

The Cluster of Excellence
Understanding Written Artefacts
at the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures (CSMC)
cordially invites you to the workshop

**Inscribing Love:
The Materialisation of Affects
in a Global Perspective**

Monday, 30 September 2024, 2:00 pm – 5:15 pm CEST

Tuesday, 1 October 2024, 9:00 am – 5:30 pm CEST

Wednesday 2 October 2024, 9:00 am – 1:00 pm CEST

Warburgstraße 26, 20354 Hamburg

Organised by Daniel Fliege (University of Hamburg),
Jenny Körber (University of Hamburg),
and Annika Nickenig (Freie Universität Berlin)

Registration:

<https://www.csmc.uni-hamburg.de/en/register/workshop59>

The transmission of love requires a materialisation in the form of a written artefact. Following Niklas Luhmann, love can be understood as a code of communication requiring a medium that he defines as informed material, e.g. an inscribed object. One obvious example is the love letter that might be seen as a handwritten artefact through which a lover expresses his or her affection. Since a letter serves to bridge a physical distance or substitute for an absence, the material quality of the letter is of particular importance. In addition to letters, numerous other forms of materialisation and inscription are used to convey emotions: one might think of love locks, testaments, farewell letters, carvings in bark, dedications, autographs, funerary spaces, poetry albums, friendship books or forms of ostentatious affective expression as in tattoos as inscriptions on the human body.

The workshop will hence focus on written artefacts that are supposed to express love for another person. We deliberately leave the concept of love open, as it encompasses diverse meanings in different cultures and epochs; instead, we focus on practices that are intended to communicate love by inscribing a material object. We want to explore if written artefacts, through their various forms of inscribed materiality, are historically, culturally or gender-specifically bound to certain practices, and represent closeness to a loved person. Rather than deciding whether an emotion expressed in an artefact corresponds to a “real” emotion, we want to analyse to what extent the expression of love is linked to certain practices of material authentication: this raises the question of the originality of the written artefact, which is particularly revealing when compared in a global perspective.

Programme

Monday, 30 September, 2:00 pm – 5:15 pm

2:00 – 2:30 Introduction

Contexts of Prison and War

2:30 – 3:15 Leyla Sophie Gleissner (Paris)
“Komm Herzensschatzi”. Inscription and Interpellation in Emma Hauck’s 1909 Letters

3:15 – 3:45 Coffee break

3:45 – 4:30 Claudia Pimentel (Porto)
Beyond “Bordered” Love

4:30 – 5:15 Maddalena Casarini (Berlin)
“Les graffitis amoureux”. Love Engravings on Prison Walls in Jean Genet’s Novels

6:00 Reception

Tuesday, 1 October, 9:00 am – 5:30 pm

Evidence of Love in Space

9:00 – 9:45 Leah Mascia (Hamburg)
Echoes of Love from the Lands of Greco-Roman and Late Antique Egypt: Tracing Evidence Through Archaeological, Papyrological, and Epigraphic Sources

9:45 – 10:30 Katherine Dauge-Roth (Bowdoin College, US)
Physical Graffiti: Inscribing Love on Bark, Stone, and Skin in the Seventeenth Century French Pastoral Novel

10:30 – 11:00 Coffee break

11:00 – 11:45 Ceri Houlbrook (Hertfordshire)
Unlocking the Love-Lock

11:45 – 12:30	Peera Panarut (Hamburg) <i>Inscribing Royal Love. Inscriptions of Love from the Royal Cemetery of Bangkok</i>
12:30 – 2:00	Lunch break
The Love Letter	
2:00 – 2:45	Jonathan Gibson (The Open University, UK) <i>Convention, Incident and Rhetoric in the Materiality of Early Modern English Love Letters</i>
2:45 – 3:30	Eike Großmann (Hamburg) <i>“Writing your First Love Letter”: Social Practices of Inscribing Love in Early Modern Japan</i>
3:30 – 4:00	Coffee break
4:00 – 4:45	Piera Mazzaglia (Gießen) <i>Materiality and Performativity of Love’s Expressions in 19th Unpublished Love Letters written by Everyday Lovers</i>
4:45 – 5:30	Eva Wyss (Koblenz) <i>Love Letters and Beyond: Insights from the Koblenz and Darmstadt Love Letter Archive</i>
7:00	Dinner

Wednesday, 2 October, 9:00 am – 3:30 pm

Love, Bodies and Communication

9:00 – 9:45	Ya’ara Gil-Glazer (Tel Hai College, Israel) <i>All we need is love and peace: The public relationship of John Lennon and Yoko Ono in photographs, performance, and songs’ lyrics</i>
9:45 – 10:30	Jungyoon Yang (Seoul) <i>Feigned Love in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Wedding Booklets</i>
10:30 – 11:00	Coffee break

11:00 – 11:45	Janine Droese (Hamburg) <i>Expressing love through albums. Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy's albums for Cécile Mendelssohn Bartholdy, née Jeanrenaud, and the singer Jenny Lind</i>
11:45 – 12:30	Camilla Skovbjerg Paldam (Aarhus) <i>From Letter Box to Inbox. Changes and Constancies in the 20th and 21st Century Love Communication</i>
12:30 – 1:00	Final discussion

Abstracts and Contributors

Maddalena Casarini (Berlin)

“Les graffiti amoureux”. Love Engravings on Prison Walls in Jean Genet's Novels Wednesday, 29
Monday, 30 September 2024, 4:30 – 5:15 pm

Love is described by Niklas Luhmann as a “symbolic code” that successfully communicates the improbability of successful communication (Luhmann 1994, 9). This presupposes the possibility that the message of love is perceived by the recipient at all. However, this is not always the case. A peculiarity of love messages that are expressed in the isolation of a prison cell is the apparent impossibility of their transmission. Even if improbability turns into impossibility, individuals in isolation cells persist in communicating their love – the question arises: Do they nevertheless expect the communication to be successful? It is noteworthy that the very medium that through the centuries has served as a support for love messages is precisely that material element that impedes communication: The isolation cell wall.

An examination of the tradition of *prison literature*, understood both as a literature written *in* prison and a literature *about* prison, reveals that the practice of love writing on walls is not only thematized but also fulfills specific poetic functions. In the case of those sentenced to death, like the protagonist of Victor Hugo's novel *Le Dernier Jour d'un condamné* (1829), inscribing love on the wall reveals a desire to bear witness to one's emotional situation: “[L]es quatre murs de ma cellule [...] sont couverts d'écritures, de dessins, de figures bizarres, de noms qui se mêlent et s'effacent les uns les autres. Il semble que chaque condamné ait voulu laisser trace, ici du moins. [...] À la hauteur de mon chevet, il y a deux cœurs enflammés, perchés d'une flèche, et au-dessus *Amours pour la vie*. Le malheureux ne prenait pas un long engagement” (Hugo 2000, 58). The recipient of this message cannot be the beloved, but the next person incarcerated in the solitary confinement cell and sentenced to death, whom the sender of the love message will never meet. In this case, this paradoxical and hopeless kind of love communication corresponds to the paradoxical time structure of the entire novel, which takes the form of a diary of a condemned prisoner.

One century later, it is Jean Genet (1910–1986) who most intensively explored the materiality of prison walls not only as a surface for projection, but also as a medium for the concretization of all kind of erotic dreams and practices of love. On the one hand, the wall is used as a stone for engraving or writing, as well as a surface on which to stick newspaper photos of prominent criminals such as Eugen Weidmann at the beginning of *Notre-Dame-des-Fleurs* (1943). The narrator entertains with these images of executed men, which are hung on the wall “comme icône[s] et star[s]” (Marcandier 2018, 8), an erotic communication that is imagined to be mutual,

thus proposing an early reversal of the pop culture that would be born in the following decades (Cf. Marcandier 2018, 10). On the other hand, in the novel *Miracle de la Rose* (1946) the “graffiti amoureux” (Genet 1995, 69) which are engraved on the wall of the isolation cells in Fontevraud are read by the narrator as a palimpsest of love messages that allows for the unveiling of different temporal layers, each linked to a prison experience that is repeated in different places and institutions, always different and always the same, “dans le mécanisme d’un cycle” (Genet 1995, 70).

My contribution thus aims to examine how the materiality of these love inscriptions condenses and structures the particular temporality of the narrative in Genet’s novels. At the same time, it aims to reconsider Luhmann’s investigation of love as a “coding of intimacy” from a different perspective: The coding of intimacy in a place where all intimacy is structurally forbidden.

Katherine Dauge-Roth (Bowdoin College, US)

Physical Graffiti: Inscribing Love on Bark, Stone, and Skin in the Seventeenth Century French Pastoral Novel

Tuesday, 1 October 2024, 9:45 – 10:30 am

This paper examines the manifestations and meanings of how the lovelorn characters of the popular seventeenth-century pastoral novel materialize their love through acts of wounding, pricking, carving, and engraving the surfaces of their own bodies and those of the natural world that surrounds them. The shepherds and shepherdesses of the pastorale inscribe signs of devotion upon their own skin through tattooing, draw their blood from wounds to use as ink for their love letters, and carve their suffering or adoration into the bark of trees and upon stones, all material metaphors for the wound of love. But while these characters seek to give stability and endurance to their emotions in a world of inconstancy and uncertain destinies through marking signs upon the body or in the book of nature, their graffiti ultimately fail them, functioning more often as signs of absence and longing rather than of love’s fulfillment.

Janine Droese (University of Hamburg)

Expressing love through albums. Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy’s albums for Cécile Mendelssohn Bartholdy, née Jeanrenaud, and the singer Jenny Lind

Wednesday, 2 October 2024, 11:00 – 11:45 am

At the end of 1836, Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy prepared a special Christmas present for his fiancée, Cécile Jeanrenaud: She was to receive an album in which he collected entries that had a

special meaning to him. These included autographs of people who had a formative influence on his life, as well as written artefacts which for him were associated with important memories. He himself also wrote several entries for this exceptional friendship album. In 1844, many years after the marriage, Cécile Mendelssohn received another album from him, designed in a similar way. And already the very next year, he produced a third manuscript as a Christmas present for his wife – this time, however, a collection of songs that differed from the previous albums mainly in two aspects: Firstly, by the time he handed it over, the album contained only his own songs, written down in the album by his own hand. Secondly, the album was only one of two similar manuscripts that Mendelssohn created that December. He created the second for the singer Jenny Lind, whom he had met in Berlin in the autumn of 1844.

In the planned contribution, the four albums mentioned will be presented in more detail and placed in the context of contemporary album practices. With the help of letters and other documents, the production process of the albums will be outlined, and evidence of how the albums were used by the recipients will be analysed. Finally, it will be asked to what extent there are indications of Mendelssohn's motivation to design the albums in the present manner, both in terms of their materiality and the inscribed content, and how he used the album as a medium to express his affection for the recipients.

Jonathan Gibson (Open University, UK)

Convention, incident and rhetoric in the materiality of early modern English love letters

Tuesday, 1 October 2024, 2:00 – 2:45 pm

In this paper, I will analyse the material features of a range of love letters written in English in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, both manuscript sent letters and copies and fictional depictions of love letters and the process of writing a love letter. Throughout, I will use as an analytical tool the distinction between two types of material causation: the deliberate or unconscious deployment of a convention (such as the use of forms of letterlocking coded as intimate) and the intervention of one-off incidents or 'accidents' (such as the apparently accidental smudging of ink or tearing of paper). I will argue that it will be important to take this distinction into account in future research into the ways in which form effects meaning in early modern manuscript culture.

Ya'ara Gil-Glazer (Tel Hai College, Israel)

All we need is love and peace: The public relationship of John Lennon and Yoko Ono in photographs, performance, and songs' lyrics

Wednesday, 2 October 2024, 9:00 – 9:45 am

Performance, photography, and music frame the love relationship of John Lennon and Yoko Ono. They met in 1966 in a London art gallery that displayed an exhibit by Ono, one of whose interactive performance pieces attracted Lennon in particular. Fourteen years later, Lennon was murdered hours after photojournalist Annie Leibovitz took the couple's iconic photo in their New York residence, documenting their symbiotic love. As a couple, they harnessed photography to externalize their love relationship in countless twosome pictures and in documentations of joint performances. They also produced shared musical works that had significant visual and verbal elements, including two albums whose covers featured their intimate photographs together. As suggested by Cronin & Robertson (2011), "the press and the public wanted John and Yoko, and these two media stars fed this desire to the max" (66).

At the core of the contemporary social movements and counterculture, Ono and Lennon presented a relationship model that combined two interrelated aspects: One was an "inseparable" bodily and emotional relationship (Burger, 2016, 14), and the other was enlisting their relationship to convey a countercultural political agenda. Both aspects reflected an idealistic view – of romantic love and an "egalitarian, loving, and peaceful society" (Tiller, 2009, 82). The proposed paper discusses the photographs that featured both, their famous bed-in for peace performances in 1969 documented in photos and texts they attached to them, and their joint music albums, including cover photos and songs' lyrics. It examines the characteristics of the public display of their ideals of love and of resistance as reflected in the various media and compares the ways they were articulated in the rhetoric unique to each medium and artefact.

Leyla Sophie Gleissner (Paris, France)

"Komm Herzensschatzi". Inscription and Interpellation in Emma Hauck's 1909 Letters

Monday, 30 September 2024, 2:30 – 3:15 pm

In this talk, I will discuss a selection of letters written by Emma Hauck during her hospitalisation at Heidelberg Psychiatry in 1909. These letters were not sent and are now archived at the Prinzhorn Collection, a museum showcasing works by people with psychiatric experiences. I am particularly interested in one letter which consists of only two words - "Komm, Herzensschatzi" - addressed to Hauck's husband. In stark contrast to an understanding of letters as a linear form of narrative, and/or a coherent expression of a given, this piece of writing does not transmit any content except for the two-word formula mentioned above. Instead of giving information on

Hauck's everyday life or her affective landscape, the letter refuses to provide any context. In fact, even the formula of interpellation ("Komm, Herzensschatzi"), is overwritten so many times, it forms graphic columns that are almost unreadable. Despite its lack of detailed content or context, many readings suggest an understanding of the letter as a direct declaration of love and wish to return home, the institution thereby fostering Hauck's early death by keeping the letters. I would like to try to complexify this reading by a) looking at the relationship between materiality and language in the letter, and b) looking at the role the psychiatric institution plays in archiving and transmitting it. I am particularly interested in the ways in which the letter can inform a critical and social understanding of language, as well as the ways in which the latter can be linked to salient themes such as affectivity and survival. Drawing from ongoing archival work, I will pose questions such as: what can be learned from investigating the letter's particular "mode of address" (Butler), and what does it tell us about the intertwining of interpellation and materiality? What temporality can be drawn from both the structure of interpellation, and its archival after-life? How can we conceptualise those institutional archival practices that have both prevented Hauck's survival but fostered the afterlife of her inscrutable writings? In short, rather than reducing the letter to the expression of any given content or affect, I aim to do justice to its complex character as a form of inscription and interpellation, as well as to the temporality of its survival.

Ceri Houlbrook (Hertfordshire, UK)

Unlocking the Love-Lock

Tuesday, 1 October 2024, 11:00 – 11:45 am

Love-locks are padlocks that have been inscribed with names and initials, and surrendered to bridges and other public structures worldwide. Typically, this is a ritual conducted by couples as a statement of romantic commitment. The key is thrown into the river below the bridge, logistically as well as symbolically ensuring the love-lock's irredeemability – and thus perceived permanence.

The love-lock is a ritual deposit, often defined as an object surrendered to a place of spiritual or emotional significance, with no intention of retrieval. The act of deposition is seen as the final stage of the deposit and depositor's tangible engagement, and although intangible entanglement persists, it is generally assumed that person and object will never come into physical contact again. The contemporary love-lock challenges this assumption.

Ethnographic research has revealed that many people conduct return visits – one might call them pilgrimages – specifically to see their love-lock again. To challenge themselves to find it amidst the hundreds or thousands that have grown up around it. Others have returned to

remove their lock, following the breakdown of a relationship. And the consternation depositors have expressed when discovering that the authorities have removed their love-lock demonstrates that even when the permanence of the ritual deposit is proven delusive, there persists a lasting relationship between lovers and love-lock.

Eike Großmann (University of Hamburg)

“Writing your First Love Letter”: Social Practices of Inscribing Love in Early Modern Japan

Tuesday, 1 October 2024, 2:45 – 3:30 pm

A reincarnated woman who remembers the love of her previous life by wearing the same tattoo on her arm; etiquette rules for women and men on how to exchange letters; practical guidebooks for prostitutes on how to write love letters to their customers; guidance in how to fold letters, a dealer in love letters who sells good fortune, and “flying legs” (*hikyaku*) who provide the infrastructure for sending and receiving letters. Expressing love, as these examples suggest, was one of the most popular adventures in Early Modern Japan and frequently connected to written artefacts.

Although such written artefacts – the love letters and tattoos in the examples above – may no longer be extant, it is nonetheless possible to investigate the social practices of epistolography with amatory themes in eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Japan. To do so, it is necessary to take into consideration a variety of sources: Kabuki theatre plays, woodblock printed advice books, *ukiyo-e* prints, and the infrastructure that supported several industries that exploited the popularity of letter-writing. By looking at these extended manuscript cultures, their written artefacts and visual depictions, this presentation will address the performativity and materiality of the act of inscribing love and make visible the customs of written artefact production.

Leah Mascia (University of Hamburg)

Echoes of Love from the lands of Greco-Roman and Late Antique Egypt: Tracing Evidence Through Archaeological, Papyrological, and Epigraphic Sources

Tuesday, 1 October 2024, 9:00 – 9:45 am

Papyrus texts represent an essential source for reconstructing the Egyptian social fabric between the Greco-Roman and Late Antique phases. Through the letters written (or dictated) by women and men inhabiting the cities and villages of Egypt at this time, we can grasp the variety of emotions that influenced their lives and, in particular, how they experienced love and affection. Some types of love are certainly more well-represented than others in letters, and quite

frequently, we find expressions of filial love or affection between friends, family members, and long-married couples. Curiously enough, what is rarely encountered in private letters dating from this historical phase is “romantic love”. To have some concrete insights into the burning love passions affecting this ancient society, we must rely on other inscribed objects, and in particular, the variety of magical written artefacts crafted by ritual experts to answer their clients’ needs.

Indeed, beyond doubt, concrete materializations of affect are not only found in papyrus texts but in a variety of inscribed objects, from pots, lead tablets, and wooden amulets to stelae, coffins, and even mummy wrappings. The funerary landscape of Greco-Roman and Late Antique Egypt is an exceptionally promising setting for exploring this aspect, thus broadening our understanding of the materiality of love in ancient Egypt. Archaeological investigations conducted in the necropolises of numerous settlements across Egypt allow us to go far beyond the simple examination of a written artefact carrying a love message. The finding of these inscribed objects in their original archaeological contexts offers a glimpse of the love gestures accompanying the preparation of the deceased to the afterlife and the ritual significance of the deposition of these artefacts.

The present contribution aims to explore the materiality of love in Greco-Roman and Late Antique Egypt through the examination of archaeological, papyrological and epigraphic evidence.

Piera Mazzaglia (Gießen)

Materiality and Performativity of Love’s Expressions in 19th Unpublished Love Letters written by Everyday Lovers

Tuesday, 1 October 2024, 4:00 – 4:45 pm

Love is performative: it requires constant evidence and the materialization of abstract feelings in order to be perceived as more real, more authentic. Material practices and performative expressions can vary according to historical periods and are usually strongly linked to cultural and social dynamics.

The nineteenth century is a critical one for any large-scale consideration of love, its transmission and materialization. During this period, the postal revolution, the rise of the (epistolary) novel, and the emerging idea of a “love marriage” for the middle classes brought about an uptick both in the practice of love letter writing and in its social and cultural significance. Love letters were not only communicative tools, but also, and more importantly, material and tangible proof of feelings and intentions upon which relationships were created and maintained.

My paper takes a comparative approach to love letters, hinging on unpublished love letters written by “ordinary” couples in the second half of the nineteenth century. It focuses, in

particular, on letters found in national and regional archives across the UK and Germany. These letters contributed to the conveyance of love and to the creation and maintenance of a romantic bond that was not only perceived as authentic, but also and in the majority of the cases lead to marriage. I argue that the materialization of love in this period was not only given by the material practice of love letter writing but also by a performative dimension,

constituted by a series of performative speech acts found in these written romantic epistolaries. I use material studies, speech act theory and critical love studies as methodologies to consider love letters as material artifacts that allow us to trace emotions and languages of love in different periods, cultures and languages, reconstruct relationships and, above all, as tools that give love a more material form.

Camilla Skovbjerg Paldam (Aarhus)

From letter box to inbox. Changes and constancies in 20th and 21st century love communication
Wednesday, 2 October 2024, 9:00 – 3:30 pm

Love letters have been a means to bring distant lovers together for thousands of years, but their form has evolved along the changing norms and modes of communication. In this paper, I will reflect on the material status of love letters in relation to the technological development and the subsequent replacement of traditional letters by their digital counterparts, such as emails. Communication always relies on the medium and technology used to convey it, and a change of medium may also change the way we communicate. Emails may be printed, but the printout does not have the same aura as a handwritten love letter, nor the same indexical materiality. However, my research – based on thousands of love letters and love emails – shows that the change of media does not change the communication entirely. Love communication between distant lovers still serves many of the same purposes as it did one hundred years ago. The rhetoric of a love email may thus be identical to that of a physical love letter. My claim is that there are a number of elements that apply to modern love communication in general, no matter how it is conducted. It has more to do with a modern idea of being in love than of the medium used to communicate the feelings. In my paper I will investigate these stable elements as well as the changes in love communication that happen due to the change from analog to digital communication.

Cláudia Pimentel (Porto, Portugal)

Beyond “bordered” love

Monday, 30 September 2024, 3:45 – 4:30 pm

“All love letters are Ridiculous. They wouldn’t be love letters if they weren’t Ridiculous.” (in Álvaro de Campos, heteronym of Fernando Pessoa) Even it is possible that the Poet is telling the truth, how could love survived without love letters? How would love letters exist without distance? Can we measure distance? Is distance just a flash of light, or just one more path towards happiness?

Minho, one of the regions from the north of Portugal, has a tradition of “lenços dos namorados” (Valentine handkerchiefs), whose origin date back to the eighteenth century. They were embroidered in linen, as written letters, for the loved ones, to short the distance when they were far away from home. But they were also used during Colonial War, between soldiers and their “madrinhas de Guerra” (godmothers of war). Hiding narratives capable of making those involved blush, they were breaths of life, and most of them became happy Families and stories of love told to grandchildren, in the evening, in front of the fireplace. Some of these “letters” will last forever and have also a place inside museums.

Based on the Portuguese tradition, eternalized in linen, but also in other materials as porcelain and pottery, we intend to show as this practice may have changed the course of countless young lives that, otherwise, could have just brought war traumas back home.

Jungyoon Yang (Amsterdam)

Feigned love in seventeenth-century Dutch wedding booklets

Wednesday, 2 October 2024, 9:45 – 10:30 am

In the seventeenth century, a new type of social convention was introduced to the Dutch public for celebrating a bridal couple’s marriage with occasional poems. It was the first page of their marital life, which was blessed with the honourable message about their love. Compared to a love poem, which mainly expresses the emotional effect on lovers, epithalamia were based more on the formality between the couple, because it was addressed not only to them ceremoniously but was also intended to be read by the wedding guests. The poets declaimed the story between the bridal couple like the best loving couple in the world in their epithalamia, in order to glorify their love and sanctify it by highlighting their beauty, intelligence, prosperous and happy life, as well as their faultless reputations. For this reason, professional poets were hired for the patrons who believed the name of the famous poet could lend authenticity to the newly-wed couple and their marriage, as if the power of words could add extra blessings and wishes to launch their marital life. This custom was developed as the commissioned private booklet, which the well-to-do citizens could have inscribed with printed words for their wedding day.

I would like to examine the meaning of the poet's inscribed verses for a wedding day, based on the seventeenth-century Dutch epithalamic booklets. The collection of printed nuptial poems contains the various types of love for starting their marriage, but we do not exactly know about the actual function of the poems. The most outstanding examples were written by Jan Jansz Starter, who used his literary talent for making a wedding sumptuously up in his oeuvres between 1616 and 1622. For instance, rediscovered archival research demonstrates that there was a paradox between the reality of a marriage which was glorified by Starter and the poet's ode about honourable love. The written love in the epithalamic booklet cannot be seen as the token of true love, but as the outcome of a feigned love born from the advocative role of epithalamists to elevate the love of the bridal couple to the level of imperishable icons.

In my paper, I will question the real value of the printed epithalamic incarnation of eternal love, which could be the vital element for boosting epithalamia to a form of an idealised love befitting the sentiment of the seventeenth century Dutch Republic. To draw attention to the paradox of the love between the commissioned occasional poetry and the reality of the betrothed couple, I will discuss the newly-coined patronage for paying extra expenses for celebrating the love between the couple.

Eva Wyss (Koblenz)

Love Letters and Beyond: Insights from the Koblenz and Darmstadt Love Letter Archive

Tuesday, 1 October 2024, 4:45 – 5:30 pm

The love letter is a material object and artifact that, as a genre, follows specific cultural norms and textual structures. Love is expressed in various forms, both explicit and implicit. This expression is often recognizable in the address, the use of compliments, love declarations, and metaphors.

Certain textual patterns and practices emerge, such as the never-ending chat (Luhmann) and the figures of love (Barthes), including longing and waiting ("Why aren't you calling me now?"), ambivalence and mockery ("I hate you"), and the fear of abandonment (prolonging the letter, skipping the goodbye, continuing for the next 1001 days).

Beyond the material aspects of writing, including layout, handwriting styles, collage techniques, and hybrid semiotics, there are paratextual dimensions that add layers of meaning. Love letters often feature poetry, postscripts, and even the envelope contributes to the semiotics of love. Additional material sent with the letter further enriches this.

The inscriptions of love also maintain rhetorical components, where tonal transitions are key. Some letters exhibit clarity in the first sentence, establishing intimacy between writer and reader. Others may shift from friendly, personal writing to romance and eroticism.

Drawing on letters, notes, and other materials from the Love Letter Archive at the University of Koblenz and the Technical University Darmstadt, I aim to study inscriptions of love from the 19th to the 21st century, including love postings on social media.