

**(love\_long)**

This is a penultimate version of the article which finally appeared in Alan Macfarlane, *The Culture of Capitalism* (Oxford, 1987), chapter 6.

## **LOVE AND CAPITALISM**

Love between men and women as the basis of marriage is a central feature of modern industrial societies. Such love is a powerful cultural component with large implications both for the societies themselves and the civilizations they are affecting. Yet this association of love and marriage is neither universal nor automatic. The majority of people in most societies believe that marriage is too important a matter to be left to the individuals concerned. Hence the personal feelings of the prospective marriage partners, their 'love' attraction, is largely irrelevant to arranging a marriage. This is not to argue that 'love' or deep affection between members of the opposite sex are unknown outside modern industrial societies. There is plenty of evidence for these emotions in simple societies, and to a certain extent in tribal societies 'love matches' may be recognized as a basis for marriage (Westermarck 1921: ii, ch. 21). Yet if we distinguish between love outside and within marriage, there is a certain peculiarity of the western pattern. It is unusual to find that the person one marries should be the person one has previously loved, and reciprocally that the person one loves should be the person one marries. In many societies, love affairs occur before and outside marriage, but marriages are nevertheless arranged. In many societies the arranged marriages lead to companionate love within marriage. What is extraordinary is the fact that the decision to marry should be based on the premise that love and marriage are indistinguishably united. Thus particularly in peasant societies, marriage is largely based on arrangement by kin or other wider groups and the personal feelings of an often very young couple are not of concern. Love marriage, the romantic love complex, may therefore be seen as a culturally peculiar institution. This strange pattern whereby love between a man and a woman before and during marriage becomes the basis for the familial and emotional system of a whole complex civilization has naturally attracted the attention of anthropologists.

Ralph Linton summarized the findings of cross comparative research thus: "all societies recognize that there are occasional violent attachments between persons of the opposite sex, but our present American culture is practically the only one which has attempted to capitalize these and make them the basis for marriage" (quoted in Hunt 1960: 308). E.A. Hoebel came to the same conclusion, suggesting that "few people are so given to romantic love as are Americans. In our individualistic sentimentalism we exalt the ideal of marriage based on love - that mysterious psychophysiological reaction" (Hoebel 1958: 214). Robert Redfield concluded that "not many societies have been able to afford some approximation of romantic love as realized in marriage; peasant societies are certainly not among them" (Redfield 1962: 317).

It was Robert Lowie who most forcefully and caustically summed up the extensive anthropological evidence. In most human societies "practical points of view are foremost in inaugurating and maintaining the conjugal state. They eclipse romance not only among aborigines, but virtually everywhere except in small circles of Western society. Romance need not be absent, but it is held inessential for that serious part of life which is marriage." Elsewhere Lowie went further, arguing that "individual attraction, we repeat, is not the basic factor; our own immediate ancestors and virtually every other society in human

history would have rejected contemporary Western conceptions as absurd and vicious in principle." (Lowie 1950:220,95). He wrote ironically, "but of love among savages?...Passion, of course, is taken for granted; affection, which many travellers vouch for, might be conceded; but Love? Well, the romantic sentiment occurs in simpler conditions, as with us - in fiction."(quoted in Goode 1959:40)

A recent survey of friendship and love by a British anthropologist finds only slight evidence of the 'romantic love complex' in non-Western societies and the author concludes that "the combination of spiritual love, frustrated sex, and marriage is a uniquely Western contribution..."(Brain 1977:222). Here he is echoing the earlier views of the literary critic C.S.Lewis who wrote that the love poetry of England from the sixteenth century onwards was "a highly specialized historical phenomenon - the peculiar flower of a peculiar civilization, important whether for good or ill and well worth our understanding"(Lewis 1959:360). It is indeed important to understand both the causes and the functions of this peculiarity, to know "what are the social and cultural factors that have led us - unique among the societies of the world - to marry for love?"(Brain 1977:245). This essay will consider some of the alternative solutions that have been suggested to this problem, with particular reference to the case of England.

Having roughly tied down the association between love and marriage in space, the next step is to locate it in time. Any explanation of the causes of this unusual association will depend heavily on when it is believed that it first emerged. One view is that the complex is very recent, that the harnessing of the mysterious passion of 'love' to marriage was a relatively recent invention, probably occurring about the same time as the supposed rise of 'modern' industrial civilization in western Europe and northern America. This would locate its origin in the second half of the eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth century, appropriately coinciding with the Romantic Movement in literature and art. The argument is plausible enough. The anomie or rootless lack of consensus and values caused by rapid industrial and urban growth, combined with the emergence of the impersonal relations of market capitalism were bound to create a new emotional structure. One side effect of the first urban and industrial revolution was a new sentiment and a new marriage system, appropriately based on individualism in its most extreme form. In answer to Keith Thomas' question as to whether it is true that "romantic love is the product of a poorly integrated society, in the way that the literary form of tragedy is said to be", most historians, sociologists and anthropologists would answer 'yes'(Thomas 1963:15-16). Depending on how one regards the 'romantic love complex', it could be seen as one of the compensations for the loneliness and isolation of a disintegrated, associational, society, or as yet another curse produced by the disintegration of the old community bonds.

Robert Lowie, we have seen, thought that "our own immediate ancestors" would have rejected contemporary Western ideas on love marriage. A.R.Radcliffe-Brown believed that "we must remember that the modern English idea of marriage is recent and decidedly unusual, the product of a particular social development"(1950:43). Brain believes that it was "in the middle of the eighteenth century (that) romantic love ceased to be a frenzy or a tragic condition and became a desirable state..."(1977:247). The view that love connected with marriage is an "invention of modernization" and, in particular the result of events in north western Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, is based on the work of a number of historians.

It seemed plausible to guess that if individualistic 'love' was somehow associated with capitalism, with an individualistic philosophy, and possibly with changes in standards of living and changes in the

means of production, then the roots of this phenomenon should be located centrally in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Furthermore, it seemed likely that the oddness of love could be linked to the growing oddness of England as the first industrial and urban society and the prototype of market capitalism. The supposed bourgeois revolution of the seventeenth century in England, the changes in the relations of production, would lead to changes in the ideology, to an affective revolution. This discovery of love and its use as a basis for marriage could then be seen, as Lawrence Stone has described it, as "perhaps the most important change in **mentality** to have occurred in the Early Modern period, indeed possibly in the last thousand years of Western history"(Stone 1977:4). The widely accepted model of a revolution in social, economic and political life in England and parts of western Europe, when a peasant and feudal society was transformed between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries into a 'modern' and capitalistic one, fits well with the view that there must also have been a simultaneous revolution in sentiment. Indeed it is almost essential that there should have been this tremendous change in ideology.

It is widely believed that there was a growth of individualism during the period between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries in Europe and particularly in England. This involved the transformation of a traditional, group-based, kinship-dominated society into the modern capitalistic system. These changes were described in the work of such historians as R.H.Tawney and Christopher Hill, building on the work of Marx and Weber. In the period between 1400 and 1750 the following major changes are thought to have occurred: the invention of private, absolute property and the destruction of group ownership; the elimination of the household as the basic unit of production and consumption; the growth of a money economy; the rise of a class of permanent wage-labourers; the growing dominance of the profit motive and the psychological drive towards endless accumulation; the rise of modern industrial production; the growth of large urban centres; the elimination of those "magical" and "irrational" forces which prevented the rational pursuit of economic gain; the undermining of small, closely-meshed communities with the growth of geographical and social mobility. England, it is argued, changed from a society in which the individual was subordinated to a group of some kind, whether the family, village, religious congregation or estate, to a land of almost autonomous individuals, bound together by money, paper and allegiance to the new nation state.

The ideology of romantic love, "vicious in principle" because it places the wishes of the individual above those of the wider group, could be predicted to emerge. It is the affective dimension of this major transformation. As the political, economic and social structures went through a revolution, so, we would expect, there would be a revolution in mentality and sentiment. Peasantries, as Redfield pointed out, are not characterized by the ideology of romantic love. Many argue that England was a peasant society until about the seventeenth century. It was only when a peasant society became transformed into a capitalistic one that the new marriage system based on love could emerge.

This connection between capitalism and the 'modern' marital system was made long ago by Engels, extending Marx's theories. He pointed out that monogamy was a necessary if not sufficient cause of modern "sex-love", as he called it, but that it took time for such monogamous marriage to develop into our modern individual-choice marriage. In medieval society, Engels argued, "the question of fitness was unconditionally decided, not by individual inclination, but by family interests. In the overwhelming majority of cases the marriage contract thus remained to the end of the middle ages what it had been from the outset: a matter that was not decided by the parties most interested"(Engels 1902:95). Then a new capitalistic world began to emerge in the later fifteenth century. This created a new order: "by

changing all things into commodities, it dissolved all inherited and traditional relations and replaced time hallowed custom and historical right by purchase and sale, by 'free contract'. In order to make valid contracts people must be, nominally, 'free' and 'equal', and hence "the creation of these 'free' and 'equal' people was precisely one of the main functions of capitalistic production." Engels argued that while marriages became 'contracts', legal affairs, the principle of freedom to contract inevitably if gradually placed the decision in the hands of those who would have to honour the contract - the couple themselves. "Did not the two young people who were to be coupled together have the right freely to dispose of themselves, of their bodies, and the organs of these?" So the "rising bourgeoisie", especially those in Protestant countries where freedom was greatest, recognized the "freedom of contracting a marriage". In short, "the love match was proclaimed as a human right..."(Engels 1902:96,97,98).

Thus romantic love could be seen as one of the side effects of the dissolution of feudal, peasant, society and the emergence of the market principles of capitalism, of increasing individualism and individual property. Since this occurred, according to a widely accepted chronology, in north-western Europe from the end of the fifteenth century, reaching its climax in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it is then that we should find the birth of the 'romantic love complex'. The model gives the causes and predicts the timing.

More recently, a second type of argument led people to expect that the so-called revolution in sentiment must have occurred recently, this was the argument from a change in the physical environment. It is widely accepted that one of the major transformations in world history has been the rapid reduction in infant, child and adult mortality during the so-called "demographic transition" which many date from the middle of the eighteenth century(McKeown 1976). Most human societies for most of history have experienced high mortality. This, it has been suggested, had a considerable effect on emotional relations.

The French historian Philippe Aries in his study of childhood was one of the first to suggest a direct connection between love and death. He stated that "people could not allow themselves to become too attached to something that was regarded as a probable loss. This is the reason for certain remarks which shock our present-day sensibility...Nobody thought, as we ordinarily think today, that every child already contained a man's personality. Too many of them died."(Aries 1962:38-9). The argument was soon extended from the relations with children to those between men and women. Husbands and wives, it was suggested, dared not invest strongly in their emotional relationships because of the threat that one of them would die. The subsequent cruelty of husbands to wives led to further mortality and increased insecurity. More widely, it began to be argued that the callousness within the family arising from demographic insecurity led to whole societies in the past being inhabited by cold and aggressive individuals, incapable of feeling love and affection. The birth of affection, joy in another's presence, spontaneous warmth, the romantic love complex, came to be linked with the supposed demographic revolution which started to reduce mortality in the eighteenth century.

The most forceful exponent of this view is Lawrence Stone. In a large book on the family he repeatedly argues that affection and love were, on the whole, impossible before the eighteenth century because the conditions of preindustrial life were so insecure that people did not dare to enter into a deep relationship for fear of it abruptly ending. Marriage based on love was impossible until mortality dropped. Stone argues that marriages only lasted for an average of seventeen to twenty years in "Early Modern England", and thus they were "statistically speaking, a transient and temporary association..."

(Stone 1977:55). Consequently, he claims, relations between husband and wife lacked affection, both before and during marriage. The conjugal family, based on unloved children and unloving husband and wife was therefore "very short-lived and unstable in its composition. Few mutual demands were made on its members, so that it was a low-keyed and undemanding institution which could therefore weather this instability with relative ease"(1977:60). This demographic insecurity was exacerbated by economic insecurity. Stone argues that sentiment cannot thrive in poverty. Writing of the eighteenth century, he suggests that there "are levels of human misery at which the intensity of the struggle to satisfy the basic need for food and shelter leaves little room for humane emotions and affective relationships"(1977:476). Thus the majority of the population,, who lived in such conditions up to the end of the eighteenth century, could not "afford" love.

According to the general theory, love is a consequence of demographic, industrial and capitalistic revolutions, coming to a head in the eighteenth century in England. The first wave of historians to devote themselves exclusively to family history, and particularly marriage, found what the model predicted they would find, the invention of sentiment and the 'romantic love complex' in the eighteenth century. The situation at the end of a decade of work in 1980 has been well surveyed and summarized by Michael Anderson in a chapter summarizing the "Sentiments Approach" to the history of the Western family (Anderson 1980:ch.3). He outlines the work of Aries, Shorter, Stone and Flandrin, and points out that their views were all in accord with one another, and that they all believe in an affective revolution located predominantly in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The agreed general view can be illustrated in the work of Edward Shorter.

Shorter argued that the family has broken loose from its surroundings, the "traditional" embedded family giving way to the separate nuclear family. Marriage has changed from being arranged by kin to the modern system of choice and affection; "popular marriage in former centuries was usually affectionless, held together by considerations of property and lineage" (Shorter 1975: 55). Within marriage "the prospect of death seemed to arouse no deep sentiments between spouses"(1975:57). All this changed in a revolutionary way towards the end of the eighteenth century. There was a "sexual revolution" when "young people began paying much more attention to inner feelings than to outward considerations, such as property and parental wishes, in choosing marriage partners"(1975:79). At the same period "a rush of sentiment swept over mating and dating", replacing the "lack of romance in peasant courtship" in the traditional society with the new ideology of romantic love(1975:120,141). Courtship was transformed, "the most important change in nineteenth and twentieth century courtship has been the surge of sentiment"(1975:148).

The cause of the revolution was the development of capitalism: "market capitalism was probably at the root of the revolution in sentiment" (1975:255). According to Shorter, capitalism broke down the small, economically self-sufficient communities that had been universal in the "traditional" societies existing up to the eighteenth century. Markets opened up, mobility increased, people were caught up in a new and open environment with money and market values dominant. Secondly, capitalism improved the standard of living. This altered the material conditions of life. Thirdly, capitalism, or more particularly its manifestation in a particular industrial form, led to the break up of the rural communities. People were sucked into an urban and industrial proletariat.

The ways in which these changes caused the "romance revolution" (1975:258) are partly indicated by

Shorter. The changes led to the ethic of individualism and competition. Thus ordinary people were forced into the marketplace and "this egoistical economic mentality spread into various non-economic domains of life, specifically into those ties that bind the individual to the surrounding community"(1975:259). As Engels had argued long before, the desire to be free in one sphere led to a desire to be free in emotional life. Furthermore an improvement in material standards, Shorter argues, allowed maternal love to flourish with new-found leisure, and the same argument could well be applied to conjugal love.

There seemed strong grounds for arguing that capitalism and industrialism, with connected demographic and social changes, were the causes of the peculiar pattern of romantic love. As predicted, they caused a revolution in sentiment in the eighteenth century, from which our modern world has developed. A challenge to this position would throw into question the model of the origins of modern civilization. If it turned out to be the case that romantic love was not basically an invention of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, we would have to re-asses our way of thinking about the transition from "pre-modern" to "modern". This seemed an unlikely eventuality.

In fact, it has become increasingly clear that the connection between love and the rise of capitalism is much more complex than this. Already in the late 1960's and 1970's the work of historical demographers, and in particular John Hajnal, Peter Laslett, E.A.Wrigley, showed that many of the most unusual structural features of the north west European family and marriage patterns were very old(Hajnal 1965, Laslett 1977, Wrigley 1969). Variousy dated back to the start of the sixteenth century, or several centuries earlier, it was now clear that most people had married at a relatively late age, or not at all, and that married children had lived apart from their parents in small households. There was little evidence in the newly discovered listings of inhabitants and the evidence beginning to emerge from parish register reconstitutions that there had been a structural transformation in the demographic and marital patterns in the sixteenth, seventeenth or eighteenth centuries. Some of the main characteristics of this pattern, enduring from the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries, were specified by Peter Laslett in 1977. These included the nuclear family form, the late age at marriage, a small gap between spouses, "marriage tending towards the companionate", and the presence of large numbers of servants (Laslett 1977:13). Thus Laslett suggested that the pattern of family and marriage was basically "the same in the 1550s as it was in the 1820s"(1977:47). Largely on the basis of work by Richard Smith, he suggested that this pattern probably went back to the fourteenth century at least. If these demographic parameters had changed little, Laslett inferred "that Western marriage has always tended to be companionate". But he admitted that "only the attitudinal or ideological evidence we need so much to discover could vindicate the claim"(1977:42). It was during the 1980s that such evidence began to be published.

The orthodox position on sentiment was challenged in an article in 1979 (Macfarlane 1979), but it was only in the 1980's that convincing evidence was produced to show that the predictions of the capitalist revolution model were totally wrong. Some of the major works were written by historians, others by anthropologists and sociologists. We may very briefly summarize a number of the landmarks in this surprisingly rapid overturning of a whole school of thought.

The anthropologist Jacqueline Sarsby examined the development of romantic love in England using literary, autobiographical and local materials. Her historical chapters flatly contradict the developmental

story as embodied in the 'rise of sentiment' school. (Sarsby 1983:35,36,66). Ferdinand Mount considered the evidence without a pre-commitment to a belief in the capitalist and other revolutions which should have caused a late invention of love and his work supports Sarsby's. Through an examination of a wide variety of sources dating back to Anglo-Saxon England he suggests that "most of what has been written until recently about the family in times past must now be dismissed or questioned"(1982:123). He finds strong evidence for the romantic love complex as far back as the historical records extend. On a related topic, Linda Pollock found that the theory of the invention of parental love in the eighteenth century was equally questionable (1983).

Finally, among those who were not full-time historians, the anthropologist Jack Goody argued that the basic structural shape of 'modern' marriage had been attained in England by the eleventh century at the latest, and in all probability between the fourth and ninth centuries. The emphasis on the conjugal pair, on consent, a high status for women, and many of the other pre-conditions for the romantic love complex were already present in late Anglo-Saxon England (1983). He argues that the 'love match' was encouraged by the Church's insistence on consent and affection in the early middle ages. This institution in essence owes "little to the later transformations of feudalism, mercantile capitalism, industrial society, Hollywood or the Germanic tradition"(1983:155).

These views are now supported by a number of full-time historians who have come to the same conclusion. In a collection of essays on marriage in England edited by Brian Outhwaite, the contributors challenge the orthodoxy. Christopher Brooke shows how important consent and affection was in medieval marriage, Martin Ingram shows the presence of love in ecclesiastical court litigation from the sixteenth century and Kathleen Davies shows that the ideals of family life changed very little as between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries(Outhwaite 1981:chaps. 1,2,3). In one of the first syntheses of the new historical research on early modern England, Keith Wrightson devotes two chapters to the family, drawing on a very wide range of published and unpublished sources. He concludes that below the level of aristocracy, gentry and urban elite "there is no doubt whatever that...the initiative in selecting a spouse already lay with the young people concerned" in the period between 1580 and 1680. In the motivation of those getting married, he can discern no significant shift in this period (Wrightson 1982:74,79). Thus he concludes that "there is little reason to follow Professor Stone in regarding the rise of the companionate marriage as a new phenomenon of the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It seems to have been already well established"(1983:103).

A particularly interesting study on 'The English Family, 1450-1700' by Ralph Houlbrooke covers the central period of the supposed birth of the 'modern' world of capitalism and individualism. It is exclusively devoted to the family and marriage and heavily based on the excellent church court records which are among the best sources for the study of marital sentiment and behaviour. A whole section in the book drawing on many sources shows the importance of love in marriage. On the question of a revolutionary change in the marital and family pattern in this period Houlbrooke is unequivocal. "Between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries there was little change in familial forms and functions"(Houlbrooke 1984:253). His picture is one of continuity in a system based on personal choice and a mixture of love and economic considerations from the fifteenth century onwards. This view is also the one which I have argued for, using a number of different sources, over the period 1300-1840 (Macfarlane 1986: esp. ch.9). The book corroborates the views of Sarsby, Mount, Goody, Pollock, Ingram, Davies, Wrightson and Houlbrooke that it is a mistake to believe that affection and love were

inventions of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, let alone the eighteenth.

Two major problems emerge from the overturning of the orthodox view that the romantic love complex was largely invented in the eighteenth century. One is historiographical, namely how did so many historians manage to make such very considerable errors? Various explanations may be mentioned. Firstly, there was the strength of the predictive model. As Shorter and Stone, in particular, show, the paradigm of a capitalist revolution, later reinforced with industrial, urban and demographic revolutions, should have led to the situation which they thought they found in the historical materials. If Marx and Weber are right in their timing, then the ideological effects of the Protestant Reformation and Capitalist revolution, alongside the rise of a supposed new political and individualistic order, should indeed have been matched by a new family and marriage system whose central pivot was the conjugal unit. The model predicted the revolution in structure and sentiment, and the revolution was duly found.

A second reason for error lies in a conflation of evidence from different countries. While most writers accept in principle that the experience of England and that of France, Germany and other continental countries may have been, and probably was, very different, in practice they tend to overlook this. If we were to put on one side all evidence from outside England for the moment, then almost all of the proof for the work of Aries, Flandrin, Shorter, Stone and others would fall away. Other reasons for error include the taking of material out of context, the jumbling of chronology, false arguments that absence of the expression of emotion means the absence of emotion, deductions about the bulk of the population from the elite and other logical, technical and historical errors (see Macfarlane 1979).

Yet in rejecting the revolutionary interpretation of family structure and the neat causal link with rapid changes in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, we create other problems. We are forced to wonder whether a paradigm that so conspicuously failed to predict what appears to have happened and led to so much error is of much value. We have to question the whole theory of the transition to capitalism and 'modernism'. Furthermore, we are left once again with the problems of trying to explain the causes of the peculiar marriage system.

If the 'romantic love complex' was strongly present in the sixteenth century or earlier in England, we clearly have to reject industrialization and urbanization as causes. It is also clear that the demographic argument, from insecurity to the absence of sentiment, is wrong. This is an important finding. If it had been established that in this case high death rates, constant sickness and poverty had made 'love' impossible, it might well have been suggested that all our ancestors, and all those living in such conditions in the Third World, were loveless, brutalized and without affection. Of course, an enormous amount of anthropological research in tribal and other societies has documented the tenderness of parents towards their children, affection within marriage, and spontaneity and depth of feeling which is perfectly compatible with high infant and adult mortality and grinding poverty. But all this might have been brushed aside by the supposed dramatic case of the birth of 'modern' society in Europe and North America. As it happens, however, even this case shows how shallow and naive deductions from the physical and demographic world do not help us to understand the way in which humans think and feel.

It now seems certain that the romantic love complex was widespread in England by the fifteenth century and probably long before. How are we to explain its presence if we can no longer rely on traditional theories concerning the urban and industrial revolutions and the supposed effects of the rise of



capitalism and the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century onwards? One widely accepted theory is that there was a diffusion of a new concept of marriage outwards from southern France. The work of C.S.Lewis, De Rougemont and more recently Georges Duby has suggested that out of the adulterous philanderings of courtiers, or possibly as a result of a new view of woman that emerged with Catharist heresy, a new sentiment emerged (De Rougemont 1940, Duby 1984). Thus C.S.Lewis argued that "French poets, in the eleventh century, discovered or invented, or were the first to express, that romantic species of passion which English poets were still writing about in the nineteenth century" (1959:27). There are, however, numerous difficulties in using this theory to explain the presence of the romantic love complex in England by the later medieval period.

No-one, as Lewis admits, has been able to explain satisfactorily why something should have been suddenly invented in twelfth century France. The Germanic, Celtic, Byzantine, Classical, Arabic or Cathar theories are all unsatisfactory in one way or another. This may be because, as Peter Dronke and others have argued, much that was taken by historians and literary critics to be new in the later eleventh century, is not, in fact, new at all (Dronke 1965-6). Furthermore, it is now clear that the portrayal of 'courtly love' as being initially concerned exclusively with extra-marital love is incorrect (Mount 1982: chap.6). A further difficulty is to show how the writings of southern French poets concerning the delights of adulterous love in the courtly circles in which they moved can have suddenly inspired millions of ordinary people within a relatively short time to feel a new and overwhelming emotion and alter centuries-old marriage practices. Life may mirror art, but this is rather an extreme case. Accidental literary origins for such a dramatic and powerful peculiarity are unlikely.

It seems much more plausible to suggest that there were major social, economic and ideological features of parts of Europe well back into the middle ages which made a certain kind of marriage both possible and desirable. It is an axiom of anthropology that everything is linked to something else and consequently the ideology of romantic love as the basis for marriage would be part of the whole pattern of kinship and marriage. It will be linked to concepts of the purposes of marriage, the demography of marriage, ideas of the individual, the rules of marriage and so on. These patterns, in turn, will be linked to the economic, social, political and religious foundations of a society. In order to explain the origins and persistence of romantic love we need to show how it was linked to such other institutions. There is something attractive in the suggestion of Marx, Engels, Weber and their followers that there is some association between the ideology of love marriage and the individualistic and capitalistic structure of northern societies. Although the precise link in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries does not fit the observed presence of the ideology, there is an alternative to rejecting the association altogether.

If we accept the theory that was dominant between 1880 and 1940 in England, then the distinctive features which form the background to romantic love were present in England well before the sixteenth century. As I have argued elsewhere, the individualism, market mentality, high mobility and other features which we associate with capitalism were present in England by at least the start of the thirteenth century and perhaps long before (Macfarlane 1978). If this is correct, then the evidence concerning love falls into place. It is part of a very ancient system, both an indicator of such a pattern, and a consequence of it. It would seem that there were characteristics of the way in which kinship, religion, law, politics and economics were organized within the Germanic peoples who conquered western Europe which led to a pattern of which romantic love and companionate marriage are a part. Such a pattern never died out in England, whereas in much of Europe it was largely submerged by old and

renovated features of the preceding Roman civilization. Being an island, one of the few areas which almost totally rejected Roman language, law, religion, England harboured a peculiar ethic of romantic love which had been more widespread earlier. Thus the ultimate origins are probably cultural and thousands of years old. Here we may end by briefly sketching a few of the ways which such an ideology fitted functionally with some other parts of the society.

One important component was Christianity. As Jack Goody (1983) has argued, the distinctive pattern of Christian marriage was early established, the basic features being present by the ninth century. This was a religion that enjoined celibacy, monogamy, a freedom of choice in marriage, and a severe sexual code prohibiting sexual relations before and outside marriage. Such a formal marriage regime enjoined by the dominant religious system was an ideal background for that peculiar romantic love ideology, which combined frustration, eroticism and desire. The ideals of celibacy, the late age at marriage, the battle between biological desire and religious injunctions are clearly a part of the pattern of romantic love. Passion was herded into marriage, sex and marriage were synonymous in a way that is unusual in world civilizations. Biological urges were channelled, sublimated and hence coloured the world. These special features were present in western Europe many centuries before the Protestant Reformation.

Romantic love also fitted with the kinship system. Talcott Parsons, when comparing the kinship system of the United States with more kinship-dominated societies, suggested that the "structural isolation of the conjugal family tends to free the affective inclinations of the couple from a whole series of hampering restrictions". In closely-knit, interdependent, kinship-based societies "any considerable range of affective spontaneity would tend to impinge on the statuses and interests of too many others, with disequilibrating consequences for the system as a whole" (Parsons 1964:187-8). When wider kinship is strong, marriages are arranged and affection between husband and wife is a secondary force. As Sjoberg has written, "Romantic love is, of all things, an expression of individualism, and as such it is at variance with the maintenance of a well-integrated extended kinship unit" (1960:153). Hence sociologists have linked the rise of individual love marriage to the degree of involvement of the conjugal family in wider kin ties, and to a lessened set of obligations to parents after death (Goode 1964:39,52). We now know that the cognatic kinship system which isolates out the husband and wife in terminology and residence was present in England from Anglo-Saxon times onwards. There is little evidence that wider kinship groupings were important in everyday life among the mass of the population. Romantic love was an appropriate ideology which could both flourish and hold together this individualistic system.

The cohesive importance of romantic love in a society where formal kinship is weak can be explored a little more. If kinship groups do not arrange marriages, why marry at all? One reason for marrying we have already seen, was that the ethical and social system was such that to have sexual relations outside marriage was considered a serious offence. As Thomas More pointed out in his **Utopia**, pre-marital sex should be harshly punished for "very few people would want to get married...if they weren't carefully prevented from having any sexual intercourse otherwise" (More 1965:103). This links up with the frustration theory, and has been repeated in other words by Robert Brain who writes that "perhaps without the passion of romantic loving or its stimulation, along with the withholding of sexual access until after marriage, people might not marry at all (Brain 1977:46)". There is a second theory introduced here. Namely that the "passion of romantic love" binds people together in long-term associations which would otherwise not occur. This has been suggested in other words by Greenfield, "rational,

profit-seeking, individuals would never marry at all except for the 'institutionalized irrationality' of romantic love" (quoted in Lasch 1977:144). A socio-biologist might, therefore, see romantic love as a necessary drive to ensure the survival of the human race at a level above mere short-term sexual couplings.

The romantic love ideology may be seen as appropriate, even necessary, in a society where the external pressures on permanent unions through kinship are large absent. The intense emotion of love can also be seen as culturally induced or exaggerated by the religious and social ideology which equates sexual and marital relations. We can take these 'elective affinities' further by looking at the way in which such an ideology seems entirely appropriate, in a paradoxical way, for a capitalistic and individualistic society.

Intuitively there seems to be something plausible in the idea that the individualism of love marriage is linked to the individualism of modern society and of the 'free' person operating within a monetized, market, capitalistic system where he, or she, has individual property in his or her own body. The link which Marx and Engels made between certain relations of production and this ideology seems right; it is merely the timing of the association that is wrong. A world of individual private property, of contract, of high social and geographical mobility, of decisions made by the individual rather than the family, of constant choice and weighing of advantages, fits well with individual choice marriage on an open market.

Even the apparent paradoxes support the association. The greatest of these has been noted by Greenfield, that between the supposed 'rationality' of capitalism and the 'irrationality' of love. This has been resolved by Weber who delicately shows how it is not merely that frustration creates the passion of love, but that passion is sustained by the loneliness and alienation created by this particular form of society. Weber showed that the central emotional feature of 'love' is a necessity where capitalist economic structures have developed most fully. At first sight, sexual passion and 'love' seem to be totally at variance with what is needed by capitalism. Weber, summarized by Watt, observed that "being one of the strongest non-rational factors in human life" sexual drives are "one of the strongest potential menaces to the individual's rational pursuit of economic ends"(Watt 1983:74). Yet, by a subtle shift, love and sex were domesticated, the force was channelled, and love became one of the central dynamic elements in the capitalist system. Romantic love is, of course, possible and present outside capitalism, but only in capitalist, or capitalist-influenced societies, is it made the cultural pivot of the ideology.

Weber saw that as societies became more bureaucratic and "rational", so at the heart of the system there grew an impulsive, irrational and non-capitalistic emotion at the level of the individual. We can see the same paradox in the treatment of the natural world. As things become more orderly, a desire for disorderliness and wildness grows, as the world is conquered by money and calculations of profit and loss, certain areas become reserved as totally outside any calculations based on profit. So it is with the growing desire for the totally overwhelming, irrational escape into romantic love. Just as he had caught the paradox of other-worldly mysticism leading to capitalistic accumulation, so Weber hints at the way in which love-marriage lies at the heart of rational capitalism: "the erotic relation seems to offer the unsurpassable peak of the fulfilment of the request for love in the direct fusion of the souls of one to the other. This boundless giving of oneself is as radical as possible in its opposition to all functionality, rationality, and generality. It is displayed as the unique meaning which one creature in his irrationality has

for another, and only for this specific other....The lover...knows himself to be freed from the cold skeleton hands of rational orders, just as completely as from the banality of everyday routine" (Gerth and Mills 1948:347).

Romantic love gives meaning in an otherwise dead and cold world. It promises that fusion with another human being which is so conspicuously lacking in the lonely crowds of autonomous individuals. It overcomes separation and gives the endlessly choice-making individual a rest, a categorical imperative which resolves all the doubts and indecisions. Furthermore the emotion of desire, to have, to own, to possess, fits very well with those similarly irrational desires to accumulate, possess and own which are the basic drive in the economic sphere. In the modern world it is obvious how consumer society has harnessed the romantic passions to sell goods, and how its enormous emphasis has raised love to a high cultural pinnacle. Love provides the promise of freedom, meaning and a return to Eden.

The opposition between the seeming 'rationality' of modern society and 'irrationality' of love is, of course, more complex than this. To start with, we need to distinguish between the irrational, passionate, love that helps in selecting a partner and companionate love that maintains a relationship. Choice, whether in the market of marriage or other goods, is always difficult. The information is always so insufficient, the variables so complex that some external force of desire is needed to help the individual to make a choice. Hence passionate 'love' overwhelms and justifies and provides compulsive authority. But the love within marriage is not necessarily as passionate or 'irrational'. It can be calm, calculating, ends and means closely connected, very like any other 'work'. If a decision has to be made to sever a relationship, the loss of mysterious 'love' is given as the justification. Love thus seems to be at its most intense when uncertainty and risk are greatest, in that phase when humans have to choose. When they make the most momentous decision of their lives, which will turn a contractual, arbitrary, relationship into the deepest and most binding of a person's life, love steps in as though from outside, blind and compelling. The heart has its reasons, even if the mind is perplexed.

If we combine all these arguments, we might suggest that the romantic love complex, both before marriage and within marriage, is the result of a number of forces. The biological urge to mate, based on a deep attraction between males and females is universal. But the way in which cultures encourage, use, or discourage it varies enormously. In the majority of societies, the feelings have not been encouraged, marriage and individual sentiment are not connected, and marriages have been arranged. This has made it possible to maintain the cohesion of wider groups of which the individual is not a separated part. Something about the kinship system in parts of Europe, and the way it interlocked with politics, economics and religion, gave the biological drives a great deal of freedom. Indeed the economy and society seemed positively to stimulate the natural emotions.

Thus it would seem that the peculiarity of romantic love which anthropologists noted in the twentieth century is a very old feature of western Europe and is particularly marked in England back to the middle ages. Through the writings of some of the greatest poets and novelists of love, and through the apparently new, individualistic, capitalistic, social, economic and political system that spread out from England, via America, from the seventeenth century, it has spread. What was once a cultural oddity is now very widely disseminated and we tend to assume that it is natural, rather than cultural. It has now crossed the boundaries of political systems and is widely accepted in communist as well as capitalist societies. Only such a long and continuous history really makes it possible to understand why it has had

such a vast impact and how deeply embedded it is in the way we think and feel. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine how western civilization, and consequently the world as it is, could have developed without the ideology and practice of romantic love. If love can exist without capitalism, it is more questionable as to whether capitalism could have existed, or could continue to exist, without love.

#### NOTE

I am grateful to Robert Rowland for reading a draft of this paper and for his comments. A number of individuals at the conference on 'Love' at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, in September 1986 made other valuable comments, several of which I have incorporated.