

## Twenty-First Century Masculinities in Popular Romance Genre

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**Abstract :** The popular romance novel has the ability to withstand the test of time by carefully adjusting its contents to the twenty-first century and modern society. At the same time, it manages to preserve unaltered its traditional foundations (heteronormativity, heterosexual love, monogamy). This paper focuses on the projection of the hero's masculinity in a selection of post-millennial popular romance narratives and attempts to discover if, and to what extent, this projection reinforces or challenges patriarchal ideas about gender. In the majority of these narratives, the hero is often presented as a hegemonic alpha male. However, hegemonic masculinity is not a fixed concept. Rather, it is subject to continuous change, which allows for the emergence of various dominant masculinities. With this in mind, and through a close textual analysis approach and a gender reading of romance narratives, the paper suggests that to a certain extent, the romance hero could be described as a platform onto which different forms of dominant masculinity are displayed and highlights that these masculinities do not necessarily clash, depend on, or function as a prerequisite for each other.

**Keywords :** gender, literary projections, masculinity, twenty-first century popular romance narratives

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