

ENG 430 | Fall, 2022
Feminist Desire and Female Pleasure
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Key Concept:

The romance narratives/texts: What? Quality/Serious Literature/ Cheap Literature? Paraliterature? Structure (e.g., the distribution of identities; the process of seduction)? Plot (hyperreality)? Story?

Romance in Paraliterature: Paraliterature comprises written works dismissed as not literary. It includes commercial fiction, popular fiction, pulp fiction, comic books and, most notably, genre fiction with works of science fiction, fantasy, mystery and others.

The romance writers: Why? (i.e., commercialization of intimate human affairs)

The romance readers: Who? What? Why? (i.e., the pleasure of romance reading; the actualization of romantic feelings)

The romance reading: What?

The enormous popularity of romantic fiction: The whys and hows of romance reading; feminist desires; feminine desires; female desires and pleasures; popular type of female pleasure.

The problems/politics of romance (texts) in romantic texts: the relationship between feminism and women? The troubled relationship between feminism and romance reading? a romance fan/reader ≠ a feminist? a feminist reading of romance (text)? the absence of pleasure as 'pleasure' in feminist reading of a romance text due to masculinity, femininity, power structure, sexual politics, cultural meanings, gender issue, identity, ideology, hierarchy, and hegemony (e.g., for Radway, "romance reading is inadequate precisely because it gives these women the illusion of pleasure while it leaves their 'real' situation unchanged.")

The pleasure of romance reading for wo/men: romance readers' great expectations; their 'maximum pleasure'

History of Romance in Brief:

The word "romance" comes from the French vernacular where initially it indicated a verse narrative. The word was originally an adverb of Latin origin, "romanicus", meaning "of the Roman style". European medieval vernacular tales, epics, and ballads generally dealt with chivalric adventure, not bringing in the concept of love until late into the seventeenth century. The word romance developed other meanings, such as the early nineteenth century Spanish and Italian definitions of "adventurous" and "passionate", which could intimate both "love affair" and "idealistic quality".

This term was primarily used by the "western countries after the 1800s were socialized into, love is the necessary prerequisite for starting an intimate relationship and represents the foundation on which to build the next steps in a family."

Psychologist Robert Sternberg (1986) developed the triangular theory of love. He theorized that love is a combination of three main components: passion (physical arousal); intimacy (psychological feelings of closeness); and commitment (the sustaining of a relationship).

Romance vs. Romantic vs. Romantick:

Romantick: Pertaining to an idealised form of love (originally, as might be felt by the heroes of a romance); conducive to romance; loving, affectionate. (from 18th c.)

What are the 5 main elements of romantic literature?

Characteristics of Romanticism. Romantic literature is marked by six primary characteristics: celebration of nature, focus on the individual and spirituality, celebration of isolation and melancholy, interest in the common man, idealization of women, and personification and pathetic fallacy.

What are the main features of romance?

Definition. Two basic elements comprise every romance novel: **a central love story and an emotionally satisfying and optimistic ending**. A Central Love Story: The main plot centers around individuals falling in love and struggling to make the relationship work.

What are the characteristics of romance novels?

According to the Romance Writers of America, a romance novel **must have a central focus on the development of a romantic relationship between two people.** The other criteria for a romance novel is that it must have an emotional throughline and build to an optimistic conclusion.

What should a romance novel include?

Romance bestsellers have many things in common: strong characters, a compelling love story, and steamy love scenes.

What are typical characteristics of a traditional romance story?

Begins with an interesting initial conflict or problem. Develops an emotionally intense core conflict. Keeps hero, heroine, and reader involved in continuing complications and problems for the characters — the plot. Has a level of sensuality appropriate to the characters and the story.

Key Information:

522. a feeling of tension problematizes the project of romance reading, especially for the romance readers.

522. a release of tension ... makes romance reading a particularly pleasurable activity for women."

523. the whys and hows of romance reading; feminist desires; feminine desires; female

desires and pleasures; popular type of female pleasure.

523. "The enormous popularity of romantic fiction with women has always presented a problem for feminism. It is an empirical given that preeminently signifies some of the limits of feminists understanding and effectivity.

523. the romance tradition of happy ending.

523. Radway rejects "the subject positions (i.e., reading positions) constructed (i.e., influenced by the text."

526. The troubled relationship between feminism and romance reading.

526. the distribution of identities (see p. 526 for details).

526. "the distribution of identities is clear cut: Radway, the researcher, is a feminist and not a romance fan; the Smithton women, the researched, are romance readers and not feminists."

527. "the relationship between feminism and women is one of the most troublesome issues for the women's movement."

527. the absence of pleasure as 'pleasure' in Radway's text.

527. for Radway, "romance reading is inadequate precisely because it gives these women the illusion of pleasure while it leaves their 'real' situation unchanged."

528. romance readers' great expectations; their 'maximum pleasure' lies in the happy ending of a romance text [?] (see p. 528 for m-info).

529. "the pleasure of romance reading for women."

529. "the process of seduction" bears "the pleasure of romance reading for women." (see p. 529 for m-info).

529. typical /regular/ common/ traditional/ banal endings of romance texts (see p. 529 for m-info).

529. "the politics of romance reading ... is a politics of fantasy." (see p. 529 for m-info).

530. "deliberate fictional bracketing of life" results in "the fantasmatic [An unbelievably fortunate occurrence. Implies an element of magic or mysticism played a role in the outcome. "I can't believe I didn't hit that car! That was fantasmic!"] perpetuation of the romantic state of affairs."

530. "the actualization of romantic feelings."

530. the ideological consequences of the mass production, distribution, and consumption of romance texts.

530. questions of sexual politics, definitions of femininity, and masculinity, and the cultural meanings of the romance.