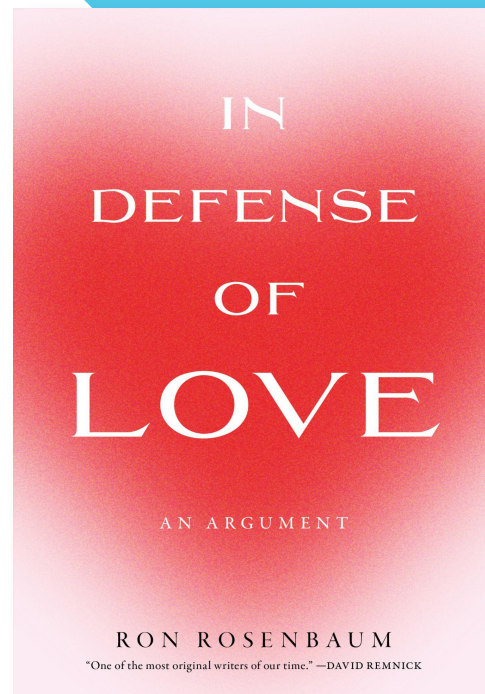


IN DEFENSE OF LOVE

Ron Rosenbaum

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“ In Ron Rosenbaum’s insightful, touching and surprising *In Defense of Love*, Rosenbaum manages to clobber all the theories and rhetoric that attempt to reduce that emotion to science. With Rosenbaum, love has finally met its perfect match.”

— **Betsy Carter, author of *Lost Souls at the Neptune Inn***

“ Whether on Hitler’s evil, Shakespeare’s genius, or the nature of love, Ron Rosenbaum resists the lure of easy answers. . . I love Ron’s book.”

— **Errol Morris *Air Mail***

“ [Rosenbaum is] a national treasure.”

— **Michele Madigan Somerville**

INTRODUCTION

A stirring manifesto on love in the modern age, now available for the first time in paperback.

In a work of ambition and brio, legendary journalist Ron Rosenbaum tackles his hardest topic yet: everyone’s favorite four-letter word. He begins by investigating the neuroscience of love, arguing that our understanding of love is imperiled by quantification and algorithms, which distill our behavior into mathematical formulas, our personality into brain-chemical categories, and our curiosity into quiz questions. The very capacity that makes us human, Rosenbaum posits, is being taken over by numbers.

To save it, he turns to literature and pop culture, discussing writing about love from a vast range of sources, including Tolstoy novellas, trailblazing Updike manuscripts, David Foster Wallace and Chrissie Hynde. Part of love’s essence is its mystery, says Rosenbaum, and when he eventually finds his own answer to the riddle of love — a happy ending! — it turns up in a completely unexpected place.

In Defense of Love is more than an examination of the intersection of love with literature and science. It is a celebration of the uncanny and the persistent, the sublime and the ridiculous: the inexorable power of love.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. If “inventionism” is what we do in order to make sense of or bring order to complexity (Love Languages, for example, according to Rosenbaum), have you ever invented for your own understanding?
2. Rosenbaum asks “Why am I so concerned about number crunchers devouring works of mystery and beauty?” in relation to love. Why do you think, as an artist, the breakdown of love into a biochemical reaction would bother him?
3. Does gender influence the perception of love? Does Fisher’s “four constellations” of traits continue binary stereotypes?
4. Do you believe that love and evil can be explained and or understood fully?

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5. When it comes to anthropology and romantic love, why is it important to have representation of love from different cultures?
6. Rosenbaum cites numerous literary and musical masters, from Shakespeare to B.B. King. How does art capture the experience of love, especially romantic love? Is this a case of “art imitates life” and vice versa?
7. What do you think the author meant when he asked: “Has sex become too good for its own good?” Can love and sex live autonomously without devaluing one-another?
8. On Page 42, Rosenbaum says, “Love is not binary but forever both on and off”; do you believe that love evolves with us, or for us?
9. When referencing century’s old poetry and classic literature, love seemed easy to explain and something profoundly novel; has modernity affected portrayals of love? If so, how has that affected our realistic ideas of love?
10. Research has shown that, particularly young adults, experience extreme loneliness after COVID’s isolation period. Does this epidemic of loneliness influence the way the modern world perceives and seeks love?
11. Can love be narrowed down to an algorithm, such as dating apps? Is love also not being expanded thanks to dating apps, as we have such a broader scope of finding it?
12. Does trying to deconstruct love make it less special? Is it human nature to try to explain the unexplainable?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ron Rosenbaum’s work has appeared in *Harper’s*, *The New York Times Magazine*, *The New Yorker*, *Esquire*, *Vanity Fair*, *Smithsonian Magazine*, and *Slate*, among other publications. He was a columnist at the *New York Observer* and the White House correspondent for the *Village Voice* during Watergate. His book, *Explaining Hitler*, a *New York Times* Notable Book of the Year in 1998, has been translated into ten languages. Random House published a collection of his essays and journalism, *The Secret Parts of Fortune*, in 2000. In 2006, he published *The Shakespeare Wars*, which Cynthia Ozick called “a spectacular book.” He has been a member of the advisory board of the Royal Shakespeare Company’s publications project, and the editorial board of Lapham’s Quarterly.

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