

## Editor's Note: Volume 8

Eric Murphy Selinger

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A great deal is happening behind the scenes at the *Journal of Popular Romance Studies*, with a number of changes (and essays!) waiting to roll out in 2020. Because of that ongoing work, Volume 8 of the journal is somewhat smaller than our previous volumes, but what it lacks in total numbers it more than makes up for in both quality and variety.

The first essay in Volume 8, by Fatmah Al Thobaiti, takes up two enduring topics in popular romance studies: the ideological significance of the romance hero and the agency, intelligence, and creativity of the romance reader. Thobaiti's "**Afterlife of the Romance Hero**" brings these topics together in her exploration of online paratexts created by fans, antifans, and nonfans of *Twilight*, looking particularly at how these paratexts—specifically fan fics and image-macro memes—serve as sites for the reproduction and revision of Edward Cullen, the series' glittering vampire protagonist. Another vampire protagonist features in our second essay, "**Thoroughly Modern Mina: Romance, History, and the *Dracula* Pastiche**," but as Miriam Elizabeth Burstein argues, since the 1970s *Dracula* pastiches have often reimagined the titular Count as a way to draw our attention to Mina as a figure for post-Victorian female freedom. In the process, she suggests, they offer a critique from *within* romance of the alluring ways that vampiric masculinity and sexuality are often portrayed in the paranormal romance genre.

The third essay in Volume 8, by Carolina Fernández Rodríguez, reminds us of the global nature of popular romance fiction and—by extension—of popular romance studies. In "**Chamorro WWII Romances: Combating Erasure with Tales of Survival and Vitality**," Rodríguez looks at a pair of historical romance novels by Chamorro authors—that is, indigenous authors from the US Pacific territory of Guam, an island which exists in a "neocolonial limbo" that has left it occluded in both American and post-colonial literary studies. As Rodríguez demonstrates, these novels intervene not only in traditions of misrepresenting Chamorro culture and cultural survival (in both popular and literary fiction) but also in the exoticizing discourse of white-authored popular romance—and, in the process, they offer an important new corpus for consideration in Popular Romance Studies and in Island Studies, an interdisciplinary field with significant connections to our own. (Lisa Fletcher, who served for many years as the Teaching and Learning editor of *JPRS*, is a

significant contributor to Island Studies, and her recent study *Island Genres, Genre Islands*, co-authored with Ralph Crane, contains a detailed case study of Nora Roberts's Three Sisters Island series.)

Issues of representation are also central to the fourth essay in this volume: **"Can She Have It All? Pregnancy Narratives in Contemporary Category Romance."** Focusing on the representation of pregnancy in novels from two Harlequin imprints, "Presents" and "Romance," between 1994 and 2015, Annika Rosanowski places these novels' treatment of pregnancy and female fulfilment in the context of discourse and debate across popular media (Hollywood films, women's magazine, etc.), and she considers both the texts and paratexts of these novels, whose covers often visually echo the imagery of pregnant actresses at the Oscars during the same period. Rosanowski distinguishes between the lines in terms of the plots, themes, taboos, and other treatments of pregnancy, including the relationships they set forth between to the worlds of work and family for both mothers and prospective fathers.

Along with these four essays, Volume 8 offers three book reviews. Two of these are focused on monographs that offer valuable critical perspectives to be integrated in the study of popular romance: Tyler Bradway's *Queer Experimental Literature: The Affective Politics of Bad Reading*, which bears on the study both of queer romance and of genre fiction reading more generally; and *Love and War: How Militarism Shapes Sexuality and Romance*, a compendium of talks by the feminist philosopher Tom Digby, which is reviewed at length by a major scholar of military / veteran romance, Jayashree Kamblé. The third is **an expansive essay-review by Amy Burge** of three "humorous, informal looks at modern practices of love, dating, and relationships": *Modern Romance* and *Is Monogamy Dead?* by comedians Aziz Ansari and Rosie Wilby, respectively, and *How to Go Steady*, a celebration and analysis of twentieth-century romance comics by Jacque Nodell, creator of the acclaimed romance comics blog Sequential Crush.

With this note, we at *JPRS* wrap up Volume 8 and 2019. We look forward to an expansive, rich, and various Volume 9, which will be marked by new special issues, fresh calls for papers, and a fresh, new look for the journal.