

# *Amour Fou* and *Crazy In Love*? Literature's Take on Uncontrollable Passion as a Universal Aspect of the Human Condition

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*Amour Fou is a universal literary topos, which originates in ancient Greece and survived until the beginning of the 20th century. It lost a lot of its attraction within the context of postmodernism, medical findings and popular culture. This paper seeks to explore its re-emergence within a new visual media.*

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## **Breton's *L'Amour Fou* and the History of an Uncontrollable Passion**

No discussion concerned with *Amour Fou* can avoid Andre Breton's seminal essay of the same name (cf. Kern 00:10). His obtuse text, which is an utmost bizarre<sup>1</sup> combination of dream, short story, poetry, autobiography, travel documentary, manifesto<sup>2</sup> and photography is often seen as the starting point of *Amour Fou*<sup>3</sup> and is anything but an easy read.<sup>4</sup>

Kuon and Kern deemed it "an absolute, free, revolutionary, scandalous tale of love against all norms and rationality" (1), which Breton claims especially for the surrealism. Similarly, Oliver Jahraus tried to define *Amour Fou* in his monograph *Amour Fou. Die Erzählung der Amour Fou in Literatur, Oper, Film* from 2004 by stating that:

What are integral elements of *Amour Fou*? Is there a set of rules or regularities? There are some models, but in general *Amour Fou* is free just like love itself. Usually, there are two partners, infected by *Amour Fou*. But that is about it [...]. The lovers of the *Amour Fou* are not granted to be united. (38)<sup>5</sup>

If one accepts this assessment and combine it with that proposed by Kern and Kuon (1), it must end tragically, life-threatening or, in many

cases, deadly. One could conceivably imagine *Amour Fou* as a sickness, which can only be healed by the object of desire, thus the sickness will spread within the lover's system until the parasite eventually kills its host. Jahraus concludes that *Amour Fou* is a kind of love that is accompanied by death and thus turns love into something lethal (cf. 251). However, Breton survives when his crazy love, namely Jacqueline Lamba, walks out on him and leaves him with their newborn child Aude. Kern and Kuon critically sum this up by stating that in the end Breton's concept of love is crazy to such an extent that it turns the revolutionary into a babysitter (cf. Kern & Kuon). The aspect of survival is of some importance: Breton survives even though he knows that Lamba will never return. It shall therefore be clarified that even though the term owes much of its popularity to Breton, his text should not be read as an *Amour Fou* prototype.

Literature knew this concept long before Breton. Oliver Jahraus critically states that the term *AMOUR FOU* is considerably younger than the topos it describes (8).

### **A Love Against All Odds from Ancient Time to Modernism**

Oliver Jahraus suggests *Romeo and Juliet* as a decent starting-point (8). Rothenberger disagrees, identifying the origin of *AMOUR FOU* at the beginning of our Eurocentric literary canon in ancient Greece.<sup>6</sup> Rothenberger<sup>7</sup> takes a close look at mad love caused by Eros as found in Hesiod's *Theogony* and defines him as "simultaneously causing the greatest possible happiness and pain, as a source of joy, sorrow, security, lust, delusion, and jealousy among many other things. He can be soft and tender, or raging and destructive. [...] But he always drives humans towards each other" (6).<sup>8</sup>

Another fine example for the destructive energy of Eros can be found in Euripides' *Hippolytus*. Instructed by Aphrodite, Eros shoots his arrow at Phaedra, the wife of Theseus and mother-in-law of Hippolytus. Now Phaedra burns full of passion for Hippolytus and when he brusquely spurns this unthinkable and socially condemnable relationship, she commits suicide. A more prominent but similar case is made in Virgil's *Aeneid*. In this national epic, Cupid (or Amor) in the guise of Aeneas' son enchants Dido, under oath to never marry again after her husband's death. Dido now falls in love with Aeneas, which is critically seen by most of her advisors. When Jupiter urges Aeneas to continue his journey, he leaves Dido, who kills herself in despair.<sup>9</sup> This is also the central theme of "Pyramus and Thisbe" in Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, the tale of two lovers from rival families. Both fall in love, though strictly forbidden to see each other.

They do find a way of communication and eventually plan their escape. When Pyramus does not encounter Thisbe at their meeting point and is made to believe that his lover is dead, he immediately decides that his life without her is meaningless and falls on his sword in a proper Roman fashion. When Thisbe finds him under the mulberry tree, she stabs herself with the same sword.<sup>10</sup> A very similar account can be found in Gottfried von Straßburg's *Tristan*, a medieval reproduction of the Welsh *Tristan und Isolde* saga, which does bear some resemblance to this scenario. Tristan and Isolde are enchanted by a magic potion,<sup>11</sup> defy their king by embarking on an illicit affair and die in the same manner as Pyramus and Thisbe. This "fol amor" genre lasted from the Middle Ages through the Renaissance, as to be found in *Romeo and Juliet*, until the Enlightenment. There are of course epochs where the rationality overrules the passions. De Rougemont suggests that "[t]he eighteenth century offered a contrasting example of how passion [...] is submerged by rationalist criticism" (103), exemplified by the Enlightenment and especially Kant's dismissal of passion.<sup>12</sup> Hence, this critical dismissal of AMOUR FOU means that it is present *in absentia*. All attempts to smother it are admissions to its very existence.

Goethe's *Die Leiden des Jungen Werther* celebrates the crazy love of a social misfit and ends with Werther shooting himself in the head, when he eventually realizes out that he will never be with Lotte. Sturm und Drang, Empfindsamkeit and later Romanticism effectively dispensed ratio and embraced the AMOUR FOU. Similarly, Percy Bysshe Shelley's poem *One Word is Too Often Profaned* compares the lover to a moth who longs for the stars. And as it will never arrive at its destination but is caught in its endless travels it is therefore sentenced to death. Even though literary Realism favoured a more sober kind of story-telling, one of its most famous works, Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* describes the heroine's journey into adultery. Driven by romantic novels and the unrealistic ideals of love, Mme Bovary falls in love with being in love – which eventually kills her. Literary modernism even finds a way to integrate love delirium. Thomas Mann's *Der Tod in Venedig* describes the delusional paedophile love-projection of an elderly German author onto a young Polish boy. This story, like so many others, ends tragically.

There are stable, timeless elements of the love delirium that transcend literary epochs and build the foundation of Amour Fou. If one analyses all these works, there are some core elements. First of all, the relationships, be they established or desired, take place in socially unaccepted areas, love between relatives, between enemies, distinct social classes, paedophilia, and adultery. The morbid and deadly are also imbedded into the genetic code of Amour Fou. All participants die or are badly harmed by pursuing

their relationships, these elements have been steady parts of the narrative for centuries.

## **The Decline of Amour Fou in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

The latter half of the 20th century however, is a very disenchanting one. Three factors do not work in the favour of love-delirium: Postmodernism, medicine and a fundamental misinterpretation of what Amour Fou actually is.

Brian Finney detects “a contemporary decline in the ability to feel deeply leading to the depthlessness of postmodern art” (118). Similarly, David Hawkes points to the waning of affect as signifying “the death of love [...] as a characteristic development of the postmodern era” (quoted in Finney 30), also felt by J.G. Ballard, who labelled the death of affect “the century’s most terrifying casualty” (quoted in Finney 188).

In addition, modern medicine took a lot of mystery out of love in general and explained a great deal of the emotional turmoil it can cause. Freud blazed the trail by removing the unexplainable by a ruthless reduction of its motivations to sexuality (cf. de Rougemont 99). Later, the biological basis of love, split into a variety of hormonal combinations, made love a profane thing and explained perfectly, why people behave in the bizarre ways they do, once they have fallen in love. Helen Fisher, a leading expert in the topic of love, – claims that “being in love is universal to humanity” (6) – and used neuroscience to examine the involved chemicals present in the brain when people experience love. These chemicals include testosterone, oestrogen, dopamine, norepinephrine, serotonin, oxytocin, and vasopressin, which she explores in great detail in one of the book’s chapters titled “Chemistry of Love: Scanning the Brain in Love” (51).

Love has just been rationalized in ways unimaginable even to the Enlightenment. AMOUR FOU is nothing more but an imbalance of hormones. The source of the love delirium has thus far been the ancient gods, blood feud, and black magic, forbidden literature, higher powers and other mysterious entities; now just science provides the explanation. Jan Rothenberger argues that all it takes is a bunch of scientists to rationally explain love:

There would be a psychologist to explain what we expect from our partner, a neuroscientist to structure the chaos of the brain in love, an evolutionary biologist to speculate on the changing circumstances of mating since prehistoric times. Furthermore, there would be a sociologist to explore the structure of relationships within society. (6)<sup>13</sup>

Some could reasonably argue that the term Amour Fou is still used, especially in popular culture. If one takes a look at the works that explic-

itly refer or allude to the topic in question, it becomes clear that none of these works explore self-harm or even suicide, and rarely deal with socially forbidden relationships. The representations are not at all deluded, they are actually an appreciation of love that has to face a few difficulties as in the television series *Mad Love*. Or love that is difficult or sometimes hard to bear, as in Michel Bubl  's *Mad Love* or even worse, just a very strong feeling of love like Beyonc  's *Crazy in Love*. While the Enlightenment tried to suppress Amour Fou as something irrational that should be banned from social discourse, these artefacts all embrace Amour Fou. However, prior discourses of Amour Fou are overwritten with clich  s taken out of the romantic love discourse. This leads to a very soft and meaningless boiling down of a great gesture; the grand narrative has become a petty tale. The heartache never lasts long or all obstacles are soon overcome.

Thinking within the context of literary universalities, one could now ask whether this is the end of Amour Fou or can it return?

### **An Anthem for the Sick at Hearts: Radiohead's *Creep***

This paper will make a case for its return by discussing two examples that follow up the tradition of earlier works. While these artefacts originate in popular culture it should be noted that they should be perceived as modern equivalents to literature. Songs of popular music are often perceived as modern, yet updated forms of lyrical poetry (cf. Saint-Andre 22) and television series are dubbed as novels of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (cf. Haupts 95). An advantage of these works is that they, unlike literature, do not have to compete with literary traditions and are not under the same pressure to innovate (cf. F  rster 3). So while the works that will be discussed stand in a literary tradition, they have significantly more leeway to seriously discuss topics – such as an Amour Fou – that are not *en vogue* within postmodern literature.

Radiohead's *Creep* offers a fascinating take on being madly in love. The most common and popular interpretation is that *Creep* tells the tale of a social outcast, an inebriated man who tries to get the attention of a woman to whom he is attracted by following her around. Lacking self-confidence, he never addresses her directly. Guy Capuzzo, author of "Theory and the Analysis of Pop-Rock Music" analyses the songs as a "self-lacerating rage of an unsuccessful crush" (186).

Bizarrely enough, the song has become an anthem for an anorexic digital subculture that is very much interested in the line: "She floats like a feather through a beautiful world". An Internet search of "creep" and

“anorexia” brings up various manifestos on blogs and websites. [www.angelfire.com/emo2/iwant2bbeautiful](http://www.angelfire.com/emo2/iwant2bbeautiful) for instance advises the viewer to thin down and uses *Creep* to illustrate this undertaking.

You'll feel light as a feather and pure. You're less likely to get food poisoning. You won't be exposed to all the chemicals and pesticides they put in food today. You'll be thin in all the right places. [...] It proves that you have the strength to live without food. (ibid)

Thus, they interpret *Creep* as an attempt to slim down to be with the object of desire, thereby reading this song as an AMOUR FOU. In the first verse, the male musical persona praises her beauty and lightness. In the second, he envisions how he would like to be in the future: in control, with a perfect body, a perfect soul, which would grant his wish to eventually be with her – which can be achieved by being like her. This does correspond with many texts, which have concerned themselves with the illegitimate nature of a love, which exists outside of a normative structured society. Being in love with an anorexic girl maybe frowned upon, but starving oneself to be like her goes beyond that which is socially acceptable.

While the music in these verses is acoustic and calm (Radiohead 00:02), illustrating her beauty and his wish to be just like her, the dynamic in the chorus changes drastically (01:00) with distorted guitars exemplifying the uncontrollable love-delirium. One can read it both ways: “I’m a creep, I’m a weirdo, what the hell I’m doing here, I don’t belong here” (01:02) can be read as his self-assessment as a social misfit within society, but it can also describe how he feels in his own body and how that stands between him and his love. The highly distorted guitars, the sonic explosion of the bass and the drums signify his self-harm, the unforgiving manner in which he forces himself to thin down and his powerful determination to do so. He does not care if it hurts (cf. 01:24) and it gets worse. In the song’s climax, the bridge, he sings that she is running out (cf. 02:40), a metaphor for death through starvation. He intends to follow her, as he has done before and will also die. The last chorus lacks power, it is played like the verse, which might show that he is very close to his ideal; he does not need to force himself as he is nearly there. The singing voice, which whispers, “I don’t belong here”, foreshadowing his death. He, like so many protagonists before, wants to be reunited in death with the object of his desire.

The song explores what people crazy in love are capable of. It digs deep into the dark side of the human mind and fuses love with the death-drive. This mad love does not care for obstacles or social boundaries, it ranks love above life itself. The song’s use of anorexia is fascinating too, as this chronicle sickness also involves an imbalance of hormones, which can

seldom be healed. *Creep* defies the convention that just because an illness can be defined and categorized, it can also be treated. This is certainly also relevant for *Amour Fou*.

### **Pathologically Mad Love: *Homeland***

Another very recent example of *Amour Fou* is Howard Gordon's and Alex Gansa's *Homeland*. To summarize the ongoing series, Carrie Mathison, a CIA operative with bipolar disorder believes that Damien Brody, held captive by al-Qaeda as in Afghanistan, has been "turned" by the enemy and now threatens the United States. During her investigation she falls in love with him, which jeopardizes her career, social life and her country's security. Of course, the War on Terror is the show's main focus, but the romantic relationship between the leading protagonists has made its way into the spotlight.

The story is highly complex, with numerous twists which cannot be discussed here; therefore the paper focuses on a few important highlights: Brody is indeed a terrorist, uncovered in a video which outlines his plan to kill the vice-president of the United States. When the CIA uses him as a double agent, Brody and Carrie's relationship is rekindled. They share a few moments of calm togetherness and mutual happiness. It is clear that he loves her as much as she loves him but they cannot be together. The second season ends with the bombing of the CIA headquarters at Langley. While Carrie might be willing to forget that Brody is a terrorist who once wore a suicide vest and plotted to kill the vice president of the United States, there are others who will not. When the CIA finds out the Langley bombing has been placed in Brody's car, he is their prime suspect.

Carrie helps Brody to escape to Canada. When she informs Saul Berenson, her boss, that she is in love with Brody and will clear his name, Berenson identifies her as the smartest and the dumbest person that he has ever known; the smartest spy but the dumbest lover. One scene perfectly illustrates this. In the episode "A Red Wheelbarrow",<sup>14</sup> Carrie thinks she has identified the real bomber and tracks him down. On finding out that the bomber is about to get shot by a contract killer she tries to intervene, leaves her surveillance car and walks toward his apartment (39:29). Her superiors however, forbid her to do so. The CIA does not care for the bomber himself; they want the people behind him (38:44). Carrie however, needs to capture him alive to prove Brody's innocence (38:50). Undaunted she proceeds in her quest until she is informed that they will gun her down to stop her; her life and love are not important enough to

compromise the mission (39:42) and she is eventually severely wounded by a sniper fire (40:12).

This willingness to catch a bullet is significant: If she cannot be with the man she loves, this might be just as deadly as the bullet. She might face the same fate as Isolde, Thisbe or Juliet – dying out of grief for the deceased lover. Her rash decision re-enacts the entire history of the AMOUR FOU *en miniature*. She is willing to sacrifice her work and her life. Reborn by this love-delirium she is willing to die for it.

As in *Creep*, *Homeland* does incorporate discourses of sickness. Carrie is diagnosed as bi-polar and it would be too convenient to suggest that her bizarre actions are driven by her illness. In fact, she had her illness under control until she met Brody. Mental illness is not the reason why she is madly in love. There are numerous references to her taking her medication and she even undergoes ECT treatment at the end of the first season. This manages her bi-polar disorder but it cannot control the Amour Fou. ECT can cure physical symptoms, but not the rather metaphysical nature of Amour Fou.

Even though the show reflects heavily on the possibilities of medicine and the processes of the human mind, it does not accept that there is a cure for everything. This crazy love – that is destroying the logic and drive of the show – has taken the spotlight and Andy Greenwald argues that it has become so strong that the authors cannot erase it anymore:

I insisted in the past that leaving Brody alive for a second year made sense on both a creative and commercial level but it grew increasingly hard to make that argument as Season 2 tumbled dangerously close to absurdity. Brody was the spark that ignited *Homeland* but now threatened to burn the whole thing down. [...] Their connection — like the show that soared whenever it brought them together — was something far more twisted and dark, a collision of damaged people intent on remaking the world before even attempting to fix themselves. (1)

Amour Fou has written itself into the diegesis and does threaten to destroy the story as it endangers the life of the protagonists who spread the ‘disease’ within the show.

### **Amour Fou and *Crazy in Love*: Pushing Boundaries**

A ‘mad love’ has been a salient feature of European literature for millennia. Kern und Kuon argue: “The truth is that it can look back on a long and complex history. Furthermore, it has been a central enthrallment in every epoch for any artistic endeavour concerned with the topic of love” (1).<sup>15</sup>

Various aspects of ‘mad love’ change to suit the different circumstances. In atheistic times, a love-delirium inflicted by God would find few readers and black magic would be laughed in literary Realism or Modernism; the source has changed, but ‘mad love’ presents itself as a very stable, still mysterious entity. It is an unexplainable force that drives human beings towards the most irrational deeds. It is noteworthy that this crazy love’s defiance towards social restrictions cannot be tamed by discourses trying to socialise it. Denis de Rougemont is correct when he claims that “[w]hatever can be said about love through the ages is based on discourse on love, for what love ‘really’ is must escape us” (94). All attempts to overwrite *Amour Fou* or to integrate it within a greater discourse can only be temporary. Unlike sexuality, it cannot be tamed or socialized: “Sexuality does not endanger society, love does. Sexuality may be hard to be integrated within cultural processes of sublimation but it can be socialised, or at least domesticated” (9).<sup>15</sup>

*Amour Fou* is, and will always be, a part of the human condition. It shows us that love is a powerful stimulus that releases free positive and negative raw energy within human beings. De Rougemont concludes that “[i]t surely seems that passion is condemned, and that we are heading directly towards a society without surprises or drama [...]—disciplined, normalized, immunized, policed, psychoanalyzed” (106).

*Amour Fou* represents a retreat against this development, a literary warning of sorts. Humankind needs surprises, drama, and reminders of the fact that life will never be fully driven by calculations and there will always be uncontrollable phenomena. If the subjects of the narratives considered above kill themselves, it is not to glorify suicide but to demonstrate how all absorbing *Amour Fou* can become. Too absorbing for bystanders to understand. This love, however destructive and rebellious is not without cause. “Each time that society created new obstacles to the anarchy of the passions, the love with renewed vitality discovered fresh ways of expressing itself and spreading its ‘contagion’”(103).

*Amour Fou* is, if nothing, persistent, as there will always be restrictions and social boundaries. Thus, we can expect more flamboyant lovers on their twisted way to be reunited with their beloved. Some may acquire short-time release, but this illness will break out again, maybe even stronger than before. Johanna Drucker concurs by stating “the inexpressible substance of such urges may yet come back to bite us” (5). Black Rebel Motorcycle Club may provide an appropriate conclusion: “Spread your love like a fever and don’t you ever come down” (00:30).

NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Peter Kuon goes further and admits that he read the text several times and still isn't really sure what it is all about (02:03) and he also dares to ask whether Breton's *L'Amour Fou* does indeed qualify as mad love or a love delirium in the sense it is used today (00:49).

<sup>2</sup> Many critics "consider *Mad Love* either as a theoretical tract (the text does more than once describes itself as "theoretical"), a kind of misshapen, personalized appendage to Breton's Surrealist manifestoes, or as a memoir or autobiography — or indeed, as both manifesto and memoir at once" (Bellin 1).

<sup>3</sup> Even though this is up to debate as Roger Bellin notes that Breton does offer interesting aspects but never actually bothers to give a stable definition of his subject. Bellin concludes that the text celebrates mad love as something defiantly resistant to definitions (2). Breton speaks a great deal about mad love without ever saying what it is, which led Johanna Drucker to the conclusion: "Unlike other principles of the early avant-garde, such as Viktor Shklovsky's 'making strange' or Ezra Pound's 'make it new' *L'Amour Fou* does not lend itself to a code of disciplined instructions" (2).

<sup>4</sup> Roger Bellin claims that "on the first reading, some initial effort is required merely to assemble the story, given the book's apparently digressive style" (1).

<sup>5</sup> "Was sind Bestandteile der Amour Fou? Gibt es feste Regeln und Regularitäten? Es gibt Modelle, aber ansonsten ist die Amour Fou so frei wie die Liebe selbst. Im Standardfall sind es zwei Partner, die der Amour Fou verfallen. Aber da hört es auch schon auf [...]. Den Liebenden der Amour Fou ist es nicht vergönnt, zu einem liebenden Paar zu werden."

<sup>6</sup> Denis de Rougement agrees with this and comes to a similar conclusion. He argues that the Greeks established very clear distinctions between *eros*, a passionate love, on the one hand, and, on the other, *agapē* or disinterested affection (94).

<sup>7</sup> Similar accounts can be found in *Erotikon, Essays on Eros, Ancient and Modern* by Shadi Bartsch and Thomas Bartscherer.

<sup>8</sup> „[D]er Urheber größten Glücks und tiefsten Leids. Er macht Freude, Kummer, Sicherheit, Lust, Wahn, Eifersucht und viel anderes mehr. Einmal ist er zart und lieblich, ein andermal rasend und zerstörerisch. [...] Doch immer treibt er den Menschen zum Menschen."

<sup>9</sup> It is important to notice that even though Vergil's Dido is somewhat based on Homer's depiction of Calypso and Circe from *the Odyssey*, Dido differs heavily from Homer's figures by ending her own life. Calypso and Circe both love Odysseus deeply, but when he leaves, their lives go on; Dido however, cannot bring it over herself to live on when Aeneas abandons her.

<sup>10</sup> This story, as many have outlined before, can be seen as the pretext of *A Summer Night's Dream* and *Romeo and Juliet* from Shakespeare (von Koppenfels 498). Another famous example can be found in Dumas *Le Comte de Monte Cristo*, where the two star-crossed lovers Maximilien Morrel and Valentine de Villefort act just like Ovid's characters, which is underlined by the fact that chapter 51 is called "Pyrame et Thisbé".

<sup>11</sup> This potion was originally made to let Iseult and Marke, Tristan's uncle and the king, fall madly in love for the rest of their lives. When Iseult and Tristan share this drink unknowingly, this initiates an affair that of course ends tragically, as the betrayal of the king was the worst crime in a feudally structured society. It is not the king who sentences them to death though. When the mentally unstable Tristan thinks his one love, Iseult has forsaken him, he loses his will to live and is consumed by his fatal illness. When Iseult sees her dead lover, she immediately dies herself.

<sup>12</sup> Kant was not in favor of passion, which he defined as being immune to any kind of medication or having any potential to be corrected ([...] welche Arzneimittel verabscheut und daher weit schlimmer ist als alle jene vorübergehenden Gemütsbewegungen, die doch wenigstens den Vorsatz rege machen, sich zu bessern" (Kant quoted in Timmermann 8)).

<sup>13</sup> “Ein Psychologe wäre vermutlich vertreten, um zu erklären, was wir bei unserem Partner wirklich wirklich suchen, ein Neurowissenschaftler, der uns die Vorgänge im verliebten Gehirn aufdröseln, ebenso wie ein Evolutionsbiologe, der über die veränderten Bedingungen der Partnerwahl seit prähistorischer Zeit spekuliert. Weiter ein Soziologe, der die Struktur der Paarbeziehung in der Gesellschaft erforscht.”

<sup>14</sup> The title reflects a brief SMS exchange between Carrie and a restricted correspondent shortly after the meeting of the two suspects, in which the first two verses of William Carlos Williams poem “The Red Wheelbarrow” are used.

<sup>15</sup> “In Wahrheit hat sie freilich ihre lange und verschlungene Geschichte und stellt in allen Epochen ein zentrales Faszinosum der künstlerischen Auseinandersetzung mit dem Thema Liebe dar.”

<sup>16</sup> “Nicht die Sexualität gefährdet die Gesellschaft, sondern die Liebe. Die Sexualität, so andersartig sie gegenüber den kulturellen Sublimationen sich geben mag, ist dennoch sozialisierbar, und wo nicht, da doch zumindest domestizierbar” (9).

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## *Amour fou* in *Crazy in love*? Literarni pogled na neobvladljivo strast kot univerzalni vidik človeškega stanja

Ključne besede: tematologija / ljubezen / strast / postmodernizem / popularna kultura / intermedialnost

Če pobliže pogledamo zahodni literarni kanon, ugotovimo, da koncepti neustavljivega človekovega poželenja vedno posijejo skozi razpoke še tako skrbno preračunanih besedilnih kompozicij. Antična dela, kot je zgodba o Piramusu in Tisbi, ali srednjeveška viteška lirika (Minnesang), v kateri *Tristan* oznani noro, neracionalno in nenavadno ljubezen, ki je ni mogoče razložiti – seznam literarnih del o *sijajnih* ljubimcih, ki skušajo s svojimi dejanji premagati zemeljske ovire, je dolg. Osupljivo je, da lahko to načelo vztraja in preživi celo v obdobjih največjega *racia*, kakršno je bilo denimo razsvetljenstvo. Razumsko ga ni mogla izključiti niti Kantova vplivna zavrnitev strasti. V delih literarnega realizma, kot je *Gospa Bovary*, je ta *sižije* obravnavan kot ena izmed izredno redkih tem iz obdobja romantike, ki jo realizem ni preziral; celo modernizem z vsemi svojimi deziluzijami je ustvaril nekaj izjemnih del o strasti, kot je denimo *Smrt v Benetkah*. Zmožnost *amour fou* oziroma nore ljubezni, da se pojavlja v različnih diskurzih, ter njena fleksibilnost, ki ji omogoča, da deluje v kontekstu dramatike, pripovedništva in poezije, ji zagotavlja dolgoživost v literarni tradiciji.

V 20. stoletju so znanstvene raziskave učinkovito demistificirale celotni koncept strastne ljubezni z dešifriranjem feromonov, endorfinov in drugih hormonov. Poleg tega postmodernistični ideali metapripovedi in diskontinuitete niso bili naklonjeni nori ljubezni. V zadnjem času se občutek nore zaljubljenosti znova vrača. Zdi se, da sta ga od mrtvih obudili pesem

»Creep« angleške rock skupine Radiohead in nanizanka *Homeland* ameriške televizijske mreže Showtime. Trdili bi lahko, da literarne predstavitve nore ljubezni preučujejo ključna področja, kamor se lahko človek umakne, ko se želi izogniti časom in situacijam, v katerih se zdi vse logično razložljivo. Ni pa še jasno, ali so te predstavitve drugačne od predhodnih in ali spremembam kljubujejo tako močno, kot nora ljubezen kljubuje izginotju.

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