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Heidegger, the Erotics of Ontology, and the Mass-Market Romance

Deborah Lutz
Hunter College

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Deborah Lutz,
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Abstract: In her paper, "Heidegger, the Erotics of Ontology, and the Mass-Market Romance," Deborah Lutz explores a particular formula of mass-market romance -- the dangerous lover or "sweet savage" one -- as an allegory for Heidegger's theories of nearness and being-toward-an-end in *Being and Time*. The postponements, secrets, and failed presence of the final immanence of love in these narratives allegorize the flight and entanglement of *Dasein* in the everyday. The romance's narrative movement as always in relationship with its end -- the full presence of love -- and its structure of being always ahead of itself, mirrors the narrativity of *Dasein*'s being-toward-death. With the meeting of these two registers, Lutz explores what romance has to teach philosophy about transcendence through the "vulgarity" of the everyday, about transcendence as a repetition, and failure as a constituent of presence.

Deborah Lutz

Heidegger, the Erotics of Ontology, and the Mass-Market Romance

The conjunction of these two registers -- philosophy and the mass-market romance -- seems one of the most unlikely and implausible. It would, at first glance, appear difficult to defend such an unsteady union and to confront those numerous skeptics who may question the interest of such an undertaking. When cast in the sometimes-garish light of romance, philosophy may fear its claim to truth will be obscured by vulgar commonplaces and everyday language. Yet it is precisely philosophy's fear of corruption that constitutes the transgressive interest in such a meeting of "high" and "low." Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time*, like most "high" philosophy, declares that its ontology applies to everyone, no matter the individual's situation in place or time, his or her positioning in light of gender or race. The headiness of this powerful dictation of all human experience is rarely given to female-coded formula genres such as mass-market romance. Theorists of the romance, such as Tania Modleski and Carol Thurston, carefully place their subject-texts within gendered paradigms, if not within a whole host of situational specifics. This essay's project is *not* to understand mass-market romance using ideas culled from philosophy, but rather to illuminate them with the same rarified light as philosophy. In fact, reading romance as we generally read philosophy not only sets romance up to speak about human experience in general, but it also serves to situate philosophy within a romantic paradigm. Expanding on Slavoj Zizek's work of elucidating Lacan and Hegel using detective fiction, *film noir* and Hitchcock, this project opens a relationship or dialogue, if you will, between, on the one hand, a language of the intellectual depth and breadth to influence thinking for generations and, on the other hand, the ephemeral obviousness of a popular language where meaning lies on the surface, and which gives the satisfaction of immediate consumption. The surface also speaks to human experience, in ways that many philosophical discourses cannot. The side-by-sidedness of these two registers, to use Gilles Deleuze's term, deterritorializes painstakingly separated disciplines or genres, and also class differences inherent in these registers.

The question presses: where is the romance in philosophy? Is there a philosophical erotic? The romance of reading philosophy is a truth rarely acknowledged. To be a student of philosophy is to desire to master a difficult philosophical text, to feel the onanistic ache of penetrating into a vast realm of ideas, the thrilling vibration of the opening into a manifold metaphysic. In fact the motivation for metaphysical thinking itself often begins with the desire for a teacher, a master, and the mind consumed by the ideas of others which, at least for a time, seem to expand the self and the mind, almost to the point of an erotic annihilation. Because philosophical truth claims ostensibly to apply to everyone, the reader of philosophy participates in a destruction of the self, reaching the mind into a place of universal objectivity, such that the world and all those in it can be written and spoken about in an enraptured unity. Heideggerian Dasein is the immolated subject, ravished of singularity for metaphysical thinking. As Jean-Luc Nancy points out, the Greek for "philo" means "love of" or "beloved," and "sophy" is "wisdom" or "thinking" (84). Hence philosophy is the love of thinking: philosophy begins with love. Romance and philosophy share this origin, this original impetus for thinking, discourse, and writing, yet romance takes the more radical position, perhaps an amorous specificity within the more generic originary movement: romance is the love of love. Beginning and ending with love, meaning love at every moment, romance saturates meaning with this excessive generosity of desire.

When we think of a romantic philosophical text, one especially attuned to romance's theories of extreme subjectivity, what texts do we think of? Certainly not Heidegger's *Being and Time*, especially given his explicit and elaborate labor to prove that, for us to understand Dasein, we must question at the ontological level, hence a place prior to any ideas of subjectivity. Nancy argues that Heidegger never writes about love yet his concept of *Mitdasein* is a beginning of such a philosophy (103). Avital Ronell has opened an erotic pathway into Heidegger through theories of addiction. And likewise,

Hannah Arendt called Heidegger, somewhat sarcastically, the "last (we hope) romantic" (qtd. in Ettinger 66). In fact, Arendt had an erotic relationship with the ideas of her lover and professor, Heidegger, and philosophy was made, for her, bodily manifest in her desire for him. To see Heidegger in the light of a beloved master is to see him as a Byronic hero, a dangerous lover, as many of his students did. He consciously created a relationship with his students that supported his character of an aloof and mysterious genius, often tortured by society and the technological world around him, finally wanting to live, reclusively, in his hut in the Black Forest, in the solitude he felt was necessary for his work. The biographer Elzbieta Ettinger writes, "Aware of his allure to both male and female students and of his power over their minds, Heidegger purposely kept his distance, intensifying the mystique, the awe, the reverence" (11). A student of his writes that Heidegger "was a little man who knew how to cast a spell" (11).

In 1924, thirty-five years old, married and with two children, he seduced his eighteen-year-old student Hannah Arendt. Throughout this relationship, which lasted in varying forms until Arendt's death, Heidegger kept his position of controlling master over his student. Arendt calls her love for Heidegger her "*starre Hingegenbenheit an ein Einziges*," or "unbending devotion to a single one" (Young-Bruehl 53). In the summer of 1925, she wrote a self-portrait which she called "The Shadows," and sent it to Heidegger. Inextricably intertwining her own self-understanding and her love affair with Heidegger, "The Shadows" describes her entrance into sexual experience as both a return to a childhood home, and, in explicitly Heideggerian terms, an "*Angst vor dem Dasein uberhaupt*," or an "anxiety over existence in general" (Young-Bruehl 52). Her experience of her subjectivity, both her past, retrospectively, and her future, projectively, becomes cast in the light of her affair with Heidegger; her very self-discourse becomes Heideggerian. With this love, she experienced, as she writes in the third person about herself, "colorful and strange realms in which she felt at home" (Young-Bruehl 53). But then this radicality and estrangement, which she felt had in the past been a powerful, *heimlich* (homely) force for her, becomes fearful, "was now so changed that everything dissolved or scattered unless she tried in docile devotion to cling to it, pale and colorless and with the hidden uncanniness [*Unheimlichkeit*] of passing shadows" (53). She no longer felt at home in the world; she calls herself in a poem, "a homeless one" (57). Not only does Arendt describe her subjectivity in Heideggerian terms, she also reads Heidegger's philosophy romantically. The structure of her romantic experience, as described briefly above, follows the amorous structure in the formula of romance that contains a dangerous hero, yet, alas, without the happy ending. But it is also structured more or less like so many of Heidegger's arguments. Heidegger uses a similar paradigm to make many of his major points, most specifically in *Being in Time*. In fact, romance allegorizes being as such, and, at the same time, Heidegger's ontological theories allegorize romance, particularly if read through an Arendtian lens. To read romance as a kind of philosophy, a love of thinking intensified such that subjectivity signifies only this, love, is to understand philosophy's romance, philosophy as love.

One of romance's most interesting theories is that of "nearness." What happens when the heroine draws near to the dangerous lover? What is the structure of this nearness? Most interesting to romance is Heidegger's theory of ontological "nearness," or *N ·*, particularly a nearness to death. Dangerous nearness can be divided into three constitutive parts or rules: The first is flight and entanglement, the second is the uncanny, and the third is being-toward-death and being-toward-the-end. These divisions lend themselves to the following three arguments. In the first section, I argue that Heidegger's theory of proximity as mysterious is an allegory for conventional devices in romance, such as the undisclosed secret, the misunderstanding, and the evasion of the beloved. These formulas appear most clearly in the dangerous lover narrative. In the second section I look at both Heidegger and Sigmund Freud's theories of the uncanny in relation to the dual state of both knowing and not knowing about being in love with the stranger from the beginning of the romance, which then lends an erotic uncanniness to "falling in love" that happens throughout the narrative. The final section explores Heidegger's formulation of how understanding existence begins with death, and the ways that this is

the same formula for the structure of the dangerous lover romance -- with each moment touching on the finality of ending.

Flight and Entanglement

The first rule of nearness states the paradox that what would appear to be nearest, in its familiarity, homely-ness, or *heimlichkeit*, and the most easily accessible and handy, lies furthest away from what is authentically most our own. Hence, what is nearest to one is what is most unfamiliar, strange, and *angst*-producing. Moving closer authentically or understandingly causes what is familiar to withdraw. Heidegger's understanding of this paradoxical structure of nearness begins with the everyday. One of Dasein's everyday ways of being is entanglement in the average, which is an evasion and flight from the authentic possibilities of one's being. Heidegger believes that one of the fundamental structures of Dasein is the tendency to understand oneself through the immediate surrounding world nearest to one, an average "work-world" where useful objects are encountered. This world of "useful things" includes the "they" -- the public that represents an averageness, "which prescribes what can and may be ventured, watches over every exception, which thrusts itself to the fore... [thus], every mystery loses its power." The "they" creates a "leveling down of all possibilities of being" (Heidegger 127). Because a constitutive factor of Dasein is to understand itself in regards to what appears to be nearest, in its average everyday working, it becomes entangled in the everyday, not understanding that there is a more authentic Dasein, which is actually nearer, covered over by this "tranquilized" being. As the above quote points out, this authentic being is akin to the power of mystery. Authentic Dasein comes from understanding oneself as one's own possibilities, as a singular, finite being, rather than as what is already real and available as a part of "publicness." In an authentic "kind of coming near," Heidegger writes, "one does not tend toward making something real available and taking care of it, but as one comes nearer understandingly, the possibility of the possible only becomes 'greater'"(Heidegger 262). For Dasein to come near in this way, which we could call a kind of transcendence, is to see all that is real, that could be "spelled out" withdraw. Heidegger emphasizes, "[t]he nearest nearness of being-toward-death as possibility is as far removed as possible from anything real" (Heidegger 262). The situation of this nearness to greater and greater possibility, or to a kind of unknown, lies somehow "inside" one -- as possibilities, which belong only to this individual Dasein. With this nearness, one draws closer and closer to what is both the most obscure and the most free -- a freeing of all possibility -- yet still what is so close that it is one's own existence itself. Maurice Blanchot describes this type of nearness as a proximity, which retains its unknownness because one does not have the distance to see it. In fact, he explains closeness itself as "... an experience that one will represent to oneself as being strange and even as the experience of strangeness. But if it is so, let us recognize that it is this not because it is too removed. On the contrary, it is so close that we are prohibited from taking any distance from it -- it is foreign in it very proximity" (45).

Heidegger's nearness is a romantic allegory, and it particularly allegorizes an attraction for a dangerous lover, as described in many formula romances. Flight from the beloved and the evasion of immanent love describes the basic plot structure of the dangerous lover formula. Immanent love defines the complete presence of both lovers, as equally confessed lovers, beloved together in the same place and at the same time. All meaning is finally immanent and this is the final aim, or the climax and ending of the book. This full presence of love states the love story's meaning; everything in the narrative means this, and this is all it means. Clearly love's completion defines romance, but with the dangerous lover formula, love's presence constitutes the end of the story; all events tend toward this culmination. Yet "to tend toward" here, means both to flee, to cover over and to always be in a movement toward. Again we see Heidegger's nearness here -- the moving closer which causes familiar nearness to withdraw. The structure of this proposition -- the fleeing movement of love -- lies in withheld secrets, postponements, misunderstandings, and evasion.

One register of flight and entanglement in our formula is the almost ubiquitous plot device in

formula romance of the undisclosed secret(s) between the hero and the heroine, which provides convenient postponements of the climax. Both the hero and the heroine can keep secrets from each other, and usually do, which cause misunderstandings and distance. For example, in Barbara Dawson Smith's *Seduced by a Scoundrel*, the heroine, Alicia Pemberton, is deliberately deceived by the hero, Drake Wilder, into thinking that he is a heartless gambler who wants only to antagonize her (to find out more about Smith and the following romance writers, including biographical information, websites, and e-mail addresses, link to <http://www.slake.com/>). He does this because he plots to hide the truth of his paternity, until the right moment, which will maximize his revenge on his father, who has refused to acknowledge him as his son. That he has this secret pain, this strange and unfamiliar interiority, makes him dangerous, and causes Alicia to flee him as someone who frightens her and will betray her love. Yet she is, finally, evading her beloved, her final ending. It is fated that what she flees, the terrors of the unknown other, is what will finally engulf her, when secrets are exteriorized in amorous unity.

In Dorothy Garlock's *Wind of Promise*, the hero, Kain Debolt, must be cold and distant toward the heroine, Vanessa, even though he has fallen deeply in love with her, because he thinks he is dying of stomach cancer. He cannot disclose this information to her, because he does not want her to see him as sick and vulnerable, and less of a man. He must constantly push her away, which confuses her and causes her to think he is hostile. Yet she can see he has erotic feelings for her and she senses that he has a secret: "Kain said the words simply, and Vanessa turned to look at him. She was surprised to see a deep sadness in his golden brown eyes, and a flood of tenderness and longing swept through her body. On seeing that smile, Kain felt the full pain of his regret" (99-100). The secret sadness causes the longing to sweep through her body.

Heidegger sees truth, or *aletheia*, as an act of uncovering or the unhidden. The desire, love, of both philosophy and romance is to reveal the truth, to illuminate and bring it to a confession. The loved one envelops and imprisons unknown worlds, which must be deciphered. The erotically charged removal of the veil points to the spark from which this erotic originates -- the veil itself. The hiding and the disclosing of the secret both create eroticism. Clearly, secretiveness is itself erotic. From *Seduced*: "She wanted to feel the warmth of Drake's arms around her. She wanted to learn all of the secrets of his past" (Smith 206). In fact the flight from love, the beloved, through postponement by the secret stands as the basis of the erotic in the dangerous lover formula. Postponement *is* the erotic. Hence the evasion of immanent love -- thematically the transcendence or sublime in romance -- enacts paradoxically a moving closer to an everyday familiarity, away from a secretive estrangement in flight and evasion, yet it is also always already a move toward the full presence of meaning -- the full confessions of all secrets at the climax of the book. Furthermore, when the heroine draws near to the hero through everyday knowledge that comes from such types of nearness as sight, touch, and discourse, the immanence of love appears to fail, because this nearness is misread as something other than love. What will finally be love is sidetracked into other valences such as loss of self-worth and will; or the sex equals love equation, required for this plot, will go awry, becoming domesticated and miniaturized as a "one-night stand," "pure lust," or "open hostility."

Dasein, as essentially structured, misinterprets. Like Dasein, another register of the evasion of the beloved is through misreading, generally of the eyes and the face. The heroine, and sometimes the hero, of this formula are bad readers. Often misreading occurs through not knowing the language, the gestures, of the other, which are fugitive and migrant to such an extent that they cannot be deciphered. Eyes are points of mystery; they speak of the possibility of transcendence in romance, and hence they are often misread. Things that flash in character's eyes contain lost scenes of access and end up closing off possibility, at least for a hundred or so pages, rather than opening it. In Smith's *Seduced*, Alicia attempts to read Drake's eyes: "Something flashed in his eyes, a starkness she couldn't read" (178), "'I wonder,' she mused, 'if you *want* me to think badly of you.' For a heartbeat, something flashed in his eyes. Something that came and went so quickly, she couldn't be sure if it was

surprise or annoyance. Or something else entirely" (164). If Alicia were a good reader, she could understand Drake's flashing eyes as love for her. Instead she sees this flash as anger, hostility, or something undefined which points to his scoundrelhood. Unlike the romantic mainstay that the eyes are mirrors to the soul, here again meaning fails, and presence delays. In the romance, the soul's illumination appears only in the presence of love.

In *Lord of Danger*, the heroine thinks, "as usual, his expression was impossible to read" (Stuart 226) and also that "there was no reading his expression; he was adept at covering his reaction"(28). In *Lord of Midnight*, Claire describes Renald as a "cryptic script" (Beverly 234). "What was he thinking? She had no idea. She longed for a spontaneous word or gesture by which to judge him, but he was as incomprehensible as a text she'd once seen written in the Arabic script" (65). And, finally, "he simply stared back with that implacable, unreadable, complex expression" (66). That he can't be read causes him to be dangerous, to envelop a secret space the heroine would like to plumb. The hardness of his exterior, like a mask, presents a cryptogram or a blank page for which the heroine, in the end when all meaning is present, will crack the code, which is only the discovery of one word -- love. The phrase "I love you" presents the completion of the narrative.

Another scene of misunderstanding involves hearing. Often the hero mutters things under his breath. The heroine does not understand these murmurings, although clearly they are presages of the final end. "Through the heat haze of her own passion, she heard Luke mutter something beneath his breath and then he was kissing her mouth" (Jordan 161). "And she could hear it [intense desire] in the harsh sound of the air escaping from his lungs as he muttered something unintelligible under his breath and then, leaning back against the wall, urged her between his parted thighs" (Jordan 142). To hear the beloved is to fail to comprehend the whispers and garbled words that mean nothing other than love, repeated in an enchanted speech, suspended of meaning other than that the secret will be disclosed.

The series of failures in formula romance point to an important difference between pornography and mass-market romance. Pornography is always a utopia, hence Stephen Marcus's term "pornotopia." In pornography everyone always wins because men always have erections at the right moment; women always desire what the man wants to give them; the orgasm, or the "money shot," always happens right on time, simultaneously, more or less, for both parties. In pornography, everything comes into sexual usage, all objects and subjects are part of the sexual play. For instance, in a pornographic scene, a tree becomes erotic because it is only a secret place to have sex. A telephone's only use is to set up a sexual rendezvous. Conversation is only good for seduction. However, in romance, almost everything acts as a catalyst to pull the hero and heroine apart. In dystopic romance, all senses, discourse, and objects, are sites and scenes of failure. Here we are in amorous time, where impulse and act do not coincide, where speaking and understanding miss their proper destination. Peggy Kamuf, in "Jealousy Wants Proof," writes of jealousy in a similar vein: wanting to have knowledge of the beloved is to be confronted with the impossibility of ever knowing the other (see <http://www.b92.net/casopis_rec/59.5/pdf/429-445.pdf>).

Failure also comes with the evasion or covering over of love, through misunderstanding seduction or ravishment. The missed arrival of love occurs through a doubled misreading, both of the heroine herself and the hero. In the dangerous lover formula, sex between the hero and heroine is never solely a material or physical act; hence it does not contain the "meatiness" or purely transparent usage pornography, which is merely to "get off"; sex in romance always must lead to an excess of meaning, the full presence of love. Because it is a possible point of access to transcendence, like the eyes and their flashing, sex constructs a site of Heideggerian nearness. Hence sex creates a continued failure of presence, until the completed pure portion. The heroine misreads her own sexual desire as, rather than the presence of love, "merely" a lack of contained control on her part, or an embarrassed weakness of the senses, or a too-passionate sensuality which she must avoid, unless she becomes seduced into a loveless affair. She does not understand that she is always already in love with him --

dazzlement at first sight, so to speak, or on the first page. Rosemary Rogers's *A Dangerous Man*, contains many of these false arrivals, with an initial ravishment and then later regrets: "Her mouth opened to... protest? surrender? ... and his tongue slid inside in a sizzling exploration that shocked a moan from her.... Her head fell back, and all thought of resistance faded into something else, strange new emotions he had somehow awakened in her, emotions that made her cling to him" (82). "But inside, she was sick with the knowledge that she had once more ignored convention and wisdom and decency to throw herself at a man who took her casually and then discarded her just as casually. But what had she thought? That he would declare himself in love with her? That he would beg her to go away with him? No, that sort of thing happened only in romantic tales, not in real life" (183).

What is covered over here is the authentic meaning of this event -- the touch and feel of the radiance of the beloved's body -- and meaning is evaded through an everyday publicness of sex equaling lust, a one-night stand, or open hostility, rape. Hence the structure of a paradoxical move toward while moving away occurs, where the most intimate erotic, or what feels to be the closest, the most familiar touch, pulls the hero and heroine away from each other into an increasingly solitary, melancholy despair. Yet the despair will finally lead to full meaning itself. She wants him but she will only have him if he really loves her, which she is convinced that he does not, generally because of his "dangerousness" -- i.e., secretiveness, misanthropy, etc. Another example can be found in Haywood Smith's *Border Lord*: "Slowly, deliberately, Duncan approached her, blatant hunger in his eyes. What did he mean to do? Catherine's arms tightened around Nevin, her heart beating faster. Part of her wanted to flee, but the greater part of her wanted Duncan Maxwell to kiss her again" (192). Other misunderstandings occur with the heroine's misinterpretation of the hero's touch. The question above, "What did he mean to do?" is a mainstay in this formula, clearly dating back to the Gothic heroine confronted by the villain, which is "Kill me? Rape me? Lock me up in a dungeon?" Generally, in the dangerous lover formula, the heroine believes he does not love her but merely desires her sexually or even hates her and wants to revenge himself through seducing or raping her. She lives "tranquilized" into the everyday publicness of "everyone feels lust, hence that is what he (and I) feels." She evades the end and finite destiny, her final meaning that leads to thematic transcendence.

The sexual encounters between the hero and the heroine in our formula of romance stand as, to use a phrase of De Man's, "allegories of reading" the romance. Like the heroine, the reader both wants and does not want the heroine to speed toward sexual consummation. The continued titillation of the postponement, the ache of the unfolding of the plot structure cause the reader to quicken forward, or to skip ahead, for the final full meaning of the end of the story. But at the same time, the reader wants to slow down, savor, and read with lassitude and inattention, because the erotic also lies in this delay. The heroine wants the full presence of sexual satiation to remain open, incomplete, to continue drawing her on through the narrative, just like the reader. A commonplace comparison links narrative itself to the structure of sexual foreplay and the final orgasmic climax. In the evasion, in the failure and covering over of presence, lies, again, the erotic of this type of romance. And at each titillating point of these plot tensions can be found both the failure and a movement of or toward success. Romance uncovers the success in failure in Heidegger. Heidegger stresses that what he calls "authentic" or "inauthentic" being is not a value judgement; Dasein is both authentic and inauthentic; these both have the status of merely modes of being of Dasein. It is important to note that, on some level, it is via the everyday and the "vulgar" that authenticity comes about. In the dangerous lover formula of romance, it becomes clear that failure is the movement of success, and that transcendence arrives out of the everyday; fluidity exists between the two at every moment.

Uncanny Nearness

Heidegger, like Freud, interests himself in the etymology of this word -- *unheimlich*. Both point to the "*heim*," or "home" at the heart but Heidegger is primarily interested in its meaning of "unhomeliness" as in "not-at-home." Heidegger even goes so far as to write, "Being-in enters into the existential 'mode' of the 'not-at-home.' Nothing else is meant by our talk about 'uncanniness'" (189). Yet being

not-at-home is directly related to *angst*; hence the anxiety and even terror of this position is also part of Heidegger's uncanny. Dasein feels at home in entangled absorption in the "they," in inauthenticity. When Dasein turns away from the everyday, toward *angst*, being-toward-death, and authenticity, it feels uncanny, because it is not-at-home; it is individuated and thrown onto its own potentialities. Heidegger states that "uncanniness is the fundamental kind of being-in-the-world" (277). For Dasein to be uncanny is to be "individualized to itself" and "absolutely unmistakable to itself" (256). Hence when Dasein draws closest to itself, it is nearest to the most unfamiliar and strange possibility of itself, which is again Heidegger's structure of nearness. This definition of the uncanny can be expanded. When Dasein understands its absorption in the "they" as an evasion and tranquilization, and turns away from it into a potentiality-of-being, then not only does Dasein feel a sense of being not-at-home in one's potentiality-of-being, but the "home" itself takes on an aspect of not belonging to one, because Dasein realizes the home's "publicness," its status as not "owned" by individuated Dasein. The potential for uncanniness then permeates the movement (which is itself always possible) of Dasein within both the everyday and potentiality of being. When Dasein is face to face with its own being, in its potential, the uncanny feeling is not just a sense of being not-at-home, it is also a sense of this strangeness being itself at the heart of one's own existence, a "home" truth which has been undisclosed.

A clearer understanding of the romantic implications of Heidegger's uncanny comes from Freud's ideas on the *unheimlich*. Freud takes his idea of the uncanny further with his insight that concealment is an aspect of the work of the uncanny. Heidegger sees the uncanny merely as being "not-at-home;" he does not see concealment as an uncanny liminal, or as integral to creating the uncanny. Freud describes an uncanny feeling, a "dread and creeping horror," coming from, among other things, the revivification through an event or experience, of an idea repressed, or concealed in the hinter-regions of the unconscious. Freud writes, "the 'uncanny' is that class of the terrifying which leads back to something long known to us, once very familiar" (369-70). Hence the uncanny brings about a "creepiness" not only because one feels "not-at-home" in the unfamiliar and strange experience, but also because, at the heart of the strange, there is a sense of home, of a deep interiority, of a place already visited. The already concealed which is now partially or entirely disclosed, moves the uncanny into feeling. This feeling also lies in the fact that what is dreadful is "inside" us, it "belongs" to us, individually, and we have been responsible for both producing and concealing it. Shelley's Victor Frankenstein has this reaction upon knowing his creation: Oh God, it's mine.

Another etymological thread related to "*heim*" is "*geheim*," which also has the "home" in it but it means "secret" or "concealed." We already know of the "secret home" because of the Heideggerian idea that, in an everyday way, authentic homes are "secret." This helps to unravel why the secret is such an important theme to the dangerous lover romance. The romantic heroine's potential, her "authentic," lies in the presence of love. Her "ownmost" possibility is unconcealed, disclosed meaning. Her possibility as fully present to love is the secret behind all other secrets and this is her final "home" -- destiny, fate. As one hero thinks to himself, "he ... had known the moment he looked at her that he was confronting his own fate" (Jordan 424). And an example of this home: "A cry sounded in her throat; then her legs parted and he was inside her. This was his true coming home, the only one that mattered" (Rogers, Evelyn 287). And another "home" scene: "that bewildering notion that somehow she had found that special wondrous place; that special wondrous person who was her real home, that knowledge somehow or other Luke had reached out and touched the very core of her innermost being and because of that... because of him the whole of her life would be changed forever" (Jordan 155). Similarly, we see this site of undisclosing in *Border Lord*. "With that simple profession [of love], all the broken pieces of Catherine's life shaped themselves into a picture of perfect provision. Suddenly she saw how everything had worked to bring them to this wondrous moment" (Smith 369). For the heroine to draw closer to her "ownmost" self, is for her to move nearer to a dangerous, even terrifying other, who is her home. Like Dasein, what has been concealed, the presence of the true love, is

something that has been "known" all along. Hence the undisclosing (unclothing) of this love leads to the uncanny: "A heightened sensation of portent, of standing on the edge of something vital and life changing shook her, a feeling of uncannily clear-minded perception that suddenly, here and now... she was facing something immensely important" (Jordan 316). And this undisclosing reveals what was already there. "There was a wonderful, exhilarating sense of release and freedom... in being able to cast aside her guard and acknowledge, admit, that the desire for him, which she was now allowing to express itself, had been there virtually from the first time they met. It existed even if she herself had tried to force it underground and keep it hidden away" (Jordan 328). The structure of this uncanny situates a sense of strangeness in the heart of what is one's own -- the true love and final destiny in an other who appears hostile and dangerous. But, in that it discloses, the heroine also feels that this is something that has been "there" all along but that she has concealed. Instead of horror in the uncanny moment, in romance it is the titillating ache of the "Oh God, it's mine." So, in some sense, while it sometimes appears that the heroine is moving inexorably toward her fate, a mere puppet in the hands of the machinations of the hero, she is always in what is her "own." Or, in the end, he is "inside" her. For example, in *My Lady Pirate*, "She felt as though he had found a secret entrance into her belly, into her bones. She felt that he was folded inside her" (Doyle 121).

Because the hero finally appears to be the heroine's, everything she ever wanted and all hers, another possibility of the uncanny can be pointed to -- the double. She doubles herself, a dangerous and unfamiliar part of herself, in the hero. This is an inverse Heideggerian nearness; what is interior to the heroine, hence very near, has been projected out as something foreign and unknown, to be regained, recalled, rediscovered outside of herself, yet "interior." She does not have full access to, or integration with, this other part of herself until the end, although she has glimpses of access throughout. This explains the language of union and becoming "one" that is the usual romantic fare, particularly in the realm of full presence. For example: "... he had the illogical sense that they had ceased to be two separate beings. As one, they cried out with the exploration of ecstasy" (Smith, Haywood 213). "His mouth closed hungrily over hers in a moist, deep, endless kiss. It seemed to Vanessa that they were no longer two separate people, but one blended together by magic" (Garlock 358). The reintegration of the strange self leads to an odd looping of time, which both the reader and the heroine experience. The loop occurs because the end -- union in love -- is prefigured in the beginning, and all along, as it is at the same time concealed. So the end seems to be both a completion, a closure, and a return to an origin, to the beginning. The end does not feel to be a narrative progression forward or a move backwards, but the meeting of both the arrival and the setting off.

The romantic uncanny unfolds in each moment of the romance. The narrative is an amalgamation of moments with a give and take of both "owned" movement, and "ravished" movement. Like Dasein, there is an oscillation within flight and arrival in each episode. The postponement and erotic failures are a "never yet" and an "almost," again and again. We have seen this oscillation already, in reference to sexual encounters. Oscillation can create an almost suspended animation that often occurs in these encounters, the movement at once of both moving toward and away, which comes from the uncovering what one already knows, and its re-concealment. There is a sense that the heroine always already knows she is in love with him, and that she sees the movement of her narrative ending, while at the same time fleeing and evading it. The sexual suspended animation has the uncanniness almost of an automaton in frozen motion, which partakes of both union and alienation. The heroine automaton's fate in the romance is inexorable, and yet realized always, created as perfection from the beginning.

Nearness and Being-Toward-Death

The loop in time, or the retrograde narrativity of the dangerous lover formula, is such that the whole of the story functions in relation to the ending; all of the narrative "happens" because of, or in light of, the end. Dasein, as stated earlier, is always a "being-not-yet," or a relation to a potential. Dasein's

fundamental structure consists of its quality of being "ahead-of-itself." Dasein always relates itself to the possibilities that it will become; in this sense, Dasein is always beyond itself, as it already is. "The not-yet is already included in its own being, by no means as an arbitrary determination, but as a constituent... Dasein is always already its not-yet as long as it is" (Heidegger 244). As soon as there is nothing more "missing," then Dasein will cease to be. The "aheadness" of Dasein is measurable by a relation to its end. What is "ahead" is definable by Dasein's individuated existence, being always toward its end. The romance runs also "ahead-of-itself" -- each moment relates to the immanence of love, the death of the narrative. Each moment moves beyond itself, always a "not-yet" but also always in anticipation of ending. The catching up that happens in the end equals death, with nothing more "missing." "Aheadness" serves as a further explanation of sexual encounters as suspended animation. Because an erotic scene, or any scene, is always ahead-of-itself, it projects itself forward, it runs ahead to its end. As still a sexual scene and in this sense, present, ending flavors it.

The immanence of love illuminates each moment of the story and gives it its sole meaning, purpose, presence. This end figures, in some sense, a kind of death, as this moment of full immanence happens once, briefly, and it always means the end of the romance. The romance exhausts itself in plenitude. A sense of a poignant flurry of activity runs throughout the narrative, which speeds toward the final satiety. Often a speedy erotic pushes the narrative; there is never enough time to have all of the sensual feelings the hero and heroine might. "She wanted to have the time to do her own share of gazing ... but she couldn't. Quite simply, they didn't have the time. She didn't have the time and the feeling that engulfed her as she saw that he was ready for her turned the whole of her insides to liquid heat" (Jordan 165). They do not have time because the end of the narrative nears, and they must fit in, through intensification, all the love and sex they can. Each scene or potential, secret togetherness is consumed by its relation to the end. Georg Lukacs, in his comprehensive theory of the history of the novel states that, "we might almost say that the entire inner action of the novel is nothing but a struggle against the power of time" (122). The consummation of each moment explains why fire and burning desire appear to be such important symbols to romance. Dorchester Publishers even has a romance series called "Secret Fires." An example of how fire functions: "Wrapping her arms around his neck, she returned his kiss. Fires burned within her, consuming flames that had been a secret even from her" (Rogers, Evelyn 119). Life is being consumed, used up, by love. "She responded with all the ardor he could have wished for. She burned the cares of the day from him, the troubles of the past, the worries about what tomorrow might hold" (Rogers, Evelyn 288). The secret fire of love will leave nothing but the end of the story, the end of our hero and heroine.

The poignancy of love in romance comes from the sense that, once the full presence of love arrives, the characters will be gone, die to their narrative, because there is nothing left to be said. Love becomes a fantasy of dying. Barthes writes that love is a "death liberated from dying" (12). Death itself is an important theme for the dangerous lover formula and for romance as a whole. Often a near death experience finally brings full confessions or realizations of love. Death as a possibility illuminates the fragility and mortality of the beloved, of the ache of bodily existence. The dangerous lover plot is often set up so that the hero has some reason or desire to kill the heroine. In *Lord of Hawkfell Island*, Rorik Haraldsson seeks vengeance for the brutal murder of his family by Einar. He kidnaps Einar's half-sister, Mirana. He mistreats her extremely, at various points trying to kill her. She also attempts to murder him. In *Lord of Danger*, Alys thinks to herself: "She would be no match for him if it came to a battle... He would be the death of her, perhaps" (Stuart 23). For his part, "He could kill this tender young girl who was so very great a threat to him" (209). In the end of *Lord of Danger*, at the final sexual climax, Alys, in her love, feels "lost in a sudden darkness that felt like death" (286). One dangerous lover romance, which deals with the metaphor of the movement of love as "dying" explicitly, is Garlock's *Wind of Promise*. As described earlier, the hero, Kain Debolt, thinks he is dying of stomach cancer from when he first meets the heroine, up to the very end. The more he falls in love

with her, the more he feels the pain of dying. The climax of the book comes when he finds out he will not die, that he does not have stomach cancer -- only an ulcer -- and hence he is free to be fully present in his love, and in Vanessa's love. The theme, which is explicit in this narrative, becomes a figurative movement in this formula. The lovers are slowly dying, of love. The classic love story is, of course, *Romeo and Juliet*. Not only do both the lovers die in the end for love, but they are doomed as soon as they fall in love, and the play is a slow movement toward death -- a play of mourning. The death is their love: love equals death. Nancy writes, "Love offers finitude in its truth; it is finitude's dazzling presentation" (99). In this relation of love to dying, there is the commonly discussed tie between sex and death. The *petit mort*, or *Liebestod*, wherein the orgasm is a kind of little death, and sex is dangerous because of the possibility of the dissolution of the self in ecstasy and sublimity, is ubiquitous in the dangerous lover formula. Yet here I am more interested in death in relation to narrativity, or being-toward-death.

The link between death and love leads to another manifestation of Heideggerian nearness, touched on previously, the idea of an authentic being of Dasein as a "being-toward-death." Heidegger argues, radically, that Dasein can only be understood by understanding first its end. Even the beginning of Dasein must be understood by leading back to it from the end. This convoluted ontology clearly allegorizes the narrativity of the dangerous lover formula. Everyday or inauthentic being-toward-death is a covering over of the certainty of death, concealing "that it is possible in every moment" (Heidegger 258). As Heidegger explains, "As soon as a human being is born, he is old enough to die right away" (245). With authentic being-toward-death, death is understood as always a possibility, an indefinite certainty; Dasein's authenticity toward death is a "holding for true" -- is letting this conviction (of the certainty of death) overcome one. This overcoming is a dwelling with the fact that death could come at any moment, which leads to finding Dasein as a whole, as an individuated whole. An authentic being-toward-death does not evade death but makes it Dasein's own as a possibility. A being-toward-this-possibility does not relate to something actual, but rather it exists "toward" an unknown possibility, which is nevertheless not to be bypassed and belongs uniquely to each Dasein. Hence existence is at each moment a living with death, a living ready to die, a living always "running ahead" to the end. The structure of this "running ahead" is a way that Dasein is face-to-face with its own self. Dasein is then free to relate to itself as finite. In the shadow of existence's end (death), in the impossibility of existence Dasein's possibility opens up. Heidegger writes, "The more clearly this possibility is understood, the more purely does understanding penetrate to it *as the possibility of the impossibility of existence in general*.... It is the possibility of the impossibility of every mode of behavior toward ... of every way of existing. In running ahead to this possibility, it becomes "greater and greater," that is, reveals itself as something which knows no measure at all, no more or less, but means the possibility of the measureless impossibility of existence.... As anticipation of possibility, being-toward-death first *makes* this possibility *possible* and sets it free as possibility" (262).

Because the impossibility of existence is *so* possible, always already possible and a constitutive part of existence, and because this impossibility -- death of existence -- is measureless, it is living in the face of death which gives Dasein its freedom of possibility. This is partially because death individuates everyone. Heidegger states that we each die our own death; no one can die for us. We can only experience death by dying, by our existence becoming impossible. "No one can take the other's dying away from him" (240). Heidegger's ideas on being-toward-death allegorize the narrative structure of the dangerous lover formula's own being-toward-an-end. "As soon as a romantic heroine is born, she is old enough to die (fall in love) right away." The series of failures that hold off "dying" are required to make the full presence of love possible. It is out of the continual failure of presence, or the impossibility of existence, that the possibility will come about. The certainty of love (death) often overcomes the heroine; it is an idea "held for true" especially when most evaded, flown from. Every moment of the romance "runs ahead" to the immanence of love at the end. The melancholy ache of dangerous love consists in impossibility illuminating possibility, which gives it its measurelessness.

From *The Loner*: "Her love was so vast, all of Texas could not contain it. It leapt into the sky and circled the moon" (Rogers, Evelyn 268). And love, while also being finite, a circumscribable fatality, does lead to a measurelessness, at the heart of failure and death. Its measurelessness moves vertically, contained in the moment's intensification and excessiveness, which speeds toward the end. Amorous time is a minute infinity in a moment of loving.

The eternity of romance comes in the redemption at the end, the ecstatic, erotic closure; the epiphanic ending holds all meaning immanent. The perfect union has been created, and, in some sense, the end of a romance is the end of all need for romance. Everything arrives solved, beautiful, and complete; everything will be happy from now on. Yet this apparent closure is only apparent; this perfection immediately breaks down into a repetition. The end of the romance leads to the beginning of a new one, which is the meaning of formulaic genre, that it can be repeated, replicated, again and again. Romance teaches us that love, like philosophy and thinking itself, is never completed. Each declaration of "I love you" is finite and utterly singular, yet in its abundance of meaning, it means both everything and nothing. To say "I love you" points to a singular place and time, with a unique and always changing self that speaks, "I," and a "you" whose status is always uncertain. In this sense, its meaning is so fleeting, we might say that we can never agree on a meaning for this utterance. Yet everyone knows what love means; to love is to exist as such: to think, to be, to philosophize. The "I love you" is what can be repeated, perhaps must be repeated. Nancy writes, "Love in its singularity, when it is grasped absolutely, is itself perhaps nothing but the indefinite abundance of all possible loves, and an abandonment to their dissemination, indeed to the disorder of these explosions" (83). The "I love you" points to "the abundance of all possible loves." The prodigality of the "I love you" is that, while it ends a particular love story, it also stretches beyond it, indicating a future "I love you." Nancy names love: "it is always the furthest movement of a completion" (92). It is not a completion, only a movement of one, a finality opening out to a series of other finalities. The love story, like philosophy, is in Arendt's words, a way of temporarily placating an "anxiety of existence in general," by first calling this anxiety forth in failed transcendence and then annihilating the anxiety in the swoon of full meaning of love or the immanence of truth, which has the finality, fatality of the last plenitude. But this truth, this love, is never completed; while it appears fully illuminated and transparent, its ecstatic completion always points to another truth, more love.

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Author's Profile: Deborah Lutz lives in New York City and teaches literature at Hunter College. Her primary interests lie in theories of the dangerous lover, English Victorian period romance, and the Byronic Hero. Lutz is a Ph.D. candidate at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. Her recent publications include "Love as Homesickness: Longing for a Transcendental Home in Byron and the Dangerous Lover Narrative" in *The Midwest Quarterly* (2004) and "Kafka's Itinerary: Toward a Writing of Failure" in *The George Washington Review* (2000). E-mail: <stellalutz@aol.com>.