

**Title:**

# Write the Book of Your Heart: Career, Passion and Publishing in the Romance Writing Community

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**Abstract (summary):**

This dissertation explores how a solitary writer becomes a social writer, entering into the industrial and community relations of mass publishing. A significant part of this transformation is managed through writing organizations which mediate between the corporate world and individual writers. Despite being one of the most prolific and commercially successful book-markets in a time when both publishing and reading are perceived to be under threat, romance fiction, because of its gendered and classed status, is often neglected by the academy and patronized in the media. Researched through observation of the largest romance writers groups in Canada, which I call City Romance Writers, this dissertation explores how writers' associations help shape would-be writers into players in the professional market, negotiating the boundaries between professional and amateur, local and global, creative and market-driven. It explores how romance writers organize to manage risk and uncertainty in the publishing industry and how they make claims to legitimacy and authority in the public sphere. Finally, it examines how structures of gender, race and class shape the communities romance writers form and the claims they make. I argue that romance writers' discourses and practices surrounding writing and publication are a revealing terrain for the exploration of contemporary issues of media production, flexible labour, gender and community. In part because of the particular characteristics of romance writing itself, these themes are also underpinned by the constant presence of love, as a discourse, an activity and a story. While revealing the importance of affective discourses of passion and love in mobilizing writers to embrace their own flexibility, this dissertation also argues that writers' affective relationship with their writing is not fully contained by capitalism.

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