



Editor's Note: Volume 12

Eric Murphy Selinger

Published online: February 2024

<http://www.jprstudies.org>

At the end of June, 2023, the **International Association for the Study of Popular Romance** (IASPR) held its first in-person conference in five years. The atmosphere was festive; the participants, diverse, joining us in Birmingham, UK (in the flesh or by Zoom) from five continents and an impressive range of disciplines and areas of interest. If you are new to popular romance studies, this twelfth issue of *JPRS* will give you a taste of that variety. Should you wish to join the global conversation, becoming a member of IASPR will give you access to the association's new, post-conference Discord server, where research queries, publishing opportunities, and discussions of romance in books, film, TV, popular music, and other media play out daily.

The six essays in our General Issue revisit enduring topics in popular romance studies and point to new directions for scholarship. On the enduring topics side, Valerie Grace Derbyshire's essay "**Do you think I haven't paid for what I did?: Rape in the Mills & Boon Romantic Novels of Penny Jordan**" situates Jordan's treatment of rape—a recurring topic in her novels of the 1980s—in the context of contemporary media debates surrounding rape myths and the treatment of rape by the judicial system; Heike Mißler's "**A Black Bridget Jones? Candice Carty-Williams's *Queenie* (2019): Challenging Discourses of Race and Gender in the Chick-Lit Genre**" builds on her work in *The Cultural Politics of Chick Lit: Popular Fiction, Postfeminism, and Representation* (Routledge, 2017) to explore this 2019 Black British bestseller as an instance of "Chick Lit in the time of #MeToo and #BlackLivesMatter"; and "**Nobody Puts Romance Fiction in the Corner: Public Librarians in New South Wales and Their Dalliance with Romance Fiction**," by Vassiliki Veros, critiques the "othering" of popular romance fiction in library collections, which she documents through attention to material practices (shelving and floor placements), to data management (e.g., the place of romance in catalogue records), and to how romance is discussed by public librarians in interviews.

New directions for the field, meanwhile, can be seen in Amy Noelle Parks's Bakhtinian reading of "**The Feminist Possibilities of Heteroglossic Spaces in Contemporary Young Adult Romance Novels**," which proposes that "romance is at its most liberatory when it poses questions rather than provides answers"; in the deployments of queer theory in

Weston Leo Richey's "**(Loves) Me, (Loves) Me Not,**" an essay on the "unbuilding" of social selfhood in contemporary popular romance fiction (the social selfhood of its characters and, by extension, of its readers); and in our first offering on the global *Bachelor/ette* franchise: "**Scandalous Romance Down Under: Becoming and Unbecoming a Heroine in *The Bachelor/ette Australia* and *The Bachelorette New Zealand***" by Jodi McAlister and Rebecca Trelease: an essay which explores two case studies of "how reality TV participants can be positioned as 'transgressive,'" and, perhaps, rehabilitated as heroine material after the show is complete. (Readers of McAlister's recent *Marry Me*, Juliet romance trilogy, set on a *Bachelor*-like TV program, may find ideas here useful in examining those novels—if so, we'd love to see your scholarship on them!)

A similar variety can be seen in this volume's book reviews section, edited by Johanna Hoorenman. Along with new books on **gothic romance fiction** from the 1960s-1990s and on **Anglophone romance novels set in the Canary Islands and Madeira**—including a **groundbreaking "annotated glossary"** of how Hispanicisms are deployed in such novels—our reviewers consider monographs on **the history of American Girls' Literature**, the emerging publishing category of **New Adult Fiction**, and the **fanfic category of dubcon** (dubious consent), considered both as a body of texts and as a practice of "discursive resistance" by the fans who read and write it. Resistance also marks the **two new books on asexuality**—one popular, one more academic—reviewed in this issue as potential resources for popular romance scholarship, not least for the ways they illuminate the pervasiveness of "compulsory sexuality" in romantic media and the possibility of disaggregating sexual desire from the erotics of attachment and intimacy.

The Notes and Queries section of Volume 12, edited by Angela Toscano, includes a mix of shorter pieces, each of which might serve to start a broader conversation. Jonathan Allan's query about **the popular romance archive**—"How does a field like popular romance studies ensure that future scholars have access to the primary material we currently use?" resonates with issues raised in the Popular Romance Canon conversation in Volume 11, and has already sparked discussions at the IASPR discord. If you have answers for Allan or other ideas about archival projects that IASPR / JPRS might undertake, please write us at notesandqueries@jprstudies.org. Notes from Alex Henderson and Francesca Pierini use this section to get ideas into circulation prior to publishing peer reviewed work on them: in **Henderson's** case, observations about "genre-savvy protagonists" in a corpus of queer YA rom-coms; for **Pierini**, a new installment in her project of reading literary fiction from the perspective of popular romance, this time with an exploration of Sally Rooney's *Ordinary People*.

The Notes and Queries section will have a new, ongoing initiative starting in Volume 13: personal essays, ~1500 words in length, on the theme of "Instigations." These essays can reflect on the origin of your current project in popular romance studies, or they can look back farther to some starting point for your interest in, your scholarship on, or your preferred approaches to the study of popular romance culture. For more details and instructions on how to participate in this series, **see the CFP here**, and check out the first three installments in **Volume 13!**