



# **Post-feminist Impasses in Popular Heroine Television: The Persephone Complex**

*Alison Horbury*



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Alison Horbury investigates the reprisal of the myth of Persephone - a mother-daughter plot of separation and initiation - in post-feminist television cultures where, she argues, it functions as a symptom expressing a complex around the question of sexual difference - what Lacan calls 'sexuation', where this question has been otherwise foreclosed. She takes four television heroines dramatizing this Persephone symptom - Ally McBeal, Sydney Bristow, Veronica Mars, and Meredith Grey - to show what is unconscious in this symptom, and identifies an impasse in feminist cultural criticisms as they respond to post-feminist cultures on the topic of 'woman'. She introduces psychoanalytic approaches to the novel to rethink the engagement of audiences with this Persephone symptom, and suggests that post-feminist discourses manifesting in Persephone's story offer us a cultural symptom that, when analysed, offers us new reflections on feminism today.



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