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Romantic Escapes: Post-Millennial Trends in Contemporary Popular Romance Fiction is a collection of essays aimed at expanding and exploring popular romance studies outside of the U.S. context. The introduction chapter provides an overview of romance studies by separating romance critiques into three distinct waves. The first wave of romance studies viewed the genre as a "means of brainwashing women into subservience," (12) emphasizing the dangers of romance fiction and negating any academic value from romance texts. The second wave of romance studies shifts slightly, focusing on the mechanics of the genre. While these two waves differ in their primary focuses, both approaches "continued to place gender dimension at the centre of the debate, still preoccupied with 'whether romance is empowering or oppressive—good or bad—for women'" (12). By highlighting the previous waves of romance critiques, Fernández and Pérez Ríu are able to introduce the third wave romance critique as the wave of criticism that transcends gender concerns through an interdisciplinary and transnational approach focused on the various cultural and socio-historical references. This collection of texts offers an expansive contextualization of romance studies that would not only be beneficial for new scholars to the field, but to those who might want a refresher or a larger scale understanding of the field.

The text is separated into four sections that correlate to an aspect of the romance genre, each containing three essays. The first section, *Romance and its Intertextual Fabric*, examines the effects of various tropes throughout the romance genre and their correlation to normative masculinity and femininity. Joseph Crawford looks at a range of historical romances that pair traditional, chivalric men with modern, independent women. Crawford highlights the negotiation that occurs in romances whereby the idealization of "old-world" cultures and values associated with "old-world" heroes contradict the reality of history. It is precisely through its contradiction, according to Crawford, that these historical romances become sites of reconciliation. While Crawford examines historical romances, Deborah

Phillips argues that there are contemporary romances that perpetuate antiquated ideologies of masculinity and femininity, and that those tropes become so common that their perpetuation of normative masculinity and femininity go unnoticed by their readers. In contrast, Elina Vlovirta emphasizes the significance of paratexts that accompany romance novels on selling platforms. Paratexts, terms like HEA and "no-cheating," are used to label and categorize romance novels, serving as a sort of warranty for buyers and a marketing strategy for the book industry. Paratextual disclaimers prey on the consumers by instilling a false sense of free will. Instead, "the reader-consumer's feelings seem autonomous but in fact are the result as well as fuel for affective capitalism brought on by paratextual hailing as a gesture of welcome and warranty by the author and the market" (82).

The second section, *Readers and the Market Always at Heart,* examines the roles of affective capitalism, marketplace feminism, and fandoms within the romance genre. Carolina Fernández Rodríguez defines affective capitalism by analyzing Nora Roberts's romance trilogy where she "combines the common tropes of romantic love (and some paranormal elements), which highlight love's unpredictability and irrationality, with a number of mechanisms that boost consumerism" (98). The number of mechanisms boosting consumerism has to do with the real world bookstore, hotel, restaurants, etc. that Roberts owns and references throughout her writing. Inmaculada Pérez Casal explores "the interdependent relationship between popular romance novels, feminism, and marketing practice" (123). Casal asserts that the use of marketplace feminism, whereby feminism is used as a means of profit because of its growing popularity, is not "real" feminism, but rather a profitable facade. However, Casal states that not all marketplace feminism is void of true activism and uses Lisa Kleypas as an example of marketplace feminism that is simultaneously a display of activism. While Rodríguez and Casal focus on the marketing strategies behind romances, Carmen Pérez Ríu explores romance fandoms and their influence on romances, describing "the opportunities available for fans around the world to participate in the booming network of convergence-culture online practices" (149).

The chapters in *Loving and Rebranding the Exotic* examine the techniques employed by authors in their construction of the exotic Other and exotic destination through romances. Paloma Fresno-Calleja examines the boost of tourism brought on by rugby romances set in New Zealand. Fresno-Calleja looks at rugby romances that center around Maori rugby players and local or foreign women. By depicting New Zealand as a bicultural utopia through successful relations between Maori men and white women, New Zealand maintains the image of being an exotic tourist destination and reaffirms its long history of settler colonialism. While the portrayal of these sites can boost tourism, María-Isabel González-Cruz argues that they can, more importantly, spread awareness for land preservation. Additionally, Cruz "highlights the strong connection between paradise discourse and the exotic Other, focusing on how the latter is constructed and represented mainly with references to the Other's language and culture" (204). Fresno-Calleja and Cruz center their analysis on romances that construct exoticism and paradise, whereas Alejandra Moreno-Alvarez looks at the expansion of Indian romances written by and for Indian women, as a means of adapting to reader expectations.

In the final section, *New Political and Genre Twists*, the chapters explore the mutability and transformation of the romance novel, specifically how it does not fit neatly into one category. Miyuki Hanabusa considers the transformation of *L-bungaku* [chick lit] through its subgenres: *Oshigoto Shosetsu* [work novel] and *Wa-mama Shosetsu* [working-mom novel].

While these are two distinct subgenres under the category of L-bungaku, their many overlaps "reflect the changes of women's social position paying particular attention to their working careers…regenerated the chick lit genre itself" (261). Similarly, Irene Pérez-Fernandez argues against strict genre categorization. She examines the Noughts and Crosses series as one that has "conventions of the popular genres of romance with elements of YA literature with the aim of creating ethically and politically committed narratives that make a young readership reflect upon social injustices, racism, the social construction of romantic love and gender violence" (284). Elisa Serna-Martinez considers the genre of Caribbean antiromances, novels that do not conform to the criterias of the romance genre. In doing so, Serna-Martinez contends with the domestic realm as a site in which civil action can take place.

This anthology serves as an insightful and expansive exploration of the romance genre across the world. The chapters showcase correlation of socioeconomic movements to the transformation of the romance genre, demonstrating the influence of culture to the genre and foregrounding the notion that romances are sites in which real-world issues can be addressed and/or reconciled. Not only does this anthology push against the restrictive barriers of whether or not romances are good or bad for women, but more importantly, it provides modes of criticism for romances that go beyond representation. This text does a wonderful job at contextualizing romance studies across the world for new and old scholars in the field, pushing readers to question the rippling effects of romance consumption.