

Understanding Blackness Through Contemporary Black Romance Narratives

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Guiding Questions

- ❖ What are Black romance narratives and how do they compare to mainstream romance narratives?
- ❖ How is Black romance figured, imagined, or narrated by Black romance writers?
- ❖ Is it possible to write Black romance without spectacularizing Black love or having to constantly prove its existence?

Methodology

- ❖ Close reading of primary text: *A Do Right Man* by Omar Tyree
- ❖ Cultural theorists: (i.e Belinda Edmondson, Simone Drake, Stephen Best ...)
- ❖ Works of twentieth-century social activists: Langston Hughes
- ❖ Black Feminist Scholar: bell hooks

Discoveries and Conclusions

Traditional Black Romance Narratives

- Prioritize emphasizing Black respectability or perpetuate negative stereotypes over realistic depictions of Black love
- Emerge from a society that oversexualizes or ignores Black sexuality/ romance
- Lack a “black-black” moments: moments that are infused with “themes, language, and ways of being that are not concerned about white accessibility and instead are invested in portraying Black interiority that is complex, intimate, and unapologetically black” (Drake)

“Pearl and her girlfriend were tickled by that morning’s events as I headed out the door. I remember thinking that I had somehow turned into a plaything. Or had I always been a plaything to Pearl... It felt like my manhood had been stripped away from me that morning. I tried to rationalize that any other man would have been flattered by the idea of two beautiful models hooting and howling for his sexual favors, but all I could think about is how violated I felt.” (Tyree 63).

What do contemporary works like *A Do Right Man* do that previously studied works don’t?

- Prioritize Black joy over desires to appease white audiences
- Provide room to grieve slave past without being overwhelmed by it
- Create a space to talk about what Black love looks like across various socioeconomic statuses
- Emphasize the fact that Blackness is not a monolithic experience /need for more “black-black” stories

Works Cited

Best, Stephen. “On Failing to Make the Past Present.” *Modern Language Quarterly*, vol. 73, no. 3, 2012, pp. 453–474.

Drake, Simone. “The Marketability of Black Joy: After ‘I Do’ in Black Romance Film.” *Women, Gender, and Families of Color*, vol. 7, no. 2, 2019, pp. 161–181. doi:10.5406/womgenfamcol.7.2.0161.

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Moving Forward....

- Examine Black films and film theory to explore Black romance in the visual realm