

EDITORIAL: LOVE: POLITICS, PRACTICES, PERSPECTIVES

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Editorial: Love: Politics, Practices, Perspectives

Love as a concept has been simultaneously central and marginalized within the humanities and the arts. It has been theorized in various and often contradictory ways, positioned as both oppressive and liberating; on the one hand, serving political and economic agendas and, on the other hand, fostering solidarity within political action. This issue of *On_Culture* seeks to open up the complexity presented by love and its relevance to cultural discourses within academic debates, social practices, and the political present.

While commonly understood as a personal sentiment, love has long been used as a political tool and analyzed as such within cultural theories. It has been utilized within national communities in order to make people willingly risk their lives for the ‘love of the nation;’ a sentiment similarly present in official political discourses as well as those of nationalist and other hate groups, reframing themselves as acting out of love.¹ Similarly, the focus on love within feminist theory has been mostly responsive to male dominated research in scientific and philosophical fields which have historically worked to associate women with emotion and sexuality as a way of justifying their oppression.² Perpetuation of this attitude has also taken visual form within art and theater since the Renaissance in order to compromise the narratives of heroic women, who were represented instead as sexual temptresses.³ These same capacities, simply described as the institutional domination of white, heterosexual men, have also worked to persecute and pathologize those whose private sentiments were seen as a threat to social and religious institutions.⁴ Within Sociology, love has been notably related to capitalism and modernity by Eva Illouz, for whom love is a commodity circulating in a marketplace of consumers with unequal access to its terms and definitions.⁵

On the other side, contrasting oppressive uses, the concept of love as a central, political tool serving liberational purposes has been greatly noted and discussed within political philosophy. Love has been theorized as a subversive rather than oppressive force, conducive to more communal social structures. Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt, for example, focus on a discussion of universal poverty in order to emphasize love as embedded in forms of solidarity fundamental to the coming together of people within political actions and their commitment to each other.⁶ Similarly, for Alain Badiou, love can overcome neoliberal modes which have produced competition, self-

interest and individualism, in favor of union between people, whether privately or communally.⁷

At first glance, the teaser image with its mathematical connotations seems to stand in contradiction with the overall topic of this issue. However, the break from the stereotypical and clichéd ideas about love is our intention and the design for the entire issue. Situated within the aforementioned spectrum of love and its contradictory uses and applications, the various contributions in this issue approach a variety of cultural histories and theories, social relations, and institutions. In this nexus between love and politics, this issue presents a range of themes from colonialism and modernity, technology and representation, migration and its instrumentalization, social solidarity, feminist and queer politics, ecosexuality, COVID-19, and care work.

Anne-Marie D'Aoust's *Essay*, which will be published in our issue in October, 2020, due to impositions of COVID-19, addresses an underreported aspect of the pandemic: the intersection of care work performed by women of color and asylum seekers in Quebec, usually invisible labor which has been rendered visible during COVID-19, with processes of de-politicization and immigration policies.

Danijela Majstorović's *Essay* is an exercise in 'situated knowledge'. Using as a starting point her own experience as an activist and scholar in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and as a migrant in Germany during the COVID-19 pandemic, she reflects on the intersection of affect and justice, and calls for love as a practice of solidarity in the context of social protests and migration.

In her *Article*, Gözde Kılıç writes about the Psychoanalyst İzzeddin A. Şadan and his publications on love within the context of modern Turkey. Kılıç situates Şadan's notion of love as pathology within the framework of an internalized colonial logic.

Mona Röhm's *Article* problematizes how romantic love as a marker of morally 'right' intimate relationship is used to illustrate an incompatibility of Muslim migrants to 'European' ideals of intimacy. Based on conceptual thinking and literature review, Röhm's theoretical paper highlights the relevance of addressing intimacies, practices, and intimate ideas within current migration debates in Europe and Austria in particular.

In his *Article*, Robert A. Winkler explores the intersection of love and modern technology in the work of media theorist Friedrich Kittler. The analysis considers diverse aspects such as Kittler's indebtedness to Martin Heidegger or the film *Her* (2013) and

in this way is able to reflect on the multi-faceted conception of love in the current technoculture.

Pınar Türer's *Article* is a critical reflection on the legacies of coloniality in our understandings of love and sex by looking at ecosexuality as a conceptual framework and basing her approach on the concept of trans-corporeality. In her discussion of the entanglement of sex and love and their rootedness in the logic of modernity and Western coloniality, Türer points out not only the pitfalls but also the potentialities for a re-imagining of love and relationality.

Against the background of queerness being largely construed through the framework of sexual pathology or sexual deviance on the African continent, Talia Meer and Alex Müller's *Perspective with the Qintu Collab* reflects on the making of *Meanwhile... Graphic Short Stories about Everyday Queer Life in East and Southern Africa* as engaging with love as driver, method, and result of queer collaboration.

In Sahra Rausch's *Perspective*, Rausch interviews the Giessen-based physician Kristina Hänel, connecting political uses of love with our local context in an invited interview by the Editorial Team. The conversation addresses Hänel's own publicized case and the functions of love within the politics around abortion and reproductive rights, as well as its wider implications.

Liza Bauer's *Perspective* draws attention to non-human animal welfare during the COVID-19 pandemic using the example of the popular 'true crime documentary' *Tiger King* (2020). Bauer sheds light on the intricacies of the human and non-human animal cohabitation and argues that the thin line between animal love and animal abuse invites to a rethinking of the terms of our relationship with non-human animals.

Publishing this issue during a worldwide pandemic, the editorial team has faced a delay of its current issue, and wishes to briefly acknowledge one aspect within the intersection of COVID-19, academic labor, and our current issue theme. Recent research suggests that our current moment, in which academics are based in 'home-offices' with no childcare facilities, has been particularly difficult for women. Such research maps women's publishing output during this time, determining their future advancement and job security, suggesting it is lower compared to men's.⁸ Even when childcare and household chores are divided equally between spouses, women are still competing with men who either have stay-at-home spouses or who take a smaller share in such care

work, causing a general disparity in academic productivity. While this was the case also before COVID-19,⁹ this disparity may be on the rise at the moment since women with children are burdened with extra care work while men with or without children may potentially have more time, especially due to the fact that more women than men have lost their jobs.¹⁰ The political history of love has frequently involved a disproportional and unrecognized amount of care work for women, and COVID-19 has proven to be no exception to that.

Giessen, August 2020

The Editorial Team

Endnotes

- ¹ Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 2nd ed., (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014 [2004]).
- ² Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. Constance Borde (London: Vintage Books, 2011 [1949]).
- ³ Mary Garrard, *Artemisia Gentileschi*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).
- ⁴ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Volume 1: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (London: Allen Lane, 1979 [1976]).
- ⁵ Eva Illouz, *Why Love Hurts*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012).
- ⁶ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Commonwealth*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2009).
- ⁷ Alain Badiou, *In Praise of Love*, trans. Peter Bush (New York: The New Press, 2012).
- ⁸ Megan Frederickson, "Women are Getting Less Research Done than Men during this Pandemic," accessed July 25, 2020, <<https://theconversation.com/women-are-getting-less-research-done-than-men-during-this-coronavirus-pandemic-138073>>.
- ⁹ Justin Wolfers, "A Family Friendly Policy that is Friendliest to Male Professors," accessed July 25, 2020, <<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/26/business/tenure-extension-policies-that-put-women-at-a-disadvantage.html>>.
- ¹⁰ Matt Lundy, "Women, Younger Workers Bear Brunt of One Million Job Losses in March," accessed July 25, 2020, <<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/business/economy/article-canada-loses-record-1-million-jobs-as-coronavirus-fallout-slams/>>.