CALL FOR PAPERS

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Towards Hopeful Horizons: Contemporary Narratives of Love and Care

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The global climate of conflict and violence has brought about an increasing dehumanisation of certain social groups when not rampant violations of human rights, whereas the prevailing neoliberal logic which continues to favour individualisation and prioritise material wealth has resulted in increasing socio-economic disparities as well as the incessant exploitation of human and natural resources worldwide. Additionally, the reinforcement of patriarchal, capitalist structures of white privilege and hierarchies of power poses important challenges for the effective achievement of egalitarian, feminist, anti-racist and ecological goals. The aim of this special issue is to explore how contemporary narratives have responded to these increasingly darker realities and the pessimistic future prospects they delineate by centring love and care as essential human practices and strategies to envision more hopeful horizons.

Recognising feminist analyses and conceptualizations of (romantic) love as a patriarchal form of domination (Ferguson 2017, 9) and wary of the ways in which love can still become a site of "gendered power asymmetries" (Gunnarson, García-Andrade and Jónasdóttir 2018, 3), in line with critics working in the field of Feminist Love Studies (Ferguson and Toye 2017), we favour an understanding of love as a necessary human emotion which manifests in various forms and which is becoming "an increasingly important arena of gender struggle" (Gunnarson, García-Andrade and Jónasdóttir 2018, 2). The development of a feminist love politics is not personal but political (Ferguson 2017, 10) and must be rooted in affective economies and nurturing love forces which respond and subvert the dictates of patriarchy and other forms of social domination (Ferguson 2017, 11). These include recognising the radical power of love as a decolonial force capable of counteracting the legacies of colonial violence and oppression and of creating emancipatory spaces for subaltern, Indigenous, queer or racialized women (Sandoval 2000; Ureña 2017; Odozor 2022), among other collectives.

In order to explore ideas of love and care as radical alternative ways to engage with ourselves and others and to envision better futures, we build on bell hooks' solid theorisation of the ethics of love as liberating and transformative (hooks 1994, 2000, 2001, 2003) and thus crucial for any society aiming towards social cohesion and gender and racial equality. In *All About Love: New Visions* (2000), hooks advocates for a return to love as a means of addressing the pervasive lovelessness in our world. In her work, hooks transcends the conceptualisation of this emotion in exclusively romantic terms and presents it as a practice of freedom (1994, 298) and as a form of restorative pedagogy, both personal and collective, with projection towards the future. For hooks love is not just a personal

option but an ethical stance from which to counter what she defines as "the culture of domination". As she puts it: "A culture of domination is anti-love. It requires violence to sustain itself. To choose love is to go against the prevailing values of the culture. This change can emerge only as we expand our concern about politics of domination and our capacity to care about the oppression and exploitation of others. A love ethic makes this expansion possible" (1994, 244). Placing love at the centre of discourses that shape political visions and aspirations is in itself emancipatory since to choose to love is "to move towards freedom, to act in ways that liberate ourselves and others" (1994, 298).

hooks' definition of love as "a combination of care, knowledge, responsibility, respect, trust, and commitment" (2001, xviii) aligns with theorisations of a feminist ethics of care developed as an alternative moral framework, a critique of liberal individualism and a form of countering the prevailing marginalisation of care. Care work has historically been devaluated because of its association with the feminine and unproductive realm whereas individualised forms of "self-care" have been co-opted by the market displacing notions of social welfare, kinship ties and community alliances (The Care Collective 2020). In the theorisations of Joan Tronto (1993), Virginia Held (2006), Carol Gilligan (2011) or The Care Collective (2020), among others, underlies the basic idea that people are interconnected, relational beings who establish relationships with others and that these connections should be mediated through love, empathy, commitment and a capacity to respond to the needs of others (Gilligan 2011). Thus, a feminist care ethics encourages the recognition of one's own and others' humanity (Held 2006), and places love and care at the centre as centripetal humanising forces (hooks 2003, 103) that validate and nurture different ways of being in the world.

We are interested in analysing twenty-first century literary, visual or activist narratives, across various genres and geographical locations, which envision mutual egalitarian and enhancing forms of loving, which mobilise positive affects as ethical and political moves and which articulate transformative feminist visions of love and care as an answer to the current troubling times. We are particularly keen on receiving proposals which explore intersectional feminist narratives of love and care articulated from various standpoints and perspectives –including queer, racialised, Indigenous, postcolonial, decolonial, neurodiverse or disabled, among others.

We welcome contributions that reflect on the lines of enquiry listed below but are also open to others not included here:

- Contemporary literary, visual and activist narratives centred on love and care as tools/sites of resistance and emancipation
- Feminist reconfigurations of love and care as radical alternatives to violence, precarity or systemic oppression
- Articulations of a feminist care ethics as a form of countering the prevailing neoliberal logics of individualisation, dehumanisation and material exploitation
- Reimaginings of love, care, intimacy, kinship or community from queer, racialised, Indigenous, intersectional, postcolonial, decolonial, neurodiverse or disabled perspectives.

- Ecofeminist, ecological, post-human articulations of love and care
- Optimistic and hopeful narratives and the political mobilisation of positive affects

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Publication guidelines and the table of contents of former issues can be found at:

https://revistes.ub.edu/index.php/lectora/information/authors

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