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The Metro: Literature scholar examines queer romance stories amid the success of ‘Heated Rivalry’

By Cary Junior II, The Metro | March 3, 2026

Queer love stories are not new, and “Heated Rivalry” scratches the surface of the plethora of stories that have been written about LGBTQ+ romance.



Photo credit: Megan Lee on Pexels



Since late last year, “Heated Rivalry”—a series about two male hockey players who fall in love—has taken the country by storm.

The show’s stars, Hudson Williams and Connor Storrie, have made appearances at major events across North America. But before the “Heated Rivalry” story charmed the audience on screen, it seduced its readers as the second book in author Rachel Reid’s “Game Changers” series.

Now the story represents the cultural moment we are in now: Romance novels exploded in popularity after the pandemic and LGBTQ+ romance stories are becoming more prevalent. To encapsulate the moment, we want to spotlight the queer love stories that came before it.

Queer love stories are not new, and “Heated Rivalry” scratches the surface of the plethora of stories that have been and continue to be written about LGBTQ+ romance.

Erin Bell, the director of the Writing Center at the University of Detroit Mercy and a researcher of women’s writing and literature, joined to help us pull back the layers of non-traditional love stories.

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Cary Junior II is an audio journalist and producer for The Metro on 101.9 WDET. Cary has worked as a producer or host on a number of projects. His work includes short and longform audio, documentary series and daily radio. In his five year career in journalism he has worked for Crooked Media, the Detroit Free Press, and now WDET - Detroit's NPR station.

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Tags: books, Heated Rivalry, LGBTQ, LGBTQIA+, Moby Dick, queer romance, romance, The Color Purple

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