America: Religion, Racism, and Stereotypes in Suzanne Brockmann's *Into the Night* and *Gone Too Far,*" *Journal of Popular Romance Studies* 6 (August, 2017). http://www.jprstudiestest.dreamhosters.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/TP9A.8.2017.pdf, or Julie E. Moody-Freedom, "Scripting Black

Methodological Considerations: The Romance as History

Recent scholarship shows just how diverse romance studies can be and demonstrates the expansive possibilities for using romance novels as historical sources. Using fiction for historical purposes acknowledges the value of narrative material, not just quantifiable data. Since the nineteenth century, history as a discipline has been largely dependent upon empiricism and a positivist view; historians are adherents to what Edward Carr calls the "cult of facts."[231] But as Carr has explained, even histories built upon facts need interrogation for how facts were selected and who selected them. Hayden White similarly warns scholars that all but historical annals are subjected to narrativizing with a goal to moralizing by an historian who can't avoid subjectivity.[232] If this is the case, why should historians be concerned about the subjective and interpretive nature of fiction, which at least confesses its subjective nature?

Allen argues in favor of fiction as an historical source, noting its importance especially for cultural and intellectual historians.[233] There are dangers in utilizing fiction without acknowledging its creative agenda; Allen notes, for example, that a novelist's primary allegiance is to "literary truth" not the historical truth. Allen warns historians to beware of intentional fallacies, whereby the author misleads readers about his/her

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Love in the 1990s: Pleasure, Respectability, and Responsibility in an Era of HIV/Aids," or June Hee Chung's essay "Henry Jame's 'The Velvet Glove' and the Iron Fist: Transatlantic Cultural Exchange and the Romance Tradition," in *Romance Fiction and American Culture: Love as the Practice of Freedom?,* William A. Gleason and Eric Murphy Selinger, eds., (London: Ashgate, 2016).

[231] Edward Hallet Carr, *What is History? The George Macaulay Lectures Delivered in the University of Cambridge January—March 1961* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962), 5.

[232] Hayden White, "The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality," chap. 1 in *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 1-25.

[233] Allen, "History and the Novel," 233.

stated intentions or accomplishments. He wryly notes, "novelists cannot always be taken at their word about the realism of their literary work" even when they present observations in a journalistic manner.[234] Allen notes that literature is a complex structure and can't be reduced, as historians may be tempted to do, to a few main ideas. Indeed, this is Regis' complaint about scholars who reduce romance novels to "prose fiction love stories."[235] Many critics mistake certain subsets of romance novels for the genre itself, as is the case with critics assuming that all of romance is as formulaic as series romances.[236] Other critics fail to understand how certain elements function, as is often the case with sexually aggressive male characters. For example, in the late 1970s and 1980s, Mills & Boon heroines had to negotiate relationships with sexually coercive male characters. Dixon argues that these plots weren't normalizing or eroticizing sexual aggression, rather it "is a literary device used to reinforce the feminist argument that all men use sexual coercion to force women into submission."[237]

While it is important for historians to understand how narratives function, they have traditionally been hesitant to approach fiction at all. In part, precisely because of how difficult it is. Fiction is viewed as impressionistic and Allen admits, "used directly as a document, fiction is unreliable."[238] Aside from this, the humanities and the sciences were divided for much of the twentieth century; history sought to be recognized as a science at the same time that New Criticism in literary theory argued against historical

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[234] Allen, 236.
[235] Regis, *A Natural History of the Romance Novel*, 21. Regis' definition, "prose fiction that tells the story of the courtship and betrothal of one or more heroines," also identifies narrative elements—actions, events, and characters—that serve readers and critics in doing analysis or comparisons. *Natural History of the Romance Novel*, 22-23.
[236] Regis, 23-25.
[237] Dixon, *Mills & Boon*, 193.
[238] Allen, "History and the Novel," 239.

analysis of literature—for that matter, New Critics closed off any interpretive methods that didn't rely solely on the self-contained text.[239] Literary criticism, during the rise of New Criticism, was an insular discipline; formalists in the mid-twentieth century "claimed a more politically 'neutral' function for literature: the object of study in isolation from its intellectual, social, and political context."[240] Literature became a "timeless form" but social historians wanted to study literature for the descriptions it had of "time-bound content." Luckily, formalism has its limits, and critical theory moved on to develop post-formalist techniques such as hermeneutics, structuralism, and post structuralism. It is these methods that Allen encourages historians to cultivate. He writes, "postformalist criticism and theory suggest approaches to the novel more appropriate than those historians have traditionally used. What postformalists have made possible is a new hermeneutics, a theory of interpretation specifically for the historian wishing to know how anonymous people in the past lived.[241] What these methods require are for historians to learn to "avoid conceiving of the text as a document…and think instead of it as part of a structuralist system, discourse, or code."

Different types of fiction still must be approached according to their genre forms. For example, the nineteenth-century realistic novel can be taken more at their word because the authors "depicted how people were related in a virtual social matrix, one modeled directly on a society the authors knew personally."[242] Other works of fiction will take more structural analysis, but by doing so the historian can get at the mentality of the author's intended audience. This is not an investigation of the details in the text, nor

[239] Allen, 233.
[240] Allen, 240.
[241] Allen, 244-45.
[242] Allen, 234.

what the author directly states about the social world. Rather, it is an investigation of the "historical readers and the structures of their beliefs reflected in the texts and their literary system."[243] In some ways, this process is what Carr was calling for twenty years before Allen when he called on historians to use "imaginative understanding" in order to "achieve some kind of contact with the mind of those about whom he is writing."[244] Allen proposes that fiction provides the historian with the resources he needs to achieve this imaginative understanding.

Allen explains that determining an author's narrative assumption allows historians to determine the author's intended audience. He asserts that the more popular a novel was in its time, the more likely it is that the narrative audience is also the historical audience.[245] Furthermore fictional works often become popular when they express beliefs in accordance with their readers, so we can ask of the novel "Who are the readers assumed by the narrator in the text? What are the social values and attitude he expects his audience to share? How does the novel help to define a community of readers and their shared preconceptions?"[246] Finding structural similarities in assumptions across many works helps confirm information. This is precisely the way that Dixon approached her study of the Mills & Boon novels through the twentieth century. The popularity of the novel allowed Dixon to associate the novels' audience to the historical audience and therefore propose that the challenges faced by heroines in the books reflected the challenges of their readers. In this way, Dixon was able to track social concerns as they changed through time and come to the conclusion that "Mills &

[243] Allen, 246.
[244] Carr, *What is History?*, 27.
[245] Allen, "History and the Novel," 247.
[246] Allen, 249.

Boon novels, far from being against change, are in some areas ahead of society in their demand for a shift in public opinion."[247] For example, in the 1910s Mills & Boon novels pushed for woman suffrage and later took up the issue of women being barred from work after marriage. Through the midcentury, male and female characters alike asserted the need for women to develop their own sense of self before marrying. At this time, British women were also grappling with how to combat objectification, so the novels supported their heroines in choosing partners that appreciated her mind and individuality. When in 1978 the Women's Liberation Movement took up the issue of male violence, demanding an end to institutions and laws that perpetuated or permitted male aggression and dominance, Mills & Boon novels reflected this new feminist agenda with aggressive male heroes that the heroine rejects and eventually tames or reforms.[248] Through a combination of structural analysis, reader-response criticism, and historical inquiry, Dixon was able to determine that Mills & Boon novels did not promote just one eternal message about social, political, or domestic values; instead, their messages changed through time in tandem with changing reader expectations. The one constant that Dixon did find, however, was that "Mills & Boon novels create a space where women's defiance is articulated."[249]

Professor John Cawelti, like Allen, believes that popular fiction is a uniquely revealing source for cultural history. His own arguments about using formula fiction for historical analysis support research like Dixon's:

> I think we can assume that formulas become collective cultural products because they successfully articulate a pattern of fantasy that is at least

[247] Dixon, *Mills & Boon*, 183.
[248] Dixon, 190.
[249] Dixon, 183.

> acceptable to if not preferred by the cultural groups who enjoy them….When a group's attitudes undergo some change, new formulas arise and existing formulas develop new themes and symbols. Because formula stories are created and distributed almost entirely in terms of commercial exploitation. Therefore, allowing for a certain degree of inertia in the process, the production of formulas is largely dependent on audience response.[250]

That romance novels might be seen as documents of feminism through history or be utilized by gender theorists to make claims about social history may catch some critics off guard. But contemporary scholars find romance texts fertile ground for textual analysis and for studying the history of female authorship and women's reading habits. Professor Julie M. Dugger suggests that popular romance is ideal for teaching feminist literary theory because it offers so much dissonance for readers, both personally and academically. Dugger explains, "What is the women's studies critic to do when a genre dominated by women writers and readers appears to conflict with feminist ideals?" Students are positively challenged when their popular reading practices don't align with the academic critical practices they are learning; when a student enjoys romance but encounters feminist critical perspectives they are "invited into a moment of metacognition"[251] and they deepen their understanding of the relationship between feminist discourse and actual women. Romance novels, which are not necessarily written with an explicitly feminist agenda, provide narrativized access to women's thoughts and can present feminism as it was mediated for the mass public. Scholarly works on the other hand, present feminist discourse that is limited to a privileged few who are most often the economic, intellectual, and activist elite.

[250] Cawelti, *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance*, 34.
[251] Dugger, "'I'm a Feminist, But…'," 2.

Dixon notes that feminism is not one monolithic philosophy; rather it is marked by traditions that can be concurrent and contradictory. She demonstrates this with her analysis of the novels. Feminist traditions argue for women's rights, equality, and economic independence but can also stress the importance of values such as love and connectivity. Feminism also supports educating men to respect women as well as these values.[252] The Mills & Boon novels "encompass these divisions in one 'romantic' philosophy."[253] At times, the novels articulate that women have a unique disposition that prioritizes interpersonal connections. "They try to reconcile the demand for equality while asserting differences between the sexes."[254] At other times, romance novels disrupt notions of gender by playing on or inverting normative concepts like motherhood, domesticity, or the male role as sole wage earner. Some protagonists require the domestication of their male suitor or his subordination to her desires. Using the term of historian Joan Scott, these female protagonists "disrupt the notion of fixity" around normative gender concepts.[255] By situating these disruptions into familiar storylines, the novels are able to introduce otherwise very uncomfortable conflicts. The novels are able to explore real issues like sexual violence, alcoholism, sickness, and women's agency in part because readers know the genre's format, which promises to always end with a happy and hopeful resolution. The genre interrogates cultural assumptions about the role of men and women. Dixon writes, "although they [heroines in romance novels] accept that society is ordered so as to give men the advantage, they do not accept that

[252] Dixon, *Mills & Boon*, 184.
[253] Dixon, 184.
[254] Dixon, 185.
[255] Joan W. Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *The American Historical Review* 91, no. 5 (1986): 1068. https://doi-org.ezproxy.lib.uwm.edu/10.2307/1864376.

this is inevitable."[256] In this way, the novels can be seen as more progressive than many histories, which Scott believes were written with the assumption that "normative positions were the product of social consensus rather than conflict."[257] While many readers and scholars have chosen to identify elements that uphold gender hierarchies or promote traditional, heteronormative relationships, others have chosen to identify elements of the heroine's resistance to them.

Beyond analyses of novel content, the production, marketing, and readership of romance novels have value as historical projects. Dixon, for example, grapples with reconciling the decidedly un-feminist production history of Mills & Boon with the feminist content she finds in the novels themselves. Dixon asserts that it is not enough for something to be written by and about women to be considered feminist. Much like Joan Scott asserts that it is not enough for feminist historians to write histories that include women, Dixon believes that the ideological assumptions and motivations reinforcing a project must also be feminist. She explains that "we need to know both the financial and ideological politics of the firm publishing the book, and about the audience that firm may be creating for its books through various marketing strategies"[258] Her analysis is that from its beginnings as an independent family-run operation that was also "a fairly paternalistic firm" to it's multiple mergers and buyouts by large, international publishers, the Mills & Boon company was not a feminist organization. She notes that as a publisher, their job is to sell, "It's financial and political ideology follows from that—and

[256] Dixon, *Mills & Boon*, 183.
[257] Scott, "Gender," 1068.
[258] Dixon, *Mills & Boon*, 179.

can be simply defined as profit-making."[259] Some publishers are feminist, and have a specifically stated feminist agenda, but Mills & Boon did not, nor did their successor parent companies. Women have done and continue to do most of the creative labor in the industry—writing and editing. But few publishing companies have few women in executive positions. If economics is tied to power and influence, how is it that the most profitable genre of literature over the past two centuries, which has been propped up by female readership and writing, has not moved more women into powerful positions in the publishing industry nor gained legitimacy and respect in the public eye? Regis highlights another dimension worthy of investigation for historians of gender, that of inequality in reading expectations. She remarks, "Men have traditionally controlled which books get reviewed, and the effort that they must make to read across the gender barrier is very great."[260] That men refuse to read romance novels has affected the genres acceptance, but it also points to inequalities in the education and socialization of readers. She explains that the male experience has been assumed to be the stand in for universal experience, in storytelling and reading too. While women have been taught from a young age to read across genres and identify with male characters, "many men lack this experience of reading across gender lines."[261] Romance novels are a social and symbolic construction of sex difference. The content of these novels speaks to how masculinity and femininity are constructed, as does the genre's publishing history and public reception.

[259] Dixon, 179.
[260] Regis, *A Natural History of the Romance Novel,* xii.
[261] Regis, xii.

Understanding the history of the romance genre and continuing debates surrounding its popularity and readership helps contextualize the genre as powerful yet contested force in both literary history and popular culture. In this, romance fiction is not unlike the profession of nursing, as both are intertwined with the history of women and have depended upon women's labor for their success. The significance of both nursing history and romance fiction in American culture and history has likewise been insufficiently appreciated. Nurse-themed romance novels thus offer an opportunity to explore multiple fields of feminist history in a new way, by looking at representations that were crafted by and for women but within a style of writing that has depended upon formulas, stock characters, and easy tropes. The next chapter will suggest how nurse romance novels can provide new insight into the socially constructed image of the nurse, and explore how they do or do not resemble, or conversely, resist, other mass-media narratives.

Chapter Three
The Nurse Romance Novel Collection at UW-Milwaukee

The postwar economic boom, joined by technological advancements and a savvy advertising industry, encouraged Americans couples and families to buy their own homes in the expanding suburbs and to modernize their lifestyles with any number of domestic appliances on the promise that they would increase their leisure time and happiness. As Professor Spigel has argues, "the new domestic ideal rewarded the technologically liberated housewife with the practical promise of pleasure and recreation…. advertisers circulated images that encouraged women to believe that machines gave them leisure time."[262] Publishers, increasingly in competition with television, sought to fill that leisure time; their new distribution channels and advertising techniques ensured that women of all social and economic classes would encounter enticing, brightly colored paperbacks with romantic, utopian themes on every errand-run, whether to the pharmacy, grocery, or department store. The zeal of the American public for paperback books is just one small example of the changes underway in leisure, media-consumption, and consumer habits.

Spigel explains that "the 1950s was a decade that invested an enormous amount of cultural capital in the ability to form a family and live out a set of highly structured gender and generational roles…the new suburban family ideal was a consensus ideology, promising benefits like security and stability."[263] Cultural capital included all types of media—magazines, advertisements, television programs and literature.

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[262] Lynn Spigel, *Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 22.
[263] Spigel, *Make Room for TV,* 2.

Studying these cultural forms "give us a clue into an imaginary popular culture—that is, they tell us what various media institutions assumed about the public's concerns and desires."[264] In her own research into the cultural history of television, Spigel explains that the "history of spectatorship" is a speculative one because it cannot be recreated and therefore must draw on many approaches and methods to help form even its partial picture.[265] The same assertion is true about other media forms. The reception of romance novels by the American public is speculative and what they reveal about popular culture is largely based on the publishing industry's assumptions about the public's concerns and desires. This chapter identifies the books in the Nurse Romance Novel collection as a particular expression of books and situate them as both entertainment medium and consumer products within the context of the paperback revolution and the growing mass consumerism of twentieth century America. By looking at a large selection of the novels, I assess what these novels communicate to potential readers through the use of rhetorical devices like motifs, clichés, and stock characters; these rhetorical devices are not solely relegated to the narrative content but are communicated in other elements such as titles, cover art illustrations, cover captions, and teaser texts on flyleaves.[266] I not only look at these elements for common themes

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[264] Spigel, 8.
[265] Spigel, 187.
[266] Literary theorists, especially structuralists, assert that reader reception and interpretation is informed by more than just the author's main text. Gérard Genette used the term paratext to describe these elements. Paratext are all the features that combine with the author's primary text (in the case of a novel that would be the narrative) to create the book as a whole, both as a physical object and as an idea. Genette identifies to main elements of paratext: epitext and peritext. Epitext are those things attached to the book such as cover art, acknowledgements, prefaces, the title, advertising, and indexes Peritext are collateral creations such as author interviews, publishing announcements, and other sorts of marketing materials. See Gérard Genette,

but also identify trends in these elements over time to determine how they reflect the social construction of reality for nurses and women in the period.

As discussed in chapter two, the marketing of romance novels in the twentieth century played a major role in their success. Rather than trying to market well-known authors or classic titles, romance publishers marketed their lines as new consumer products. The "commodity style publishing" and advertising tactics helps explain why so many people today view romance novels not as great literature but as cheap, formulaic stories.[267] It isn't an accident that romance novels are predictable; publishers asked writers to follow strict guidelines on character and plot development in order to create consistency in a series. According to Auchmuty, romance novels were "the pioneers of brand-name publishing, whose readers are attracted by a logo rather than an author's name, they have come to stand for all that is worst in formulaic writing and cynical mass-marketing."[268] While the predictability and adherence to certain patterns and conventions is often a critique of the genre, these are also features that make the novels appealing to readers. Ramsdell states that the "predictable, satisfactory resolution to the story is the promise of the genre writer to his or her reader."[269] It also accounts for much of the genre's success. This well-worn character types and predictable plot lines are particularly prevalent in nurse-themed romance novels.

The books in the Nurse Romance Novel Collection are nearly all written in a light, sweet, romantic style as compared to other styles in the romance genre. This style was

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Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation, trans. Jane E. Lewin. Literature, Culture, Theory 20 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
[267] Paul Grescoe uses this term in *The Merchants of Venus,* 15.
[268] Auchmuty, foreword to *Mills &* Boon, ix.
[269] Ramsdell, *Romance Fiction: a Guide to the Genre,* 19.

prominent during a period from the 1940s through the 1970s.[270] It consists of well over 400 novels that feature nurses as their protagonists.[271] The bulk of this collection is made up of books published between the 1950s and 1970s with a few predating that period. Books that were published after the seventies are mostly reprints of earlier titles whose original copyright date falls within the twenty-year span. A The description of the collection on the UWM Libraries, Special Collections website describes the novels as:

> …reflecting stereotypes about nurses, usually negative, that are held in the popular imagination. These works raise issues concerning the image of nurses and the nursing profession in popular culture, and the books that [*sic*] serve to reinforce not only popular misconceptions of nurses, but of women generally, and professional women in particular.[272]

The books were donated to the department by Leslie Bellavance, former UWM Art professor, who used them for her own research and art project that dealt with the theme of the nurse in popular culture. After the initial donation, several others were inspired to donate similar items. The collection has been subsumed under the much larger UWM

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[270] I chose not to analyze books that are designated as part of the Nurse Romance Novel Collection but fell outside of the sweet, category romance style. This includes career romance stories for young women such the Sue Barton, Cherry Ames, and Kathy Martin series. Those these novels do follow the lives and professions of young nurses and are marketed as romances, their intended audiences and the genre's differing conventions place them outside the scope of this investigation (see footnote 105 for resources on nurse career romances). The collection also has a handful of books that are better identified as erotic literature than romance; these are nurse-themed soft-core pornographic tales that were marketed to a male audience. Most are in the style of an expose on the naughty lives of working women. For example, *Doctors And Lovers* by Roy Sparkia, published in 1960 by Pyramid Books and *Wayward Nurse* by Norman Bligh (a pseudonym of William Neubauer), which was published in 1953 by Venus Books (originally with title *Soft Shoulders*).

[271] My investigation revealed that there are a small percentage of items identified by this collection note that are outside the scope of nurse-themed romance novels. For example, about a dozen books that feature female doctor protagonists, a few books that are erotic literature, and a few children's fiction titles featuring nurses but that are not romances.

[272] https://uwm.edu/libraries/special/collections/nurse-romance-novels/

American Nursing History Collection, "which was established in 1995 through a donation from the UWM Center for Nursing History."[273] The incorporation of these romances into the broader collection aroused concern from some at the Center for Nursing History. Critics wanted to distance the romance novels from nursing history materials and, given that they are described as reinforcing negative stereotypes of nurses, it's no wonder. Those who opposed the collection were concerned that these novels provide an anti-professional image of the nurse and were leery of romance novels in particular, assuming that the nurse characters would take on the stereotype of the nurse who gets involved with patients and doctors. While these concerns are understandable, this chapter takes the UWM nurse romance collection seriously on its own terms, in order to demonstrate its scholarly value and complexity and suggest why they belong not only within this specific nursing history collection, but in research libraries more generally.

The collection is mainly comprised of *category romances*. Category romances, also called series romances, are short novels published as part of a specific line or series.[274] Category romance lines become familiar to readers because the romance titles published within them will have some element of commonality: setting, characters, type of conflict, style. While the stories are all different, there is a predictable element in the line that allows readers to anticipate what type of story they will get if they buy the

[273] https://uwm.edu/libraries/special/collections/nurse-romance-novels/
[274] The term "series" can be confusing as it is often used to describe books written by the same author that are interconnected and meant to be read sequentially. Often, these books may even be labeled as a particular number in the "x series." These romance novels are still considered "single-title" romances by the industry, which distinguished between author-established series and the category romances belonging to a publisher's established lines.

book. Publishers communicate the elements required for particular lines to authors, which is partly why romances are criticized for being formulaic. Category romances are much shorter than single-title releases, usually ranging from 50,000 words to 85,000 words, or less than 200 pages.[275] In the Nurse Romance Novel Collection, most are fall between 126 pages and 192 pages. The low page count leads many to believe that they are quick or easy to write, but librarian Wendy Crutcher notes that the short format requires a different writing style, not an easier one when she comments, "category romance needs to deliver everything that a longer single-title release does, only in a shorter word count…authors need to have a strong, intense focus on the relationship building between the couple to make the romance believable."[276] And, popular fiction scholars argue that categorizing books into specific lines is a savvy marketing move resulting in "a financial boon that allows readers to focus their energies and dollars on the types of stories they know they will enjoy."[277]

The designation of *sweet romance* is given to romance novels without sex scenes or those that do not describe those scenes overtly. The term arose in the 1970s when some romance novels did start to include sex scenes and publishers needed a way to communicate to potential readers the nature of the content. Before then, the term was unnecessary as the romance lines for women were featured only good old-fashioned courtship. Hand holding and kissing might be narrated, anything more than that wasn't even insinuated. Character development and narrative conflicts were

[275] Wendy Crutcher, "Category Romance," in *Encyclopedia of Romance Fiction*, ed. Kristin Ramsdell (Santa Barbara: Greenwood, 2018), 39.
[276] Crutcher, "Category Romance," 40.
[277] Crutcher, 39.

constructed through "the emotional journey rather than the sexual journey."[278] Sweet romances have main characters that are likable; the heroines are "modern women forging their own destinies," and the heroes "may be less alpha than heroes of sexier books."[279] Usually, the characters lead ordinary lives and work common jobs so that the plot lines and characters seem fairly realistic to the reader. In the case of this collection, they are also contemporary romances, meaning the narratives within the text are set in the same time period as the book's publication.[280]

To begin my examination, I assessed the collection as a unit before looking at individual books. I first used the staff login side of the UWM Libraries online public access system (OPAC), to create an exportable list of the catalog data for all books in the collection. Using Excel, I coded the dataset according to properties such as author, title, publishing date, series, and Library of Congress subject headings. As subcategories began to emerge I also took notice of similarities, differences, patterns, and anomalies and paid attention to properties that appeared to be related. For example, certain titles and subjects appeared more frequently in works published after a certain date. I saw this computational approach as the first part of a *distant reading* process that deliberately reduction and abstracted the books in order to destabilize my understanding of them as a narratives and art forms.[281] I then decided to physically

[278] Therese Dryden, "Sweet Romance," in *Encyclopedia of Romance Fiction*, ed. Kristin Ramsdell (Santa Barbara: Greenwood, 2018), 358-359.
[279] Dryden, "Sweet Romance," 358-359.
[280] Romance novels published today are far more diverse and frequently intersect with many other genres—science fiction, fantasy, time-travel, Christian fiction, and historical fiction.
[281] One day, in the future, large-scale digitization efforts might make it possible to perform quantitative cultural analysis upon all of the books held within the Nurse Romance Novel through text mining and image analysis to assess patterns in words,

examine a high number of the novels, again applying more distant reading methods as I performed very basic examinations of the books' forms, aesthetics, titles, authors, and other paratextual elements, looking for features that stood out as well as for elements that repeated across many novels.

The collection includes 426 books from almost three dozen publishers.[282] Publishers for which the collection holds the highest number of titles are: Ace (31), Avalon (32), Dell (42), Harlequin (93), McFadden-Bartell (28), New American Library (55), and Prestige (31). Harlequin is by the far the highest represented publisher with ninety-three titles, nearly all of which are Harlequin's reprints of Mills & Boon novels.[283] The series are even more numerous than publishers, as some companies produced multiple romance series. The collection at UWM can't be said to be a representative sample of category romance novels, but the series for which this collection has higher representation do reflect the larger and more popular publishing houses. For example, the collection has thirty-eight of Avon's "Valentine Books," seven of Ace's "Nurse Romance" series, nineteen of "Avalon Nurse Stories," twenty-six of Dell's "Candlelight Romance" titles, and eighty-nine "Harlequin Romances." Deciphering how many authors are included in this collection is a bit trickier. While there are 191 author names, many authors used a pseudonym and several of them used multiple pseudonyms, using

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phrases, or images. For more about the new research methods and disciplinary hybridity made possible through computational approaches and digital humanities, see David Berry, "The Computational Turn: Thinking About the Digital Humanities," *Culture Machine* 12 (2011). Sussex Research Online. http://sro.sussex.ac.uk/id/eprint/49813/.

[282] To give an idea of just how many romance novels were published during this period, Harlequin alone published 2,304 romance novels between 1949 (when they published their first romance) and the end of 1979.

[283] Harlequin began publishing originals only after they acquired Mills & Boon in 1972.

different names for different publishers or various series.[284] Peggy Dern also wrote under the names Peggy Gaddis, Georgia Craig, Carolina Lee, Perry Lindsay, James Clayford, Gail Jordan, and Joan Sherman. In this collection there are eleven titles by Peggy Dern, twenty-five by Peggy Gaddis, and five by Georgia Craig, which indicates just how prolific her career was given that she also wrote romances without a nurse theme as well as writing in numerous other genres. Other authors producing a large body of work were Jane Converse (28 titles), Peggy Gaddis, Marjorie Norrell (14 titles), Adelaide Humphries (13 titles), Arlene Hale (18 titles), and Diana Douglas (12 titles).

After viewing dozens upon dozens of these novels, the first thing I noticed were commonalities in form and aesthetic. The cover illustrations looked remarkably similar, variations on a few themes. Sorting them chronologically helped bring to light trends and changes over time in terms of elements like their iconography, titles, and subject matter. In her book *The Look of Love*, Jennifer McKnight-Trontz claims that, "an entire genre of fiction was sold based on the premise that one could, in fact, tell a book by its cover."[285] In my assessment, romance novels from the midcentury do communicate the basic premise of their plots through cover art but they don't convey any nuance, and nothing of the unexpected elements scholars like Regis and Dixon claim defy the

[284] Deciphering an author's body of work is further complicated when using a library's catalog records because although the Library of Congress provides cataloging guidelines, catalogers do have individual preferences for indicating authorship/authority; some might use an author's real name if it is known, others use the name that appears on the book's title page, and still others might use one or another and indicate the alternate name in another cataloging field. Additionally, some catalogers choose to import records made by other professionals, which may or may not have errors or follow different guidelines.

[285] Jennifer McKnight-Trontz, *The Look of Love: The Art of the Romance Novel* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2001), 9.

stereotypes about romance novels. As I will argue in chapter four, nurse-romance novels tackle a lot of unexpected topics, sometimes quite serious, that provide an emotional relevance for female readers. Nevertheless, the covers are indeed attractive and their illustrations are detailed works of art. In fact, during the midcentury, "romances were illustrated by some of the most talented and sought-after illustrators in the publishing industry, most of them men."[286] Graphic designer Baryé Phillips came to be known as the "King of the Paperbacks," for his ability to illustrate a cover per day and, like most illustrators of the time, performed work for both books and magazines and for many genres. Collecting paperbacks for their cover illustrations has even become a hobby nowadays. In particular, collectors seek out books with covers done by Gerald Gregg, "who earned a reputation for his exquisite airbrush technique," and whose style became recognizable for his use of "light and shadow with the addition of a few bright colors to accentuate particular features of his characters."[287] Because stores usually stocked these paperbacks according to their publisher, publishers designed their covers to help readers distinguish between them and also to distinguish different series or genres from within their own works. Some publishers like Albatross used color-coding on their spines or covers to indicate the genre; romance novel covers were often in pastels with floral designs."[288] Sweet, category romances indicated their mild-mannered nature through their cover art that featured "couples behaving themselves decorously.

[286] McKnight-Trontz, *The Look of Love,* 16.
[287] McKnight-Trontz, 18.
[288] McKnight-Trontz, 17.

They may embrace, hold hands, or stare into each other's eyes, but they never move on to anything scandalous."[289] Figure 1 is an example of the intimate, but chaste embrace.

While some nurse romance covers do follow the basic pattern McKnight-Trontz has identified for sweet romances, more often the cover art shows the protagonist in the foreground with her suitor(s) in the background, as illustrated by the cover art for *The Taming of Nurse Conway* in figure 2. Occasionally a man stands behind the nurse with his hands on her shoulders—is he offering comfort or asking for her to turn around and pay attention to him? Figure 3 demonstrates the ambiguous physical gesture. I identified three basic trends in nurse romance cover illustrations: 1) the nurse simply in the context of her work and commonly staring off into the distance with a suitor gazing at her from the background, as illustrated in figure 4; 2) the nurse-protagonist looking directly at the viewer or off into the distance, against the backdrop of the glamorous or unusual narrative setting is illustrated in figure 5; 3) for nurse romance novels that blend in gothic styling, a case of mistaken identity, or other elements of danger and intrigue, the nurse is illustrated in a perilous situation, as in figure 6.

Book buyers knew the difference between romances and erotic stories by the taste and style of a cover illustration; steamier tales meant for male audiences signaled their content with voluptuous or scantily-clad women striking a provocative pose (see figure 7), while the sweet romances depicted a pretty and young woman properly dressed, perhaps in a man's tender embrace. The covers were as wholesome as the narrative content—at least until the 1970s when women's romances turned up the heat.

[289] McKnight-Trontz, 35.

Even then, women's steamy romance covers ensured it was the man who lost his clothing, not the protagonist.

Regardless of any other visual or textual content on the cover of these novels, two things were present on nearly every one—a nurse in her uniform, and the word nurse in the title. The uniforms occasionally varied, as was the case with novels that featured a nurse in the military or working in a more remote setting such as the mountains or a ranch. Overwhelmingly though, nurses were pictured in the formal, high-necked and collared, white dress and topped with their white cap. Of course, novels about student nurses portrayed their protagonist with a white cap sans the black band, which was added when a nurse graduated from training (see figure 8). This attempt at professional accuracy is incongruous with illustrating a nurse in uniform on sailboat (see figure 9) as it was strictly forbidden to wear the uniform outside of the hospital or clinic. Of course, in the case of a cruise ship nurse (see figure 10), the uniform would be permitted, as the ship was her clinical setting. And yes, there about a half dozen books in the collection featuring a cruise ship nurse and another half dozen featuring nurses who accidentally find themselves having to perform their nursing duties while sailing, travel by ship, or vacationing on a cruise.

Just as there are numerous variations on the title *Cruise Ship Nurse*, there are seemingly endless variations on *Emergency Nurse*, *Student Nurse*, *Small Town Nurse*, *City Nurse*, and *Mountain Nurse*. The repetitious titles aren't merely reprints by small publishing imprints or the same book published under multiple pseudonyms, though those exist as well. There are at least four distinct novels titled *Emergency Nurse* and another ten variations on the title such as *Candy Frost: Emergency Nurse* or

Emergency Ward Nurse. The titles most often represent the nursing context of the protagonist. Because titles indicated professional contexts for the narrative, I analyzed them for patterns and change over time and determined that they reveal a historical trajectory within this genre.

The basic premise of the nurse-themed romance novels is stable, but indeterminate enough to allow for variations: a young, beautiful, fresh nursing graduate starts a new job (a student-nurse-protagonist has just moved into the hospital school residence and started her training). She quickly finds herself courted by multiple men at the same time as she faces a professional dilemma. Over the course of the novel, she must remedy her professional situation and sort out whom she loves. Earlier nurse-themed romance novels tend to be focused on the nurse's professional setting in a more realistic and serious way. In the forties and early fifties, military nursing, hospital settings, and social outreach were popular themes reflecting the reality of social services coming out of the Great Depression, the need for nurses during the war, and the growing hospital industry. While other romance novel covers during the war "allude to the preciousness of family and home" by illustrating a couple reunited, nurse romance novel covers depict the heroine standing alone as if to convey her strength, courage, and necessary role in the war effort (see figure 11).[290] Notably, nurse-romance novels had not yet taken on the category format and were largely still single-title releases with higher page counts. Coming out of the war, romance covers conveyed the importance of marriage with illustrations that foreshadowed a plot ending in which the heroine happily settled down to get married and have children. Alternately, they

[290] McKnight-Trontz, 18.

illustrated heroines who "with a newfound independence—were determined to take life less seriously. Postwar covers often portray beautiful men and women on social escapades."[291] Nurse romance covers tend toward the latter, which is not surprising given that the country was desperate to keep nurses working. Career women and the tension between work and marriage was a popular theme in the romance genre through the fifties; covers foreshadowed the romantic/professional conflict with the earlier identified cover theme of a nurse (or other professional) in her work setting with a man (or men) in the background. Nursing-themed novels also provide a glimpse of the expanding options in the profession by placing the nurse in different clinical settings: convalescent homes, surgical wards, pediatric wards, district nursing, or home front nursing. Some of the nurse-themed romances in the forties and fifties have dedications that indicate the author was acquainted with nurses or inspired by real life nurses. Some author biographies indicate author had once been a nurse. These novels, more than others, describe particular procedures or medical situations with details that seem out of place or irrelevant to the narrative yet appear to be a strategy to demonstrate an appreciation and understanding for the true nature of the work and knowledge of nurses.[292]

By the sixties, "it had become readily apparent that medicine was the career of choice for women readers" and publishers were turning out numerous nurse- and/or

[291] McKnight-Trontz, 18.
[292] For example, in chapters 7 and 8 of *Nurse into Woman* the author details repeatedly the hygiene precautions, sanitation procedures, and disinfectants used to prevent the spread of a contagious illness. See Marguerite Mooers Marshall, *Nurse into Woman* (Philadelphia: Macrae-Smith Co., 1941; New York: Bantam, 1948), 43-48. Citations refer to the Bantam edition.

doctor-themed romances each year. The market was so saturated with medical romances that their plots and nursing contexts became more outlandish. *Jet Set Nurse*, *Art Colony Nurse*, *Nightclub Nurse*, *Jungle Nurse*, *Network Nurse*, *Ski Resort Nurse,* and *Penthouse Nurse* are all titles exemplifying the unexpected settings and professional specialties that arise in the mid to late sixties. The plots of these novels rely on bizarre predicaments and unlikely scenarios. As McKnight-Trontz sums it up, "the late 1960s the nurse was everywhere—from the neighborhood clinic to the African jungle."[293] The nurse-theme in these novels is a lure for readers already hooked on nurse romance lines and often do not describe the protagonist doing any medical work. Without further archival research, into correspondence between authors and publishers, for example, one can only speculate as to the reason for this change. Perhaps new authors less familiar with the profession wanted to jump on the bandwagon of an already popular genre, or perhaps readers had grown more interested in adventure and novelty but weren't ready to part with the archetype of a nurse heroine. Whatever the reason, the later variations of nurse-romance novels move them further away from reflecting the realities of nursing. The emotional script doesn't change much, however. The sixties nurse-protagonist still resists love at first, which she fears will end her professional identity and independence.

The 1970s, however, saw dramatic changes in romance novels' content and marketing. Beginning in the 1970s, female protagonists in many romance subgenres, including nurse romances, gained more executive positions; instead of a secretary, the heroine now might be the boss. Covers, too, became more sexually suggestive. For

[293] McKnight-Trontz, *The Look of Love*, 87.

example, the cover of The Disobedient Nurse, features the nurse in her bedroom with a man, the nurse's bare legs and feet outstretched as she reclines on her bed (see figure 12). The image is still fairly tame and relies on innuendo but the romance genre overall was beginning to change. Narratives and covers had rapturous embraces, passionate kissing, and expressed lust. Harlequin resisted this trend longer than others. Avon Books was one of the first publishers to put out steamy and historical-themed romances in the early 1970s.[294] *The Flame and the Flower*, written by Kathleen Woodiwiss, featured descriptive sexual content, some of which was coercive and violent. The new romance novels were more traditional novel lengths, three times longer than the category romances of the earlier decades. The novels dealt with sexuality openly, and not just tender intimacy but lustful and aggressive scenes. Known as sweet savage romances, these novels developed their own cover aesthetics and an iconic illustration of an embrace between a bare-chested man and the protagonist, which artists came to call "the clinch."[295]

In the 1970s, there were nearly 400 imprints producing both trade and mass-market romances.[296] Competition was incredibly fierce and the houses increasingly relied upon large marketing departments over illustrators to determine the look of their covers.[297] Conveying passion was more important than the storyline, and romances, which had previously centered the female protagonist on their covers, now emphasized the male characters. Romance covers also increasingly used photography over illustration for cover art. They also started using gaudy scripts and other design flair like

[294] McKnight-Trontz, 23.
[295] McKnight-Trontz, 24.
[296] McKnight-Trontz, 24.
[297] McKnight-Trontz, 30.

embossing, foil stamping, and die cutting for the new lines they produced.[298] In the eighties, Fabio finally made his arrival on the covers of romances. McKnight-Trontz, writes, “For years to come, the aggressive, primal presence of Fabio and his ilk became the de facto iconography of the romance novel.”[299] While nurse romance novels have not disappeared, their production waned in the seventies. When sweet savage romances came onto the scene, readers opted for the new genre over the exhausted plots and themes of the mild-mannered category romances. The cultural and political climate had changed and it seems that readers wanted their romances to reflect the new morays. Up until the seventies, however, nurse romances had managed to speak to women’s fantasies—not their sexual fantasies, but romantic, social and professional ones. The recurrent themes, plot devices, and other literary elements shared by the novels in the Nurse Romance Novel collection distinguish these romance novels from other category romances. I propose that these elements made nurse romance novels culturally relevant to women’s experiences and yearnings, resulting in their popularity.

As reviewer Bill Casey notes, in contrast to a lot of other women’s romantic fiction, the nurse novel doesn’t “trade in emotion” in the same way that others category romances do.[300] The protagonist’s professional training as a nurse has taught her emotional restraint. In many of these novels, this trait is used to slow down the inevitable coupling. “It is a fantasy of dominance over the emotions, of training over instinct, of occupational prestige.”[301] Contrary to assumptions that could be made based

[298] McKnight-Trontz, 30.
[299] McKnight-Trontz, 30.
[300] Bill Casey, “Nurse Novels**,”** *Southwest Review* 49, no. 4 *(*1964): 332. https://www.jstor.org/stable/43467640
[301] Casey, “Nurse Novels,” 338.

upon titles, cover captions, and cover art, the nurse-protagonists of these novels are generally not flirtatious nor are they vapid; the authors make clear from page one that even though the protagonist is young and beautiful, she is smart, hard-working, and takes her career seriously. Given the realities of hospital hierarchies at the time these novels were written, it is not unreasonable that contemporary readers might fear reading a nurse portrayed as the subservient extension of a doctor. Contrary to this, as nurse-romance novel reviewer and blogger Susanna Clark explains, "they stand up to or win over condescending doctors, irritable patients and evil co-workers. Indeed, a central theme is often the dichotomy between the expectations of them as women (to be submissive and self-effacing) and the expectations of them as nurses (to be capable and strong). The nursing persona frequently triumphs."[302]

The uniform is an important element in nursing history, the romance novels, and media representation overall. Not only do the covers of these novels depict the uniform prominently, but the narrative content does as well. Without fail, within the opening pages either the narrator describes the protagonist caring for her uniform, admiring her uniformed reflection in the mirror as she prepares to go to work, or the author describes the protagonist's internal monologue as she reflects on her self-pride for having finished her training and earning the stripe on her cap. In one 1958 example, the protagonist celebrates the receipt of her uniform, " 'Polly Brundage, R.N.!' She spoke the words aloud, savoring to the fullest the exciting truth that she had completed her three years of training and now was free to wear the starched white uniform, topped by an absurd but cherished little white cap and with her precious R.N. pin attached to her breast

[302] Susannah Clark, "Drama! Intrigue! Romance! Adventure!," *Scrubs,* Winter 2013: 32, https://scrubsmag.com/drama-intrigue-romance-adventure/.

pocket."[303] The uniform goes on to make appearances throughout one of these novels, used to insinuate traits of nurse characters. For example, authors usually describe the protagonist as taking great care of her uniform; real training school manuals had chapters devoted to the history, traditions, and proper care of the uniform. Uniforms are also used to reflect a character's adjustment to the profession; the protagonist is meticulous about her uniform's appearance and has adopted the characteristics of a well-adjusted nurse while a coworker or fellow nurse resident character that carelessly tosses the uniform in with other laundry or neglects to starch her collars will surely be seen breaking hospital rules, cutting corners, and also prove to be a gossip and envious rival. In the narratives, unlike the cover illustrations, protagonists never wear their uniform outside their clinical setting. The uniform is one of the first devices authors engage to emphasize the training and professional status of nursing. In the narratives, protagonists declare their authority in based upon their training and status as a nurse. But, rarely do authors actually provide any specifics about the training other than to describe it as long and arduous. The authority asserted by nurses is a rather fantastical element; some romance protagonists make a pretense of following hospital hierarchies for addressing concerns, but ultimately challenge doctors and head nurses in ways that seem unlikely for the era.

The nurse-protagonist is a young woman at the start of her career. The protagonist is declared to be one of the best from her training program; but the reader meets her at her moment of transition from student to professional. As actual curriculum manuals explained, "the neophyte nurse learns what others expect of her in a specific

[303] Peggy Gaddis, *Nurse at Sundown* (New York: MacFadden-Bartell, 1958), 5.

role while simultaneously learning how to exert control over her new environment."[304] Male suitors, especially doctors or patients, challenge the protagonist's adjustment to her new role and her ability to establish control in the new environment. Professional adjustments courses didn't prepare her for the numerous romantic overtures of doctors and patients!

Nevertheless, she is clever, driven, polite, and independent. She is devoted to her work and respected by her colleagues for her work ethic. Because of these traits, she nearly always finds herself advancing quickly in her professional life. "Pretty red-haired Karen Hayden was new at the hospital, but already she had a reputation for efficiency and dedication since work came first in her life."[305] Usually, the protagonist is alone in the world; freedom from these familial restraints explains her ability to move more freely through the world.[306] There is usually little that is disagreeable about the nurse. The protagonist is respected, takes herself seriously, and is infinitely accommodating to the demands of the job.

How then is such a perfect woman still single? So devastated by the end of her first love or by the loss of family early in her life, she has turned away from men to devote herself completely to the noble pursuit of caring for patients. This is the case in *College Nurse,* "Since the tragic death of her fiancé one week before their wedding, Fern O'Connor had buried her grief in her work as a nurse at College Hospital. She thought she'd buried her heart with it, but when her wealthy young patient, Bob Creasey,

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[304] Bass, "Professional Socialization," 34.
[305] Katherine McComb, *Night Duty Nurse* (New York: Dell, 1972), cover.
[306] When family is present, they are either a source of conflict in the plot or are infinitely supportive to the protagonist's life but tangential characters in the storyline. These variations will be explored in chapter four.

reached out to her in his desperate emotional need, she found herself responding not just as a nurse, but as a woman."[307] With no family and no beau, a nurse-protagonist is unencumbered, free to pursue her career aggressively. Her commitment to nursing also protects her from emotional involvement and future loss. As is the case with the protagonist in *Candy Frost, Emergency Nurse* who, "hoped to forget herself in her work, to forget the man who had jilted her and left her sick at heart. She certainly was never ever going to make the same mistake and fall in love again."[308]

An alterative explanation is that the protagonist feels she is too young and inexperienced in life to settle down into marriage. The cover caption on *Nurse at Sundown* implies that the nurse-protagonist will give have to end her career when she marries, "Polly Brundage's nursing uniform was still too new to swap for a wedding gown…This she tactfully made Gary Maynard see before things went too far." To the nurse-protagonist nursing is an opportunity to support herself as she matures and figures out who she is and what she wants from life. Nursing also provides a community and identity while being a noble and valuable profession. According to the cover of *Emergency Ward Nurse*, "Emergency duty was the very breath of life for young nurse Merle Asquith. To countless men, women and children struck by illness and disaster, she was a true angel of mercy."[309] How can the protagonist fairly manage to devote herself to competing interests: nursing, her own development, and marriage? Either way, the protagonist believes that nurse and woman (read: wife) are mutually exclusive identities. At the outset of the novel, she has chosen the identity of the nurse. Shoreline

[307] Fern Shepard, *College Nurse* (New York: Pyramid Books, 1966), cover.
[308] Ethel Hamill, *Candy Frost, Emergency Nurse* (New York: Hillman, 1960), cover.
[309] Helen B. Castle, *Emergency Ward Nurse* (New York: Paperback Library, 1963), cover.

Nurse captures the nurse's internal conflict, "Before long, Lorina found herself caught in a tangle of island politics and deepening love that forced her to choose between her duty as a nurse and her life as a woman."[310] As does the front cover caption of *Nurse with Wings,* which foreshadows the protagonist overcoming of the obstacle, "Her training left no room for romance, until she learned that she was a woman first and a nurse second."[311] Though other barriers to the courtship plot arise, this is overwhelmingly the main obstacle in the nurse-romance.

Another common element is the setting: usually a community to which the nurse is a newcomer or outsider or, an geographic exciting location. Earlier nurse-romance novels relied on the novelty of introducing readers to clinical settings, which might have initially been novel in their own right. The locale often serves to demonstrate the protagonist's deviation from female stereotypes: she's tough enough and resourceful enough to make her way through challenging new cultures or the backwoods. Hard work is nothing new to a nurse and she is not squeamish about living without luxuries. As is the case in fantasy worlds, her ability to "rough it" doesn't challenge her femininity or desirability.

Similarly, her ability to forge her way into the hearts of community that first saw her as an outsider demonstrate the nurse as savvy, compassionate, and dedicated. Occasionally the nurse finds herself accepting an odd private duty assignment as she runs away from her past, as is the case in *Nurse to the Cruise*. "Nurse on a luxury yacht cruising the Mediterranean seemed an ideal way to recover from a broken love affair. Mab found it only to easy to forget Nat once she'd met the others on the yacht--

[310] Jeanne Bowman, *Shoreline Nurse* (New York: Pyramid Books, 1971), cover.
[311] Georgia Craig, *Nurse with Wings* (New York: Avon, 1945), front cover.

especially Dr. Donald Guthrie."[312] Before the nursing contexts became as outlandish as they did in the early seventies, they increasingly saw the nurse travelling both domestically and abroad. I suggest that the nurse romance novel served as a vicarious replacement for domestic and international travel. In the sixties, nurse-protagonists travelled to the Bayou, the Everglades, Las Vegas, Hawaii, the Blue Ridge Mountains, Cape Cod, reservations, tropical islands, and Europe. Nurse-protagonists introduced readers to different socio-economic classes and ways of life as they took nurse assignments at dude ranches, lumber camps, fancy ski resorts, and private social clubs. In the mid-sixties, they travelled around the globe to Ghana, the Congo, Sri Lanka, the West Indies, Afghanistan, Tasmania, Acapulco, Vienna, Paris, and Spain to name just a few. Increasingly, the nurses worked for organizations like the Red Cross, the Tourist Service, and the Peace Corps., blending global missions work with their medical training. Though beyond the scope of this investigation, there seems to be a potential relationship between President Kennedy's executive order in 1961, which creating the Peace Corps., and the emergence of these new themes in the nurse-romance novel. Perhaps the country's changing attitudes about international relationships and foreign policy are echoed in popular fiction.

Domestic missions-type service was modeled, too, when nurse-protagonists worked with Native American populations and immigrant populations. Whether home or abroad, the white nurse-protagonist working with another ethnic, cultural, or racial group generally adopted a tone of paternalistic care. The narratives reflect the attitudes and perceptions of a dominant white culture, especially the belief that white Americans and

[312] Anne Vinton, *Nurse to the Cruise* (New York: Harlequin Books, 1976), back cover.

Europeans will civilize and educate *the other* through their selfless devotion and service. The patient population does not actively participate in the narrative; rather than individual characters with speaking roles, the population is a generalized mass, save for one spokesperson who speaks to either communicate the community's rejection of the foreigner or their eternal gratitude for her help.

Another common feature to the nurse-romance novel is what I will identify as the *charity case character*. The nurse-protagonist meets someone who faces a desperate situation; this mostly tangential character needs an especially sympathetic ear, advocate or ally. Though the nurse is usually emotionally restrained at work, this character is the exception to her rule. It is often a child, a pregnant woman, or someone suicidal with whom the nurse-protagonist forms an emotional bond. The nurse vows to help this person overcome whatever situation they face, but it usually requires her doing so alone and maintaining absolute discretion. As the plot proceeds, helping this character puts the nurse in a precarious professional position or leads to a misunderstanding that interrupts her developing romance. This element seems to function as a means to soften the nurse's restrained professional approach as well as her resistance to marriage and family life in the reader's mind and also demonstrates that the nurse's character is built upon equality and justice.

There are numerous side conflicts throughout the novel, usually strife in clinical settings: she is accused of a medical error that cost a patient their life, there is a case of mistaken identity, or someone spreads a rumor that affects her professional reputation. A female romantic rival or a Head Nurse (always older and unmarried) who feels threatened are usually the ones to generate these conflicts. The romantic rival is often

wealthier, prettier, or in some capacity initially superior in social status to the protagonist but always revealed to be less gracious and less noble.

Many of the novels feature a message about social ambition and upward mobility. Nurse-protagonists sometimes serve as private duty nurses in a position that allows them to experience life in a social class above their own. The patient or patient's family is wealthy and the job provides an opportunity for the nurse to reside in their luxurious home or accompany them on travels. In *Office Nurse* by Rebecca Marsh, the front cover entices the reader with a tale of a nurse who voyeuristically enjoys, but isn't seduced by wealth, "Gerry Staley, R.N., loved the sleek elegance of the society doctor's office, but her conscience told her there was more to nursing than caring for the imagined ills of the rich."[313] Or, the nurse must decide between men of different means who both court her. Often, one is an older, well-established doctor who wines and dines the protagonist while the other is the middle-class stereotype of hardworking and loyal (never working class). She considers not just who she cares for more, but what kind of life she wants to lead. "After chapters of soul-searching, the nurse heroine inevitably chooses love over security, personal integrity over societal pressure."[314] Though socio-economic class is introduced, differences between them are minimized. In the romance fantasy world, class is reduced to a matter of entry to country clubs and an appreciation for high culture, while the realities of poverty are not addressed. The message, nevertheless, communicates a bias toward middle-class lifestyles and fails to recognize finances as a real determinant in people's lives. The sense a reader gets is that one should strive for upward mobility but that hard work, not marriage, is the honorable way to achieve it.

[313] Rebecca March, *Office Nurse* (New York: Macfadden-Bartell, 1960), front cover.
[314] Clark, *Scrubs,* 33.

Finances are not the only thing the nurse-protagonist considers when it comes to her suitors. Our protagonist always has at least two men competing for her affection and their stock portfolios are just the start of their differences. One man will be dependable, rational, caring, and mild-mannered; the other will be adventurous, brilliant, passionate in his pursuits, and in some cases, emotionally indecipherable. This emotional volatility presents a challenge to the protagonist's sensibilities. Both men will be handsome, smart, and generally professionally successful. Once a reader understands the patterns of the nurse-romance novel, they will pick up on clues as to who is or isn't Mr. Right. The cover captions and cover art insinuate that a nurse's job is in conflict with marriage and hint that the protagonist will ultimately choose love. As the front cover caption of *Mountain Nurse* questions, "Nurse Julie's job was her whole life. Could she risk losing it to find herself as a woman?"[315] Rarely do the authors force their protagonist to choose career over love or vice versa. Rather, the entire trajectory of the narrative brings the protagonist to the moment when she understands that the man worthy of her love will not ask her to choose and nor should her job.

In *Border Nurse*, the author pokes fun at stereotypes as she has one suitor declare to the protagonist shortly after their first meeting, "But of course I should have realized that a girl as pretty as you would already be spoken for! Some hard-working, dedicated young intern who's going to be a doctor one of these days; or maybe even a lucky patient who has recovered due your tender ministrations."[316] The suitor assumes that her rebuff of his advances is because as a nurse, naturally, she is already entangled with a doctor or patient. That this character can't fathom a young woman

[315] Peggy Gaddis, *Mountain Nurse* (New York: Macfadden-Bartell, 1959), front cover.
[316] Peggy Gaddis, *Nurse at Sundown* (New York: MacFadden-Bartell, 1958), 27.

postponing romance to focus on her career is the clue that he will not be the winner in the end. By contrast, in *Nurse Atholl Returns*, the doctor who questions the protagonist's choice to leave nursing to get married will, in the end, be her chosen companion. Early in the story he say's to her, "It's a pity…Not for you, I dare say…I was merely reflecting upon the waste involved in women getting themselves trained for exacting careers, only to drop them when they marry."[317] Likewise, the student nurse in *Junior Pro* knows she has found her partner when he declares, "It's just that I want you to be absolutely free to choose whether you finish your training or not. I want you to enjoy being a person in your own right, before you tie yourself down to me. And I want you to go on loving medicine…"[318] Time and again, the nurse will choose the man who believes that her identity as a nurse should continue alongside her identity as a woman, and his wife.

This central feature of nurse romance plots was just one of many distinguishing characteristics of the nurse-romance novel: sensational settings, the emotional reservation of the nurse, her absence of any personal ties, her respect for the uniform and profession as indicators of her training and skill, her assertion of independence, and the male character who is supportive of her career. And, of course, the nurse-protagonist is not interested in chasing men but spends a great deal of the short book trying to keep them at bay. These conventions are distinct enough from other romances that amidst their popularity, book reviewer Bill Casey assessed nurse-romance novels

[317] Jane Arbor, *Nurse Atholl Returns* (London: Mills & Boon, 1952; Winnipeg: Harlequin Books, 1960), 4. Citations refer to the Harlequin edition.
[318] Katie Norway, *Junior Pro* (London: Mills & Boon, 1959; Winnipeg: Harlequin Books, 1960), 187. Citations refer to the Harlequin edition.

as an entirely new genre.[319] The novels are unpretentious, catering to the interests and reading levels of the general public in a way that classical literature does not. Casey goes so far as to assert that the conventions of the nurse-romance novel are distasteful to educated readers.[320] Their overarching themes focus on major life events and emotions, with no great literary or philosophical expressions. McKnight-Trontz argues that, "in an era before sexual liberation and the Pill, romances offered female readers a taste of illicit freedom."[321] If the romance novels depict rather ordinary lives and lack any element of sexual fantasy, what then are the illicit freedoms offered to female readers?

Nurse-romance novels focus on female characters who worked hard to get an education and who work a job that is personally rewarding. The protagonist has no fear in expressing her desire to focus on herself for a while before getting married. She makes her own money and decisions. Overall, the novels minimize the difference in status between men and women, nurses and doctors by portraying female nurses questioning doctors without consequence. They also minimize difference in social class. These are all very basic desires and small freedoms. Casey asserts that readers related to the nurse-romance novel because they reflect "the desire to be independent, to be competent at something," and pessimistically concludes that "viewed in the mass and from a certain distance, their function is clear enough. That is why the final effect of these books is not ridiculous, but depressing. It is a sombre thought that desires so simple, and at bottom so decent, should for many women be the stuff of fantasy."[322] Though Casey's argument resonates on an emotional level for many people, as did

[319] Casey, "Nurse Novels," 332.
[320] Casey, 341.
[321] McKnight-Trontz, *The Look of Love,* 9.
[322] Casey, "Nurse Novels," 341.

Friedan's, my inclination is that readers seek out and enjoy literature for numerous reasons, not only as a coping mechanism for an unfulfilled life or to escape into a fantasy world of greener pastures. In the next chapter, I test Casey's assertion and uncover the many surprises that nurse-romance novels offer their readers.

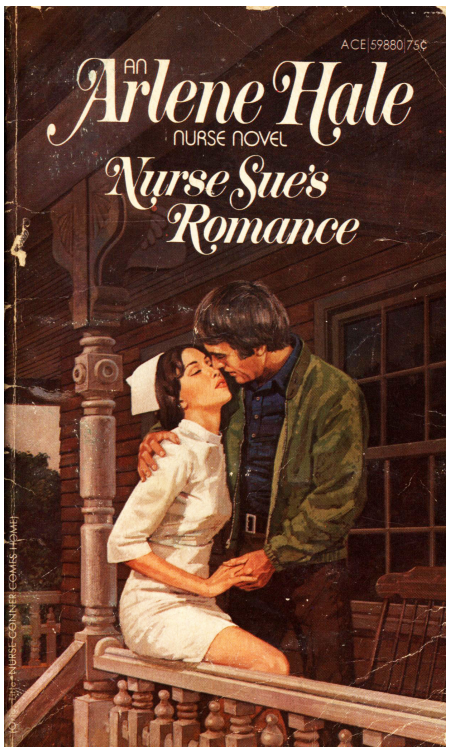

Figure 1. Arlene Hale, *Nurse Sue's Romance* (New York: Ace Books, 1964)

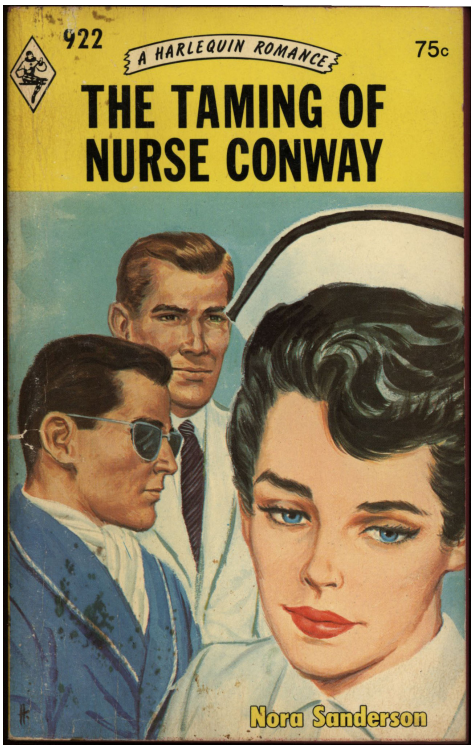

Figure 2. Nora Sanderson, *The Taming of Nurse Conway* (Toronto: Harlequin Books, 1965).

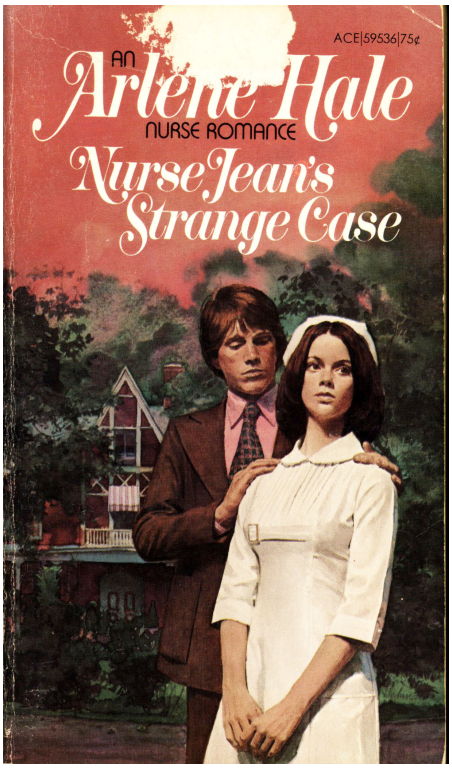

Figure 3. Arlene Hale, *Nurse Jean's Strange Case* (New York: Ace Books, 1970). Illustration by Charles Gehm.

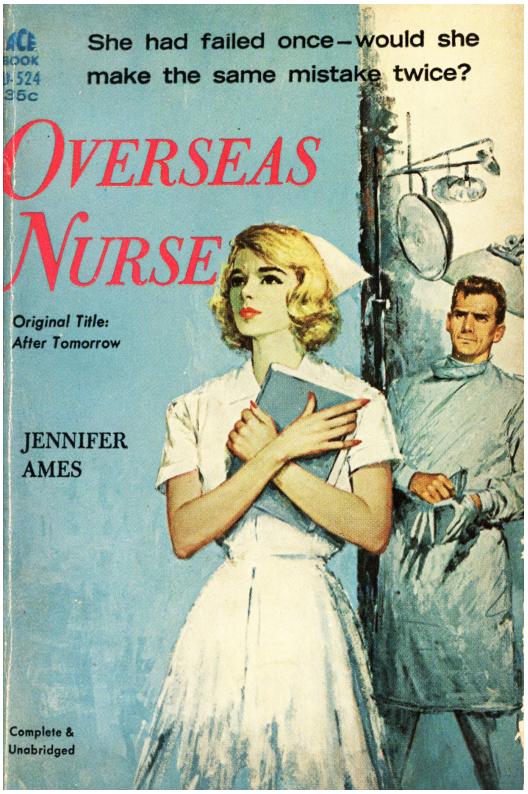

Figure 4. Jennifer Ames, *Overseas Nurse* (New York: Ace Books, 1951). Illustration by Lou Marchetti.

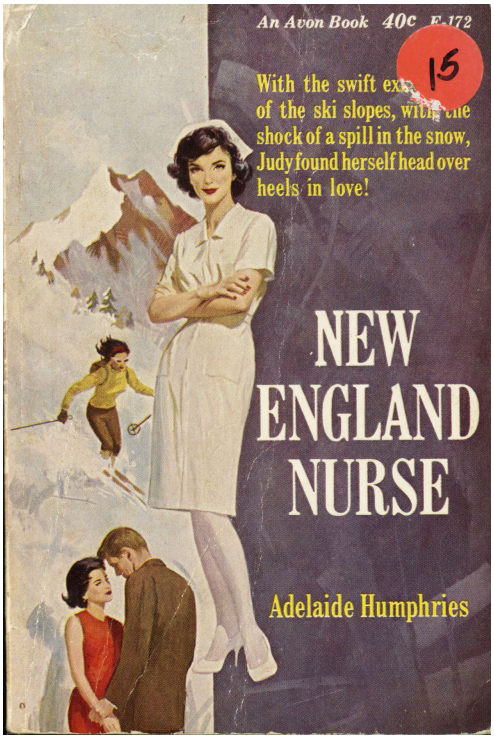

Figure 5. Adelaide Humphries, *New England Nurse* (New York: Avon, 1962). Illustration by Robert Maguire.

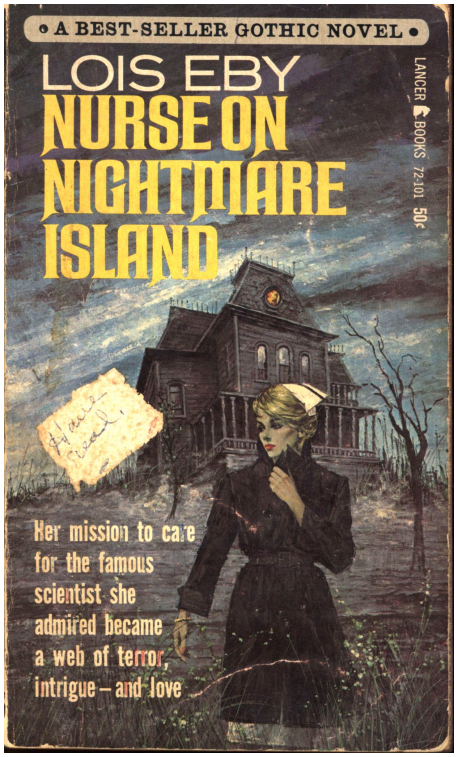

Figure 6. Lois Eby, *Nurse on Nightmare Island* (New York: Lancer, 1966). Illustration by Lou Marchetti.

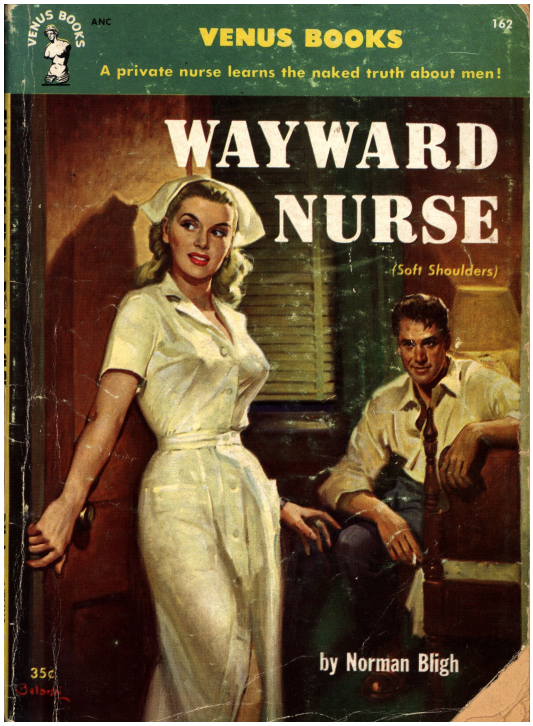

Figure 7. Norman Bligh [William Neubauer], *Wayward Nurse* (New York: Venus Books, 1953).

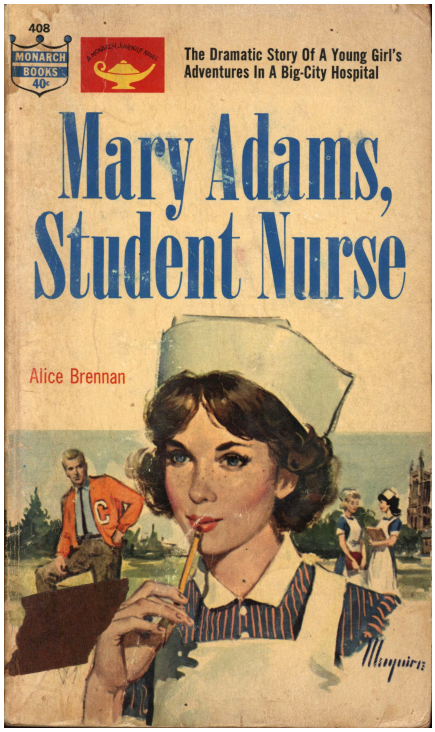

Figure 8. Alice Brennan, *Mary Adams, Student Nurse* (Derby, CT: Monarch Books, 1964). Illustration by Robert Maguire.

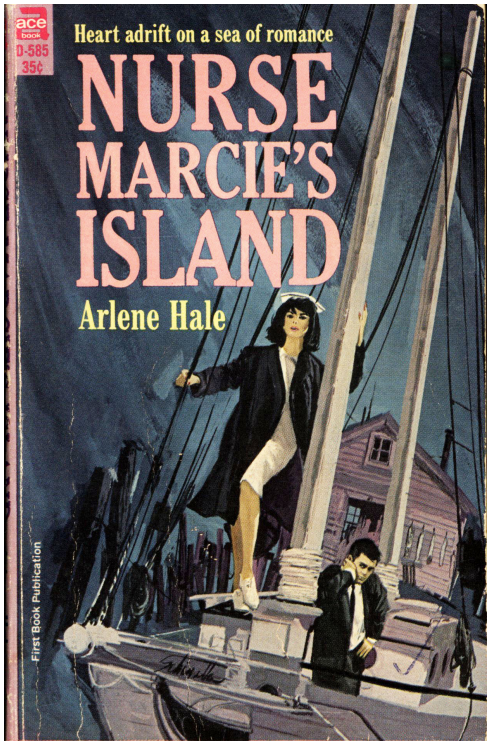

Figure 9. Arlene Hale, *Nurse Marcie's Island* (New York: Ace, 1964). Illustration by Bob Schinella.

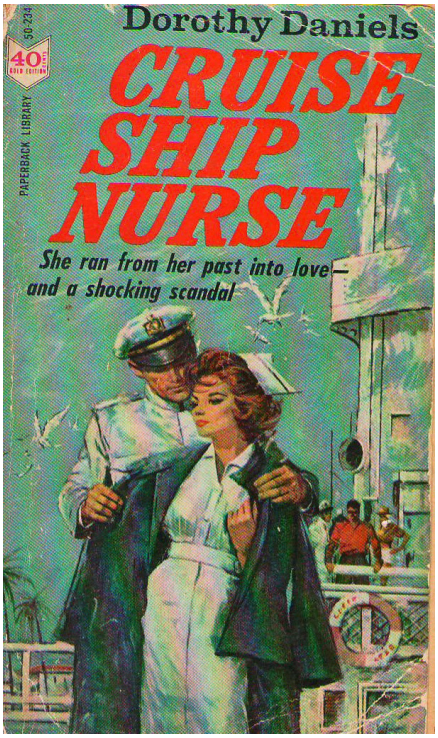

Figure 10. Dorothy Daniel, *Cruise Ship Nurse* (New York: Paperback Library, 1963). Illustration by Lou Marchetti.

Figure 11. Ruby Lorraine Radford, *Nancy Dale, Army Nurse,* Fighters for Freedom Series (Racine, WI: Whitman Publishing Company, 1944). Illustration by Henry E. Vallely.

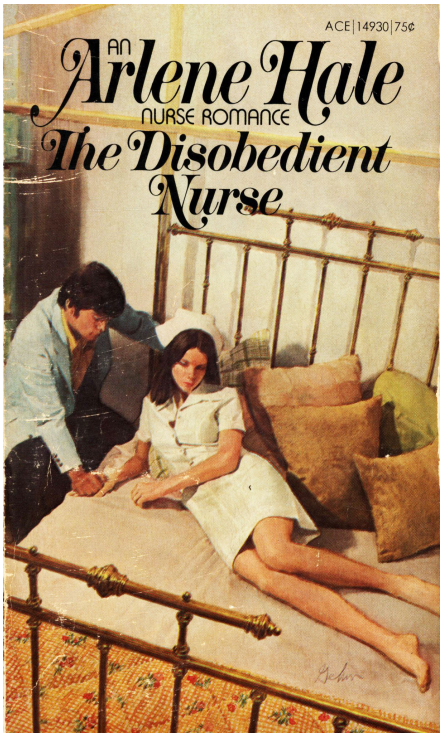

Figure 12. Arlene Hale, *The Disobedient Nurse* (New York: Ace Books, 1975).

Chapter Four
Nurse Novels in Context: Decade-by-Decade Analysis

Nurse romance novels offered more to women that just a fantasy of basic independence and agency.[323] It is impossible to know precisely how authors intended for their stories to be interpreted or to know how women reacted to them. Instead of rehashing old debates or arguing that these novels contribute to one dominant stereotype about either nurses or women, I am more interested in demonstrating that their complexity. Romance scholars Frantz and Selinger argue that "popular romance fiction negotiates the claims of generic convention and of artistic innovation…authors explore the complexities, self-contradictions, and polymorphic variety available within and around the genre."[324] Based my own distant reading practices of paratexts and select passages within so many novels, I argue that nurse-romance novels deviate from the conventions of other romances to create their own variations. How these conventions operate within the narrative as a whole communicate authors' views on social and political issues of their time. Romance scholars have argued that reading for the interplay between convention and innovation can reveal more about the historical and social context of the narrative's creation. For example, Frantz and Selinger explain that a romance author "must supply both comfort and surprise; indeed she must achieve 'authenticity' of voice precisely by giving the reader what she wants and expects—but differently."[325] This is not a simple task; it requires rhetorical dexterity as the author walks a fine line between producing content with mass-appeal while presenting

[323] Bill Casey, "Nurse Novels**,"** 332-341.
[324] Frantz and Selinger, *New Approaches to Popular Romance Fiction*, 11.
[325] Frantz and Selinger, 11.

challenging or unsettling themes. In doing so, authors sometimes "construct heroines who simultaneously conform to the traditional model of a heroine, are contrasted to it, and challenge it through their assumption of masculine traits, their consciousness of their social roles, and their reflexivity."[326] Keeping this in mind, I assessed how the characters were or were not conscious of their social roles as a woman or nurse, how the contemporary narrative contexts were described and the ways that characters understood their identities in relationship to those contexts.

I selected several texts from each decade within the period of the 1940s through the 1970s to read entirely.[327] Of these, I will discuss here just one or two from each decade. I sought to avoid what contemporary romance scholars now perceive as the pitfalls of first-wave romance scholarship, that is a "psychoanalytic approach to the genre, in which everything really interesting about the romance novel was repressed or unconscious or latent, needing the critic-analyst to bring it to light."[328] This critic-analyst approach informed by psychoanalysis is similar to that of Betty Friedan's in *The Feminist Mystique*. I sought instead to follow the lead of Jay Dixon in her work *The Romantic Fiction of Mills & Boon, 1909-1990s*, which looked at what was immediately present or absent in the narratives. Dixon demonstrates that while the Mills & Boon

[326] Frantz and Selinger, 12.
[327] I acknowledge that decades are an arbitrary designation of time and history. Kalisch and Kalisch performed their analysis of mass media representation of nurses by decade while Bass performed her analysis of twentieth century nurse education by social eras, which she developed by modifying several prior social era timelines created by historians Arnold S. Rice, John H. Cary, and Julius Weinberg. My historical analysis identifies the 1940s to the 1970s as its own era reflecting the popularity of the nurse-themed romance novel and I am interested in that period generally as well as changes from the beginning to the end moreso than identifying particular eras within that timeframe. Therefore, section headings move chronologically by decade to provide structure rather than attribute particular significance to decade periods.
[328] Frantz and Selinger, *New Approaches to Popular Romance Fiction*, 6.

heroines avoided any risqué sexual activities with men, they often advocated for women's social and legal equality through their work activities, promotion of women's suffrage, and more. I took note of similar types of references, social issues, political issues, and work issues, as they were made in the nurse-romance novels.

What I found outside of the courtship plots in these novels were references to the Korean War, PTSD, economic development of small towns, urban renewal projects, California farm workers strikes, the Civil Rights movement, and the Women's Liberation movement. Nurse-protagonists might have filled up their social-calendars with romantic dates, but they also found time to attend community meetings, mentor teenagers, and do charity-nursing work with people marginalized by the healthcare industry. I was surprised to find that even though most secondary female characters were flat, they played crucial roles in helping illustrate the protagonist's value-system, especially through dialogue. For example, female characters have conversations about depression, drug addiction, suicide, racism, current and local events, labor organizing, and more. In light of this, many of these novels would pass the infamous *Bechdel Test.*[329] Usually applied to movies, the Bechdel Test evaluates the representation of women in fiction based on three simple criteria: 1) the presence of at least two female characters 2) who have conversations with one another, 3) about something other than a man.[330] As Scott Selisker explains, like film ratings,

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[329] The test was names for Alison Bechdel who first promoted it in her cartoon Dykes to Watch Out For, though she credits her friend Liz Wallace and the writing of Virginia Woolf for the idea.

[330] The Bechdel Test is a simple pass/fail assessment and Scott Selisker raises the point that a narrative can pass the test and still not have a feminist impact. The function of the female characters in the story, the nature of their relationship, and the subject of their conversations are all factors. Selisker articulates a strategy of using Bruno Latour's

"the test advertises a horizon of expectation for the content of a film, but, unlike them, it explicitly grants that content a political valence."[331] The Nurse romance authors give their protagonists inner monologues that, like their conversations with female characters, center around things going on in their life and the world other than romance, though they do often relate these topics to their assessment of suitors as well. As the nurse-protagonist contemplates selecting a mate, she considers what his political and social leanings imply about his suitability as her partner and makes character-judgments between her suitors based on these over his attractiveness, social sway, or financial standing.

Additionally, some authors play around with reader expectations by inverting stereotypes about women. For example, in *Nurse at Sundown*, the author promotes men with progressive ideas about women and nurses over those with outdated notions. In one short dialogue, she disrupts stereotypes about both women and nurses:

> Her protagonist declares, "After all my years of training I'd like to practice my profession for awhile before I think about settling down."
> The suitor: "You're everything anybody could want in a nurse; you're warm, sweet, gentle, kind, human! You're the very nurse I'd like most to have hold my hand when I come down with a case of the galloping what's-its… The same reasons that you make a fine nurse, Pretty Thing, will also make you a you a very fine wife! So don't fool around *too* long with your professional career, will you, and thus cheat some more or less deserving guy?" [332]

The authors glib addition of "human" to the suitor's perception of what makes a good nurse and his comment that she is "fooling around" with a career make it clear that this

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actor-network theory to situate the results of a Bechdel Test within the structures and forms of a social world in order to better assess how characters enable or constrain women's subjectivity and agency. Scott Selikser, "The Bechdel Test and the Social Form of Character Networks," *New Literary History* 46, no. 3 (2015): 505-523. https://doi-org.ezproxy.lib.uwm.edu/10.1353/nlh.2015.0024.

[331] Selikser, "The Bechdel Test," 505.

[332] Gaddis, *Nurse at Sundown*, 53.

man doesn't respect nursing as a skilled profession nor does he understand the partnership in marriage, both of which are important to the protagonist. Even though the 1950s nurse-protagonist isn't ready to confront his entitlement and chauvinism head-on, she makes her feelings known when she rejects him in favor of a man who declares his openness to relationship models that upset typical gender roles. The man she chooses describes (without judgment) a married couple in their community in which the woman is both the head of household and an influential community member. He states, "people wondered how he had managed to court and marry such a—well, steamroller of a woman. But they've been married for more than thirty years and they are completely happy. She just about runs the island…"[333] Though these dialogues and plot developments may not seem significant, when repeated several times over within a novel and then through many novels I suspect that they have a cumulative impact on the reader. It appears that nurse-romance authors draw on stereotypes in ways that at times uphold traditional ideologies and at other times disrupt them. Let's take a look at some novels more in depth.

1940s: The Ideal Nurse Learns to Love in *Nurse Into Woman*

Nurse into Woman was written by Marguerite Mooers Marshall. She wrote several nurse-romance novels as well as a few non-fiction works. She was, however, primarily a journalist and used to her reporting to advocate for women's suffrage and women's labor rights. She believed that women deserved to be recognized for their abilities on equal footing with men. In 1920 she penned an opinion piece in reaction to

[333] Gaddis, *Nurse at Sundown*, 98-99.

the Women's Trade Union League supporting protectionist legislations of women workers instead of supporting women's unionization:

> Why is it that the National Women's Trade Union League chooses to assume, the typical anti-suffragist, anti-feminist attitude—i.e., that women must 'be protected,' that they must 'shrink' from meeting men on the level ground of equality, that the dear and delicate creatures must be 'shielded against themselves, if necessary, for their own welfare and that of the race'?[334]

Ms. Marshall's protagonist in *Nurse into Woman*, Kristine Grant, displays a fair degree of Marshall's rational approach to women's capacity for both physical and mental labor and does hesitate to advocate for herself at work. *Nurse into Woman* was first published by Macrae-Smith in 1941, just two years after the introduction of Robert de Graaf's introduction of Penguin paperbacks to the American market. It was published before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and US entry into the World War II. Remember that before World War II, romance fiction was popular but mostly published in hardcover formats with moderate print runs. This particular novel straddles the transition from single-title releases to mass-market paperback category lines; the two editions in Special Collections are hardcover editions from 1941 and 1942 and roughly 300 pages but it was released again after the war as a paperback with cover aesthetics characteristic of the sweet, category romances (see figure 13). I thought it would be informative to look at one pre-war novel to identify changes in both content and form. Romance novels featuring female characters with jobs, intelligence, and an independent streak were not uncommon before the war; although these traits were portrayed as

[334] Margaret Dreier Robins, "Newspaper Woman Protests against 'Maternal Legislation'." *Life and Labor* X, no. 3 (1920): 84. https://link-gale-com.ezproxy.lib.uwm.edu/apps/doc/WQEHBB379430358/NCCO?u=milwaukee&sid=NCCO&xid=bd7fb27f.

"acceptable and even attractive to men, but only as a prelude to marriage."[335] As Honey explains, female characters who insisted on maintaining their jobs after marriage or of upstaging their husband's careers became selfish villains, often meeting their demise.[336] Marshall, however, has crafted a story that defies these patterns with a nurse-protagonist who remains a likeable heroine throughout the narrative despite refusing to relinquish her career.

Nurse Kristine Grant is the epitome of beauty and femininity, narrowly defined by standards of Northern European ancestry.[337] Marshall describes her protagonist, "…she had inherited the intensely vital and heroic beauty of a daughter of the North—hair the gold of old-fashioned yellow roses, eyes that could be clear gray like an iceberg or the deep, burning blue of Northern lights, a white skin and a tall, long-limbed, wide-shouldered body, effortlessly strong."[338] Marshall will return to the Norse imagery time and again throughout the novel to describe Nurse Grant's beauty and strength. Her

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[335] Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter*, 69.
[336] See Honey, "Fiction before Pearl Harbor," in *Creating Rosie the Riveter,* 65-72.
[337] Marshall relates beauty to Northern European ancestry and later describes an Italian immigrant woman with paternalistic stereotypes. This seems to b a holdover from the late nineteenth and early twentieth understanding of whiteness as a racial category. Whiteness was neither a stable nor binary, especially in northern and western cities; it was constantly in flux and responsive to immigration patterns. Definitions of beauty were one way that racial boundary maintenance was socially enforced. In the early twentieth century the racial status of immigrant groups and the question of whether or not they should be afforded the privileges of racial whiteness were hotly contested in discussions about municipal politics, immigration, and labor. By the thirties racial boundaries had mostly softened to include southern and eastern Europeans as white so I was surprised to read Marshall's narrow definition of beauty, especially given her advocacy work with working women, of whom a large percentage were immigrants. For more about racial categories and immigration in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, see Brian Donovan, *White Slave Crusades: Race, Gender, and Anti-Vice Activism, 1887-1917* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006.
[338] Marguerite Mooers Marshall, *Nurse into Woman* (Philadelphia: Macrae-Smith-Co, 1941), 1.

strength, however, doesn't sacrifice her femininity and is recognized as an asset to her profession, “Broken men and women whom Kristine nursed were for the most part conscious only of her strong tenderness and her deep reservoir of vitality…she was accepted as a beneficent force of nature…”[339] It is also one of the traits that her suitors find attractive, as the ship Captain Dudley says to her, “You’re like a rock. Why can’t all women be fit and fine and adequate—not just physically but in other ways? Why do they think helplessness attractive?”[340]

Not only is she beautiful and strong, but she is what Turner called “the ideal of disciplined yet sympathetic nursing” and exhibits both the internal and external factors of the “well-adjusted nurse” according to Bass’s assessment of nurse training and socialization for the period of 1930-1945.[341] The temporal setting of this novel takes place just after the new NLNE guidelines for nursing curriculum advised using the term professional adjustments so it is interesting to note that Marshall narrates, “Kristine Grant had a pride in being “‘ethical’—an adjective sometimes overworked by her profession, but nevertheless connoting a fine blend of nursing adequacy, honor, and dignity.”[342]

Ms. Marshall seems to have been very knowledgeable about nursing as she describes both the practices and procedures of various hospital wards as well as the accompanying interpersonal dynamics of a hierarchical hospital setting with detail and accuracy. These details begin immediately as the narrative opens with an image of Nurse Kristine Grant as she “walked lightly, weight on the balls of the feet, as nurses

[339] Marshall, *Nurse into Woman*, 2.
[340] Marshall, 35.
[341] Turner, “In Perfect Sympathy,” 268; Bass, “Professional Socialization,” 169-236.
[342] Marshall, *Nurse into Woman*, 24.

are trained to do."[343] Indeed, Dietz' *Professional Adjustments I* textbook, advises nurses to wear either black or white colored moderate heels with soles made of a rubber or else covered with tape so as to mute the sound of them on the floor to ensure the nurse would not make noise and disturb anyone as she moved about the ward.[344] And while the protagonist is ethical and perfectly poised, she is also smart and unafraid to speak up about problems. When, for example, she has a problem with a male orderly she follows hospital hierarchies by first taking the matter to her Head Nurse; when this fails to remedy the problem, she requests permission from her Head Nurse to escalate the problem to the Chief of Staff. Though nursing textbooks still emphasized loyalty to physicians, the hospital, and the profession they were beginning to address the issues of nurse's raising issues with hospital procedures or errors in physician's orders.[345] In Spalding's textbook for senior students she writes, "without fault-finding…it may be necessary to try to change policies and conditions in a situation, because adjustment means more than just fitting in; it means making things right."[346] Nurse Grant is unafraid of speaking with doctors about problems but does so with tact and discretion. Throughout the novel she demonstrates diligent attention to detail in her work, is methodical in performing medical procedures, and when an emergency arises she is self-directed and quick to act. She exhibits each of the "personal qualities characteristic of confidence" as delineated in nursing textbooks—"accuracy, intelligence, discretion,

[343] Marshall, 1.
[344] Lena Dixon Dietz, *Professional Adjustments I,* 2nd ed., (Philadelphia: F.A. Davis Co., 1943), 73.
[345] See Bass, Professional Socialization," 208, 211-12.
[346] Spalding, *For Senior Students*, preview to the Introduction.

confidentiality, non-critical, meticulous, punctual, and trustworthiness."[347] In the first chapter alone, she is shown to manage an entire ward of thirty patients by herself during a night shift, performing not only routine care but also giving extra attention and compassion to each patient, and addressing three separate medical emergencies. In contrast, one of the secondary characters, Nurse Ruth Norris, is shown to be the epitome of a maladjusted nurse; she hasn't learned the professional adjustment lessons of being likeable and exhibiting solidarity with other nurses. Her jealousy of other women compromises her ability to be a good nurse as she encourages patients to lie about their circumstances and spreads lies about both healthcare workers and patients. On account of her unprofessional actions, Captain Dudley is accused of impregnating and subsequently abandoning a young woman and the immigrant mother is terrorized with the misinformation that her baby will be taken away from her by the state because of her status as an unwed woman. Nurse Norris is not only written as morally reprehensible woman but an unfit nurse.

The professional context of this novel changes as the plot progress; at first, the protagonist Nurse Grant works nights in the intensive care unit a hospital, then provides individualized step-down care to a male patient (the hero, Captain Dudley), she moves on to a dangerous quarantine assignment, is promoted to Head Nurse of the maternity and pediatric ward (by the Chief of Medical Staff Dr. Lee Bowen who hopes to that working with mothers and babies will soften her heart to his proposal), and finally she leaves the hospital for a private duty assignment to care for a wealthy, but suicidal and morphine-addicted young woman who ultimately teaches her about seizing life's

[347] Bass, "Professional Socialization," 213.

opportunities. Throughout, Ms. Marshall provides some oddly specific details about particular illnesses or procedures, giving the reader a sense that nursing does require extensive medical knowledge and training. Early in the narrative, Marshall makes repeated references to the hospital being understaffed and nurses being overworked, yet managing to perform miracles while maintain a pleasant and professional demeanor—Marshall is clearly an advocate for increased recognition and praise for nurses.

In each nursing assignment the reader is introduced to different aspect of the protagonist's character as well as stereotypical images of nurses. As a charge nurse on night duty she is alternately a comforting mother or stand-in sweetheart for male patients. Nurse Grant's inner monologue reflects on this role "Nurses were so often mother-confessors."[348] The protagonist has fully internalized this stereotype, "She had just laid down the needle, when there came one of the faint calls to which a night nurse's ears are attuned as sharply as those of a mother sleeping with one ear open for the protest of hunger or pain from her firstborn."[349] The sweetheart role, however, is one that she understands but resists, "She had to allow for a certain sentimentality as a part of the behaviorism of men patients, but one didn't give it a serious thought, much less a response."[350] The flirtations of Captain Dudley, however, go beyond any of her other patients and when she is assigned to be his private nurse as he recovers from pneumonia, his affection grows and develops into serious courtship. Marshall continuously emphasizes Nurse Grant's refusal of his courtship; she is after all *not* the

[348] Marshall, *Nurse into Woman*, 3.
[349] Marshall, 11.
[350] Marshall, 24.

stereotype of a nurse easily swayed by men's fickle advances and instead displays absolute commitment to nursing as she denies her own emotions and maintains her professional demeanor. She explains to Captain Dudley her commitment to nursing, "Nursing's my whole life. There won't ever be any other."[351] But, the Captain's attraction to her is not the fleeting erotic transference experienced by her other patients, rather he admires her whole identity before he leaves the hospital tells her "…a man could love you as few women are loved, because you have what they have not—strength, vitality and courage and tireless willingness to serve."[352]

After this, Nurse Grant is asked to take on a potentially life-threatening case involving extended care of a patient in quarantine, what Dr. Bowen calls a "death battle…the nurse who goes into it may not come out."[353] The protagonist is not afraid, however, because she has fully internalized the stereotype of the nurse martyr, "It was their business not to be afraid of plague-swept cities—nor even of bomb-swept countrysides….Young men, at the call of such a commander, have offered to lay down life in suicide battle. No more than they did Kristine hesitate."[354] The author uses the quarantine assignment to again raise the issue of the public's lack of understanding and respect for the practice of nursing, describing the patient and husband as ignorant of the precautions necessary to provide safe care and ungrateful for Nurse Grant's vigilance. Nurse Grant's internal monologue reveals her cleverness, by flattering their egos and disguising some of her treatments she draws on what nursing textbooks advised: a "combination of alertness, sympathy, and resourcefulness," which could correct almost

[351] Marshall, 30.
[352] Marshall, 41.
[353] Marshall, 45.
[354] Marshall, 45; 48.

any difficult situation and put others at ease.[355]

After performing the miracles of saving the quarantined patient and not contracting the disease herself, Nurse Grant becomes the Head Nurse of the maternity ward where she struggles to remain emotionally detached. Recall that nursing scholar Malka explained that nurse training in the early and mid twentieth century was regarded as valuable for its applicability to "building ideal feminine characteristics for motherhood."[356] To Dr. Bowen the protagonist confesses, "no nursing post could have been a better forcing-ground for faith to live a woman's life."[357] The protagonist must draw on all her training to maintain the requisite balance of objectivity and personalized care expected of the well-adjusted nurse.

Like Captain Dudley, Dr. Bowen falls in love with the nurse for her courage "Fear didn't keep you from being the bravest, the most gallant nurse. Watching you day after day, in that place of deadly danger, made me realize how I've felt."[358] If there's any question that Marshall believes men need to meet women on equal ground, she corrects this when she had Dr. Bowen admit that he has infantilized her in the past, "you're a woman, not the child I've been calling you."[359] In her response, the reader learns that like so many nurse-romance protagonists to come, her resistance to love is a self-preservation tactic, "When my father and mother died, I promised myself to be a nurse and help the suffering of others…I'd resolved never to marry, never to have a child—and suffer through what I loved. I'm a good nurse—I'll stay one. I'm not going to

[355] Spalding, *For Senior Students*, 394.
[356] Malka, *Daring to* Care, 4.
[357] Marshall, *Nurse into Woman*, 90.
[358] Marshall, 81.
[359] Marshall, 80-81.

be a woman!"[360] But Marshall presents a challenge her protagonist by crafting a radically feminist character in Dr. Bowen:

> Everyone at Samaritan knew of Dr. Bowen's supreme interest in the mothers' ward and the adjoining nursery….Men on the staff were urged to explore and perfect new methods for making childbirth more painless. The most irresponsible interne soon learned that no sacrifice of his own time and convenience mattered, as compared to a young mother's comfort.[361]

And the protagonist, in accordance with nurse socialization, has reverence and respect for the doctor, "She had watched him beside sickbeds, strong wise, self-controlled, yet never forgetting humanity for science."[362] Later she reflects that "more than anyone he was the person she trusted, admired, half-worshipped, and wholly served."[363] He expresses mutual regard for her professional capacity, likely divergent from historical realities. When Dr. Bowen calls on her for the quarantine assignment he promises, "If [the patient] does get well, it will be a marvelous thing for Samaritan…We'll be the talk of medical circles all over the country. You'll get your share of credit—trust me for that."[364] She does not love Dr. Bowen but, believing Nurse Norris's lies about Captain Dudley, she agrees to marry Dr. Bowen who has offered her a companionate marriage built on a professional partnership. He shares his plan to create a new maternity hospital, "You would be my second-in-command. I would put you in complete charge of the nursing administration."[365] Indeed, over the next several pages Marshall describes the project's advancement and Dr. Bowen including Nurse Grant in the decision-making. Usually, in nurse-romance novels the protagonist falls in love with the career-supporting

[360] Marshall, 82.
[361] Marshall, 84; 85.
[362] Marshall, 7.
[363] Marshall, 47.
[364] Marshall, 48.
[365] Marshall, 126.

suitor but Marshall has created two of them, a dilemma she rectifies with the death of Dr. Bowen. Nurse Grant goes on to care for Yvonne, a wealthy woman suffering from suicidal depression and morphine addiction; this character is not portrayed negatively, rather her afflictions are conveyed as medical and psychological problems that can (and are) overcome. In fact, Nurse Grant eventually identifies that Yvonne's depression originated from her unfulfilled desire to be a mother—she and her husband cannot agree on whose religion their children would be brought up in. Kristine and Yvonne develop a friendship and Yvonne teaches Kristine that emotional intimacy is not a threat to her nursing identity. She goes on to inspire Kristine to investigate the accusations against Captain Dudley. Confirming his innocence, Nurse Grant then pursues him all the way from her private duty assignment in Canada to Bermuda. Their love story ends happily as they make plans for Nurse Grant to continue her career, though now on Captain Dudley's ship.

Marshall's story promotes the idea of independently minded, working women as attractive mates. Nurse Grant is never shown subservient to a man, either in her personal or professional life. In fact, she is described as stubborn, having "never without an effort abandoned an idea of withdrew from a position."[366] To deserve her love, men must not only recognize her strength, her intelligence, and her dedication to nursing but also never desire for her to abandon those traits or her career. Marshall's story features subplots about grief, suicide, addiction, and sex before marriage. In regards to these topics, Marshall is non-judgmental and practical, almost clinical. For example, while nursing the young and unwed mother-to-be, Nurse Grant's inner monologue reflects, "A

[366] Marshall, 18.

nurse knew too much of the strength of sex drives to dismiss them as unforgivable sins."[367] She does not judge either the man or woman for their passions, only that the man abandoned a woman and baby in their time of need. She devotes herself to ensuring the mother can maintain discretion about her situation and even arranges a work position for her in a good home with fair pay. Rather than judge the morphine-addicted Yvonne, take the time to learn about her needs and wants. The two women have numerous discussions about faith, literature, philosophy, architecture the importance of female friendship, and love.

1950s: Accepting and Rejecting Self-Sacrifice in *A Nurse Comes Home* and *Hospital Zone*

A Nurse Comes Home (1954)

In contrast to Marguerite Mooers Marshal, Ethel Hamill does not describe in careful detail the duties and traits of an ideal nurse in her novel A Nurse Comes Home. She does, however, grapple with an equal number of serious topics outside of the courtship plot. Avalon Books first published the novel in 1954. Dell picked up the reprint rights to publish it as part of their *Candlelight Romance* series in 1969. The Dell reprint is the version held by the Special Collections department at UWM (see figure14).[368] Ethel Hamill, which was adopted from his mother's maiden name, was one of the pseudonyms used by male author Jean Francis Webb (1910-1991).[369] He wrote at least

[367] Marshall, 123.
[368] Any shortened citations for quotes from *A Nurse Comes Home* will reference page numbers according to Dell's 1969 edition unless stated otherwise.
[369] Library of Congress, Copyright Office, *Books and Pamphlets Including Serials and Contributions to Periodicals, July-December 1954.* Part 1, Volume 8 of Catalogue of

six nurse-romances under the name Ethel Hamill and used Roswell Brown, Lee Davis Willoughby, and his own name for historical novels and hard-boiled detective fiction. Other romance stories authored by Webb under the Ethel Hamill pseudonym include: Honeymoon In Honolulu (1952), Nurse For Galleon Key (1958), Candy Frost, Emergency Nurse (1960), The Golden Image (1961), Runaway Nurse (1962), Aloha Nurse (1964), Bluegrass Doctor (1965), and All For Love (1969).

A Nurse Comes Home was published just a year after the Korean Armistice Agreement was signed, which brought a halt to the immediate hostilities of the Korean War. The protagonist of the romance is Nurse Elizabeth Lane, who is travelling home to the United States, as the narrative opens, after being freed from a prisoner of war camp in North Korea. The first edition of the book offers a misleading back cover caption for the story, "A young nurse returns to California after three years in a North Korean prison camp to find her fiancé, a handsome surgeon, has left her for another woman."[370] This caption might lead readers to believe the narrative will focus on the romantic conflict faced by the protagonist as she strives to win back her fiancé. The main conflict, in fact, has less to do with her former fiancé than with the protagonist's emotional turmoil as she comes to terms with wanting a different future for herself than the one she envisioned before her ordeal. The romantic conflicts that arise are numerous: the protagonist must convince her ex-fiancé (Dr. Marsh Carson) that their love was only a first love and to leave her alone, she must accept her growing love for a new man (photojournalist, Scott Alexander) who seems to understand her prisoner of war

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Copyright Entries, Third Series (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1955), 1489. https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015050651549

[370] Ethel Hamill [Webb], *A Nurse Comes Home* (New York: Avalon Books, 1954), back cover.

experience and the future she still wants as a nurse, and determine how far her loyalties extend to the man who became her best friend (Barney Jordan) during their shared experience as prisoners of war and who believes that their friendship is in fact romantic love. Dell's 1969 back cover caption presents the story a bit more comprehensively than Avalon's:

> When lovely, blonde Elizabeth Lane returned home to San Francisco, she thought she could take up her life just as it had been before. But, in the three years the young nurse had been away, years spent as a prisoner of the enemy in Asia, grave changes had taken place. Elizabeth quickly discovered that she was no longer the same girl who had gone away as she struggled to find out what this new person who bore her name should do.[371]

During the Korean War, US and UN troops supported South Korea in their battle with North Korea, who was backed by China and the Soviet Union. The armed conflict lasted from approximately 1950 to 1953. The United States interest in supporting South Korea was founded in the belief that maintaining capitalism and democracy in South Korea and neighboring Japan was vital to the containment of communism. The author avoids having to describe the historical circumstances too specifically by beginning his narrative with the protagonist's return home from the camp. The protagonist's flashbacks explain that she had travelled to Korea on what was meant to be a quick round-trip nursing assignment chaperoning a patient on his journey home to Korea. That her imprisonment lasted three years indicates that her travels began before the outset of the war. Both sides in the Korean War have been accused of war crimes for the conditions of their prisoner of war camps and their treatment of prisoners; both sides have been accused of indoctrination, starvation, torture, and mass killings. Webb's premise that civilians captured and detained in Korean prisoner of war camps is not

[371] Ethel Hamill [Webb], *A Nurse Comes Home* (New York: Dell, 1969), back cover.

entirely out of the question and his description of the conditions in the memories of characters Elizabeth Lane and Barney Jordan are consistent with actual reports that came out after the war. It is also not unsurprising that this topic might have been of interest to the general public given that after the armistice there was a lot of publicity about the prisoner of war camps.

Anecdotes from American prisoners who returned home revealed that prisoners of war suffered psychological breakdown, sometimes collaborating with the North Korean demands and betraying other prisoners.[372] Because of this, the US Department of Defense commissioned studies on the matter and in an effort to provide guidance to armed forces who may be taken prisoner in future conflicts created the "Code of Conduct for Members of the Armed Forces of the United States." President Eisenhower signed executive order 10631 on August 17th, 1955 to approve this new code of conduct and giving the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of the Treasury the directive of implementing the order and make the code of conduct known to all members.[373] In *A Nurse Comes Home*, the protagonist's memories include the educational campaigns at the camps "They all had been able, at first, to recognize the diabolic Red 'brain washes' for what they were. But the human mind is not fibred with steel…"[374] She goes on to

[372] The Department of Defense describes the prisoner of war situation that occurred during the Korean War and the subsequent justification for the Code of Conduct in: U.S. Office of Armed Forces Information and Education, Department of Defense. *The U.S. Fighting Man's Code*. DOD Pam 8-1. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1955.
[373] *Codification of Presidential Proclamations and Executive Orders,* Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration*,* s.v. "Executive Order 10631--Code of Conduct for members of the Armed Forces of the United States," last reviewed on August 15, 2016. *https://www.archives.gov/federal-register/codification/executive-order/10631.html*
[374] Hamill [Webb], *A Nurse Comes Home*, 148.

describe indoctrination lectures and systems of rewards and punishments and recalling that “once well minds had given way before those overwhelming shock tactics.”[375] But nurse Elizabeth Lane had managed to resist the pressures and withstand the physical deprivations by focusing on the serving the needs of the prisoners.

Webb uses Nurse Lane’s prisoner of war status to emphasize the martyr stereotype. Unlike most other nurse-romance novels, the protagonist does not actually work during the narrative. The entire story takes place in the couple weeks following her return from Korea while she is recovering and readjusting. Nursing is portrayed when Nurse Lane describes trying to nurse other prisoners when interviewed by the photojournalist. The protagonist continually downplays her own work. After interviewing other prisoners, Scott Alexander tries to encourage her to recognize the full impact of her effort, “You never told me what you’d done in that compound. Not newsworthy, you said. Nothing glamorous, you said. Just a trained nurse by profession.”[376] Nurse Lane objects, “I—I didn't do anything anyone else wouldn’t have— ”[377] But he confronts her with the stories that other people have told him about her work and how she and one doctor cared for the entire camp, that is until the doctor was murdered and Nurse Lane carried on the work alone. “People I interviewed were telling me about the cart-loads of casualties they’d haul into the camp after a new air raid. You’d be swamped—one doctor and one nurse. You’d have only have minutes to do an amputation, and nothing to use to sew up the stumps, and tetanus to fight on top of the surgery—.”[378] The other prisoners called her an angel, but also accompanied the stereotype with vivid

[375] Hamill [Webb], 148.
[376] Hamill [Webb], 56.
[377] Hamill [Webb], 56.
[378] Hamill [Webb], 57.

descriptions of the medical work she performed. The protagonist finally concedes that she worked in filthy conditions, attempting to treat numerous critical casualties at once, and having only one scalpel and no anesthetics. After the doctor was killed she carried on alone but again states "any nurse would have done what she could…Most of the time I was lucky at a diagnosis."[379] She explains that she drew on all her prior training and also credits the doctor-prisoner for mentoring her "I had to do more than a nurse's usual job for him, and so he taught me."[380] The protagonist, despite having worked through war, is not ready to relinquish the inferior status of nursing that she internalized during her education and training. Whereas Bass argues that nurses coming home from World War II recognized that war nursing gave them new skills and independence and didn't desire to return to positions viewed as inferior in the hospital system, Webb's protagonist fails to comprehend her own professional capacity even as other characters do.

Webb follows the nurse-romance pattern of rewarding feminist male characters with the protagonist's love. Readers can anticipate that Scott Alexander will be the winner because he tells Elizabeth that it was while listening to the memories other prisoners describe her nursing work and praise her dedication, bravery, and persistence that he fell in love with her. To top off his admiration and respect for her work, he is patient and understanding. After confessing his love he follows up with, "You've been through too much already. I can wait. When you recover enough to start feeling things again, you'll know how I feel. And maybe you won't be quite so lonely, meanwhile,

[379] Hamill [Webb], 57.
[380] Hamill [Webb], 57.

remembering that."[381] Unlike Marshall's protagonist who cannot reconcile her identities as a nurse and a woman, Nurse Lane's hesitancy to the courtship is on account of her loyalty to Barney Jordan. In a misguided effort to protect Barney from an old legal issue, the two pretended to be engaged knowing that her good reputation will sway the authority's decision about his fate. Of course, the entire dilemma was initiated on gossip, slander, and blackmail of a woman envious of Nurse Lane.

The protagonist's most self-sacrificial actions do not happen in the context of her work as a nurse but rather as a woman devoted to helping her friend. Elizabeth and Barney credit one another for their survival, both physical and emotional. But his camp experience was more violent and his recovery and readjusted to life back home will take longer. All, this on top of the threat of jail for a minor crime before the war; the protagonist cannot accept the injustice of him being caged again after enduring so much in the war and is willing to sacrifice her own love life to marry him if it will keep him from jail. She explains,, "there's just one thing that's even more important than love, I guess. You learn that, if you're shut away somewhere and know that any day may be your last. You learn that if you're starving. It's standing by the other fellow when he needs you, and seeing him through."[382] Though the protagonist's demonstration of dedication, loyalty, and sacrifice are qualities that were fostered during nurse training, Webb does not attempt to make that association. In fact, Webb's agenda appears to be more about asserting the harmful affects of war and acknowledging the privilege of American amenities like modern medical facilities.

Throughout the narrative, Elizabeth makes comments like "In Korea, we dreamed

[381] Hamill [Webb], 59.
[382] Hamill [Webb], 104.

so long about America—freedom, home."[383] The courtship conflict is primarily a matter of the protagonist overcoming the sense that only those who shared in her trauma will ever understand her. In an era before the term PTSD, Webb has written two characters that exhibit the condition. Elizabeth states, "You've never been a prisoner, Scott…Barney and I have. We went through that together. Can't you understand that you'd owe a very special sort of loyalty to anyone who'd helped you ride out that kind of nightmare?"[384] But Scott Alexander proves to her that he does listen attentively when she speaks and that he understands her fears and vulnerabilities when he publishes a photo-essay featuring Elizabeth in the setting of her hometown's new hospital wards accompanied by captions of the interviews with prisoners. As Elizabeth interprets his work:

> It was not merely the saga of one girl's return, but of the return of all exiles-in-violence to a world of sanity. Delicately, it counterpointed the dreamlike daze of every freed prisoner with the factual details of the life to which she—or he—was coming home. And as for its capsule contrast of American and prison-camp medicine, no learned treatise five times its length could have made the point better.[385]

The photo-essay both communicates to Elizabeth Scott's recognition of the challenges she faces readjusting to civilian life but it also glorifies America, as represented by a modernized hospital industry. "It was medicine that was his star. The dignity and dedication of normal American medicine, played against the misery and heroism of the way medicine could and did carry on under circumstances calculated to crush it hopelessly." He seeks to shock readers as he contrasts the glistening wards of the hospitals, filled with ready staff with captions taken from the accounts of prisoners that

[383] Hamill [Webb], 104.
[384] Hamill [Webb], 91.
[385] Hamill [Webb], 129.

remember, “mangled humans dragged in by the cartload and dumped into Compound muck.” Scott uses photographs of nurses in pristine white uniforms to contrast with photographs he takes of Elizabeth in civilian clothing, shown waiflike from the starvation in the camps but also shown free as she stands atop a hillside overlooking her hometown. This is one of the only times the nurse uniform is conjured up and unlike other nurse-romance novels, the protagonist is not illustrated wearing, caring, or reflecting on her uniform. This nurse-romance novel stands apart from others especially in the fact that the protagonist is never portrayed nursing once she returns home from Korea and so the narrative setting remains outside of any clinical context. Despite feeling more like a pseudo-nurse romance novel, Webb’s narrative still manages to advocate for recognition of the challenges facing nurses during wartime but fails to offer any perspective on nursing outside of that context. He does raise serious issues in his depiction of the on-going psychological effects of war. Unlike Marshall’s narrative, female characters rarely have conversations with one another about topics other than love or romance, but his female protagonist is complex. Nurse Elizabeth Lane both upholds some stereotypes about women, for example a natural inclination to sacrifice their own needs for other. But she is also repeatedly described as more resilient than male characters, challenging stereotypes about feminine weakness and need for protection. But this narrative includes fewer subplots that depict female characters navigating their social and political worlds than others—perhaps because it was written by a man?

Hospital Zone (1956)

Just two years after *A Nurse Comes Home* was published, Mary Stolz' novel *Hospital Zone* was published by Harper & Brothers. This story must have been fairly popular because the Berkley Publishing Corporation gained reprint rights for its Berkley Medallion imprint in 1961 and the text went through five print runs at Berkley alone over the next three years.[386]

I selected this title based upon two stand-out characteristics: that the title didn't conform to the usual formula and that the cover illustration was incredibly campy (see figure 15). As it turns out, this story was in fact written for a young adult audience and Mary Stolz wrote numerous works for both children and young adults. While the cover illustration and captions insinuate romantic encounters of a more adult nature, the back matter advertising is all for other young adult fiction and career stories and the protagonist's flirtatious nature never leads to licentious behavior. Indeed the protagonist's growing self-awareness and developing agency read like a typical coming of age story. Yet, I suspect that nurse-romance fad led many adult readers to this title as well.

Initially, the story presents nurses, gender dynamics, and dating rituals according to the negative stereotypes that a feminist or real nurse might dread. The protagonist is a student nurse named Honey Kirkwood whose nurse supervisors describe as bright, always cheerful, a good nurse, but not very serious. Unlike other nurse-protagonists, Honey's parents are neither absent nor a source of conflict in the plot. In fact, in a

[386] Mary Stolz, *Hospital Zone (*New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956; New York: Berkley Publishing Company, 1964), title page verso. Citations refer to the Berkley edition unless noted.

passage Stolz writes to describe the conversation Honey remembers having with her parents about entering nurse training, she manages to introduce numerous cultural attitudes about women, education, and careers. In three short pages, characters remark on the possibility of a woman president in their lifetime, weigh the merits and drawbacks of a baccalaureate program versus hospital school, debate the need for attractive women to go to college before concurring that education or professional training is a good insurance policy for women in case they don't find a husband, and express concern that so many women drop out of college after getting married.[387] Nurse Honey Kirkwood is a tremendous flirt and through the story dates three men outside of the hospital (who all wish to go steady or get engaged) while also flirting her way through ambulance drivers and interns before falling head-over-heels for Doctor Dragone. As the narrator summarizes it, "Honey was a rather businesslike romantic" unready to commit to one romantic future and never too affected by the end of any of her relationships.[388] Her fellow nursing students, though more traditional in their dating approaches, are portrayed as searching for husbands. For example, one of the student nurses quits quite suddenly in order to marry a man she's been dating for two months "Ferna Perry had run away from training and was the first girl in their class to be about to marry."[389] According to the reaction of the nurses, the only surprising factor in this event was the particular student to go first because she was less attractive than the others. A month later when Ferna sends a postcard to the student nurse residence, it

[387] Stolz, *Hospital Zone*, 51-53.
[388] Stolz, 123.
[389] Stolz, 136.

inspires hope in all the freshman nurses that they, too, will have a similar outcome.[390] Historically, most students were not permitted to remain in their training programs after marriage.

Mary Stolz's writing style is humorous and lighthearted and her older female nurse characters are portrayed as knowing, serious about the profession, but also tired of male antics. For example, the numerous male intern characters are obsessed with chasing after nursing student. Two nursing supervisors discuss the situation:

> Miss Roberts: "At least [Honey Kirkwood] isn't always having her heart broken over an intern, the way some of them are. The ones with broken hearts can be terrible trials."
> Mrs. Harmon: "…at some point in training you must go through the phase known as internitis. So Honey Kirkwood hasn't reached it yet?"
> Miss Roberts: "That girl's heart wouldn't break…it would bounce."
> Mrs. Harmon: "Nice to know there's someone like that. Sort of evens up the score a little."[391]

Meanwhile, male patients gratuitously comment on their appreciation for attractive nurses. For example, as one male patient questions Nurse Kirkwood Male patient: "You like this sort of work? Mean to say, a girl as pretty as you—should think you'd have tried to be an actress, or something."[392] Before the nurse can answer for herself, a male doctor retorts, "Nursing is a fine profession…And you ought to be glad there are pretty girls in it, you fathead. If you have to go to a hospital, you might as well have something pleasant to contemplate while you wait it out."[393] The protagonist is bold, daring to interrupt doctors and correct them during conversations unrelated to medical practice. At one point she catches herself and realizes "It was not, they knew, the way a nurse

[390] Stolz, 138-39.
[391] Stolz, 13.
[392] Stolz, 76-77.
[393] Stolz, 7.

could or should talk to a doctor" but she doesn't back down thinking to herself, "this has nothing to do with hospital hierarchies, and, anyway, he wasn't spectacularly polite himself."[394] Through Honey's struggle to adapt to the socialization training and hierarchies, Stolz introduces a few real aspects of nurse training. For example, Honey recognizes "Miss Roberts and Mrs. Calhoun and the other nurses were right—they were even good—in their effort to instruct the characters of students. Nursing was not just a matter of technique.." and yet she longs for the "all white uniform [that] would automatically remove her form the category of one who had to take not only professional guidance but personal guidance."[395]

Nurse Kirkwood, unlike other nurse-protagonists, has no trouble reconciling nursing with womanhood and she has no shame about being a flirtatious. Honey advises other student nurses to avoid heartache by dating without emotional attachment, providing a lighthearted description of developing feelings or expectations for any one man as "symptoms" that need to be managed before they get out of hand. Her romantic dilemma is that all of her boyfriends want to become serious and while she appreciates them all, she can't envision a future with any of them. Like other nurse-protagonists, she dates men who are all very different and who represent very different lifestyles for her future:

> Of them all, she sometimes thought that Joey was the most dear. He was, anyway, the one with whom she never had to pretend, or play at all being something she was not. The difficulty in accepting that and saying, all right, it will see Joey and no other, was that she enjoyed pretending and playing at something she was not. Or, could she be sure she was not the grave, curious person who met Alex, or the gay,

[394] Stolz, 22.
[395] Stolz, 50.

> inconsequential one who met Dick? How many times had she said that she didn't know yet who she was?[396]

Throughout the novel, this question about who she is and who she wants to be returns again and again. When her suitors in turn propose marriage, she turns them down, explaining that she is too young and doesn't know what she wants. As the novel progresses, Honey evaluates her dating behavior and attitudes. She chastises herself for having been too friendly with a patient's son and for feeling slighted when the doctor she is interested in treats her with complete professional courtesy instead of greeting her in a more personal and familiar manner. For the first time she declares:

> I'm a nurse, and only a nurse, when I'm on the floor…She felt more than uneasy. She felt a little degraded, and somehow a fool. For the first time it occurred to her to be ashamed of her reputation as a man-trap, even a little afraid of it. For the first time she wondered whether she oughtn't to mind what people said, rather than dismiss it because she knew within herself that she was neither gullible not promiscuous.[397]

She comes to realize that even though she doesn't pursue men for marriage or take dating too seriously, she nevertheless spends an inordinate amount of time prioritizing them. "I say that other things matter, but what do I ever think about besides men? Unless I'm studying, or working so hard I can't think about anything but the case in had, I think of nothing but men."[398] In the end, the protagonist picks no man at all. She realizes that her feelings for Dr. Dragone were more serious than for the others; she acknowledges the pain of her feelings being unrequited but focuses instead on having overcome her fear of emotional vulnerability. "And it was being borne in upon her that this quest for identity was one that never ended…She would search and wonder and

[396] Stolz, 90.
[397] Stolz, 122.
[398] Stolz, 122.

change and go on, and the search would take up her life. It would be her life. That life itself was the quest was not the answer she'd looked to find, but it was one she was beginning to accept."[399]

The author's narrative focus is a young woman learning that her own self-fulfillment is more important that romantic fulfillment. She also raises a few notable questions about cultural attitudes towards sex, motherhood, death, and human emotion. First, even though Stolz writes no sex scenes, she manages to use her protagonist's position as a nurse to communicate support for sex education to young adults. In one scene, Honey reflects on the benefits of the sex education movies shown to her high school class, thinking, "things really were a lot more sensible and forthright these days than they'd been for her parents. Those movies used to send the high-school kids into paroxysms of silent embarrassment and delight, but darned if they hadn't learned…"[400]

Notably, Stolz's student nurse characters do not have a strictly positive view of motherhood. Rather than romanticizing it as noble and natural, the young women repeatedly observe that the mothers they encounter are physically exhausted and stressed. In one scene, Honey's friend Jean notices a mother and upset child disembarking their bus very late at night and comments, "You get to thinkin' you might end up like that yourself. I'd rather never get married."[401] Honey recognizes that the "the woman, not so very much older than themselves, had looked completely and utterly defeated. By her shabby clothes, her dull hair, her large, unhappy child."[402] After a few moments, Honey comments that her own mother seemed to worry a lot and remarks, "it

[399] Stolz, 172-73.
[400] Stolz, 20.
[401] Stolz, 133.
[402] Stolz, 133.

must be awfully hard to be a mother…Mother's apparently have to worry. Worry seems to be handed to you—like ergotine or something—as soon as you have the baby, and you have to go on swallowing it all your life."[403] Not only does Honey notice the worry and workload of mothers but she also notices that their husbands remain utterly ignorant of it. In this way, Stolz demonstrates the growing awareness in younger generations a sense of injustice in gender expectations as well as reassessments of life goals.

Stolz's does not show her protagonist performing particular medical procedures, but she is shown trying to determine how much of nursing care is about medical treatments versus affective care. She is assigned to nurse a young suicidal woman, generating a scene in which Honey reflects on her privilege of never having experienced true physical pain or emotional suffering. In this scene, Honey recognizes that without these experiences, her nursing care is limited and doesn't attend to the human spirit. Between the suicidal young woman and a dying elderly patient, Mrs. Marburg, Honey contemplates the need for healthcare professionals to be better trained to address the emotional and psychological aspects of caring for patients through death; she reflects that nurses and doctors take a rational approach to caring for bodies but aren't prepared to go beyond that. Her interactions with Mrs. Marburg become personal, with the elderly woman counseling her about love, life, and death. For example, Mrs. Marburg counsels,

> I do not believe that there is one destined mate for each person and, having failed to find or attach that particular one, you are bound for singleness and lovelessness. Fortunate people are able to love not once, but many times….I think a person capable of loving only one other person is…unfortunate. I think

[403] Stolz, 133.

> such a person is probably shallow, and his love a puny thing. You don't replace a love, any more than you replace a person. But love is—should be—a *full* thing, Honey.[404]

Mrs. Marburg's opinion counters the traditional stance of romance fiction and also promotes a progressive view that neither men nor women need to remain devoted to just one partner their entire lives but can over the course of their lives love many times. The relationship between nurse Honey Kirkwood and her patients, in particular the suicidal young woman and Mrs. Marburg, also marks a major shift in the representation of nursing as requiring emotional distance. This suggests that the public's perception about the role nurses play in patient care goes well beyond providing for their physical needs. In fact, nurse Kirkwood seems to advocate for advanced training in psychological and spiritual nursing practices so that nurses can understand and treat patients holistically.

1960s: Labor Lessons and Nurses as Activists in *Border Nurse*

Border Nurse was written by Dorothy Dowdell and published by Ace Books in 1963 (see figure 16). Dorothy Dowdell wrote over a dozen other novels, mostly romance fiction of which only a few were nursing themed. *Border Nurse* focuses less attention on nursing practice than on other elements of its plot. Though only 144 pages, Dowdell manages to pack in quite a few subplots and historically significant themes. The novel contains some of the expected elements for a romance novel, such as competing male suitors, female romantic rivals, a past marked by a broken heart, and a kind but not-as-pretty nurse sidekick who struggles to find a man. It also introduces debates about labor

[404] Stolz, 157.

organizing, marital infidelity, racism, immigration, and the demise of small family farming by agribusiness.

The work context for *Border Nurse* is a private clinic sponsored by a large farming association in California to treat their laborers. The bilingual Nurse Jeanne Reynolds agrees to run the clinic under the supervision of a doctor. In the first chapter, readers learn that the clinic is meant to strictly serve Mexican migrant farm workers, called Braceros. Dorothy Dowdell situates her novel within the real context of 1960s farm labor agitation that was occurring at the point of her writing. During World War II, the United States entered into an agreement with Mexico to temporarily fill a gap in labor known as the The Bracero Program. The Bracero Program received numerous extensions after the war and lasted until 1964. In 1951 it became Public Law 78, legislation that meant to delineate certain regulations such as that no bracero could replace a domestic worker. As one report on California agricultural history explains, "opposition to the program grew from those who claimed that the migrants depressed agricultural wages for U.S. citizens and increased rural poverty."[405] Despite the fact that the National Labor Relations Act had given most private sector workers a right to collective bargaining in 1935, the right did not extend to agricultural workers.[406] Through the forties and fifties, Ernesto Galarza tried to organize the National Farm Labor Union but struggled to create a lasting organization; one of the critiques of early organizing

[405] Alex F. McCalla and Gordon C. Rausser, "Social Value of the Giannini Foundation," in *California Agriculture: Dimensions and Issues*, edited by Philip L. Martin, Rachael E. Goodhue, and Brian D. Wright (n.p.: Giannini Foundation, 2017), 12. https://giannini.ucop.edu/publications/cal-ag-book/

[406] Olmstead, Alan L., and Paul W. Rhode. "A History of California Agriculture," in *California Agriculture: Dimensions and Issues*, edited by Philip L. Martin, Rachael E. Goodhue, and Brian D. Wright (n.p.: Giannini Foundation, 2017), 17.

was that it was anti-immigrant. California's agriculture has often depended upon migrant workers from many different nations, with the origins of workers dependent upon US foreign relations.

Issues that are raised in *Border Nurse* relate to changes in agriculture and its effects on the economic stability of farmers, in particular regard to irrigation and water district management, domestic and foreign labor, and the inability of small farms to survive against large-scale farming. Dowdell sets up the romantic rivalry over the nurse-protagonist such that each suitor presents the protagonist (and reader) with the opposing viewpoints on these matters. Through each suitor's commentary and actions, readers come to understand the complexity of viewpoints in regards to California's agricultural and labor situation. Alan Olmstead and Paul Rhode confirm these viewpoints in "A History of California Agriculture:"

> Two contrasting legends dominate the telling of California's agricultural history. The first extols California farmers as progressive, highly educated, early adopters of modern technologies, and unusually well organized to use irrigation to make a "desert" bloom. Through cooperation, they prospered as their high-quality products captured markets around the globe. This farmers-do-no-wrong legend is the mainstay of the state's powerful marketing cooperatives, government agencies, and agricultural research establishment, and largely ignores agricultural workers. The second and darker legend sees the California agricultural system as founded by land-grabbers whose descendants continue to exploit migrant workers and abuse the Golden State's natural environment.[407]

Dowdell represents these contrasting legends in *Border Nurse*. One man who courts Nurse Reynolds is Gary Hunter, a man who has taken out enormous loans to start up a new small farm and who struggles to make it profitable in the face of the larger farms in the Growers' Association. The other man is Merritt Williams, who is a lawyer and represents the domestic workers attempting to unionize. Her employer, the Desert

[407] Olmstead and Rhode, "History of California Agriculture," 1.

Valley Growers' Association is against the unionization and prefers to hire Mexican nationals over domestic workers; though their association includes small farmers like Gary, their tactics favor the large industrial farms and they defend their right to employ migrant workers to protect both profits and lower prices for consumers. But Dowdell acknowledges that the debate over migrant/domestic laborers is complicated by the difference in economic stability of small and large farms and farmer's unequal access to irrigation and equipment. For example, as the plot progresses, readers learn that Gary Hunter isn't opposed to labor organizing of domestic workers per se and in fact would like to support them but is prevented from doing so by his own economic precarity.

This point has historic realities. Due to an unequal distribution of property rights very early in California's history, throughout the twentieth century the state had a higher proportion wealthy landowners with large acreage compared to the Midwest, where even commercially-oriented family farms worked their own land with little or no hired labor.[408] One result was that "production tended to involve larger scale and greater quantities of capital (for machinery, irrigation works, and orchards)."[409] Small farmers were caught in a cycle of economic precarity as their smaller harvest also meant an inability to finance irrigation and equipment. From the time after World War II until the 1960s, individuals or small partnerships supplied irrigation water. This started to change in the 1950s as irrigation districts were established. These were "public corporations run by local landowners and empowered to tax and issue bonds to purchase or construct, maintain, and operate irrigation works—had become the leading suppliers." It was the large landowners that controlled these "public corporations" not the small farmers. The

[408] Olmstead and Rhode, 18-19.
[409] Olmstead and Rhode, 19.

result of the districting was that "success in managing water heavily depended on cooperative action, rather than just individual initiative. Water access has often been contentious, pitting farmers against urban interests and farmers against farmers."[410] As Nurse Reynold's beau Merritt Williams explains to her that the All American Canal costs taxpayers twenty-five million dollars but "a few agricultural imperialists get the benefit of it all."[411] The labor agitation of the domestic laborers reaches its apex in the novel when they form picket lines during the peak harvest days for the tomato crop, shutting down entire farms for days. According to Olmstead and Rhodes these were the actual tactics employed in California farm strikes, "agricultural strikes invariably occurred during the peak-harvest season, when the absence of labor could mean the loss of an entire year's crop for the farmer."[412]

Dowdell also raises issues about race and stereotypes about worker's willingness to perform various types of labor necessary. Characters assert the difference in work ethic and willingness to perform hard labor between Mexicans and Americans. Gary Hunter explains to nurse Reynolds that he depends on Mexican labor because "usually a good domestic worker isn't willing to do the stoop labor that braceros will do."[413] Nurse Reynolds also encounters racism when Peter, the son of her doctor colleague who she has befriended, explains to her that his best friend, Raúl, is Mexican but begs her not to tell his parents because they don't like Mexicans. He states, "Mom wont let him come to my house."[414] Because her protagonist has no bias against

[410] Olmstead and Rhode, 15.
[411] Dowdell, *Border Nurse* (New York: Ace Books, 1963), 114.
[412] Olmstead and Rhode, "A History of California Agriculture," 17.
[413] Dowdell, *Border* Nurse, 35.
[414] Dowdell, 102-103.

Mexicans, Dowdell makes an indirect statement against racism. Later, Peter runs away from home, upset by his father infidelity and Nurse Reynolds turns to Raúl for help. She keeps her word to Peter, however, and doesn't inform his parents about Raúl's assistance. Neither the racism of Peter's parents nor the marital infidelity see any literary resolution. Dowdell provides names and small speaking roles to several Mexican characters and problematizes racism but she, or perhaps Ace Books, aren't willing to risk offending their mass-market audience with foreigners or people of color as main characters nor by making unequivocal statements against racism.

Still more complex is Dowdell's presentation of the Bracero Program. In her novel, the Bracero program is at first represented as protective for the Braceros in terms of housing, food, payment and medical care. Her characters take care to describe the program as very just and the effect is that domestic workers resent Mexican laborers. As the Growers' Association explains to their newly hired nurse, "the Mexican Consul sees to it that the braceros are treated right."[415] The potential for class solidarity over national or ethnic solidarity is not suggested. Characters in the novel believe Mexican workers not only get more economic protections but better living conditions. In one scene, Merritt takes Nurse Reynolds to view both types of camps; while the Bracero camps have permanent, sturdy buildings for housing, with electricity, plumbing and common kitchens, at the domestic labor camps she sees workers "of all nationalities and all colors" living in make-shift tents "ill-cared-for children" playing in squalor.[416] In reality, protections for Mexican laborers were written into an agreement between the American and Mexican government but American farmers have been criticized for not

[415] Dowdell, 18.
[416] Dowdell, 28-29.

following the guidelines nor ensuring protections. In fact, claims have been made that workers failed to receive their pay, lived in deplorable conditions, and were treated terribly. As Dowdell's plot thickens, the protagonist grows suspicious of the Bracero camp conditions as workers overrun the clinic with injuries and illness but are too afraid to speak out against camp managers and foremen, fearful of deportation. She has to fight the Growers' Association and risks her job to investigate an outbreak of illness that causes some deaths; she not only traces the origin to the camp kitchens but proves that camp managers knew the source of the illness and deliberately covered it up to avoid accountability. Near the end of the novel, she experiences what it is to work in the fields and through her character describes the deplorable conditions workers face in back-breaking work.

Ironically, Dowdell's novel was published just as major changes to California tomato farming were about to occur. In the 1950s, researchers at the University of California Davis began developing a tomato that would ripen uniformly and withstand mechanical handling; by 1960 they were successful and issued a patent. The researchers also teamed up with equipment manufacturers to develop a mechanical tomato picker. In 1962, the new tomato variety and harvesters were introduced to a few commercial farms. The Bracero Program ended in 1964, which may have had less to do with labor organizing than these news tomatoes and harvesters. In 1965, hundreds of these harvesters were circulated and that first year, twenty-five percent of the tomato crop was harvested mechanically; in just four years, ninety-five percent of the tomato

crop was harvested this way.[417] The tidy narrative conclusion of *Border Nurse*, which saw a win for the domestic laborers, is unrealistic. Tomato pickers, in reality, became a moot point in the years following as farmers no longer needed a large labor force, domestic or migrant, to harvest their tomatoes. “The change had profound social effects. The tomato industry thrived but field employment fell by nearly 50 percent. Many small tomato farmers, unable to afford the expensive technology, left the sector—the number of tomato farmers dropped to less than 25 percent of the level in the late 1950s.[418] Farm workers continued to struggle through the sixties and seventies to achieve protections, largely under the leadership of Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta. They formed the National Farm Workers Association (NFWA) and held their first convention in September 1962, going on to join the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee (AWOC) in 1966 and eventually becoming the United Farm Workers Union. It wouldn't be until 1975 that agricultural laborers gained the right to collective bargaining with the passage of the California Agricultural Relations Act.”[419]

The political message about the need for agricultural labor protections supersedes feminism in *Border Nurse*, the two causes aren’t even associated with one another. Though Nurse Reynolds and her best friend/clinic assistant, Nurse Susan McCormick, have lengthy conversations with one another about the merits and drawbacks of labor agitation—in particular how the labor fight is affecting their patients, the community they live in, and more personally, the men they are in love with—they

[417] James F. Thompson and Steven C. Blank, “Harvest Mechanization Helps Agriculture Remain Competitive,” *California Agriculture* 54, no. 3 (2000): 53. https://doi.org/10.3733/ca.v054n03p51.
[418] McCalla and Rausser, “Giannini Foundation,” 12.
[419] Olmstead and Rhode, “A History of California Agriculture,” 17.

never apply their analysis to their own labor conditions. The women are portrayed as running the clinic, from stocking and equipping it with all necessary supplies to diagnosing and treating the patients, most often without the doctor even on site. Their appearance, the clinic, and their medical practice are detailed as neat, orderly, and efficient and they work all hours of the day and night, even packing sandwiches in order to be able to work right through their lunchtime. Despite their dedication and diligence, they face discrimination and patronizing attitudes based on their age and gender. When Nurse Reynolds first arrives at the clinic, the Director of the Growers' Association introduces her to Dr. Scott by saying, "I picked a mighty pretty nurse, didn't I?" and the two men go on to encourage a clinic visitor to date her, without knowing the first thing about her personal situation.[420] The Director repeatedly chastises the nurse and questions whether her age is a liability, despite acknowledging that she excelled in her training program and that her professional references were superb. Working in a privately funded clinic, the women are frequently threatened with dismissal for such things as failure to acquiesce to non-work related demands from their employers or their personal associations with people in the labor fight. The protagonist acknowledges that she feels her employer overreaches by trying to control her personal network but doesn't go so far as to consider how organizing and unionizing might be applied to her own job.

Border Nurse reiterates some of the common themes of the nursing work being a higher calling. When the protagonist begins to question her impact on the community, one of her suitors reminds her of her calling, "Think about the patients that owe their

[420] Dowdell, *Border Nurse*, 14.

lives you because you nursed them so skillfully. Remember that nurses are necessary to our very existence."[421] Dowdell uses technical language to describe medical procedures and includes meticulous details about the ways in which nurses ensure efficiency and readiness—the protagonist always stocks her uniform pockets with supplies! And, she occasionally entertains concerns that becoming a wife would prevent her from maintaining her autonomous personal and professional identities, "He would absorb her, dominate her every thought and action. Merritt's wife would have to dedicate her life to him. Would she ever be ready for that?"[422] The protagonist doesn't truly struggle with reconciling her nursing identity and her womanhood, but her suitor Merritt does. When he uses her credentials to tell her, "I'm in love with you Jeanne Reynolds, R.N.," she knows that he accepts her nursing identity as a vital part of her.[423] Earlier nurse-protagonists were won over by men who accepted their career, but this one is ready to advocate for more; she also wants to be recognized as an equal emotional and intellectual partner.

It takes her the entire novel to adjust his belief system. Though he is eager to explain to her his labor efforts, he repeatedly brushes off her attempts to have true dialogue about it. When she confronts him about the extreme tactics of the union strike and reasons that compromises might be reached through less violent negotiating tactics, he scolds her "I'm not going to spend the evening arguing with you about the theory of unionism, Jeanne."[424] Nurse Reynolds, who has patiently listened to her friends on both sides of the debate, sees the issue in shades of gray; Merritt perceives her ability to

[421] Dowdell, 95.
[422] Dowdell, 66.
[423] Dowdell, 96.
[424] Dowdell, 124.

acknowledge both sides as a personal affront, rather than an opportunity to learn more about her value-system and share his own. While Jeanne wants a partnership, Merritt describes his dream girl as someone who "would listen to every word I had to say with rapt attention" yet confesses that he is attracted to her precisely "because you aren't easily dominated."[425] Meanwhile, her other suitor, Gary Hunter has fallen in love with her best friend, Susan. Even though Gary faces financial hardship caused by the union strikes of his farm, Susan is willing to take a chance. They share with Jeanne and Merritt that together they have develop a plan to get through the hard times: she will keep working as a Nurse to support them while he strives to make his small farm more profitable. Gary unashamedly admits that he fell in love with Susan for the domestic care she offered to him as well as the emotional support. Perhaps inspired by another man's willingness to admit the need for an equal partner, Merritt comes around, too. He admits at the end of the novel that Jeanne's suggestion that labor negotiations take into account the economic disparity and profit differences between small and industrial farms distinct provisions is the right move and ensures that small growers get a separate union contract. When he finally confesses that he appreciates her opinions and needs her emotional support, she agrees to marry him.

Though Dowdell's nurses in Border Nurse never manage to apply what they learn about labor organizing to their own work, shortly after the publication of this novel real nurses did organize themselves to demand better labor conditions—in California no less. "California was the first state to strike for better working conditions." What interests me most about Border Nurse was that Dowdell didn't casually describe a romantic plot

[425] Dowdell, 79;77.

with labor organizing as the background. The narrative explains the multi-faceted nature of the dilemma, explaining how access to water and land, race, economics, and immigration all complicate the fight for labor protections in a format that is easily digestible to the general public. In this way, she has crafted a more romance meant to draw readers into the social and political issues of their time. And, *Border Nurse* has relevance to today's readers, especially in light of current public discourse about Mexican immigration and racialized labor in the United States as well as discourses about the role of women within labor unions and the Democrat Socialists of America.

1970s: Race Matters in *Soul Nurse* and *Marilyn Morgan, R.N.*

As discussed briefly in chapter three, most romance novels limited their introduction of race and ethnicity to situations in which a white nurse is nursing people of color. There are a few exceptions, for examples in *Reservation Nurse*, in which the nurse's own native heritage is an issue in her romantic life. *Border Nurse* exemplifies the way in which authors addressed race issues very cautiously. It appears that publishers assumed that their mass-market audience was white. Many romance novels featured tangential characters of color, mostly identified in service work. For example, in *Sundown Nurse*, the protagonist briefly recollects her African American nanny. Or, in *Hospital Zone*, the hospital porter is a kind "negro." The authors often rely on paternalistic stereotypes. By the end of the sixties though, some authors decided to write their nurse-protagonists as black Americans. I juxtapose two novels featuring black nurse-protagonists, *Soul Nurse* was written by a white, male, Canadian author

while *Marilyn Morgan, R.N*. was written by a black, female author from Brooklyn (see figures 17 and 18, respectively).

Soul Nurse (1970)

Lancer Books published *Soul Nurse* in 1970 as part of their Valentine Book line. The author's name is identified as Rose Dana, a pseudonym used by William Edward Daniel Ross who was a prolific novelist of genre fiction, writing over 300 books under numerous pseudonyms. In fact, the Library of Congress has attributed at least fifteen pseudonyms to him. The Special Collections Department holds six other nurse romance titles bearing the Rose Dana name. William Ross was married to a nurse, perhaps inspiring his additions to the genre.

The cover illustration uses one of the conventional themes: the foregrounded protagonist in her nurse's uniform, her rival suitors looking on from the background, all set in the context of their surgery ward work. The illustration and accompanying caption, however, deviate from prior covers by showing a black nurse-protagonist with both a black and white suitor. The caption reads, "Sally had a grand job at Canton General—plus the love of a handsome surgeon. To keep both, must she turn her back on her heritage?," foreshadowing the romantic conflict to come.[426] Though romance novel covers often mislead the reader about the major themes and plot lines, Ross' novel indeed focuses on the challenges of interracial dating and the protagonist's understanding of her racial identity in relationship to social and political circumstances. Ross' novel was published just three years after the US Supreme Court ruled anti-miscegenation laws unconstitutional in Loving vs. Virginia.

[426] Rose Dana [William Ross], *Soul Nurse* (New York: Lancer Books, 1970), front cover.

Ross' nurse-protagonist is described according to the usual conventions that require protagonists to be young, beautiful, and best and brightest from their class. Nurse Sally Hughes is an honors graduate from one of the best teaching hospitals in Boston. She moves to Canton, a small port city in New Hampshire and "has lost no time proving herself" as one of the best surgical nurses at Canton General Hospital[427] She dates both Dr. Stanley Thorne and Dr. Jim Dawson. Her relationship the widowed father Dr. Thorne is described as one of mutual admiration, a partnership built on professional compatibility and mutual interests, but she doesn't feel passionately about him. His teenage daughter adores Sally and Dr. Thorne believes she is a wonderful role model. Physically, he is described as attractive and athletically built but Sally does catch herself realizing "his extremely white skin suggested weakness or illness to her, but she knew this was not so. It was merely a matter of pigmentation."[428] Dr. Jim Dawson is described as "a black man in his early thirties with a shrewd, intellectual cast to his features. He was slim and considered good looking by the white nurses in the hospital…"[429] Sally reflects that "it was natural that they should be attracted to each other."[430] As with other nurse-protagonists, Sally's initial resistance to allowing either of her romances to become more serious is attributed to her desire to establish herself professionally and maintain personal autonomy. She often responds to their pleas to become more involved with responses like "I have to have a life of my own."[431]

[427] Dana [Ross], *Soul Nurse*, 9.
[428] Dana [Ross], 38.
[429] Dana [Ross], 27.
[430] Dana [Ross], 9.
[431] Dana [Ross], 12.

As both the white and black surgeon express their love and desire to marry, Nurse Sally Hughes imagines what her future with each of them might look like and realizes that racial identity will play a major factor. Here, Ross' white privilege is apparent because he writes his protagonist as a woman outside of her own racial identity; she not confronted by it until it intersects with her romantic life. Nurse Sally Hughes declares, for example, "I don't think racial."[432] Sally's political and racial consciousness grow alongside of growing racial tension in Canton as Daniel introduces a number of subplots: Mayor Hopper is stabbed and his racist campaign manager and advisor, Sam Grayson, publically states that the suspects were a gang of "negroes," Canton's city council announces plans for a new highway bypass that will run through the city's historically black neighborhood called Blair Settlement, and a gold-digging, white, racist divorcee tries to swoop in on Dr. Thorne. Daniel manages to craft a story that considers race with a surprising amount of complexity. It's not simply a matter of black and white; for example, his narrative acknowledges both personal biases and institutional racism, that politics and media heighten emotional responses to racial fear, and that black people are not a homogenous community of people who share all social and political viewpoints or responses to racism.

Nurse Sally Hughes "had been outstandingly successful in integrating with the white world. Her good looks and charm of manner had been an undeniable asset."[433] She responds to racism with a calm demeanor and often uses humor to draw attention to someone's bias and ignorance instead of condemning them. When Sally and a companion run into a white acquaintance at a high-end department store, the woman is

[432] Dana [Ross], 140.
[433] Dana [Ross], 70.

startled by their presence and asks the woman if the two are related. Sally uses a saccharine voice but retorts, “Of course…our families came from the same continent.”[434] When the lawyer Sam Grayson assumes that the mayor was stabbed by a gang of black men he states, “I’m judging by the kind of crime it was. That gives us the tip off. It was what I’d call a nigger crime!,” quickly adding, “I don’t have to tell you, Miss Hughes, that present company is excepted.” But, Sally coolly responds, “You don’t have to except me from your statement, Mr. Grayson, I do happen to be black.”[435] Later on, she reflects on his outspoken racism and ponders to herself about the unevenness of stereotyping, “since blacks were responsible for all knifings, why weren’t white people blamed for all poisonings? As a racial group it was a crime which they committed far more frequently. Yet no one thought of white people as poisoners!”[436] Nurse Hughes’ approach to mitigating racial tension has been to conform to white standards. Through his protagonist, Webb explores the contradictions of respectability politics, which he highlights further through having Nurse Hughes clash with Dr. Dawson over his assessment and approach to race matters. Dr. Dawson, Sally notes, is accepted and respected by Canton’s white community for his brilliance as a surgeon. She believes Dr. Dawson is short-sighted in wanting to move to Blair Settlement and for being publically outspoken about racism, citing the danger it poses to his career if he loses acceptance among whites. Dr. Dawson, who responds, “let them respect my race as well,” argues that professional respect isn’t worth a dime without personal respect as well. The two go head-to-head many times about the importance of racial solidarity and white acceptance.

[434] Dana [Ross], 95.
[435] Dana [Ross], 15-16.
[436] Dana [Ross], 17.

In fact, he questions Sally's loyalties and undermines her racial identity by saying, "I should give up. Just stop seeing you and find myself a black girl with some spirit."[437]

For the most part, the hospital functions in the narrative as a sort of race-free zone, with the professional training and status of doctors and nurses diminishing racial hierarchies and difference. The protagonist occasionally struggles to navigate her friendships with white colleagues and begins to see color-blindness as problematic. In one conversation, Sally and an intern named Jeff discuss the media coverage of the mayor's stabbing, which has advanced the rumor that the perpetrators were black men:

> Jeff: "It's nothing to do with you."
> Sally: "I'm beginning to question that…It seems a slur on any of them reflects on me."
> Jeff: "If I thought you'd take it to heart, I wouldn't have mentioned it. I didn't mean to upset you. You're one of us!"
> Sally: "I'm also one of them."[438]

But, the nurse-protagonist also has white friends with whom she makes jokes about racial biases. In one exchange, fellow nurse and friend Christine comments to Sally, "You're disgustingly bright this morning…You have resources of hidden energy," to which Sally responds, "Surely you've read the theories of racial superiority."[439] And later, Sally turns to an older, white nurse named Amelia for relationship advice. Expressing concerns about Dr. Jim Dawson she explains, "he has insecure feelings. He's very hung up on racial discrimination, for instance."[440] Amelia, without giving direct advice on what

[437] Dana [Ross], 66.
[438] Dana [Ross], 58.
[439] Dana [Ross], 22.
[440] Dana [Ross], 73.

to do or how to feel, simply states, “I think I can understand his point of view….There are a lot of injustices being committed against your people.”[441]

Dr. Thorne is concerned about racism but also not an activist. Yet, even he encourages Sally not to always make light of ignorance. After dining with Jennifer, the gold-digging divorcee, who made numerous biased assumptions about Sally based upon her race, Sally tries to brush it off with humor and Dr. Thorne remarks, “She tried too hard and made a lot of mistakes…Don’t make a joke of it. In a way it’s tragic. Look at it in the larger sense and it’s the answer to all our troubles in this regard. People aren’t able to communicate.”[442] And indeed Sally’s emotional response grows with the increasingly vocal racism in the community. Dr. Dawson points out to Sally that while Dr. Thorne is not himself a racist, he isn’t willing to take a stand against institutional racism and questions how she sees a future possible with Dr. Thorne, “Stan Thorne can't invite you to the club along with his other friends…Why doesn’t he see they change their rules or resign?”[443]

The conflicts boil over when Dr. Jim Dawson begins to suspect the mayor’s stabbing and subsequent racial accusations were a political plot, carried out prior to the announcement about the highway construction and relocation of Blair Settlement to decrease public objection to it. Sally starts to buy into his theory and Dr. Thorne accuses her of “beginning to sound like a Black Militant and it doesn't become you….keep it in balance.”[444] In fact, Dr. Thorne’s assessment is pretty far-off. Like the protagonist in Border Nurse, Sally is one of the sole characters able to see both sides of

[441] Dana [Ross], 73.
[442] Dana [Ross], 47.
[443] Dana [Ross], 65.
[444] Dana [Ross], 113.

an issue and calling for reason and understanding. While she was supportive of Dr. Dawson's community organizing efforts, she opposes his invitation to Black Power speakers, whose tactics do not foreground the community efforts to block the highway project and end up stirring up more racial fear.

As it turns out, the mayor's wife was his assailant after she discovered his marital infidelity. Sally confronts him about both the media accusations and questions why he didn't correct them. He claims he did try to encourage the news not to run with the unfounded story but Sally knows the repercussions are too great and refuses to let the mayor off the hook. " 'Well, you'll simply have to speak to them again,' she said, willing to go on with the charade if only to make him uncomfortable."[445] When she confronts him about the highway project, again he offers a lame apology that the timing was bad but Nurse Sally Hughes has no patience for his lack of accountability:

> Mayor: "You can't stop progress."
> Sally: "And if someone happens to be hurt there's nothing to be done about it. Progress is the sacred word. It's almost as reveres as mother and marriage."[446]
> Mayor: "… I'm sure you haven't any schoolgirl ideas about politics being all power and graft…Sometimes the common good is not good for a certain group."
> Sally: "You can excuse many actions with a phrase like that. I'm sure Hitler must have used it often."[447]

In the end, the Nurse Sally Hughes decides that she cannot marry Dr. Thorne. If her desire for him were great enough she might be able to work through their differences and accept that "there were things which she and Dr. Stan Thorne would never be able to share, points of view, emotional feelings about remembered days long past, pride of

[445] Dana [Ross], 90.
[446] Dana [Ross], 116.
[447] Dana [Ross], 117.

race and color."[448] Instead, while saying goodbye to Dr. Dawson as he prepares to leave Canton for a new surgery assignment in a large city, something stirs inside of her and she knows that he is the man she must marry.

Marilyn Morgan, R.N. (1969)

While Nurse Sally Hughes finds her soul mate and husband, Rubie Saunders' nurse-protagonist, Marilyn Morgan, takes an entirely different course. New American Library published *Marilyn Morgan, R.N.* in 1969. This title is the first novel in a four novel series about the same protagonist. Book two is *Nurse Morgan's Triumph* (1970), followed by *Marilyn Morgan, Cruise Nurse* (1971), and the series ends with *Nurse Morgan Sees it Through* (1971). Like *Hospital Zone*, the first book in this series doesn't wrap up neatly with an engagement. Instead, Saunders writes a novel about the emerging subculture of single women; her characters exemplify the challenges and opportunities of young, single, career women trying to break free from familial and social expectations. As "contemporary audiences often take single heroines for granted…for media audiences of the 1960s and 1970s, however, the single woman was a compelling and often controversial figure."[449] Helen Gurley Brown's book *Sex and the Single Girl,* published in 1962 and followed-up quickly in 1964 with a movie adaptation, promoted the notion that single women could enjoy lives of leisure, work, and dating in the same way that men did. Following the popularity of her book, media of all types glamorized the working girl. Ms. Saunders seized on the popularity of the working girl theme to write

[448] Dana [Ross], 71.
[449] Katherine J. Lehman, *Those Girls: Single Women in Sixties and Seventies Popular Culture* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2011), 1.

a novel that featured nurse characters of different races and religions taking the bold step to leave home and live the single girl lifestyle. Through the novel readers see women expressing their views about race, birth control, parents, adjusting to single girls life, and dating without the intention of finding a husband.

The novel opens with Marilyn Morgan, a "slim, attractive girl" attending an interview for a staff nurse position in a large New York City hospital. Immediately, the reader is alerted to her racial identity as the nurse-protagonist observes, "as she walked to the information desk, she was glad to see other Negro nurses and doctors going about their duties. 'At least being a Negro isn't going to be a problem,' she muttered to herself."[450] While interviewing, the superintendent of nurses wants to know as much about Ms. Morgan's personal life as her professional qualifications: what do her parents think about her nursing career, does her social life include someone special, if so will marriage interrupt her work plans?[451]

Marilyn lives at home with her parents, an older sister, and a teenage brother. Her parents encouraged her education but her father wants her to be a teacher and thinks nursing is unladylike. But Marilyn has both a bachelor's degree and her nursing degree and loves the profession. The morning of her first day on the new job the protagonist is described as giddy like a kid on Christmas morning as she wakes up early. Marilyn is confident and optimistic and thinks to herself "she knew she was capable and nursing was what she wants to do." Her first few days in the pediatric ward, she finds her coworkers "all friendly and helpful and Marilyn felt right at home with them. The color of the skin didn't seem to matter here at all, and the pediatrics staff was a

[450] Rubie Saunders, *Marilyn Morgan, R.N.* (New York: New American Library, 1969), 5.
[451] Saunders, *Marilyn Morgan, R.N.*, 5-6.

miniature United Nations with Orientals, Negroes, and whites all working together."[452] She is more excited for work than she is for a date with her boyfriend Sam, a scene in which she "drags her feet" getting ready.[453] Nurse Morgan eagerly takes on double shifts at the hospital, cancelling dates with Sam, in order to see her patient through an emergency and avoiding her loving but stifling parents. Though she works in pediatrics and is dedicated to the young patients, the nurses are advised to still maintain a professional perspective. Mrs. Andrews, the head nurse of pediatrics says to Marilyn, "An important part of your job will be to make them feel relaxed and comfortable. That does not mean that you can relax yourself; first and foremost this is a hospital and you are a nurse."[454] Likewise, her friend and nursing colleague Marcia Goldstein warns, "Don't get too involved with any of these kids or you'll tear yourself apart. When you go off duty, force yourself not to think of any of them or you'll end up in psychiatrics as a patient!"[455] Nurse Morgan struggles to negotiate the balance between compassion and too much emotional attachment but still nevertheless does well in the pediatric ward where her medical and interpersonal skills are challenged.

While busy working, Marilyn's mother meddles in her relationship, encouraging Sam to keep pushing the marriage issues. Nurse Marilyn Morgan is vocal about not being ready for marriage, an impediment to experiencing life in her opinion. Her mother, however, believes, "It ain't natural for a girl of twenty-two not to be married. When I was your age I was married four years and Liz was three years old,"[456] It is clear that the

[452] Saunders, 35-36.
[453] Saunders, 20.
[454] Saunders, 22.
[455] Saunders, 24.
[456] Saunders, 12.

marriage discussion has been repeated many times over as a frustrated Marilyn replies, "But today twenty-two isn't old; I'm not an old maid yet. So just relax and let me live my life."[457] Readers today might resonate with Marilyn's assertion that she's not yet an old maid but in the early sixties the average woman married before age 21 and not much changed through the decade with still only 7 percent of 30-year-old women unmarried in 1969[458] Sam doesn't understand Marilyn's passion for nursing or her desire to remain independent, growing impatient with her refusing to accept his proposal. Marilyn pushes him to date other women while she focuses on her career. Instead of hearing her statement as an assertion of autonomy, he resorts to stereotypes about nurses chasing wealthy doctors, "I think you mean that you intend to date doctors; a bus driver isn't good enough for our high and mighty Nurse Morgan."[459]

Marilyn intends to avoid becoming like her mother, who she thinks is "stuck" with housework instead of personal fulfillment by her role as wife and mother. She finds herself overwhelmed with the constant battles with her parents over whether she is a grown woman; hearing that one of the neighbor's single daughters has moved out of the house, her parents assert that a daughter has "no right to leave home until she is married."[460] Marilyn Morgan is delighted to bond with a fellow nurse who faces the same parental dilemma:

> Marcia: "…one of these days I'm going to get a place of my own. I don't think I can stand my mother's nagging me to get married much longer."
> Marilyn: "Yours, too? I get a lot of that myself."

[457] Saunders, 12.
[458] Lehman, *Those Girls*, 13; 20.
[459] Saunders, *Marilyn Morgan, R.N.*, 17.
[460] Saunders, 62.

> Marcia: “I thought only Jewish mothers were supposed to push their daughters into marriage.”[461]

The women make covert plans to get an apartment across the street from the hospital. Here, Ms. Saunders describes in detail how the two women search for an apartment, save up money, negotiate their lease, discuss how to equitably divide their bills, coordinate the furnishing of their apartment, and agree on a schedule of chores, errands, and cooking. Saunders description of their preparation feels like a *how-to guide* for readers wanting to establish a single life. In the sixties and seventies, women faced considerable social and financial pressures that made living away from home and remaining single difficult—unequal access to high-paying jobs and wage disparities compounded with cultural prohibitions, familial expectations, and media messaging that praised domesticity. Marcia and Marilyn, though trepidations about upsetting their parents, enjoy planning their escape immensely.

The women develop a close friendship and their apartment becomes one of the social hubs for young nurses and interns. Colleagues frequently stop by the apartment for drinks or meals the women delight in their newfound freedom. Though Sam was incorrect that Marilyn sought to move up in the world, she does go on to date two interns and a resident. Interest in the new nurse began on her very first day and Marilyn exclaims to the another nurse, “aren’t there any modest interns in this place?”[462] Other than this joke, the flirtatiousness of the interns is presented as playful not aggressive, and they quickly all become friends. Dr. Henri Gallois, however, proves to be a challenge. A bilingual Haitian with a dark complexion, he is “terribly handsome, but he

[461] Saunders, 32.
[462] Saunders, 30.

knows it" and as Marcia goes on to warn, Marilyn "he has some peculiar notions abut women."[463] After a few dates, Marilyn finds his exorbitant charm exhausting and is shocked when he can't understand her need to cancel a date to take care of a patient. When he demands she ask another nurse to take the shift she comments, "I'm the one they asked. As a doctor you should know where my responsibility lies."[464] Undeterred by her prioritization of nursing over romance he soon asks her to marry him, "think of what I can offer you—wealth, position, and an easy life. You won't have to work any more, and you'll be living on a beautiful tropical island…"[465] Marilyn isn't ready to give up her freedom and isn't interested in money or an easy life, especially with a man who wants a wife who will give up working after marriage. After her refusal Dr. Gallois goes on to ask several other nurses to marry him, desperate to find an American wife to take back to Haiti. He becomes a joke among the nurses and interns and Matt questions, "Do you suppose he proposed to white nurses, too? He's so impressed with his brains I'm sure he'd give every girl, regardless of her race, creed, or color, a chance to marry him."[466]

Sam, too, reveals himself to be quite traditional in his views about marriage. Though Marilyn had been incredibly clear with him at the beginning of the novel and goes on to date other men, he continues to pine for her and request she reconsider his proposal. Unable to hear her and take her at word, he goes to Marcia looking for an explanation:

> "You didn't listen to what I said. Marilyn doesn't want to marry anybody just yet. It's not that she doesn't want to marry you. Can't you understand that?"

[463] Saunders, 26.
[464] Saunders, 47.
[465] Saunders, 54.
[466] Saunders, 83.

> Sam: “What's so great about her life the way it is that she doesn’t want to change it?”
> Marcia: “I think it’s just that it is her life; she makes her own decisions without having anyone to tell her what she can or can't do.”[467]

Marilyn’s final conversation with Sam turns into a row, with Sam blaming her nursing career for ending their relationship, “I wish your folks had never sent you to college!” Standing her ground, Marilyn retorts, “You want a dumb broad who’ll sit at your feet and admire you. Well, I’ve got a news flash for you, buster; you’re looking at the wrong girl!”[468] Today, readers will be frustrated by the number of chances Marilyn extends to Sam, hoping he will meet her on equal ground. But, Lehman argues that women in the sixties were “simultaneously encouraged to achieve and acquiesce” through the messaging of popular culture.[469] There are male characters, however, who support the nurse-protagonist as both an independent woman and professional. Matt, who is a medical intern, describes Nurse Morgan as a “hero,” and expresses constant awe for her work as a nurse. In When Marcia tells Marilyn, “Don't you realize that you’re the one who made a doctor out of him?...Matt used to think of medicine as a sort of ‘get-rich-quick’ career, but since he met you he’s realized there’s more to being a doctor than making money,”[470] she inverts the stereotypical male-female and nurse-doctor dynamics by having both a man and a doctor learn about both healthcare and dedication to patients from a female nurse.

Saunders is careful to never insinuate sexual activity on the part of her protagonist. But, she does reflect the changing sexual mores of the seventies through

[467] Saunders, 88-89.
[468] Saunders, 90.
[469] Lehman, *Those Girls*, 16.
[470] Saunders, *Marilyn Morgan, R.N.*, 60.

the words and actions of other characters. For example, when Nurse Morgan first starts her job, one of the nurses makes a passing comment about Matt, “That boy is the greatest reason for birth control in the world!”[471] Marcia also warns Marilyn that Dr. Gallois “doesn’t mind spending money on a girl, but he expects a reward, so watch out for yourself in the clinches!.”[472] Despite male-female friendships and casual dating, Marilyn and Marcia exemplify good girls. Their parents’ fear that women living alone would lead to promiscuity is unnecessary as the nurses’ are able to balance independence and morality without chaperones. While some single women icons in popular culture posed an affront to sexual mores by demanding the right to their desire and sexual activity, Marilyn and Marcia challenge double standards on a more basic level—they simply want to make their own decisions. Prior to this era, single women in nurse-romance novels who had this basic agency were Head Nurses or supervisors, viewed as “spinsters,” now too old or embittered by a failed romance to find love and get married. But Marilyn remains young and vibrant enough that readers might choose to believe she will one day settle down.

While *Soul Nurse* uses a black protagonist to explore racial dynamics, *Marilyn Morgan, R.N.* sidesteps most serious discussions about race. The nurse-protagonist only dates black men and a Haitian, though the text does not draw attention to or indicate whether it is intentional. Saunders’ characters mention race infrequently and usually only in very casual observations and jokes. For example, Marilyn asks “Sam, do you suppose every Chinese in New York is a waiter…I’ve never see a white or Negro

[471] Saunders, 30.
[472] Saunders, 27.

waiter in a Chinese restaurant, have you?"[473] Marcia and Marilyn find it amusing that their Jewish and African American parents have the same constraining views about working and single women. When the pair decide to hold a dinner party for their parents in their new apartment, to make amends for leaving home and to demonstrate that they are still respectable women, they are initially worried whether a joint gathering will be a problem based on cultural differences. But the parents get along splendidly. "Marilyn had never known her mother to become so friendly with anyone so quickly as she did with Mrs. Goldstein. Her father surprised her, too, because usually he didn't feel comfortable around white people."[474] Ms. Saunders presentation of race, religion, and ethnicity is matter of fact; her characters are never overtly racist and any the few mild stereotypes that characters voice are remedied through exposure to new ideas and people.

Saunders has created a carefree single black nurse who doesn't face the racism that would have been typical of the era. Lehman explains that "while civil rights gains enabled African American women to move into white-collar careers starting in the mid-1960s, their lives were shaped by legacies of racial segregation…black single women in cities like Washington, D.C., complained of segregated housing and limited dating prospects, and their wages lagged behind those of white women."[475] Marilyn and Marcia face no problems in securing an apartment nor do any female characters express concern about their wages. In *Soul Nurse*, Nurse Sally Hughes strives to escape stereotyping by conforming to white standards of manner and dress, perhaps following

[473] Saunders, 16.
[474] Saunders, 93.
[475] Lehman, *Those Girls*, 7.

the cue of “magazine articles [that] urged African American singles to dress conservatively and act like strong, capable women rather than frivolous girls. ”[476] Marilyn Morgan on the other hand doesn’t worry about presenting a certain type of face to the world. Saunders allows her protagonist to indulge in the same carefree attitudes as her white female colleagues, yet carefully ensures that Marilyn is still a model of sexual restraint. Her single girl lifestyle is about intellectual and emotional independence, not sexual independence. I wonder to what degree, Saunders sought to naturalize black professional women for the reader by presenting a character that would otherwise be completely familiar to them. By allowing her protagonist to enjoy diverse social and professional networks that don’t make an issue of race, she allows her readers—black or white—to imagine what that world might look like in reality. Marilyn Morgan, R.N. ends without any engagement. The nurse-protagonist and her roommate go on to keep enjoying the single life. While Sam and Dr. Gallois can’t reconcile their idea of a proper woman with one who works, especially one who works as a nurse and dedicates so much time and energy to her practice. Whereas earlier nurse-protagonists had to overcome their idea that their nurse identity and female identity were mutually exclusive, for Marilyn the two are intertwined. Earlier nurse-protagonists tied womanhood to love and marriage; they feared that the demands of nursing would prevent them from fulfilling expectations of them as wives and so they intended to put off womanhood until they were finished nursing. Through the narrative, they come to see that they can do both and that the right husband will agree. Later Nurse-protagonists like Nurse Reynolds don't see their identities as women and nurses as incompatible because they

[476] Lehman, *Those Girls*, 7.

do not associate womanhood with marriage at all. Nursing is one way that they experience the world and seek fulfillment. For them, being a woman means taking the time to get to know oneself and find fulfillment *before* marriage. That love and marriage threaten the process reveals that the nurse-protagonists distrust the institution of marriage and men. In this way, later nurse-protagonists show less optimism in men's ability to accept a woman on her own terms. While the nursing profession no longer demands a woman sacrifice marriage in order to perform her work, men still demand that women sacrifice their career in order to perform as wives.

Through the 1970s and Beyond: Did Women's Liberation Kill the Nurse Romance Novel?

Typically, people assume that romance novels, especially category romances, are vacant entertainment media, inferior literature, and deal in the same plots while relying on silly stereotypes for characters. I wanted to test these generalizations and see how nurse romance novels in particular traded in stereotypes of nurses and women. I sought to compare their narrative contexts with their historical contexts as well as look for unexpected elements and themes in order to assess what their content and formulas revealed about dominant culture.

Cawelti explains that formula fiction functions "by confirming existing definitions of the world."[477] He goes on to explain that they "maintain a culture's ongoing consensus about the nature of reality and morality. We assume, therefore, that one aspect of the structure of a formulas is…confirming some strongly held conventional

[477] Cawelti, *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance,* 35.

view."[478] What I found was that nurse-romance novels did confirm many conventional views and relied on describing their characters according to dominant ideologies but also often stretched the boundaries of those views and occasionally upended stereotypes and reader expectations in order to challenge dominant ideologies. The diversity of topics introduced by nurse romance authors was immense; often they mentioned controversial issues in passing or with humor, thereby treading cautiously with a mass-market audience. For the most part, however, authors didn't pander to conservative domestic ideologies.

Early nurse romance novels illustrated nursing much more than later ones—both actual nursing work and nursing stereotypes. Providing scenes in which the nurse carries out her duties in a hospital ward or clinic the reader gets a better picture of nursing practices and hospital dynamics and the work of the nurse is emphasized as both valuable to society and personally rewarding to the protagonist. Later novels are vague about the profession; it is often more significant that the protagonist *has* a profession, and one to which she is so dedicated. All nurse-romance novels explore on one way or another issues related to women's struggle to manage social expectations about their domestic roles, work, as well as male desires and insecurities. Contrary to Modleski's assessment that heroines "achieve happiness only by undergoing a complex process of self-subversion" and the shared assertion by Modleski and Casey that nurse-protagonists serve to help readers "adapt to circumscribed lives and to convince themselves that limitations are really opportunities,"[479] I think that romance novels were often a vehicle by which readers exposed themselves to new places, new cultures, and

[478] Cawelti, 35.
[479] Modleski, *Loving with a Vengeance,* 29; 30.

new ideas. How many women, for example, were introduced to Afghan culture by reading Rachel Payes' *Peace Corps Nurse?* And how many women had their biases against Muslim culture challenged thereby internalizing her call for increased cultural awareness and compassion? Cultural lessons aside, many women also travelled vicariously through the nurse-protagonist, experiencing a seedy but alluring Las Vegas casino, the perils of a rugged mountain trek, or the glamour of jetting off to a Caribbean island—experiences that may working women or housewives might never have enjoyed otherwise.

Though Modleski believes that male heroes in romance novels "treat the woman as a joke, appraise her as an object, and give her less attention than they give to automobiles," what I found in the nurse-romances were protagonists who rejected those men in favor of one who listened to and respected her.[480] In the absence of such a character, she chose to remain single. Unlike the novels Modleski assessed, which "are always about a poor girl finally marrying a rich man," nurse-protagonists earn their own money and are more interested in a man who supports them emotionally than financially.[481]

Romance scholars Gleason and Selinger have explained that the engagement and promise of marriage is nearly always a necessary requirement for a happy ending in romance novels; this ending signifies marriage as both an optimistic hope for the future but also a goal to achieve. And yet, during a large portion of the narrative, the protagonist and her male counterpoints disagree on and must negotiate an agreement about what marriage will look like for them and what it will mean for the identities they

[480] Modleski, 31-32.
[481] Modleski, 40.

hold outside of the relationship. These negotiations are often the central point of tension in the novel. Gleason and Selinger summarize this paradox when they say, that popular romance "represents marriage…also as a fraught, contested enterprise, that may be questioned, renegotiated, and redefined in individual novels."[482]

The idea of the nurse has been such a pivotal cultural icon, defined and limited by notions of femininity yet challenging femininity because of its status as wage work. "The nurse has occupied a position of some emotional resonance in the public mind—a resonance based on the coming together of occupational and sexual stereotyping in the profession of nursing."[483] Because of this, nurse stereotypes are a natural starting point for working women characters and already provide a lot of complexity that authors can explore as they introduce themes that challenge cultural ideas about work and women's roles. While some nurse-romance novels create worlds in which nurses resist patriarchal institutions, others do trade in strict campy entertainment. But, literature is after all an imaginative form and meant to be entertainment. But asking romance novels to provide a solution to patriarchy or to guide women to personal fulfillment is to expect to much; other genres are not held to these standards and asked to bring about social transformation and gender equality.

By the mid seventies, the popularity of nurse-romance novels was waning. The women's liberation movement voiced concerns about the representation of women in media. They condemned romance novels and romance readers. Publishers stopped seeking new, original nurse-romances, though reprints of old titles continued well into

[482] William A. Gleason and Eric Murphy Selinger, eds., *Romance Fiction and American Culture: Love as the Practice of Freedom?* (London: Ashgate, 2016), 4.
[483] Kalisch and Kalisch, *The Changing Image of the Nurse,* 8.

the seventies and eighties. Any number of factors may have played a hand in the decline of the nurse romance novel. Certainly, all fads have life cycles; no doubt influenced by the fact that the short category romances could be read in one evening and authors and publishers had exhausted all possible variations trying to keep up with reader demand. The nurse romance was able to carry on for a little while as the industry responded to single women, who "became an economic force in their own right."[484] By 1967, the entertainment industry estimated that urban singles were a $60 billion market and publishers were certainly not going leave this market to film and television.[485] Nurse-protagonists became single girls and more secondary characters became divorcees. Lehman argues, "single women also benefited from greater sexual freedoms during the seventies, as popular advice literature, novels, and films acknowledged the prevalence of casual and promiscuous sex."[486] Mild-mannered category romances couldn't compete but the impassioned scenes of the new bodice-rippers could. Outspoken as Germaine Greer was in asserting that romance novels harmed female equality by promoting values of chastity and monogamy, her words were likely far less damaging to the sweet nurse-romances than the words of authors such as Kathleen Woodiwiss. Nurses, too, were in the midst of transforming the image of their profession. State-by-state they gained new legal definitions for the nurse's role and function, forcing the healthcare industry to recognize the profession's autonomous role and they voiced concerns about stereotyping and media representation. The publishing industry shifted their priorities to cater to reader's new tastes, which were in part influenced by both

[484] Lehman, *Those Girls*, 3.
[485] Lehman, 3.
[486] Lehman, 5.

popular and feminist discourses about women's pleasure, at the same time that nurses sought to regain control of their own narratives—these factors together seem to have coalesced in the demise of the sweet nurse romance novel.

Figure 13. Marguerite Mooers Marshall, *Nurse Into Woman* (New York: Bantam, 1948). Illustration by Dave Attie.

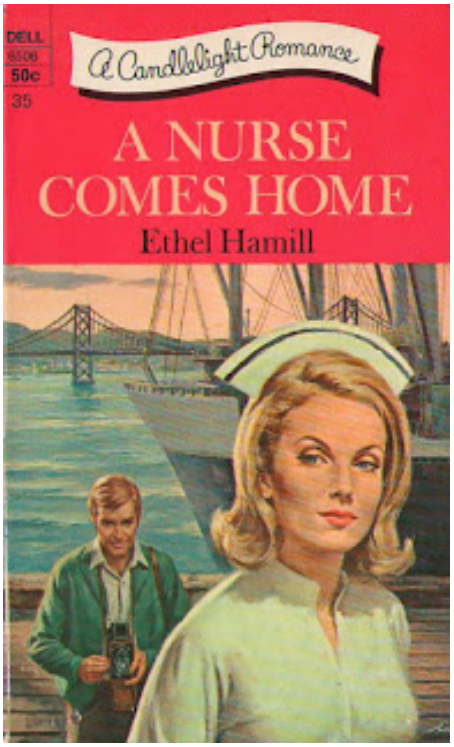

Figure 14. Ethel Hamill, *A Nurse Comes Home* (New York: Dell, 1969). Illustration by Edrien King.

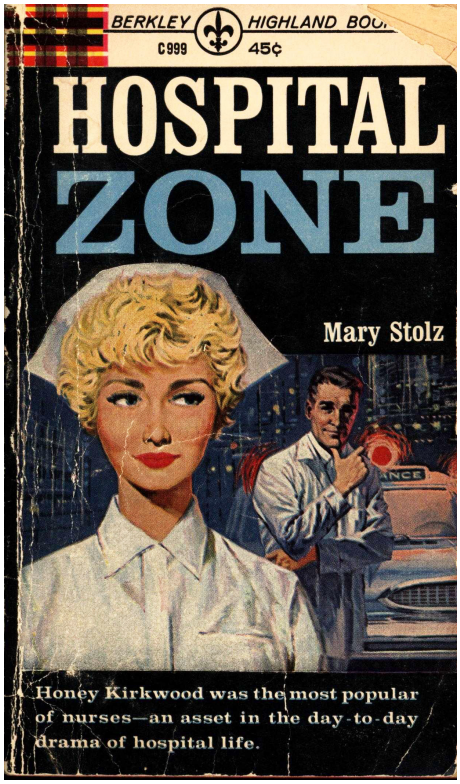

Figure 15. Mary Stolz, *Hospital Zone* (New York: Berkley Publishing Co., 1964).

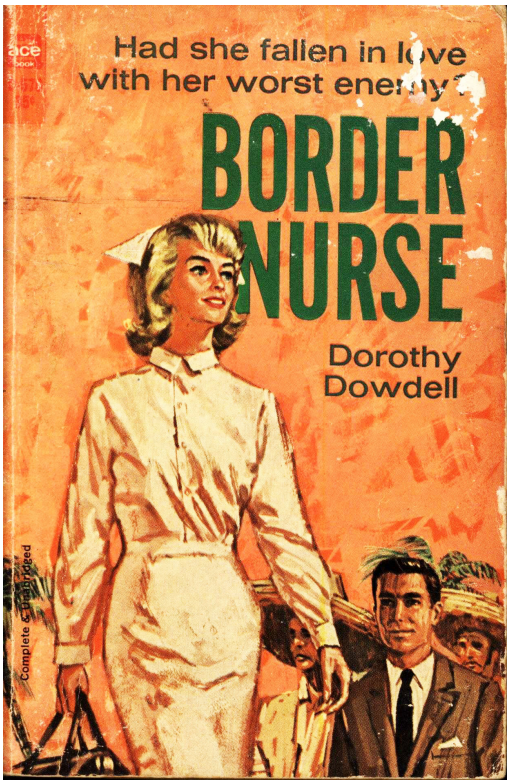

Figure 16. Dorothy Dowdell, *Border Nurse* (New York: Ace Books, 1963).

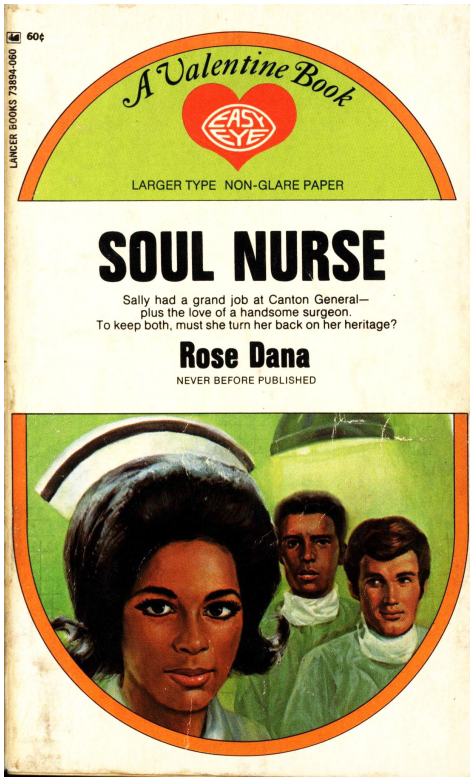

Figure 17. Rose Dana [William Ross], *Soul Nurse* (New York: Lancer books, 1970).

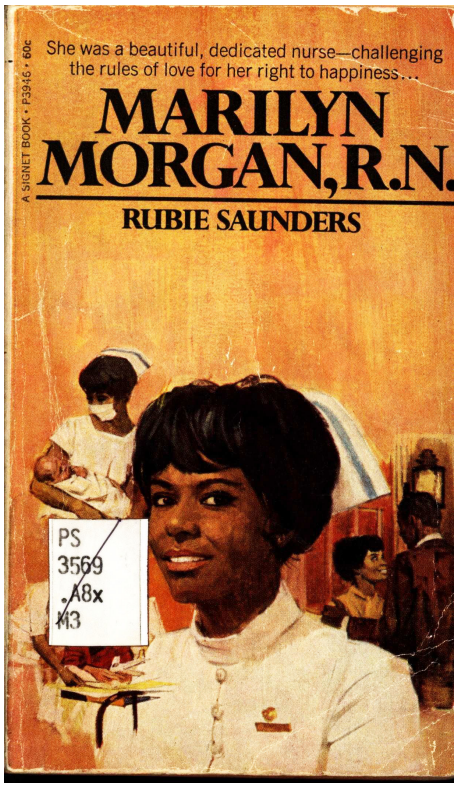

Figure 18. Rubie Saunders, *Marilyn Morgan, R.N.* (New York: New American Library, 1969).

Conclusion

The Nurse Romance Novel collection is an incredibly valuable set of historical sources for investigating the history of nursing and women's history. The novels contribute to the interpretation of twentieth century social and cultural histories by depicting a diverse range of political and social issues with complexity. The authors' depictions of nurses and nursing reveals that popular fiction often reified professional stereotypes and archetypes but at times complicated or challenged them. Scholars increasingly choose to incorporate popular fiction into their research. Yet, not even forty years ago many academic disciplines frowned upon scholarship that examined non-canonical texts—texts written by women and forms of popular culture. Likewise, scholar Heather Schell notes, women's studies departments are not yet even a generation old.[487] Popular romance studies and popular culture studies are also only emerging as departments and gaining academic legitimacy. The question of where these studies fit within disciplinary and institutional contexts of higher education is still being decided. Complicating the matter is that, by their very nature, they are interdisciplinary. But this also makes them incredibly valuable. The cultural critic and theorist of critical pedagogy, Henry Giroux stated that it is in the "diverse spaces and spheres [of popular culture] that most of the education that matters is taking place on a global scale."[488] It may be unnerving to institutions to think of the most vital learning as outside the academy; but I think that by bringing popular culture into the fold, the academy can participate more fully in public life.

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[487] Heather Schell, "Love's Laborers Lost."
[488] Henry A. Giroux, *Disturbing Pleasures: Learning Popular Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), x.

The State of Affairs: Popular Culture and Romance in Academic Libraries

Libraries can play a key role in the development of these fields by developing popular culture collections and collaborating with faculty to design instructional sessions that utilize them. Unfortunately very little investigation has been done into how academic libraries are incorporating popular romance into their collecting policies.[489] But we do know that few university libraries in the Untied States collect popular romance resources because the field isn't that strongly represented in academia. Crystal Goldman, the Library Instruction Coordinator at UC San Diego states, "popular romance studies has yet to gain a toehold as a major department on any university campus in the United States, which means that collections in this area tend to be haphazard."[490] Popular romance is rarely offered as a major or minor area of study; library collection policies typically only mandate collecting to support academic departments leaving popular romance off the list. Some universities may collect a few popular romance resources as a subset of a popular culture or media studies department, though this is still uncommon as well. Special collections departments, who are more likely to collect popular romances as primary sources, largely do so only through donation. Goldman believes this is a problem because popular romance collections then lack a "cohesive vision." She writes,

> With no cohesive vision for which materials to collect and little justification for fiscally supporting popular romance studies materials, vital monographs, papers, and articles are not being preserved by libraries for future researchers' use and

[489] Crystal Goldman, "Love in the Stacks: Popular Romance Collection Development in Academic Libraries, *Journal of Popular Romance Studies* 3, no.1 (October, 2012): 2.
[490] Goldman, "Love in Stacks," 2.

may, indeed be lost from the record entirely.[491]

It's difficult for institutions to justify expenditures on resources that don't support their academic departments, but many librarians also mistakenly assume that these resources are already available through public libraries or that they will only garner temporary interest. Popular culture resources like romances and comic books don't appear in review sources, which most librarians depend on for acquisitions decisions. On top of this, the sheer volume of popular romance that is published each year is a barrier to their acquisition because they require a lot of shelf space, staff time, and are most printed as paperbacks, which librarians know as "a preservation nightmare."[492]

Pulp magazines and pulp fiction were called such because of the paper they were printed on; pulpwood stock was the cheapest paper available at the time and not meant to be preserved for years on a bookshelf. Gary Hoppenstad explains, "much of what was produced in the past, even the recent past, does not survive today because it was not thought that this 'disposable culture' was important enough to save."[493] Researchers will often find that a public library has weeded out older resources of poplar culture to make room for contemporary popular resources while fans and collectors of magazines, book series, or comics are reluctant to part with them. Specialty shops and dealers sell them as rare, vintage, or novelty items at very high prices. As Hoppenstad sees it, given the scarcity of these resources available to researchers, "the immeasurable value of those libraries and archives that collect and

[491] Goldman, 2.
[492] Goldman, 4.
[493] Gary Hoppenstand, "Editorial: Collecting Popular Culture," *Journal of Popular Culture* 38, no. 2 (September, 2004): 236.

preserve popular culture cannot be overestimated."[494] So, when libraries *do* collect these things, they are a rare find.

In 2012 Goldman noted, "Romance makes up 13.2% of the consumer market and produces over 9,000 books per year."[495] With that volume of production, how can libraries determine which romance lines or series will be most representative of the genre or most valuable to scholars? No academic library has the budget, shelf space, or preservation resources to collect all contemporary romance titles. Libraries that do collect popular romance aren't confident about where they belong: special collections, the general collection, a browsing or leisure reading collection? Scholarly works about popular romance are also difficult to categorize and might be given subject headings related to the history and criticism of any dozen of higher subject headings from "love stories" to "American fiction" to "popular literature" to "women and literature."[496]

To help equip academic libraries with some tools to begin collecting popular romance, Goldman created a "core collection" of scholarship. She then analyzed the libraries in California's public university systems to determine how many of them met this minimum collection profile before also assessing academic libraries worldwide. While none of the California schools had the complete core collection, several had a majority; those with the highest representation of her core list titles were research

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[494] Hoppenstand, "Collecting Popular Culture," 236.
[495] Goldman, "Love in the Stacks," 5.
[496] Vassiliki Veros authored an article investigating the enormity of cataloguing problems for romance fiction. Subject headings, for example, are not simply a matter of shelving location but of patron access. He demonstrates that insufficient and inconsistent cataloging practices also affect acquisition of new resources, budget allocation, awards and compensation given to author, and inaccurate reporting of circulation data. These problems are cyclical and reinforcing. See, "A Matter of Meta: Category Romance Fiction and the Interplay of Paratext and Library Metadata," *Journal of Popular Romance Studies* 5, no.1 (August, 2015):

universities. Goldman makes a plea to romance scholars and the IASPR to develop her core lists more fully and continue to update them annually so that university libraries have a resource to guide them. Librarians Sarah E. Sheehan and Jen Stevens have also documented their work in developing a quick popular romance collection development for George Mason University.[497] In their research, they found several other academic libraries collecting literary scholarship on popular romance novels, but not purchasing the primary texts themselves. This tactic reveals that bias still exists in the treatment of romance as, for example, few academic libraries would consider collecting literary scholarship about Walt Whitman without having at least a few works by Walt Whitman in their collection. If a field of scholarship is important enough to necessitate scholarship about it, then it is important enough to include both the primary sources and secondary sources. There is good news too in that the Library of Congress now supports and encourages popular romance which helps mitigate their reputation as "fringe or not appropriate for scholarly study."[498] It may not be feasible for collections to be comprehensive but the collection development deserves to be deliberate and include not just donated novels but also manuscript papers of writers, journal articles, and texts about the histories of publishers, artists, and others involved in the reading and production of popular romance. Universities can make building a romance collection more manageable by specializing and then collaborating across institutions; in this way,

[497] Sarah E. Sheehan and Jen Stevens, "Creating a Popular Romance Collection in an Academic Library," Journal *of Popular Romance Studies* 5, no.1 (August, 2015): 5.
[498] Sheehan and Stevens, "Creating a Popular Romance Collection," 6.

breadth and depth in representation across subgenres, time periods, and authors can still be achieved.[499]

So far, primary source collections of popular romance are still rare enough to name: Hoover Library's Nora Roberts Center for American Romance at McDaniel College in Maryland, Bowling Green, George Mason, the Romance Fiction Collection (primarily contemporary fiction by authors from Australia and New Zealand) at the University of Melbourne Library, and University of Melbourne Library in Australia, and a Romance Publicity collection, The Vivian Stephens Collection, and the Frank Kalan Romance Cover Art Collection are all at the Ray & Pat Browne Library for Popular Culture Studies at Bowling Green State University. Hoppenstand summarizes that "the point is that for popular culture studies to grow, there must be established collections of popular culture materials to support this growth. I do not believe that it is accidental that the two major centers of popular culture studies in the American Midwest—Michigan State University and Bowling Green State University—also feature two of the finest libraries of popular culture. And, when these libraries are at last celebrated for their many accomplishments, it's an additional cause for rejoicing."[500] The Nurse Romance Novel collection at UW-Milwaukee has begun to garner some attention, too. It was cited in Sheehan and Stevens' 2015 article "Creating a Popular Romance Collection in an Academic Library," which appeared in the *Journal of Popular Romance Studies*. So how do we continue to "rejoice" in our collection?

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[499] Library of Congress subject headings and the lack of a literary genre sections in academic libraries make browsing difficult and limit discovery in OPACs. Sheehan and Stevens' suggest some cataloging procedures that universities would need to agree upon to ensure that their coordinated collections were still mutually discoverable see, "Creating a Popular Romance Collection," 6-10.
[500] Hoppenstand, "Collecting Popular Culture," 237.

Rejoicing, Promoting, and Teaching with the Nurse Romance Novel Collection at UWM

Fletcher argues that, "as with any emergent field, the classroom is one of most important sites for mapping the parameters of popular romance studies, identifying and defining its key concepts (most importantly 'love'), and for determining theoretical frameworks and methodologies. One of the guiding principles of the scholarship of teaching and learning is that the classroom functions as a 'site of inquiry' for students and teachers."[501] I believe that library collections are an extension of classrooms. The UWM Archives and Special Collections departments are notably proactive in collaborating with faculty and promoting their collections. These departments have policies that prioritize access and staff members who foster a culture of outreach, collaboration, and service. The Special Collections department also has an incredibly active social media presence that functions as an educational platform, collaborates with the Digital Collections and Initiatives Department to bring resources online, and hosts more than seventy instruction sessions each semester.

When classes visit the department for instruction sessions, the current Head of Special Collections, Max Yela, emphasizes "I collect these things for you. I want you to treat this like your lab. We are not a museum and I don't put these items behind glass because I want you to see them, touch them, even smell them." When students see sixteenth century books next to comic books from the 1980s and are allowed to look through them they get curious and excited—even if some won't admit it. But access to

[501] Lisa Fletcher, "The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Popular Romance Studies: What is it, and why does it matter?" *Journal of Popular Romance Studies* 3, no.2 (June, 2013): 4.

primary sources doesn't automatically foster learning. To support, enhance, and collaborate in the educational, research and service activities of the university librarians and archivists need to have a teaching mindset and familiarity with their collections that enable them to design inquiry-based learning activities. This mindset is common among the instructional librarians at UWM but not yet universal at academic institutions. The Special Collections department has several collections of popular culture materials and staff that are excited to help faculty and students alike make connections between these materials and courses from any number of disciplines. My own analysis has shown that these novels contain content that can serve much more than just women's and gender studies courses.[502]

The Nurse Romance Novel collection can be used to teach not just about a particular moment in history but to help develop historical literacy. Educators already encourage the use of primary source analysis as a way to develop interpretative practices on the belief that through active engagement in "doing history" as opposed to just reading about, students are able to integrate theory more naturally. In my view, using artifacts and documents of popular culture as primary sources takes this a step further, by providing unexpected elements and challenging students to question how some sources become naturalized as authoritative or legitimate while others do not. Historians Sandwell and Lutz explain,

> "Researchers and theorists in the field of history education tend to share a conviction that, because history essentially is a dialogue among people about the interpretation of evidence left over from the past, then history education must, to be effective, at the very least introduce students to what history is by inviting

[502] For example, imagine using *Border Nurse* to deepen classroom discussions about the intersections of immigration, migratory work, agriculture, and labor activism in a history course, a business course, or an international studies course.

> them to participate actively in the process or practice of what doing history involves."[503]

Sandwell and Lutz go on to argue, however, that teaching evidence-based critical inquiry is not enough alone because studies have shown students will revert back to the easiest method of obtaining historical facts, interpretations, and opinions even after practicing document analysis.[504] Educators need to continually stress that history is not about "resolution and coherence" but about "juxtaposing conflicting and even contradictory materials" and allowing interpretation to be a dialogical process of diverse perspectives.[505] The Nurse Romance Novel Collection is an ideal set of historical documents that provide contradictory representations of many recent historical issues. That they are entertainment fair of a popular nature adds to their complexity and the commonly held view that romance novels are trashy will incite curiosity on the part of students. I believe fostering this curiosity is key. A playful research ethic goes against the usual academic demands of productivity and efficiency but the benefits are that students find sources that resonate with their own interests and make connections across unlikely sources.

So much of what undergraduates are taught about research at the library is about harnessing the power of technology to develop accurate and efficient search strategies. First year orientations and class visits to the library focus on bibliographic and database instruction, never mind the fact that numerous studies on student search behavior reveal that with or without these information literacy sessions students don't

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[503] Ruth Sandwell and John Sutton Lutz, "What Has Mystery Got to Do with It?," in *Pastplay: Teaching and Learning History with Technology*, ed. Kevin Kee (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2014), 26.
[504] Sandwell and Lutz, "Mystery," in Kee, *Pastplay*, 25-31.
[505] Sandwell and Lutz, 30-31.

start their search process on library websites or using specialized search tools, opting instead for simple keyword search on search engines and switching to a library databases only if they can't find what they want.[506] Technology enables us to search for information in a programmatic fashion, providing ordered and supposedly relevant results.[507] But Stephen Ramsay argues that as beneficial as search technology is, a lot can be lost by no longer browsing—"screwing around" as he call it. He argues "we are being encouraged to have a purposive experience when we are perfectly happy having a serendipitous one."[508] Web browsers, Google Books, and online public access catalogs (OPACs) search existing networks of associations and therefore limit "your roaming intellect…Seek and you shall find. Unfortunately, you probably will not find much else."[509] Like Ramsay, I see this as more than just a resource discovery issue; by controlling our search process, technology upholds academic orthodoxies by resisting "a hermeneutics of screwing around," and by promoting the discovery of what Roland Barthes called "readerly texts" over "writerly texts."[510] Certainly, neither Google nor Search@UW will provide a student with a nurse-themed romance novel in response to a query about the experiences of nurses in World War II.

I believe Ramsay's concerns can be applied to the work of academic librarians and archivists. Distill his theoretical and pedagogical concerns and we can apply them

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[506] Marcus Ladd, "Access and Use in the Digital Age: A Case Study of a Digital Postcard Collection," *New Review of Academic Librarianship*, 21 (2015): 228. https://doi-org.ezproxy.lib.uwm.edu/10.1080/13614533.2015.103125

[507] Stephen Ramsay, "The Hermeneutics of Screwing Around; or What You Do with A Million Books, " in Kee, *Pastplay*, 111-120. Ramsay also argues that technological search systems repeat past endeavors to create guides/canons of literature, which promote fallacies about out human knowledge and history.

[508] Ramsay, "Screwing Around," in Kee, *Pastplay*, 115.

[509] Ramsay, 118.

[510] Ramsay, 118-119.

to daily practices in libraries. The more librarians emphasize efficient search strategies to students, the less we encourage critical thinking, play, and discovery. Working with primary sources requires willingness on the part of both student and professor to forego approaches to research that set specific goals from the outset. To paraphrase Johan Huizinga, play is unstructured and begins with purposelessness. We can encourage a "ludic sensibility" with historical research.[511] To teach historical thinking as a dialogical process that promotes diverse voices requires students have unstructured playtime with primary sources; the serendipitous discoveries arising from that process become an invitation to investigate and from there students can formalize their research. My own work benefitted from this process but I recognized early on that there were simply too many avenues I could not explore. The Nurse Romance Novel collection deserves more attention than one scholar can give it.

The Nurse Romance Novel collection is rightly held in the Special Collections department where it can be preserved. But the department is physically separated from other parts of the library and because the shelves are not browse-able, patrons often don't know how to find resources. Students don't always know that there are cool and diverse primary source resources at their disposal (for research or personal interest) until they see them in person or online. And, a lot of faculty and staff are only familiar with those collections they've already incorporated into their course instruction. Faculty and students alike need to be made aware of how the novels might fit with their academic programming. In other words, the collection needs a robust promotional campaign and outreach to both the campus and the growing community of romance

[511] Kee, introduction to *Pastplay*, 4.

scholars; I seek to send the message that we want scholars working with this collection! So, I proposed to create a digital exhibition.

Angels and Handmaidens: Beyond Nurse Stereotypes, a Digital Exhibition

Digital exhibits serve a number of purposes: they advertise the arrival of new donations, increase awareness of existing primary source collections, and can provide instructional support by creating online content and context. They are one strategy to get students, many of whom are *digital natives* and thus more comfortable with that medium, interested in primary sources. Digital exhibitions make primary sources manageable and approachable by curating select resources and providing a particular lens by which a novice researcher can begin to understand the materials. Their limited scope also avoids causing information overload, which as one digital humanities scholar has lamented is "now a hazard of the humanist's job."[512] Fragmented collections or seemingly disparate resources within a collection are reunited or brought together in the digital environment, which can open up new possibilities for discovery and interpretation. And, as David Berry argues "they point toward a new way of working with representation and mediation, what might be called the digital 'folding' of reality, whereby one is able to approach culture in a radically new way."[513] My own digital exhibition project is humble and will not incorporate some of the fascinating and fancy features that make digital humanities such an innovative approach to research, but it nevertheless provides unique perspectives through the curation of resources that span

[512] Little, "We Are All Digital Humanists Now," 353.
[513] David Berry, "The Computational Turn: Thinking About the Digital Humanities," *Culture Machine* 12 (2011): 1. Sussex Research Online. http://sro.sussex.ac.uk/id/eprint/49813/.

time, function, and format. (I'm well aware how awkward this sounds, started to lose it here because I used to have a huge section on digital humanities theory)

The exhibition compliments my thesis work but proposes lines of inquiry that are beyond the scope of this paper. It juxtaposes primary printed sources that document the rise and development of American nursing issues, practice, and education during the twentieth century with works that feature nurses and nursing as subjects of popular culture, such as children's career-fiction series, biographies and memoirs of nurses, and of course, the nurse-themed romance novels. The exhibition raises questions about the role mass media and popular culture play in influencing our understandings of both the past and the present, most particularly in relationship to stereotypes and archetypes about nurses and nursing. By juxtaposing fictional representations of nurses with educational and professional resources of nursing, the exhibition offers touch points between fiction and reality.

The first thing that I determined was the type of exhibit I sought to create. Exhibitions do more than display objects or convey ideas; they also seek to affect the viewer. The most common types of exhibitions and effects are: aesthetic, emotive, evocative, didactic, and entertaining.[514] Most didactic exhibitions teach their viewers about a particular topic. While this thesis does review much of the common body of knowledge on American mass-market publishing history, American nursing history, and romance novels, my aim is not to transmit subject knowledge and I chose to limit that content significantly. Instead, I aim to provide just enough historical context on those topics that viewers can confidently navigate the exhibit while encouraging them to

[514] Kalfatovic, *Creating a Winning Online Exhibition*, 3.

generate their own questions on those themes and to think about their inter-relationships. It serves as a demonstration of how to begin primary source research by drawing attention to certain themes and providing initial questions to prompt further critical inquiry. For example I suggest that viewers consider the ideology of nursing as an unstable construct that is informed by both sources from nursing education and mass media portrayals. By placing narrative and non-narrative sources related to nursing together I emphasize the interplay between formal institutional structures and popular culture. I hope to spark the same type of playful curiosity I felt when I first encountered these resources—the type of curiosity that creates a desire to explore more!

This strategy avows my own teaching perspectives, center learners over content and the prior knowledge that students bring to their learning. This "developmental perspective" sees the educational goal as encouraging in learners an "increasingly complex and sophisticated ways of reasoning and problem solving within a content area or field of practice."[515] The goal then is to present viewers of the exhibit with possibilities and resources that challenge their way of thinking and to allow them to construct their own understandings about the content rather than being able to reiterate my understandings of it. What I find useful about this perspective is that it acknowledges that viewers have prior knowledge to draw on as they engage with the exhibition and by encouraging them to rely on prior knowledge, new learning becomes more impactful and transformative. If the exhibition is used as part of an instructional session or

[515] Daniel D. Pratt, "Good Teaching: One Size Fits All?," *New Directions for Adult & Continuing Education* 2002, no. 93 (Spring 2002): 8. https://doi-org.ezproxy.lib.uwm.edu/10.1002/ace.45.

assignment for a course, each student will bring different understandings to bear on the discussions that follow. By asking viewers to engage the content with open-ended questions, there are no wrong answers. Viewers are not given one historical perspective but asked to consider many and develop their own.

The Special Collections department is valued on campus and visited frequently, but only by classes in a few departments—art, art history, history, urban studies, architecture, women and gender studies. The most used resources represent a very small portion of the collections—book arts, facsimiles of medieval manuscripts, periodicals that document local history. Students and faculty are missing out on the breadth of knowledge staff have on vast and diverse collections. Primary resources related to popular culture might excite students and activate their prior knowledge in new ways. As my deep analysis of a select few nurse romance novels demonstrated, the topics and themes covered are incredibly diverse. I envision the possibility of collaborating with faculty in many departments to create instructional sessions with the Nurse Romance Novel collection including: African and African Diaspora Studies, American Indian Studies, Art History, Comparative Ethnic Studies, Global Studies, History, International Human Resources and Labor Relations, International Studies, Journalism, Advertising and Media (JAMS), Nursing, Public Health, Sociology, Urban Studies, and Women and Gender Studies. In the digital exhibition, I strive to highlight some of the elements that relate to these disciplines to demonstrate the instructional capacity of the collection. I hope that when viewers interact with the exhibit they will come visit the department and engage more deeply with the collection and identify connections to other resources that are not within the exhibit. But more than this, I hope

to demonstrate that serious research can be playful, that research topics can come from unexpected sources, and that cultivating curiosity is a vital component to teaching and learning.

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