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On Matters of Love

International Seminar

Book of abstracts

15-17 May 2023

15 May 2023, Monday



‘ENTREPRENEURIAL’ LOVE

1:30 PM - 3 PM CEST, 2:30 PM - 4 PM EEST, 5 PM - 6: 30 PM IST, 7:30 AM - 9:00 AM ET

Discussants: [Anna Romanowicz](#) (Jagiellonian University), [Amiya Kumar Das](#) (Tezpur University)

Material status, maturity and marriage: love and career in corporate life

Jaspreet Kaur (Delhi Skill and Entrepreneurship University)

Post liberalization resulted in Multinational corporations promoting the materialistic culture in India. This paved way not only for financial viability but provided space for emotional attachments among the employees. Research studies found workspace relationships are inevitable and this happens due to long working hours, foster team building and career growth facilitating relational patterns.

In India patriarchal culture largely depicts male as the bread earner in the family and females are for producing children and managing household. With the expansion of education and employment opportunities females are becoming the epitome of successful careers, and their relationships in public spheres have changed. In technical culture of swiping right and left in dating app indicates the language of flirting but to find the old school of love in present generation, youth often get attracted to those people who spend time with opposite sex due to the work environment.

In the context of ‘high power distance’ in corporate life, many a times employees do politick to gain the visibility in the eyes of superior. This can be looked in especially majority of females, opting their life partners starts with high material status. Many cases showcased that males are often superior ones and females are subordinates resulting in match making. In a corporate setup, the nodes of similar careers and finding ‘right fit’ and ‘good catch’ of material statuses find easily in corporate network. And the question arises that only material status leads to a successful relationship which turned into marriages? Or the variable of maturity which females often search in their counterparts is significant? In this paper, author as HR professional shares narrative case studies of three women in corporate life and how they found their life partners with the amalgamation of Material Status and Maturity which turned into marital relationships.

The Poor Brahmin, the Jilted Lover, and the hard work of (not) being hurt

Bhoomika Joshi (Yale University)

This paper centres on the accounts of love, hurt and intimacy that circulate among male taxi drivers in the Uttarakhand Himalayas. In doing so, it aims to understand how the sentiment of hurt figures in the stories that taxi drivers tell about their entrepreneurial aspirations, especially when describing the hard work of self-reformation from failed love. These accounts parallel the narratives of alleged frugality, renunciation, and hard work of the poor brahmin embodied as the deserving but hurt figure in the mythical and folk tales that circulate among them. In doing so, the paper describes how the sentiment of hurt is interactively shaped and expressed among the predominantly upper-caste male drivers to evoke and shape their deservedness through the pursuit of entrepreneurialism when it is thwarted by the democratic project of social justice and of failed love. It is part of my broader dissertation research on ‘attachments to hurt’ and the contradictions thereof for the intimate economy of mobility, enterprise, and regional demography in the Indian Himalayas.

LOVE AND SEXUALITY

3:15 PM - 4:45 CEST, 4:15 PM - 5:45 PM EEST, 6:45 - 8:15 PM IST, 6:15 AM - 7:45 AM PST

Discussant: [Kristina Garalytė](#) (Vilnius University)

Chandigarh Kare Aashiqui (Chandigarh makes romance): an ethnography

Manu Multani (California Institute of Integral Studies)

This paper highlights the invisibility of the polysemy of love in North India through multimodal ethnographic methods exploring how gender, sexuality, intimacy and romance are conceptualized and contested among college-aged Indian youth in Chandigarh, Punjab. The ethnographer encountered varied ways in which language describing love demonstrates how “power and sex collide,” (Fahs and McClelland, 2016). Intimacy and sexuality taken out of the Western context become notions problematically limiting different experiences as universal ones, enabling this

interrogation. I trace how concepts travel transnationally and how these notions are employed from the ethnographic perspective of an "outsider in and insider out," (Minh-ha, 1989). I discuss how terms like intimacy and love reveal more than what I may understand versus my interlocutors detailing the privileges and assumptions surfacing in our shared encounters. Additional themes explored in this paper include student dating practices, sexuality education experiences and sexuality-related curiosities and how these in-turn inform sexual scripts pertaining to love, intimacy and desire among Punjabi youth. Ethnographic data also unravels the influence of media technologies by turning to the same digital platforms integral to the circulating popular scripts around sexuality within North India. Youth are often left out of discourses where decision-making takes place— further challenging youth to establish their own personhood. This project will offer first-hand insight of Indian youth sexualities and how “their own cultural understandings become assets” for them to make sense of sexuality (Carillo 2018, 28). Youth in India are already challenging the pervasive assumption that India is solely a site of routine sexual violence or that love and romance cannot and does not manifest there. Discovering the curiosities, dilemmas and sexual scripts of youth provoked by this study will continue to challenge that narrative.

Love and sexuality in Mandatory Palestine: the body, the fantasy, and the spirituality

Yael Itai-Pak (Bar Ilan University)

In this paper, I explore how Jews living in Mandatory Palestine between world wars understood marital love and its relations with sexuality. I do that by examining guidebooks on sexuality written in Hebrew in Palestine and local versions of books translated for the local audience. I use the perspective of the History of Emotions, which claims that emotions, marital love included, are socially constructed. I follow the narrative of these books, focusing on their choice of metaphors, and attempting to reconstruct the local concepts of love and sexuality. The first half of the 20th century was the heyday of Sexology in Europe. Jews immigrating from Europe to Mandatory Palestine were influenced by sexology, Jewish and Zionist ideas, thus forming a unique attitude concerning love and sexuality. The guidebooks I examine follow the European bourgeois culture of the time, claiming to be "professional", addressing the educated reader and emphasizing hygiene, especially for women. Nevertheless, the perspective they hold on fantasy is different. The European and American sexologists, psychologists, and psychoanalysts who inspired the books, understood the body both as

a physical presence and a metaphor, hence a bodily fantasy. The Palestine literature claims a "Jewish" perspective on sexuality, building on a loose interpretation of Jewish texts, Greek mythology, and German culture. Marital love is portrayed as an aspired spiritual elevation, though related to sex. Sex, in contrast, is understood as crude and animal-like. Unlike the European texts, the writers of Hebrew books minimized the fantasy, replacing it with a combination of concrete descriptions with spirituality. Translated books, of which the preface was written in Palestine, show a disparity between the introduction and the original text, again showing relative neglect of fantasy in Palestinian writing.

WELCOME PANEL

5 PM - 6:30 PM CEST, 6 PM - 7: 30 PM EEST, 8:30 PM - 10:00 PM IST

Welcome by the Organizing Committee: Anna Romanowicz, Amiya Kumar Das, Dev Nath Pathak, Kristina Garalytė, Victor de Munck.

Keynote lecture by [William Jankowiak](#) (University of Nevada)

Love and sex across cultures: thoughts and speculations

No culture is ever entirely successful or satisfied with its synthesis of romantic love, companionship, and sexual desire. Whether the setting is a busy metropolis or a quiet farming village, tension always exists between a community's sexual habits and customs and what it believes to be the proper context for love. Even in Western societies, we prefer sexual passion to romance and companionship, and no study of any culture has shown that individuals regard passion and affection equally.

16 MAY 2023, Tuesday

ROMANTIC LOVE AND MEDIA

1 PM - 2:30 PM CEST, 2 PM - 3:30 PM EEST, 4:30 PM - 6 PM IST

Discussant: [Biswajit Das](#) (Jamia Millia Islamia University)

Lover's discourse: a qualitative study of romantic love in the social media age

Maanya Tewatia with Dr. Annie Baxi (Ashoka University)

What words, phrases, idioms, images and symbols become popular in a given time are indicative of the ontological assumptions of a society. Social media platforms have added new layers to the meanings of terms that have been in common usage. In this study, we discuss how certain social media platforms have developed linguistic expressions to account for the experiences of romance that complicate the lasting cultural constructions of love and relationships. Data was collected through observation of online activities of the couple participants, personal interviews and their responses to public posts made by anonymous couples on social media platforms. The obtained data was analysed through the approach of discourse analysis, rooted in discursive psychology, highlighting the shifting terrain of romantic love through its changing vernacular. Prominent themes include a critical discussion on the ideas of 'forever', 'together', 'official', 'commitment', 'giving space', 'relationship goals', and their role in defining romantic love. The findings provide an exploratory and critical perspective on the ways our new expressions are modifying and commodifying our intimate felt emotions.

Whose individual choices? Romantic love in the Indian media discourse

Elżbieta Foltyniak (Jagiellonian University)

The notion of “romantic love” is stereotypically connotated worldwide with a free choice. Finding “the one”, “a perfect match” and being able to consciously choose an ideal person is one of the popular media clichés. The context of India at a first glance gives an additional aspect of an individual choice as an opposition to arrange marriages. However, according to Eva Illouz, in the contemporary world, none of the choices is fully individual and our social and matrimonial practices are shaped by widely accessible mass media (Illouz, 2012). The choice is no longer pure and simple.

In the English-language Indian media discourse an individual, free choice is often depicted and valued positively. Nevertheless, some crucial questions about the conditions of the choices are overlooked and remained without answers. This paper aims to fill this gap by examining the media discourse consisting of two models of representation of romantic love – love as emancipation and love as a thread. Those models, aiming to be opposite and different, have a lot in common and the most important notion they share is a choice.

The paper seeks to answer a question whose choices are depicted in the media discourse? What kind of cultural capital is owned by the people undertaking and not undertaking choices? What sorts of choices are present in the discourse and how are they valued in the frame of this narrative? Particular emphasis will be put on the role of the urban middle class in forming and developing the discourse.

TRANSGRESSIONS?

08 AM - 9:30 AM CST, 3 PM - 4:30 PM CEST, 4 PM - 5:30 PM EEST, 6:30 PM - 8 PM IST

Discussant: [Dev Nath Pathak](#) (South Asian University)

Romantic love and violence within polyamory relationships: learnings, reproductions, and challenges

Enciso Dominguez and Haley Briggs (University of Houston - Clear Lake)

Polyamory is a type of Consensual Non-Monogamy (CNM) defined as a love, committed, long-term relationship that involves multiple partners at the same time, where all the people involved are aware of and consent to the relationship.

Our research is focused on Polyamory relationships that consider Feminist and Critical perspectives. Dr. Enciso started her research in Polyamory in Spain. She witnesses how the Polyamorous community discussed topics like emotions, motherhood, traditional gender roles, and romantic love. Haley Briggs joined the research and together we started to map out how Polyamory is experienced in the USA. Unfortunately, Polyamory did not escape the scope of patriarchy, its discourses, and practices regardless of the cultural context.

We discovered violence was a shared topic in the Poly-community. There are some discussions within the community in different blogs, forums, or mainstream mass media, but there was no research scholarly addressing the topic. Within CNM, the concept of violence is problematic given the different dynamics of power and expectations from having multiple partners at once, and the mainstream approach still inaccurately focuses on physical, blatant violence. Furthermore, celebratory discourses on romantic love and CNM lead people to overlook sensitive matters, while societal criticism maintains the stigmatization of these types of relationships keeping violence invisible and silenced.

We are currently collecting our data through Narrative Productions. A feminist qualitative critical methodology based on Haraway's epistemology. advocating for the co-construction of knowledge with their participants. We ask ourselves how our understanding of romantic love could lead us into a violent relationship. We do not argue romantic love *per se* causes violence, we aim to explore the practices that can create a breeding ground for violence in a romantic relationship. We urge a critical open discussion on violence in the context of love and alternative relationships in the hope to learn from CNM and get some answers about how to experience healthier relationships.

Beyond the heteronormative constructions of love and family in India

Lakshita Bhagat (Amity University in Noida)

In contemporary India, discourses on romantic love, marriage and family are increasingly dominated by heteronormative understanding. Despite signs of second demographic transition (SDT), such as rising age at marriage and falling fertility rate, attitudinal changes, and other markers of the SDT, like the emergence of complex family settings as reflected in same-sex partnerships and non-marital cohabitation, remain nascent. While India is not a stranger to same-sex and queer relationships (Vanita, 2005), such relationships appear eclipsed, given the socio-cultural constructions of love in contemporary settings. However, in recent years, discussions around same-sex relationships have been making ripples, with petitions in the apex court asking for the legalisation of same-sex marriages.

Against this backdrop, this paper examines the socio-cultural constructions and legal underpinnings of heterosexual and same-sex relationships in India. To this end, the paper uses primary and secondary sources by conducting interviews with young working people in a same-sex relationship and assessing their perspective and practice of love, marriage, family, and children. Given that most marriages and family formation in India continue to take place within the caste, class, and religion matrix based on traditional gender norms, it would be interesting to analyse the ‘choice’ and consideration of these social categories in the formation of queer romantic relationships. Support from workplaces is also analysed by looking at workplace policies. Further, this paper analyses the representation of same-sex and non-heterosexual relationships in the popular discourse and media, like, social media, movies, sitcoms, and advertisements. Overall, the paper strives to gauge the trajectory and dynamics of relationships beyond the heteronormative bind by looking at personal, popular, and legal meaning-making.

Cultural narratives of the transgressions in love in an Indian context

Nishrin Ghadiyali with Dr. Jigisha Gala (The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda)

Predominantly, breach of the marital contract is considered as sin/*adharma*/crime because marriage is widely understood as sacred. Challenging the dominant social constructions, studies from the biological and evolutionary perspectives describe the

phenomenon as ‘human nature of falling in love and not permanently staying in it’ (Wright, 1994). While in Indian traditions, love in its sense is explained as transcending worldly limitations thus placing love-based relationships as sacred than duty-bound marital bonds. This paper aims to understand the constructions of transgressions in love by scrutinizing the cultural narratives through a story completion qualitative methodology. The story completion tool involved some hypothetical story stems to be completed by 30 participants, equally divided across gender and life stages (18-29, 30-49, 50+ years). Participants story ending predictions revolved around domains like leading factors of marital transgressions, its socio-emotional impact, and the scope of reconciliation. Broadly, participants’ stories on forgiveness and reconciliation revolved around recalling the investment in building a family, overseeing and deceiving oneself considering it to be a one-time mistake and blaming the other man or woman in the partner’s affair. This reveals the narrative of marriage as a system of support and social acceptance, not faith and loyalty. Various issues in long-term relationships leading to transgressions emerged in stories like seeking novelty, deteriorating quality of time spent together, attraction towards masculinity, and finding love somewhere else. Discussion revolves around examining the play of socio-moral norms, cultural constructions around transgressions, biological imperatives, and how they can be understood to enhance relationship quality harmony and individual wellbeing.

17 MAY 2023, Wednesday

LOVE 'MEETS' POLITICS

09:00 AM - 10:30 AM CEST, 10 AM-11:30 AM EEST, 12:30 PM - 2 PM IST, 4 PM - 5:30 PM KST, 5 PM - 6:30 PM AEST

Discussant: [Alex Nelson](#) (University of Indianapolis)

Love is more political than you think: an anthropological fieldnote from South Korea

JiMin Nam (University of Oslo)

Aside queer discourses regarding legalization of same-sex partnership or marriage, which highlights the political-ness of love enough, love is often regarded as something far from political but rather personal. While many feminists are frustrated in how men in their society keep failing respecting women, such as not being active enough to educate male peers to better understand what 'consent' is in interaction with women, or not encouraging other men or himself to actively transform or at least evade from any misogynistic, homosocial culture, only few feminists use love as the weapon to ring the alarm. During more than a half-year of fieldwork in various places in South Korea that was conducted in par with online ethnography, I discovered the specific, localized idea(s) of politicized notion(s) of love within the context of South Korean politics, society, and economics through exploring the lifestyles of young South Korean feminists who explicitly identify themselves as women who does not engage or unionize with men romantically neither sexually. From my ethnographic data, I concluded that 'love' is something more complicated than people take for granted. I stand on the shoulder of core anthropological lens, which de-naturalizes but rather complicates and dissects the concept of love, the lens that makes us think love not as a one-big-element but as a weird, complicated composition of different atoms which each has potential to be interpreted locally. In my case, such detanaturalized, dissected, and localized definition of love was obtained within the case study of this community of young feminist women in South Korea. For them, boycotting heterosexual love is a stern warning sign against

men that they are done with being the victim of constant intimate partner violence. For them, contemplating on homoromantic love between women, although many identify as straight, is both a time and place where they could finally breathe among heteronormative air of South Korean society that felt suffocating to them. Here, it shows how escaping heteronormativity is not just for the sake of 'others' for straight women, but something that straight women in South Korea themselves were also desperate for. For them, love does not necessarily mean sexual neither romantic, but also means solidarity among women who share similar trauma and struggle. For them, homoromantic love between women is not something that should be blindly celebrated but rather a complicated topic that offers them an infinite platform to think rather a lesbian love is helpful or detrimental to them to help them achieve their goals faster. Their goal is to make their own community where women are psychologically, physically, and economically strong and happy.

The complicated love languages of expat wives in Hong Kong before separation

Alexandra Ridgway (The University of Hong Kong and Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology)

In this paper, I explore how the love languages of married female migrants, described as probationary migrant wives, shift after arriving in a new host society. Drawing upon stories of women who migrated under a dependent visa scheme to Hong Kong, I expose how their expressions of love, once strongly founded upon romantic notions, become influenced by the nature of their visa status whereby they are sponsored by their husbands. As a result of the migration process and this legal arrangement, I find that these women's former expressions of pure romantic love (Giddens, 1992) towards their intimate partners become complicated by the need to demonstrate their legal worth which they do through particular intimate gestures. I explore how this is a response to the perpetual uncertainty of their relationship (Bauman, 2000) which is intensified within a migration setting but also relates to how state regimes work to capitalise emotional bonds (Illouz, 2007). Taking this one step further, I use Bury's (1982) concept of biographical disruptions to contend that while migration and the acquisition of a relationship-based visa are certainly events which disrupt these women's lives, this does not mean that they completely relinquish the romantic aspects of their intimate relations from the past. Rather they walk a tightrope in which they seek to maintain the romance

which led to the formation of their marriages in the first place, while also engaging with new expressions which act to secure their relationships and livelihoods.

LOVE LITERATURES

11:00 AM - 12:30 PM CEST, 12:00-13:30 EEST, 2:30 - 4:00 PM IST

Discussant: [Kristina Dolinina](#) (Vilnius University)

Love and the nuclear: literary dimensions of reconsidering romantic relations in nuclear fiction

Inna Sukhenko (University of Helsinki)

The current nuclear narratives vary from nuclear optimism to nuclear violence and toxic geographies, from distinguishing the nuclear energy as ‘sustainable clean energy’ and as ‘an invisible but overwhelming evil’, but still defining it as a debatable value. (Aref 2016). Global debating on nuclear energy as a societal value in the energy dependent society faces not only the feminist anti-nuclear movements, but acts of ‘*challenging patriarchy*’ (Acheson, 2018) within ‘*white male academics*’ (Klien 1983), which initially stemmed from romanticizing the nuclear within the Nuclear Anthropocene.

The literary parameters of situating romantic relations in nuclear fictional writings – Jennie Fields’s *Atomic Love* (2020) and Bobbie Ann Mason’s *An Atomic Romance* (2006) – reveal the narrative tools of romanticizing ‘nuclear energy’ by appealing to framing ‘love story’ at the background of scientific experience and activities within nuclear studies via discussing characteristics of ‘Romantic Science’ (Hadzigeorgiou, Schulz 2006) (such as 1) the emotional sensitivity toward nature, 2) the centrality of sense experience, 3) the importance of ‘holistic experience’, 4) the importance of the notions of mystery and wonder, 5) the power of science to transform people’s outlook on the natural world, and 6) the relationship between science and religion, science and philosophy.)

The presentations aims to show how situating romantic relation of love within romanticizing nuclear science contributes to conceptualizing nuclear optimism as well as transmitting scientific knowledge (radioactivity, nuclearism, electricity, magnetism, meteorology, anatomy etc) to readers by appealing to comparison of romantic relations with ‘nuclear chain reaction’ (nuclei-reactor-meltdown-fusion-fission) via introducing the intimacy component into conceptualizing romantic relations in the Nuclear Anthropocene.

Together with references to Mauch’s *Slow Hope* (2018), Morton’s *Dark Ecology* (2016), Cordle’s *Nuclear Criticism* (2014), Albrecht’s *Earth Emotions* (2019), Bruhn’s *Intermedial Ecocriticism* (2020), such approach to conceptualizing romantic relations in fictional writings helps distinguish ‘romantic’ components of communicating nuclear energy related issues (nuclear threat, nuclear infrastructure, nuclear disaster, radiation contamination) as well as articulated connections between action, reflection, subjectivity and nuclearism, nuclear optimism, nuclear violence within the societal multidisciplinary debates on nuclear power challenges in energy-driven within energy humanities’ and environmental humanities’ agenda.

Is romantic love seen as a ‘sine qua non’ for relationships, or a ‘conceit’ which only a few can think of?

Ganga. S. Mashal (Central University of Karnataka)

The mystery of the relationship between the two, as suggested by Amrita Pritam in her poem, “The First Book” is the union, an apparently romantic one, conceited as the first Language (Love), holds true but may not be the sole truth.

My paper would deal with the various expressions of relationships of all borders and genders found in the realm of literature. What Donne posits in “To His Coy Mistress” and Sir Thomas Wyatt in “They flee from me” are two extremes of the relations between a man and a woman although both lived during the Renaissance. Over the ages, authors have represented that the physical and the emotional are two separate elements in love, and they may or may not unite, yet, the union of a man and a woman doesn’t get disturbed as suggested in the works of Webster (Way of the World) which leads the discussion to many other aspects (material) that makes a union. The elements like insecurity, possession, and suspicion found in epics like Mahabharata and the Iliad

and works of Shakespeare, Tennyson, Yeats, etc., would be a separate section in the paper.

Contemplating the meaning of the relationship in today's age as suggested in T.S. Eliot's "The Wasteland" is sorrowful. Yet on another hand, the units that form the relationship are not constant, making it more interesting and enigmatic as we reach gender studies. Considering the illustrations of transition and homosexual love in "The Danish Girl" and "The Funny Boy", our understanding of Amrita Pritam could be questioned.

Taking Romance and Love separately and together, along with the human-made factor of the relationship, the paper would address the question of *sine qua non* and conceit in the society.

SUMMARY PANEL

1:00 PM - 2:30 PM CEST, 2:00 PM - 3:30 PM EEST, 4:30 PM - 6 PM IST

Keynote lecture by [Victor de Munck](#)

Destablizing love in the era of contingency

Thank you and goodbye.