



Editor's Note: Volume 10

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Published online: January 2022

<http://www.jprstudies.org>

If these Editor's Notes had titles, I'd be tempted to call this one "The Great Slowdown." After the bumper crop of essays, reviews, and other offerings in Volume 9, this year's edition of *JPRS* is far slimmer, in large part because each stage of the publishing process—receiving and vetting submissions, obtaining two double-blind peer reviews, receiving resubmissions and revisions of conditionally accepted work, getting things copyedited, and the edits approved—seemed to take longer this year. Even popular romance scholarship suffers, it seems, from Supply Chain Issues! That said, we are very proud of the work we have published this year, and very impressed, in retrospect, by the quality and variety of other publications on popular romance that have come across our pandemic-purchased stay-at-home stand-up desk.

The four essays in our General Issue this year point to the geographical and disciplinary diversity that has become a hallmark of popular romance studies. Veera Mäkelä's "**Reading Response in Mary Balogh: A Critical Engagement**" explores three Regency-set novels by the Canadian novelist Mary Balogh from what I think of as a literary studies / author studies perspective, making the case that Balogh's books can be read as responses to ideas from critics about the romance genre during the late 1980s and early 1990s. Elin Abrahamsson's "**Superwomen, Latte Dads and Feminist Alphas: Negotiations on Feminism in Contemporary Swedish Popular Romance Novels**" likewise documents how extra-textual discourse—in this case, "a Swedish gender equality discourse" which "focuses on heterosexual couples who fulfill themselves equally in relation to both family and work life"—at once shapes popular romance texts and can be, at times, contested by them. In "**Parting the Curtain: The Virgin Heroine and the 'Westoxified' Villain in Contemporary Iranian Romance Novels,**" Elham Naej attends to the intersections between gender, religion, and national identity that play out in eight popular Iranian romance novels published after the 1979 revolution: texts in which the virginity of the heroine, who "does virginity properly," is contrasted with the sexual behavior and values of a contrasting, "Westoxified" villain. (It is particularly exciting to see how this essay draws on a secondary text, Jodi McAlister's *The Consummate Virgin*, whose publication we were celebrating just last year.) Our final general issue essay, "**The Best Romance Dime Novels on the (French-Canadian) Market: The Promotional Strategies**

of Police-Journal, 1944-1963,” shares this interest in the national / local aspect of the popular romance genre world, but rather than dive into textual analysis, Jean-Phillipe Warren and Marie-Pier Luneau focus on issues related to publishing, promotion, and epitextual framing, equally crucial to our sense of the romance genre-world. As they demonstrate, attending to the marketing practices of the mid-20th century Quebec publisher Éditions Police-Journal not only illuminates an understudied facet of romance publishing history; it serves to dispel some enduring myths about how “paraliterary” publishers have sought to appeal to readers and negotiate their shifting desires and reading practices.

In addition to our General Issue essays, Volume 10 of *JPRS* includes Javaria Farooqui’s **review** of the recent critical anthology *Love, Language, Place, and Identity in Popular Culture: Romancing the Other*, edited by María Ramos-García and Laura Vivanco, and it also inaugurates the new “Notes and Queries” section edited by our Book Review editor, Angela Toscano. The “Notes and Queries” section **invites submissions** of shorter essays (up to 1500 words) and queries (up to 500 words) about popular romance culture, in the hope of “cultivating a written record of institutional and community knowledge” that might otherwise vanish in the transitory realm of social media. In print this year we have the first of what looks to be a very promising series of Notes by Francesca Pierini that she calls “**Literary Fiction from the Perspective of Romance,**” in which she uses the tools of popular romance scholarship to look at texts *outside* of the genre, in this case, “the novel *Don’t Move* (2004) by author Margaret Mazzantini, one of the best-known works of fiction belonging to the tradition of the Italian *Romanzo Sentimentale* (Sentimental Novel).” Behind the scenes, meanwhile, a query about the existence and desirability of a Popular Romance Canon and a series of responses is currently making its way towards publication.

If you have responses to Pierini’s reading, or thoughts on her broader project, please send them to **bookreviews@jprstudies.org**, and if you are interested in reviewing for *JPRS* or have a Note or Query of your own, we are eager to hear from you!