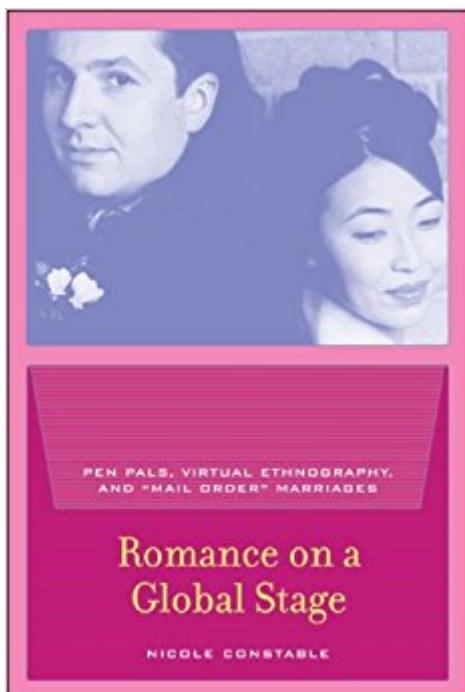


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# Romance On A Global Stage: Pen Pals, Virtual Ethnography, And "Mail Order" Marriages



## **Synopsis**

By the year 2000 more than 350 Internet agencies were plying the email-order marriage trade, and the business of matching up mostly Western men with women from Asia, Eastern Europe, and Latin America had become an example of globalization writ large. This provocative work opens a window onto the complex motivations and experiences of the people behind the stereotypes and misconceptions that have exploded along with the practice of transnational courtship and marriage. Combining extensive Internet ethnography and face-to-face fieldwork, *Romance on a Global Stage* looks at the intimate realities of Filipinas, Chinese women, and U.S. men corresponding in hopes of finding a suitable marriage partner. Through the experiences of those engaged in pen pal relationships—their stories of love, romance, migration, and long-distance dating—this book conveys the richness and dignity of women's and men's choices without reducing these correspondents to calculating opportunists or naive romantics. Attentive to the structural, cultural, and personal factors that prompt women and men to seek marriage partners abroad, *Romance on a Global Stage* questions the dichotomies so frequently drawn between structure and agency, and between global and local levels of analysis.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

"Nicole Constable has produced a splendid sequel to her much-praised *Maid to Order* in Hong Kong. Constable's sensitive ethnography and her international scope insures that we see every Filipino and Chinese woman as a thinking, feeling person, and every American man who is her pen pal and sometimes future husband as far more than a mere cartoon character. *Romance on a*

Global Stage wonderfully complicates the genderings and globalizings of power and emotions."—Cynthia Enloe, author of *Bananas, Beaches and Bases*"The rise of feminism in North America has been paralleled by a growth in marriages between Western men and women from the global periphery. Constable's fascinating study explores the multiple desires at work, revealing the anti-feminist reason and feminist surprises in these global romances."—Aihwa Ong, author of *Buddha Is Hiding: Refugees, Citizenship, the New America*"Constable adds a new map to the cartographies of desire in this nuanced and fresh account of 'mail-order marriage.' Her original work carefully attends to emotion, sex, and political economy, offering a complex account of gender, marriage, and globalization."—Carole S. Vance, author of *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality*"This innovative and compassionate work maps new formations of desire in the context of globalization. Constable breaks through the stereotypes about transnational pen-pal marriages to enable us to see, in an ethnographically detailed way, how agency and desire are shaped by uneven economic development and how cyber-technologies figure in the production of new global imaginaries."—Ann Anagnost, author of *National Past-times: Narrative, Representation, and Power in Modern China*"Constable is a talented and perceptive anthropologist who has mastered the use of the web both as a research tool and a topic of research. Her sensible and timely examination of transnational marriages of American men with women from the Philippines and China relentlessly debunks commonly-held tales about submissive (or manipulative) Asian women and wealthy (or abusive) American men."—Jean-Paul Dumont, author of *Visayan Vignettes: Ethnographic Traces of a Philippine Island*

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"Romance on a Global Stage" by Nicole Constable is a very unique book that explores the world of "mail-order brides" and the reality of the relationships formed. I, taking a course in sociolinguistics and chose the topic of mail-order brides as my research project. During my research into the subject, I learned that there have been very few anthropology/sociology studies on the topic. Constable's book is the most concentrated study that dives deep into the subject than any other source I have discovered. I approached this book as a person who is representative of the couples Constable befriends and writes about. I met my wife through an online website, traveled to China, instantly fell in love, and then spent the next year petitioning the US government to help her acquire a K1 marriage visa into the United States. It was the most unique, challenging, and rewarding experience of my life. We have been together for many years and now have a little boy who is the jewel of our relationship. She is the most beautiful woman I have ever known referring mostly to her inner beauty, which is more important to me than her external beauty. She is the love of my life. Constable tackles the subject of "mail-order brides" by first approaching the research that has been done. She discusses this at length. Much of the studies are outdated, biased, and flawed. The concept of a mail-order bride is often mired in prejudice and misguided assumptions. This is also discussed. She then goes into detail about how she approached her study, which was funded by grants and university funding. She became active in online user groups, forums, and chat groups. Her approach was to understand the online

community and how this community facilitates communication. The results of her research are surprising and previously undocumented. Through her research, she befriends Chinese and Filipina women, who she eventually travels to meet and spend time with on numerous occasions over the course of years. She learns how these women approach searching for and communicating with online suitors. This extends into cultural mores and norms and the differences between Western and Eastern ideals. For example, the motivation for certain online pictures often depicts a woman as overly sexy. To Western eyes, these are women who are interested in attracting men for sexual interests. To Eastern eyes, these women want to show that they are healthy, young, viable mates who are capable of bearing children and worthy of consideration for starting a family. This is a far cry from common attitudes that many of these women are "lotus blossoms" or "dragon ladies." Constable finds that, contrary to popular belief, the majority of these women are not out to use men to acquire a Green Card, nor are they out to rob or take advantage of them. Based on personal experience, my wife and I found the path it takes to get to America is a long and arduous one. It is costly, requires an enormous amount of patience, a confusing amount of paperwork and bureaucratic processes, and a tense interview process that in no way guarantees a visa is granted. As I've always said, anyone who is interested in taking this path to find a wife has to \*want\* to do it.

It's a very difficult way to meet and marry someone. But if you find the right person, the reward of the challenge is that it bonds and binds a couple together. Many times, as I read this book, I felt as though I was reading about me and my wife. Constable totally nails the truth behind the world of mail-order brides. She outlines the relationship of various couples and their experiences up to the point where they receive their visa. It's at this point that she stops. My only regret is that she didn't continue her research to study the assimilation of these women after they entered their new country. It would be even more fascinating to read about each woman's experience after the visa is granted. Regardless, I see this book as an excellent and highly accurate study into a world that is often misunderstood and rarely documented. I can tell you, as one who is experienced in this subject that "Romance on a Global Stage" is a truthful and realistic look into a fascinating, overly ignored, and misunderstood subject.

book in good condition, the book itself was bought for a class. a bit dated now, but overall interesting read

Really interesting accounts of women and men in these international marriages. Mail-order brides.

Ethnographic in nature.

bought for a class, interesting enough

Great condition

The book was in great condition. It came to me in a timely manner and being a school book that is a good thing. It's very interesting in that it opens people up to a new anthropological approach to relationships.

The review column of is not an appropriate place to flame or post such loud propaganda as some of the submitters before me have. In this case, such obnoxious attention-getting, no matter for what purpose, can seriously detract from the worthwhile merits of a profound study such as we have here. While the propagandist(s) only wish to draw attention to something he or she feels is vitally important and relevant, its very brash and 'partisan' (in this case, anti-feminist) style will actually turn people away from reading this book who otherwise might learn a lot from it. Constable's nuanced account of the "mail-order" bride paradigm and the varieties of Pacific Rim cross-cultural marriage issues are presented in a well-studied, first and third person narrative that is rich with real-life examples and specifics. In basic terms, her book makes a strong case for the varied nature of people involved in such relationships, and does not settle for glossing over them with simplistic and often unwholesome generalized demographics. This book is about real individuals, not theories. The conclusions Constable's book offer are based more on observations than philosophies. This is what makes it so engaging and valid to me. I recommend this book to anyone curious about so-called 'mail-order' marriages, and for those who have been around the scholarly block a few times and prefer NOT to read the sort of propagandist headlines as seen elsewhere above in this review column.

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