

WOMEN'S READING AND WRITING PRACTICES: EXPLORING *CHICK-LIT* AS A SITE OF STRUGGLE IN POPULAR CULTURE AND LITERATURE

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Abstract

This paper represents an exploration into “chick-lit” literature and its significance in the popular cultural context. As a genre of popular literature written for young urban women, the tremendous commercial success of the popular chick-lit fiction inevitably calls for a critical assessment of its status within literature and popular culture. This paper aims to explore the genre’s significance for the research about popular literature, its relationship to literary and scholarly criticism, and women’s reading and writing practices. By focusing on the production, consumption, and reception of chick-lit as a global feminine genre, this paper presents the main characteristics of chick-lit fiction as well as revealing its differences from other genres such as conventional romances. It also highlights the strengths and limitations of the genre in relation to literary values and cultural standards. Chick-lit’s incredible popularity as a cultural and literary phenomenon is further investigated under the light of several critical debates introduced by Stuart Hall, Lawrence W. Levine, Michel de Certeau and John Fiske. This paper also considers chick-lit as a deeply contradictory genre of literature that generates highly polarized responses, thus as a site of continuous struggle between “consent and resistance”. To view chick-lit either from an entirely negative or an entirely positive perspective would be to oversimplify both the genre and the issues related to literature. Therefore, by considering chick-lit’s both wide appeal to its readers and denunciation by literary critics as trivial fiction, and exploring the positions taken up in academic and popular discussions about the genre, the paper seeks to examine the polarized responses and the questions chick-lit raises regarding literature, popular culture and contemporary socio-cultural realities of women.

Keywords: Chick-lit, popular culture, literary criticism, women’s fiction.