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The Female Complaint The Unfinished Business of Sentimentality in American Culture

By Lauren Berlant

Duke University Press Books. Paperback. Book Condition: New. Paperback. 368 pages. Dimensions: 9.1in. x 6.1in. x 1.1in. The Female Complaint is part of Lauren Berlant's groundbreaking national sentimentality project charting the emergence of the U. S. political sphere as an affective space of attachment and identification. In this book, Berlant chronicles the origins and conventions of the first mass-cultural intimate public in the United States, a women's culture distinguished by a view that women inevitably have something in common and are in need of a conversation that feels intimate and revelatory. As Berlant explains, women's books, films, and television shows enact a fantasy that a woman's life is not just her own, but an experience understood by other women, no matter how dissimilar they are. The commodified genres of intimacy, such as chick lit, circulate among strangers, enabling insider self-help talk to flourish in an intimate public. Sentimentality and complaint are central to this commercial convention of critique; their relation to the political realm is ambivalent, as politics seems both to threaten sentimental values and to provide certain opportunities for their extension. Pairing literary criticism and historical analysis, Berlant explores the territory of this intimate public sphere through close readings of...



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