

## Editor's Note: Issue 4.1

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Last November, the Humanities Research Centre at Australian National University held a two-day conference on “The Radicalism of Romantic Love: Critical Perspectives.” The conference conveners, Renata Grossi and David West, come to the subject of love from backgrounds in law and political philosophy; Ann Ferguson, who spoke with me on the opening panel, is an American feminist philosopher whose latest book, *Love: a Question for Feminism in the Twenty-First Century* (Routledge, 2013), is co-edited with Anna G. Jónasdóttir, the Icelandic political scientist and gender studies scholar known for her work on the “political conditions of sexual love.” Next September, Mansfield College at Oxford will host a global conference on “Gender and Love”: the fourth such gathering in as many years, featuring themes such as “Love as a Disciplinary Force: Productions of Gender” (papers on narrative, law, religion), “Norms, Normativity, Intimacy” (papers on “rituals and rites” and “transgressions and taboos”), “Gendered Yearnings,” “Global Perspectives,” and, last but not least, “Representations of Gender and Love,” this last the home for papers on media, aesthetics, gendered love narrations, and so on.

It may not be spring, but academia’s fancy seems to be turning to thoughts of love, from a dizzying variety of perspectives. But what is the relationship between this emerging interdisciplinary field—is it too soon to call it “Love Studies”?—and our own bailiwick, the study of Popular Romance?

We have a great deal in common: the topics of love, desire, and intimate relationships; interests in gender and power, the global and the local; a willingness to look at love in real life as well as in its media representations, neither conflating the two nor ignoring the complex feedback loops that link them. Love Studies attends to a wider range of loves that Popular Romance Studies—not just romantic love, but also filial love, parental love, and the political bonding that Ferguson calls “solidarity love”—and also, at least so far, to a rather different set of texts: more ancient and medieval works; more canonical philosophers; more theorists and thinkers from the contemporary academic scene. As I have encountered it so far, Love Studies also boasts a well-honed critical edge, a wariness about the costs of love as such, especially to women. Such wariness was not uncommon in works of Popular Romance Studies from the 1980s and early ‘90s, but the field seems to have mellowed in the past decade.

We have, I think, a great deal to learn from the new field of Love Studies—and also a great deal to contribute. Consider the range of essays and reviews in JPRS 4.1. In the main body of the issue, we have three essays on the subgenre of erotic romance: two on the most famous recent contribution to that subgenre, E. L. James’s *Fifty Shades* trilogy, engaging it via the sharply different perspectives of fan-fiction / fandom studies and the history of white masculinity; one on the groundbreaking collection *Macho Sluts* (1988) by Patrick Califia, which situates this volume of lesbian BDSM fiction at the crossroads of public history (the feminist anti-pornography movement of the 1980s), queer activism, and romance genre conventions. We look forward to publishing more papers on queer romance, and on queer readings of heterosexual texts, as part of our Special Issue on Queering Popular Romance, edited by Andrea Wood and Jonathan A. Allan, for which the Call for Papers has recently been posted. Please submit your work, and spread the word.

Speaking of Special Issues, JPRS 4.1 proudly features the first of our guest-edited Special Issues: a gathering of pieces on Romantic Love in Latin American Popular Culture edited by David William Foster, Regents Professor of Spanish and Women and Gender Studies at Arizona State University. The six essays here focus primarily on film and visual culture, with a particular interest, as Foster writes in his Introduction, in approaching these texts “from a feminist, queer, and masculine studies perspective”; the Special Issue also contains an interview with the acclaimed Mexican novelist and short-story author Enrique Serna by the editor, translator, and scholar Michael K. Schuessler (Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana). Future issues of JPRS will include Special Issues on Love in Australian Popular Culture, guest edited by Hsu-Ming Teo, and Romancing the Long British 19<sup>th</sup> Century, guest edited by Jayashree Kamble and Pamela Regis. (The Call for Papers for the latter is still open, and will be until March 1, 2014.) On a less regional / national note, we have upcoming Special Issues on Romancing the Library, edited by Crystal Goldman, and on the widely-popular, rapidly-evolving subgenre of Paranormal Romance, edited by Kristina Deffenbacher and Erin S. Young. Submissions guidelines for these, and for all of our issues, can be found on our Submissions page.

Finally, we are pleased to offer four book reviews: a piece on Cathy L. Jrade’s study of the Uruguayan poet Delmira Agustini, which highlights the discourses of love, gender, eroticism and Latin American identity in this major modernist’s work; a review of Victoria Nelson’s *Gothicka: Vampire Heroes, Human Gods, and the New Supernatural*, a monograph of interest to any scholar of paranormal romance; an assessment of the new anthology *Trauma and Romance in Contemporary British Literature*, which includes (among many other pieces) an essay by our Editorial Board member, Lynne Pearce; and, finally, foundational romance scholar Kay Mussell’s evaluation of *New Approaches to Popular Romance Fiction*, the collection edited by Sarah S. G. Frantz and, well, me. If you know of a book we should review—new work, or a classic text that’s worth revisiting—please get in touch with our Book Review editor at [bookreviews@jprstudies.org](mailto:bookreviews@jprstudies.org).