

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS: Love, Desire and Stanley Cavell**Submissions deadline: 6 October 2023**

Love—its offering, its acceptance or avoidance and the ramifications of both—is a central theme of American philosopher Stanley Cavell’s work. Whether it be familial love, as in Shakespeare’s tragedy *King Lear*; romantic love, in works as diverse as *Othello* or the remarriage comedies of mid-twentieth-century Hollywood; self-love, as in the rejection of possessive love in Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House* or the unknown woman melodramas; or even the “little community of love” (1979: 109) that meets the tribulations of the everyday with hope and reciprocity, Cavell’s writings on the ordinary, scepticism and “other minds”, acknowledgment, and moral perfectionism often hinge on the complex human relations involved in this most complex, and often confounding, of human emotions—although it’s unclear whether love can be strictly defined as an emotion at all. (And if it isn’t purely an emotion, what *is* it?) As humans, love affects and inflects everything with believe and do, how we live together, and how (and whether) we choose to divide ourselves. In “The Avoidance of Love”, he is explicit about its capacity to not only embrace but consume: “[I]f you would avoid tragedy, avoid love; if you cannot avoid love, avoid integrity; if you cannot avoid integrity, avoid the world; if you cannot avoid the world, destroy it” (2015: 322).

Desire naturally goes hand in hand with love, but what happens when the two come into conflict? In *The Philadelphia Story*, Tracy Lord’s desire to be “worshipped instead of loved” is evidence not only of her “ignorance of her sexuality”, but also, ultimately, of her humanity (1979: 171). For Paula in *Gaslight*, “her desires are twisted and incomprehensible to the one figure in her life who now defines reality for her”, her husband, and so love and desire devolve into sadistic parody (1996: 81). For Cavell, mutual desire forms the basis of acknowledgment, for “responding to what another says is to be seen as demanding a response to (the other’s) desire” (1999: 94) and desire’s articulation has not only personal but societal ramifications: “How is the acceptance of individual desire, of this form of self-knowledge, of importance to the nation?” he wonders (1979: 150). The sceptical impulse itself rests in “the desire and the fear of both privacy and of union”; if human beings “naturally desire” the embrace and love of community, why is it that “in faithfulness to that desire” they declare themselves “unknown” (1999: 463)?

After the success of the recent **Stanley Cavell and the Vicissitudes of Love** symposium, hosted by the University of Warwick’s School of Creative Arts, Performance and Visual Cultures and Institute for Advanced Study, we are inviting submissions for a proposed interdisciplinary anthology on Cavell, love, and desire. Cavell’s life’s work straddles the line between analytic and Continental philosophy, encompassing everything from the philosophy of mind, ethics and ordinary language theory to literature, the visual arts, music, drama and of course film. We welcome abstracts from these disciplines and more that interrogate the philosophical questions love and desire engender and how Cavell envisages and engages them. This edited collection has already attracted interest from the [Warwick Series in the Humanities](#), Routledge.

Please send abstracts of 300 words along with a brief biography to Cavellandlove2023@gmail.com. The deadline for submissions is **6 October 2023**.

General queries can be sent to anthology co-editors **Dr Michelle Devereaux** and **Dr Dominic Lash** at the above address.

Works Cited:

Stanley Cavell (1979), *Pursuits of Happiness: The Hollywood Comedy of Remarriage*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Stanley Cavell (1999 [1979]), *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality and Tragedy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Stanley Cavell (1996), *Contesting Tears: The Hollywood Melodrama of the Unknown Woman*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

Stanley Cavell (2015), *Must We Mean What We Say? 2nd Edition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.