

Decolonising Affective Relationships in Contemporary Romantic Narratives

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Editors:

Irene Pérez-Fernandez (University of Oviedo)

and Cristina Cruz-Gutiérrez (University of the Balearic Islands)

Popular romance has traditionally been decried as low-quality and escapist genre by conservative canon gatekeepers and feminist scholars alike, scornfully repudiated on account of its allegedly endless recreation of old-fashioned romantic fantasies and harmful gender stereotypes, and generally understood as stubbornly impervious to politics and, as a result, unworthy of academic attention. Despite the complex evolution experienced by the genre in the last few decades and its indisputable popularity, romance fiction continues to be perceived by many as unsuitable for classroom discussion and postcolonial critical thinking. Our aim in this special issue is to reflect on how romance – in its multiple print and media forms–, can be a suitable vehicle for postcolonial/decolonial critique.

Contemporary romance is going through a process of transformation and diversification that reverberates social and cultural changes occurring beyond the gates, but not under the market's radar. As the third wave of romantic criticism (Teo 2018) has demonstrated, modern popular romantic narratives are shaking the formulae and even re-evaluating the very idea of romantic love as a cultural construct and are, therefore, articulating some of the recurrent preoccupations found in the corpus of works which conform the postcolonial literary canon. In the last two decades, we have witnessed a proliferation and increasing diversification of the romantic narratives that populate bookshops, library shelves and readers' apps. Encouraged by the genre's popularity and spurred on the demand for new voices, authors from various postcolonial, diasporic, Indigenous and minority backgrounds have embraced romance in its various subgenres and formats, infiltrating and reshaping it to accommodate their particular stories and advance their own political agendas (Pryde 2022; Young 2021; Teo 2021). Contributors to this special issue will be asked to consider the following discussion questions, among other related topics:

- How romance revises hegemonic historical narratives, reimagines or recovers silenced stories, and seeks redress via plots which favour reparation and reconciliation
- How the format serves to engage in discussions of interracial tensions, national identity conflicts and intercultural negotiations through stories which narrate love in all its diversity and complexity and offer satisfactory or joyful endings
- How romantic novels reject hegemonic and white visions of love and articulate positive visions of hope, solidarity and affective justice in alternative and previously unrecorded versions of the “happily ever after”.

References:

- Pryde, Jessica P. ed. 2022. *Black Love Matters. Real Talk on Romance, Being Seen, and Happily Ever Afters*. Berkeley: Penguin.
- Teo, Hsu-Ming. 2018. "The Contemporary Anglophone Genre." *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Literature*. Oxford: Oxford UP.
- Teo, Hsu-Ming. 2021. "Love and Romance Novels", in *Routledge Research Companion to Popular Romance Fiction*. Eds. E. Selinger, H. Teo, J. Kamble, eds. London: Routledge, 454-484.
- Young, Erin. 2021. "Race, Ethnicity and Whiteness", *Routledge Research Companion to Popular Romance Fiction*, Eds. E. Selinger, H. Teo, J. Kamble, eds. London: Routledge, 511-528.

We accept proposals for full articles, reviews, interviews with authors and scholars on romance, short articles by postgraduate students and creative writing pieces.

Deadlines:

30th March 2025: submission of a 300-500 word abstract together with a short biographical note (100 words) to cristina.cruz@uib.es and perezirene@uniovi.es

15th December 2025: submission of full articles (6000-8000 words)

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