

**FOR RELEASE ON OR AFTER VALENTINE'S DAY: FEBRUARY 14, 2018**

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[THE COMPLETE LIST OF RECIPIENTS OF THE 26 AWARDS  
WITH CITATIONS (REASON EACH RECIPIENT GOT AN AWARD)  
BEGINS ON PAGE 2 OF THIS MEDIA RELEASE;  
RELATED VIDEO ANNOUNCEMENT AT RealisticRomance.com.]

**Media literacy expert Dr. Mary-Lou Galician confers her 16<sup>th</sup> annual  
*Dr. FUN's Stupid Cupid & Realistic Romance*<sup>®</sup> Awards<sup>™</sup>  
for the worst and best relationship strategies  
in 2017 mass media portrayals of sex, love, and romance**

**"Beauty and the Beast" gets the 2018 over-all Stupidest Cupid Award<sup>™</sup>  
for perpetuating numerous unhealthy myths and stereotypes;**

**"Wonder Woman" is honored with the 2018 Realistic Romance<sup>®</sup> Grand Prize<sup>™</sup>  
for presenting multiple healthy relationship strategies;**

**and 24 additional awards are conferred on popular films, TV shows, songs, music videos, and magazines**

February 14, 2018—Two 2017 blockbuster movies with diametrically different archetypes of partners in romantic relationships (including bully toleration) were named the worst portrayal ("Beauty and the Beast") and the best portrayal ("Wonder Woman") of sex, love & romance in the **16<sup>th</sup> Annual Dr. FUN's Stupid Cupid & Realistic Romance<sup>®</sup> Awards<sup>™</sup>** announced on Valentine's Day by Dr. Mary-Lou Galician, creator of *REALISTIC ROMANCE<sup>®</sup>: The Thinking Person's Relationship Remedy<sup>™</sup>* and author of the pioneering textbook *Sex, Love, and Romance in the Mass Media: Analysis and Criticism of Unrealistic Portrayals and Their Influence*.

"Beauty and the Beast" (Emma Watson and Dan Stevens) got ***Dr. FUN's Stupidest Cupid Award<sup>™</sup>*** for perpetuating numerous unhealthy, potentially dangerous myths and stereotypes of sex, love, and romance (the *12 Myths of Dr. FUN's Mass Media Love Quiz<sup>®</sup>*—online at RealisticRomance.com). Galician warns that these counterproductive strategies, which abound in the media, might make interesting media narrative, but her award-winning academic research suggests they can actually "ruin real-life relationships."

In contrast, "Wonder Woman" (Gal Gadot, with Chris Pine) was honored with the ***Realistic Romance<sup>®</sup> Grand Prize<sup>™</sup>*** for presenting multiple research-based strategies for successful happy and healthy coupleship that benefit both women and men (encapsulated as the *12 Dr. Galician's Prescriptions<sup>®</sup> [Rx's] for Getting Real About Romance*)—but which are rarely portrayed.

The awards are part of Galician's media literacy mission to "create awareness beyond academia to the general public about what we learn from media portrayals and how they influence us—even if we think they don't." She adds: "You can enjoy all kinds of media portrayals, but just make sure you're aware of the beliefs and behaviors they subconsciously promote."

Galician also notes, "This year's two top awardees offer an especially instructive comparison, because the *12 Myths* are best understood in terms of their corresponding 'antidotal' *12 Prescriptions*—and vice versa."

She cautions that even portrayals with *Rxs* usually include one or more *Myths*, because most media narratives rely on them. However, *Prescriptions* are the dominant themes of *Realistic Romance<sup>®</sup> Grand Prize<sup>™</sup>* winners. In fact, the criterion for "realistic" in Galician's work is thematic emphasis on *Prescriptions* (rather than *Myths*)—not dramatic realism or naturalism, so even fantasies and animated features have earned *Realistic Romance<sup>®</sup> Awards<sup>™</sup>* over the years. And "worst" and "best" refer to bad or good relationship strategies (*Myths* or *Rxs*, respectively)—not to artistic merit.

All the Valentine's Day 2018 recipients—blockbuster films, top-rated TV shows, popular songs and music videos, and major magazines—in 26 award categories (one for each of the *12 Myths* and *12 Rx's*, in addition to the two over-all awards) are listed below. Some portrayals earned multiple awards, and this year's listing includes a total of 70 separate awardees with citations explaining the reason for each recipient's award(s). Galician also discusses the two over-all awardees—"Beauty and the Beast" and "Wonder Woman"—in her announcement video at RealisticRomance.com.

Galician—known affectionately as "Dr. FUN" because of her musical motivation program *FUN-dynamics<sup>®</sup> The FUN-damentals of DYNAMIC Living*—is an expert on the influence of mass media portrayals on real-life relationships. She enjoyed a successful career in the media before joining the faculty of the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism & Mass Communication at Arizona State University, where she also served as founding head of media analysis & criticism and created the innovative online media literacy course *Sex, Love, and Romance in the Mass Media*, reaching thousands of college students worldwide.

***The complete listing of the 70 awardees begins on the next page.***

**THE 16<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL DR. FUN'S STUPID CUPID & REALISTIC ROMANCE® AWARDS™  
FOR 2017 MEDIA PORTRAYALS OF SEX, LOVE, & ROMANCE**

**RECIPIENTS OF ALL 26 AWARDS ANNOUNCED ON VALENTINE'S DAY 2018  
by Dr. Mary-Lou Galician  
(The Original "Dr. FUN")**

- 1 *Stupidest Cupid Award*™ & 1 *Realistic Romance® Grand Prize*™ (Top Over-all Awards)
- 12 individual *Stupid Cupid Awards*™ & 12 individual *Realistic Romance® Awards*™

Each individual award category has multiple recipients, and this year's listing presents 70 awardees  
—each with a citation explaining the reason for each portrayal's award(s).

**DR. FUN'S TOP 2 OVER-ALL AWARD RECIPIENTS**

**16<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL STUPIDEST CUPID AWARD™**

for the 2017 portrayal with the most *Myths & Stereotypes* of all the Valentine's Day 2018 Awardees

***Beauty and the Beast*** (movie) . . . because it perpetuates unhealthy, harmful *Myths 1, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10*.

**16<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL REALISTIC ROMANCE® GRAND PRIZE™**

for the 2017 portrayal with the most *Prescriptions (Rx)*s of all the Valentine's Day 2018 Awardees

***Wonder Woman*** (movie) . . . because it offers models of successful healthy *Rxs 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10*.

Dr. Galician discusses these two movies' diametrically different archtypes of romantic relationships in her Valentine's Day 2018 announcement video at [RealisticRomance.com](http://RealisticRomance.com). Check it out!

***Myth #1. Your perfect partner is cosmically predestined, so nothing/nobody can ultimately separate you.***

**MYTH #1 STUPID CUPID AWARD™**

***Beauty and the Beast*** (movie) . . . because the enchanted servants remind us—repeatedly, excitedly, and literally, “She [Emma Watson’s “Belle”] might be THE ONE,” and, as we already know, she is indeed. *This portrayal earned this year’s over-all Stupidest Cupid Award™.*

**MYTH #1 STUPID CUPID DIS-HONORABLE MENTION™**

***Everything, Everything*** (movie) . . . because it’s just “destined” for Olly (Nick Robinson) to move right next door to teenage bubble-girl Maddy (Amandla Stenberg) and experience a Romeo-and-Juliet romance (complete with an enabling *Nurse!*) in this YA novel-based film—defying (jeopardizing!) her serious health condition, parental and medical oversight, and basic logic, but ending more happily (sappily?) than the bard’s play—albeit utterly absurdly. *See also Myth 2.*

***Fifty Shades Darker*** (movie) . . . because “fate” continues to bring them back together and nothing (even the machinations of crazed exes) can separate Anastasia (Dakota Johnson) and Mr. Grey (Jamie Dornan). *See also Myth 4 and 9.*

***Greatest Love Story*** (song and its music video) . . . because despite a “long four years” with no communication (?!), when the childhood sweetheart of a local bad boy who “was gonna be [her] forever” returns home from college (and her college boyfriend who “didn’t work out”), all it takes is “a couple of drinks” and a round of pool for the couple in this tuneful LANCO country song to become engaged to be married and fulfill their destiny to “be the greatest love story this world has ever seen.” *See also Myth 9.*

**Rx #1: Consider countless candidates.**

[This doesn't mean all at once! And it doesn't recommend promiscuity. The point is: There's more than one appropriate partner in the world, but we often overlook potential candidates while seeking the "perfect" one—who's not always so perfect anyway.]

**Rx #1 REALISTIC ROMANCE® AWARD™**

**Everybody Loves Somebody** (movie) . . . because in this delightfully upbeat, humorous, and touching film (with key scenes primarily in English at Mexican Dr. Clara Barron's L.A. OB-GYN practice and primarily in Spanish with subtitles at her parents' ocean-side Mexican hacienda), Clara (Karla Souza) must choose between two physicians: her gone-but-never-forgotten and "meant-to-be/perfect partner" Mexican charmer Daniel who suddenly returns after abruptly leaving her for an overseas job and who now spars for her affections with her new colleague/friend/dating-partner Asher, a caring Aussie who is there for her in more ways than one. BONUS: An operational definition of genuine "love" movingly delivered by her sister's Anglo husband.

**Rx #1 REALISTIC ROMANCE® HONORABLE MENTION™**

**Lady Bird** (movie) . . . because, unlike too many teen-centric stories, this title character (Saoirse Ronan) dates several different seemingly cosmically destined candidates (in her last year of hometown high school and in her first year of faraway college), but she wisely learns (as does the audience) that they clearly are not—and she's more than OK with that. See also Rx 2, 5, 10.

**Myth #2. There's such a thing as "love at first sight."**

**MYTH #2 STUPID CUPID AWARD™**

**Baby Driver** (movie) . . . because after a five-minute encounter at a diner, armed robbery driver Baby (Ansel Elgort) is deeply "in love" with waitress Debora (Lily James), who as quickly and deeply returns his affection (including, only a few days later, abruptly leaving her job to join him on a wild ride to escape the police—and then faithfully waiting years for his prison release).

**MYTH #2 STUPID CUPID DIS-HONORABLE MENTION™**

**Everything, Everything** (movie) . . . because before exchanging a single word, teenagers Maddy and Olly are immediately in love at their literal very first house-to-house glance. See also Myth 1.

**Rx #2: Consult your calendar and count carefully.**

[In other words, take time to really get to know a romantic partner.]

**Rx #2 REALISTIC ROMANCE® AWARD™**

**Lady Bird** (movie) . . . because this coming-of-age story shows the teenage title character (whose real name is Christine) evaluating several boyfriends over time and learning that they're not appropriate for her. See also Rx 1, 5, and 10.

**Rx #2 REALISTIC ROMANCE® HONORABLE MENTION™**

**The Big Sick** (movie) . . . because Uber driver/standup comedian Kumail (Kumail Nanjiani) and grad student Emily (Zoe Kazan) really take a lot of time to develop their relationship, which includes months while Emily is in a medically induced coma, in this film written by Nanjiani and his wife Emily V. Gordon and based on their real-life romance. See also Rx 3, 4, 5, and 9.

**Wonder Woman** (movie) . . . because the enduring love between Wonder Woman/Diana Prince (Gal Gadot) and WWI pilot (Steve Trevor) takes time to develop (and it doesn't play the "hate at first sight" card either). *This portrayal earned this year's over-all Realistic Romance® Grand Prize.™*

**Myth #3. Your true soul mate should know what you're thinking or feeling (without your having to tell).**

**MYTH #3 STUPID CUPID AWARD™**

**Phantom Thread** (movie) . . . because Alma (Vicky Krieps)—the young waitress-turned-“muse” and lover (and, at the finale, wife) of 1950s London haute couture fashion designer Reynolds Woodcock (Daniel Day-Lewis)—just *knows* what the controlling, fastidiously elegant artiste really wants: to be poisoned by her to the point of near-death (and copious vomiting), not once but several times (so he can be the “submissive” and she can dominate by taking care of him)—all in the final 20 minutes of this film that suddenly becomes an unmotivated Gothic horror story that ends with their marriage. Warning: Don't try this tactic at home! *See also Myth 6 and 10.*

**MYTH #3 STUPID CUPID DIS-HONORABLE MENTION™**

**Home Again** (movie) . . . because it's *Myth 3* (and definitely NOT the *Prescription!*) that is represented by a childish, self-centered, blame-game speech that Alice (Reese Witherspoon)—a recent divorcee and privileged daughter of a late famous writer-director in whose Beverly Hills home she lives—lays on a young suitor for his failure to join her at an informal dinner at her friend's house when a vital-to-his-survival business meeting ran long, even though she wasn't sure she wanted him to come! His agreement with her chastisement and repeated obsequious apologies merely demonstrate the *un-woke* sensibility of this film's privileged first-time writer-director (daughter of a famous Hollywood couple who write and direct similar *Myth*-filled “rom-coms”).

**Rx #3: Communicate courageously.**

*[Don't expect mind-reading from partners. If you can't talk openly, safely, and courteously, it's not an intimate relationship.]*

**Rx #3 REALISTIC ROMANCE® AWARD™**

**The Shape of Water** (movie) . . . because this visually dazzling, enthralling fairy tale (described as an “interspecies romance”) set in a 1960s Cold War secret government research lab uniquely demonstrates the power of courageous loving communication—made all the more emphatic (albeit admittedly metaphorical—like an Aesop's *Fable*) by the brave and beautiful actions of a mute-but-not-deaf cleaning woman, Elisa (Sally Hawkins), to use via sign language and music to reach and understand the lab's captured “asset” under study and vicious torture—a merman (Doug Jones) considered a god in his native South America, and who also doesn't exactly speak. This Oscar® contender is also a reminder that a fantasy can demonstrate a *Prescription*. *See also Rx 5.*

**Rx #3 REALISTIC ROMANCE® HONORABLE MENTION™**

**The Big Sick** (movie) . . . because Emily (who is earning a master's degree in psychology) is very frank about her concerns to Kumail, and he learns to admit to Emily his side-stepping of his Pakistani parents' arranged marriage plans for him and to communicate courageously about his desire for a committed relationship with her. *See also Rx 2, 4, 5, and 9.*

**This Is Us** (TV) . . . because the happy and healthy marriage of Randall (Sterling K. Brown) and Beth (Susan Kelechi) is undergirded by their consistent, clear, and courageous communication of both minor and major issues affecting their relationship and their family, including their wants and needs. *See also Rx 8 and 9.*

**Wonder Woman** (movie) . . . because although they are literally from different worlds, Wonder Woman/Diana Prince is ardently and totally frank with Steve, and he reciprocates (although in a less blunt, more subtle and gracious manner) as they work as to understand each other and partner to save the one world where their noble missions merge. *This portrayal earned this year's over-all Realistic Romance® Grand Prize.™*

**Myth #4. If your partner is truly meant for you, sex is easy and wonderful.**

**MYTH #4 STUPID CUPID AWARD™**

**Fifty Shades Darker** (movie) . . . because sadistic and masochistic sex that's portrayed as erotically exciting and ecstatic is all that binds (Sorry!) this couple. *See also Myth 1 and 9.*

#### MYTH #4 STUPID CUPID DIS-HONORABLE MENTION™

**Men's and Women's Magazine (such as Maxim, Playboy, & Cosmopolitan)** (magazines) . . . because their cover-lines and suggestive (if not explicit!) photos too frequently scream that sex is the most important and affirming aspect of a relationship rather than just one component. See also Myth 5.

**Rx #4: Concentrate on commitment and constancy.**

[“Easy, wonderful” sex is not always instant—and it’s not the only thing to consider.]

#### Rx #4 REALISTIC ROMANCE® AWARD™

**Master of None: Season 2/Episode 4: “First Date”** (TV) . . . because of the dozen women of various ethnicities and eccentricities Dev Shah (Aziz Ansari, who co-created the series and writes/directs many of the episodes) meets for dinner when he’s pressured to use a dating app, at least one woman makes a point of refusing his invitation for after-dinner drinks at his apartment, reminding him that it’s only their first date.

**Wonder Woman** (movie) . . . because even though they’re adults (and combatants facing death in the forefront of major World War I battles), Wonder Woman/Diana Prince and Steve nevertheless wait until they have had time to get to know each other before sharing a room for a night—and we don’t see or hear anything beyond their closed door. *This portrayal earned this year’s over-all Realistic Romance® Grand Prize.*™

#### Rx #4 REALISTIC ROMANCE® HONORABLE MENTION™

**The Big Sick** (movie) . . . because even though they enjoy great sex (on a first date, unfortunately), they face and acknowledge serious roadblocks on the road to their (ultimately) long-term relationship. On the “detour,” Kumail develops his steadfast faithfulness to comatose Emily—and to her parents. See also Rx 2, 3, 5, and 9.

**Myth #5. To attract and keep a man, a woman should look like a model or a centerfold.**

#### MYTH #5 STUPID CUPID AWARD™

**Baywatch** (movie) . . . because in this more aptly titled “Babewatch,” females have to be a TEN to get a lifeguard job (and wear the skimpiest of beach attire for maximum T&A display, often in slow-mo) as well as to get a man. No schlumpy women—or even FIVEs—qualify for either job.) However, the schlumpiest nerdiest (though sweet-natured) young *male* gets to beat out hundreds of other (qualified) applicants for this beach job AND one of the three top lifeguard babes to be wildly attracted to him (and become his girlfriend). See also Myth 7.

#### MYTH #5 STUPID CUPID DIS-HONORABLE MENTION™

**Beauty and the Beast** (movie) . . . because, per Gaston’s explanation of why Belle is the best candidate to be his wife: “She’s the most beautiful girl in the village—so that’s why she’s the best.” And we get it: She’s the title’s *Beauty*, and *Belle* means *Beauty*. *This portrayal earned this year’s over-all Stupidest Cupid Award*™.

**Men’s and Women’s Magazines—and even those aimed at younger audiences** (magazines) . . . because many promote ideals of often highly re-touched beauty that can lead to dis-satisfaction with oneself—and that are only attainable by purchasing advertised products and services. See also Myth 4.

**The Shape of You** (music video) . . . because the music video of Ed Sheeran’s Grammy-winning hit song addresses only on the title statement: the woman’s absolutely gorgeous, totally gym-toned, boxing-ring-ready *shape*. There’s no discussion of this woman’s other attributes as a person other than just a body.

**Rx #5: Cherish completeness in companions (not just the cover).**

[Impossible-to-attain looks are a foolish criterion, especially if the person inside is not attractive.]

#### Rx #5 REALISTIC ROMANCE® AWARD™

**The Shape of Water** (movie) . . . because although cleaning lady Elisa doesn’t have typical leading lady/love-interest looks, she gets a loving and lusty powerful “god” as her well-matched romantic partner who values her inner beauty and communication skills. See also Rx 3.



**Rx #5 REALISTIC ROMANCE® HONORABLE MENTION™**

**The Big Sick** (movie) . . . because this couple are appealing and interesting without being made to appear movie-star gorgeous, and they're attracted to each other because of their personalities and kindness. See also Rx 2, 3, 4, and 9.

**Lady Bird** (movie) . . . because several good-looking young men date Lady Bird, who is cute in an off-beat way but not-at-all glamorous. See also Rx 1, 2, 10.

**Myth #6. The man should not be shorter, weaker, younger, poorer, or less successful than the woman.**

**MYTH #6 STUPID CUPID AWARD™**

**The Hero** (movie) . . . because 70-something former Western movie icon Lee Hayden (Sam Elliott)—divorced from but on good terms with his art dealer wife (Elliott's real-life wife, the lovely 70-something Katherine Ross)—is in a serious romantic/sexual relationship with half-his-age stand-up comic Charlotte (Laura Prepon).

**Valerian and the City of a Thousand Planets** (movie) . . . because even the *title* of this movie version of the classic French sci-fi adventure comic book series ("Valerian & Laureline") eliminates the female partner's name. It's set in the 28<sup>th</sup> century, and they're presumably equally qualified, yet Valerian (Dane DeHaan) is a Major, whereas Laureline (Cara Delevingne) is only a Sergeant. See also Myth 8, 9, and 10.

**MYTH #6 STUPID CUPID DIS-HONORABLE MENTION™**

**Beauty and the Beast** (movie) . . . because the gigantic Beast is a prince with a huge castle and servants; Belle is a petite commoner with a little cottage and no household help, etc. *This portrayal earned this year's over-all Stupidest Cupid Award™.*

**Phantom Thread** (movie) . . . because towering Reynolds is a hugely successful, wealthy famous fashion designer—nearly twice the age of young Alma, who was a roadside restaurant waitress until he made her his muse and featured model (and, ultimately, his wife). See also Myth 3 and 10.

**Rx #6: Create coequality; cooperate.**

*[This does NOT mean the woman should be superior! That's just a countertype, which is merely another stereotype. Peer coupleship—in which power is balanced and shared—is the most healthy and beneficial for both partners.]*

**Rx #6 REALISTIC ROMANCE® AWARD™**

**Brooklyn Nine-Nine** (TV) . . . because romantic couple and police NYPD detectives Jake (Andy Samberg) and Amy (Melissa Fumero) are both equal in rank at their Brooklyn 99<sup>th</sup> Precinct.

**Rx #6 REALISTIC ROMANCE® HONORABLE MENTION™**

**blackish** (TV) . . . because advertising executive Dre (Anthony Anderson) and physician Bow (Tracee Ellis Ross)—both in their 40s and both college educated—share power in their marriage and family.

**NCIS: Los Angeles** (TV) . . . because fan fave "Densi"—now-engaged couple Marty Deeks (Eric Christian Olsen) and Kensi Blye (Daniella Ruah)—have equal status on the job and at home.

**Myth #7. The love of a good and faithful true woman can change a man from a "beast" into a "prince."**

**MYTH #7 STUPID CUPID AWARD™**

**Beauty and the Beast** (movie) . . . because Belle does exactly that. (NOTE: Even *before* the "curse" transformed his physical appearance to match his selfish, mean, and loveless character, this Beast was no better than her other inappropriate suitor, Gaston!) And what kind of 21<sup>st</sup> century message does this send about how to deal with bullies? *This portrayal earned this year's over-all Stupidest Cupid Award™.*

#### MYTH #7 STUPID CUPID DIS-HONORABLE MENTION™

**Baywatch** (movie) . . . because cocky “soloist” bad-boy Matt Brody (Zac Efron) is completely reformed by the love (emphasis on sex and romance) of his by-the-rules lifeguard teammate Summer Quinn (Alexandra Daddario), who in Act I points out that he’s a sexist jerk (but his buff bod leaves her breathless). See also *Myth 5*.

**Rx #7: Cease correcting and controlling; you can’t change others (only yourself!).**

[Stay away from “bad” partners. Instead, seek one who doesn’t need to be changed by you.]

#### Rx #7 REALISTIC ROMANCE® AWARD™

**Big Little Lies** (TV) . . . because Celeste (Nicole Kidman) finally faces the fact (thanks to a caring therapist) that she can’t stop the bullying and volatile physical abuse she has endured from her husband Perry (Alexander Skarsgard)—which they’ve both long excused as key to the erotic sexuality they enjoy—except by leaving him AND by working on her own unhealthy behaviors and beliefs.

(movie) . . . because despite couples counseling and cover-ups of the serial philandering of her husband/business partner Stewart (Mike Colter), successful author/lifestyle guru Ryan (Regina Hall) finally realizes she can’t change him—and wisely changes herself, including divorcing him. See also *Rx 9 and 10*.

#### Rx #7 REALISTIC ROMANCE® HONORABLE MENTION™

**Bad at Love** (song and music video) . . . because in the refrain, Halsey warns: “You know I’d be lyin’ sayin’/You were the one, ooh-ooh/That could finally fix me”—and also suggests she knows she has to fix herself.

**Myth #8. Bickering and fighting a lot mean that a man and a woman really love each other passionately.**

#### MYTH #8 STUPID CUPID AWARD™

**Back to You** (song and music video) . . . because both Bebe Rexha and Louis Tomlinson acknowledge that—despite their intention to be “done with wicked games” that they just “can’t take” in their “love it/hate it” dysfunctional toxic relationship that leaves them stressed out, dragged down, on the ground, and screaming—they “keep coming back” to each other because they’re “addicted to the drama.”

#### MYTH #8 STUPID CUPID DIS-HONORABLE MENTION™

**Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2** (movie) . . . because the constant verbal sparring of Star-Lord/Peter Quill (Chris Pratt) and Gamora (Zoe Saldana) is ultimately demonstrated to be their way of sublimating their sexual tension and romantic feelings for each other.

**Modern Family** (TV) . . . because this sit-com’s committed couple Cameron (Eric Stonecraft) and Mitchell (Jesse Tyler Ferguson) constantly argue over prime and petty issues, but at the half-hour’s end all’s well and they love each even more.

**Valerian and the City of a Thousand Planets** (movie) . . . because the conversation of Valerian and Laureline consists of snarky insults, but he claims to love her and wants to marry her. See also *Myth 6, 9, and 10*.

**Rx #8: Courtesy counts; constant conflicts create chaos.**

[Respectful disagreement is healthy, but bickering and fighting—and lack of respect—are signs that the partners are simply not truly suited to each other.]

#### Rx #8 REALISTIC ROMANCE® AWARD™

**Despicable Me 3** (movie) . . . because Dru and Lucy have always provided a model of courteous communication—beginning with their courtship and continuing in their marriage and professional partnership. This is also a reminder that a *Prescription* can be demonstrated even by characters in an animated feature film.

**Rx #8 REALISTIC ROMANCE® HONORABLE MENTION™**

***This Is Us*** (TV) . . . because Beth and Randall talk it out with a good dose of healthy, respectful courtesies and a minimum of toxic chaos. See also Rx 3 and 9.

***Wonder Woman*** (movie) . . . because Wonder Woman/Diana Prince and Steve respect each other and speak frankly but courteously in their earnest (and sometime gently comic!) efforts to understand each other's worlds-apart cultures and mores. *This portrayal earned this year's over-all Realistic Romance® Grand Prize.™*

***Myth #9. All you really need is love, so it doesn't matter if you and your lover have very different values.***

**MYTH #9 STUPID CUPID AWARD™**

***Valerian and the City of a Thousand Planets*** (movie) . . . because although Valerian and Laureline share the cockpit of a spacecraft, they're nevertheless worlds apart: He's a self-described bad-boy and playboy; she's an ivy-league non-nonsense type—yet throughout the film he tells her he wants to marry her, and she appropriately refuses, explaining, “Why would I want to marry a conceited child?” Later she tells him: “...I don't want to marry you, Valerian. You don't know what 'love' means!” (To say nothing of their utter lack of chemistry!) But, YES, dear reader: At the end, she *does* say, “Yes.” See also Myth 6, 8, and 10.

**MYTH #9 STUPID CUPID DIS-HONORABLE MENTION™**

***Beauty and the Beast*** (movie) . . . because she's decent, and he's not (which is *why* he was “cursed”). (Pre-curse, he was on a par with Gaston—except he was royalty, richer, and a reader.) He's a bully who's never apologized for imprisoning her father—and her. And in a way, he's using her (at the insistence of his enchanted servants) to get the curse reversed. *This portrayal earned this year's over-all Stupidest Cupid Award™.*

***Fifty Shades Darker*** (movie) . . . because although they're bonded in their sexual preferences, Ana and Christian have very different, opposing value systems. See also Myth 1 and 4.

***Greatest Love Story*** (song and music video) . . . because other than physical attraction (and “a couple of drinks” and a round of pool), what is there in common between these two who have pursued very different goals and haven't even communicated during the “four long years” she was away in college? See also Myth 1.

***Rx #9: Crave common core-values.***

*[Partners from different cultures, ethnicities, and races can have successful relationships if they share values, but partners with totally different values cannot. When romantic partners share values, mutual respect naturally flows—and they can be themselves, rather than walking on eggs and wearing masks.]*

**Rx #9 REALISTIC ROMANCE® AWARD™**

***The Big Sick*** (movie) . . . because this story (based on the marriage of the real-life Kumail and Emily) demonstrates that individuals from different cultures and ethnicities can indeed share values and enjoy a happy, healthy relationship. In this case, Kumail and Emily share a belief in marrying for love and personal choice, as well as working on one's career and giving romance time to develop. Thus, despite some nominations of this movie as an example of Myth 9 (given the all-too-frequent comic media narrative that pits one culture against another for easy “fish-out-of-water” laughs), this film is quite the opposite. See also Rx 2, 3, 4, and 5.

***Wonder Woman*** (movie) . . . because altruistically heroic Wonder Woman/Diana Prince and Steve strongly share (and act upon) their primary values: saving the world from destruction by evil forces—and, ultimately, “love instead of hate.” *This portrayal earned this year's over-all Realistic Romance® Grand Prize.™*

**Rx #9 REALISTIC ROMANCE® HONORABLE MENTION™**

***Girls Trip*** (movie) . . . because Ryan admits to herself and her followers that she and her husband share nothing but a “brand” based only a *facade* of a perfect relationship with shared values. (Bonus: She realizes the significance of a worthy old friend who does share them.) See also Rx 7 and 10.

***This Is Us*** (TV) . . . because Randall and Beth share core values—facilitating and empowering their courageous communication and unchaotic courtesies toward each other. See also Rx 3 and 8.



**Myth #10. The right mate “completes you”—filling your needs and making your dreams come true.**

**MYTH #10 STUPID CUPID AWARD™**

**Phantom Thread** (movie) . . . because the film opens with Alma (Vicky Krieps)—the young “muse” (nemesis?) and lover (and, at the finale, wife) of 1950s wealthy London haute couture fashion designer Reynolds Woodcock (Daniel Day-Lewis)—explaining (in a flashback), “Reynolds has made my dreams come true” by rescuing her (like Cinderella) from her drudge-like job as a waitress at a village roadside restaurant. NOTE: The rest of her unhealthy statement is: “And I have given him what he desires most in return, every piece of me.” This couple’s dangerous mutual obsession is clearly *not* a healthy form of love. See also *Myth 3 and 6*.

**MYTH #10 STUPID CUPID DIS-HONORABLE MENTION™**

**Beauty and the Beast** (movie) . . . because in this 18<sup>th</sup> century fairy tale (purportedly created to prepare young girls for arranged marriages), Belle has filled the Beast’s needs and humanized him in more ways than one (and has had the responsibility of restoring the enchanted servants to *their* human form after suffering for years *because* of the Beast’s abhorrent behavior)—but other than nice clothes and better digs, what is *Belle* getting? A thoughtful viewer might ask: In all of France, couldn’t she have found more worthy candidates who didn’t need to be fixed? *This portrayal earned this year’s over-all Stupidest Cupid Award™.*

**In Case You Don’t Know** (song and music video) . . . because although Brett Young thoughtfully acknowledges that he should say “Baby I’m crazy ‘bout you” more frequently, he spoils it by adding, “I would be lying if I said that I could live this life without you.”

**Valerian and the City of a Thousand Planets** (movie) . . . because throughout this film, Laureline has consistently rejected Valerian’s marriage proposals—forthrightly giving him accurate descriptions of his major inappropriateness as her romantic partner. Yet, in the last few minutes, she accepts. See also *Myth 6, 8, and 9*.

**Rx #10: Cultivate your own completeness.**

*[This Prescription does NOT advocate counter-dependence or avoiding coupleship, but it’s a reminder that no one else can complete you or make your dreams come true. It commends the importance of realizing that you are not incomplete if you don’t have a partner and of being able to be independent at times and to focus on your own growth, whether or not you have a partner. “Wanting” an appropriate partner is normal and healthy, but “needing” one indicates you are not a good candidate. Two half-people cannot constitute a healthy consummate relationship.]*

**Rx #10 REALISTIC ROMANCE® AWARD™**

**Girls Trip** (movie) . . . because of relationship guru Ryan’s spot-on, courageously self-aware and empowering message (for men as well as for women) in her speech at the end of this raunchy R-rated comedy, when she confesses to a huge convention audience of her followers that she’s been a fraud—convincing herself to remain in a bad marriage rather than facing her “fear of being alone,” but that she’s now ready to grow up, stop pretending, and end that unhealthy and unhappy relationship. See also *Rx 7 and 9*.

**Rx #10 REALISTIC ROMANCE® HONORABLE MENTION™**

**Lady Bird** (movie) . . . because (refreshingly, unlike too many cinematic teen stories) after a few inappropriate short-term romantic partners during her senior year of high school, Lady Bird bravely dumps her distracted prom date (a handsome, arty band member who’s part of the “in-group” at her school) and attends instead with her best friend Julie. See also *Rx 1, 2, 5*.

**Wonder Woman** (movie) . . . because of Steve’s heroic self-sacrifice during World War I, Wonder Woman/Diana Prince is left alone, remaining faithful to his memory and the power of love, but ready to fulfill her purpose. *This portrayal earned this year’s over-all Realistic Romance® Grand Prize.™*

**Myth #11. In real life, actors and actresses are often very much like the romantic characters they portray.**

**Myth #11 STUPID CUPID AWARD™**

**Fans who confuse and conflate performers’ “reel” roles & real lives** (and this applies to performers in *all* media—not just movies and TV) . . . because these fans too often don’t really know what it’s like to actually

be a media idol or what these idols are really like. Do these fans realize that they're objectifying the very icons they idolize? Can we admire media artists' professional work without invading their private lives? Discuss with your fan club.

**Rx #11: (De-)Construct celebrities.**

*[Realize that celebrities are NOT necessarily what you might think, even if you think you "know" them. Appreciate their professional performance—but don't use them as role models for your personal life unless their personal lives have been consistently documented as ethically worthy over the years. Even better: Make yourself the star of your own real-life love story.]*

**Rx #11 REALISTIC ROMANCE® AWARD™**

**The Simpsons** (TV) . . . because for more than 20 years, this pop-culture legend consistently and cleverly satirizes our conflation of media celebrities' reel-lives and real-lives, as well as the related fanatical feelings and behavior of fans—reminding us to apply this *Prescription*.

**Myth #12. Since mass media portrayals of romance aren't "real," they don't really affect you.**

**MYTH #12 STUPID CUPID AWARD™**

**Media critics who describe myths and stereotypic portrayals as "harmless"** . . . because although we can still enjoy mythic portrayals of sex, love, and romance in the mass media, research shows they can lead to harmful unrealistic expectations and behaviors. Therefore, it's irresponsible to label these portrayals as completely harmless simply because they're fluffy and vacuous. And stereotypes are *always* damaging to the targets and to the believers.

**Schools that don't provide media literacy education** . . . because media literacy offers foundational concepts and applicable strategies for helping media consumers of all ages to stay in control of the media they use and enjoy—rather than allowing the media to control them. We can and should still enjoy the media, but it's important to learn how to "dis-illusion" ourselves and our media! Media literacy education in other English-speaking nations is far ahead of the United States. It's high time for us to catch up.

**Rx #12: Calculate the very real consequences of unreal media.**

*[Don't be fooled into thinking you're never influenced by media portrayals—and be media literate about the media you use. Through media literacy strategies and skills, we can become more aware and pro-active, thereby increasing our own chances of enjoying satisfying and successful real-life close relationships. We can still enjoy the metaphoric meanings and pure "escape" that romantic media myths offer us (though stereotypes are always harmful to us and others), but it's not wise to use media myths—or media celebrities—as models in our real lives. It's much healthier and smarter to make yourself the hero or heroine of your own true love story.]*

**Rx #12 REALISTIC ROMANCE® AWARD™**

**Media literacy resources that foster critical thinking—and consumers who utilize them** . . . because although we can and should still enjoy the media, it's important to learn how to (what I call) "dis-illusion" ourselves—and "dis-illusion" mythic/stereotypic media portrayals of sex, love, and romance. (Note: *Dis-illusion* is definitely not a bad thing: Who wants to live in illusions?) The core of media literacy is critical thinking, and its strategies and skills can be learned and adopted by utilizing a variety of excellent media resources, such as the Center for Media Literacy (CML)—[MediaLit.org](http://MediaLit.org), the National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE)—[namle.net](http://namle.net), and, of course, Realistic Romance®—The Thinking Person's Relationship Remedy™—[RealisticRomance.com](http://RealisticRomance.com).

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