



Editor's Note: Volume 9

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In my **Editor's Note** for Volume 8 of the journal I promised that a number of changes and essays would roll out in 2020. Some of those changes are already visible, both in the new look for our "Volumes" page—general articles, special issues, roundtables, and book reviews separated out for easier browsing—and in the new names and titles that are beginning to appear on our masthead. I am honored to thank our outgoing Managing Editor, Erin Young, for her many years of service, and to welcome the new hands who have so far joined our masthead team: two new Managing Editors, Amy Burge (General Issues) and Suzanne Mpouli (Special Issues); two new Section Editors, Stacey Lee (Libraries and Information Science) and Amanda K. Allen (Young Adult Romance); a new Book Review editor, Angela Toscano; and the first member of the IASPR-/JPRS Early Career Researcher team, Elham Naeef. More changes will come in 2021, so stay tuned.

Although 2020 was a terrible year in just about every respect, it produced a bumper crop of popular romance scholarship. This summer, the **Routledge Research Companion to Popular Romance Fiction** was published: a 24-chapter, 560-page resource for graduate students and scholars wishing to study the genre from any number of humanities and social-science perspectives. Readers of this journal will recognize most, if not all, of the contributors, whether as the authors of pieces that we have published or as members of our masthead staff and Editorial Board. A glance at Laura Vivanco's indispensable **Romance Scholarship Database** shows several other new essay collections and monographs on popular romance culture this year, including Jonathan A. Allan's **Men, Masculinities, and Popular Romance** (reviewed in this issue), **Love Across the Atlantic: US-UK Romance in Popular Culture**, edited by Barbara Jane Brickman, Deborah Jermyn, and Theodore Louis Trost, **The Consummate Virgin: Female Virginity Loss and Love in Anglophone Popular Literatures** by Jodi McAlister, **Love, Language, Place, and Identity in Popular Culture: Romancing the Other**, edited by María T. Ramos-García and Laura Vivanco, and Vivanco's monograph-in-progress, which she is publishing online without charge, **Faith, Love, Hope and Popular Romance Fiction**.

As for this volume of *JPRS*—well, a glance at the table of contents shows that it contains over *three-dozen* essays, reviews, and pedagogical resources, and they cover a lot of ground, both in terms of time and space and in terms of methodology.

Chronologically speaking, we have essays and book reviews that look back to the late 19th and early 20th century roots of modern popular romance culture, including a review of Faye Halpern's *Sentimental Readers: the Rise and Fall of a Disparaged Rhetoric* (2013), Cornelia Wächter's essay on the remarkable Anglo-Indian middlebrow novelist "**Victoria Cross**" (Annie-Sophie Cory), who transformed romantic fiction into novels of ideas through her "Contestation of Compulsory Monogamy" and a twelve-part **Special Issue** on E. M. Hull's international bestseller *The Sheik*, its silent film adaptation, and its afterlife in popular culture and literature classrooms. (The **Introduction** by the issue's editor, Amy Burge, will give you an overview of its contents.) The complex mid-century Regency romance *Venetia* (1958), by Georgette Heyer, **gets an attentive close reading from Anne Lancashire**, who situates this work in the ancient and enduring traditions of literary pastoral: traditions explicitly invoked (and subtly revised) by the novel itself. In our Book Review section, meanwhile, reviews of John Markert's *Publishing Romance: The History of an Industry, 1940s to the Present*, and Dan Nadel and Frank Santoro's collection *Return to Romance: The Strange Love Stories of Ogden Whitney* (2019), which gathers this artist / writer's mid-century romance comics, attend to the ways that popular romance "genre worlds" developed across the twentieth century, while reviews of Valerie Weaver-Zercher's *Thrill of the Chaste: The Allure of Amish Romance Novels* (2013) and Catherine M. Roach's *Happily Ever After: The Romance Story in Popular Culture* (2016) attend to scholarship on late-century fiction and early-twenty-first century shifts in social mores concerning faith, love, and female sexuality.

Much of Volume 9 is devoted to twenty-first century popular romance fiction, whether this appears in novels, magazines, or online. Our second Special Issue in this volume, "**Romance Fiction in the International Marketplace**," features two groundbreaking articles on Russian popular romance fiction—a genre that emerges in the 1990s and whose uses of **literary allusion** and **BDSM erotic tropes** are grounded in the local specifics of post-Soviet popular culture and political life—along with essays on **Chinese Jane Austen fanfic** and on how translations of Harlequin romance are received and reimagined by **Turkish readers**. Another pair of essays explore Asian American authored popular romance novels: one on broader issues concerning **cultural authenticity and the representation of family** and one more narrowly focused on Sherry Thomas's wuxia / romance hybrid *My Beautiful Enemy*. This dual global / local perspective is a hallmark of recent popular romance scholarship, as shown in our review of Erin Hurt's *Theorizing Ethnicity and Nationality in the Chick Lit Genre* (2019) and in three essays from the General Articles section. Here, Francesca Pierini's "**He Looks like He's Stepped out of a Painting: The Idealization and Appropriation of Italian Timelessness through the Experience of Romantic Love**" attends to how Italy and Italians are exoticized and idealized in Anglophone popular romance narratives, Javaria Farooqui explores the Urdu-language Pakistani popular magazines called "digests" and the "imagined sociality" of women created in them by the genre Farooqui dubs "**kitchen fiction**," and a pair of Swedish academics, Maria Nilson and Helene Ehriander, describe their experiences **teaching both locally-produced and imported popular romance fiction at Linnaeus University**.

Another hallmark of recent scholarship on popular romance media is the proliferation of new methodologies and theoretical approaches: developments that are needed to keep pace with the proliferation of romance narratives that do not fit into hegemonic heterosexual norms, as well as to study changes in real-life love and the social practices that surround it.

On these lines, we are proud to have published, in Volume 9, Ellen Carter's **Francis Award**-winning essay "**Asexual Romance in an Allosexual World: How Ace-Spectrum Characters (and Authors) Create Space for Romantic Love**," a trailblazing study of sixty-five novels that lays out the terms, tropes, and traditions needed for future work on asexual romance—and, by extension, into allosexual romance, which can no longer be taken for granted as an unquestioned normative model. Rather than analyze an expansive corpus, Jonathan A. Allan's "**And he absolutely fascinated me": Masculinity and Virginity in Sherilee Gray's *Breaking Him***" uses and advocates for a "case study" model for popular romance scholarship. Allan's efforts at infusing popular romance studies with ideas and theoretical models from porn studies and the critical study of men and masculinities are presented more expansively in his monograph ***Men, Masculinities, and Popular Romance*** (2020), reviewed in this issue, while Allan himself reviews David Shields's ***The Trouble With Men: Reflections on Sex, Love, Marriage, Porn, and Power***. Other new disciplines and methodologies appear in reviews of Ben Mattlin's ***In Sickness and in Health. Love, Disability, and a Quest to Understand the Perils and Pleasures of Interabled Romance*** (2018), in ***Love, Inc.: Dating Apps, the Big White Wedding, and Chasing the Happily Neverafter*** (2019), by Laurie Essig, and in Beth Driscoll's ***The New Literary Middlebrow: Tastemakers and Reading in the Twenty-First Century*** (2014), while we look back to 2004 for an exploratory review of philosopher Harry G. Frankfurt's ***The Reasons of Love***, a text which reviewer Jaspal S. Gharu suggests will be of use to scholars of popular romance, especially in conjunction with Natasha McKeever's commentary, "'What can we learn about Romantic Love from Harry Frankfurt's account of Love?'," published in 2018 in the *Journal of Ethics and Social Philosophy*.

On the very day that I write these lines (December 28, 2020), the *New York Times* has published "**For Television and Romance Novels, Love at Last?**", an article about the Netflix *Bridgerton* series which mentions—and links to—the *Journal of Popular Romance Studies*. If you've come to this Introduction through that link, or out of curiosity about the series, welcome to the journal, and to what is, as you can see, a thriving and variegated field. We look forward to an equally rich and even more diverse range of pieces in 2021, and we hope that you will check in periodically or follow us on Twitter at **@jprstudies** for updates.