



Loving Literature: A Cultural History

Deidre Shauna Lynch

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One of the most common—and wounding—misconceptions about literary scholars today is that they simply don't love books. While those actually working in literary studies can easily refute this claim, such a response risks obscuring a more fundamental question: why should they?

That question led Deidre Shauna Lynch into the historical and cultural investigation of *Loving Literature*. How did it come to be that professional literary scholars are expected not just to study, but to *love* literature, and to inculcate that love in generations of students? What Lynch discovers is that books, and the attachments we form to them, have played a vital role in the formation of private life—that the love of literature, in other words, is deeply embedded in the history of literature. Yet at the same time, our love is neither self-evident nor ahistorical: our views of books as objects of affection have clear roots in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century publishing, reading habits, and domestic history.

While never denying the very real feelings that warm our relationship to books, *Loving Literature* nonetheless serves as a riposte to those who use the phrase “the love of literature” as if its meaning were transparent. Lynch writes, “It is as if those on the side of love of literature had forgotten what literary texts themselves say about love’s edginess and complexities.” With this masterly volume, Lynch restores those edges and allows us to revel in those complexities.

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