

The Daily Dose of the Good (and Not So Good) Words **On the heads of maidens or how to clear a mucous membrane in one easy step**

I am being pricked by Cupid's arrow (and my consciousness of not living up to your or my own expectations) to send y'all a little love in the form of the next Daily Dose. We continue our scriptural study of the romance genre. I study the romance genre as I would passages from the Bible because I believe that it has as much, if not more, to tell us about our lives.

Today, we break (into) Hymen's ring to contemplate the meaning of virginity, to ponder what it means to be unsploited and then sploited and to wonder why what is essentially a mucous membrane has been so damn important.

Before I plunge into our subject, I need to fill those of you not familiar with the subgenre of historical romance in on some important plot elements. In almost every single historical romance, with a few notable exceptions, the heroine is a virgin, and the hero is significantly more experienced. The hero, more often than not, is a rake.

Rake, as used in these novels, is almost but not quite synonymous with slut. Rakes aren't as dirty as sluts despite the fact that to become a rake you'd have to spend a whole heck of a ton of time with sluts. We could find this troubling, but of course, that was the way it was way back in the day; we don't have to worry about silly sexual double standards now.

Back to the plot. After many hot *tete-a-tetes*, the rake pops the heroine's sweet little cherry. Most of the time, the hero bursts through Hymen's gate in one, surprisingly easy, thrust. The heroine experiences some pain on the loss of her *innocence*, but generally, and also surprisingly, not very much. The hero gives service to his lady by removing this culturally and sometimes physically significant roadblock, so the heroine can ease on down the road of sexual satisfaction.

Of course, it isn't quite so easy. There are repercussions for the loss of innocence. In many versions of this oft-told tale, the piercing of her maiden mucous membrane (versus ones found elsewhere in her body) happens before the knot has been tied. Many wacky shenanigans ensue in which the heroine almost becomes a fallen lady, which would mean that she'd have to join the ranks of the sluts and slatterns who made sure that our rake had sufficient experience to initiate our heroine in such a delightful way. But it all works out in the end, and they live happily ever after in conjugal bliss.

Now it would be easy to mock the formulaic plot devices of historical romance, and a lot of it is, frankly, more than a little disturbing. But I'm certain y'all realize by now that I'm not interested in just setting up straw men to knock down, though admittedly I almost always rough 'em up a bit.

I would be shirking my duties to truth, if I let you believe that the prominence and importance in these novels of women losing their virginity was solely a function of the historical conditions of 19th Century England, when the vast majority of these novels are set. No, it has much to say about what we think and believe and want now in the 21st Century.

Let's push a little deeper.

Our question should be why, in this day and age of supposed sexual liberation when young teens are dressed like strumpets by advertisers and told to strut their stuff to sell us shit we don't need, why is this storyline so common? What makes it so compelling?

First off, I'd like to remind you that smutty romance novels are fantasies. And then I'd like to ask you, who doesn't find cherry popping hot? Male or female or transgendered, gay or straight or bi, all of us probably enjoy projecting ourselves into either side of the virgin initiated by expert scene. Of course, I tend to like cherry popping scenes that involve older women instructing younger *people* or the even more luscious initiation of a strap-on to a man bent over a table, but I realize that few if any historical romances will be written with my predilections in mind. (Authors take note, there is a niche in the market that desperately needs to be filled).

Part of the potency of all this, I think, is that for many of us our first few fucks were painfully awkward and/or just plain painful. The awkwardness of fumbling for condoms and lubrication or even the need for them is edited out of pornos, so that we can be carried away. The awkwardness of piercing a woman's maidenhead or if she doesn't have one due to an active lifestyle of horseback riding, etc., the awkwardness of just getting into what is generally a very tight space is excised. It can be nice to go along for the ride with the characters and have an easy first time.

Virginity is prominent in these novels, because women still are taught to regret, Sex and the City notwithstanding, their sexual experience. The fantasy is that we would find our love before we tasted the fruit of another (or others), and he would claim us. We would forever belong to him. There would be no pesky memory of previous lovers; there would be no comparisons to be made. Never, that I know of and I've read hundreds of these novels recently (see how I sacrifice myself to help save you), does the newly de-virginated heroine go on to find fulfilling lust and/or love with another man.

Part of the heroine's appeal to the jaded palate of the hero is that she is not like the sluts he regularly cavorted with. She is lusty but not learned; she rarely asks directly for what she wants. (Some of this is that we are lazy and scared of our own desires and do not want to have to ask or tell our lovers what we want/need from them). Women who do ask and are skilled in bedroom games generally are set up as villainesses. Women who are forthright about pursuing the hero for sex will lose him in the end to the less direct, less honest, unskilled heroine.

Perhaps because I identify more with the sluts, I find the prevalence of this particular storyline upsetting. At what point does the heroine become the sexual experienced woman who might disgust the hero? Is it after a few years of marriage, when she's become skilled at fellatio? Is it when she might actually know enough about her body to tell her husband that he hasn't quite gotten his tongue right where she wants it?

I may be asking too much. I would like more trashy historical romances that have hot cherry popping scenes and celebrate sexually experienced women who know what they want and get it from a variety of partners without being punished. There is nothing wrong with wanting to

imagine the first time as magical and important and life changing. But it would be nice, if we also could envision that the 500th or 5000th time as magical, important, even as life changing.