

BRIDE OF WICKED SCOTSMAN AS A POPULAR NOVEL: A LACANIAN PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract: Popular literary work is produced with significant conventions that attract readers' attention, and it is influenced by society's dynamic culture. Readers become the important aspect when it comes to analyzing popular fiction due to its determinant value based on the quantity of readers. Besides, readers' choice of reading is considered to have an interrelation with their unconsciousness. This research aims to find out and elaborate the use of formula found in *Bride of A Wicked Scotsman* and describes how the formula used in the novel can fulfill the readers' 'lack.' This research is a qualitative one and employs formula analysis to identify character and plot conventions. It is found that *Bride of A Wicked Scotsman* implements Harlequin-romance formula along with some modernistic inventions. In order to relate the formula with the fulfillment of readers' 'lack' upon the romance reading, psychoanalytic approach is used. This results in noting down several convictions that help describe how readers' lack is fulfilled by the attractiveness, balanced identity, passivity, and eroticism presented in the novel. In conclusion, the popularity of *Bride of A Wicked Scotsman* is verified by the use of formula and its potentiality to fulfill readers' lack.

Keywords: romance fiction, formula analysis, psychoanalysis, Lacan, popular literature

INTRODUCTION

Popular culture is basically backed up by what is currently ventilated within society. Likewise, the basic principles of popular art are to be interesting, accessible, familiar, and reflective of society's daily life (White, 1972). Besides those characteristics, popular art is concerned with the quantity of devotee who claims responses by either relishing the work of it or spreading the enjoyment to others. Thus, this culture is alternatively known by mass culture. The development of popular art tends to change during particular periods yet maintains its uniformity as long as desired by society, and these qualities are found in literary works.

The rise of popular literature which is credited to the reader's satisfaction provides a systematic pattern to keep the similarity of the works. Cawelti (1976) acknowledges this by using the term 'literature formula' and defines it as structural narrative or dramatic conventions which are employed in massive individual works and adjusted with cultural properties. He then elaborates that formula construction is straightforwardly based on enjoyment and escape demands pursued by readers. In terms of popular culture, readers are perceived as the selector of literary formulas to keep surviving and evolving as cultural products (Cawelti, 1976). Some fiction formulas which are popular among readers, such as adventure, romance, mystery, melodrama, and alien beings, have their own distinctive features. *Bride of A Wicked Scotsman* novel is surely no exception.

This novel is written by Samantha James along with the other two books in its trilogy published by Avon Books. It has got New York Times Bestseller label in 2009. The novel collects positive feedback from the audience, mostly woman readers, and achieves a score of 3.72 out of 5 with 769 ratings in total (Goodreads, 2021). According to romance categories mentioned by Cawelti (1978), this novel is included in Harlequin-type romances in which the protagonist portrays moral compliance and perceives sex before marriage as wrong. The construction of the story follows the romance literary form of deploying the protagonist's feminine point of view (Cawelti, 1976).

Society finds popular roman stories really addictive, and so does the reader of *Bride of A Wicked Scotsman* in specific. Out of the three series, this book is the only one entitled with the bestseller notion. Thus, it is speculated that it sells more copies than do the rest. Along with its popularity, the book has received some comments displaying the reader's satisfaction with the plot and the character. One of the comments found in Goodreads is written by Fae (2021), and the commentator states:

i really enjoyed this one! [...] i am glad that Maura actually had the conscience to feel guilty after tricking Alec, that makes her a better heroine in my eyes. if she didn't feel guilty, i would have given this book a much lower rating.

It can be concluded that the reader's satisfaction emerges from how the book can fulfill the reader's expectation, demand, and desire. Based on that premise, one question is proposed: How do elements in the romance formula found in *Bride of A Wicked Scotsman* fulfill the reader's lack of desire? Thus, the objective of this study is formulated as follows: (1) to examine the kind of romance formula used in the novel provided and (2) to describe the fulfillment of the reader's lack of desire carried through in this romance novel.

The production of popular literary works is interrelated with the massive demands of entertainment from society. The requests concern much about psychological needs to escape from those which the readers lack of, and these are provided in the reading of romance novel. It is certainly important to note that romance novels are meant to build the realms of escapism for the readers. This presumption is based on the fact that romance novel selling is really striking and said to be really precise in acting out the term 'entertainment industry' it deals with (Gelder, 2004). Therefore, this discussion is necessary to be elaborated further in order to unveil the reader's psychological contribution to the romance novel's popularity, and this somehow marks the importance of this study.

Romance popular fiction is defined as a work that narrates a story about courtship and betrothal of one or more heroines (Regis, 2003). This kind of fiction has started to penetrate the market in the 1920s and has been associated with the leading mass-publishing house, Mills and Boon and followed by Harlequin in the 1940s. Cawelti (1978) mentioned that Harlequin had produced more than 2000 titles by 1977, and romance titles like *Wicked Loving Lies*, *Bought for Greek's Revenge*, *Punishment of a Vixen*, *The Temptation of Tortilla*, etc. had been sold in millions of copies. With this flabbergasting fact, it concludes that the romance genre successfully catches the reader's attention. Also, this leads to the necessity of identifying several reasons that cause the successful selling to take place.

Gelder (2014) admits this is due to the implementation of rules and formulae depicted in the stories. These conventions frame the way how the stories are delivered to the readers over centuries. Any kind of specific romance genre naturally starts the opening with the situation in which the heroine being engaged to a demanding quest, and a bit much later, the heroine will run into the charismatic and wealthy hero. After having confessed the admiration one feels for another, the problem is created to split them, but it functions to glue the bond like never before. In the last stage, after conquering the obstacles, the heroine and hero decide ways for a marriage to happen (Cawelti, 1978). Since putting the heroine as the main character is what a romance novel is all about, the story centers on the woman's view of how the world works and how happiness is defined. Thus, romance fiction is comprehensively associated with the term 'woman's novel'.

The attachments of women's values, such as preference, desire, and need for reading romance fiction, are considered important and visible when it comes to a culture of the society (Juhasz, 1988). According to Cawelti (1978), romance conveys two issues that are traditionally linked to women's experience, namely the ambiguities of a woman's identity in society and the tension of dependency toward a man. The formulaic structure of the romance novel resolves those issues by generating an ultimate balance of being able to depend on her partner without violating her personal accomplishment in order to secure her identity. This balance produces the normalcy and desirability of self-fulfillment carried out through the intimate bond of the heroine and the hero (Johnson, 2010).

Juhasz (1988) claims that the happy ending setting which the reader acquires when reading romance fiction is the culmination of preoedipal experience. On the one hand, this experience views romance as a replication of the mother-infant matrix with the bond of writer-reader interaction (Juhasz, 1988). On the other hand, that kind of relationship indicates that the existence of the writer becomes vital in the discussion and belongs to the Freudian phenomenon. Therefore, this study needs another approach which highlights the involvement of the reader. In relation to the trait of popular work, the Lacanian perspective provides a method to inspect the reader's contribution to shape or even develop the romance fiction convention through concepts such as necessity, demand, and desire.

Lacan (cited in Faruk, 2020) asserts that a subject suffers a 'lack' as it is believed that the subject is a part of bigger and more primordial fragments. This lack is inherently formed through the separation between an individual with the presence of a mother which is appointed as the libidinal object of the individual. The urge to fulfill this lack in order to create self-reconstruction consists of desire which is directed to some ideal representations of loved objects. Lacan believes that the search for this representation will be permanently impossible to accomplish. To sum up, Lacan's theory perceives human unconsciousness always suffers lacks or feels there is something lost that steers the individuals to look for ways in coping or covering that lack to form their true identities. Specifically, Juhasz (1988) affirms that women have greater difficulty to achieve primary requisites for self-identity since they are mothered by other women themselves who are also socialized in a culture that denies authenticity and agency to women.

METHOD

Based on the statements above, this research employs the Psychoanalysis approach to identify and describe readers' psychological drives that intrigue them to read romance novels. Lacan's theory stresses the relationship between desire and subjectivity in a literary text. As stated before, it perceives human's unconsciousness always suffers a 'lack,' and 'desire' is created to complete what is felt missing in order to obtain a genuine identification of self. In other words, psychoanalysis is operated to describe the relationship between literature, act, motive, and presence of the text in relation to readers as a part of society (Kaplan, 1990). Moreover, Adi (2016) states that popular fiction can hardly produce meaning if it dismisses the readers' unconsciousness as meaning can be distinguished through the imaginary construct.

This research is basically categorized as a qualitative study and a textual analysis. This investigates how *Bride of A Wicked Scotsman* novel can be labeled as a popular literary work and how the implementations of the romance formulation complete the lack of readers. It also identifies what kind of romance formula is used in *Bride of A Wicked Scotsman* by employing the romance formula modeled by Cawelti (1978). Therefore, this research also falls into formula analysis, and it complements the use of psychoanalysis mentioned earlier to construct complete and logical research about the novel in question. The primary data of this research is the *Bride of A Wicked Scotsman*, whereas the secondary data includes factual information taken from written articles, books, audios, videos, and other forms of relevant data. The data taken from the novel are classified into the description of characterization and the plot of the story in terms of romance formula, while the signification of the external data is shown into several distinctive points.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This part divides the outputs of the research into two outlines which are in accordance with the number of research questions determined earlier. The first part covers the findings concerning the romance formula used in *Bride of A Wicked Scotsman* and the inventions it makes to justify the demands from the society, while the other focuses on describing the investigation results of using Lacan's theory to correlate the demands of the society with the concept of lack and desire provided by the novel in question. Two discussions employ the excerpts from the novel to show some pieces of evidence to legitimize the phenomena of lack and desire found in the novel and to identify the improvement of the romance formula used.

JUSTIFIED ROMANCE FORMULA

Bride of A Wicked Scotsman narrates a story about a woman named Lady Maura O'Donnell who promised her father to recover the Circle of Light that is stolen by Black Scotsman. She tricks the pirate's descendant, Alec McBride, into marriage and does everything to get the gem back. It consists of 21 chapters and uses the heroine's as well as the hero's point of view. The story focuses on the efforts done by Maura to make her family gains the prosperity which they have had before. Realizing that Maura does him wrong, Alec cannot hate her but help her instead. Finally, they get married once again and live happily ever after with their two children.

The main characters have basic values of characteristics in romance fiction. The hero is described as a handsome and tall man with blue crystal eyes and black hair. Not only does Alec have perfection in terms of appearance, but also he is known as a wealthy Duke. Meanwhile, the heroine lives a poor life but is pictured with beauty on her face and a good posture. This is in accordance with the features mentioned by Cawelti (1976), who states that the formulaic characteristic which readers love the most is the love between a poor girl and a rich or aristocratic man. This kind of formula is famously known as the Cinderella formula.

And then . . . no sound in the world, no image, no words could have prepared her for what she saw next. Lingered near the hall entrance stood a man. And exceedingly tall man. One eye patched, a tartan thrown over one just as exceedingly broad shoulder. (James, 2009: 41)

Cawelti (1976) mentions that sometimes romance contains adventure elements. The purpose of this formula is to challenge and cement the affectionate relationship. In *Bride of A Wicked Scotsman*, this adventure is done with the heroine pursuing the Circle of Light located in the hometown of the hero. The adventure starts from the first very chapter and is accomplished in the last chapter. Although in the beginning, the heroine despises the hero, the feeling changes and somehow leaves the heroine into confusion. She longs for the affection yet feels rage upon the hero. According to Cawelti (1976), a

permanently happy marriage is proposed to end this issue. The second marriage in this story is considered as an invention of the romance formula.

The modern romance formula affirms the essential of monogamous marriage and feminine domesticity (Cawelti, 1976). This novel applies such a formula by focusing the hero to be merely engaged with the heroine since there are no other female characters summoned with the potentiality of ruining their relationship. When it comes to domestic tasks, *Bride of A Wicked Scotsman* describes the heroine as a full-time housewife. The heroine is technically spoiled with the wealth that she benefits from the hero. After the second marriage takes place, the concept of this feminine domesticity is more strengthened in the story when the heroine bears two children, one boy and one girl. Regarding the historical romance type of this fiction, the heroine's value of the domestic characteristic is even more striking because the first child, who is often appointed to inherit the throne, is a boy.

For the plot, *Bride of A Wicked Scotsman* replicates the paths designed by Cawelti (1978). The novel's formulaic order can be traced as follows: (1) Heroine suddenly is orphaned and meets Hero (2) who is a dark and menacing stranger. (3) She dislikes him from the start, but (4) but decides to marry to restore her family's fortune and eventually falls desperately in love. But (5) she is a poor waif, not of his class, but (6) she loathes to spoil such true bliss, and (7) they live happily ever after. These formulaic paths mold the narration of this romance novel in the same exact way, but with a little improvisation.

The decision to marry the hero does not technically give a direct impact on the heroine's family fortune. The heroine gets married to him only to have access to look for the Circle of Light that can bring back prosperity to her family because the gem is hidden somewhere in the area where the hero lives. Cawelti (1978) mentions that a circumstance will appear to conspire the separation between the two characters, and it sometimes involves elements of suspicion, mystery, or unfaithfulness. In *Bride of A Wicked Scotsman*, it is the element of suspicion that temporarily halt the desire which the hero has toward the heroine. The hero suspects the heroine as a gold-digger due to her attitude that tends to avoid the romanticism that the hero initiates.

In the final stage, the confession of the heroine and hero takes place in places like caves, dark forests, twilight graveyards, midnight beaches, or in the daylights, in private and ordinary places (Cawelti, 1978). This formula is executed in *Bride of A Wicked Scotsman* by having the private place where the heroine and hero share their intimacy. However, right after the misunderstanding is resolved, the heroine decides to leave the hero by himself. This is similar to what is mentioned by Cawelti (1978), stating that there is another misunderstanding that threatens the lover to be apart once again, and they loop to finally resolve the final misunderstanding for the last time.

And when it was over, he dragged her against him and held her tight, his beloved lady pirate. He captured her, bringing her fast against his side, reluctant to release her. Long into the night he held her, until exhaustion claimed him and he slept.

And in the morning when he woke . . .
She was gone.

On the pillow was a note . . . and the family wedding ring he'd placed on her finger. Disbelieving, his jaw tight, Alec read: [...] (James, 2009: 348)

THE CONTRIBUTION OF LACK

Popular literary work often deploys existing formulas but still manages to justify the current phenomenon that leads to the inventions of new formulas (Cawelti, 1976). Therefore, society has a huge part in considering which formula can create satisfaction upon reading the popular works. In order to be popular, the novel should display what has become the readers' expectation, demand, and desire. This issue also applies to novel *Bride of A Wicked Scotsman*. After analyzing the whole story *Bride of A Wicked Scotsman* to inspect the romance formula, there are some important points that explain the relationship between the formula used and the popularity of the novel using the perspective of the readers' lack and desire.

Romance fiction is mostly read by women. Brantlinger (1975) acknowledges that romance signals wish-fulfillment and is interconnected with dreams and illusions. Nevertheless, the woman readers have the urge to witness themselves reflected in their choice of fictional reading (Wainger, 2004). When it comes to the hero, Wainger argues that the hero's characteristics should suit him well to create chemistry with the heroine by having irresistible physical features. Fisher (2010) concludes that roman fiction understands that an attractive type of man is what women readers most want. Above all, pleasure for women and men for it

is the result of the reinforcement of the prevailing cultural code (Snitow, 1979). Since a woman feels that it is not easy to be cared for perfectly by another person, women readers find it really pleasing to have a fictive masculine and passionate character in their imagination (Radway, 1983). The hero in *Bride of A Wicked Scotsman* is pictured to have this quality of man, and that makes the woman reader feels satisfied and forget the absence of a perfect companion in their real lives due to whatever reason for a while.

Despite Eileen's prattling on about how the ladies flocked to him, he was nothing like she expected—yet exactly as she should have expected. [...] Jet-black hair tumbled over his forehead. It deeply emphasized the contrast between the pale blue of his eyes and the pitch-blackness of his hair. A patch covered one eye, and only served to heighten the aura of danger he exuded. (James, 2009: 58)

Besides enjoying the figure of the lovable hero in the story, readers who read a popular romance novel find escapism through its plot in which the heroine is indulged with clear-cut identity and personal accomplishment through the balance that the story offers. This balance completes the lack that concerns woman's dependency on man's superiority in societal patriarchy tradition (Cawelti, 1976). In the end, this leads to what is meant by subjectivity in Lacan's perspective. The heroine in *Bride of A Wicked Scotsman* owns this kind of balance by having full power to construct conspiracy in order to trick the hero into marriage and take the gem back, but at the same time, she gets the full attention from the hero. Because the heroine is the reader's alter ego (Wainger, 2004), the triumph of achieving the balance somehow fulfills the lack of identity that most woman readers suffer in real life.

[...] She had promised to wear whatever he purchased. She had hurtled herself into this entire predicament of their so-called marriage without any real—perhaps the better word was realistic—ideas into the Black Scotsman's home. She'd known at the outset that she had to tread carefully with regard to husbandly expectation. To wifely duties. (James, 2009: 228)

Radway (1983) admits that romance reading is a claim for psychological needs and a means for fulfilling those needs. One of the calls is an attitude of passivity. When women are responsible for their role as wives and mothers, they need to be active and all-around initiators. In popular romance fiction, the formulaic patterns allow the reader to feel the privilege of getting the recognition of worth by someone who is perfect from head to toe. *Bride of A Wicked Scotsman* represents the heroine with this value of passivity by picturing her as a person who receives compliments from the hero while she believes he is the bad one. The hero has to solve the strange behavior of the heroine by himself but still pours her with attention every woman longs for. The heroine does not make any attempts to solve the misunderstandings because she keeps herself busy accomplishing a quest mandated to her. This passivity is even more highlighted with the notion of heroine's poverty. Modleski (1980) suggests that the satisfaction of reading the passive heroine is due to the desire for vengeance that women used to conceal. Women want to be loved and taken care of in the same way they do to their partners, but sometimes it goes the other way around.

She had hoped, prayed, that he would come. She needed to know that he wanted her. That he needed her as she needed him. That he loved her as she loved him. And the fact that he was here could only mean one thing. (James, 2009, 353)

Another lack that readers pursue to complete when deciding to read popular romance fiction concerns their sexual desires. Cawelti (1978) states that romantic fiction has been paralleled by the elaboration of pornography, and this kind of mixture is considered to be one of the healthiest segments in the publishing industry. In regards to that, (Wu & Walsh, 2005) concludes that women readers are prone to this kind of socialization influence since women are exposed to less motivation to engage in powerful sexual activity. According to them, the romance novel is considered as a medium that provides opportunities to create sexual fantasies of which the outcome is denied to the women reader in the misogynistic culture they live in. Snitow (1979) supports this thought by stating that women find it hard to use pornography as a legitimate literary form or as a legitimate source of pleasure.

Since *Bride of A Wicked Scotsman* belongs to Harlequin romance, it applies the formula in which marriage agreement and erotic scenes are exhibited as well. The story indeed contains marriage planning and some intercourse scenes. First, sexual activity is done to trick the hero into marriage without giving up the heroine's virginity. This book, however, does not keep the heroine and the hero from doing real intercourse before the marriage to indicate how the hero really adores the heroine. It can be concluded that *Bride of A Wicked Scotsman* still tries to promote the importance of conducting marriage as it is one of the

basic features in the romance formula without eliminating sexual scenes that can be manifested by the readers to release their sexuality needs.

He kissed her, slowly at first—oh, so slowly! And then with mounting fervor—with fevered hunger, a soul-blistering kiss that left them both vying for air. (James, 2009: 278)

CONCLUSIONS

Bride of A Wicked Scotsman is considered as a romance fiction that applies some basic features of popular work, although there are some minor inventions found in relation to the formula. Those inventions that include multiple marriage occurrences and having done sex before marriage are perceived as strategies to legitimize the value of its popularity as being a familiar, interesting, and reflective piece of work. Several elements help to make *Bride of A Wicked Scotsman* become one of the best-seller books and explain the reason why the readers decide to read the book. Those elements concern the fulfillment of lack suffered by women readers. Those are represented through the existence of an attractive hero, the balanced identity of becoming a dependent and successful individual, the passivity of the heroine, and some erotic narrations.

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