

LOVE, ETC.

A conference sponsored by the “Uses of Literature” Research Centre at the University of Southern Denmark, October 3-4, 2019

What is there left to say about love? Endlessly invoked, celebrated, assailed, abused, and parodied, love has been hailed as the meaning of life and disdained as the ultimate cliché. This conference is inspired by the conviction that love is poised to become a focus of renewed interest in the humanities. We anticipate two main focal points for the conference, without excluding other options.

Love in contemporary literature, art, and culture. How should we understand love at a time when experiences of love seem increasingly fragmented and traditional milestones of adulthood less appealing? How is love being transformed in the age of Tinder and online dating shows? And how is recent fiction, especially by writers who challenge normative notions of gender, reimagining ways of loving and being loved? (*The Argonauts, I Love Dick, How Should A Person Be?*) How, in this light, is the relationship between love and friendship changing? What can be learned from recent reflections on human-animal attachments (Donna Haraway, Vicki Hearne)? And last, but not least, how is love likely to change in the light of a rapidly encroaching future of technological intimacy: predictions that people will not only rely on robots but also come to love them?

Love of literature and art. There is currently a surge of interest in developing more affirmative kinds of criticism. References to love, however, can feel analytically and descriptively thin. They convey the strength of an affect, but nothing about its qualities, tone, or shading. How do we develop richer ways of thinking about the spectrum of positive affects toward literature and art? What is the relation between love and caring, appreciation, infatuation, obsession, a crush? Is loving a book or a movie like loving a person or entirely different? And what are the implications of love for method? Does the work on fandom in cultural studies offer any guidance? Or a hermeneutic language of receptivity and generosity, recently deployed by David Scott and Nikolas Kompridis? Or reflections on camp as a form of love? And in what sense can we think of love of one’s field, discipline, or subject matter as a form of academic labor (Deidre Lynch)?

The conference will feature twenty-minute papers that tackle these questions in accessible and engaging ways. We are looking for position papers, provocations, and intellectual experiments rather than surveys of existing scholarship or close readings of a single text. As we’ll be exploring the option of publishing versions of talks, we ask that materials not be committed for publication elsewhere. Travel costs to Denmark and hotel accommodation will be covered.

Interested participants should submit a three hundred word abstract and cv to Rita Felski (ritafelski@gmail.com) by November 15 2018.