"True-To-Life": Romance Comics and Teen-Age Desire, 1947 – 1954

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Abstract Romance comics, a type of comic that featured illustrated narratives about love, were developed in post-World War II America and marketed extensively to girls and young women. Through a variety of narrative and visual devices, many of these comics claimed to convey truth to their readers, thereby offering plausible models of behavior for their readers to emulate or avoid. Very few romance comics engaged with controversial topics, but one particular example, entitled "Good-By Innocence!" dealt extensively with the causes and consequences of premarital sex, one of the strongest taboos for young middle-class women of the mid-20th century.
Key words Romance comics; adolescence; Cold War; Comics Code; premarital sex

Though once romance comics had a significant presence in American popular culture, today their appearance and affect are familiar to us primarily via the work of Roy Lichtenstein. Lichtenstein appropriated melodramatic panels depicting tearful heroines from romance comics, and used them, with few changes, in many of his paintings (Beaty 249). But Lichtenstein's focus narrows the range of issues and emotions that romance comics dealt with, and obscures under a heavy cloak of irony the intriguing narrative and artistic means that comic creators deployed to address their target audience of girls and young women. Romance comics are unique artifacts of the post-World War II era, a time in American history that is much studied, but these publications, which were cheap enough to be marketed directly to adolescent girls, offer a unique and little-scrutinized perspective on the experiences of these young women. Many historians have addressed the anxieties of late 1940s and early 1950s America, such as the atom bomb and the Communist threat. Others, among them Beth Bailey, Wini Breines, and Elaine Tyler May, have focused on the fears and frustrations of the era's young women. In a time when every aspect of American society was changing in response to rising affluence, suburbanization, mass marketing, and so forth, the questions that romance comics addressed, such as how to date, who to date, and how to behave as part of a couple—are certainly not trivial, and the comics themselves well repay a closer examination than they have been granted by most subsequent scholarship.

Romance comics were created in 1947, a time when publishers were casting

about for ways to broaden comics' appeal after the end of World War II precipitated a decline in sales of patriotic-superhero titles. Accepted wisdom has it that the legendary team of Joe Simon and Jack Kirby created the genre with Crestwood publication *Young Romance* #1 in 1947 (Goulart 311). The cover of this issue was forthright in declaring that it was something different than the lighthearted teen fare of *Archie* and his many imitators. Instead, *Young Romance* would address more mature, i. e. sexual, themes. It was, as an orange banner screamed across the cover, "intended for the more adult readers of comics" (*Young Romance* #1, cover). The first issue sold out, and subsequent sales reached the millions (Jones 237). In the spirit of the times, which was one of cutthroat competition and ruthless profit-mongering among comic publishers, *Young Romance* spawned over 120 imitators within two years and romances made up a full twenty-five percent of the total comics market at the peak of their sales in 1952 (Nolan 62).

The trick had been to incorporate into comic form the breathless melodrama of true confession pulp magazines. The degree of overlap between pulps and comics is not surprising, given that over the course of time many publishers and some of their employees worked in both forms, and many comic creators, such as Will Eisner and Jerry Siegel, grew up reading pulps (Jones 29). In the 1940s the pulps' heyday was coming to a close, though they were similar in size and price to comics and many sported attention-grabbing covers (Haining 13). But inside they lacked colorful illustrations and some kinds of pulps—those that were deemed too racy to be placed on display and were sold under the counter—were not available to children, especially not little girls (Haining 26).

The true confession pulps were the brainchild of physical-fitness-print-impresario Bernarr MacFadden. The first, *True Story* magazine, debuted in 1919. According to MacFadden's wife Mary, she had given her husband the idea of publishing some of the love and romance-oriented confessional letters that had been written by readers of MacFadden's fitness magazine *Physical Culture* (Hunt 87). The magazine became phenomenally popular, as romance comics would in later decades, and like the first romance comics it spawned a host of imitations and competitors. Of course all the stories in the magazine were supposedly true, but even though MacFadden required references and an affidavit to accompany submissions, his biographer acknowledged that it was "likely that many story submissions did not meet the standards of veracity MacFadden wanted" (Hunt 84). Joe Simon specifically referenced *True Story* when reminiscing about his first romance comic (Simon and Simon 122). Like the confessional pulps, the comics they inspired purported to offer truth to their readers but there was no guarantee that any of them actually did. In fact, Simon wrote, although "all stories were shamelessly billed as true confessions by young women and girls," male editors wrote them all (Simon and Simon 123). Nevertheless, the confessional style became a staple of romance comics and their claims to veracity persisted. (This was despite the fact that early romance comics focused on an incredibly narrow slice of American society, rarely acknowledging nonwhite or disabled people and virtually ignoring religious or politically radical views. Homosexual desire was entirely absent.)

The confession, as Michel Foucault wrote in *The History of Sexuality*, *Volume* 1,

is a powerful narrative device because it ritually "exonerates, redeems, and purifies" the confessor (Foucault 62). And in romance comics, the character that delivered the confession was intended to resemble the audience. She appealed to young female readers because they were like her, or they soon would be. Simon, speaking of the pioneering and much-imitated *Young Romance*, acknowledged that his audience included high-school-age girls who had outgrown the funny-animal and teen-humor comics, who would want to read about "people a few years older," and who would not stand being condescended or talked down to (Hadju 159). The protagonists of romance comics were jealous or timid girlfriends, G. I. sweethearts, shy students, lovesick nurses, devoted secretaries, young wives, rebellious daughters, waitresses, and factory girls. By and large, these characters grappled with the same problems as the girls and young women who read about them.

By virtue of their being marketed in this particular form directly to teens and children without the intervention, permission, or even knowledge of adults, the confessional claims to truth in romance comics warrant special attention. As Gerald Jones has remarked, comics are "where the great American popular dramas took place," a medium that provided "the rawest communication between storyteller and audience" (Jones 75). But comics were also a part of a peer-oriented media subculture that was rapidly forming around adolescents in the postwar era. As the executives at *Seventeen* magazine chose to put it, teenagers "came in bunches, like bananas" (Palladino 104). Since publishers were quick to cut titles that didn't sell, it was necessary for romance comic creators to cater to whatever their young readers desired, not only in terms of believable plots and characters, but with good artwork that conveyed drama though the stories were set in the domestic sphere and lacked fistfights and explosions. The best artists in the business, including Kirby, Alex Toth and Matt Baker, all worked on romance. Toth, who spent time researching in movie theaters and fashion magazines, considered it the most labor-intensive genre of them all (Levin). But publishers had to walk a fine line to avoid, if possible, provoking a backlash from such self-appointed censors as the Catholic National Office of Decent Literature or the Committee on Evaluation of Comic Books. While romance comics did not attract nearly as much critical heat as contemporary crime and horror comics, they did not escape completely. For example, in 1951 Dr. Hilde Mosse accused them of depicting "a distorted picture of love" (Hadju 170). Simon even alleged that comic publisher Martin Goodman had written a letter claiming that the first issue of *Young Romance* "borders on pornography" (Simon and Simon 125).

Comic historian John Benson credited St. John Publications with putting out some of the best of the early romance comics (Benson 7). In January of 1954, St. John published an issue of the title *Teen-Age Romance* featuring an illustrated trio of good-looking diner personnel caught in a love triangle, which quite overshadowed the text in the lower right corner. The small text box promised to reveal the shocking story of runaway Jenny, who faced heartache, despair, and all the other melodramas that readers had come to expect from the previous issues of *Teen-Age Romance* (TAR) and its numerous competitors. The story, "Good-By Innocence!" is one of the most explicitly sexual I have yet found in a romance comic form before 1954.

Sixteen-year-old Jenny Rawlins was, like many romance comic heroines, frustrated with her lot in life. As an uneducated farm girl under the thumb of a too-strict mother, she had reason to be. The comic presented her with a choice that would have been quite familiar to dedicated readers of romance comics: the choice between stability and excitement. Jenny could always marry Bill, her homespun suitor, and settle for a continuation of her unsatisfying lifestyle with an added degree of independence, or she could wait for an opportunity that offered more freedom and more excitement. When a couple of city slickers from Chicago opened up a lakeside resort nearby, Jenny decided to run away from home to work there, despite her mother's warning: "I've heard stories about these tourist people and no daughter of mine is gonna work around them!" (*TAR* #35 [2/6])

"Those tourist people" were rich Mrs. Bellows and her shiftless husband John, much younger than his wealthy, sad-eyed wife. It took John Bellows all of two days to begin seducing Jenny. Though she protested that it wouldn't be proper to walk down to the lake with him after hours, as an older, wealthier, and worldlier man, he was able to dismiss her objections until she rationalized to herself, "I'm just acting like a schoolgirl" (*TAR* #35 [5/5]). In their first moonlit kiss, Jenny saw a future that promised excitement and thrills. The very next night John slipped into Jenny's room, and then into her bed. Their first night of sex was, for Jenny, a blend of desire and pride—"I was no longer innocent little Jenny Rawlins"—mixed with fear: "If only Mrs. Bellows doesn't suspect" (*TAR* #35 [7/6]). Thus began a two-month-long extramarital affair wherein Jenny was torn between guilt, gratitude for John's affections, and jealousy when he flirted with pretty guests.

However, the relationship turned unmistakably sordid when Jenny discovered that not only was she pregnant with John's child, but John was in no hurry to divorce his wealthy wife and make an honest woman of her. Instead, he revealed his true colors as a villain: a drunk, a manipulator, a serial philanderer, and a slave to his sexual impulses. In recklessly pursuing a beautiful but unattainable traveler, John finally drove his wife away and proceeded to vent his rage on Jenny, leaving her in a bruised and beaten heap and wondering only, "How could I have given myself to him?" (*TAR* #35 [16/2]). From this extreme she was rescued by the always loving and patient Bill, who took her away, married her, and helped her raise her son, the child of the man who took advantage of "a frustrated teenage girl" (*TAR* #35 [16/7]).

"Good-By Innocence!" has formal and narrative qualities that are typical of romance comics of the time. It is one of several stand-alone stories in the issue. Unlike superhero comics, or even the romance-oriented serial comic strips of the 1940s such as *Mary Worth* and *Brenda Starr*, romance comic books hardly ever employed recurring characters. Jenny and Bill never appear again. Like nearly all such stories contained in romance comics, it relies heavily on expository text boxes, including one right at the beginning that frankly acknowledges the didactic aim of the story—to "prevent other girls from making the same mistake" that the narrator did (*TAR* #35, [1/1]. These text boxes are almost uniformly written in the past tense, implying that the narrator is confessing her past escapades to an interested but less-experienced peer: "I was sixteen when I went wrong," Jenny reminisces (*TAR* #35 [1/1]). Yet

the word and thought balloons that accompany the images are obviously meant to occur as the action unfolds. Thus as the reader is drawn back and forth through time via the memories of the narrator, juxtaposed with the events of the present, the narrator's regret is reinforced. The readers' foreknowledge of the impeding tragedy seeps into the action, coloring the whole with hints of the mess to come and reiterating the catastrophic nature of the climax. The reader is not asked to imagine herself in Jenny's position as much as she is asked to accept that a girl like Jenny exists, that the past actions of the character that are illustrated in the comic book are plausible, and that therefore, so is the remorse that the narrator feels not only at the moment of recounting her past mistakes, but that she projects indefinitely into the future. The text box that concludes the story refers to Jenny's baby boy, a constant reminder of the terrible events in her past, the "sin" that still "weighs heavily" on her (*TAR* #35, [16/7]).

Other devices at work in this and other comics reinforce the veracity of the narrative. Not all were as blatant as the banners, boxes, and symbols that proclaimed "True Love Stories," "True-To-Life Romances," "True Pages of My Own Romance," or "A REAL Hi-School Romance!" Some were subtle, but simple: using ordinary, everyday names for the characters, incorporating current events, contemporary clothes, cars, and furniture into the narratives, and setting them in recognizable, real-world locales—Chicago, not Krypton, is Jenny's new world where the inhabitants are different. Other methods were less common, but more interesting, as they made better use of comics' unique ability to blend text and image. For example, the titles *Diary Secrets*, *Diary Loves*, and *Sweetheart Diary* distinguished their stories by sprinkling the narratives with images of characters writing in their diaries, then using supposedly handwritten pages of the diaries themselves, instead of printed text boxes, to reflect on the narrative.

So in some respects "Good-By Innocence!" is a typical romance comic book story, and it illustrates some of the characteristic ways in which romance comics manifested their claims to truthfulness. In other respects the narrative is quite unusual. At sixteen pages, it was longer than most stories in other comics, and correspondingly complex. Certainly "Good-By Innocence!" was able to deal quite graphically with the consequences of extramarital sex. The seduction and impregnation of an unmarried teenager was strong stuff for kids, especially as America in the mid-fifties was in the grip of a media-fuelled hysteria over juvenile delinquency, of which sexual deviance was very much a part. Both Bradford Wright and Matthew Costello have argued that Cold War anxieties over juvenile delinquency stemmed from fears that the American family, that stronghold of American values and the foundation of the American identity, was crumbling. It is important to note that social commentators, officials at every level of the government, and the media explicitly linked anxieties about the family, women's roles, and childrearing to the Communist threat (Costello 54). As Costello argues, defining the American identity in opposition to the Soviet required a consensus on the nature of the American self, which by the end of the 1950s had become conformist, even hegemonic, to the degree that actions and words that fell outside the narrow range of the permissible could be, and were, attacked as un-Ameri-

can (Costello 3). The degree to which William Gaines and EC were taken to task for horror comics depicting murder and mayhem between family members is an infamous illustration of the way in which American authorities, and society in general, closed ranks against threats to the middle-class norm (Wright 147).

Romance comics often provided multiple depictions and interpretations of the various anxieties of adolescent female life, and not just within the genre, or within the run of one title, but sometimes within the confines of a single book. This has sometimes been dismissed as a failing of the genre, an adherence to stock formulaic plots. However, I would argue that the multiplicity of narratives concerning certain key emotions, such as jealousy, fear, and desire, at work in different characters and in different circumstances, allowed girls to explore a variety of ways to deal with the powerful and confusing feelings that arose in such fraught situations in the privacy and comfort of their own homes. Even a small sample of romance comics will provide several iterations of one such crucial moment: the moment when a female character must engage in a negotiation of her status as an adult versus her status as a child. Her status might be fluid throughout a comic narrative, and contested between a girl and her parents, or a girl and her boyfriend, or both. A girl's status as an adult was bound up with questions of her sexual agency, and there were often ancillary concerns relating to her status as a girl who had been brought up according to middle-class values. These are words that code her as belonging to the broad segment of the American population that self-identified as culturally middle-class, as Beth Bailey has argued in her study of American courtship, *From Front Porch To Back Seat* (Bailey 10). That sexual misbehavior implies a lower class status is apparent from the frequent use of words like "cheap" and "tramp" as insults (Breines 114). The Kinsey report of 1953 asserted that boys would seek out the company of lower class girls for sex rather than romance and marriage (May 106). This assertion found its way into another *Teen-Age Romance* story entitled "Wrong Side Of The Tracks!" wherein the football-star love interest hints that he only dated the lower-class heroine "because—well, you know how it is for a guy" (*TAR* #37 [14/2]). His companion agrees, "But you don't marry a girl like that" (*TAR* #37 [14/2]). It seems, then, that beyond the punitive consequences of overtly sexual behavior as portrayed in romance comics (which could be dire enough, as in "Good-By Innocence!") a girl's failure to correctly negotiate her adult, sexual status was additionally freighted with a threat to her and her family's middle-class status. It is worth noting that while the end of "Good-By Innocence!" blames Jenny's plight on her "frustration," throughout the story she is explicitly coded as belonging to a lower social class, with her farm background, her lack of education (displayed by her poor grammar) and her status as a "little servant girl" (*TAR* #35 [15/4]).

Since a happy ending in romance comics depended on the heroine finding the right fellow, men of different classes are worth examining as well. Like John from "Good-By Innocence!" inappropriate candidates were usually not spectacularly bad at the outset, so a girl always had to be on the lookout for subtler signs of unworthiness. A romance comic character could increase her chances of finding true love by seeking a mate within her own class—the middle class, it was assumed. Though this

was not a uniform convention of romance comics, the oafs of the lower class and the playboys of the upper class were not to be trusted, as both were liable to be financially unstable (either shiftless or spendthrift) but morally unstable too, in that they were portrayed as oversexed. Though such potential partners might offer the thrills of rebellion or riches, readers were more likely than not to come to the last page of such a comic only to find the heroine struggling to escape from their clutches, either with a good slap of her own or a knockout punch from the steady, faithful middle-class guy who'd been pining for her all along.

Many comics implied that young girls could not entirely trust their own judgment and were better off listening to their parents or whoever else urged them to maintain the status quo. Even Jenny's strict and unsympathetic mother seemed to know what was "better" for her when she forbade Jenny to go work in the Bellows' hotel, and faithful Bill had qualms too: "Gee whiz, Jenny, maybe it won't be good for you to work around those tourists! You're so pretty and young!" (*TAR* #35 [3/6]). With few exceptions, romance comics championed the gender roles of the white, culturally middle-class status quo, elucidated the various ways in which such roles could be threatened, and presented the chilling consequences of disobeying the rules. Social ostracism, as in Jenny's case, was not even the worst thing that could happen to a romance heroine. For example, in a story from the October 1949 issue of St. John's *Pictorial Confessions*, called "I Was A Hollywood Glamour Girl," Anne Fields, led astray by her desire for a Hollywood playboy, ended up in jail for fencing stolen jewels, while "Thrill-Crazy!" published in 1952 in *Hi-School Romance*, featured an unsuitable boy who turned out to be a mobster's kid brother and implicated the heroine in a gang homicide. These are extreme cases, but in romance comics the threats to one's reputation and threats to one's true love were presented as equally hazardous, for to lose the one was to risk being rendered unworthy of the other. And reputations, in romance comics as in America in the 1950s, were fragile things, as addressed by one of the Kinsey report's findings cited by Elaine Tyler May, wherein women expressed fear of public exposure of their sexual activity that was only surpassed by their fears of an out-of-wedlock pregnancy (May 106). In comic after comic, girls who kissed too many boys, who kissed the wrong boy, or allowed themselves to be picked up by a stranger, were not undone a pregnancy, as Jenny was, but by public humiliation. With so few exceptions to this rule, it is tempting to think that comic creators were sending a message. Some may have been. For example, Rae Herman of Orbit, had an editorial agenda slanted towards persuading her readers to wait for the "fruits of marriage" (Goulart 312). But with competitors willing to publish more daring, creative, scandalous, or sleazy comic books, no single point of view could corner the market.

Of course people other than comic-book creators were concerned with adolescent sexuality at this juncture. One of the most famous was Esther ("Eppie") Lederer, writing under the name Ann Landers (Gudelunas 87). Landers' rules for girls were widely disseminated via her syndicated column and speaking engagements, and are useful in defining ways in which adult-oriented media outlets differed from those like comics, which were more peer-oriented. Lander's rules were punitive and aimed at

frightening readers. Her list of the consequences of "petting" which she defined as "roaming hands, passionate kissing, loose garments, feet off the floor," is worth listing (Landers 158):

1. Makes you feel guilty and ashamed
2. Ruins your reputation
3. Causes you to lose your boyfriend because after he goes farther than he knows he should, he may decide you're cheap
4. Leads to pregnancy
5. Breaks your parents' hearts
6. Results in an unwanted marriage or a child out of wedlock (Landers 158).

It was a girl's responsibility to avoid situations that would lead to all these horrible consequences. Landers directed girls to keep busy "so necking doesn't become the number one sport," avoid the practice of "going steady," and especially to stay out of parked cars, which she referred to as "portable bedrooms" (Landers 155 – 157). But, as some of the letters to Landers from teenage readers make apparent, this advice was not always very helpful, as when one girl wrote, "How can I make a guy keep his hands to himself? I like him a lot and don't want to lose him, but he's been getting out of line lately" (Landers 154). Critically, this advice also fails to acknowledge adolescent female desire, as seen in a letter from a girl whose relationship of five months was developing sexually: "We are trying to control ourselves but I don't know how much longer we will be able to manage" (Landers 154). A study of *The Adolescent Experience* quoted by Wini Breines put it bluntly: "The dating system, as we find it in the middle class, forces its participants to be their own executioners of impulse" (Breines 117). Romance comics may not have condoned, but they at least acknowledged the powerful desires of their young readers. For example, Jenny, in John's arms, says "good-by" to her innocence while feeling "an upsurge of passion so intense I couldn't drive it back" (*TAR* #35 [7/5]).

The plaintive letters written to Ann Landers serve as evidence that the romance comics did depict situations that girls actually faced in the early 1950s. But there is further proof, which can only be seen if we examine the comics as whole artifacts, not just individual narratives. Perhaps the strongest claim to truthfulness that the comics could put forward were their own pages of letters from readers. These came in two forms. The first were letters to the editor commenting on the comics themselves, such as in the November 1952 issue of *My Own Romance* (MOR) where a letter-writer requested a particular type of story ("I like stories about high school girls, office girls, and farm girls") and the editor, none other than Stan Lee, promised to oblige ("The reason our stories are true-to-life, Judy, is because they are based on actual letters we get from real girls like you") (Lee, *MOR* #25, [11]). Other letter-writers requested dating advice, and were answered in a variety of different forms. Some replies were dry, straight text employing an authoritative tone similar to Landers', but others incorporated their advice more seamlessly into their comics. For example, the

title Intimate Love featured an advice columnist called Martha Hale, although Simon's account of the *Young Romance* staffers taking turns at playing the "love counselor" suggests that Martha may have been the pseudonym of a male editor (Simon and Simon 125). In *Intimate Love* #18, "Martha Hale Suggests" was presented as a single-page illustrated narrative, rather than an all-text column, and it was capable of serving as a script for girls who were uncertain about coping with the delicate question of a boy who was demanding too much, but without seeming too aloof to get a second date. As Carol kisses Pat goodnight—on the cheek—he tries to pressure her into more by saying, "Gee, that's not much of a kiss! Can't you do better than that?" "Nope! That's my goodnight brand! I'm saving my real kisses for the man I'm going to love someday!" Carol replies jauntily (*IL* #18, [19/3 – 4]). Pat tries again, pouting: "So you don't love me! I'm glad you told me!" but Carol refuses to be drawn into an argument, and eventually Pat goes off thinking, "Somehow, I kinda like her more because she doesn't want to neck. It makes me sure she doesn't let the other fellows do it either!" (*IL* #18, [19/5,7]). This page could be a condensed version of many other romance comic narratives with titles like, "My Blind Date Wanted Thrills!" suggesting that these other, similar stories could also be read as plausible models for teen behavior (*TAR* #14).

The sympathetic and chatty tone of editors like Lee in their responses to letters, the comics' acknowledgement of adolescent female desires, the elucidation of their fears, and the offering of some positive (alongside the cautionary) models of teen behavior in all kinds of realistic situations I believe all support an assumption that romance comics prior to 1954 assumed an empathetic stance towards the tribulations of their young readers (though of course we can never underestimate the power of the profit margins). The girls who read romance comics were growing up at a time when dating rituals were in a state of flux, older authority figures had lost their centrality in their peer-oriented subculture, and the terrain they had to navigate in order to reach a safe, happy, and prosperous adulthood according to American middle-class norms was increasingly uncertain as the consequences of failure grew increasingly high. Ironically, one of the strongest proofs for this relatively compassionate orientation on the part of the romance comics can be found in General Standards Part C. 3 of the Comics Code of 1954, which dealt with marriage and sex. This mandated "Respect for parents, the moral code, and for honorable behavior shall be fostered. A sympathetic understanding of the problems of love is not a license for morbid distortion" (Nyberg 168). In practice, it seems that this meant that a sympathetic understanding for the problems of girls was more or less eliminated. Increasingly tear-stained romance comics, filled with female suffering, continued to be published into the 1970s, a period Benson characterizes as a "long, lingering decline," to which a variety of factors contributed (Benson 6). One of the most important was the ever-expanding presence of television sets in American homes (Spigel 331). Another was the film industry's eager embrace of teen audiences (Doherty 2). In 1976, Bruce Bailey argued in the *Journal of Popular Culture* that the values still espoused by romance comics in the era of second-wave feminism were the "bêtes noires of the liberated woman" (Bailey 247). It seems clear that despite their attempts to keep up to

date in fashion and slang, romance comics became increasingly irrelevant. But it is probable that the restricted tone of the majority of post-1954 romance comics also played a part. Bradford Wright characterized post-Code comics as "superficial and puerile," and argued that they had "forsaken" their audience (Wright 228). Characters like Jenny from "Good-By Innocence!" vanished. Romance comics no longer had the option of even addressing premarital sex, even though fifty percent of the respondents in the 1953 Kinsey sample reported that they had engaged in such behavior (Breines 89). Lesser transgressions against middle-class values were treated in a far more punitive way. By ignoring or condemning what was actually going on in the lives of their readers, romance comics forfeited their claims to truthfulness, and thus one of the qualities that had most endeared them to readers.

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