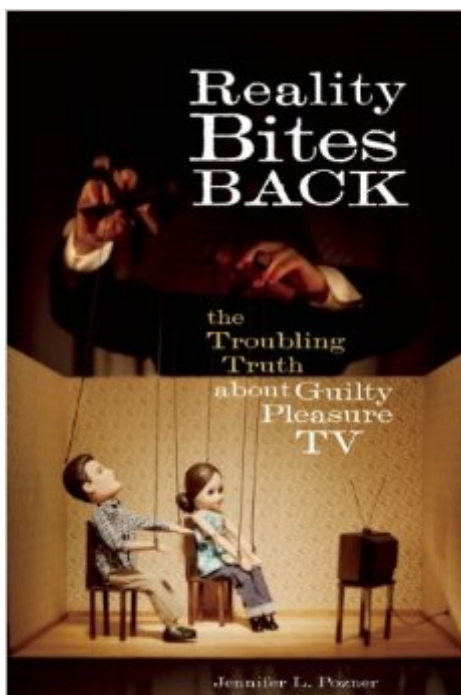


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# Reality Bites Back: The Troubling Truth About Guilty Pleasure TV



## Synopsis

Nearly every night on every major network, 'unscripted' (but carefully crafted) 'reality' TV shows routinely glorify retrograde stereotypes that most people would assume got left behind 35 years ago. In *Reality Bites Back*, media critic Jennifer L. Pozner aims a critical, analytical lens at a trend most people dismiss as harmless fluff. She deconstructs reality TV's twisted fairytales to demonstrate that far from being simple 'guilty pleasures,' these programs are actually guilty of fomenting gender-war ideology and significantly affecting the intellectual and political development of this generation's young viewers. She lays out the cultural biases promoted by reality TV about gender, race, class, sexuality, and consumerism, and explores how those biases shape and reflect our cultural perceptions of who we are, what we're valued for, and what we should view as 'our place' in society. Smart and informative, *Reality Bites Back* arms readers with the tools they need to understand and challenge the stereotypes reality TV reinforces and, ultimately, to demand accountability from the corporations responsible for this contemporary cultural attack on three decades of feminist progress.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In an attempt to shut out the worries of the world with a little mindless entertainment, my wife and I have watched the last few cycles of America's Next Top Model. A few cycles back, there was a contestant named London, a pretty girl and a capable model who happened to gain a few pounds as the season progressed. At no time did we consider her fat, but we also had no reason to doubt

the show's conclusion regarding this contestant, that she was unable for whatever reason to discipline her eating as well as her competitors. London was eliminated from the show mid-season. In *Reality Bites Back*, Jennifer L. Pozner fills in certain details about London - she had suffered from eating disorders throughout her life, which had become increasingly severe right before she was cast on *ANTM*. When her eating habits became somewhat normal during the show, her body reacted normally and she gained a few pounds. London had spoken frankly to fellow contestants about this issue, but the footage never made it to air. The show's producers knew about her issues, but allowed the judges to knowingly portray her as unprofessional due to overeating during the season. I focus on this example because it shows perfectly how Pozner is true to the subtitle of this book - this is *The Troubling Truth About Guilty Pleasure TV*. There is a wealth of new information about shows we've all either watched or experienced as cultural wallpaper, such as *The Bachelor*, *Flavor of Love*, and *Wife Swap*. And not just backstage details and descriptions of editing tricks either; the book fires sharp arrows at the networks, sleazy producers, and sponsors of these shows and explains why they are uniquely damaging to our culture and our image of ourselves and others.

In *"Reality bites back"* author Jennifer L. Pozner launches a timely and funny critique of reality television. She does this from a mainly feminist perspective, going after shows like *"The Bachelor"* and *"Who wants to marry a millionaire"*. In these shows she says progress that has been made in the feminist movement has regressed, portraying women as hysterical and desperate with only one goal in mind-which is to marry a rich husband who they in turn can serve. Notions of independence and free thinking are not encouraged and women are placed in stereotyped roles like "the antagonist", "the slut" and "the weeper". All the while promoting youth, thinness and whiteness. She also discusses shows like *"Americas next top model"* where she critiques the programs proliferation of dangerously underweight women and the constant comments they receive about how they must change their looks and bodies by the judges. These shows are heavily sponsored by makeup products and as she writes "that's just the kind of anxiety reality tv hopes for to inspire in female viewers. After all, as advertisers have long understood, it's far easier to sell cosmetics and clothing...to insecure women scared of being alone than it is to self confident people who believe that they are beautiful, loveable and capable of being happy just as they are." Another show she takes on is *"Flavour of love"* which she means has neo-minstrel show tendencies portraying black women as angry ghetto divas. In this way further perpetrating black stereotypes that have long been entrenched in popular culture. To me what is most worrying though is how she ends the book. There

she paints the picture of the future of television.

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