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Shahghasemi, Ehsan

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## Love Literacy: A Media Literacy Approach

Ehsan Shahghasemi

### Synopsis

Although research has shown that nowadays we are less likely to have a lifelong love partner, the media industry has increasingly incorporated 'love' as a guarantor of success for media products of all kinds. My argument is that, in order to sell more, the media industry has constructed a false notion of love. Worse than that, we the audiences have adopted this notion; since this is a false construct, many people have come up with unrealistic expectations of their love life. The results can be seen in the ever-increasing rate of divorce. I argue that we need something that I would call "love literacy" to appropriately respond to one evolutionary intention that exists in all of us.

**Keywords:** commodification, love literacy, media construct, media industries, mediatization.

**Ehsan Shahghasemi;** Associate Professor, Communication Department, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran | Email: shahghasemi@ut.ac.ir



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Each day more and more people fail to keep their marriage and turn single. Musicians sometimes call our age 'the age of love,' but the ever-increasing individualism has made it evident that 'love' is now at its worst situation in human history. Evolutionists tell us that around 2 billion years ago, prokaryotes miraculously started exchanging genes in order to become more effective and competitive. In this sense, love has a merely biological origin and not a romantic one. Moreover, the sociology of love tells us that 'love' can be a social construct by and large. Love is something we construct rather than inherit in a solid form. That's why Durkheim contrasts between love and passion and sees the former as more natural. Many sociologists tell us of love that romantic love is a construct of the modern age. Most natural emotional needs would have been automatically satisfied in the pre-modern tribal environments, and the passionate love that we know today and yearn for rarely existed in the past.

Again, evolutionists tell us that considerable changes in human and other species' nature are intensely slow. It will take tens of thousands of years to push us through such changes -if any- and help us to claim the emergence of a new man -Übermensch or otherwise. Biologically, therefore, we are almost the same as our ancestors in the past centuries, and since any manifestation of humanhood must be put on this biological foundation, we can conclude that our -natural- emotional needs are only slightly different from our ancestors in the past.

Modernism has changed many aspects of our way of life; one of these changes has been an increasing tendency towards individualism. Individualism has its hidden charms: living one's preferred way of life, getting rid of unnecessary and unpleasant relationships, becoming free of other people's galling interventions, etc. But it has its downsides too. Individualistic people still need to satisfy emotions that previously used to be satisfied in groups. The novel industry -followed by the media industry- provided a solution: romantic love.

Every media specialist knows that 'love' is an ace if a media product is to win the public's -positive- attention. Increasingly, love has become the central theme in popular movies. Storytelling has been reduced to love stories, and love stories are increasingly turned sexual to touch audiences' unescapable instincts. The film industry intends to produce remakes, and in most cases, these remakes have more sex and love scenes than the original ones.

Although we should accept that love has its sociological aspects and there is no wild type of love with which we can compare other types, we can assume that there are more natural -and hence more healthy

and enduring- ways to love; but the more we distance ourselves from this perspective, the more we will be likely to live alone. Most media have a commercial mandate and produce entertainment. We love their products, and this is why they will continue producing them. We have led them, therefore, to deceive us with a false perception of love. No man or woman can be that good. The expectation from one's spouse to act like fictional characters we see in the media has made a love mania in our societies. Love literacy is a solution that is free from media opportunists' endeavors and pop psych's prescriptions, and will help unarmed audiences lead a more healthy love life.

### Further reading

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