

Writing Mature Love

Jennifer Crusie says that the structure of romance novels makes it difficult for them to depict mature love. Rarely do novels cover a several year period, and so writers have to foreshadow a deeper connection than the infatuation that comes from the characters first meeting.

What is mature love?

You know, you don't start in the beginning and go "is this real?" It's infatuation. When you know its real is if 6 weeks to 1 year, three years down the line, you have moved into mature love and you have bonded on all those things that aren't looks and sex and laughter and all that. That mature love lasts forever.

Immature love is "I love you because I need you. I need you because you're sexy, because you're good in bed, and because you're beautiful and you make me look good. And I need you because you do this." The problem with that is, if any of those things changes and you're not fulfilling those needs, then the love goes.

How does Erich Fromm describe mature love in *The Art of Loving*?

And Fromm said that mature love is "I need you because I love you. I love you and that is why I have to be with you." Which is why the spouses of Alzheimers patients stay with them until the end, even though the things that brought them together are gone. I love you. And that is that bone-deep love. That is the one you got to sell in a romance novel.

Unfortunately, very few romance novels cover a span of 1 to 3 years. So you've only got the limerance period to construct this romance, which means you have to foreshadow mature romance. You have to show them when she's not pretty and he's not rich. You have to show them when they're really angry with each other and fighting and how they work it out. You have to show them under a great deal of stress. You have to show them that, yes, when this limerance is finished, there will be strength and mature love. They will be there.

One of the big ones is people who work together, who work well together, who can cooperate on projects. So if I set them up with the same antagonist that they're working to fight him, that spurs a lot of adrenaline, which spurs limerance. But also, the way they work together will foreshadow subconsciously in the reader's mind that when they are dealing with stuff down the line, this is how they are going to handle it. So you have to work it into the subtext, but I think it is crucial. I think it is the only way that people will believe it is gonna last. And that is where the satisfaction is.

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