

Edited Book – Romantasy as Public Pedagogy

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Publisher: Bloomsbury

Sarah Maas's series *A Court of Thorns and Roses* (Bloomsbury, 2015–2021) defined Romantasy anew for a generation of readers. With five novels in the main series and a sixth to come, millions of copies sold worldwide have solidified a genre with huge appeal in the mass market. The first books of the series follow the heroine Feyre Archeron, who having hunted a faerie in deer form becomes the hostage of a faerie court and party to the politics and intrigues of the Prythian kingdom. The plotline is driven through Feyre's relationships with two High Lords of the faerie courts while facing a series of trials and overcoming supernatural curses. This series exemplifies typical features of the genre, such as the influence of fairytale, mythology, and epic world-building. Most importantly—recognisable for readers of HEA romance novels—romance storylines often featuring fated mates, enemies to lovers, and explicit sex (spicy) scenes. The erotic content of the series has created controversy with all Maas' books recently banned from schools in the State of Utah (The Guardian, 7 Aug 2024).

Romantasy, of course, predates Sarah Maas, with the Arthurian cycle posited as an early offering of character-driven romance in a fantasy setting. Other notable contributions in this space include the current #1 New York Times Best Selling Author Rebecca Yarros' *The Empyrean (Fourth Wing)* series, New Zealand's Nalini Singh and her *Guild Hunter* series and A.K. Mulford's *Five Crowns of Okrith*. Samples from the queer lit scene include, Samantha Shannon's *Priory of the Orange Tree*, Freya Marske's *A Marvellous Light*, and *The Bone Shard Daughter* by Andrea Stewart. The taste for Romantasy is clearly signaled by young adult and adult readers alike. What is the appeal or draw of this material? In what way does Romantasy contribute to public pedagogy on gender and sexuality? What is learned about the rules of romance, shifts and trends in social mores, and particular critiques of societal values with its focus on young women's (and others') sexualities? Romantasy lends itself as a mirror, for the formulation of sex and desire in a time of contemporary social change and challenge. A poignant instance of this is with respect to the politics of young women's sexuality (and their bodies) amid the conservative push in powerful democracies such as the United States and correspondingly, around the world.

This edited book seeks to explore a range of themes that draw from the romantasy genre with respect to public pedagogy and/or cultural studies. Romantasy is distinguished here as character-driven romance within a fantasy setting, where the romantic plot is central to the arc of the story. While explorations of early examples of this genre are welcome, the focus is on contemporary and influential romantasy

(Maas, Armentrout, Yarros, and others) and in terms of public pedagogy, how bestseller Romantasy novels might contribute to the socialisation of young people in terms of (informal) forms of education. Chapters could consider, how Romantasy such as ACOTAR might influence young adult readers regarding notions of power and freedom, or, ways in which series like *Dark Fever* offer a platform for readers to reflect on or critique gender and identity. How might the *Five Crowns of Okrith* shape values, attitudes and beliefs about the world? What provocations about relationships, identity, sexuality, and power are offered in a series like *Fourth Wing*?

This book will be an addition to studies of critical pedagogy, popular culture, education, gender and sexualities. While it imagines a broad range of academic readers, it will be of particular interest to lovers of romantasy and readers fascinated by the complex discursive space between popular culture, gender, sexuality and society.

Timeframes:

Please send a 300 – 500 word abstract, accompanied by a brief bio to editors yael.cameron@aut.ac.nz and toni.ingram@aut.ac.nz by June 1, 2025.

Acceptance notifications will be sent out July 1, 2025. Manuscripts are due on Dec 1, 2025.

Maximum word length for all chapters is 7000 words including notes and references.

Chapter topics could include but are not limited to:

- What does 'redemption' look like in ACOTAR?
- Resistance of traditional gender roles and types in *Dark Fever*
- Masculinity in romantasy: Pedagogy or pipedream?
- Hopepunk heroines find love
- The power of myth-making in romantasy
- Arthurian Afterlives: Every girl needs a knight
- Sacred and profane: The erotic as education
- Fantasy as pedagogy: Love stories
- The Sex Cult Faerie
- Expressions and limitations of the feminine in romantasy
- Queer faeries and other fantasies
- Genderqueer explorations in *Five Crowns of Okrith*
- Religion and spirituality in romantasy as pedagogy
- Rejection of the Crone in romantasy
- Speculating other worlds as resistance
- Romantasy and the literary image
- The fetish of the text: Reading romantasy
- Reading salvation stories in romantasy
- Innocence and purity in YA romantasy
- The ethics of bad sex in romantasy
- Red flags and relationships in romantasy
- Falling in love with a monster: Lessons for surviving gendered violence
- Ecology as side-game in romantasy
- Misogyny, homophobia and the romantasy novel
- Madness and mental health in romantasy