

## Love Matters

And did you get what  
you wanted from this life, even so?

I did.

And what did you want?  
To call myself beloved, to feel myself  
beloved on the earth<sup>iii</sup>

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### *Abstract*

*Love matters because it is what produces us in our relational humanity as mentally healthy, warm and considerate human beings; it both enhances the capacity of our lives and enables our moral transformation (hooks 2000a). We believe that one cannot fully participate as a relational being in family, professional, political or other areas of life without the experience of being loved and wanted. Without love, life is significantly less than it has the capacity to be. This paper argues that love matters for four major reasons: firstly, because love is a discrete entity and love relations are distinguishable analytically from other affective relations, including care and solidarity; secondly, because of the inalienability of the love laboring that secures and sustains love over time. Thirdly, love matters politically and socially as it is central to the framing of personal identities, to what people prioritize in life and because loving produces socially significant outcomes through the processes of nurturing and its absence produces loss. It also matters socially and politically because of the salience of the affective system as a discrete site for generating injustice, including gendered injustices.*

### **The Importance of Love**

This paper argues that love is a key concept for developing a theory of social justice. Relatedly, love matters for understanding politics and society: how and who people love and what love is promoted by social institutions. Love matters politically because it is central to the framing of personal identities and what people prioritize in life. It matters socially because loving produces socially significant outcomes through the processes of nurturing, while its absence produces

injuries and injustices in the form of loss, deprivation, neglect and/or abuse. Love is the primary element of our ‘humane co-affective relations’ through which we make and remake each other (Matheis 2014, 12).

We contend that people are carers and care recipients both in the public and the private domain of life, and that, as humans they live in profound states of dependency and interdependency; they are deeply vulnerable at several levels, corporeally, emotionally, socially, politically, culturally, environmentally and economically. And we hold that people are sentient beings, with relational ethically-informed identities and feelings (both positive and negative) and that these relational feelings and identities play an important role in informing how people frame their personal identities and moral choices (Hill Collins 1990; Sayer, 2005: 35-50[v]; Tronto 2012). We argue that one cannot fully participate as a relational being in family, community, professional, political or other areas of life without the experience of loving and being loved and wanted. Our core contention is that the affective relations involved in reproducing the love, care and solidarity that produces people as social and intimately capable others is a core part of what produces them as human beings (Oksala 2016, 297) To be deprived of love, care and solidarity is to experience affective inequality (Authors 2009). Love matters in terms of enhancing the capacity of our lives and enabling our moral transformation (hooks 2000a). Thus love matters as a public good without which life is significantly less than it has the capacity to be.

In our view, love is recognizable as a discrete inalienable set of non-commodifiable social practices; it operates within the wider affective system of caring, loving and solidarity from which it is analytically and empirically distinguishable. Love matters because of the inalienability of the love laboring that secures and sustains love over time. We believe that what distinguishes love most from other forms of caring is its non-substitutionability. The emotional work involved in loving a given person cannot be assigned to another by a commercial or even voluntary arrangement without undermining the premise of mutuality that is at the heart of intimacy (Authors 2007; Strazdins and Broom 2004). Unlike care, where care work can, in theory, be exchanged with another caregiver in order to have care provided the

same is not possible with love: one cannot pay someone to have a meal with your partner, or to visit a friend in hospital without fundamentally transforming the interchange.

To say that love is distinct from other forms of caring is not to deny that in the practice of loving, desiring and caring, the boundaries between forms of love and care cannot be neatly drawn. The all too human self-intervenens. As Traustadottir (2000) observes, while we can make a distinction between emotions and activities, they are not so easily separated in practice. Professional (theoretically, non-love) care relationships can and do transform into friendships in specific contexts. Relations that appear to be governed by a one-sided kind of love (where there is unfailing love over time for a parent or a very ill child) do call forth some form of reciprocation, even if only in the form of a smile; and they involve relations of power and control as well as love (Authors 2009). In understanding love, it is also necessary to distinguish between affective relations of love, care and solidarity as a system of caring relations, and the emotionally-driven commercial care work undertaken in a market context (Hochschild 1979). Affective care relations are also analytically distinguishable from affective actions operating in the exercise of political power (Ahmed 2004; Lakoff 2008[iv]).

Like Ferguson (2014) we regard loving, and the affective relations in which it is embedded, as highly materialized. The labor that produces love is undertaken through affection, commitment, attentiveness, and the material investment of time, energy, and resources. It involves, at different times and in various forms, friendship, desire, and/or other-centeredness where there may be little or no reciprocation, or seeming merit or deservedness for receiving love. Moreover, love laboring is very unequally distributed between women and men, with the result that women's exploitation as love laborers is arguably the principal form of exploitation that applies specifically to them as women (Bubeck 1998; Authors 2008, 2009). Thus love also matters because of the salience of the affective system as a discrete site for generating gender and, increasingly, racially-related injustices (Gutierrez-Rodriguez 2014).

### **The Neglect of Love**

Feminist scholars have taken issues of care and love out of the privatised world of the family to which they had been consigned by most political theorists (Gilligan 1982, 1995; Tronto 1987, 1993; Okin 1989; Benhabib 1992; Kittay 1999; Sevenhuijsen 1998; Fineman 2004; Held 2006). They have drawn attention to the salience of care and love as public goods, and have identified the importance of caring as a human capability meeting a basic human need (Nussbaum 1995; hooks 2000a). Feminist scholars have also played a key role in exposing the complex ways in which exploitative gendered power relations are embedded in love and care relations (Ferguson 1989; Folbre 1994; Jónasdóttir 1994; Bubeck 1995; Fraser and Gordon 1997). In making love and care public and problematic, feminists have highlighted the affective domains of life to be discrete sites of social action, sites that are deeply interwoven with the economic, political and cultural spheres.

Despite the advances of feminist thinking on care and justice, however, much of their scholarship is ignored or peripheralized in discussions on social justice in political theory. In contemporary theory, including feminist theory, focusing on the subject of love ‘in particular evokes embarrassed responses, similar to what the formerly taboo topic of sex used to elicit’ (Toye 2010, 40). While there are exceptional political theorists, such as Axel Honneth (2003, 143) who regard love as ‘the central idea of intimate relationships’ and a form of ‘affective recognition’ central to the realisation of equality, most branches of the social and political science neglect love relations, concentrating instead on the political relations of the state, the economic relations of the market, and the cultural relations governing social recognition<sup>1</sup>. The implicit (if not always explicit) deployment of the Marxist-Weberian framework to frame issues of inequality peripheralizes affective relations: they are not seen as generative, but merely derivative sites for the realization of social justice (Authors 2014). Love and care tend to be analyzed either as problems of the good life such as in the work of Habermas (1981) or, as Okin (1989) and Tronto (1987) observed almost thirty years ago, not sufficiently important to be addressed in mainstream theories of justice and politics.

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<sup>1</sup> Among the political egalitarian theorists that exemplified this tradition are John Rawls, Charles Taylor and G.A. Cohen. We would like this as an endnote to the text but do not know how to move it...as new formatting inserted by the editors.

Contractual models of social relations tend to inform dominant moral theories and ‘are built on liberal models of social relations between strangers’ (Held 2006, 80) with the result that the love life of the affective world is often ignored. Rational choice theorists are even stronger in their allegiance to contractualism regarding all social relations ‘as between independent, autonomous, self-interested individuals’ (ibid). This separatist view of personage largely ignores the reality of human dependency and interdependency across the life course (Benhabib 1992; Kittay 1999). The idealization of autonomy, choice and self-interest as the over-riding orientations of social relations has placed a premium on the analysis of a human condition that is never fully realizable (England 2005).

Yet studies of infants show that ‘the desire for relationship, pleasure in connection and the ability to make and maintain relationship are present at the onset of development’ (Gilligan 1995, 123), while a ‘neurobiology of attachment’ is emerging that is helping to illuminate the importance of love (Damasio 2006). Nurturing love is what produces us in our relational humanity as mentally healthy, warm and considerate human beings. Love secures our sense of self emotionally and gives us the capacity to show our vulnerability as well as the ability to show our strength (Nussbaum 2013). Love is endemic to our relationality and has liberatory potential because, as Hill Collins observes ‘...love is active, dynamic, determined and generates the motive and desire for justice’ (1990, 197).

### **Love Labor**

One of the first challenges in speaking of love is to move beyond problematizing the patriarchal interpretations of love, to see it as a positive force, a potentially powerful political force grounded in action, not an abstract sentiment. Like Ferguson (2014: 250-51, 256-7), we believe that love is sought because it meets fundamental human needs for care and affection; it is valued ‘as something intrinsically good’. It ‘energizes’ and motivates people to act other-wise rather than self-wise, both in intimate relations but also at a wider group and political level. As hooks has observed ‘... love has the power to transform us, giving us the strength to oppose domination’ (2000b, 104).

What we wish to argue here however, is that without the investment of time and effort in nurturing love, it cannot be produced. Secondly, we argue that it is necessary to distinguish analytically between different forms of affective relations, particularly between primary, secondary and tertiary care relations, as love, and the relations producing it, are non-substitutable in a way that does not apply to other types of care relations.

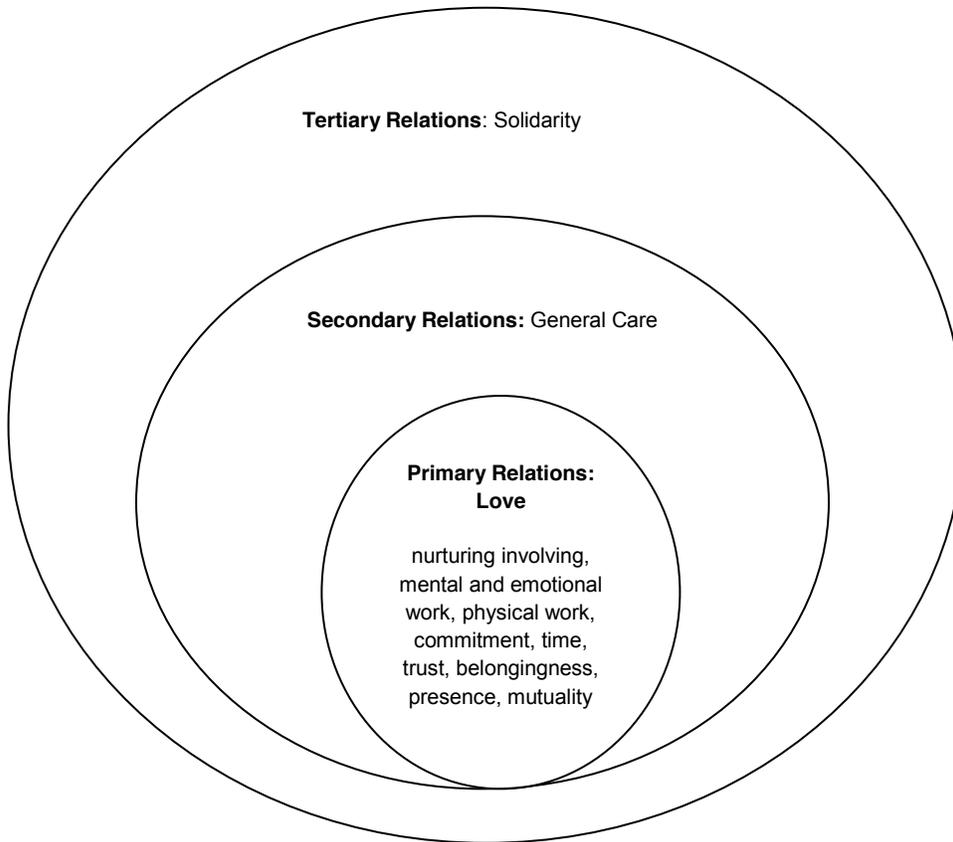
Recognizing the power of love means recognizing it as a practice that requires action. As noted by Hardt and Negri .....’love is not, as it is often characterized, spontaneous or passive. It does not simply happen to us, as if it were an event that mystically arrives from elsewhere. Instead it is an action, a biopolitical event, planned and realized in common’ (2009, 180). Love requires labor, for its realization. Recognizing that love has to be produced through the exertion of human energy and effort means challenging dominant theories of value, and relatedly of work, in both materialist and phenomenological traditions. Not all work is about producing exchange value and/or of self cultivation (Gürtler, 2005); a very important part of life’s work is reproducing the human species *per se* (Federici 2012), and this work can be measured and accounted in the creation of value (Waring 1988; Varjonen and Kirjavainen 2013). We know love is work also because it is both pleasurable and burdensome; people try to escape from the burdensome demands of love laboring, sometimes by spending longer hours in paid employment than is necessary (Hochschild, 1997). We know that love is work also because it is a discrete site of social practice within the relational world of caring. It can be distinguished analytically and theoretically from other forms of affective relations work (Figure 1).

Love labor produces the primary world of intimate relations where there is strong attachment, interdependence, deep engagement and intensity; the prototypical relationship in this circle is that between parents and children.<sup>[vii]</sup> Even in situations where there is minimum love labor invested by the parties to this intimate world, or where there is abuse or neglect, these relationships still retain a high level of emotional and relational significance.

The love labor that is involved in primary care relations is distinct therefore from the emotional social, and/or physical work involved in creating and maintaining secondary care relations where affective engagements in terms of time, responsibility, commitment and emotional engagement is less intense. The care work involved in maintaining affective bonds with neighbours, kin and work colleagues, or the caring given in teaching or nursing or paid caring, all operate in this secondary space of affective relations or care. This is not to deny the way love labor and secondary care work can and do become closely intertwined with love, sometimes emanating from the activity of care (Traustadottir 2000; Folbre 2012; Tronto 2013).

Tertiary affective relations involve solidarity work, where people have responsibilities through democratically constituted statutory obligations<sup>[viii]</sup>, or where people work informally, politically or economically through solidarity to challenge injustices. While solidarity varies in form and context, and has many different manifestations, from the more limited form of voting to maintain the redistribution provisions of the welfare state, to a more major commitment such as political solidarity with minorities, or to collective action ‘in response to a situation of injustice or oppression’ with the intention of challenging injustice (Scholz 2007, 43), it is a form collective caring and politicized loving of others that is vital in the global struggle against neoliberal capitalism at the transnational level (Mohanty 2003; Ferguson 2014)

Figure 1: Concentric Circles of Affective Relations



The world of affective relations is distinguishable sociologically as a unique system of social relations; it is analytically distinguishable from economic, political and cultural systems, although intersecting with these in terms of its form and substance in any given context (Crean 2016). Within the sphere of affective relations there are three overlapping systems of caring, each of which is distinguishable from the other, and each is created by different forms of laboring.

Love labor is the emotionally engaged work of primary care relations. It has as its principal goal the survival, development, and/or well-being of the other through the relationship itself. There can be an intense sense of belongingness and trust in primary care relations when they are positive, and of isolation, distrust, and pain when they are neglectful, exploitative, or abusive.

Love labor variously involves presence, time and physical and mental work as well as emotional work. It is in everyday undertakings that it is created, doing practical physical tasks such as cooking favorite meals for a friend, a child or partner (not just feeding them so they are not hungry), listening to cares and worries, massaging the body, or giving financial help if needed. At the mental level, it involves holding the persons and their interests in mind, keeping them “present” in mental planning, and anticipating and prioritizing their needs and interests. Emotionally, it involves listening, affirming, supporting and challenging, as well as identifying with someone and supporting her/him/hir emotionally at times of distress (Mattingly 2014). While love labor varies in level of intensity and degree of commitment depending on the context and cultural and legal norms, it does involve making some kind of commitment to continuity over time, although the length of that commitment can vary. For example, the moral and legal imperatives to care for and love dependent children is much stronger than is the imperative to care for and love ageing parents in most Western cultures; and love for friends is more loosely defined as a lesser expected commitment as indeed is care for sisters or brothers, especially in Western societies.

At times love laboring is experienced as intense work, especially where it involves prolonged care of persons who are multiply dependent and/or with whom there neither is nor is likely to be any great reciprocity in love terms; at other times it is simple pleasure. Loving older family members, partners and friends who are nearing the end of life is very different from caring for young healthy children: the hope of the future is generally not present with a parent or partner who is terminally ill (Authors 2009).

While primary care relations can also require secondary care labor (paid caring or voluntary supports) to sustain them, they can be distinguished sociologically from secondary and tertiary care relations on a number of grounds. Neither the moral imperative to care, nor the expectations of trust, mutuality, and attentiveness that are part of love laboring are present to the same degree in secondary care relations. One of the defining features of love labor that distinguishes it from secondary care labor more generally therefore is that it is not only to a set of tasks, but to a set of perspectives and orientations integrated with tasks. Nurturing the other is a major focus of a love relation; it is a feeling and a way of regarding another while relating to her or him. And it is this that distinguishes it from professional caring, such as that given in teaching and nursing or paid caring. The goal in the latter cases is not the development of the relationship itself, as it is in a love relationship. Love involves higher levels of attentiveness and responsiveness than would apply to other forms of caring (Engster 2005). It also refers to the very real activities of “looking out for”, and “looking after” the other, including the management of the tensions and conflict that are an integral part of love labor relations (McKie et al. 2002).

This is not to suggest that love laboring is entirely altruistic; the bonds that develop in love relationships have the potential to be mutually beneficial. There is a sense of mutual dependence no matter how challenging the relationship may be. The structurally defined loved care recipient is not necessarily a silent or powerless partner, a *tabula rasa* for someone else’s love labor (Authors 2009). Those who are more dependent can show appreciation for love or fail to show it. When the love-giver is a woman, the love recipient can call on the gendered

moral imperatives on women to be caring in order to enforce their love and care expectations and in that way exercise care commands on carers (Bubeck 1995).

What we are suggesting therefore is that the realization of intimate love, as opposed to the declaration of love, requires work. Love laboring is affectively-driven and involves at different times and to different degrees, emotional, mental, cognitive and physical work. Without such laboring, feelings of love or care for others can simply involve rhetorical functioning's, words and talk that are declaratory in nature but lack substance in practice or action. Verbal utterances of affection, care or solidarity (which may be valuable in themselves) become empty and formulaic when they are not complemented by undertakings on behalf of others. Love labor, and paid and unpaid care labor have immaterial dimensions but they are also highly materialized and “exemplary of an embodied practice” that “is deeply relational” (Lanoix 2013, 86).

### **Inalienability of Love**

While care feminists have made a major contribution to scholarship and public discourse in bringing issues of care out of the family cupboard, the importance of distinguishing analytically between different forms of care, especially between primary love and secondary care, has not been given adequate analytical attention.

One of the factors that distinguishes love most of all from secondary caring and solidarity is its inalienability and non-commodifiability. While many secondary care tasks are commodifiable, and there is a case for substantially improving the conditions of paid care and domestic labor to preclude care-related exploitation (Meagher 2002), love labor cannot be commodified without being transformed into something it is not.

The love labor that produces a sense of support, solidarity and well-being in others is voluntarily given; it is intentional and chosen to some degree and because of this it is inalienable. There are, as Oksala observes, a ‘variety of moral, political, and economic reasons’

why ‘the labor required for human reproduction cannot be completely commodified and brought into the sphere of market transactions’ (2016, 299). This is not to deny the many cultural variations in how love is practiced nor is it to deny that the choice to love is culturally framed and context-specific, and that it can be reneged upon or not chosen in the first instance. But because love is generated in intentions and feelings for others, it cannot be bought and sold not least because these feelings are not tied to a fixed-term contract. Love laboring is defined through specific personal relationships and non-transferable; it is given in the contexts of pre-established relationships with a unique history and assumed future involving continuity and attachment (Barnes 2005, 8-9).

Moreover, the rationality of love labor is different from, and to some degree contradicts, scientific and bureaucratic rationality (Wærness 1984): there is no hierarchy or career structure to relations of love laboring. As the goal is the development of the relationship itself, the creating and recreating of rewarding, nurturing relationships with others, there is no identifiable beginning, middle, and end. One cannot pay someone to love someone else on your behalf as to do so is remove the love dimension of the relationship: put simply, one cannot pay someone to visit one’s mother in hospital and claim that the visit is from oneself.

What also contributes to love’s inalienability is that it cannot be packaged and delivered in a neat pre-planned way. Love has a different ‘temporal logic’ to the ‘profit-oriented rationality of the market economy’ (Bryson 2013, 119). It takes time and presence on the part of the self, one cannot segment it and assign it in bits and pieces to others. It has no clear boundaries and therefore cannot be done in the “measurable” time that commodification requires (Folbre 2004; 2012). ‘Lean and mean loving’ would be a contradiction in terms, as a lean and mean relationship could not be a loving one. The illusion of reducing time for loving, by having ‘quality time’ with those one loves is that it ignores the need for ordinary time and presence, preliminary time in the (positive) presence of the other, that allows for the necessary trust and understanding to develop to have ‘quality time’. If we try to “McDonaldize” caring what we will get is not care or love but “pre-packaged units of supervision”: feeding or

attending without intimacy or personal interest in the welfare of others (Badgett and Folbre 1999, 318). This Inattentive caring may not only happen in professional care situations but within families as well, if love time is forcibly condensed to those times when one is likely to be preoccupied and tired, and capable of ‘loving in a hurry’, loving only with bits of left-over energy and time.

Those aspects of relationships that boost confidence, inspire strength and encouragement, give people a sense of belonging, and a sense of being wanted and needed and of being free, cannot be commodified as they can only exist in a context where there is some intention or decision to commit oneself for the sake of the relationship and not for payment. This is not to deny the reality of the “compulsory altruism” which has been a feature of so many women's lives, nor is it to suggest that those who care should not get paid for certain types of caring work. Quite to the contrary, payment for certain aspects of caring often has a positive rather than a negative effect on care relationships, as it makes the relationship between the carer and the person being cared for more reciprocal and more equal (Qureshi 1990).

In suggesting that inalienability and non-commodifiability are defining features of love laboring, we are not saying that certain dimensions of secondary and tertiary care relations may not also be non-substitutable. The support provided by a good colleague at work or the commitment provided by an advocate for social justice in a given social movement, is not replaceable in a direct sense. However, as the goal or secondary and tertiary care relations are beyond the relationship itself, they are possibilities for substitution that do not apply in a primary love relationship.

The primacy of love has significant gendered political implications. As women are the world’s primary carers, not only in doing love laboring but also in doing secondary care laboring, this has greatly constrained their activism for love and care in the public realm. There are very real every-day conflicts between ‘various forms of personal and political love relations’ (Ferguson 2014, 260). Put simply, the loved one who needs 24-hour-care cannot be left unattended while one attends conferences, marches, meetings or mobilizing events. Love and care cannot and

will not become political issues until those who do the non-substitutable love laboring (most of whom are women) are at the negotiating political table. The political table needs to be moved homewards, in a love-laboring-accommodating way, if we are to create the kind of caring democracy and feminist-inspired politics for which many feminists have called (Held, 2006; Tronto 2013; Ferguson 2014).

### **Love as a Political and Social Justice Matter**

Love is a political matter because it is vital to creating the emotional infrastructures for democratic thinking and practice. Further, love labor produces *nurturing capital* that enables people to love and work; love produces externalities, nourishing and resourcing people, and giving meaning, warmth and joy to life outside of the love relationship itself (Authors 2009). And love is a political and social justice matter as being deprived of love is a serious human deprivation and injustice, and because love labor has both benefits and burdens that need to be shared on equal terms between women and men, and across classes and ethnic and racial groups.

Loves matters politically as both democratic participation and sharing, and the promotion of equality need love to flourish. The emotional ties and bonds that are part of loving and being loved encourage people to act as moral agents, and while they are partial, they promote relational responsibility to others (Tronto 2012). Thus, contrary to Hardt and Negri (2009, 182), while recognizing the partisan problematics of family love, the family is not necessarily a form of 'identitarian' 'corrupt love' as they suggest. It can be so, but the family, in its different manifestations, also provides a spatial and emotional site where mutualized other-centeredness can be lived and learned, and where the commitment and security of primary care can be sustained. It is a space where we learn to live 'other-wise'. Without learning and doing other-centeredness, it would be hard to create and maintain the most elementary forms of civic and political solidarity:

...public culture needs to be nourished and sustained by something that lies deep in the human heart and taps into its most powerful sentiments, including both passion and humor. Without these, public culture remains wafer thin and passionless, without the ability to motivate people to make any sacrifice of their personal self-interest for the sake of the common good (Nussbaum 2013, 43).

In effect, without the security of being loved and cared for, it is difficult to develop the capacity to go beyond the preoccupation of one's own personal security and wellbeing, to go beyond a politics that is not entirely governed by self-interest. And 'without a more public conception of care it is impossible to maintain democratic society' (Tronto 2013, 18).

The preoccupation of contemporary capitalism with the incessant production of more and more (often useless) goods and services, and the promotion, through ubiquitous advertising, of the desire for more goods (Akerlof and Shiller 2015), has meant that working (and borrowing) to buy, and living to consume has become the *raison d'être* of existence in many Western countries (Crary 2013). Moreover, and for a variety of different and unrelated reasons, more and more women undertake both paid work and unpaid caring. When they are middle class and career-trained, women must follow the male trajectory of long hours and assume a career-led life (Hochschild 1997). They must maintain the image, and often the forced practice, of a relatively care-free life, even though they remain care's foot soldiers while men are care commanders (Authors 2009, 2012). The process of consumption-led living in an already gendered capitalist economy presents a love labor and care challenge in Western capitalist economies. This is increasingly addressed by hiring migrant women workers from the poorer countries and regions of the world to do low-paid family and non-family care work in a new globalized coloniality that is as deeply racialized as it is feminized (Gutierrez-Rodriguez 2014). The care economy increasingly works on the assumption that women from the global south can leave their own children to earn a living caring and loving for others with all the attendant love contradictions that operate both for themselves, those for whom they care, and their children or other dependents (Parreñas 2001; Hochschild 2009). The rise of neoliberal capitalism in

particular, and its incessant focus on cutting public services to maintain profits, has exacerbated this trend leading to a growing decline in public care supports for children and vulnerable adults, even in what were once strong welfare and socialist states (Karamessini and Rubery 2013). As consumption reigns, and as it takes more time and money to buy what one does (or does not) need, time for love labor is treated as a subsidiary activity that can be ‘fitted in’ after real work, and/or off-loaded (along with the dirty domestic work of caring) to low-paid care workers, be they migrants, local nannies or grannies (Hochschild 2009; Federici 2012). Love is a political matter therefore as it is indirectly deeply integral to the economy and politics of life, enabling producing and consuming to happen; it is also political because, given the organisation of love and care work globally, it literally makes the world go around.

Love laboring is a multifaceted set of nurturing endeavors producing emotionally, mentally, socially and physically resourced persons; in a sociological sense it produces nurturing capitals in the form of emotional, social and cognitive capacities that primary carers regard as vital for producing a meaningful and wanted life; its loss is experienced and feared as a serious deprivation (Department of Health and Children 2009; O’Brien 2009). As Hochschild (2009, 3) observes Love is a ‘valuable resource’ that has to be protected and enabled because ‘the more we love and are loved, the more deeply we can love’.

Because the affective labor of love impacts on ‘people's bodies and psyches’ (Gutierrez-Rodriguez 2014, 3), it produces emotional, physical and mental outcomes that can be seen and felt, if not always easily measured, both individually and collectively. We recognize the presence or absence of love and care in the lives not only of those familiar to us, but in organisations and other social institutions such as families. Institutional histories of love (or of its absence in the form of abuse) are a resource/constraint that can be drawn on to produce positive/ negative affect and actions for others. Feelings are transmitted, with those of love bringing meaning, purpose and joy to life, and those built on relations of abuse or neglect creating the opposite, purposelessness, rejection and exhaustion (Brennan 2004; Department of Health and Children 2009).

Being loved and cared for is a social justice matter not only because it is a prerequisite for survival, but because it is also a prerequisite for human development (Engster 2005) and for good health and wellbeing (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009). Relations of solidarity, care, and love help to establish a basic sense of importance, value, and belonging, a sense of being appreciated, wanted and cared about. To deprive or deny someone the experience of love is to deprive them of one of the great “goods” of human existence (Nussbaum 2001).

Hardt (2011) suggests that a political concept of love would reorient our political discourses and practices by challenging the false binary between the personal and the political, and in so doing challenging ‘conventional conceptions that separate the logic of political interests from our affective lives and opposes political reason to the passions’. In addition, he argues that ‘love is a motor of both transformation and duration or continuity’ that ‘constitutes powerful bonds that last’ (ibid, 676). While Ferguson (2014) also argues that love has revolutionary potential, she is rightly critical of Hardt and Negri’s (2009) belief that the ‘multitude of the poor’ will generate transformative revolutionary love through mass mobilization across sites of social action that are neither powerful nor organized relative to global capitalism and patriarchy. As Ferguson (2014, 258-261) observes, to reclaim the commons, a much more nuanced and elaborated framework for mobilization is required, built on co-operative power-sharing, intersectional analyses and mutual recognition of different, and even, mistrusted others. Such a mobilization would also involve resolving conflicts between personal and political love actions if women and girls are to make the revolution on equal terms with men.

Moreover, while a political form of love, in the generic solidarity sense, has the potential to create social bonds, in sociological and political terms, love and solidarity are quite distinguishable from each other. Solidarity takes many different forms (Scholz, 2007)<sup>[viii]</sup> and in the political and civil sense of that term is highly contingent on culture, political norms and trust (Van Oorschot 2000 Stolle, Soroka and Johnston 2008). Rorty (1989, 189) has highlighted the contingent nature of solidarity in particular noting that ‘what counts as being a decent human being is relative to historical circumstance, a matter of transient consensus about what

attitudes are normal and what practices are just or unjust'. In addition, since solidarity in the social (Durkheimian) sense of the term can generate narcissistic bonds as well as bridges overcoming differences (Putnam, 2000), it can result in the exclusion of those who are not part of the in-group. 'Love and altruism seem to be better suited to small groups ...[while] solidarity ... usually entails a generosity of spirit that extends to larger numbers, in which love and altruism have a tendency to dissolve' (Arnsperger and Varoufakis 2003: 161). Thus, while love is a political matter, it is distinctive from solidarity not least because the family of relations to which love and solidarity belong are distinguishable from each other in empirical terms. They operate according to related, but separated, contexts of social practice.

### **Affective Politics**

We believe that the potential for new modes of political engagement rests in affective relations. Affective relations matter politically because the worlds of love, care and solidarity are not isolated and autonomous spheres. They are deeply interwoven with each other and with economic, political, and cultural relations, and inequalities in the latter can undermine the capacities and resources to do love, care and solidarity work (Authors 2009; Crean, 2016). Structural injustices exacerbate affective deprivations and vice versa. In the paper we identified three major sets of affective relations (primary, secondary and tertiary) or care circles: interlocking sets of relational realities connected to each other (and other species) in complex, and often unobservable, ways (Gilligan 1995). Within each of these circles of care, people live in varying states of dependency and interdependency. These circles of "other-centered" relational care work vary in cultural and historical form with institutional, political, and legal frameworks, defining and (de)regulating their intersections over time. We identify primary intimate, or love relations, as those where there is strong attachment, interdependence, depth of engagement and intensity. While economic, political and other self-interests inevitably play a role in desires to love and be loved, we should realize that love relations yield both individual and collective

benefits, and hence are important for feminist politics. Specifically, we have argued that love matters for at least three major reasons: because it plays a formative socially productive and reproductive role in sustaining and developing human life itself; because it is a discrete form of work that is distinguishable from other forms of caring, particularly secondary caring and solidarity relations, and that such love laboring is inalienable and non-commodifiable; and finally because it has socially significant outcomes through the processes of nurturing and its absence deprives people of one of the great goods in human life and is a serious injustice.

We believe that one cannot participate fully as a relational being in family, community, professional, political or other areas of life without the experience of being loved and wanted. Love has the potential for enabling liberatory change at a collective level through empowering and energizing (Hill Collins 2000; Hardt 2011; Matheis 2014). However, for this to happen the politics of love need to be mobilized in line with the core principles of feminist politics, many of which are still in the making (Ferguson 2014). We obviously recognize that societies cannot *make* anyone love anyone else, and to this extent the right to have loving, caring and solidary relations is not directly enforceable. Even in the prototypical relationship in the primary circle, parents can be legally required to *care for* their children, but they cannot be forced to *care about* them. But societies can work to establish the conditions in which these relationships can thrive. These would include, at minimum, maternity, paternity and parental leave that recognizes the nurturing needs of children and the emotional needs of parents; it would involve the provision of accessible, affordable public child care and elder/vulnerable adult-care supports for carers. In effect, it would involve creating a global order governed by an ethic of love and care rather than the ethics of capitalism.

The work involved in providing love labor needs to be properly recognized, supported and shared, and there is an urgent need for political recognition that love labor is non-commodifiable due to its inalienability. We believe equalizing the affective relations of love is as central to the politics of justice as the relations of redistribution, recognition and representation.

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<sup>[i]</sup> *Late Fragment*, Raymond Carver (1988).

<sup>[ii]</sup> While reciprocity is defined as central to philia, eros is governed by desire, and 'eros depends...just as philia does, on the quality, or merit, of the beings towards which it is attracted' (ibid; 107). Agape, on the other hand, is defined as a gratuitous form of love that is indifferent to merit and reciprocation (ibid: 110-116).

<sup>[iii]</sup> We recognize that choices are constrained and contextualized and that the concept of choice varies in its cultural interpretation

<sup>[iv]</sup> Recent research in cognitive science shows how people often vote against their own self-interest because political decisions are generally not based on logic, evidence or good reasoning. People ‘allow bias, prejudice, and emotion to guide their decisions...they quietly reach conclusions independent of their interests without consciously knowing why’ (Lakoff 2008: 8).

<sup>[v]</sup> Sayer explores the importance of lay normativity (non-religious moral norms) and its analytical neglect in the social sciences at length in *Why Things Matter to People* (2011).

<sup>[vi]</sup> Heterosexual, lesbian, homosexual and transgender relations between couples are also potentially primary sites of intimacy. However, “The way heterosexual relations are institutionalized in contemporary society means that love’s two elements - care and ecstasy – find themselves in continuous opposition ....” in a way that that is highly disadvantageous to women who are “ ‘forced’ to commit themselves to loving care - so that men can be able to live/experience ecstasy” (Jonasdottir 1994: 102)

<sup>[vii]</sup> Such as those agreed collectively at national levels, e.g. through welfare state taxation, or at international levels through UN Conventions giving rights to people with disabilities.

<sup>[viii]</sup> Scholz, drawing on Kurt Bayertz (1999) ‘Four Uses of Solidarity’ in Bayer, K. (ed) *Solidarity*. Dordrecht, Netherlands, Kluwer) claims there are at least four different meanings for solidarity, the human solidarity that arises from our common humanity, social solidarity that can unite a given society in the mechanical or organic sense, as defined by Durkheim, civic solidarity as enacted in welfare state systems in the redistribution of wealth, and political solidarity which is ‘a project-related solidarity, [that] connotes a struggle for liberation that seeks to change social structures that are unjust or oppressive.’ (Scholtz 2007, 39)