

## **Fiction and Feminism**

### **Aims**

- To explore the origins of modern romantic love in medieval courtly love
- To investigate whether the text of a modern romance maintains aspects of courtly love by analysis of narrative structure, transitivity, politeness, vocabulary and inferencing
- To use the analysis as a feminist critique of the short story
- To give practice in creative writing of a story reflecting or rejecting in its language the ideology of romantic love

### **Content**

#### **8.0. Introduction: courtly and romantic love**

describes the features of medieval courtly love as the basis of romantic fiction

#### **8.1. Narrative Structure**

analyses the narrative structure of a romantic short story

#### **8.2 Transitivity and ideology**

shows the different degrees of power of the main characters and the importance of behavioural gestures and expressions to the “action”

#### **8.3 Politeness and Verbal processes**

demonstrates the change in the characters’ relationships from the first to the second scene of the story

#### **8.4. Vocabulary and ideology**

shows how the ideology of the story can be detected in names, job titles, and the symbolic lexis for space and verticality

#### **8.5 Metaphor, irony and inferences**

exemplifies the importance of conceptual metaphor, irony and other inferential processes in making sense of the story.

#### **8. 6. Summary: courtly love, romantic fiction and feminist critique**

concludes on the sexism in the story and the token ideology of the “new” woman

### **Project -- a love story**

Writing a short love story for a student magazine, analysing how it adheres to or deviates from the norms of courtly love/romantic fiction

## 8.0. Introduction: courtly and romantic love

Back in the 12<sup>th</sup> century in the south of France there began an ideology of romantic love. It flourished in the Middle Ages under the name of *courtly love* and reached its climax in plays such as *Romeo and Juliet* or more precisely Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*. And it still exists, curiously enough, in watered down form in the romantic fiction much read by young and middle-aged women in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

What kind of ideology of love was this, and how did it position women and men? The important elements of the original courtly love can be gleaned from a typical scenario. A young man, often an adolescent page, would catch sight of a married lady. He would be physically and emotionally overcome by her appearance, and would worship her from a distance, perhaps not making much distinction between her and the Virgin Mary. He would be too timid or overwhelmed to show his love directly, but would go home and fantasise about her, suffering physically, from sleepless nights and loss of appetite, which over the weeks and months would come close to destroying his physical and mental health. When he could bear this no longer, he would finally pluck up the courage to send the lady a letter through an intermediary or confidante, asking for an audience. At the audience he would summon up the will to ask to become her knight, wearing her coat of arms or device on his shield. Before agreeing to this she would send him on some "errands" or tasks in order to prove his love and loyalty. This could be something as drastic as a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in a crusade. He would try to prove his chivalry by fighting in battle for her, perhaps acquiring a wound or bringing back to her a blood-stained handkerchief. After the successful completion of these tasks, which supposedly ennobled him, the lady might accede to his wishes; at least to the extent of allowing him to swear loyalty to her and fight for her in tournaments bearing her arms on his shield or wearing her device. After a long period of probation the page, now ennobled into a knight, might finally be admitted to her sexual favours. End of story.

The main elements which we can extract from this scenario could be enumerated as follows:

- the love was passionate, physical and emotional
- the love was adulterous
- the man subjected himself to the will of the lady
- the lady remained passive, apart from issuing him with orders and tasks
- the carrying out of these tasks ennobled the man
- the consummation of his passion was the end of the story and of his ennoblement.

Because this consummation was a hard act to follow, when courtly love developed later into Romantic love a narrative solution was often the death of the lovers, as in *Romeo and Juliet* where Romeo poisons himself and Juliet kills herself with a dagger. Or, more romantic still, where Tristan tears off his bandages, and Isolde dies of love and grief. The main

difference between courtly love and Romantic love is that in the latter the woman too has strong physical and emotional feelings.

One curious development is the domestication of this kind of passion, the attempt to incorporate it within and reconcile it with marriage. If we look back at the key features of courtly love we can see how much of this ideology of passion modern romance fiction has altered and how much it has preserved. The passion is no longer associated with adultery, and in many cases is assumed to be a good basis for marriage. Since marriage, or at least a steady relationship of cohabitation, is the sequel, the first consummation is not really the end of the story, and there is no need for death – the partners live together, if not happily ever after. What remains of courtly love in modern romance? Perhaps, the idea that men are ennobled or behave with more chivalry when in love, but certainly the emphasis on the physical and emotional nature of this passion, the lustful gaze, the throbbing of the heart, weakness at the knees, the obsessional thinking, if not fantasising about the loved one, the sleepless nights, the love-sickness.

Courtly romantic love is a passion beyond the control of the lovers, or at least of the young man. Like a sickness it is something caught involuntarily, a force similar to gravity which we cannot resist. A “falling” in love. One question is how can such a love be compatible with a long-lasting steady relationship? If we look at the Christian marriage service the couple are asked to promise to love one another. But in courtly love, the passion is not something we have control over; we can fall out of love as quickly as falling into it. Marriage or stable long-lasting relationships demand a different kind of love, where love is an act of the will. In other words, to equate a kind of short-term passionate love which in its origins is adulterous with married love is anomalous if not contradictory. ‘The romantic moment, its [romance’s] central tenet, cannot be reconciled with its promise of eternity’ (MacRobbie 1991:98). Some have seen the Arthurian figure of Guinevere as being destroyed by just such a contradiction (Pearce 1991: 114-5). And yet such is still the staple ideological position of much contemporary popular romantic fiction. And possibly one of the causes of the high divorce rates in modern society.

As we analyse our case study of romance fiction, let’s bear in mind the origins of romantic love in courtly love and see how the story we dissect exemplifies or diverges from them.

### Key

A = Action

ABS = Abstract

C = Coda

E = Evaluation

SA = Speech Act

R = Resolution

O = Orientation

[*Romance*

*in the air*

***Lizzie came to New York full of hopes and wishes for the future. Lieutenant Renard was a hard city cop who had settled for a life of routine ... until Lizzie appeared ABS]***

[Lizzie [seemed out of place E] in the bustling Manhattan police station, her new winter jacket a spot of sunshiny orange in a field of dark blue uniforms O].

[[Even if her dress hadn't identified her as a tourist her face would have E]. A constant smile played around her mouth, and her translucent blue eyes met every stranger [as if they might become a good friend E] O]

[She shook her short fair hair and looked around for Officer Gregory A].

[He'd taken her statement and then gone away 10 minutes before O]. [She watched the hand of the wall clock ticking away the minutes of her first day in New York A].

["[Ms Engel? E]" Officer Gregory finally summoned her to an open door. ["Lieutenant Renard is ready to see you. E]" SA]

[He nudged her through the door and shut it A].

[Lizzie, more used to the wide prairies of the Midwest O], [thought the small dull office resembled a prison cell E]. [She stopped in front of an untidy desk A] [where the lieutenant was scowling down at a document O].

["[How are you? E]" she asked. SA]

["I'm Lizzie Engel from Iowa—" SA]

["I know." SA] [He looked up A] [with a confused interest so sharp E] [it made her blush A].

["[You look like Iowa. E]" SA]

[Lizzie frowned. A]

["[I'm complimenting you, E]" he added and smiled. SA]

["Oh," she smiled, [somehow pleased E]. SA]

[She noticed that his eyes were the colour of the grey tiles on her father's old farmhouse.

Somewhat reluctantly E] [he diverted his gaze from her and back to the document he was reading A].

["I'll just take two minutes to review this and then I'll be with you." SA]

[She nodded then watched him read until he glanced up and noticed her looking. A]

["Wouldn't you like to take a seat? E]" he asked. SA]

["No thanks." SA]

[Her eyes searched the dingy office and found a grill-covered window framing the winter dusk as it descended on the city. She went over and peered between the skyscrapers and just caught sight of the Empire State Building. A] [Though far distant, the landmark tugged at her heart like a very old friend E].

[[For as long as she remembered E] [a model of that building had been on her Mom's dresser, a memory of her honeymoon.

"New York is magic," she'd always told Lizzie. "When you're older and get married, I'd like you and your husband to see the Empire State Building, just like your father and I did."

"So then," little Lizzie had always concluded the story, "I'll live happily ever after, just like you, won't I?"

Her Mom had always nodded and chuckled, and Lizzie had been waiting for ages to visit New York City. O] [But just the previous week as she blew out the 28 candles [like a bush fire E] on her birthday cake, she suddenly became weary of waiting for the right man and made up her mind to go to New York without him. A]

[The drive was a long one alone in midwinter E], [but that city—that building—was pulling her on O].

["I can't understand why." SA]

[Lizzie turned from the view and looked back at the lieutenant. A] [He was holding the stolen-car report Officer Gregory had attempted to make her sign O].

[Lizzie let out a sigh A].

[" [How can I sign a stolen car report, lieutenant, when my car wasn't stolen. E]" SA]

[He spoke [slowly and carefully as if to a child E] SA].

[" [In New York you can't let a stranger sit alone in a car with the engine running and expect to find it there when you get back. He stole it. E]" SA]

[Lizzie puckered her lips. A] [[“He was a kind E] [old man, waiting for his friends to pick him up. O] ” SA]

[“Yeah, really kind. E]” SA]

[Lizzie chose not to notice [the sarcasm E] A]. [[“But his friends were late and he was freezing. O] [He said he’d look after my baggage SA] [as I ran into the cafe to get a coffee . A] ” SA]

[He stared at her. A] [“[You left your baggage in a car with a complete stranger? E] ” SA]

[“[I’m perfectly aware there are people in this city that can’t be trusted. But this wasn’t one of them. E] ” SA]

[“[How do you know? E]” the lieutenant inquired. SA]

[Lizzie looked through the window. A] “[I just know, that’s all. E] ” SA]

[The lieutenant sighed A] [with frustration E]. [“[If you won’t sign this I won’t be able to put out an APB E]” SA]

[“[He didn’t steal the car, E]” she insisted. “[It’s missing E].” SA]

[He closed his lips together. A]

[“[Pets go missing and persons go missing, Miss Engel, but there are no missing cars. They get stolen. E]” SA]

[Lizzie looked back at his serious face, [asking herself if it was the city or the job that had etched that line between his dark straight eyebrows, as if he had spent too long looking at things too close. E] A]

[“[Don’t you trust anybody, lieutenant? Surely there’s someone. E]” SA]

[“[My mother, E]” he grunted softly. “[Occasionally]” SA]

[Lizzie smiled a bit, and when he looked up and noticed, he smiled too, and the anxious line between his brows went away. A]

[“Look, Ms. Engel, [I really want to assist you. But I can’t do a thing if you don’t sign this. E] ” SA]

[Lizzie shrugged her shoulders then started to zip up her jacket. A] “[I apologise for taking up so much of your time today, Lieutenant Renard. E] ” SA]

[His eyes flickered. A] [ “[That’s it? Where are you off to? E]” SA]

[She smiled] [“The Empire State Building”. SA]

[“[But how about your car, your baggage? How will you get home? E]” SA]

[She chuckled and stopped with her hand on the doorknob. A]

[“I’ve got a whole week to worry about that. [I’m certain my car will turn up by then. E]” SA] [She looked back at him and smiled. A]

[Lieutenant Renard stared after her for a long moment, then grabbed the phone from its rest. A] [“Gregory, put an MCR on the Iowa plate in the computer...[you don’t know what an MCR is? E] A missing car report.” SA]

[It was chilly on the observation platform, but it was nine o’clock when Lizzie finally thought of looking at her watch O] [She had to drag her eyes away from the amazing view. It is the most magic place in the world, she felt, remembering her Mom’s words. E]

[She pictured her mother and her father standing in the same place, sharing the amazement that would live with them in their future years. E] [She walked backwards towards the door to the lifts—right into the person coming out. A]

[“Oh, sorry,” SA] [she tottered but felt strong hands steady her by the arms, then she turned her head and looked into Lieutenant Renard’s eyes. A] [He seemed changed now E], [in a long overcoat and the wind tousling his hair O].

[“Hi, Lieutenant.” SA]

[“[We found your car. A]” SA]

[“[Is that so? E] ” SA]

[He scowled down at the concrete under his feet. A]

[“It so happens it was in the car park at another district station most of the day.” SA]

[“I see,” Lizzie nodded, her grin broadening. SA]

[“[It appears you were parked on a double yellow line E], [and a officer going by asked your kind old man to drive off or be booked... A] ” SA]

[He lifted his eyes, A] [and Lizzie noticed [ they weren’t precisely the colour of those grey tiles on the farmhouse after all. They were a more intense blue. E] A] [“He went on driving round the block, hoping you would come out, and [I expect you just missed each other. E]” SA]

[“[It was very nice of you to come up here to tell me. E]” SA]

[“[It’s nothing. E]”SA]

[He moved toward the door and then turned back. A] [“[I expect you’ve had dinner already? E]” SA]

[Lizzie grinned. A] [“[No, I’m famished. E]” SA]

[His whole countenance lightened. A][ “There’s [a good E] place just round the corner. SA]

[He gazed at the panorama, his eyes mirroring the myriad lights below. A]

[“[Hey, isn’t that something?, E]” he whispered. SA]

[Lizzie gazed in the same direction. A] [“[It’s wonderful isn’t it? E]” SA]

[He nodded, then they both leaned on the rail. A]

[“[I’m sorry to leave, E] she sighed. “[Is it this beautiful every time you see it? E]” SA]

[“ [I wouldn’t know, E]” he said. “[It’s my first time. E]” SA]

[“[First time? E] ” she whispered. SA]

“[[Stupid, isn’t it? E] [I’ve been in this city for years O], and it took a woman from Iowa to get me up here. CODA]” SA]

[Lizzie felt him turn to her, with eyes soft on her face, A] [and from deep inside she sensed a small fire kindling into life, something magic, something romantic R].

P. J. Platz *Woman’s World* January 14<sup>th</sup> 1997 pp. 40-41.

In describing the surface features of this short story we’ll take a top-down approach, looking first at the overall narrative structure, considering the importance of Evaluation, the salient narrative clauses, and then quantitatively analysing the patterns of transitivity. We’ll go on to a more interpersonal perspective and examine the patterns of mood/modality, speech acts (Verbal processes) and politeness which help us to discover in some technical detail how the main characters and their changing relationship is constructed. Finally we analyse the oppositions established in the lexis of the story, which lead us into the Pragmatics of inference and symbolic interpretation.

### 8.1. Narrative structure

I have labelled the whole story using basically the categories provided by Labov. However, instead of simply using the rather general label “Complicating Action” we can make a distinction between *actions* on the one hand, which, strictly speaking, are what constitute the narrative clauses, and *speech acts* on the other. This story in particular, and romance fiction in general, is heavily dependent on dialogue. And the “action” of the story is as much a matter of the dialogic tensions created by the cynicism of Renard and the innocent trust of Lizzie and how they are resolved, as it is about material doings.



The first problem we encounter in this analysis is that we may wish to identify two or even three narratives in this story. There is the narrative of how Lizzie used to talk to her mother when she was younger; the narrative concerning the old man and how Lizzie picked him up; and the main narrative that begins when Lizzie is summoned into Renard's office. The first of these "narratives" can be discounted, on the grammatical evidence. The clauses of this passage, which begins 'For as long as she remembered' and ends 'to visit New York' are not in straightforward past or present tense, as are the typical narrative clauses, but are in **past perfect** (or past in past), using the **auxiliary verb** *had*. In addition, the adverb *always* recurs, so that these are habitative actions and speech acts rather than single ones forming a discrete sequence. For this reason I label this whole passage "Orientation", as it provides background to the action of the main narrative.

The clauses involving the old man, do, however, constitute part of the main narrative, although they are narrated to us as part of the dialogue, disturbing the chronology of the story. The sentence which tells of Lizzie blowing out her candles and deciding to go to New York is also a flashback. On my reading it constitutes the first sentence of the Complicating Action, and is significant in terms of romances since, in this genre, the city is where things really happen (MacRobbie 1991:100).

Narrative theorists have made an important distinction between the narrative in its chronological sequence, which is called the *story*; and the actual way these chronological events are presented in the text, which is called the *plot*. If we reconstitute the story from the plot we end up with the following narrative clauses in their chronological order.

1. But just the previous week as she blew out the 28 candles on her birthday cake, she suddenly became weary of waiting for the right man
2. and made up her mind to go to New York without him.
3. {He [the old man] said he'd look after my baggage
4. as I ran into the cafe to get a coffee .
5. (You) she left (your) her baggage in a car with a complete stranger
6. a officer going by told (your) her kind old man/complete stranger to drive off or be booked...
7. and..(you) Lizzie and the old man just missed each other.
8. (He) Officer Gregory (had taken) took her statement
9. Officer Gregory (had) tried to make her sign the stolen-car report
10. and then (had) gone away 10 minutes before}
11. She shook her short fair hair
12. and looked around for Officer Gregory
13. She watched the hand of the wall clock ticking away the minutes of her first day in New York .
14. He [Officer Gregory] nudged her through the door
15. and shut it
16. She stopped in front of an untidy desk where the lieutenant was scowling down at a document

17. He looked up  
18. it [the confused interest] made her blush .  
19. Lizzie frowned  
20. She nodded then watched him read  
21. until he glanced up  
22. and noticed her looking.  
23. Her eyes searched the dingy office  
24. and found a grill-covered window framing the winter dusk  
25. as it descended on the city.  
26. She went over and peered between the skyscrapers  
27. and just caught sight of the Empire State Building.  
28. Though far distant, the landmark tugged at her heart  
29. Lizzie turned from the view  
30. and looked back at the lieutenant.  
31. Lizzie let out a sigh .  
32. Lizzie puckered her lips.  
33. Lizzie chose not to notice the sarcasm  
34. He stared at her.  
35. Lizzie looked through the window.  
36. The lieutenant sighed with frustration .  
37. He closed his lips together.  
38. Lizzie looked back at his serious face,  
39. Lizzie smiled a bit,  
40. and when he looked up  
41. and saw that,  
42. he smiled too,  
43. and the anxious line between his brows went away.  
44. Lizzie shrugged her shoulders  
45. then started to zip up her jacket.  
46. His eyes flickered.  
47. She smiled.  
48. She chuckled  
49. and stopped with her hand on the doorknob.  
50. She looked back at him  
51. and smiled.  
52. Lieutenant Renard stared after her for a long moment,  
53. then grabbed the phone from its rest.  
54. “We found your car”.  
55. She walked backwards towards the door to the lifts—right into the person coming out.  
56. She tottered  
57. and felt strong hands steady her by the arms,  
58. then she turned her head  
59. and looked into Lieutenant Renard’s eyes.  
60. He scowled down at the concrete under his feet.

61. He lifted his eyes,
62. He moved toward the door
63. and then turned back.
64. Lizzie grinned.
65. His whole countenance lightened.
66. He gazed at the panorama, his eyes mirroring the myriad lights below.
67. Lizzie gazed in the same direction.
68. He nodded,
69. then they both leaned on the rail.
70. Lizzie sense him turning toward her, with eyes soft on her face,
71. and from deep inside she sensed a small fire kindling into life, something magic,  
something romantic

Not all these narrative clauses have equal importance for the story and the plot, however. Probably the most crucial ones are 53, 57, 69 and 71. 53 indicates Renard's sudden resolve to accede to Lizzie's unwavering insistence that the car be listed as missing rather than stolen, a kind of agreeing to undertake the courtly lover's task. Incidentally, we note the Upgrading of the verb here, 'grabbed' rather than *took*, a distinctive mark of romance and action fiction (Nash 1990: 48-51). 57 represents the only physical contact between them. Symbolically, of course, he saves her from falling, physically, while she saves him emotionally from the pit of mistrust and cynicism into which he has already fallen. The gender roles are quite clear here, with the man showing physical strength and the woman emotional fortitude.

Another clause which is noticeable is 69, because, exceptionally, it has Lizzie and Renard as joint Subjects. The only other sentences in which there are joint subjects, significantly enough, feature her hypothetical husband, and Lizzie's mother and father:

I'd like you and your husband to see the Empire State Building, just like your father and I did.

She pictured her mother and her father standing in the same place, sharing the amazement that would live with them in their future years.

We infer, I suppose, that at the end of the story the same amazement, transcending time and generation, stays with Lizzie and Renard in their future. The last narrative clause has to be important as it constitutes the Resolution. Once she has this warm feeling of some kind, love or passion, we know the solution to being an unmarried 28 year-old woman is at hand.

I've isolated these few clauses, but for a more thorough-going quantitative analysis we ought to look at the patterns of transitivity in the story.

## 8.2. Transitivity and ideology

To do so we can perform a thorough analysis of the process types represented. There are 98 clauses, all in Active voice, with Lizzie as Subject (Actor, Experiencer, Token, Sayer) and there are 54 for Renard. This difference in numbers reflects the reader's focus of attention on Lizzie, rather than Renard. Given the readership of the magazine, female, American, conservative, 30-50, Lizzie must be the character the ideal reader is asked to identify with.

Close inspection reveals some more interesting patterns. Material processes, we remember, may either have an Affected as Object, traditionally called transitive clauses, or may have no Object, in which case they are intransitive. Of the clauses where Renard is Actor 70% are transitive, but when Lizzie is Actor only 40% are transitive. The significance is obviously that Renard comes across as more powerful: his actions impinge on the environment and people more regularly than Lizzie's (cf. Wareing 1994: 122-126).

Let's look at Lizzie as Actor clauses first. If we discount the clauses in which she acts on herself and her clothing, we are left with only three clauses in which another Thing or Person (underlined) is actually Affected:

as she blew out the 28 candles like a bush fire on her birthday cake

as I ran into the cafe to get a coffee .”

and it took a woman from Iowa to **get** me up here.”

The most significant of these clauses is the last one. For it is a crucial point of the story that Lizzie exerts sufficient influence on a suspicious scowling Renard to take him out of his constricted and poky office, where he spends his days short-sightedly poring over documents, up the Empire State Building for the first time to develop a smiling and trusting appreciation of the extensive views. But this is not really a material act of Lizzie's so much as a spiritual influence. The *get* here is not as literal as in the previous case of getting coffee.

We can analyse the transitive Material process clauses with Renard as Actor in exactly the same way. We can ignore the clauses in which Renard acts on himself, and those clauses which describe him reading documents. But with these set aside, we still have a number of significant clauses which show effective actions which precipitate the narrative outcome. Firstly he has the knowledge of his power to do things for Lizzie, to help her, if only she will co-operate:

I really want to assist you. But I can't do a thing if you don't sign this.

“If you won't sign this I won't be able to put out an APB ”

Then there is the crucial decisive action which leads to the order to put out a missing car report (MCR):

then [Lieutenant Renard] **grabbed** the phone from its rest.

This leads to the police force in which he is an officer recovering her vehicle, perhaps a debased version of the knightly errand on which the courtly lady sends her admirer:

“We **found** your car.”

The need to tell her this news takes him up the Empire State Building, and here the most important symbolic Material process action takes place.

She tottered but felt strong hands steady her by the arms

In contrast with the woman from Iowa, ‘getting him up here’, this steadying is Material, but in so far as it indicates his power over Lizzie, the Affected, the two clauses resemble each other.

The inequality in material power is mirrored when we look at how frequently Lizzie is constructed as an Affected of Material processes and a Receiver of Verbal processes. The general pattern seems to be one in which Lizzie is controlled by how the Empire State Building influences her (‘that building—was pulling her on’, ‘the landmark tugged **at** her heart’), by what her mother and men say to her ( “‘New York is magic,” she’d always **told** Lizzie’, ‘Officer Gregory finally **summoned** her’), and what men do to her ( ‘[Officer Gregory] **nudged** her through the door’, ‘I really want **to assist** you’, ‘she tottered but felt strong hands **steady** her by the arms’.) Renard is physically controlled by other people to a lesser extent, though clearly what Lizzie says to him has a considerable effect on his attitude. It is quite an achievement to ‘get [him] up here’.

Analysis shows just how few of the apparent Material process clauses actually convey actions in which an Actor brings about a physical change to an Affected. Rather, in this kind of story, the emphasis is on the inner life of thought and feeling and the body language which expresses it. Although nothing much happens materially a sense of business is conveyed by the characters’ frequent and intense reactions and responses to the other characters’ utterances.

Indeed, what strikes one immediately about this story and others within this romantic sub-genre is the extent to which **behavioural processes**, that is facial expressions, and looks and glances, constitute the action (cf. Nash 1990: 34-5, MacRobbie 1991: 127, 171) For example, look back at the narrative clauses 17-23, 38-43, and 50-52. Lizzie’s smiles, laughs or grins are mentioned eight times in the course of the story, and she only frowns once. Renard smiles twice, and scowls twice. In part the story is about her smile infecting him,

Lizzie **smiled** a bit, and when he looked up and noticed he smiled too

In the scene on the ESB his dark scowls are lightened under the influence of her smiles and grins.

Of course these facial expressions have to be perceived by the characters so there are many processes of looking. Lizzie has fifteen, and Renard has nine. What is interesting is the nature of the Experience they sense or towards which they direct their gaze. Occasionally Lizzie looks out of the window or peers through the skyscrapers at the Empire State Building, but on the whole her gaze is directed towards the Lieutenant (20, 22, 30, 38, 50, 59, 67). As in courtly love, the visual sense, the lust of the eyes, is crucial to the onset of romantic feeling. However, having the man as the focus of the woman's attention is a reversal of the courtly love situation, where it is the young man's gaze which is directed towards the lady.

Renard, on the other hand, seldom intentionally looks at her specifically, and when he does it is with stares of amazement (34, 52). Only at the end is he shown 'with eyes soft on her face'. The transformation which takes place in his visual perception is obvious enough. A man in his cramped prison cell of an office, mean minded and short-sighted, ends up redeemed:

He **gazed** at the panorama, his eyes **mirroring** the myriad lights below.

### 8.3. Politeness and Verbal processes

One way in which stories such as this strive for, and, perhaps, achieve effect is through **upgrading**--the avoidance of the common core or ordinary vocabulary in favour of the more specific or glamorous word. This is nowhere more evident than in the choice of verbs for the reporting clauses that indicate the Sayer. We have only two occurrences of common verbs of saying : *told* and *said*. The author prefers something more specific: 'called', 'inquired', 'added', 'asked', 'insisted', 'grunted softly', 'whispered', 'sighed'. Along with these are the numerous facial expressions and gestures, the nods, the frowns, the shrugs. The Upgrading of Verbal process verbs and these almost obligatory responses to the other character's utterances achieve two effects. Firstly, as we pointed out, in the absence of real material action they create a sense of busy activity. But secondly, they label speech acts for us and convey the propositional attitude of the speaker. They compensate for the inability of the written medium to directly represent intonation and voice quality, the normal ways of conveying propositional attitude in speech

Propositional attitude is one aspect of the narrative element known as Evaluation.

If we look back at my labelling of the elements of narrative structure, we note how loaded down this short story is with Evaluation, either in the strict Labov sense, which is anything which interrupts the flow of the narrative (the linguistic symptoms of which were listed in unit 1), or in the narrower sense of characters expressing their attitudes. Most of the dialogue is evaluation in one or both of these senses.

In fact, the real psychological plot of this piece hinges on the evaluation of the old man, and of whether he stole Lizzie's car. So although Lizzie is represented as physically weaker, less of an effective Actor in physical terms than Renard, she wins psychologically. This

should emerge when we consider the speech act categories into which the characters' utterances fall.

<i>Speech Act</i>	<i>Expression</i>
Summons	"Ms Engel?" Officer Gregory summoned her to an open door
T Request (I)	"Lieutenant Renard is ready to see you."
P Greet	"How are you?" she asked.
P Introduce	"I'm Lizzie Engel from Iowa—"
IP Dismiss	"I know."
AP Compliment (I)	"You look like Iowa."
Performative	"I'm complimenting you," he added and smiled.
Accept	"Oh," she smiled, somehow pleased.
P Excuse	"I'll just take two minutes to review this and then I'll be with you."
T Offer	"Wouldn't you like to take a seat?" he asked.
IP Decline	"No thanks."
Seek clarification	"I can't understand why."
DG Refuse/account	"I can't sign a stolen car report, lieutenant because my car was not stolen"
DP Advise/criticise	"In New York you don't let a stranger sit alone in a car with the engine running and expect to find it there when you get back"
DP Assert/Accuse	He stole it"
DG Defend	"He was a kind old man, waiting for his friends to pick him up."
DG (Dis)Agree (I)	"Yeah, really kind."
Account/justify	"But his friends were late and he was freezing. He said he'd look after my baggage as I ran into the cafe to get a coffee."
DP	
Criticise/wonder	"You left your baggage in a car with a complete stranger?"
AG Admit	I'm perfectly aware there are people in this city that can't be trusted.
DG Disagree	But this wasn't one of them"
DP Disparage	"How do you know?" the lieutenant inquired.
DG Insist	"I just know, that's all."
P Explain	"If you won't sign this I won't be able to put out an APB"
DG Disagree	"He didn't steal the car," she insisted.
State	"It's missing."
DG Disagree	"Pets go missing and persons go missing, Ms Engel, but there are no missing cars. They get stolen."
DP Accuse (I)	"Don't you trust anybody, lieutenant? Surely there's someone."
Answer	"My mother," he grunted softly. "Sometimes."
S Sympathize	"Look, Ms. Engel, I really want to assist you.
P Account/request (I)	But I can't do a thing if you don't sign this."
P Apologise	"I apologise for taking up so much of your time today, Lieutenant Renard"
Question/Surprise	"That's it?"
Question	Where are you off to?"
Answer	She smiled. "The Empire State Building."

S Advise/ remonstrate	"But how about your car, your baggage? How are you going to get home?"
IP Decline	"I've got a whole week to worry about that" "I'm certain my car will turn up by then"
TL Command	"Gregory, put an MCR on the Iowa plate in the computer..."
IP Reprimand	you don't know what an MCR is?
Inform	A missing car report."

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Key:

P = politeness

IP = impoliteness

T = tact

TL = tactlessness

DG = disagreement

AG = agreement

DP = disapprobation

AP = approbation

M = modesty

S = sympathy

(I) = indirect

The most interesting way in which to approach the psychological movement of this narrative and the changing relationship is in terms of politeness, which, of course includes agreement and disagreement over the old man's honesty or whether the car was stolen. With this in mind we can attempt to label the speech acts, and to allocate letter codes for those speech acts which appear to have some obvious consequences for politeness or lack of it. The letters *P* and *IP* are general labels, but all the other letters refer to the maxims of Leech's Politeness Principle: agreement, approbation, modesty, sympathy and tact, the latter achieved by building indirectness and optionality into the message. (See p. X)

General politeness (*P*) covers speech acts that are inherently polite: greetings, introductions, apologies, accounts/excuses for non-compliance. General impoliteness (*IP*) covers dispreferred seconds. For example we would expect Lizzie's initial greeting and self-introduction (3, 4) to be reciprocated and acknowledged. Instead Renard seems to interpret Lizzie's introduction as an attempt to inform him, but, rather than acknowledging this information, impolitely indicates he has it already (5). Lizzie seems to get her revenge a little later when his offer of a seat, showing Tact, is declined rather than accepted (11). And later still she declines his indirect advice to make plans for getting home.

The atmosphere when they first meet in Renard's office is ambiguous in terms of politeness. Added to the dispreferred seconds we have a number of disagreements over whether the car was stolen or not (22, 28); implied disagreements about whether she should make plans for getting home rather than go off to the Empire State Building (37); several speech acts which indirectly insinuate disapproval of Lizzie's behaviour in leaving her car unattended with the old man (14, 20), and her reciprocal criticism of Renard for having lost trust in humanity. But on the polite side we have an example of approbation, a compliment by Renard (6), albeit he has to label it for us before Lizzie or we recognise it; direct and indirect expressions of sympathy for Lizzie, with accounts / explanations of why he cannot help her



(31, 32, 25); and an apology by Lizzie for having wasted his time (though this may be ironic given her clock-watching and impatience to get to the Empire State Building ).

Their second meeting is altogether different. Lizzie persists with her general politeness with an initial apology and greeting (43, 44), and thanks/compliment later on (51), which Renard acknowledges (52), though for a hint of impoliteness we might interpret Lizzie's "Is that so?" and "I see!" as indirect gloatings over proving him wrong. Renard still appears a little gauche and slightly ungracious in his conceding that Lizzie was right (49) (his scowl indicates this). But at the end he shows that he can swallow his pride and be modestly self-critical (64). He is very polite and shows Tact in offering to take her to eat at a restaurant— in technical terms he makes a pre-offer/request "I expect you've had dinner already", followed by an indirect offer/request "there's a good place just round the corner". The tactfulness is partly conveyed by the indirectness, but especially by loading the pre-offer/request so that refusing is easy for her, by assuming she has had dinner already. Unlike the dispreferred second of declining the offer of a seat in their first meeting, Lizzie accepts the offer of food with alacrity and appetite (54). But perhaps most important, besides the implied agreement or concession that Lizzie had been right in her evaluation of the old man, is their symbolic agreement in appreciating the view (58); and his (indirect) approbation of her having got him up there so that he could enjoy it (66). The sense that she has made him a better man with a healthier, more trusting attitude comes over very strongly in this last speech act of his, and reminds us of the ennobling function in courtly love fictions.

We have seen how the patterns of polite and impolite behaviour change between the first and second meeting, and it is interesting to explore whether similar changes can be observed in the patterns of mood, questions, and modals. Clauses in imperative mood show an obvious pattern. Three clear imperatives, perhaps four, come from the lips of Renard during the meeting in his office, underlining his authoritative work status (9, 31, 40, ?14). In this second meeting there are no imperatives from Renard.

As for interrogatives and questions, Renard has eight in the first meeting. The first four of these (10, 23, 20, 41) are hardly questions at all—and are labelled offer, disparagement, indirect criticism and reprimand. Genuine questions are concentrated towards the end of the first encounter. Though intrusive and persistent, they do show a genuine concern for Lizzie's welfare (34, 35, 37). By contrast, in the second encounter Renard only produces two questions, a tag-question (64), and a very indirect pre-offer/request (53). When we look at Lizzie's questions the pattern is reversed. She has more interrogatives and asks more questions in the second encounter (46, 57, 60, 63).

The significance of this pattern can be found partly in their roles and subject positions: a policeman is entitled, even expected, to ask questions of a member of the public who has come for help. From another point of view, the asking of questions intrudes on **negative face**, the right to remain undisturbed, and can be interpreted in terms of dominance as well as curiosity. Renard is less dominant in the second encounter, and Lizzie clearly more, with the confidence to ask questions, where before she had only managed to pick up clues from his facial expressions. Notice that her questions are largely centred on his experience of the Empire State Building and his reaction to the view. We could infer that she wants to know

whether he has passed the test; does he share her excitement? It was this shared excitement that guaranteed lifelong happiness to her parents, and promises to do the same for her and Renard.

On the evidence of modals, and modal devices like verbs of knowing and perception, the rather dogmatic Renard of the first interview becomes the relatively diffident Renard of the second encounter. He is dogmatic in his generalisation “‘pets go missing and persons go missing, Miss Engel, but there are no missing cars’”, as certain as he can be about his own future behaviour “‘and then I’ll be with you’”. But he is uncertain about who can be trusted, only ‘occasionally’ trusting his mother, and no one else (30).

But, by the time of the second encounter, having had his earlier cynical generalisation proved wrong, he is much more diffident, using modals of cognition, ‘appears’ and ‘expect’, partly because he does not wish to be forced to admit how right Lizzie had been (49, 50). Partly too, in this non institutional setting, he may feel shy and vulnerable about inviting a woman out to dinner, though perhaps not as self-consciously vulnerable as a love-sick page trying to summon up the courage to meet his lady.

“I expect you’ve had dinner already?”

In the interview Lizzie can be just as certain as Renard. She is sure about the need for trust, ‘Surely there’s someone’, her opinions of the old man, ‘I’m perfectly aware.....’, and the fate of her car, conveyed through the dogmatic ‘I’m certain my car will turn up by then’. All these employ modal devices of high probability. The interesting contrast is the generality or universality of the claims made by Renard ‘there are no missing cars’, with the less than universal claims made by Lizzie ‘there are people [i.e. some people] in this city that can’t be trusted’. In this feminine focus on particular experience rather than a masculine striving after generalisations, she relies, stereotypically, on intuition rather than reason: ‘I just know, that’s all’.

In the Empire State Building (ESB) encounter, on the other hand, there is little to say about Lizzie’s use of modality of possibility since the only statements she makes are about her perceptions, feelings and appetites (51, 54, 57, 59) about which she has no doubts. Perhaps this emphasis on inner feelings, longings and sense impressions, along with the not so enigmatic last sentence of the story, help to fit her neatly into the stereotype of the emotional female.

To sum up the changes in politeness and impoliteness, mood and modality between the first interview and the second encounter. In the first interview we have a rather dogmatic, authoritarian Lieutenant Renard, with his subject position institutionally assured, confident in his cynicism and disapproval, unwilling to accept Lizzie’s opinions, and a little gauche in his compliments and social relations, though concerned enough about her welfare to exercise his right to ask questions. In the second encounter he is a more diffident human, grudgingly conceding his mistakes, and sharing her viewpoint, tactfully or hesitatingly offering to satisfy her appetite, as a way of reconstituting trust. Lizzie changes from a rather polite but assertive and critical young woman, insisting on her intuitive personal experience as the touchstone of

judgement, and refusing offers, into the sensitive, gently inquisitive and acquiescent feminine lover.

#### 8.4. Vocabulary and ideology

If we look at the vocabulary in this text we may notice or infer a number of ideologically marked terms, categorisations and oppositions

She suddenly became weary of waiting for the right man and made up her mind to go to New York without him.

The phrase ‘the right man’ betrays a certain view of relationships: everyone has a specific potential partner who is made for them and the only problem is finding this Mr Right or Ms Right. It follows from this that if a relationship hasn’t worked, it is because the other member wasn’t the ideal partner, who is waiting somewhere else, and we just have to shop around until we find them. The notion of the right person is incompatible with the idea that we should stick with less than ideal relationships and through mental discipline and emotional effort make that relationship work. We might think that by going to New York Lizzie actually distances herself from this ideology, but in fact by the end of the story we are reasonably sure that she has found her Mr Right--the ‘the small fire flickering to life, something magic, something romantic’ is a good enough guarantee.

The way people are named in this story is also significant. The narrator consistently calls the female character ‘Lizzie’. This is not only a first name, but also a diminutive form of the name, suggesting a young child. Women’s youth is crucial to their childbearing function, and if they accept this as their main role in life then they can only be flattered to be addressed as girls. It is perhaps not so surprising that Lieutenant Renard ‘spoke slowly and carefully as if to a child’, since the narrator refers to her as if she were. We might infer that her childlike representation integrates with the theme of innocence and trust versus mistrust and cynicism. In contrast with the narrator, Renard is quite formal and correct in the way he addresses her, either as Miss Engel or Ms Engel. Since the ‘Miss Engel’ is inserted into one of his most dogmatic statements ‘pets go missing and persons go missing, Miss Engel, but there are no missing cars’ it might indicate a particularly overbearing or patriarchal attitude at this point of the dialogue. Alternatively, the inconsistency might suggest the author wishes to hedge her bets: she cannot be sure whether her readers dismiss the use of *Ms* as an affectation of feminism or whether they are likely to welcome the abandoning of the practice of labelling women according to their marital status.

By contrast the male character is called by the narrator ‘Lieutenant Renard’, and by Lizzie ‘lieutenant’. Use of the surname gives him an air of maturity, and the rank or title ‘lieutenant’ identifies him by his job and status. We never hear if Lizzie has a job, and, even if she has, she is at present a (sex?) tourist, but Renard’s job seems to define him. He has a relatively high rank and all the business of interaction with his inferior Officer Gregory, and

his rather petulant tone in explaining what an MCR is, construct this man with a ‘serious face’ as a person of power and authority. The critical discourse literature points out that while men are typically defined by job or profession, women are more often placed socially in terms of their family relationships as daughters, wives and mothers, and this story provides a clear example (Fowler 1991: 102)).

The vocabulary describing Lizzie and Renard is significant. Lizzie with her fair hair and orange jacket is associated with lighter and brighter colours. By contrast the police in their dingy office wear dark blue uniforms. Much is made of the colour of their eyes. Hers are ‘translucent blue’. To start with Lizzie perceives his as grey like the grey tiles on her father’s farmhouse, but later, up the ESB, realises they are a deep blue. Renard’s brows too are dark until she agrees to their dinner date when ‘His whole countenance lightened’. I would imagine that the target readership of this magazine is largely white. Perhaps the bright/white v. dark/dingy vocabulary reinforces the racist overtones of white = good, black = evil.

If we look carefully at the patterns of vocabulary we notice that the story explicitly sets up oppositions between constricted and open spaces, and less explicitly between downwards and upwards orientation. The key section runs as follows:

He nudged her though the door and shut it.

Lizzie, more used to the **wide open spaces** of the mid-west, thought the **small dull office** resembled a prison **cell**. She stopped in front of an untidy desk where the lieutenant was scowling down at a document.

Lizzie manages to find a window which gives her a view out of this constriction

and with difficulty, through the grill, catches a glimpse of the Empire State Building. Renard, however, as we first encounter him, is habituated to small distances, ‘as if he had spent too long looking at things too close’.

Many of the Material processes associated with Lizzie are to do with movement through space, whether the ‘long drive’ from Iowa to ‘go to’ or ‘visit’ New York, or running into the cafe to get coffee, or simply walking across the room. She pointedly refuses to sit down. By contrast the Material process verbs associated with the more sedentary Renard are often to do with reading: ‘I’ll just take two minutes to **review** this’, ‘the document he was **reading**’.

Because he spends much of the early part of the story reading Renard’s gaze is generally directed downwards, and it is Lizzie’s presence and behaviour which forces him to redirect his gaze upwards.

He looked **up** with a confused interest

Lizzie smiled a bit, and when he looked **up** and noticed he smiled too

The visit up to the observation floor of the Empire State Building with its ‘amazing view’ is a vertical movement of larger physical and symbolic scope. However nice he was ‘to come **up** here to tell me’, when he first arrived, Renard was reluctant to admit his mistaken suspicions of the old man who Lizzie had helped, and ‘scowled **down** at the concrete under his feet’. It was a little later before he ‘**lifted** his eyes’. Finally of course ‘he gazed at the panorama, his eyes mirroring the myriad lights below’. He is redeemed from his suspicious short-sightedness by Lizzie – ‘it took a woman from Iowa to get me **up** here’.

The Empire State Building represents both distance, in terms of the space opposition, and height, in terms of the up-down orientation. It is the influence which pulls Lizzie to New York, and the symbol of Renard’s renewed faith in humanity, as well as being a subliminal phallic symbol. The theme of lost faith or lost trust is made explicit enough in the exchange:

‘Don’t you trust anybody, lieutenant? Suely there’s someone.’

‘My mother,’ he grunted softly. ‘Occasionally.’

And it is also evidenced in the use of the word ‘stranger’. Lizzie treats all strangers as potential friends: ‘her translucent blue eyes met every stranger as if they might be her next friend’. Renard expostulates with her about her trusting attitude to strangers:

‘You left you baggage in a car with a complete stranger?’

The Empire State Building functions as a phallic symbol in the context of Lizzie’s need to find a sexual partner. (Note that its model sat permanently on her parents’ dressing table!) Her problem is to find him before she gets too old, presumably for child-bearing. The received wisdom seems to be that once past thirty the process of childbirth becomes relatively less safe, so marriage at 28 would still give her time to have the ideal two children before she is out of her twenties. But she will have to be quick about it, and cannot wait any longer for the right man, and so succumbs to the tugging of the building. She has no time to waste in New York, and impatiently ‘watched the wall clock ticking away the minutes of this first day in the city’. The issue of her missing/stolen car still unresolved, she rushes off to the Empire State Building, the New York erection par excellence, not wishing to waste any more time. Once on the observation deck, however, she poses as a lingering image of isolation typical of romance fiction, ‘a single figure against ...a wonderful landscape’ (MacRobbie 1991: 102), and the passing of time becomes relatively unimportant:

It was nine o’clock before Lizzie finally thought of looking at her watch

Renard turns up, of course, and provides the real partner--and, we suppose, eventually the sex of which the building is a symbol. Neither of them has been up there before, and we might interpret this as an indication that they are both virgins.

## 8.5. Metaphor, irony and inferences

Although this carefully constructed story is not a particularly sophisticated piece of fiction, nevertheless it makes considerable inferential demands upon the reader. Of course, some of the inferential aspects of my explanation have been devoted to uncovering latent or subliminal symbolism. We have to know something about Freudian theory, at least in its popularised form, and perhaps some of the avowedly phallic symbolism of tall buildings, especially the lingams of Hindu and Buddhist culture, to make the inference about the ESB as a phallic symbol. The writer may not have intended us to do this.

However, there are points in the narrative where we are expected to make inferences about the symbolic opposition of vertical and horizontal space versus constriction. At one stage Lizzie has already looked out of the window once and caught a distant glimpse of the Empire State Building, and this has set up the opposition between the tiny office and the elevated building. Some minutes later the crucial point of disagreement between Renard and her surfaces in dialogue.

‘I’m perfectly aware there are people in this city that can’t be trusted. But this wasn’t one of them’

‘How do you know?’ asked the lieutenant.

Lizzie looked through the window. ‘I just know, that’s all’.

At this point we are invited to infer that she sees the building and this reinforces her trust in human nature and faithful relationships.

Part of the ESB symbolism depends upon, not Freud, knowledge of whose theories we may not be able to count on in a conservative middle-aged female American readership, but on the more universal conceptual metaphors or **root analogies** which are encoded in the English language (Goatly 1997: chapter 2). For example, when we are told that, at the positive response to his dinner invitation, Renard’s ‘whole countenance lightened’, we actually plug into two or three of these root analogies. EXCITEMENT = COLOUR, SERIOUS = HEAVY, HAPPY = UP. Lizzie brings colour, and presumably excitement into Renard’s dingy life and office, lightening his face and using her smile to make the dark line on his brows disappear. But the Empire State Building is one of the tallest buildings, and obviously by going up there they achieve happiness, and avoid the heavy responsibilities of Renard’s working day world. The open spaces are also a powerful metonymy or metaphor for freedom, FREEDOM = SPACE TO MOVE. Part of the problem of Renard’s prison cell attitude is his inability to see far, either into the future, or to grasp the whole picture, stuck as he is into the details-- to understand this symbolism we tap into the analogy UNDERSTAND = SEE.

Not all the inferences are simply related to the understanding of metaphors and symbols. Inferencing is sometimes quite mundane, where we interpret in the light of information given before. An inferential process is needed, for example, to work out the consequences that the narrative has for the debate over trust versus cynicism. When Renard tells that the police found her car and that it was sitting in the district and that he supposed that Lizzie and the old

man just missed each other, this does not, on the face of it, count as conceding defeat for cynicism at the hands of trust. But if we supply information from earlier in the story, we recognise this as an indirect concession of defeat.

In some cases the genre will be crucial in giving guidance. What, are we supposed to infer, is Lizzie's motive, for example, in picking up the old man? Is her sexual frustration so strong that she wants to take the first man who presents himself, whatever his age? Or is this an indication of her helpful and generous nature, an attitude to life which she brings from her relatively rural background? The genre and the nature of the magazine in which we find the story makes the second inference much more plausible.

Lastly, we might think of the choice of surnames in the story, since these tend to produce rather weak allusive implications. Both would appear to be the names of white people. Renard has something of a French faded aristocratic ring. *Engel*, German for "angel" suggests Christmas, given the midwinter setting, the importance of lights, and Lizzie's fair hair.

## **8.6. Summary: courtly love, romantic fiction, and feminist critique**

To begin our summary we can reconsider the main features of courtly love which we laid out in the introduction, and see how this story measures up.

1. the love was passionate, physical, emotional and uncontrollable
2. the love was adulterous
3. the man subjected himself to the will of the lady
4. the lady remained passive, apart from issuing him with orders and tasks
5. the carrying out of these tasks ennobled the man
6. the consummation of his passion was the end of the story and of his ennoblement.

1. The love here certainly does seem to be physical. Lizzie's obsessive glances, finally reciprocated, are symptoms of the lust of the eyes. Renard does physically touch or steady her. She eagerly accepts his dinner invitation with "I'm famished", which suggests displaced sexual appetite. A phallic interpretation of the Empire State Building is a possibility, and the euphemistic "a small fire kindling into life" is certainly a flame of emotion if not visceral lust. This something warm is beyond her control, not an act of her will.

2. However, we have no doubt that this encounter is destined to end in lifelong marriage. Their mutual appreciation of the Empire State Building which parallels that of her parents, suggests an equivalent relationship for Lizzie and Renard in the future. The grammatical use of joint subjects for father/mother and Lizzie/Renard underlines the equivalences.

3. After a struggle, Renard certainly submits himself to the will of the lady, by agreeing to list the car as missing rather than stolen, though this is hardly the heroic act of a would-be knight.

4. The transitive Material process clauses present Lizzie as rather passive, though she does go on a quest for love--the kind of journey which in the courtly love tradition would have been associated with a knight rather than the stay-at-home lady. Renard's issuing the report and bringing news about the finding of her car might be seen as performing the task she had set him, in courtly love style. His reporting back to her the successful completion of this errand is very similar to the typical medieval story sequence.

5. No doubt Renard is ennobled in the course of this story, by his relationship with Lizzie, which turns him from cynicism to trust. It may not be so much the task itself that ennoble him, as the attraction to Lizzie, and the influence of the building with a view, up which he chivalrously pursues her.

6. There is no consummation to their love, though the Empire State Building and the anticipated dinner provide symbolic substitutes for eroticism and satisfied appetite. But the indications are that on the basis of this love they are going to attempt a lifetime's relationship. However, the story declines to give details

The story illustrates that many of the courtly love themes and elements of plot and characterisation are still being recycled in romantic fiction, though with the stark difference that romantic love in the women's magazines is associated with marriage rather than adultery. However, there are a number of other ideological, stereotypical assumptions which have emerged in our analysis and which are worth underlining.

Firstly, in this story woman is presented as incomplete without a man. This is something like a reversal of the courtly love situation, in which the lady has independent status (albeit as a married woman) before the page falls head-over-heels in love with her. Renard has his social roles and status as a police lieutenant, and is relatively independent of the influence of his mother. Lizzie's actions are defined by her mother's wishes for her, she has no job that we know of, and feels the need of a husband to be fulfilled, with 28 a dangerously late age to linger beyond if she is to assume her motherly duties. Of course, Renard, in a sense, needs the influence of a generous and trusting Lizzie as well, but he is not conscious of this need, as Lizzie is.

Renard, too, is a strong authoritative man. There is something a little paradoxical in the fact that it is his institutional authority, conveyed by his imperative mood clauses, his tough decisiveness with his opinions and generalisations, and his brusqueness with inferiors which attracts the female reader to him, at the same time that it makes it necessary for Lizzie to soften him. The way the transitive clauses represent him as impinging on people and the environment, but particularly the way 'his strong hands steady her by the arms' construct him



as basically a macho male. The one concession to the new man is his ability, in the right circumstances, to appreciate beauty.

By contrast Lizzie is intuitive, for example in her judgement of the old man, in which practical experience weighs more importantly than cynical generalisations. She is emotional, excited about New York and the Empire State Building. She is trusting in a sort of childlike way, spoken to by Renard and referred to by the narrator as if a child. Apparently she submits to or courts institutional authority in the form of parents and the police. She is more socially adept than Renard, with her greetings, introductions, apologies and thanks, and a civilising influence on him. All these qualities fit the female stereotype. The two concessions to the new woman are her initiative in making the journey to New York in the first place, and her defiant insistence, modally reinforced, in the validity of her judgements about the old man and her missing car.

Lizzie, we suppose, is being proffered by the writer as the sort of woman with whom to identify, inviting the reader to construct herself as subject of/to her kind of femininity. And Renard is offered as the kind of man with which the ideal reader could imagine forging a permanent relationship. However, the magazine, *Woman's World*, as is clear from the problem page extracts we analysed in unit 3, does not target an unmarried 20something readership, but rather middle-aged women/mothers. This suggests that the identification is to take place in the imagination rather than in real life. Lizzie could function as a fantasy figure, a symbol of escape from the boredom of Iowa, or other areas of the mid-west. Janice Radway (1987) found that for housewives reading romances was an act of independence, an escape from looking after husbands and children, but paradoxically a way of giving them the emotional strength to continue with the endless round of housework. Such a housewife readership might be comforted by some of the ideological slants of the story: the necessity for submission, that a woman is incomplete without a man; that though he is the intelligent breadwinner she uses her intuitive and interpersonal skills to build a family and social network.

It would be interesting to do a wider study to see how typical these ideologies are for stories within other issues of this magazine, or magazines targeted towards a similar readership, and to what extent the ideologies change in magazines for younger women (See MacRobbie 1991, chapter 6). And how tenacious, I wonder, in other stories, are the romantic themes that were first celebrated among the troubadours of 12th century southern France?

**\*Activity 49 \***

You could find another romantic short story in a magazine and analyse it in the same way as 'Romance in the Air'. How do the two stories compare or differ in their depiction of male and female roles, and in the nature of the love they depict? Has this anything to do with the differing readership of the magazines from which they are taken?

### **Project:—a short love story**

For this project you could write a short love story, roughly of the length of ‘Romance in the Air’. However, the ideal readership for your short story would be other students at your institution, not middle-aged white American women. Ideally you will be able to publish the best ones in an anthology or magazine.

The material in this unit is designed to help you think about your story, and also to revise the linguistic features and communicative strategies we mentioned in sections A and B of this textbook. So when composing your story

1. Consider how traditional you are going to be in terms of gender roles of your characters. Are they going to be very traditional, are they going to make a few concessions to the new man and the emancipated woman, or are they going to be a radical departure from the norm? What elements of the courtly love passion, if any, are you going to adhere to in your story?
2. When drafting and redrafting think carefully about the following points:
  - How are you going to organise the narrative structure? (unit 1.) Will there be a distinction between plot and story, or will the narrative be told chronologically without flashbacks? Will you have first-person narration, or will the narrator make evaluative comments? What will be the Complicating Action, and how will it be resolved? How much of the resolution will be left implicit, and how much actually stated?
  - How do you conceive the relationships and personalities of your characters. What patterns of process type and participant roles will you establish as part of your characterisation? (unit 2)
  - How will the relationship between characters be reflected in the pattern of speech act types which they use on each other? How polite will they be to each other? (unit 5). Will this change in the course of the story, as it does in ‘Romance in the Air’?
  - How much will you, as a narrator, interfere with the speech of the characters when you represent it; will you use Free Direct, Direct, or Indirect Speech or Narrative Report, and in what proportions? (unit 6)
  - What names will you choose for your characters, and will they allude to other real-life or fictional characters? Will there be a symmetry in the way the characters in your story are named, for example in the use of title, surname, first name, diminutive?
  - Will you use any ideologically loaded, contested or offensive terms to stimulate the reader or to tune them in to a particular ideology? (unit 3)
  - What use might you make of irony and metaphor? Will any of the objects or places or actions of your story acquire symbolic value, through the inferences you encourage the reader to make, for example the model of /climbing of the Empire State Building. (unit 4)

This assignment will be more useful if you include notes where you justify the linguistic and discursal choices you have made in your story.

## FURTHER READING

- Two important books on this topic of courtly love and its development in Western literature are C.S. Lewis's *The Allegory of Love* and Denis de Rougemont's *Passion and Society*. C.S. Lewis examines the phenomenon of courtly love in medieval literature, and somewhat contentiously assumes that it was not simply a literary phenomenon but reflected societal practice. De Rougemont traces the development of courtly love into Romantic passion in European cultural history, and draws interesting contrasts with Chinese attitudes to gender, sex and marriage.
- Walter Nash's highly entertaining *Language in Popular Fiction* is recommended to anyone going on a long plane journey. He critically analyses in an accessible and lighthearted manner the linguistic and discourse style of romance fiction in magazines and action stories, concentrating on the structures of the narratives and the formulae to which they are written.
- Deirdre Burton's 'Through a glass darkly--through dark glasses' shows how the transitivity patterns in Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* could be rewritten from a feminist perspective. This could be very useful supplementary reading before doing the "love-story" project.
- Angela MacRobbie writes on teenage magazine fiction from a sociological perspective. Two chapters of her book *Feminism and Youth Culture* are the most relevant to this unit. In 'Jackie Magazine: romantic individualism and the teenage girl' she describes the typical patterns of subject positioning of teenage girls in the magazine *Jackie* during the seventies, concentrating on the fiction of their photostories. In 'Jackie and Just Seventeen: girls' comics and magazines on the 1980s' she shows how fiction has been replaced with feature stories about 'pop boys' as the main field for the teenage imagination.
- Janice Radway's *Reading the Romance* is a study very relevant to this unit, as it records research into the reports of middle aged housewives on their motives for reading romances, and the effects that the reading has on them. 'Romance in the Air' obviously has such housewives as its intended readership since the short story on which it was based appeared in *Woman's World*