



UMSAEP Report - F. Fiona Moolla (UWC) & Megan Moore (Mizzou)

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Project Description: A co-edited volume titled *The Routledge History of Love in World Literature and Culture* to be published by Routledge

Background

Our edited volume brings together twenty-three original chapters from an international cohort of scholars to explore how romantic love in all its forms—from ecological and more-than-human affinities to transcultural, affective politics, to feminist and queer interrogations of romantic and self-love—has been theorized and practiced across time and place, interrogating and reframing the naturalization of traditional scholarly theories of love anchored uniquely in western, European philosophers from Plato and Aristotle onwards. In Lynda Spencer's contribution, for example, the politics of love and intimacy in Goretti Kyomuhendo's *Whispers from Vera* are read as an intergenerational collaboration that re-theorizes heteronormative romance alongside networks of women's friendship and solidarity. Other chapters map "more-than-human love" in contemporary cartographies of ecological erotics; trace the genealogy of "love force" in Republican China's revolutionary culture; examine indeterminate love as feminist intervention in 1920s Chinese short fiction; analyze romantic longing in Gladys Mgudlandlu's Southern African visual art; and revisit transgressive erotic self-love in Olive Schreiner's late-Victorian fiction. Together, these essays offer a synoptic yet deeply nuanced account of love as a site of theoretical innovation, political contestation, and aesthetic possibility—making a compelling case for the continued centrality of love studies within humanities scholarship. And, most importantly, they point to the ways that love is conceptualized, practiced, and felt as deeply cultural and, pointedly, as resistant to anchoring in any transcultural philosophical tradition, even as they work with universals as expansive as passion for god.

Following an initial conference panel that produced several of the excellent anchor pieces in our volume, we sent out calls for proposals on national and international listservs germane to the cultural studies component of this volume, and we blind reviewed the submissions for inclusion. Having selected a set of essays, we petitioned Routledge University Press for a contract and proceeded with editing and double blind peer review, a substantially involved process that required us to find two external peer reviewers for each of the 23 essays in the volume. (To date, the difficulties of finding reviewers has been the most significant challenge of the project.) After two rounds of submissions and revisions, the essays will make their way in a final draft of the manuscript, to be presented to the press in early October 2025.

First Draft and Introduction(s)



Faculty of Arts and Humanities
New Arts Building
Robert Sobukwe Rd, Bellville
7735, Western Cape, South Africa



We are presently at the stage of the project where we have a good first draft of the manuscript, and would have met the agreed-upon publisher deadline of the end of July 2025, had we not thought it would strengthen the volume considerably to include short introductions to the sections into which the volume is divided. Thematic subdivision was a possibility that was entertained, but we finally decided that regional subdivision was closer to the initial aims of the volume, despite the historical and cultural connections that complicate a regional approach. The division into parts has taken the following form: Africa, South Asia, South East Asia, the Middle East, Anglo-America and Latin and South America. Since we are not subject experts of all of these regions, we have commissioned short introductions to the sections from experts of regional literatures and cultures, and have also commissioned a volume foreword from an established scholar of love, critical of some of the ways in which love in Europe has developed as an ideology and an index of civilizational superiority.

Fiona's visit to Missouri

Fiona visited Columbia, Missouri, from 24 September to 15 October 2024. This visit allowed Fiona to get to know Megan in ways deeper than online interactions permit and encouraged concentrated consolidation of the edited volume project. The in-person meetings jump-started work on the editors' introduction to the volume, which will be completed in September this year once the manuscript has been submitted and finalized.

Fiona also took advantage of this time away from the full set of responsibilities as the Deputy Dean of Research and Postgraduate Study in the faculty to conduct the intense and reflective research that distinguishes scholarship in the Arts and Humanities. The contemplative space and rich resources of the Mizzou library provided Fiona with a research experience she has not been able to enjoy, probably since she worked on her PhD. Megan also leveraged her position as the Chair of the School of Literatures Language and Cultures to set up meetings for Fiona with a range of scholars in the Arts and Humanities and institutional leaders, allowing a widening of the network of potential UWC-Mizzou partners. The visit to Columbia was also greatly rewarding for the cultural, cuisine and outdoor experiences the city encompasses.

Megan's visit to Cape Town

Megan visited Cape Town from June 22-July 5, 2025, and stayed near the UWC campus, where she met and worked with faculty, toured the campus with a very promising graduate student, and spent a morning learning about the UWC library's subject-area specialties with a special collections librarian. She notes that the Afro-Portuguese collection is likely of interest to some in her department, and will follow up for opportunities for future partnership. She met with Fiona and planned future progress on the volume and shared vision and strategy about shaping the volume through their in-progress introduction. Discussions with a junior colleague in English were also formative in thinking about the opportunities and challenges facing junior scholars in the current funding/grant market worldwide. Additionally, the partnership has spurred further connections between Mizzou's Afro-Romance Institute, the new Interdisciplinary Migration Studies Institute, and with faculty in the English and Geography departments and UWC, with





whom Dr. Moolla met during her stay in Columbia. Several faculty are interested in furthering the partnership through collaborative work.

The benefits of the UMSAEP program

The UMSAEP grant program catalyzes transformative, transcontinental collaborations by underwriting both the practical and relational dimensions of scholarly exchange between the UWC and Mizzou. By covering travel and logistical costs, UMSAEP not only makes sustained, in-person engagement feasible but also enables scholars to move beyond the limitations of virtual interaction—discovering unexpected affinities in campus facilities, archives, and local research communities that simply cannot emerge over Zoom. These visits lay the groundwork for enduring intellectual infrastructures—joint seminars, co-taught courses, shared graduate workshops, and lab rotations—that persist long after the initial trip, seeding networks of mutual mentorship and co-authorship. In this way, the program does more than fund a visit: it builds the scaffolding for life-long partnerships, enriching both institutions' scholarly ecosystems and ensuring that the insights generated through face-to-face dialogue continue to reverberate across continents.

There have also been more immediate and tangible benefits to the specific project since the collaboration significantly supported the acceptance of the proposal by Routledge, a first-tier international publisher. In the South African and UWC institutional context, the volume has created accreditable publication possibilities for three UWC researchers, growing their individual scholarly profiles, and generating Department of Higher Education and Training subsidy for UWC.

Megan Moore
Chair, School of Languages, Literatures, & Cultures
Professor of French
Catherine Paine Middlebush Chair of Romance Languages

Fatima Fiona Moolla
English Department and Deputy Dean of Research and PG Study

