

Feminist Love Studies? Current Tensions, Contingencies and Visions

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Love, one of the most compelling drives in human life, has not only been under-researched, but also viewed as a psychic, un-measurable and unruly subject, a realm envisioned by art, literature and philosophy, i.e. areas considered less relevant for science and more for pleasurable pursuit. Significantly, the immense feminist literature has also avoided investments in love as a powerful affect. With the exception of e.g. Afro-American stand on love as the erotic and maternal power, love has been associated with feminine disempowerment, while its universality as a human experience has been put under scrutiny and abandoned. The reasons for such rejection can be seen both as a strategic intellectual act and an emotional counteraction towards the highly individualistic conceptualisation of love as the ultimate object of human desires, which simultaneously justifies oppression. While contemporary feminist, postcolonial and eco-political theories of sustainability continue to illustrate tensions between the Eurocentric individualisation and love as a source of security in the social, the 21st century marks a significant turning point in thinking about love. Important voices emerge in research on the human right to love (care, preserve, sustain) i.e. the right to values globally eroded through enforced migrations, deteriorating labour contracts and various denials of affects. Impacted by global conflicts and loaded with tensions on a local scale, Western attitudes and understanding of love bonds become more diverse and elastic, but also more intensive than ever. In the face of the growing secularism and the shifting grounds of traditional institutions, psychic transformations in the perception of love as indispensable human affect are on the horizon.