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Re-inventing romance: Reading popular romantic fiction

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Abstract

Over the last 20 years or so, examples of popular culture have become more acceptable as topics for exploration and feminists have led the way in this demystifying of art and media products. However, no matter what the stated aims, the readers of popular romantic fiction still seem to be treated as “victims” of psychic incompleteness, of lack of education, of a capitalist and patriarchal system of which they are unknowing pawns. Through empirical research, however, it would seem that women read in a much more sophisticated and active way, and at a great many more levels of interpretation than has hitherto been suggested. The mythical form of the stories is a source of multiple uses and gratifications for women well aware of a society and a set of roles for women within that society that are so often not of their making.



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