

Bibliotekarstudentens nettleksikon om litteratur og medier

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Sist oppdatert 25.03.19

Dette dokumentets nettadresse (URL) er:

<https://www.litteraturogmedieleksikon.no/cm4all/uproc.php/0/kjaerlighetsroman.pdf>

Kjærlighetsroman

Engelsk: “romance novel”. På fransk også kalt “rosevann-roman” (“romans à l’eau de rose”).

De fleste romaner inneholder en kjærlighetshistorie (minst én), men trenger ikke å være kjærlighetsromaner av den grunn. Kjærlighetsforholdet må være det sentrale. I romanen framstår kjærlighet som det største, viktigste og sterkeste i verden.

Kjærlighetsromaner kan tilhøre den vestlige kanon (f.eks. Brontë-søstrenes romaner). De kan samtidig som de er kjærlighetsromaner, også være f.eks. feministisk litteratur. Men de fleste kjærlighetsromaner er formellitteratur, og selges i kiosker og dagligvarebutikker.

Spanjolen Diego de San Pedro skrev sentimentale kjærlighetsromaner på 1400-tallet (Wittschier 1993 s. 77). Portugiseren Bernardim Ribeiros bok *Barndom og ungdom* (*Menina e Moça*; 1554) har blitt kalt en psykologisk kjærlighetsroman (Wittschier 1993 s. 85). Den franske forfatteren Antoine de Nervèze skrev kjærlighetsromaner på begynnelsen av 1600-tallet.

“ ‘Love’ is the key figure in defining the feminine romance: the romance narrative represents the feminine subject’s quest to identify and secure ‘true’ love. But romance is a difficult term to inherit, connoting a number of now quite discrete objects, which are related but treated differently in most definitions:

- Medieval fantasy literature
- Chivalrous stories
- [...]
- Feminised story-telling (women’s stories, women’s films, not serious, degraded wish-fulfilment, feminine escapist pulp)
- Not realism – stories involving implausible outcomes and dodgy causality
- Ur-text for individual and historical processes of engendering the subject (Freud’s ‘Family Romance’)
- Sentimentalised or slushy Love

- A dangerous myth constructed and perpetuated by Institutional Heterosexuality (evidencing feminine false consciousness and tending towards rape fantasy)
- ‘Category literature’ feeding constructed appetite for the above – unreflexively ideological and critically despised.

The remarkable refraction of the concept of ‘romance’, particularly between its ancient (heroic-mythic) senses and its contemporary (feminised-sexualised-commercialised) senses, can be overcome when both forms are recognised as centred on the narrative quest, focalised differently through a masculine or feminine imaginary. Taken together, we can understand romance as a narrative expression of a desire for salvation, the end of evil, or the achievement of freedom out of necessity in the more materialist register.” (Tauchert 2005 s. 17-18)

Kjærlighetsromaner fra 1700-tallet og framover hadde ofte en mannlig forfører som en sentral person i plottet, en person som fungerte som en trussel og symboliserte ondskap (Olivier-Martin 1980 s. 15). “[D]en unge kvinnen møter, i sin verste nød, en pervers forfører eller en lysten, gammel riking, men hun kan alltid motstå dem og kan gi seg selv, ren, til den Utvalgte.” (Guise og Neuschäfer 1986 s. 215) For at heltinnens og heltens følelser skal virke overbevisende, må handlingen ofte foregå utenfor den av publikum kjente hverdagsvirkeligheten (Esquenazi 2007 s. 186).

“The romance quest at its most abstract is a narrative of finding one’s lost object without a map, or a clear sense of what that object might be in reality. The trick is to recognise it when it stands before you, and that recognition demands a kind of knowledge now as thoroughly debased as the feminine romance form in which it makes most sense.” (Tauchert 2005 s. 145)

Undersjangerer som i større eller mindre grad overlapper med kjærlighetsromaner, kan betegnes etter “hvilket miljø kjærlighetshistorien finner sted: legeromaner, herregårdsromaner, teater- og sigøynerromaner, historiske romaner og adelsromaner er begreper for klart avgrensede undergenrer i trivillitteraturen for kvinner.” (Vibe 1984 s. 5)

Kjærlighetsromaner er blant de mest leste sjangerer i verden, og mange av sjangerens forfattere skriver for et internasjonalt marked. Den engelske forfatteren Barbara Cartland er trolig verdens mest solgte forfatter gjennom tidene og hun hadde en enorm produksjon av kjærlighetsromaner. Hun skrev over 700 romaner som til sammen er solgt i over en milliard eksemplarer (<http://www.livresse.com/Nouvelles/000522-cartland.htm>; lesedato 07.09.05). Og hennes gjennomsnittlige produksjon var to romaner per måned. Til tross for denne sjanger-populariteten, er det en tendens til at kvinner ikke vil innrømme at de leser denne typen litteratur. Kjærlighetsromaner (romantisk litteratur, dameromaner) har et “kulturelt stigma”: Leserne er ofte brydd over å innrømme at de leser tekstene og liker dem. Bøkene er “guilty pleasures”, altså litteratur som noen elsker, men også skammer seg over å lese.

Kjærlighetsromaner er vanligvis skrevet av kvinner, har kvinnelig hovedperson, og er skrevet for kvinnelige lesere. Den kvinnelige hovedpersonen kan være fortelleren (“jeg”) eller omtales i tredjeperson (“hun”). Romanene handler om den kvinnelige hovedpersonens liv og lengsler, som forutsettes å være eller ligne også leserens drømmer og lengsler. Leseren ønsker at fortelleren skal si at “ditt [leserens] mest hemmelige begjær” er realiserbart (Guise og Neuschäfer 1986 s. 208). Tekstene gir fiktiv ønskeoppfyllelse ved at hovedpersonen opplever eller oppnår forelskelse, lidenskap, kjærlighet og meningsfullt liv (gjærne også med rikdom og glamour). “Romance offers a literary mode peculiarly suited to represent feminine wish-fulfilment in narrative.” (Tauchert 2005 s. 22) En kjærlighetsroman må “ikke bare fortelle om beiling og begjær, den må også få leseren til å føle seg beilet og begjært.” (Janice Radway, gjengitt fra Naper 2007 s. 67) Dette skjer gjennom at leseren identifiserer seg med hovedpersonen, eller snarere (dag-) drømmer seg inn i rollen som heltinnen i boka. Kvinnene som Radway intervjuet “chose to ignore the events and actions in the narrative that contradicted their reading of the heroine as strong and independent.” (Stokes og Maltby 1999 s. 195)

Den moralske fordømmelsen av kjærlighetsromaner har vært langvarig. “Romances were deemed “dangerous fictions” and “instruments of debauchery” by Oliver Goldsmith in 1761” (Ferriss og Young 2006 s. 31). Slike advarsler har på ingen måte utryddet sjangeren. Det engelske forlaget Mills & Boon “selger en romansebok i Storbritannia hvert sjette sekund” (*Morgenbladet* 1. – 7. februar 2008 s. 34). På nettsida “Romance writers of America” ble det i 2011 oppgitt disse tallene fra en undersøkelse i 2008:

- “- 74.8 million people [i USA] read at least one romance novel in 2008.
- The core of the romance fiction market is 29 million regular readers.
- 24.6 percent of all American read a romance novel in 2008, versus 21.8 percent in 2005.
- 29 percent of Americans over the age of 13 read a romance novel in 2008.
- Women make up 90.5 percent of the romance readership, and men make up 9.5 percent.
- The heart of the U.S. romance novel readership is women aged 31-49 who are currently in a romantic relationship.
- [...]
- The most popular places romance novels are read are at home or while traveling or on vacation.
- 29 percent of romance readers usually carry a romance novel with them.
- Romance readers typically begin and finish a romance novel within 7 days.
- Mass-market paperbacks are currently the most preferred romance novel format.
- [...]
- 50 percent of romance readers are somewhat or extremely likely to try a new subgenre in the next 24 months.
- [...]

- 70 percent are likely to follow an author they like into a new subgenre
- Half have favorite romance authors
- 91 percent are likely to seek out an author's previously published titles after reading a novel from an author they like
- 88 percent are open to trying new authors
- What makes readers try new authors? Recommendations from friends or acquaintances and seeing the book on the retail or library shelf.”

(http://www.rwa.org/cs/readership_stats; lesedato 28.10.11) Tallene er basert på en undersøkelse som det ikke gis mange detaljer om (“The 2009 RWA Reader Survey was a Web-based survey of romance fiction readers.”)

En medieundersøkelse gjennomført i Tyskland i 1994 viste at 35 % av kvinnene hadde kjærlighetsromaner som sin favorittlitteratur, mens bare 2 % av mennene hadde det samme (Kaufmann 2007 s. 45). En amerikansk undersøkelse viste at for ca. 20 millioner amerikanere hadde lesing av kjærlighetsromaner blitt en “avhengighetsskapende vane” (Feige 2003 s. 249). “In 2002, 93 per cent of popular romance consumers in the United States were women, and this readership accounts for approximately 48.6 per cent of the multi-million dollar paperback book market.” (Tauchert 2005 s. 19)

“It is difficult to explain the appeal of romance novels to people who don't read them. Outsiders tend to be unable to interpret the conventional language of the genre or to recognize in that language the symbols, images, and allusions that are the fundamental stuff of romance. Moreover, romance writers are consistently attacked for their use of this language by critics who fail to fathom its complexities. In a sense, romance writers are writing in a code dearly understood by readers but opaque to others. The author of a romance novel and her audience enter into a pact with one another. The reader trusts the writer to create and recreate for her a vision of a fictional world that is free of moral ambiguity, a larger-than-life domain in which such ideals as courage, justice, honor, loyalty, and love are challenged and upheld. It is an active, dynamic realm of conflict and resolution, evil and goodness, darkness and light, heroes and heroines, and it is a familiar world in which the roads are well-traveled and the rules are clear.” (Linda Barlow og Jayne Ann Krentz i <http://faculty.winthrop.edu/kosterj/ENGL618/readings/theory/Krentz&BarlowRomanceCodes.pdf>; lesedato 23.08.13)

“Everyone loves a love story. But this apparently simple tale may be the most difficult form to write well, for a number of reasons. First, love is the only genre where you need not one, but two equally well-defined main characters. [...] the love story has a plot where surprise must come out of intimacy. This is different from almost every other major genre. [...] deep down they are afraid to love. Both know they will lose some freedom and some of themselves, and they will experience pain if they fall to this attraction. But they keep coming back to it because, down the road, they may get something back through this unique other person that is far more valuable. Be sure you show this fear of love for both of your

lead characters. If you believe love is the most important thing in life, if you believe that learning to love is how we live a good life, then you should write this form. [...] A good love story is among the most powerful of all genres because it shows the audience what love could mean in their own lives.” (John Truby i <https://www.writersstore.com/writing-the-blockbuster-love-story/>; lesedato 03.09.18)

I en kjærlighetsroman “the focus is on a hero and heroine’s courtship at the expense of other characters and other experiences” (Deborah Kaplan sitert fra Kaufmann 2007 s. 99). Både hun og han må gjennomgå en læringsprosess for å innse både sine egne svakheter og sin framtidige partners styrker (Kaufmann 2007 s. 308). Kjærlighetsromaner skal framstå som “kloke” gjennom at de viser innsikt i menneskehjertet, i menneskers dypeste følelsesliv (Guise og Neuschäfer 1986 s. 201). Målet er “å finne frem til den ene personen som kan bekrefte en individuell egenverdi [...] Ifølge den tyske filosofen Niklas Luhmann (1927-1998) inngår vi en uskreven avtale om at vi skal se hverandre på den måten vi ønsker å bli sett. [...] en stor lengsel etter kjærligheten. Man ser på kjærligheten som livets høyeste mening.” (Christian Refsum i *Morgenbladet* 11. – 17. november 2016 s. 47)

Det første møtet mellom han og henne er ofte avgjørende, med beskrivelser som dette: “She jumped, her eyes going wide and startled. Then as her gaze flashed to his, she saw his control shatter in an explosion of raw need that stunned every sense she possessed. His face went hard, his eyes fierce, blazing, almost savage in their passionate hunger. He looked primitive, as if polite society had barely touched him. Fear, sheer primal female fear, streaked through her, urging flight, but at the same time she was paralysed, completely and helplessly fascinated.” (Tauchert 2005 s. xiii)

“The romantic conception of love focuses our attention on the opening moments of a relationship. It regards falling in love as the essence of love. [...] We want love to last. But romantic vision concentrates only on the opening stages of encounter with another person. [...] The later part of the relationship is just the after-glow of the genuine period of love.” (John Armstrong i boka *Conditions of Love*; her sitert fra Kaufmann 2007 s. 103). “ ‘Not all love stories are romances.’ Some are simply novels about love. [...] a romance is, first and foremost, a story about a woman. [...] To qualify as a romance, the story must chronicle not merely the events of a courtship but *what it feels like* to be the *object* of one.” (Janice Radway sitert fra Kaufmann 2007 s. 59)

Noen motiver går igjen i kjærlighetsromanene, f.eks. askepott-motivet og kvinnen som “frelser” mannen. Bøkene har en “courtship story”. “Every woman wants instinctively to tame a devil through the purity of her love” sa Barbara Cartland om kvinners behov for å forløse kjærlighetsevnen i “kalde” menn. Mange kjærlighetsromaner handler om kvinner som vinner menns kjærlighet og respekt fra et utgangspunkt der mannen er fortvilet, kynisk og har mistet all livsglede. Kvinnen er frelseren for både seg selv og mannen, og kjærligheten er selve frelsen. I disse

romanene inngår kjærligheten i en slags skapelsesmyte. Det er kjærligheten som er betingelsen for at mennesket skal finne tilværelsen meningsfull. Kjærlighet (eros i åndelig forstand) har siden den greske filosofen Platon vært forbundet med dyp erkjennelse, livsinnsikt, kunnskap og visdom. Kjærligheten kan altså oppfattes som kjernen i livets egentlige, dypeste verdier.

Motivet “å kysse våken” er sentralt i noen historier (Kaufmann 2007 s. 98), dvs. at kvinnen gjennom erotisk tilnærming oppdager sin sterke evne til kjærlighet, hengivenhet osv. “The final kiss” markerer at to halvsirkler er forent til en helhet, og peker samtidig framover som en markør for “happily ever after” (Kaufmann 2007 s. 118). Målet for romanen er at hun og han skal bli en “evig og hellig monogam enhet” (Didier Coste i Guise og Neuschäfer 1986 s. 198).

Hun og han når fram til “du-er-alt-for-meg-øyeblikket” (Guise og Neuschäfer 1986 s. 204), som f.eks. kan komme til uttrykk slik: “All my life I’ve been searching for something, I didn’t know what. I’ve undertaken dangerous assignments in strange places, and still this inexplicable urge drove me on, but now my quest is ended.” (Elizabeth Ashtons *Moonlight on the Nile*, 1979, s. 188)

“Romance novels are often criticized for certain plot elements that occur over and over in the genre [...] the books that hit the bestseller lists are invariably those with plots that place an innocent young woman at risk with a powerful, enigmatic male. Her future happiness and *his* depend upon her ability to teach him how to love. Writers in the genre know that the plot elements that lend themselves to such clashes are those which force the hero and heroine into a highly charged emotional situation which neither can escape without sacrificing his or her agenda: forced marriage, vengeance, kidnapping, and so forth. Such situations effectively ensure intimacy while establishing clear battle lines. They produce conflicts with stakes that are particularly important to women. They promise the possibility of a victory that romance readers find deeply satisfying: a victory that is an affirmation of life, a victory that fuses male and female.” (Linda Barlow og Jayne Ann Krentz i <http://faculty.winthrop.edu/kosterj/ENGL618/readings/theory/Krentz&BarlowRomanceCodes.pdf>; lesedato 23.08.13)

Den unge kvinnen befinner seg vanligvis i en mellomfase, “that short but turbulent interval between a young woman’s identification as ‘daughter-of-the-father’ and as ‘wife-of-the-husband’.” (Tauchert 2005 s. 21)

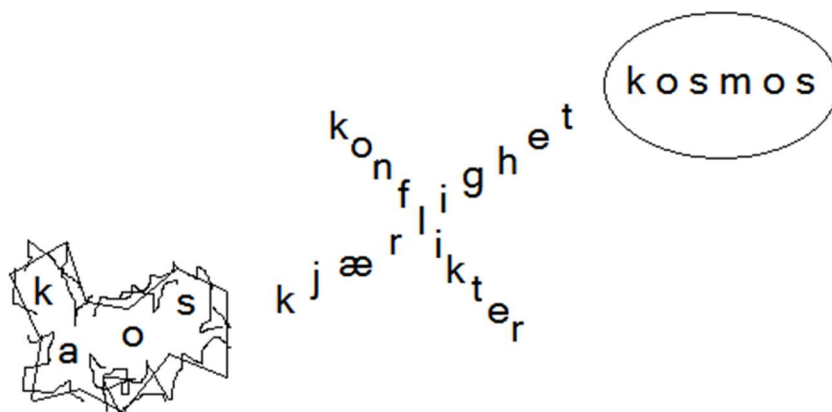
Heltinnen kan i begynnelsen av romanen var ensom og ulykkelig, men hun er vakker og klok (Guise og Neuschäfer 1986 s. 211-212). Ulykke underveis i romanhandlingen er aldri irreversibel/uopprettelig for heltinnen (Guise og Neuschäfer 1986 s. 215).

Kvinnen lengter etter en idealmann og mannen etter en idealkvinne, og når de finner hverandre, finner de også den som ligger nærmest idealet. Dette kan forstås

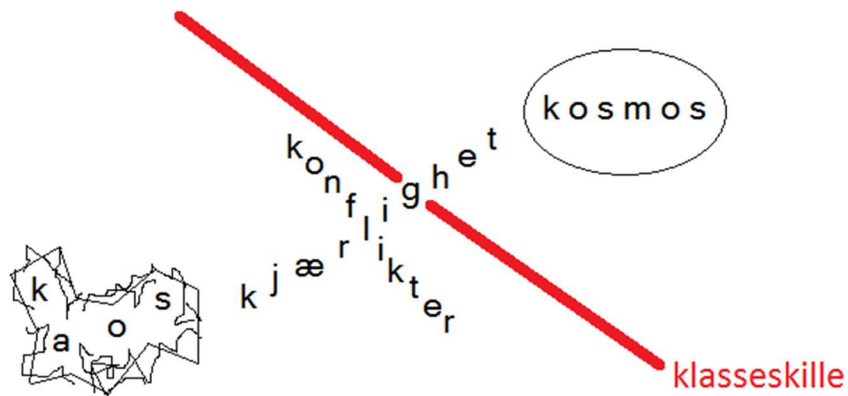
ut fra det som psykologen Carl Gustav Jung kalte arketyper anima (mannens indre kvinnelige dimensjon) og arketyper animus (kvinnens indre mannlige dimensjon). Anima og animus trenger hverandre for å utgjøre en helhet.

I kjærlighetsromaner er gjensidig forelskelse en betingelse for lykke. Kjærligheten settes på prøve og kan virke utsiktsløs, men den seirer til slutt over all motstand. Kjærligheten er en drivkraft og naturkraft som alltid triumferer i denne litteraturen.

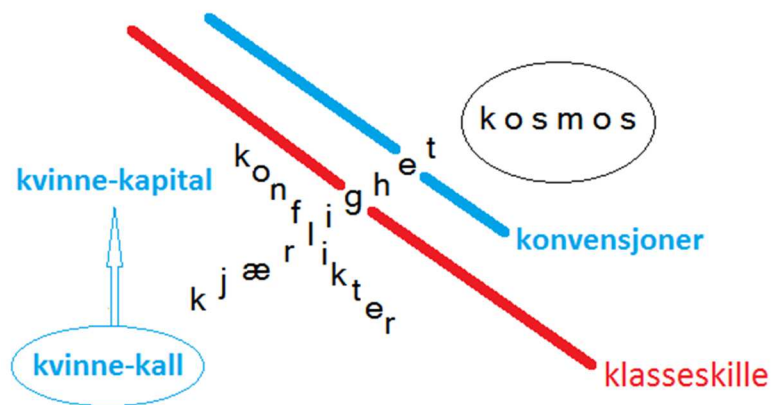
Kvinnen kan oppleve livet som tomt uten en mann, uansett hvor mange plikter og aktiviteter kvinnen måtte fylle tilværelsen med. Noe av spenningen er knyttet til *når* Kvinnen og Mannen vil innse at de er som skapt for hverandre og elsker hverandre. Denne erkjennelsen kan komme langsomt og etter mange hindringer, skuffelser og misforståelser de to imellom. Den gradvise eller sprangvise utviklingen i handlingen går fra ensomhet til tosomhet, fra tomhet til fylde, fra Kaos til Kosmos. (Et vanskelig samliv derimot, er et dobbelt kaos ...) Kaoset kan være der før de to unge blir kjent med hverandre, men ofte vil det være de gryende følelsene som skaper kaos, forvirring, usikkerhet og utrygghet.



Kjærligheten er veien til harmoni og lykke, men konfliktene legger seg på tvers og blir et midlertidig hinder for å nå det kosmos som utgjøres av familien med kvinne, mann og (kommende) barn. Det kan være forviklinger snarere enn konflikter. Kaoset i begynnelsen er ikke alltid like tydelig, det kan være en rolig, men likevel litt tom tilstand. Blant konfliktene i eldre romaner er ofte classeskillet det tydeligste – et skille som kan gjøre det nesten umulig for de to unge å få hverandre:



I noen romaner, f.eks. av Jane Austen, er den ugifte kvinnens liv preget av rolig, ventende lengsel (etter å få en mann og sin egen familie). For å være attraktiv på “ekteskapsmarkedet” må kvinnen skape seg en “kapital” av kunnskaper og ferdigheter (i Austens romaner er det bl.a. å være god i håndarbeid som sying og brodering, å kunne spille piano og å være relativt belest). Hennes viktigste kapital er likevel hennes skjønnhet. En kvinnes kall i disse eldre romanene er å bli gift og få barn, ikke å ha et yrke. Austens bøker er sederromaner (“novels of manners”) der svært strenge konvensjoner for hvordan kvinner og menn skal oppføre seg (“manners”) hindrer åpen kommunikasjon, og dette vanskeliggjør en kjærlighetsrelasjon. Brudd på konvensjonene bringer skam over mannen og særlig kvinnen.



Med parforholdet og ekteskapet blir ensomheten brutt. Hun og han får små smakebiter av kosmos underveis i handlingen: den første berøring, det første kyss osv. Når hun og han gifter seg, er det som om selvet og samfunnet også gifter seg. De to blir en ny familie, som forener to slekter og ikke minst skaper en ny generasjon ved å få barn.

En fase i utviklingen av deres parforhold setter dem på prøve om de fortjener den store kjærligheten. Fasene i fortellingen er ofte forelskelse, atskillelse og ekteskap. “Gjennom konflikter og atskillelse har de vist at de har den rette kjærlighetsevnen som ikke er forstyrret av utøylelige drifter, pengebegjær eller andre uhumskheter.

De har fortjent hverandre” (Vibe 1984 s. 6). Den avsluttende lykken kan komme på grunn av såkalt poetisk rettferdighet (lesernes behov for at de gode skal få sin belønning), ikke fordi den er sannsynlig. Det at heltinnen opplever den store kjærligheten og oppnår lykke, kan fungere som en slags “hevning” over de som har begått henne urett. Den store Kjærligheten er også den store Rettferdighet (Guise og Neuschäfer 1986 s. 214).

Annick Houels bok *Kjærlighetsromanen og dens kvinnelige leser: En veldig lang pasjon* (1997; på fransk) handler om Harlequin-romaner, og tilskriver dem samme funksjon som psykologen Bruno Bettelheim gir folkeeventyr: Tekstene viser fram og bidrar til å bearbeide konflikter.

Noen romaner inneholder de følgende “three distinct stages: (1) the people involved in a love story either do or do not want each other, (2) do or do not get each other, and (3) do or do not keep each other. Moreover, in instances of all of the above classes of love stories there are interesting causes and consequences of (not) wanting, (not) getting, and (not) keeping each other. *Pride and Prejudice* is a novel (and several films) entitled by the two major causes preventing the two potential lovers from even wanting each other, at least for a while.” (Gerard Steen i https://www.researchgate.net/publication/300471617_Genre_between_the_humanities_and_the_sciences; lesedato 07.01.19)

Den utvalgte mannen kan gjerne være rik, men det må gå tydelig fram at rikdom ikke er nok, på langt nær tilstrekkelig. Penger er uten verdi hvis forholdet ikke er bygd på kjærlighet (Guise og Neuschäfer 1986 s. 216). Pengene er en verdi som kommer uten å være oppsøkt, uten å være kalkulert av heltinnen (s. 217). Hjertet og fornuften forenes (s. 218).

Romanen kan avsluttes med et storslått bryllup, og brud og brudgom som stråler av av lykke. Teksten følger eventyrformelen “så levde de lykkelig alle sine dager” (“they lived happily ever after”). Mye skal hende i ekteskapet, men fortellingen strekker seg ikke til dette “rolige” stadiet.

“Perhaps we still read and care about [Jane] Austen because she [...] allows us at least temporarily to suspend our belief in the inevitability of suffering.” (Tauchert 2005 s. xv) “For et publikum som vil føle noe holder det ikke å se noen forelske seg, vi vil se hovedpersoner som blir satt på prøve og foredlet av kjærligheten. Vi vil se folk ønske så sterkt å redde noe eller beskytte noe at de trosser hindringer og overvinne seg selv.” (Inger Merete Hobbestad i http://ingermerete.blogg.no/1313795392_pomp_and_circumstance.html; lesedato 18.01.16) Heltinnen er tildelt rollen som “øverste dommer” over personenes hjerter og følelser (Marcel Graner i Guise og Neuschäfer 1986 s. 211). Hun har innsikt i hva som er ekte kjærlighet og kan (etter hvert) vurdere hva som er verdt å satse på og hva som ikke er det.

“One of the things that makes Austen so astonishingly successful as a writer is also the thing that associates her work with the basest of feminine fantasies: she narrates the daydream of the heroine’s persistent desire to be *somehow* saved by an ideal gentleman: a common desire to be rescued from ‘all this’, and to live ‘happily ever after’. The ‘somehow’ seems to involve a feminine power to transform an animalistic masculine desire into civility, or gentlemanly action.” (Tauchert 2005 s. xiii) “The ‘form’ of romance, taken as an ‘axial system’, expresses a very human desire for salvation.” (Tauchert 2005 s. xiv)

“Marriage in Austen’s novels is not only the ‘career’ most real women of the time had to look forward to. Rather it is a way of grounding in familiar reality a powerful old romantic and religious symbol. In romance it is not only the heroine and hero who marry, but ... self and society. In Austen’s novels many other seemingly opposed principles are wed as well, including humanity and God.” (Deborah Ross sitert fra Tauchert 2005 s. 48)

Forfatteren Donna Hatch liker kjærlighetsromaner som foregår i Regency-perioden, dvs. Austens historiske periode: Personene i disse bøkene er “very cultured. From a young age they were taught to dance, play musical instruments, sing, paint, and recite poetry. Even many of those of the working classes were receiving an education at that time, an unprecedented movement in England. I love the way people in Regency England spoke so eloquently. The upper classes didn’t maul the language – they used correct grammar and had an enormous vocabulary. They prized wit and excelled in using the famous British understatement. I love their dry humor. They also spoke and wrote beautifully and spent a great deal of time writing stories, poems, letters, and journaling. Jane Austen’s novels are almost like poetry. She carefully chose each word for its wording, imagery, and rhythm to deliver the exact nuance she wanted. Gentlemen were civilized and treated ladies with courtesy in a hundred little ways. They stood when a lady entered the room, doffed their hats, bowed, curtailed their language, offered an arm, and more. They were also athletic; they hunted, raced, fenced, boxed, rode horses. They were manly. Strong. Noble. Resolute. Honorable. I love that about them! All of this is what makes them perfect heroes for both historical fiction and Regency romance novels. By the Regency Era, ladies and gentlemen had gotten rid of those powdered wigs of the past few centuries, toned down previously excessive manner of dress which once included excessive ruffles and lace, and even – my personal favorite – bathed daily. Men’s three-piece suits worn today are patterned after Regency gentlemen’s clothing. Another aspect of the Regency that draws me is that it landed in the middle of the Napoleonic Wars, which creates a natural backdrop for tension and conflict. Men and boys went off to war. Some didn’t come home; others came home but were forever changed. This darkness in history creates what’s known as the tortured hero, and I love helping my fictional tortured heroes find peace and healing, and matching them up with ladies who understand and love them.” (<http://donnahatch.com/why-regency-is-my-passion/>; lesedato 11.05.17) Hatch har selv skrevet Regency-romaner.

Mange romaner og romanserier handler om *forbudt* kjærlighet, f.eks. den amerikanske forfatteren Stephenie Meyers *Twilight*-serie (2005 og senere) om kjærlighet mellom et menneske og en vampyr.

“Registeret over konfliktskapende forhold er bemerkelsesverdig lite [i legeromaner]: misforståelser, uoppgjorte kjærlighetsforhold i fortiden, nye rivaler/rivalinner, arbeids- og familieforpliktelser er blant de vanligste.” (Vibe 1984 s. 5) Problemene kan ta overhånd, slik at romanen ender ulykkelig. Det gjelder for eksempel Knut Hamsuns lyriske kjærlighetsroman *Victoria* (1898), der den kvinnelige hovedpersonen dør av sykdom og sorg. *Victoria* er også en kunstnerroman, der kunsten synes å gå på bekostning av erotikk og ekteskap.

Kvinnen lengter etter en mann, men velger egentlig ikke hvilken mann det skal være. Skjebnen velger for henne. Og for å få denne mannen, må hun ha bestemte egenskaper. I noen romaner er hun primært passiv, men med en godhet som virker som en åndelig kraft i det stille: “[T]he heroine of a Harlequin novel sits patiently and devotedly waiting for her hidden virtues to be rewarded” (Naper 1999 s. 127). Mannen har derimot dårlige egenskaper, men han forandrer seg: “Initially he is depicted as distant, cold, cynical, even brutal. By the final page, however, he has become protective, close and sensitive. [...] this aspect of the genre can function as a kind of prop or substitute for the reality of the reader’s own love life. Provided the heroine is patient enough to wait meekly and lovingly, the day will dawn when love conquers all, at least in the world of romances.” (s. 127) Samtidig som det er noe skjebnebestemt ved at de to får hverandre, er det også tilfeldigheter som er på kvinnen og mannens side (hvis ikke han hadde vært akkurat der på det tidspunktet ..., hvis ikke hun hadde ... osv.). Romanenes “controlling idea” er at “love conquers all” (Matthews og Moody 2007 s. 32).

“The heroine is confused by the hero’s behaviour since, though he is obviously interested in her, he is mocking, cynical, contemptuous, often hostile, and even somewhat brutal. By the end, however, all misunderstandings are cleared away, and the hero reveals his love for the heroine, who reciprocates.” (Tania Modleski sitert fra Kaufmann 2007 s. 52)

Mange kvinner verdsetter en romanhelteinne som er energisk, utholdende og som “endures and survives cruelty and coldness from the hero, but who constantly fight against this victimization and never succumbs to it. One of the effects of this is that the hero becomes “feminized“, he softens towards her and starts to treat her with care and sensitivity, and only when he has been sufficiently feminized can she consider him fit to marry. In her reading the housewife finds and validates feminine values in opposition to patriarchal ones. These values are shown to be morally and socially superior to the more politically powerful patriarchal ones, which have the power to make the heroine suffer, but not to subjugate her entirely.” (Fiske 2010 s. 45)

I noen verk er kvinnen påfallende sterk. “The heroine’s unique combination of innate femininity and uncompromising strength enables her either to “heal” the flaws in her hero, thus revealing the gentle personality beneath the hard surface or to transform the deceitful and weak hero into a complete and whole person. Out of an admittedly courteous, but weak, unreliable, rejected, even accursed “beast”, she conjures by the end of a novel a “beauty”, a tender, considerate lover, sensitive to his woman and her every impulse. Obstacles, however, are not confined to the psychological level. The lovers also face massive opposition from society. [...] Unlike those around her she [= romanheldtinnen] can see through the social stigma attached to her hero and into the genuine heart of things. She stands by her chosen one with uncompromising honesty, loyalty and burning love in spite of threats of sanctions and social dishonour. [...] She pursues her aims regardless of all obstacles, but without any detriment to either her femininity or her subject status. [...] The ambiguous, almost androgynous portrayal of the heroine allows room for different kinds of reaction and identification depending upon the various readers’ horizons of understanding and general “cultural baggage”.” (Naper 1999 s. 128-129)

Mariam Darce Freniers bok *Good-bye Heathcliffe* (1988) handler om sjangeren i et historisk perspektiv. “Virginal Heroines, young and naive but seething with passion, change sardonic heroes into loving, monogamous husbands. Such romance novel characters and themes have been transformed by the women’s movement, argues history professor Frenier in this convincing, well-researched study. Frenier surveys earlier feminist studies of women’s romances and traces the evolution of the romance industry, focusing on the competition between Harlequin’s more traditional British writers and the American authors of Silhouette. She finds undertones of rape and violence in late 1970s novels giving way to more explicit and equal sexuality, to gentler, more nurturing heroes matched with stronger, more experienced heroines. By the late 1980s, premarital sex and women’s careers are assumed in many novels, but the heroines greatest power remains her ability to inspire her hero to addictive, obsessive love ... [...] Frenier looks at developments in this literary genre in light of feminist issues and the pervasive social changes that continue to affect women in the post-World War II decades. Exploring traditional and more contemporary depictions of romantic heroines, as well as changing approaches to sexuality, she assesses the degree to which the values of the sexual revolution and women’s movement have penetrated this form of popular culture.” (<http://www.ebay.com.au/itm/NEW-Goodbye-Heathcliffe-by-Mariam-Darce-Frenier-BOOK-Hardback-/181555635254>; lesedato 16.03.15)

Den engelske forfatteren Ethel M. Dell skrev en lang rekke kjærlighetsromaner i årene fra før 1. verdenskrig og gjennom mellomkrigstida, og bøkene er typisk formellitteratur: “Her stories are always romantic and drippily sentimental. They revolve around a young woman who comes in two flavours, Perky and Painfully Shy. The hero also comes in two flavours: Happy-Go-Lucky and Brooding.

Sometimes both flavours will be present at once, and either the Brooding Hero will save the heroine from the licentious intentions of a Happy-Go-Lucky villain, or will chivalrously surrender his claim to the heroine to the Happy-Go-Lucky hero because he loves her so much, and will then go off to the desert to shoot big game and try to forget. [...] To begin with, she uses stock characters. While they are capably drawn, they never vary beyond the basic shape of her mould. After three or four stories, one begins to see the same characters playing out slightly different situations again and again. The characters exist for just one purpose: to create romantic thrills. Second, her stories revolve around romance. It's there from the first sentence to the last and is obviously the only topic she's interested in, although she'll try others if the story is sappy enough. Her aim was probably to make her public cry over every single story and she followed this aim religiously. Everything she wrote was aimed solely at instant, shallow emotional gratification for the reader. Third, Ethel M Dell's stories usually don't depict healthy romantic relationships: they are characterised by passion and fear and don't have any apparent foundation. What made these characters fall in love? What shared views, visions, or faith do they have? Who knows? Just accept that they are, and enjoy the ride." (<http://www.vintagenovels.com/2011/04/bad-novels-complete-works-of-ethel-m.html>; lesedato 07.10.13)

To amerikanske forskere skriver om Harlequin-bøkene: "The prevailing stereotype that Harlequin authors use a formal template to write is not true (Harlequin Enterprises Ltd., Personal Communication, April 2010). Instead, at least since the advent of the Internet, readers provide direct feedback to authors about the sorts of books that they want to read. Subsequently, authors respond to any received feedback and adapt their writing with respect to reader's requests and comments. This said, the plots of these romance novels are noticeably homogeneous. Within the first few pages, the heroine always meets the hero. [...] usually he is aloof, rude, or in some way undesirable to her. This perception could stem from the heroine's misinterpretation of the situation, the hero's lack of social skills, or simply because the hero is not an overall "nice guy." Readers know, however, that he will transform within the remaining 180 or so pages (in our experience the typical length of a Harlequin series romance is 180-189 pages). He will become a charming, devout, loving man by the end of the book. The transformation might be caused by the influence of the heroine in that she causes him to see the error in his ways. That is, "her future happiness and his depends on her ability to teach him to love" (Barlow & Krentz, 1992, p.17). Alternatively, he might have been a kind-hearted person all along, but hides this side of his personality (under the cover of being aloof or rude) so as to avoid being taken advantage of or thought of as less masculine. Somewhere in the middle of the book, though, he begins to more openly express these positive traits, or else the heroine inadvertently discovers them. Thus, the transformation might partially be in terms of the heroine's ability to recognize that the hero has some positive attributes that he did not initially express. However, almost always, the transformative change is focused on the hero, not the heroine."

(Maryanne Fisher og Anthony Cox i http://www.maryannefisher.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/Fisher_Cox_Neeps2010.pdf; lesedato 15.08.13)

“Heroes are always described in considerable detail (e.g., appearance, resources, and career status), while heroines are rarely described in these terms, or in this depth. These descriptions of men are congruent with the evolutionary psychology literature on women’s mate preferences. We found that heroes undergo noteworthy changes within the books, such that they often start as ‘cads’ who are often rude, independent, and aggressive, but by the end of the book they are loyal, devoted men who are in love with the heroine. In contrast, the heroine undergoes only minimal transformation. This desire for a mate who encompasses both a ‘cad’ and a ‘dad’ mating strategy is beneficial to women, evolutionarily speaking, because cads may have high gene quality and dads may provide high paternal investment.” (Maryanne Fisher og Anthony Cox i http://www.maryannefisher.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/Fisher_Cox_Neeps2010.pdf; lesedato 15.08.13) “A cad is a man who is aware of the codes of conduct which separate a gentleman from a ruffian, but finds himself unable to quite live up to them”; “a rogue-type character unworthy of the heroine’s affections; he may be rude, gruff, aggressive, surly, but always handsome and financially sound” (Fischer og Cox).

“Essentially then, a Harlequin plot can be summarized as follows: boy meets girl, boy has to do something to live up to girl’s expectations, girl falls for boy, and they live happily ever after. This formulaic plot in itself reflects women’s evolved mating interests, in that women are actively selecting a mate of good quality for a long-term relationship. The same plot could be written more explicitly in evolutionary psychological terms, which reads as follows: Female meets potential mate and assesses him with respect to gene quality, earning potential, parental investment, personality characteristics (including kindness, honesty, sociality) and emotional loyalty. Being the one to undertake the majority of parental investment, the female is very selective about her potential mates and decides that he needs to improve in certain aspects before he will be a viable choice. She also needs to determine with some certainty that he is interested in a long-term relationship with her. She must also figure out whether or not he has children with other females whom he will be required to invest in, and if so, she requires assurance that he will still care for her and her children. She also needs proof that he has positive relationships with those around him, such as his family, friends, co-workers, all of which reflects a soundness of character.” (Maryanne Fisher og Anthony Cox i http://www.maryannefisher.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/Fisher_Cox_Neeps2010.pdf; lesedato 15.08.13)

“The male ascertains that the female is not interested in a short-term mating strategy, and she seeks a mate with certain characteristics that he should express if he wants to engage in a sexually exclusive relationship with paternity certainty. In some instances, he engages in intrasexual competition to fend off potential rivals, which thus indicates to the female that he is interested in her, as well as displaying

characteristics that might be desirable, such as physical strength. Any necessary competition, though, must not be overly violent, and is rarely initiated by the male so that the perception of his positive personality characteristics (e.g., kindness) remains intact. The female, at some point in their interactions, notices that he has these traits and decides that he is, after all, a viable mate, at which point she expresses her acceptance. The two of them then proceed and initiate a monogamous, committed relationship. As this example of a plot demonstrates, the focus is on the woman choosing a mate, thus placing the heroine within an active role in the mating process.” (Maryanne Fisher og Anthony Cox i http://www.maryannefisher.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/Fisher_Cox_Neeps2010.pdf; lesedato 15.08.13)

“[F]or most women the word *man* reverberates with thousands of years of connotative meanings which touch upon everything from sexual prowess, to the capacity for honor and loyalty, to the ability to protect and defend the family unit. He is no weakling who will run away or turn to another woman when the conflict between himself and the heroine flares. Instead, he will be forced in the course of the plot to prove his commitment to the relationship, and, unlike many men in the real world, he will pass this test magnificently. Should the book fail to deliver on its implied promise, should the writer be unable to create the fantasy satisfactorily, make it accessible, and achieve the integration of opposites that results in a happy ending, the reader will consider herself cheated. The happy ending in a romance novel is far more significant than it might appear to those who do not understand the codes. It requires that the final union of male and female be a fusing of contrasting elements: heroes who are gentled by love yet who lose none of their warrior qualities in the process and heroines who conquer devils without sacrificing their femininity. It requires a quintessentially female kind of victory, one in which neither side loses, one which produces a whole that is stronger than either of its parts. It requires that the hero acknowledge the heroine's heroic qualities in both masculine and feminine terms. He must recognize and admire her sense of honor, courage, and determination as well as her traditionally female qualities of gentleness and compassion. And it requires a sexual bonding that transcends the physical, a bond that reader and writer know can never be broken.” (Linda Barlow og Jayne Ann Krentz i <http://faculty.winthrop.edu/kosterj/ENGL618/readings/theory/Krentz&BarlowRomanceCodes.pdf>; lesedato 23.08.13)

Jane Austen regnes som “mother of the popular ‘feminine romance’ ” (Tauchert 2005 s. x) og “tends to be credited by contemporary popular ‘Romance’ readers as the ‘founder’ of the sub-genre of ‘Regencies’ (or ‘Historicals’)” (Tauchert 2005 s. 19). Austens kjærlighetsromaner (*Pride and Prejudice*, *Sense and Sensibility* og andre) bruker et “courtship plot”, der kvinnen enten nekter å la seg erobre, vil erobres av en tvilende mann (han vet ikke om han vil ha henne eller kan få henne) eller til slutt lar seg erobre nesten mot sin rasjonelle vilje av en mann som begjærer henne. Det hender at den samme mannen frir to ganger, og det er kvinnens

utvikling mellom å si nei til det første frieriet og ja til det andre vi som lesere følger med spenning.

Jane Austens heltinner bærer sine kjærlighetssorger med verdighet, og vil helst ikke at uinnvidde skal merke noe. Den følelsesmessige ensomheten blant kvinnene innen land-adelen kan være stor, og leseren blir berørt gjennom å være den eneste som vet “hva hun egentlig føler” (overfor en potensiell frier og andre). Det oppleves som episk rettferdighet at Elizabeth (Lizzy) i *Pride and Prejudice* får den mannen hun elsker til slutt. Hun framstår alltid som edel og god, og viser bl.a. et beundringsverdige storsinn overfor søsteren Jane som forlover seg med en annen mann på et tidspunkt da Elizabeth tror at hun selv vil være uten mann livet ut. Elizabeth og andre heltinner i kjærlighetsromaner forener det gode, det sanne og det skjønne. Den edle og vakre kvinnen både vet hva som gjør livet verdt å leve (dvs. sannheten), og oppnår lykken som en konsekvens av å ville oppnå dette målet. Kjærligheten i kvinnehjertet forener godhet, skjønnhet og sannhet.

“The comedic resolution of harmonious marriage, redolent of the spring/summer quarter of cyclical myth, becomes the object of feminine desire, and is achieved through specifically feminine modes of heroic agency or ‘virtue’ (modesty, passivity, restraint, negativity). [...] ‘awakening’ to the ‘truth’ [...] This experience of feminine enlightenment tends to be represented as a profound crisis of judgement:

‘Till this moment, I never knew myself ...’

‘The truth rushed on her’

‘she found every doubt, every solicitude removed’

‘The revolution which one instant had made in Anne, was almost beyond expression’

‘Emma’s mind was most busy, and, with all the wonderful velocity of thought, had been able – and yet without losing a word – to catch and comprehend the exact truth of the whole’. [eksemplene er fra Jane Austens forfatterskap]

[...] These moments become crucial points of conversion which produce, or reflect, a new relationship between the heroine’s desire and its object. The synthesis which follows seems to radiate out from the central dyad into the social world that remains its context.” (Tauchert 2005 s. 16-17)

Historiene i mange kjærlighetsromaner minner oss om historiene i gamle og i sin tid nyskapende tekster (Askepott, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Wuthering Heights*, *Jane Eyre*). Noen av de litterære klassikerne har imidlertid en tragisk, ulykkelig slutt, mens “happy ending” er en sterk konvensjon i formellitteraturen. Historiene kan handle om kjærlighet som overvinnet selv de vanskeligste hindringer. Kjærligheten fører til tapt selvkontroll og etter hvert et nytt og bedre selv. Mens forholdet utvikler seg kan personene oppleve usikkerhet, bitterhet, sjalusi, til og med hat overfor den andre. En formel er “boy meets girl – boy loses girl – boy gets girl” (Olivier-Martin 1980 s. 16).

“Provocative, confrontational dialogue has been the hallmark of the adversarial relationship that exists between the two major characters ever since the earliest days of romance narrative. It is Jane Eyre’s verbal impertinence that calls her to the attention of her employer, Mr. Rochester, who notes in one of their first conversations, “Ah! By my word! There is something singular about you . . . when one asks you a question, or makes a remark to which you are obliged to reply, you rap out a round rejoinder, which, if not blunt, is at least brusque.” She is not his equal in terms of fortune or circumstance, but Jane proves early on that she is very much his equal in verbal acuity and assertiveness. Such is also the case in *Pride and Prejudice*, in which Elizabeth Bennet’s growing attraction for Mr. Darcy is based not only upon her “fine eyes,” but also upon her ready wit. The opportunity to engage in verbal sparring is rarely declined by the heroines of romance since it is far more likely to be her words than her beauty that win her the love she most desires. Romances are full of heroes who eschew the company of beautiful but insipid women who would rather fawn than fight. Indeed, heroes of romance enjoy the duel of wits. Frequently they take the heroine’s words to heart, changing in response to her stated criticisms. The heroine’s words are her most potent weapon. It is Elizabeth’s scathing refusal of his marriage proposal that forces Darcy to reevaluate his own behavior and relinquish the worst aspects of his pride” (Linda Barlow og Jayne Ann Krentz i <http://faculty.winthrop.edu/kosterj/ENGL618/readings/theory/Krentz&BarlowRomanceCodes.pdf>; lesedato 23.08.13).

“The abiding desire for a ‘Mr Darcy’ seems to evidence both Austen’s own neo-conservative dream of being *somehow* rescued from the ‘real’ contradictions structuring women’s lives under capitalism, and the persistence of this day-dream in the reading and viewing tastes of her contemporary mass audience.” (Tauchert 2005 s. 24)

“A housewife regularly buys romance novels and finds some pleasure in her husband’s disapproval – buying a romance is both spending money on herself instead of on the family (an indulgent evasion of the ideology of the housewife) and buying a cultural place of her own. The act of reading is evasive: she “looses” herself in the book in an evasion of the ideology of femininity which disciplines women to find themselves only in relation to other people, particularly within the family. This loss is characteristic of *jouissance* and enables her to avoid the forces that subjugate her, which in turn produces a sense of empowerment and an energy otherwise repressed. These evasive pleasures are not text-specific: any book will produce them provided it can take her out of the social self. It is the act of reading rather than the specific text that is the producer of this form of evasive pleasure. But only certain books *can* do this, books with a relevance to her social situation.” (Fiske 2010 s. 44-45)

Radway skiller i *Reading the Romance* (1984 og 1991) mellom på den ene siden *lesehandlingen* som fungerer som en kvinnelig “declaration of independence”, og

på den andre siden det relativt trivielle *innholdet* i romanene. Det å ordne seg med tid til å lese var en “uavhengighetserklæring”. “[W]hen the act of romance reading is viewed as it is by the readers themselves, from within the belief system that accepts as given the institutions of heterosexuality and monogamous marriage, it can be conceived as an activity of mild protest and longing for reform necessitated by those institutions’ failure to satisfy the emotional needs of women. Reading therefore functions for them as an act of recognition and contestation whereby that failure is first admitted and then partially reversed. [...] At the same time, however, when viewed from the vantage point of a feminism that would like to see the women’s oppositional impulse lead to a real social change, romance reading can also be seen as an activity that could potentially disarm that impulse. It might do so because it supplies vicariously those needs and requirements that might otherwise be formulated as demands in the real world and lead to the potential restructuring of sexual relations.” (Radway 1991 s. 213) Leserne er – uansett hvor “virkelighetsfjerne” romanene kan være – gryende feminister (“embryonic feminists”; Ang 1996 s. 103). Gjennom lesingen tilfredsstilte de egne behov og økte sin følelse av “selvverdi” (Dörner og Vogt 2013 s. 201).

“Strangely missing in Radway’s interpretative framework, I would say, is any careful account of the *pleasurableness* of the pleasure of romance reading. The absence of pleasure *as* pleasure in *Reading the Romance* is made apparent in Radway’s frequent, downplaying qualifications of the enjoyment that the Smithon women [dvs. hennes informanter] have claimed to derive from their favourite genre: that it is a form of *vicarious* pleasure, that it is *only temporarily* satisfying because it is *compensatory* literature; that even though it does create ‘a kind of female community’, through it ‘women join forces only symbolically and in a mediated way in the privacy of their homes and in the devalued sphere of leisure activity’ (Radway 1984: 212). [...] [Radways forklaring på] repetitive romance reading is a case in point. She analyses this in terms of romance reading’s ultimate inadequacy when it comes to the satisfaction of psychic needs for which the readers cannot find an outlet in their actual social lives. In her view, romance reading is inadequate precisely because it gives these women the *illusion* of pleasure while it leaves their ‘real’ situation unchanged.” (Ang 1996 s. 104)

Radway tenker seg en slags “idealhistorie” for sine lesende informanter: Først blir en ung kvinne utsatt for en krenkelse av en mann som er altfor full av begjær. Kvinnen avviser mannen, men kontakten mellom dem blir opprettholdt. I romanens lengste fase prøver kvinnen å “oppdra” den altfor “ville” mannen til siviliserte måter å tilnærme seg en kvinne på. Mannen begynner å betrakte kvinnen som en likeverdig person, og dette åpner for kjærligheten. Forelskelsen er deretter et faktum, og denne kan virke nesten mirakuløs for begge partene.

Romanene kan sies å romme “en slags feminin utopi for forholdet mellom kjønnene.” (Esquenazi 2009 s. 93)

“In real life women often complain about the reluctance of their male partners to engage in meaningful dialogue, but in the world of romantic fantasy heroes willingly participate in verbal discussions. They fence, they flirt, they express their anger, they talk out the confounding details of their relationships with the heroine. No hero of romance will ever respond to the eternal feminine query, “What’s wrong?” with the word, “Nothing.” He will tell her what’s wrong; they will argue about it, perhaps, but they will be communicating, and eventually, as they resolve their various conflicts, the war of words will end. One of the most significant victories the heroine achieves at the close of the novel is that the hero is able to express his love for her *not only physically but also verbally*. Don’t just show me, tell me, is one of the prime messages that every romance hero must learn. Romance heroines, like women the world over, need to hear the words, and the dialogue of romance provides them with this welcome opportunity.” (Linda Barlow og Jayne Ann Krentz i <http://faculty.winthrop.edu/kosterj/ENGL618/readings/theory/Krentz&BarlowRomanceCodes.pdf>; lesedato 23.08.13)

De fleste kjærlighetsromaner gir nyanserte beskrivelser av sosiale relasjoner og har et språk for et repertoar av følelser. Det har blitt hevdet at lesingen er spesiell betydningsfull eller “nyttig” for kvinnen (moren) i huset, som vanligvis er “the manager of personal relationships” i familien (Fiske 2010 s. 122).

Romanene har ofte blitt kritisert, og leserne latterliggjort. Amerikaneren Rudolph Bold skrev i en artikkel i tidsskriftet *Library Journal* i 1980 om den typiske leser av romantiske dameromaner: “She’s a 200-pound lady with a bad complexion, a husband who philanders, and kids who never shut up. She didn’t graduate from high school, had to get married and can’t afford a psychiatrist, and so she must continue to live in a world she never made and doesn’t much like. For her there is the escape of reading, not best sellers or popular biographies, but those paper-backed romantic nirvanas that sell themselves in supermarkets and bus terminals. And along with other house-bound housewives, maiden aunts, retired telephone operators . . . she escapes for an hour or two each day into a delicate world where romance warms the heart and perversion dare not enter.” (siteret fra <http://www.allbusiness.com/humanities-social-science/>; lesedato 07.06.11) Den kanadiske litteraturprofessoren Catherine Ross innvender: “Who is this 200-pound high school dropout and where did she come from? Not, certainly from actual data on romance readers. Readership surveys have consistently found that romance readers resemble a normal cross-section of the female population, apart from having attained, on average, a higher level of education.” (samme nettside)

Av og til er kritikken basert på et mer eller mindre “vitenskapelig” grunnlag. “Kärleksromaner av Harlekin-typen är en fara för sina läsares verkliga relationer och sexuella hälsa. Det står att läsa i det senaste numret av det brittiska vetenskapliga magasinet *Journal of Family Planning and Reproductive Health Care*. [...] Bakom rapporten står relationspsykologen Susan Quilliam, som bland annat skriver att “en oerhörd mängd” av de ärenden som är föremål för terapi hos

Quilliam och hennes kollegor kan härledas till kärleksromaner. Quilliam gör en distinktion mellan *chick lit* av Bridget Jones-typen och den genre hon ser som ett problem – *romantisk fiktion*. I det senare fallet följer romanerna en given formel: Flicka möter Pojke redan inom de första sidorna, och därefter är deras gryende kärleksrelation romanens enda fokus. I sista kapitlet lovar så Flickan och Pojken varandra evig kärlek. Enligt rapporten utgör den här typen av böcker nästan hälften av all såld skönlitteratur i vissa länder. Vissa inbitna fans kan läsa 30 böcker i månaden. Quilliam jämför det med de få timmar av sexualundervisning som läsarna kan ha fått under sin livstid. Den här obalansen bäddar för förvridna förväntningar för de kvinnor – för det handlar om en nästintill uteslutande kvinnlig läsekrets – som konsumerar böckerna i fråga. Även om genren har utvecklats och moderniserats under årens lopp så framställs de kvinnliga huvudrollsinnehavarna fortfarande som helt beroende av att hjälten ska “väcka” deras sexuella insikt. [...] “Vi försöker lära ut att sex kan vara underbart och förhållanden kärleksfulla, men de är aldrig perfekta. Att idealisera dem leder till brustna hjärtan”, skriver Susan Quilliam.” (<http://www.dn.se/nyheter/vetenskap/ny-forskning-karleksromaner-skadar-verkliga-relationer>; lesedato 04.09.12)

Forlaget bak Harlequin-bøkene nedsatte i en periode et “panel for kvinnelige lesere” som skulle komme med anbefalinger om hvordan forlagets bøker burde skrives (Sayre 2011 s. 60).

“Gutter liker ikke så godt å lese om og identifisere seg med ei jente i en kjærlighetsroman, det blir kanskje litt for “klissete” for dem. [...] Vi drømmer om den store, altoppslukende kjærligheten og lengter etter den. Men som helt unge har vi kanskje ikke opplevd å være forelsket ennå, men er veldig nysgjerrig på hvordan det er, hvordan det føles. Når vi leser en kjærlighetsroman kan vi på en måte oppleve det gjennom hovedpersonen. Man leser om en jente som blir forelsket og det er nesten så en blir forelsket selv. Gode, varme, pirrende følelser oppstår – vi kjenner dem i magen når vi leser. Og det er nok grunnen til at vi leser kjærlighetsromaner: De får oss til å føle oss godt, det gir en positiv leseropplevelse. Vi vet at denne type bøker gir oss en god følelse, og oppsøker dem når det er det vi er ute etter. Det er også noe trygt ved det at kjærlighetsromaner alltid ender lykkelig, selv om vi vet at det ikke alltid er slik i virkeligheten. [...] I vår tid kan det hende at en kjærlighetsroman ikke handler om en jente som ønsker seg en gutt, men en jente som ønsker seg en jentekjæreste eller en gutt som drømmer om en guttekjæreste. Så lenge hovedhistorien i boken handler om et kjærestepar som får hverandre til slutt, kan vi kalle det en kjærlighetsroman. Du har kanskje lest andre typer bøker som også handler om kjærlighet? En romantisk intrige er ofte med i andre sjangre som en slags bihistorie eller for å gjøre handlingen enda mer spennende.” (Anonyme Vibeke i <http://www.txt.no/>; lesedato 28.10.11)

“Romance seems to be established as the prose equivalent of the romantic comedy of theatre and film.” (Sørbø 2008 s. 97)

Det finnes mange undersjangrer av kjærlighetsromaner, f.eks. chick lit-romaner. Andre eksempler:

Rachel Van Riel og Olive Fowler skiller mellom to romantyper: de før-ekteskapelige og de både før- og etterekteskapelige. Dette kan i mange tilfeller også sies å være et skille mellom romantiske romaner (der vi følger paret fram til ekteskapet) og psykologiske romaner (der vi opplever et parforhold også etter ekteskapet, når paret må bryne seg på hverandre i hverdagen). “There is strength to be drawn from seeing how characters work out their problems and being reassured that there is no such thing as the perfect relationship. Post-consummation novels, which follow the couple after they are wedded or bedded, will have very different shapes; there is no underlying pattern. Disillusion may set in; characters have to compromise; external pressures lead to quarrelling; they are unable to meet each other’s needs. They fall out of love or fall for other people; the focus shifts to the affair or the adultery. Sometimes they come through and the novelist explores how love changes and develops as they grow older. Pre-consummation novels always have happy endings – they stop before it can go wrong. [...] Some people want the pleasure of repeated gratification and don’t want to suffer the uncertainties of the relationship maybe breaking down. Others find the pre-consummation novel too far from the real experience and are frustrated that it stops just at the point where it gets really interesting – what happens to Darcy and Elizabeth [i Jane Austens roman] after the first bloom has worn off? And what did they do about having Lizzie’s mother at Christmas?” (Van Riel og Fowler 1996 s. 41). Van Riel og Fowler legger ved sin distinksjon lite vekt på alle de problemene som kan stå i veien for at to unge blir et par, altså at de førektekapelige romanene sjelden beskriver en dans på roser. Både “pre-” og “post-consummation novels” kan være kjærlighetsromaner.

“I slutningen af det 20. århundrede begyndte der på ny at dukke store fortællinger om romantisk kærlighed op i litterært ambitiøse forfatterskaber. Det er karakteristisk for disse værker, at de både gennemspiller en bærende, romantisk kærlighedshistorie og gennem en encyklopædisk, satirisk og selvbevidst form søger at reflektere nutidens informations- og vidensorienterede samfund. Der er således i værkerne tale om en sjælden sameksistens af to traditionelt modstillede litteraturformer, romancen og encyklopædien. Heraf hybridgenren *encyklopædiske kærlighedsromaner* [...] romanernes encyklopædiske, ironisk-refleksive modus ikke er vendt mod selve kærlighedshistorien, men tværtimod forlener denne med en større grad af troværdighed og aktualitet for en veluddannet, nutidig læser end en traditionel romance. Mens kærlighedshistorien netop får lov til at fremstå som et bud på en sammenhængsskabende faktor i dén komplekse, uoverskuelige verden, læseren måske genkender som sin egen. [...] Det første forfatterskab er nordmanden Jan Kjærstads. Her analyseres seks romaner: *Det store eventyret* (1987), de tre bind i Wergeland-trilogien, *Forføreren* (1993), *Erobreren* (1996) og *Oppdageren* (1999), *Tegn til kjærlighet* (2002) og endelig *Kongen av Europa* (2005). Det andet forfatterskab er englænderen A.S. Byatts; her fokuseres der

særligt på *Possession – A Romance* (1990), men også hendes mindre kendte roman *The Biographer's Tale* (2000) inddrages. Og det tredje forfatterskab er amerikaneren Richard Powers', hvor der fokuseres på en enkelt roman, *The Gold Bug Variations* (1991)." (Tine Engel Mogensen i <http://www.kærlighedshistorier.dk/assets/Tekster/DanskResume.pdf>; lesedato 07.06.12)

Den kanadiske sosiologen John Alan Lee har lagd en oversikt over ulike typer kjærlighet, og disse kan gjenfinnes i mange kjærlighetsromaner. Hver type betegnes med et latinsk ord:

- Eros: "represents passionate love. It focuses strongly on physical attraction and sensual satisfaction. Erotic lovers look for rapidly developing, emotionally intense, intimate relationships. They tend to idealize their lovers and are willing to take risks."

- Ludus: "is love practiced as a game or pleasant pastime for mutual enjoyment. Love is a series of challenges and puzzles to be solved. This type of lover dates several partners and moves in and out of love affairs quickly and easily. He or she refuses to make long-range plans. Ludus is wary of emotional intensity from others."

- Storge: "is a caring, concerned friendship that is based on similar interests and pursuits. The love is evolutionary and may take time to develop. Lovers desire a long-term relationship based on mutual trust. For those who practice this love, the most appealing aspect of the relationship consists in making a home and raising a family together."

- Pragma: "is a love that goes shopping for a suitable mate. All it asks is that the relationship work well, that the two partners be compatible and satisfy each other's basic or practical needs. Relationships are based on satisfactory rewards rather than romantic attraction."

- Mania: "is possessive, dependent love. Lovers are insecure and are fearful of being rejected. Mania is associated with high emotional expressiveness and disclosure, but low self-esteem. The typical manic lover yearns for love, yet anticipates that the relationship will be painful. He or she tries to force the partner into greater expressions of affection."

- Agape: "is all-giving, selfless, nondemanding love. Lovers sacrifice their own interests in favor of their partner's and give without expecting a reward. They are not happy unless the partner is also happy. Prepared to share all they have, they are vulnerable to exploitation."

(http://faculty.frostburg.edu/ncat-psyc/chapter15/15_loveattitudesscale.htm; lesedato 07.06.13) "Storge" er et gresk ord for "naturlig kjærlighet" slik det f.eks. er mellom foreldre og barn.

Lee teori om ulike typer kjærlighet kan sammenfattes slik (her fra Kaufmann 2007 s. 43-44):

- romantisk kjærlighet (“eros”): umiddelbar tiltrekning til en annen person, forbundet med seksuell interesse
- lidenskapelig og eiendomsbegjærende kjærlighet (“mania”): en person vil eie en annen person, og både gir og krever udelt hengivenhet inntil det besatte, ofte forbundet med sjalusi
- vennskapelig kjærlighet (“storge”): vokser fram av et langt vennskap, der felles interesser og aktiviteter dominerer relasjonen
- lekende kjærlighet (“ludus”): fokuserer på her og nå, på forførelse, seksuell frihet og felles, eventyrlige opplevelser
- pragmatisk kjærlighet (“pragma”): oppstår ut fra ønsket om en passende partner, med personer som gjensidig tilpasser seg hverandre for å ha et solid grunnlag for sin relasjon
- altruistisk kjærlighet (“agape”): den andres behov og velferd er det viktigste

Eros-kjærligheten i Lees kategorisering begynner med en intens følelse, en sterk fysisk tiltrekning og oppleves som “kjærlighet ved første blick”. Mania er karakterisert ved besettelse og angst, og partnerne opplever det som både skremmende og betryggende at de er i stand til å elske en annen så intenst. Ludus-kjærligheten er ikke like intens som eros-kjærligheten, og mannen og kvinnen lar ikke kjærligheten dominere deres liv fullstendig. Storge-elskere har ofte vært venner i årevis før de finner ut at de passer sammen som partnere. Lee beskriver den pragmatiske elskereren som en kombinasjon av ludus og storge. Agape er ifølge Lee en kombinasjon av eros og storge, og er en altruistisk kjærlighet.

Lees kategorier er forskjellige “kjærlighetsstiler” (Kaufmann 2007 s. 44) som kan kombineres, og som genererer ulike plott i kjærlighetsromaner og -filmer. Mania og ludus genererer et besettelses-plott. Agape genererer et rednings- og offer-plott. Storge og pragma genererer et våg-å-satse-på-kjærligheten-plott.

“[M]any people believe in romantic ideals and these beliefs do seem to predict facets of real-life relationships.” (Hefner 2011 s. 32) Veronica Hefner beskriver “four main themes that comprise the romantic ideal in western societies: Idealization of partner, soul mate/one and only, love at first sight, and love conquers all [...] *Idealization of partner*. When a person believes that his/her romantic partner is perfect, this individual is said to have idealized his/her romantic interest (Bell, 1975). Idealizing a partner means that an individual typically chooses to focus only on the good qualities, often exaggerating those characteristics, and ignores the parts that make a partner human (Bell, 1975). An individual who embraces this ideal typically feels adoration, fondness, liking, tenderness, and intense sentimentality toward a partner (Aron & Aron, 1986). Consequently, this

person believes the partner is flawless. [...] *Soul mate/one and only*. This theme of the romantic ideal refers to the notion that there is only one perfect love for each individual (Franiuk, Cohen, & Pomerantz, 2002). It is the idea that real love comes only once, can only be experienced with one person, and that fate and destiny work in tandem to connect true lovers (Bell, 1975; Peplau & Gordon, 1985; Sprecher & Metts, 1989). It is a reassuring belief for those feeling “in love” because it rules out other potential possibilities and reinforces the thought that nobody else could make them as happy as their soul mate (Bell, 1975).” (Hefner 2011 s. 22-23)

“*Love at first sight*. The third major theme of the romantic ideal construct is a belief that a romantic relationship can blossom after a one-time meeting (Bell, 1975). According to this theme, it can take just a mere glance or a short conversation for individuals to fall into love. Consequently, this type of love is characterized by flamboyant passion and fast-paced relational movement (Sprecher & Metts, 1989). People who believe in this ideal think that it is perfectly acceptable for physical intimacy and long-term commitment to happen sooner than what might be considered socially normative or appropriate. [...] *Love conquers all*. The fourth theme of the romantic ideal is that love will overcome everything. According to this ideal, different values and interests are not pertinent, and financial, social, and geographical concerns are irrelevant. Indeed, conflict in the relationship does not matter for this ideal, because it is the belief that love will somehow find a way (Bell, 1975; Peplau & Gordon, 1985). The key to this theme, however, is the way in which partners believe conflicts are resolved. Instead of working through the issues and developing real solutions, the belief is that a couple ultimately can ignore problems and instead resort only to love as the mechanism for overcoming obstacles. This theme is the foundation of many of the storylines in many romance novels (e.g., Lee, 2008). For example, one content analysis of these books revealed that most of the stories trivialize the importance of safe sex to the point that the characters often explicitly tell each other that true love means never having to be careful (Diekman, McDonald, & Gardner, 2000). In other words, their love alone is expected to overcome the issues and concerns that arise from practicing unsafe sex.” (Hefner 2011 s. 24-25)

“[M]en are more likely to idealize their partner and relationship, and to believe that love can overcome obstacles and can happen at first sight (Sprecher & Metts, 1989). At first glance, these sex differences appear to be at odds with the popular notion that females are more interested in romance than males are. Yet there is evidence that men are also more likely to behave in accord with such ideals. When compared to women, for example, men are more likely to end a relationship that appears ill fated (Rubin, Peplau, & Hill, 1981) and more likely to sacrifice a career in order to have a romantic relationship (Mosher & Danoff-Burg, 2007). Several scholars have proposed an evolutionary perspective for these sex differences (Ellis, 1995). They argue that men endorse ideals more strongly than women do because men historically have not had to worry about practical matters in relationships, whereas women traditionally have relied on men to provide food and shelter (Sharp

& Ganong, 2000). As a result, women have had to base relationship decisions on logistical concerns rather than on ideals about love. [...] men put a greater emphasis on romantic qualities than do women, who tend to be more realistic and pragmatic than men are. Thus, romanticism often precedes feelings of commitment for men.” (Hefner 2011 s. 27 og 30)

Sosiologen Eva Illouz har utgitt boka *Why Love Hurts: A Sociological Explanation* (2012). “The organised marital relationships of Jane Austen’s day, and the model of love as pure emotionality that followed, are both long gone, she says. Instead, the search for love today, while it looks like free choice, “entails engagement with a complex affective and cognitive market apparatus to evaluate partners”. Yet despite this complexity, we (women) need to understand it more than ever because it is the way we constitute our self-worth. [...] Conversations (what Illouz calls “thick talk”) with friends are a key part of the choice process. With friends we spend a great deal of time reflecting on relationships, agonising over mistakes and hoping new relationships will avoid past errors. Partner choices are frequently framed within well-trodden narrative formulas and visual cliches from Hollywood films, novels and women’s magazines. The media promote the view that we will know “the right man” when we see him: we will look across a crowded room and recognise our soulmate, we will “click”. Illouz says it is too simple to call these beliefs false consciousness. She cites Simon Blackburn that love is not blind. You see each other’s faults. But you forgive them and, through forgiveness, the self-esteem of the loved one increases. Through love we become who we imagine ourselves to be. Love validates us and gives us a sense of self-worth.” (Jean Duncombe i <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/419788.article>; lesedato 05.06.13)

“However, despite our continuing search for Mr Right, today there is an added problem in achieving romantic perfection. Integral to modernity is irony. Illouz cites David Halperin that true sexual passion requires the elimination of irony. This irony, uncertainty and sometimes cynicism about “real love” leads to another new dimension of the choice process, which Illouz calls “emotional interiority”. When seeking a relationship we engage constantly in self-scrutiny. What sort of person am I really? What sort of person do I really desire? When I am in a relationship, how do I really feel? How long will this love last? It is a modern belief, she argues, that such reflexive self-understanding will help us to better understand ourselves and our choices. But again, Illouz draws our attention to the drawbacks of introspection. Choices are harder. Modern introspection creates ambivalence, a sense of dissatisfaction about never fully knowing what our “true” feelings are. [...] She draws out the contradictions between our endless idealisation of love set alongside irony and ambivalence. There is acknowledgement that relationships, whether marriage, remarriage or cohabitation, frequently break down. Optimistic searches for a new romantic partner therefore carry within them an inbuilt expectation of disappointment.” (Jean Duncombe i <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/419788.article>; lesedato 05.06.13)

Ellen Fein og Sherrie Schneiders selvhjelpsbok *The Rules: Time-tested Secrets for Capturing the Heart of Mr. Right* (1995) anbefaler hva kvinner bør gjøre for å tiltrekke seg og gifte seg med sin drømme-mann. Et av rådene er at kvinnen bør være “easy to be with but hard to get”. Kvinnen bør ifølge Fein og Schneider få mannen til å ville ha henne, men ikke framstå som om hun vil ha han.

For en mann betyr ekteskapet med en svært vakker kvinne vanligvis en status-økning, uansett om hun er fattig, mens valget av en mann for en kvinne alltid bør innebære en forbedret sosial og økonomisk livssituasjon (Kaufmann 2007 s. 98).

Hun må omforme han til “husband material” (Kaufmann 2007 s. 53). Mannen må lære seg “gentleness”, dvs. å bli mer sensitiv overfor kvinnen (Kaufmann 2007 s. 49). “In the love story, the male undergoes a kind of feminization by contamination” (Mary Ann Doane sitert fra Kaufmann 2007 s. 50), blant annet med en ny evne til å vise følelser og reflektere over sin egen oppførsel. Den amerikansk-tyske professoren og feministen Shere Hites bok *Women and Love: A Cultural Revolution in Progress* (1987) refererer til en undersøkelse blant flere tusen kvinner. Hele 98 % av dem ønsket seg mer “verbal nærhet til mennene som de elsker [...] de vil at mennene skal snakke mer om sine personlige tanker, følelser, planer og bekymringer og spørre kvinnene om deres” (sitert fra Kaufmann 2007 s. 46). For kvinner var mangel på kommunikasjon en av de viktigste grunnene når de ville ha skilsmisse (s. 46).

Det kan være et problem å finne en betegnelse på romaner der kjærlighet (og lett underholdning) er hovedsaken, uten at de nødvendigvis (kun) er kjærlighetsromaner. I 2007 kommenterte en bibliotekar ved et norsk folkebibliotek navnevanskene slik: “[V]i ønsker å samle Frid Ingulstad, Danielle Steel, Margit Sandemo og de [på samme hylle]. Dette fordi vi tror det vil være til hjelp for brukere som liker en forfatter/bok og som leter etter andre som likner. Problemet er hva man skal kalle samlingen/kategorien – Det vi har kommet på sitter ikke helt. Vi har prøvd “Serier” (noe for eksempel Steel ikke er). Vi har tenkt på “Underholdning” (er noe subjektivt). “Lett underholdning” (denne er heller ikke god – den antyder at det som er å finne her er av dårlig kvalitet (om så noe mildere enn “husmor-porno”).” (e-postlista Biblioteknorge, 17.08.07) En annen bibliotekar svarte at “Vi kaller samlingen: Kjærlighet. Dette fungerer bra = fornøyde kunder”.

“Romance Novels: Legitimate Laughingstock or Ultimate Girl Power? [...] They’ve been called [...] dirty, bawdy, glorified pornography, traditionalistic, irrelevant, silly, predictable and formulaic, etc., etc. ad nauseum. I say the naysayers are completely missing the point – not to mention that they clearly haven’t picked up a romance novel (or perhaps any other book for that matter) in the last 25 years. [...] Bestselling author Nora Roberts perhaps sums it up best: “The books are about the celebration of falling in love and emotion and

commitment, and all of those things we really want.” ” (Keyren Gerlach i <http://harlequinblog.com/>; lesedato 07.02.12)

Den tyske sosiologen Niklas Luhmann har prøvd å beskrive kjærlighetsromanenes betydning for kvinners psyke i sin bok *Kjærlighet som lidenskap: Om koding av intimitet* (1982; oversatt til engelsk med tittelen *Love as Passion: The Codification of Intimacy*).

Tania Modleskis bok *Loving with a Vengeance: Mass Produced Fantasies for Women* (1982) prøver å forklare de letteste kjærlighetsromanenes popularitet. “Their enormous and continuing popularity, I assume, suggests that they speak to very real problems and tensions in women's lives. The narrative strategies that have evolved for smoothing over these tensions can tell us much about how women have managed not only to live in oppressive circumstances but to invest their situations with some degree of dignity” (Modleski sitert fra <http://www.ejumpcut.org/>; lesedato 29.02.12).

Modleski argumenterer mot “the view taken by Ann Douglas that Harlequins appeal in a purely escapist fashion to feminine masochism [...] For what Modleski discovers by examining the dynamics of the reading process for Harlequins is that the selfless “disappearing act” seemingly required of both heroine and reader has beneath it an outlet for feminine (if not feminist) rage. Popular culture texts tend to be elusive not in their complexity but rather in their simplicity. Their complexity lies not in the deciphering of the meaning of the text but rather in the deciphering of the psycho-cultural dynamics of the reading process. [...] Modleski relates this to John Berger's ideas that a woman's way of seeing in our culture must be schizoid. At the same time that she exists as an object of sight for men, she must continually survey herself from a male point of view. Evidence of this doubled perspective is also apparent in Modleski's approach to the overall reading dynamics. In the Harlequin formula, a young, innocent woman becomes involved with a handsome older man whose behavior towards her — contemptuous and often brutal – confuses her. Yet it does not confuse the reader because the reader has “retrospective illumination” from her knowledge of the Harlequin formula. Unlike the heroine, the reader is able to read back from the formula ending in which all misunderstandings are cleared away and the hero reveals he has loved the girl all along. The reader may identify emotionally with the heroine without suffering her confusion.” (Jane Feuer i <http://www.ejumpcut.org/>; lesedato 29.02.12)

“Modleski finds, in this distancing the potential for expressing strong revenge fantasies upon men for the way they treat women (the heroine exhibits quite a bit of hostility toward the hero for the way he treats her) while at the same time easing women's guilt at their anger (we know he loved her all along), Modleski relates this reader response to psychoanalytical theories of hysteria and feminine masochism. [...] Modleski concludes that rather than condemning Harlequins, we should

condemn the social conditions that have made them necessary.” (Jane Feuer i <http://www.ejumpcut.org/>; lesedato 29.02.12)

Den franske sosiologen Bruno Péquignots bok *Kjærlighetsrelasjonen: Sosiologisk analyse av den moderne sentimentale roman* (1991; på fransk) hevder at kvinnene søker etter sannsynlige historier som kunne ha skjedd, og dermed fortellinger som kunne vært selvopplevde for dem selv. Romanene utformer en ideell kjærlighetsrelasjon i lesernes bevissthet. Den plutselige forelskelsen er nødvendig, men ikke nok. Kjærlighetsforholdet må gjøres solid og permanent, og dette går ikke av seg selv. Oppbyggingen av en solid relasjon skjer gjennom kjennskap til hverandre, og ved å overkomme en serie av utfordringer eller “prøvelser”. Péquignot viser dessuten at overraskende mange menn leser Harlequin-bøker, som det på slutten av 1980-tallet ble solgt 30 millioner årlig av i Frankrike (<http://www.cnrs.fr/Cnrspresse/n381a4.htm>; lesedato 03.05.13). Kvinnene “gjemmer seg” for å lese “sentimentale romaner”, og er særlig motvillige til å vise fremmede hvilke bøker de liker (Péquignot gjengitt fra Bourgatte 2008 s. 120).

Det britiske forlaget Mills & Boon ble etablert i 1908. “Mills & Boon wasn't all about lust and amour at first – when the company initially launched, it was a general fiction publisher, turning out books about everything from travel to craft. The first book it ever published was prophetically a romance book – *Arrows From The Dark*, by Sophie Cole. Critics gave it a glowing report and by 1914, 1,394 women had bought a copy. The writer went on to pen another 65 thrilling titles for the publisher during her fruitful career. [...] Whilst still targeting librarians and book buyers, Mills & Boon also started to establish a direct mail catalogue operation. Twice a year, the ‘Happy Reading’ catalogue did the rounds of its regular readers. Alan Boon linked the company up with magazines such as *Women's Weekly* and other popular publications. Editors of these magazines helped to shape the editorial direction of the company's output. The magazine industry was thriving and thus served as an excellent vehicle for Mills & Boon – whose serials appeared weekly. Readers would have a taste of a story and go and buy or borrow the book. An important name at the time was Winifred ‘Biddy’ Johnson, who edited *Woman's Weekly* for over 20 years. Alan Boon described the publisher and *Woman's Weekly* as being “sort of brother and sister” during the period – and Biddy often demanded changes and dictated policy to the authors during her reign. During this time, one of the company's biggest stars was also discovered. Lilian Warren, who wrote under three names – Rosalind Brett, Kathryn Blair and Celine Conway – established a new style, capturing the imagination of her readers with erotic, sometimes violent stories, set on foreign shores. “She had an immense influence on the romance novel, by the way she portrayed these handsome heroes, the sunshine backgrounds, and her skills in dialogue,” Alan Boon noted.” (<http://www.millsandboon.co.uk/history.asp>; lesedato 11.04.13)

Forlaget Harlequin Enterprise har sin base i Canada, Mills & Boon i London, Silhoutte i New York og Cora i Hamburg (Kaufmann 2007 s. 99).

“100 years of Mills & Boon. The publisher, now a subsidiary of Harlequin Enterprises Ltd., has grown to become the UK's undisputed market leader in romance fiction publishing, entrenched in the hearts and minds of its avid readership. Since two dashing young entrepreneurs – Gerald Mills and Charles Boon – launched the company in 1908 with just a modest £1,000, millions of women across the globe have been entranced by their books, reaching into their handbags or to their bookshelves to spend a few hours transported into a fantasy world of intrigue, danger, passion and romance. [...] Mills & Boon's army of dedicated readers know that once they pick a brightly coloured paperback, they will be taken on an easy, thrilling read – with a guaranteed happy ending. Alan Boon, one of the masterminds behind the stylised romances, once declared that the books “could take the place of Valium” – because they are so well known for their restorative quality. [...] One of the most notable developments occurred in the 1950s when Mills & Boon caught the attention of the Canadian firm, Harlequin Books. Set up in 1949 by Richard and Mary Bonnycastle, the company had begun to publish reprints of Western novels, mysteries and thrillers. In 1957, they published their first Mills & Boon – Anne Vinton's medical romance, *The Hospital In Buwambo*. In 1958, Harlequin published 16 Mills & Boon titles, all Doctor-Nurse romances. The companies then started to publish each other's books in their respective countries” (<http://www.millsandboon.co.uk/history.asp>; lesedato 11.04.13).

“By 1966, paperbacks represented 50 per cent of Mills & Boon's turnover and by 1968 they were turning out 130 hardback and 72 paperback romances a year. Paperback publishing also encouraged standardisation – and book length was enforced at 188 to 192 pages and glamorous heroines became the central element of covers. [...] More new authors signed up – one of the most popular of which, was Violet Winspear. Influenced by the likes of Lilian Warren, she set her novels in Hollywood with a brooding hero and young tortured heroine. She became Mills & Boon's top-selling writer – and shocked the older readers with her erotic tales. In 20 years, she wrote 37 titles, most of which were set abroad. As society was changing, along with attitudes to family, love, sex and marriage, Mills & Boon's authors started to reflect these developments in their writing. The traditional boundaries still remained firm – but the occasional thriller fantasy became more commonplace. The traditionally submissive heroine became more assertive undertaking solo journeys, following their heroes to foreign countries, for example. [...] In the 2000s, they maintain the title of the world's leading publisher of romance fiction. Each month, Mills & Boon publish 50 new titles, with manuscripts from 200 authors living in the UK and a further 1,300 worldwide. Every five seconds there is a new Mills & Boon book sold within the UK.” (<http://www.millsandboon.co.uk/history.asp>; lesedato 11.04.13)

“There are currently 10 products in the Mills & Boon series:

Modern: This is one romance you'll never want to end! Glamorous and sophisticated, these passionate romance titles feature international affairs, seduction and passion.

Modern Extra: Sizzling, stylish and sensual – the ultimate temptation. Titles feature intense relationships, reflecting shared feelings, desires and dreams.

Romance: Dare to dream... Warm and emotionally fulfilling, this series captures the magic of falling in love. They are sparkling, fresh and tender love stories.

Blaze: Hot and Sexy, couples in contemporary romantic relationships embark on sexual adventures and fantasy journeys. There is a promise of intimate experiences and total scorching satisfaction.

Medical: The best medicine of all for healing any sort of ailment. These delightful contemporary romances set against the background of the medical profession with glamorous young nurses and doctors to make your heart race.

Historical: Love and passion bring the past to life! From medieval sagas to the roaring twenties, rich and vivid, these novels capture the essence of times gone by.

Desire 2-in-1: Two passionate, daring and provocative love stories in every book, for the ultimate extended read.

Special Edition: Compelling romances packed with emotion. These books tackle sensitive issues while embracing the romantic ideal that love can conquer all.

Superromance: Realistic and passionate, these contemporary novels are longer and more involved – a bigger, action-packed read, so when you just can't put that book down, you won't have to!

Intrigue: Romance suspense at its best: Danger, deception and desire are at the forefront of these gripping mysteries.” (<http://www.millsandboon.co.uk/history.asp>; lesedato 11.04.13)

Den britiske filmregissøren Dan Zeffs romantiske komedie *Consuming Passion* (2008) handler om tre kvinners jakt på en lidenskapelig mann, og er samtidig historien om forlaget Mills & Boon. En av kvinnene i filmen skrev flere hundre romaner som gis ut på forlaget. Franskmannen François Ozons film *Angel* (2007) er basert på en roman av den britiske forfatteren Elizabeth Taylor. Angel Deverell skriver romaner med titler som *Hearts in Venice* og *Diana in Delphi*. “We realize that Angel's writing is not brilliant about twenty minutes into the film, when she's watching a play that has been adapted from one of her novels. That scene was invented to visually illustrate the essence of her writing. But I tried to temper the ridicule and the clear absence of literary merit with Angel's emotional reaction to

her success. [...] If I'd followed the book, the whole movie would have been like the scene where Angel dines with her publisher, where she behaves like a hysterical, manipulative monster. I could have continued playing with this rather farcical caricature, but I also wanted to explore Angel's complexities, discover her fragility behind the protective shield of her image as a strong woman who has rapidly climbed the social ladder. Her rise is all the more spectacular because she's a woman. She's her own boss, she chooses her husband, buys her own house and controls her career. Essentially she has broken free of her Edwardian shackles. She's sort of an early feminist. Women today can relate to her. But I wanted to show all sides of that coin, and reveal her multiple facets. Angel has built her life on lies and suppressed emotions. She is often in situations where she's playing a role, acting. But I also included scenes where she has no other choice than to be herself, like when she's humiliated at school, or when her mother dies." (Ozon sitert fra <http://www.francois-ozon.com/en/interviews-angel>; lesedato 15.09.15)

"Elinor Glyn, E. M. Hull and Ethel M. Dell were all British writers whose books were immensely popular in their time. [...] Elinor Glyn was the most flamboyant of these writers. [...] *Three Weeks* [av Glyn] is the story of Englishman Paul Verdayne, who is sent abroad by his aristocratic parents to break up an unsuitable love affair (he has fallen for a parson's daughter). In Lucerne, he meets a mysterious woman dressed all in black who exudes an hypnotic fascination. Paul and the Lady, who is a Balkan queen on the run from her degenerate and cruel husband, begin a passionate affair. She and Paul spend three weeks together where they make love on tiger skins amid masses of exotic flowers. When the three weeks are up and the Lady leaves Paul, he faints and is ill for a time. [...] Elinor received gifts of tiger skins from several admirers. She was bewildered by the fuss the critics raised about the "immorality" of *Three Weeks*. Elinor, despite her passionate purple-prose writing style, was not really interested in sex. She thought sex too earthy and animalistic – downright unromantic in fact. There is lots of kissing, caressing and writhing around on the tiger skin in the book, but there are no descriptions of sex. A large part of the book is devoted to the Lady's lectures to Paul to be true to his race and heritage, but according to most critics, an adulterous affair, especially one the author seemed to condone, was not acceptable subject matter for a novel in 1907." (Ellen Micheletti i <http://www.likesbooks.com/hist1.html>; lesedato 21.10.14)

"Glyn coined the term 'It' in her novel *The Man and the Moment* (1914) a 1920s euphemism for sex appeal of which the actress Clara Bow was the 'It' girl. Glyn herself was a vivacious green-eyed red-head who wrote high-spirited romances that dealt with aristocracy and issues of morality in society. [...] *Three Weeks* [...] scandalized Edwardian aristocrats and jeopardized Glyn's status. The Headmaster of Eton deemed it immoral and banned it from the premises, but ultimately the furore ensured her meteoric rise to fame. [...] The *doggerel*

Would you like to sin

With Elinor Glyn
On a tiger skin?
Or would you prefer
To err
With her
On some other fur

was inspired by a detailed scene in *Three Weeks*.” (<http://www.online-literature.com/elinor-glyn/>; lesedato 22.10.14)

“Ethel May Dell was born in a suburb of London, England in 1881. [...] Beneath her shy exterior, Ethel had a passionate heart and most of her stories were stories of passion and love set in India and other British colonial possessions. They were considered to be very racy and her cousins would pull out pencils to try and count up the number of times she used the words; passion, tremble, pant and thrill. [...] Ethel Dell's book, titled *The Way of an Eagle*, was published in 1912 and by 1915 it had gone through twenty seven printings. *The Way of an Eagle* is still in print and is very characteristic of Ethel Dell's novels. There is a very feminine woman, an alpha male to rival any of Linda Howard's heroes, a setting in India, passion galore liberally mixed with some surprisingly shocking violence and religious sentiments sprinkled throughout. The book opens in a fort under siege on the frontier in India. Muriel Roscoe is the fort commander's daughter. The constant stress of being under seige has caused her to take refuge in opium. Muriel's father has chosen Nick Ratcliffe to take care of her and Muriel does not like him. Nick is big and strong and overpoweringly masculine. They are forced to flee the fort, have adventures in the desert where Nick kills a man, and when they reach the garrison town and safety, Nick proposes to Muriel (they have spent a lot of time together unchaperoned). Muriel agrees to the marriage, but changes her mind and becomes engaged to another man who is smooth, suave and polite but lacks Nick's sheer sexual magnetism. Muriel is not happy and when she sees Nick again she realizes that he is “the one,” but her pride prevents her from telling him. Muriel does break her engagement and goes back to India where she languishes around missing Nick dreadfully. Back in India, Nick has seemingly vanished, but he has disguised himself as a beggar and has been hanging around so he can keep watch on Muriel. Nick reveals himself when, still disguised as a beggar, he foils an assassination attempt on a high ranking officer. All of Muriel's doubts are swept away: “The tumult of her emotions swelled to sudden uproar, thunderous, all-possessing, overwhelming, so that she gasped and gasped again for breath. And then all in a moment she knew the conflict was over. She was as a diver, hurling with headlong velocity from dizzy height into deep waters, and she rejoiced – she exulted – in that mad rush into depth. With a quivering laugh she moved. She loosened her convulsive clasp upon his hand, turned it upwards, and stooping low, she pressed her lips closely, passionately, lingeringly upon his open palm.” Readers adored Ethel M. Dell's novels, critics hated them with a passion, but she did not care what the critics thought. She considered herself a good storyteller – nothing more and

nothing less. Ethel M. Dell continued to write novels along the same lines as *The Way of an Eagle* for a number of years.” (Ellen Micheletti i <http://www.likesbooks.com/hist1.html>; lesedato 21.10.14)

“E. M. (Edith Maude) Hull, was so shy and retiring that no picture exists of her. [...] During World War I, she began to write to amuse herself and produced a book that is still in print and has influenced romances ever since. *The Sheik* is the story of a spoiled English girl, Diana Mayo, who will not listen to anyone. She refuses offers of marriage and wanders out on her own in the Egyptian desert. While she is out in the desert, Diana is kidnapped by Sheik Ali Ben Hassan and is ravished again and again and again and again (you get the picture). She puts up a token protest at first, but later learns to love her ravisher (who turns out to be the long-lost son of an English nobleman). Here’s a passage from *The Sheik*: “The flaming light of desire burning in his eyes turned her sick and faint. Her body throbbed with the consciousness of a knowledge that appalled her. She understood his purpose with a horror that made each separate nerve in her system shrink against the understanding that had come to her under the consuming fire of his ardent gaze, and in the fierce embrace that was drawing her shaking limbs closer and closer to the man's own pulsating body. “Oh you brute! You brute!”, she wailed, until his kisses silenced her.” Talk about purple prose! Critic's jaws dropped and they quickly proclaimed the book pornography. Readers bought it by the cartload and Mrs. Hull went on to write several more books, all set in Egypt and all featuring masterful men and masochistic women. Some of her other titles were *The Sons of the Sheik* and *The Desert Healer*. The movie version of *The Sheik* starring Rudolph Valentino was a world-wide smash and made the desert sheik the number one sex-symbol of the day. Sheiks have gone in out of favor ever since, but have never totally faded away.” (Ellen Micheletti i <http://www.likesbooks.com/hist1.html>; lesedato 21.10.14)

Victoria Holt var ett av flere pseudonym som den engelske forfatteren Eleanor Hibbert brukte. “Hibbert’s first book as Victoria Holt was *Mistress of Mellyn* [1960]. I was enthralled when I encountered the book’s heroine, young governess, Martha Leigh; its powerful, enigmatic hero, Con TreMellyn; the great, haunted mansion; and the suggestions of scandal and betrayal. [...] I read all of the more than thirty books that followed *Mistress of Mellyn*, all the way through *The Black Opal* published posthumously in 1993. [...] The Holt books were translated into twenty languages and sold more than 75 million copies. Hibbert had started a revival of the gothic romance that persists into the 21st century. [...] Her afternoons were devoted to answering the letters she received from fans all over the world. [...] She had sold more than 100 million copies of her two hundred books written over a career that spanned more than half a century. She wrote Gothic romance, historical fiction, mystery, children’s books, and non-fiction. She won praise from critics and loyalty from untold numbers of fans. Her particular focus, she said, was “women of integrity and strong character” who were “struggling for liberation, fighting for their own survival.”” (den anonyme kvinnen Janga i <http://>

www.heroesandheartbreakers.com/blogs/2012/11/the-many-facets-of-victoria-holt/ lesedato 04.03.15)

“The bestselling pioneer of romantic-suspense novels Mary Stewart has died at the age of 97, her publisher has said. Known for much-loved novels including *Touch Not the Cat*, *This Rough Magic* and *Nine Coaches Waiting*, Stewart among the first novelists to integrate mystery and romance. She made the archetype of the determined, intelligent heroine her own, thrusting her into daring adventures from which she would emerge intact and happily romantically involved. Stewart was spotted after sending the manuscript of her first novel, *Madam, Will You Talk?*, to Hodder & Stoughton in 1953. It hit the bestseller lists the following year, and she went on to pen a series of novels in a similar vein. [...] ‘We must love and imitate the beautiful and the good.’ [Stewart said]” (<http://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/may/15/romance-suspense-novelist-mary-stewart-dies/>; lesedato 12.03.15)

Lesingen av kjærlighetsromaner som “litterær fastfood”, fører med seg “idealiserende tankeskjemaer, som ikke lar seg omsette i virkeligheten, og kan føre til alvorlige problemer i parforhold og i taklingen av hverdagens utfordringer” (Feige 2003 s. 249). (Jamfør fenomenet bovarisme.)

En kvinne som heter Kristin Bird skrev i 2012 på en katolsk nettside: “[T]here has been a seedy underbelly to my reading habits as well: authors whose books are found in the checkout line at the grocery store instead of the college bookstore. Authors who aren’t really a part of the classic lit canon: Nora Roberts, Stephanie Laurens, Jude Deveraux, and Johanna Lindsey. Yes, it’s true – I have a history as a voracious romance novel reader. Harlequin romance novels. You know the ones: with the cover featuring a scantily clad lady and a Greek god slowly tearing her dress off her shoulder. At one point, I had 2 whole bookshelves (not 2 shelves of a bookshelf, 2 whole bookshelves) filled with romance novels. [...] The male leads in these books are everything a man should be. That’s not to say they’re perfect – there’s usually a sordid past or some emotional (or physical) scarring going on – after all, we want these characters to be believable! Usually they have a problem being a little too demanding, bossy, heavy handed, etc with the leading lady as well. And then BAM! They fall in love, and suddenly this guy is falling all over himself to change all the negative parts of his personality to accommodate his beloved. If he was domineering, he’s suddenly trying to loosen up and let out the reins a little. If he was a workaholic, he’s trying to spend less time at work and more time with his lady. If he hated everything that the word “family” stood for, he’s reaching out and rebuilding broken family relationships.” (<http://thecatholicrealist.com/2012/07/26/how-romance-novels-almost-ruined-my-marriage/>; lesedato 02.12.13)

Kristin Bird sympatiserer med sin ektemann som ikke lever opp til romanenes standard: “The problem is that when I’m escaping into worlds where the men are constantly trying to prove their love by trying to change, I end up looking at my

own husband and wondering why he isn't quite so malleable. Suddenly, my unconditional love and acceptance of him as a man created in the image and likeness of God slowly shifts into frustration that he's not the man I've created in the image and likeness of the romance novel character. [...] These changes in thought process were gradual and it took me a really long time to even notice them, but they were there. Every time I finished a romance novel I found myself a little irritated with my husband – even if he hadn't done anything wrong. I found myself thinking of all the things I wish he would do or be that he wasn't instead of appreciating the things he does and the person he is. So, I gave up romance novels – or at least seriously, seriously cut back – so that I could learn to appreciate the man my husband is instead wishing (even subconsciously) that he would be more like the men I was reading about in the romance novels. These unrealistic expectations followed me right into the bedroom...leading to my second huge problem with romance novels...but that's a blog for another day.” (<http://thecatholicrealist.com/2012/07/26/how-romance-novels-almost-ruined-my-marriage/>; lesedato 02.12.13)

“Ebøker gir oppsving for romantikken [...] Romantisk underholdningslitteratur, også kjent som husmorporno eller kiosklitteratur, kan ofte vise til opplagstall andre skjønnlitterære forfattere bare kan drømme om. Likevel er det sjelden du ser noen sitte på T-banen med en slik bok i handa. Dette er kanskje i ferd med å endre seg, takket være ulike elektroniske lesebrett. Med en Ipad i handa kan ingen se hva du leser. [...] de erotiske forfatterne tjente på diskresjonen Ipad og andre lesebrett tilbyr. - Hvis det er på Ipaden din, kan ingen se hva du leser. Du kunne lest Platon, sa han [en redaktør i et britisk bransjeblad].” (*Dagbladet* 10. desember 2010 s. 62)

Noen kjærlighetsromaner har et éntydelig erotisk eller seksuelt innhold, og det er særlig disse som på norsk kalles “husmorporno”. På svensk finnes det to like nedsettende betegnelser på disse bøkene: “Därför gillar kvinnor att läsa “tantsnusk” [...] En del kallar det tantsnusk eller mammaporr. [...] Erotik slår brett på flera fronter. Harlequin, som främst är känt för sina kärleksromaner, är ett av världens mest framgångsrika förlag. I snitt ger de ut 27 titlar i månaden i Sverige och säljer omkring 3,5 miljoner böcker per år i Norden. En tredjedel säljs via bokklubbar. - Sedan 2001 har vi ökat vår försäljning med 260 procent. Vi har ett brett utbud med allt från relationsromaner till thriller och deckare, säger Anette Ekström vd för Harlequin i Norden. Enligt Ann Steiner, docent i litteraturvetenskap på Lunds universitet, finns i dag en erotisk marknad som riktar sig mot kvinnor – en marknad som inte fanns för fem år sedan. E-boksutvecklingen kan ha bidragit till den ökande populariteten. - Numera behöver du inte skylta med vad du läser och du kan läsa många böcker utan att betala stora pengar.” (<http://www.expressen.se/halsoliv/darfor-gillar-kvinnor-att-lasatantsnusk/>; lesedato 24.11.16)

På nettsida “Romance writers of America” stod det i 2011: “The good news for the romance community is that romance book market revenue is estimated to grow to \$1.368 billion [i USA] by the end of 2011. No matter the format, readers will want

the happily ever after that can only be found between the pages of a romance novel.” (http://www.rwa.org/cs/readership_stats; lesedato 28.10.11)

Det tyskspråklige forlaget Bastei-Lübbe hadde fram til 2010 publisert hefteromaner i et samlet opplag på over to milliarder eksemplarer, og de fleste av disse romanene var kjærlighetsromaner. Kelter Verlag publiserte månedlig 55 hefteromaner med et samlet opplag på 3,3 millioner eksemplarer (Lüdeke 2011 s. 273).

Den amerikanske forfatteren Alyson Noëls romaner “tilhører sjangeren paranormal romantikk, som har fått et voldsomt oppsving” (*Dagbladet* 30. november 2010 s. 52).

“Steamies” er “eskapistiske kjærlighetsromaner der unge, kvinnelige hovedpersoner for første gang utforsker sin seksualitet” (*Klassekampens* bokmagasin 29. desember 2012 s. 2) “The rise of ‘steamies’: British publishers get wise to American craze for teen erotic fiction [...] *Irresistible* by Liz Bankes, the story of a 16-year old girl torn between caring Dan and wealthy bad boy James, was released as an ebook earlier this month, the first British book of the new genre. [...] The bandwagon has already started rolling in America with titles including *The Vincent Boys*, by Abbi Glines, and *Nightshade* by Andrea Cremer proving popular. [...] Simon and Schuster UK has picked up titles by Glines, Nicole Williams and Steph Campbell for a series of “hot romances set at college or university” aimed at young adults. Bankes, 26, said her book was the kind “I would have wanted to read as a teenager: full of gossip, some rude bits and sequences that would fade to black if they were in a movie. For me a steamy is all about the emotional connection of first love, and the sheer excitement of first lust.” Judy Blume’s *Forever*, published in 1975, was one of the first young adult novels to deal frankly with teenage sexuality. The subject matter meant it was banned in many schools and faced censorship. Ms Gardner said the steamy was a new genre although admitted it did draw heavily on Blume’s novels. “There are parallels, it’s a much more contemporary look at the issues of being a teenager. Bringing it up to date there’s more danger.” The publisher said [a steamy] offers young people a sexually charged story where one partner was not a vampire or a werewolf. “Recently everyone went to the paranormal. There was a dearth of contemporary love stories.” ” (<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/news/the-rise-of-steamies-british-publishers-get-wise-to-american-craze-for-teen-erotic-fiction-8417926.html>; lesedato 24.01.14)

Kathrine Nedrejords *Trengsel* (2014) er en kjærlighetsroman der “[a]mbivalens og sjalusi dirrer [...] Nedrejord dekonstruerer all romantikk i en spennende kjærlighetsfortelling [...] I sentrum står den om lag 25-årige kvinnelige forfatteren som er i Paris for å skrive og studere, snart møter hun Han, en fransktalende, vakker ingeniør. De forelsker seg og blir kjærester. Men kan det vare? Og vil kvinnen at det skal vare? Hun er ambisiøs, men skjødesløs, “flink pike”, men ikke fremmed for å bryte med andres forventninger. Ladet med både selvhat og

selvsikkerhet blir hun en kompleks karakter [...] Nedrejords “Han” har algeriske røtter, mens kvinnen er delvis samisk. [...] Paradokser ligger lagvis, som at kjæresten elsker kvinnen og hele tida ønsker å vise henne fram, bli ett med henne, samtidig som han plukker hennes lyse hårstrå i leiligheten for å skjule henne fra foreldrene.” (*Klassekampens* bokmagasin 1. februar 2014 s. 10)

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