

Love Etc.

3-4 October 2019

Det Adelige Jomfrukloster, Albani Torv 6, 5000 Odense C

Organized by Niels Bohr Prof. Rita Felski, Associate Prof. Anne-Marie Søndergaard Christensen and
Associate Prof. Camilla Schwartz

Sponsored by the Niels Bohr Professorship “Uses of Literature. The Social Dimensions of Literature”
(DNRF127)



PROGRAMME

Thursday 3 October 2019

9.30-9.45 WELCOME

By Rita Felski (University of Southern Denmark/University of Virginia)

9.45-11.00

-Carolina Bandinelli (University of Warwick), “Love me, Tinder’: An Exploration of the Digital Culture of Romance”

-Biswarup Sen (University of Oregon), “Post -Romantic Fantasies: Love in an Algorithmic Age”
Chaired by Emily Hogg (University of Southern Denmark)

11.00-11.15 COFFEE BREAK

11.15-12.30

-Hannah Stark (University of Tasmania) and Timothy Laurie (University of Technology Sydney), “How to Do Politics with Love”

-Camilla Schwartz (University of Southern Denmark), ”Friendship in a Time of Adulthoodphobia”
Chaired by Jon Helt Haarder (University of Southern Denmark)

12.30-14.00 LUNCH (*only by invitation*)

14.00-15.15

-Hanna Meretoja (University of Turku), “Dialogical Encounters: Love and Engagement with Literature”

-Kevin Ohi (Boston College), “Unrequited Love”
Chaired by Anne-Marie Mai (University of Southern Denmark)

15.15-15.30 COFFEE BREAK

15.30-16.45

-Mette Blok (Roskilde University), “A Question of Family Resemblance? Stanley Cavell on Loving Books and Loving Persons”

-Anne-Marie S. Christensen (University of Southern Denmark), “The Look of Love: Perspectives from Philosophy and Literature”

Chaired by Moritz Schramm (University of Southern Denmark)

16.45-17.15 WINE BREAK

17.15-18.30

Namwali Serpell (UC Berkeley), "Ima read: *American Psycho*"
Chaired by Rita Felski (University of Southern Denmark/ University of Virginia)

19.00 CONFERENCE DINNER (only by invitation)

[Olivia Brasserie](#)
[Vintapperstræde 37](#)
5000 Odense C

Friday 4 October 2019

9.30-10.45

-Catherine McDermott (Manchester Metropolitan University), "Autistic Love"
-Anna Poletti (Utrecht University), "More Etc., Less Love?"
Chaired by Anne-Marie Søndergaard Christensen (University of Southern Denmark)

10.45-11.00 COFFEE BREAK

11.00-12.15

-John Plotz (Brandeis University), "Love Machines?"
-Jessica Pressman (San Diego State University), "Loving Bookishness"
Chaired by Jon Helt Haarder (University of Southern Denmark)

12.15-13.45 LUNCH (only by invitation)

13.45-15.00

-Angus Connell Brown (University of Birmingham), "Someone Like You: Love, Pop, and Lyric Form"
-Jonathan Flatley (Wayne State University), "Liking Trees"
Chaired by Alastair Morrison (University of Southern Denmark)

15.00-15.30 COFFEE BREAK

15.30-16.45

Hanne Ørstavik, "Inside distance" – a conversation with Jon Helt Haarder (University of Southern Denmark)
Chaired by Camilla Schwartz (University of Southern Denmark)

19.15 DINNER (only by invitation)

[Storms Pakhus – Odense Street Food](#)
[Seebladsgade 21](#)
5000 Odense C

ABSTRACTS

Keynote Abstracts

Ima Read: *American Psycho*

Namwali Serpell (UC Berkeley)

In this talk, I examine, then trouble, the binary divisions of aesthetics, affects, and politics in our current so-called “reading debates.” I then take up the use of the word “reading” in queer black cultural production, famously defined by Dorian Corey in Jennie Livingston’s 1990 documentary *Paris is Burning*: “Shade comes from reading. Reading came first. Reading is the real art form of insult.” Using images and clips from the film and from a music video for Zebra Katz’s 2012 song, “Ima Read,” I unfold the meanings and implications of this kind of “reading,” arguing that it’s a dialogic form of keen noticing that embraces many versions of reading, even those often posited as diametrically opposed: symptomatic and surface, critical and reparative, political and performative. Queer black reading gives us a new way of thinking about how we approach form: it entails multiple methods, affords both love and judgment, and adopts play, style, and irony as rhetorical strategies. Its unusual combination of aggression and affection takes us beyond the impasses of our reading debates, while suggesting a methodological stance or mood that seems particularly suitable to artworks that afford ambivalent feelings such as “guilty pleasure” or “love-hate.” I close by applying this kind of reading to Bret Easton Ellis’s 1991 novel *American Psycho*.



Inside distance

Hanne Ørstavik

Hanne Ørstavik will give a talk, which she describes as follows: “I think my whole writing for me is a way to learn to love. First, to investigate what love might be. Then, to investigate how to live it. I think of this lecture as an investigation into this journey.” This lecture will be followed by an interview with Jon Helt Haarder, which will delve further into her development as writer, the themes of her books, and her views on the relations between love and literature.

Speaker Abstracts

“Love Me, Tinder”: An Exploration of the Digital Culture of Romance

Carolina Bandinelli (University of Warwick)

I explore digital technologies of love in the forms of dating apps to highlight their poetic power, the power of creating a fantasy of love. My aim is to shed light on the specificities of the relationship between humans and apps, and on the discourses and imaginaries of love that produce and are produced by this very relationship. Combining media theory, cultural studies and psychoanalytic critique, I draw on in-depth interviews, focus groups, life histories, and reflexive ethnography to show

that dating apps, far from being simple intermediaries of love, are subjects and objects of romance in their own right, with which humans entertain a complex relationship of emotional intimacy.



Post-Romantic Fantasies: Love in an Algorithmic Age

Biswarup Sen (University of Oregon)

Ostensibly celebrating traditional notions of courtship and marriage, the hit reality show *The Bachelor* brazenly employs a set of matchmaking protocols – group dates, data-gathering from family and friends, an interfering host, public ranking of suitors – that goes against received notions of love and romance. *The Bachelor's* strategies, I argue, need to be seen as contiguous with digitally enabled practices like Match.com and Tinder, that collectively constitute a new calculus of objective evaluation and algorithmic decision-making. Such a mode of reasoning values public prudence over private passion and dismantles the subjective ground of love as we know it. Reactionary at one level, *The Bachelor* is also futuristic, pointing to the potentialities of post-romantic attachments between “non-loving subjects” in the coming era.



How To Do Politics With Love

Hannah Stark (University of Tasmania) & Timothy Laurie (University of Technology Sydney)

How can love be used for alternative political imaginaries? In what ways can love be employed as a world-making concept? Moreover, can romantic love be recuperated for creating social bonds beyond heterosexual coupledness? Our project introduces a post-sentimental concept of love as a radical departure from existing discourses on romance and familial attachment. Exploring contemporary political conceptions of diversity, solidarity, and kinship, our project draws on feminist and queer paradigms linking intimate practices to political processes. By working through a selection of texts that challenge the ritualized norms of romance, this paper points toward immanent utopian futures by reimagining the kinds of worlds that love is capable of making.



Friendship in a Time of Adulthoodphobia

Camilla Schwartz (University of Southern Denmark)

We live in a time of what I would identify as “adulthoodphobia.” Adulthoodphobia expresses a mode of both resistance and obedience to neoliberal ideologies, since it idealizes the idea of the liberated but also immature child who opposes patriarchal authority, while at the same time doing almost exactly what neoliberal ideology dictates. In this context, emphasis on strong and intimate attachments between women has become a common theme in film, TV series, and literature. Taking my starting point in a variety of cultural representations (*Girls*, *Fleabag*, *Frances Ha*, *Conversations with Friends*, *How Should a Person Be*, *Everything I know about Love*) my paper examines how contemporary depictions of love and friendship among women differ from earlier feminist representations and how they are linked to the idea of adulthoodphobia.



Dialogical Encounters: Love and Engagement with Literature

Hanna Meretoja (University of Turku)

This paper explores the conceptual resources that the metaphor of love as a dialogic encounter provides for understanding engagement with literature. What are its affordances and limits? It allows us to acknowledge, first, the affective intensity of engaging with literature and, second, its transformative power. In all its intensity, love can be nonreciprocal, consuming and blind. The ethical, transformative power of love emerges fully only in a dialogic relationship that entails exposing oneself to the other. In relation to Maggie Nelson's *The Argonauts*, I discuss the idea of transformative love that involves fundamental existential openness and receptivity to the literary work. I suggest that "love as dialogue" allows us to articulate how literature can transform our sense of the possible.



Unrequited Love

Kevin Ohi (Boston College)

Unrequited love confronts us with the limits of our power, and the radically alien nature of other minds. The pangs of despised love shelter unresolved contradictions: stigmatized and singular, we are replaceable, and the fate that cast up one person on the shores of our longing is shaped by contingency. Bodies, minds, and circumstance seem both ineluctable and arbitrary. How might focusing on these and other aspects of unrequited love inform a history of the novel in English—its shifting understandings of a society's power to shape characters at once idiosyncratic and typical, particular and representative, for example; its solicitation of attention and distribution of ostensible rewards; or its rendering of chance and necessity in the unfolding of fictional lives?



A Question of Family Resemblance? Stanley Cavell on Loving Books and Loving Persons

Mette Blok (Roskilde University)

From the beginning of Stanley Cavell's career, the concept of care has been central to his thinking about literature and art: we care about works of art in much the same way that we care about people, and we stand in relations to them in ways that resemble our relations with persons. In my paper, I describe this similarity between love of books and love of persons as one of family resemblance. Thinking about our attachment to art in terms of love or care has important implications for how we approach it. In the case of literature, Cavell maintains the reader's passivity or receptivity vis-à-vis the text, which leads him to an anti-theoretical and anti-methodological standpoint and to describing our relation to fictional characters as ethical.



The Look of Love: Perspectives from Philosophy and Literature

Anne-Marie Søndergaard Christensen (University of Southern Denmark)

We live in a time where it is crucial to be seen – and seen in the right way. Explaining why she became a model, the main character of Jennifer Egan's *Look at Me* (2001) remarks, "Being observed felt like an action, the only one worth taking". But why this obsession with being seen? One possible answer is that to be seen, truly seen, is to be loved. As Iris Murdoch observed, "to direct attention is love" (*The*

Sovereignty of Good, 65). I will explore how we are to understand this connection between love and vision in a time where our modes of seeing are changing and our greatest fear is that “God was dead: to begin with. And romance was dead [...] Love was dead” (Ali Smith, *Winter* 2017)



Autistic Love

Catherine McDermott (Manchester Metropolitan University)

Outdated yet enduring perceptions that autistic people lack ‘theory of mind’ have led to the assumption that autistic love is something of a misnomer. Popular media suggests autism impedes relationality, and medical discourses pathologise autistic expressions of love as neurotic, rigid, and obsessive.

Neurotypical relationality, however, is presumed universal and reflective of what John Swinton calls ‘true humanness’. To challenge these perspectives, I explore narratives that understand autistic love as a concept, feeling, experience, and mode of relationality that is intimately entwined with yet distinct from dominant notions of neurotypical love. Drawing on Melanie Yergeau’s characterisation of autism as a ‘narrative condition’ and ‘queer way of being’, I seek to develop a vocabulary to express the unique contours of autistic love.



More Etc., Less Love?

Anna Poletti (Utrecht University)

In recent years, alternative terms to ‘love’ point to the rich and varied ways we can cherish, be inspired, compelled and rearranged by our encounters with texts and beings. Amateurism, attachment, crush, desire, hospitality, identification, intimacy, kinship, recognition, relationality: these terms form a constellation that offer ways of thinking about positive feelings in contemporary life and culture. Yet positive relations are never simple; they bring ambivalence, confusion and, perhaps, destruction. Any move towards reclaiming love as a mode of critical engagement must contend with its potential connections to fear, persecution, risk, responsibility, vulnerability. Thinking love through a constellation of terms that track ambivalence may allow us to contend with the inexorable movement between positive and negative dispositions regarding the things and beings that captivate us.



Love Machines?

John Plotz (Brandeis University)

There is a long tradition of loveable or lustable-after robots, with roots in works like *Metropolis* and *RUR*. Ever since Philip K Dick’s 1968 *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* and Donna Haraway’s “Cyborg Manifesto” it has been clear that our conception of what AI’s capacities are—in imitating or in surpassing humanity--will be both a cognitive and an emotional challenge, reconfiguring the sense of where personhood begins and ends. This paper traces the recent rethinking of the relationship between human, animal, and cybernetic/robotic in popular SF--Hollywood blockbusters such as *AI*, *Ex Machina*, and *Her*, TV series like *Humans* and *Westworld*--as well as in recent affect-experiments like Ian McEwan’s 2019 *Machines Like Me*. It uses the idea of loving and loveable AI beings to explore current distinctions between love for a human and for a machine, an animal—or a divinity.



Loving Bookishness

Jessica Pressman (San Diego State University)

“Bookishness” is a cultural phenomenon and aesthetic practice wherein, in the moment of the book’s foretold obsolescence due to digital technologies, we see the proliferation of creative acts that fetishize the book. From cell-phone covers crafted to look like books to pillows printed with beloved book covers, necklaces comprised of miniature books to altered book sculptures exhibited in museums, books are everywhere. They are things to love and fetishize... not just to read. Bookishness is about loving books in the digital age. Understanding loving literature today means taking seriously objects of bookishness (even the most kitschy ones) as well as the search engine algorithms and social media sidebars that enable our attachments to them and support our networked literary culture.



Someone Like You: Love, Pop, and Lyric Form

Angus Brown (University of Birmingham)

How does popular music shape understandings of love? In the last decade, critics like Virginia Jackson, Jonathan Culler, and Gillian White have developed a range of lyric theories that revise our understandings of genre, affect, and literary history. While song is often in the background of their work, these critics have largely neglected the most popular lyric form of the post-war era: the pop lyric. This talk seeks to attune lyric theory to popular music for the first time and, in doing so, push poetry studies towards a more urgent discussion of love and its everyday cultural forms. Pop represents one of the largest bodies of sustained thinking about love that we have, it’s time to start listening to it.



Liking Trees

Jonathan Flatley (Wayne State University)

This paper makes the case for the significance of liking as distinct from love, and it makes that case in relation to trees through an examination of two distinct projects: Zoe Leonard’s photographs of trees that have grown into, around, or through fences that were blocking their growth and Richard Powers’s novel *The Overstory*. What does it mean to like trees? Drawing from Andy Warhol’s effort to “like everything,” this paper examines “liking things” as a praxis involving abilities that can be nurtured and educated. Pursuing liking as a project relies on the production of and attention to ways of being alike, as something experientially and conceptually distinct from being equal or identical. This attention to likeness is central to Leonard’s and Powers’s efforts to present trees as objects of an open-ended, noninstrumental affective attachment.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Venue

Odense Adelige Jomfrukloster
[Albani Torv 6](#)
5000 Odense C



Photo/Video/TV production/Radio production/Newspaper and Magazine production

During the conference “Love Etc.”, photographers will be present in order to get video and pictures to be used online, in social media and in printed material in order to promote the project “Uses of Literature. The Social Dimensions of Literature”. Also photographers and journalists from different kinds of printed media and online resources might be present at the conference in order to make tv-programmes and articles about the conference.



Guest network

SDU-VISITOR



Contact information

Don't hesitate to contact Executive Officer Pernille Hasselsteen if you have any questions regarding the conference:

Pernille's email: perha@sdu.dk

Pernille's phone: +45 9350 7246