

Chapter 2

Cultural and Interdisciplinary Approaches to Romantic Love

2.1 Is Romantic Love Universal Across People, Societies, and Cultures?

Some researchers (following Stone 1977) suggested that courtly love was a precursor of romantic love and the concept of romantic love itself, as the bunch of idealistic emotions originated relatively recently in the upper class with the growth of modern industrial civilization and the Romantic Movement of early modern Europe. Other scholars identified its presence in the various folk notions, religious and social ideas of antiquity, wide class, and geographical distribution (MacFarlane 1987). Many maintained that love had multiple, complex, and competing descriptors throughout history. What happened in the modern era was a shift in connotations of love (Gillis 1988).

Western societies in the recent two centuries have been preoccupied with romantic love as the idealization of love. The character of a French novel or hero of an American movie has been always a romantic lover. What about other societies? As we will see in this book, some scholars viewed romantic love as a Western invention and considered the idealization of love as a peculiarly Western phenomenon. In particular, Goode commented (1959) that the implicit understanding (among anthropologists) is that love as a pattern is found only in the USA and in the societies whose cultures derived from the Western European tradition, and romantic love is a relatively recent and localized cultural notion.

Until recently, the ethnographic records and data available on love were scattered, incidental, and patchy in quality and content. Earlier studies maintained the Western ethnocentric bias and claimed that romantic love was a European contribution to the world cultures. In particular, Stone (1989) suggested that romantic love does not exist in non-Western countries, except possibly for the elite of those countries who have the time to cultivate romantic love. Some scholars contended (Doi 1973; Hsu 1985) that romantic love is almost unknown in some cultures such as China and Japan.

On the other side, poets, philosophers, and some social scientists proposed that romantic love is a human universal or a universal human potential manifested minimally in all societies. In the historical review presented in previous chapters, this controversy was comprehensively discussed. Many anthropologists found evidence of the occurrences of romantic love—or at least passionate love—in many cultures. Passionate love is an emotion experienced by many people in the world's cultures (Fischer et al. 1990; Shaver et al. 1996). Evolutionary psychologists contend that passionate love is innate in human nature and is based on biological processes that are universal, applying to people of all cultures. In particular, Fisher (1992) analyzed the occurrence of love (as well as monogamy, adultery, and divorce) in various cultures from a natural history perspective. She related being in love with infatuation and defined the notion of love as being “awash in ecstasy or apprehension... obsessed, longing for the next encounter... etherized by bliss” (1992, p. 37). She contended that “above all, there was the feeling of helplessness, the sense that this passion was irrational, involuntary, unplanned, uncontrollable” (1992, p. 40). Obstacles to the relationship seem to make the passion more intense. She concluded that this feeling must be universal among humans.

Many scholars over the recent decades attempted to answer the question about universality of romantic love providing various arguments in support. However, the question is too general to get a comprehensive response. Romantic love may exist as a literary phenomenon, an anthropological fact, psychological emotion, or sociological prevalence. Therefore, we have to answer this research question in reference to these specific areas of human reality. The following chapters should present a plethora of diverse evidence from these realms. As we will see, romantic love has existed throughout history in many cultures. It was present in the literature and life of ancient Greece, the Roman Empire, ancient Persia, feudal Japan, and other cultures. However, only in the recent couple of centuries in modern Western societies and some other cultures, romantic love became a mass phenomenon.

Another difficulty in answering the question about universality of romantic love was the lack of a comprehensive commonly accepted definition of romantic love. So an important advancement by Jankowiak and Fischer (1992) was when they employed a clear operational definition of romantic love in their study in terms of the key aspects of romantic love (idealization, desire, commitment): “any intense attraction that involves the idealization of the other, within an erotic context, with the expectation of enduring for some time into the future” (p. 52). The definition was somewhat limited. A more comprehensive synthesis of romantic love features was offered by Harris (1995), based on earlier academic descriptors: (1) desire for union or merger (physical and emotional), (2) idealization of the beloved, (3) exclusivity of the beloved, (4) intrusive thinking about the beloved, (5) emotional dependency, (6) powerful empathy for the beloved, and (7) reordering of motivational and life priorities.

I believe that the features of romantic love presented in the chapter above will help to further extend the descriptive definition of romantic love. These will guide us and help to purposefully search the presence or absence of symptoms of

romantic love in historical and modern cultures that are reviewed in the following chapters. However, we should note that there is no universal or uniformed definition of romantic love applicable to all people. As it is presented in the following chapters, the notion of love was in flux over the history of human cultures. The concept of love is a personal construct, a social category, and cultural idea that people create in their minds, souls, emotions, and behavior. There is no one particular concept of love that can be applicable to all people (Beall and Sternberg 1995; Berscheid and Meyers 1996). In particular, Rubin (1988, p. viii) suggested that the meaning of the concept varies subjectively with people and asks rhetorically whether it is “an attitude, an emotion, a set of behaviors... an individual orientation or a dyadic bond?” From this social constructivist view, Sternberg (1998) thought about love as a very personal form of social construction, as a story that an individual creates by living it.

The following chapters intend to demonstrate that the experience of love is largely subject to the historical and cultural context in which it operates. Romantic love is a social and cultural construct; it is a product of literary imaginations, scholarly connotations, and people’s dreams and associations, yet sometimes it is a matter of real relationships. There might be multiple connotations of the concept of love with other emotions, cognitions, and behaviors. The word love quite often is used as a synonym of sex—“to make love,” for instance. Quite often scholars and lay people talk about love actually meaning passionate love. However, passionate attitudes and behaviors have varied dramatically from one culture to another or from one temporal period to the next. Hatfield and Rapson (1987) suggested that passionate love is “universal,” and not the “inventions of the twentieth century,” probably because the “predisposition... is ‘prewired’ into primates.” The genetic basis, however, does not deny “the power of cultural, demographic, economic, social, and historical factors in... shaping the manifold ways in which that emotion is expressed, repressed, and suppressed” (p. 135).

There are several points in debates about romantic love in cultural contexts.

1. The traditional central point of the discussions over the universality of romantic love admits two positions: whether romantic love is a uniquely European cultural idea that has been transferred to other parts of the world by colonization, or it is the natural stage of cultural evolution of indigenous societies.
2. We should distinguish between cultural universals—those that can be found in all cultures—and human universals, which characterize all humans. Romantic love may be rather an absolute cultural universal (that exists in all cultures), but not necessarily in every social group and individual. Therefore, in cultural analyses we also should distinguish between absolute universals (that admit no exceptions) and statistical universals (that admit exceptions and present typical patterns of feelings and behaviors). Romantic love may be a statistical human universal and present in certain social groups of societies and in certain pattern of emotions and behaviors. We cannot draw the conclusion that every person falls in love in those cultures.

3. There can be two different approaches to the concept of romantic love: categorical and dimensional. From the categorical standpoint, the question is whether romantic love is present or absent in various cultures. Many scholars followed this approach and strived to demonstrate in their studies, presented in the following chapters, that the notion of romantic love is an indigenous idea, which was present before Western colonization or other types of external influence. The others still argue that the concept of romantic love has been alien in many cultures for quite a long time. The dimensional approach admits romantic love as a multidimensional concept, so in some cultures one or several dimensions might be present, while in other cultures, French and American cultures among those, we can observe the dense accumulation of all these dimensions. In this book, I follow the dimensional approach and the next chapters examine love in historical and modern cultural contexts in attempt to identify the presence or absence of these dimensions in various cultures.
4. Another point necessary to be distinguished in these debates of universality of love is what realities constitute the presence or absence of romantic love: (1) in literary circles as innovations or traditions, (2) in the minds and dreams of a cultural elite, (3) in the real feelings of people still not being able to express it in behavior, (4) in the real behaviors of people, but still being marginal for society, or (5) in social circles and groups of people. The elite of the societies, middle class, and commoners might have different opinions and behaviors due to the complexity of their mind and social context in which they have been lived.

Cultures and people from different cultural groups may hold their own understanding of love and define it in terms of a combination of various aspects and dimensions. The rich texture and subtle nuances of love need to be understood within a cultural context (Dion and Dion 1996). Cultures in different historical periods have defined love fairly differently. For example, the connections between love, sex, and marriage were interpreted variously. Being separate realms of relationships earlier in history, they became later intertwined with each other.

In eleventh–twelfth centuries in Europe, sexual passion, being embellished by idealized imagination, invented and constructed a concept of courtly love, the version of passionate romantic love outside of marriage. It was entertained by the elite of some European countries for several centuries.

Only later in eighteenth–nineteenth centuries romantic love began being considered as a foundation for marriage relationships. Historians (Stone 1977; McFarlane 1987, and others) described the transformation of the conception of love in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as the *sentimental revolution* of the modern age. Associated changes in affective life began in the last third of the eighteenth century and were due to positive changes in material life of people, the development of the market economy, and corresponding growing individualism of Western society. Increasing geographical mobility and urbanization extended the opportunities and possibilities for mating and meeting a more diverse pool of potential partners. People of a new capitalistic class developed novel cultural

lifestyles, manners, and practices. In the nineteenth century, the middle class and various professionals—doctors, lawyers, professors, scientists, writers, journalists—who were interested in cultural activities, reading, theater, and art, substantially grew. Emerging in literature, the romantic emotions captured their thinking minds. Science and education made the cultural elite of some societies more open-minded and receptive to new ideas in mental life and sentiments. Love received a higher value and became associated with relationship happiness.

Over the eighteenth–twentieth centuries romantic love changed the forms of its expressions due to socioeconomic development and cultural contexts. While in the eighteenth–nineteenth centuries, music, dance, poetry, books, personal sentiments in beautiful writing or saying, tokens of appreciation, small gifts, and flowers were the sentimental expressions of romantic love, the twentieth century brought the elements of consumerism in making things romantic. Love as it was depicted in Hollywood films was associated with a dinner in a restaurant, a honeymoon travel, expensive gifts, jewelry, and a luxurious bouquet of flowers.

I pursue to demonstrate in the following chapters that different societies and cultures have had their typical or popular understandings of the love that have been useful for people communicating within their societies. Although it looks like there have been some typical notions about love across cultures, the set of associations, interpretations, connotations, and emphases on certain concepts differ greatly across time and space. People construct their concept of love during their socialization in childhood, youth, and later, using culture as a guide in their way of thinking and feeling. Assimilation of love ideas and norms can occur explicitly, in talking about the topic with parents, peers, and teachers, or implicitly, through accidental observations that form common sense. Once the basic schema of love is shaped, people use it like a frame to interpret events, behaviors, and expressions.

Scholars and ordinary people in Western cultures often assume that their notion of “love,” romantic love, must be the best, and any other kinds of love between partners are cold and trivial by comparison. It is important, however, to admit honestly that this Western approach to romantic love is not always working well, and other cultures can provide alternative visions that are no less valuable. People are actively engaged in forming the culture of love in a society, deciding what is right and wrong, what is acceptable and what is not, and what is moral and immoral. Cultures are different in how they view various experiences and expressions of love and which they consider acceptable, or maybe ideal. Cultures may also consider certain kinds of feelings, which people have toward each other as respectable. For example, in a repressive culture, like in Medieval Christian culture, passionate sexual feelings may be understood as natural but considered as evil. On the other hand, in a permissive culture, like in ancient Rome, passionate sexual feelings may be valued and encouraged. Various examples of cultural influences on the conception of love across times and parts of the world will be reviewed in the following chapters.

While considering the presence of romantic love in various cultures around the world, in history or in the modern world, we should critically evaluate and address certain questions. How does a researcher determine the concept of romantic love

and whether it is genuine? If a researcher assures that romantic love has existed in a non-Western cultural setting, how can we be sure that these examples are endogenous and not due to diffusion from the West? What is the relationship between the experience of romantic love and the cultural environment that either nourishes or inhibits its expression? Is romantic love possible in a cultural context lacking a concept for it? Where romantic love is a phenomenon of adulthood, what do we make of those who lack the experience? Romantic love may be a cultural universal in terms of its existence as an idea or a possible reality in many societies, but it is not necessarily present in every individual and social group. Cultural context can predispose to love, but a complex of biological, psychological, and environmental factors still play their important role.

Men and women experience love in the cultural context of broader patterns that include emotional norms of expression, styles of courtship, and types of marriage as well as class, gender, ethnic, and religious factors (Stearns and Stearns 1985, p. 825). The mainstream culture of romantic love in the countries may exclude or incorporate differences in class, geographical regions, ethnic origins, and educational and religious background. Therefore, it is important to recognize the limitations in any applications of our knowledge about culture of romantic love to a general population of a country. That can be quite diverse, so researchers should exercise and entertain caution when they extrapolate their results obtained from a limited sample to an entire population. This is important for psychology and sociology when they collect data from hundreds of participants, and even more important for anthropology when they collect data from one hundred or fewer informants, or for literary studies when they sample from a limited number of writings. The studies in these disciplines aim to solve different tasks—prevalence, incidence, or presence of romantic love notion in people's minds and culture. For example, Seidman (1991) took particular care to limit his discussion of romantic love to non-immigrant white middle-class Americans in the northeastern USA.

Research interest in sexual rituals and marital mores has been traditional among anthropologists. Yet, over recent decades they became increasingly more involved in theoretical reviews and observations of the notion of love. Since the 1980s, anthropologists have taken up the topic of romantic love, focusing primarily on passionate love and its biological, cognitive, and social parameters (De Munck 1996).

In light of the body of knowledge recently acquired, the statement that love is a recent European invention with no historical tradition outside of the West is incorrect. Anthropologists working in non-Western societies around the world have demonstrated "long traditions of romantic love" (Smith 2001, p. 130), which are found and valued in many societies through stories, songs, poetry, films. Further in the book, I will review a plethora of evidence in support.

The growing literature has disproved the early scholarly opinion that romantic love is alien in non-Euro-American contexts. Anthropologists have explored the folk conceptions of love in diverse cultures such as the People's Republic of China, Indonesia, Turkey, Nigeria, Trinidad, Morocco, the Fulbe of North

Cameroon, the Mangrove (an aboriginal Australian community), the Mangaia in the Cook Islands, Palau in Micronesia, and the Taita of Kenya (see Jankowiak 1995a, for a review of this research). In all these studies, people's conceptions of passionate love appear to be surprisingly similar. Therefore, many anthropologists and evolutionary psychologists believe that passionate love and sexual desire are cultural universals.

Jankowiak and Fischer (1992), in their cross-cultural study of romantic love in 166 societies, discovered that romantic love is a "near-universal" feature of the societies, which they studied. In that study, they defined romantic love as "an intense attraction that involves the idealization of the other, within an erotic context, with the expectation of enduring for some time into the future" (1992, p. 150). They distinguished romantic love from the companionship phase of love (sometimes referred to as attachment). The latter is characterized by a more peaceful, comfortable, and fulfilling relationship accompanied by a strong and enduring affection built upon long-term association (p. 150). They examined such indicators of love as follows: (1) young lovers talking about passionate love, (2) recounting tales of love, (3) singing love songs, and (4) speaking of the longings and anguish of infatuation. The researchers found romantic love being present in 147 out of 166 cultures (88.5 %). For the remaining 19 cultures, there were no evident signs indicating that people experience romantic love. The results showed that romantic love is nearly universal in the world.

Literary studies have also demonstrated the evidence of universality of the notions of romantic love in the literature in many cultural contexts. In particular, Hogan (2003) reviewed many narratives and stories of world literature about human emotion and concluded that "romantic union" may be a universal generic prototype.

Gottschall and Nordlund (2006) replicated the findings of Jankowiak and Fischer (1992) in a different cultural medium, through a systematic content analysis of the seventy-nine folktale collections drawn from all inhabited continents, from different historical periods and from societies vastly differing in ecology, geography, ethnic composition, religious beliefs, and degree of political organization. These were the collections of traditional tales, originally transmitted through the oral tradition. All non-English tales were translated into English. Collections were grouped into 7 major cultural areas and 11 subgroupings, based on salient geographical, linguistic, and cultural affinities and was guided by anthropological convention. A list of the words that are regularly associated with romantic love, generated from a thesaurus used as key words in content analysis. There were fifty-nine keywords (love, longing, romantic, dear, beloved, married, adore, affection, and so on) and their relevant variants (e.g., love, loved, lover, loving). Gottschall and Nordlund (2006) were able to identify the attributes of romantic love in diverse varieties of cultures. The process of "falling in love" was distinctively depicted in tales from cultural regions of West Africa, Japan, North and South America, the Middle East, Polynesia, China, and Europe. The instances of intrusive thinking were present in the cultures of Hawaii (where a young woman

professes to love the King so much that she thinks of him day and night and even in her dreams, and another woman weeps bitterly because the thought of her absent lover never leaves her); Punjab in northern India (where an enamored youth cannot eat or sleep for love of a beautiful princess); and the Western Yugur steppe of China (where a boy suffers from “lovesickness” and is eventually cured). Whenever lovers were separated for long time, intrusive thinking was accompanied by pain or even despair. The emotional dependence took a great intensity in a Maori tale of creation where the Sun weeps so hard over his separation from his mistress Earth that his tears eventually turn into oceans. In many stories, the researchers found examples of emotional commitment, empathy, and exclusivity that were very strong. Lovers often were prepared to sacrifice their own lives for their loved ones (as in a Japanese tale) or continue their relationship beyond death (as in a tale from the Heiltsuk Nation of British Columbia, where two lovers swear that the one who dies first will return to bring the other to the kingdom of the dead) (Gottschall and Nordlund 2006).

Despite universality of the concept, cultural attitudes toward romantic love are highly diverse, with some cultures simply rejecting romantic love “as an evil and frighteningly emotional experience. In others it is tolerated but not celebrated or asserted, and, in still others, romantic passion is praised as an important and cherished cultural ideal” (Jankowiak 1995, p. 17).

Depending on these societal attitudes, romantic love can be controlled by some cultural variables, including social organization and ideology, and therefore, people may be more or less predisposed to love experiences, feelings, and expressions (Jankowiak and Fischer 1992). For instance, they may fall in love less often when their society disapproves of the romantic love. There might be gender, social, and individual differences in this regard. People from the upper-level classes read more literature and therefore might be more affected by the romantic love ideas expressed in fictional literature, novels, and visual and plastic art. They tend to idealize the social world and sentimentalize with others, and they have more free time than those from lower-level class to cultivate romantic relationships.

There is definite evidence that society and culture have a profound impact on people’s definitions of romantic love and on the way they think, feel, and behave in romantic settings (Hatfield et al. 2007). In my opinion, culture is what transforms passionate love into romantic love. Passion is universal and based on biological principles of sexual selection, while romance is culture-specific and based on historical and cultural traditions. Universal features of passionate love primarily relate to evolutionary bases of mate selection important for people’s survival, while romantic love is a luxury, which some cultures create, elaborate, and embellish.

The following chapters will review how the notion of love is represented and interpreted in various historical and modern cultural traditions of the world.

2.2 Cultural and Individual Preferences in Expressions of Romantic Love

There are three major psychological aspects of love: *emotional, cognitive, and behavioral*. Love is an emotion, which affects and is affected by cognitive processes and manifests in certain behaviors. There are multiple ways to express romantic love besides saying “I love you,” even in an embellished way.

Do love feelings always coincide with love enthusiastic expression? Does a passionate and energetic Latin lover love more intensely than a quiet and reserved Nordic lover, or do they just express their emotions differently? People express their love explicitly as well as implicitly. Passionate words, kind tones of voice, smiley facial expressions, and special gestures are explicit and direct ways of love expressions to a romantic partner. American culture, for example, stresses the importance of verbal expression of love to another, so Americans many times say to each other how they love. “I love you”—these are the very typical words for them which they use on daily basis.

Sometimes, however, people do not have to be straight in their expressions because some things can be implicitly interpreted and understood without words. Actions and doing something good to a partner are implicit and indirect ways of love expression. In Filipino and Filipino-American families, for example, the verbal expression of love is much more reserved for special occasions. They do not need to explicitly share their feelings for each other because it is known and understood. Perhaps Filipinos and Filipino-Americans do not find it essential to express love in overt ways because it can be construed as excessive, showy, or too American (Nadal 2012). Instead they show their *Mahal* (Tagalog word for love) in indirect ways. They express their love indirectly, through doing. Romantic partners may reveal their love by sharing a laugh or listening to each other’s problems in nonjudgmental ways or by working through hardships and keeping their promises to remain by each other’s sides. Then for Filipino, Filipino-American, Chinese families (Nadal 2012; Moore and Wei 2012), and other families with similar cultural values, love is rather in actions. Sometimes one might have to look more closely to notice it. Their love is not minimal or invisible, but instead, the love is omnipresent and understood, and there is no need to flaunt it.

Within these two major approaches—explicit and implicit—there is a variety of ways to express romantic love feelings. These might be flowers or other gifts, writing letters or other special types of messaging, special looks and words, special gestures and affectionate touching, hugging and cuddling, or a suggestion to spend quality time together (a special date coming together to a movie, to a restaurant, or to a dancing party). These might be various acts of service and help or being considerate and listening attentively. Some romantic lovers can be even more inventive. The typical connotations of the word *romantic* are that it is something non-routine and not pragmatic, but beautiful like in fairy tales, novels, movies, and songs. People borrow the forms of romantic love expressions from all these sources.

For examples, Chapman in his popular press book (1992/2015) outlined five ways how to express and experience love that he called “love languages”: words of affirmation (encouraging messages), quality time (time spent engaged in shared activities), gifts (tokens of affection), acts of service (help with necessary tasks), and physical touch (hand holding to sexual intercourse). According to Chapman, each person has primary and secondary love languages. People tend to show love to their partners using their own preferred love language, but partners who enjoy higher quality relationships tend to express love according to their partners’ preferred love languages. Despite the popularity of this theory in public, there had been a lack of research done to test the credibility of Chapman’s theory until Egbert and Polk (2006) developed a new measure derived from Chapman’s typology and then tested its construct validity by comparing it to established empirical measures of related constructs.

In the following chapters, we will present diverse ways of how men and women in various historical periods and cultures have expressed their love. The experiences and expressions of love naturally varied depending on a situation: (1) first encounter, (2) meeting again, (3) unrequited love, (4) risk of losing the beloved one, or (5) the beloved one will never return. These feelings can be joy and elation, jealousy, nostalgia, etc.

2.3 Romantic Love and Culture

Culture can be broadly defined as a stable and dynamic set of norms, ideas, beliefs, and attitudes shared by a group of people. Culture can be conceptualized as part of the person (internal culture) and as a set of conditions outside of the person (external culture) (Berry et al. 2011). The terms of French culture or Chinese culture refer to the ways how people make a living, the organization of society, and other aspects of the ecological and social context. This is external culture that is shared by a group of people and transmitted across generations. Internal culture refers to the ideas, philosophies, and beliefs of the members of a culture. Knowledge, language, religion, and beliefs of a person’s social environment become internalized. The features of one’s culture become part of oneself in the processes of socialization and enculturation (Berry et al. 2011). This approach to the study of a culture explores the behavior patterns typical for people in a particular culture in terms of prevailing external conditions. As Schmid (2010) argued, love should be recognized and interpreted in the context of its comprehensive culture and society. The notion and sense of love developed and cultivated by the people can only be understood in connection with the social and cultural environment.

In addition, another approach complements the study of cultures. It assumes that a culture is the shared meanings that are constructed by its members in the course of their interactions. The focus of these studies is the cognitions, emotions, and experiences. For the benefits of the study of romantic love, it is worthwhile to study both external and internal aspects of culture.

Culture is a dynamic social system; some of the mores, ideas, and beliefs held by members in a culture can change over time, but usually remain stable for a while. Nevertheless, over the big historical periods a culture may undergo a substantial change; multiple economic, political, and intercultural influences can have a profound effect on such transformations. Although it is difficult to define when quantitative and qualitative societal modifications transform the essence of a culture into another type, I believe people living on the same territory in different historical times may hardly be named as the same culture. Modern Greece is probably a substantially different culture than ancient Greece; ancient Rome is not a culture of modern Italy; and nowadays, France cannot be considered as a culture of courtly love. In this book, I consider societies and people living on the same territory in different historical periods as different cultures.

Cultures and cultural groups are usually linked to ethnicity, race, religion, country, nation, nationality, and geographical location. In combination with these links, the cultures can be mapped in a hierarchical or topological layout. The names and notations of the cultures can be on the global geographical level (*Western, Eastern, Slavic, or Latin American*), on the religious level (*Christian, Buddhist, Muslim, or Secular*), on the country level (*Japanese, American, French, or German*), or further on regional, national, and local ethnic levels. The relations between cultures are neither dichotomous nor mutually exclusive and can overlap with each other. The cultures are structured in a topological morphological manner in multilayer and spatial relationships with various combinations of the above mentioned criteria. *Catholic Latin American* and *Polish Catholic* cultures (still *Slavic* in origin) are complex combinations of different criteria for classification of cultures. So, many cultures are actually very complex and representative of a mixture of various cultures.

A typical mistake, which some research admits, is to associate a culture with a country. How to distinguish culture from nation or country? Nations are not natural, timeless entities but historically contingent political, social, and cultural communities, whereas cultures are loosely tied to national territories; they rather represent complex geographical, political, religious, ethnic, and cultural formations. The terms *nation* or *country* are geopolitical and mean a nation-state, e.g., Germany, Austria, or Switzerland, yet, Germany, Austria, and German-speaking Switzerland have many shared cultural elements that comprise their common culture. On the other hand, Switzerland has at least three distinct cultural or ethnic groups, which can be considered cultures: German, French, and Italian. What culture do people living in borderland and transnational worlds have? How do new cultural meanings and identities take shape in such circumstances? How do intimate dynamics of everyday cultural crossings work?

In many studies, cultures are titled by simply using the name of the country or nationality and their results are extrapolated to the whole nation. Such extrapolation should be done cautiously because it may be sometimes inadequate, especially in the cases of big multicultural countries, such as the USA, Russia, India, China, and Brazil. Another confound variable is nationality. Should we consider Chinese living for a long time in the USA as Chinese or Americans by culture?

The concept of mixed culture describes such a cultural phenomenon when a person has a cultural heritage different from the culture in which they were raised or in which they currently live. In this mixture, the characteristics from either culture remain distinct and still coexist. For example, a person might be Asian American in the USA, but Asian American in Korea; another person might be considered a Jew Russian in Russia, while a Russian Jew in Israel.

Different cultural groups have their own set of prescriptions for behavior, beliefs, and attitudes that can be explicit or implicit; people can learn them by observation and pass them on by word of mouth, or they can write them down as laws or rules for the group to follow.

According to Markus and Conner (2013), culture is made up of four components:

- Ideas, e.g., what is good, right, and natural;
- Institutions, e.g., government, media, science, and education;
- Social interactions, e.g., family, home, and school;
- Individuals, e.g., thoughts, feelings, and behavior.

Culture is located in patterns of ideas, practices, institutions, products, and artifacts. In this culture cycle, the individuals—their thinking, feeling, and behaviors—are shaped by the interaction with others, by social institutions, and by commonly shared ideas. Conversely, their actions and behaviors shape the other three aspects of their cultural world.

Romantic love can exist in any or in all of these four spheres, and it circulates in this circle the same way. It comes as a special feeling, exclusive thinking, and devoted behavior of an individual toward another; lovers interact with each other. This kind of relationship serves as a role model to others, as well as inspiration to writers and artists. Consequently, the idea of romantic love transfers from an individual level to the sphere of ideas. When this idea of valorizing romantic love spreads wide in the minds of legislators, it can be confirmed by a legislation institution, for example, as a right for free choice in marriage based on love. The culture cycle presented above may serve as an excellent basis for an interdisciplinary approach to romantic love.

The emphasis in the study of love in cultural contexts should be on studying how people's feelings, cognitions, and behaviors may be implicitly and explicitly shaped by the worlds, contexts, or sociocultural systems in which people live. In the following chapters, we will observe how romantic love circulated in the historical and modern cultures among the four constituents: *Ideas*, *Institutions*, *Social interactions*, and *Individuals*.

In the study of love, it is important to know whether romantic love is a norm or deviation from the norm in a given society and culture. Norms are social patterns that govern behavior; they are conceptualized as context-specific regulators of behavior and therefore may help to understand how cultural patterns vary across situations and contexts both for individuals and groups.

Morris et al. (2015) distinguish different types of norms. Norms exist in the objective social environment in the form of behavioral regularities, patterns of sanctioning, and institutionalized practices and rules. In addition to the objective

aspects of group regularities, sanctioning, and institutionalization, norms exist in subjective assumptions, perceptions, and expectations. Subjectively they exist in perceived descriptive norms, perceived injunctive norms, and personal norms. The *perceived descriptive norms* act as interpretive frames that shape what people see in a situation and how they perceive their society's norms. The *perceived injunctive norms* represent the patterns that evoke social approval or disapproval. Another way norms exist subjectively is as self-expectations or *personal norms* (Morris et al. 2015). Acceptance of romantic love in various societies may exist in the forms of one of these norms.

Romantic love may be considered in various realities and in different normative fields of societies. It may be considered as a reality of dreams that novelists, poets, musicians, and artists present in their creative work. They may not be present in the minds of the majority of people, but they already exist as ideas worthwhile to spread. The analyses of literature, art, and music are important in this regard. Besides, romantic love may be considered as a reality of life where nobles or intellectuals live, or at least some of them. For commoners, these romantic ideals might be still alien. But over time these ideals can capture the mind of more and more people. According to anthropologists, the problem with verifying romantic love's presence anywhere lies not with population sample size but with the quality of data and the criteria of judgment. Yet, in sociology and psychology generalization to the whole culture or country should be made with caution. We should always admit the limited capacity of the sample to be representative.

The ideas of romantic love can evolve in three stages as follows: (1) fictional ideas, (2) real feelings, or (3) behaviors. In the first case, romantic ideas exist in the pieces of art, music, and writing—in the mind of their creators. They may be acknowledged by other people as a fantastic dream, or other reality of life, but not accepted as their own feelings toward their real partners. In the second case, people may try to feel this way toward their partners, even though their reality may not allow them to express and behavior in the corresponding terms. They may feel romantically, but act pragmatically. In the third case, people express their feelings in their behaviors and are capable to act romantically.

As we will see in the following chapters, several cultural factors may affect the status and understanding of romantic love in cultural contexts.

2.4 Interdisciplinary Approach to the Study of Love

Scholars from several disciplines study romantic love from different, yet overlapping perspectives and complement each other in their cultural and cross-cultural investigations. Philosophy, literary studies, history, anthropology, sociology, psychology, and communication studies, each contribute their valuable knowledge and methods and can be integrated into interdisciplinary approach.

What are the areas of specialization of various disciplines in the study of romantic love and how can they contribute to the whole picture of what love is?

Philosophers over the centuries observed and contemplated about love. The nature of love has always been a mainstay in philosophy. Philosophical schools suggested theories such as the materialistic conception of love as purely a physical phenomenon (an animalistic or genetic urge that dictates our behavior) or theories of love as an intensely spiritual affair that in its highest form permits us to touch divinity (Moseley n.d.). The philosophical treatment of love transcends a variety of subdisciplines including epistemology, metaphysics, religion, human nature, politics, and ethics.

Philosophy strives to contemplate the host of abstract issues about the nature of love, the functions that it serves in the society, and the ethical and political issues. Philosophers ground their inferences on analyses of arguments, logics, and the thoughts of ancient philosophers and historians. The reasoning and generalization of facts obtained from researchers in other disciplines, and sophisticated interpretations substantially advanced philosophy of love (e.g., Singer 1984a, b, 1987; Solomon 1988; Secomb 2007; Naar 2013; White 2001).

History of love substantially contributed to our understanding of romantic love (e.g., Abbott 2010; Coontz 2005; Hunt 1959; Lee 2007; Licht 1972; Manniche 1987; Murstein 1974). Historians investigate the love “fossils” remaining from former generations of humankind and cultures. Different historical periods and ages really can be considered as different cultures, even on the same territory. Every culture gradually changes over time and transforms into another, qualitatively and distinctively different one. The modern Italian culture is probably substantially different than that of ancient Romans. The modern Greeks culturally are not the same as their earlier ancestors from Ancient Greece with their mentality and devotion to Gods, even though they can find something in common. Culture is a dynamic system; the sociocultural ideas, practices, institutions, economics, and ecological factors are constantly changing over time. With these quantitative modifications, a culture may be considered as the same culture for quite a long period of historical time. However, such quantitative modifications gradually transform the culture into a qualitatively different one in some regards. So, the cultures of medieval England, of the Victorian era, and of modern England can be considered as qualitatively different ones. This is how we treat the concept of culture and cultural contexts in the following chapters.

In an attempt to reveal how older cultures understood, experienced, and practiced love, historians study old literary and art sources as well as everything that is conserved underground. Quite often they have little left to reconstruct the past validly, so they rely substantially on interpretations of what they found. So, the history provides very important sources of knowledge, but we cannot rely enough on the works of historical science of love. Some pieces of information are still missing.

Literary studies contribute to the love studies exploring people's minds and dreams in the forms presented in novels, poems, and other writings (e.g., Ashton 2010; Allen 1992; Hardin 2000; Eifring 2004; Kaler and Johnson-Kurek 1999; Selinger 1998; Suzuki 2010; Zaerr 2012). Artists do the same in their paintings and sculptures, while musicians do so in songs and other musical forms. These types of creative works on the one hand reflect what people typically think, feel,

and how they behave. On the other hand, they depict imagination and construct what people wish and dream about. The realities of life and relationships are quite often different—more beautiful, embellished, valorized—than it is depicted in novels, poems, and romances. This is actually the source of the word *romantic*, which means “characterized by or suggestive of an idealized view of reality” (Romantic 2016a).

The literature reflects only part of the truth—the ideas which are in the minds of a minority or majority of the population in a certain culture. What is more important in this context is that these ideas exist, at least in the people’s ideals and imagination. The language, words, and phrases, which the authors employ in their writings, also reflect the different interpretations that people apply to their feelings and thoughts reality. However, according to the four constituents of culture cycle presented above (Markus and Conner 2013), the dreams, ideas, and ideals come to the real behavior of people, sooner or later, depending on a cultural context. So, novels, poems, and songs bring us the knowledge about an important part of reality of love.

Cultural anthropology contributes to the study of love investigating and presenting in a descriptive way the life of people in various cultures—their norms, traditions, customs, and rituals. Anthropologists observe people’s lives and relationships, interview informants in a given culture, and present a unique case study of love manifestations (e.g., Abu-Lughod 2000; Danielsson 1986; De Munck 1996; Endleman 1989; Fisher 1992; Lindholm 2006; Hirsch and Wardlow 2006; Jankowiak 1995, 2008; Smith 2001; Trawick 1990). In a single case study, an anthropologist cannot validate the prevalence of romantic love in the whole culture, yet presents a vivid example of its existence and presence in a culture. The series of anthropological studies should accumulate a more comprehensive picture of a culture and phenomena of romantic love.

Sociology strives to draw a large, general, and more representative map of love in the culture(s) based on a variety of sources of information, including various statistics available, surveys, interviews. Sociologists study attitudes that people have about love and the prevalence of romantic ideas (e.g., Goode 1959; Rougemont 1974; Fowler 2007; Illouz 2012), providing something that resembles the “epidemiology of love.” For instance, Illouz (2012) argues that the romantic experience is affected by transformation in the ecology and architecture of romantic choice: the samples from which men and women choose a partner, the importance of choice and autonomy, and what people imagine to be the spectrum of their choices. She believes that love is shaped by social relations and institutions and that it circulates in a marketplace of unequal actors.

Psychologists investigate mental reality within the individuals and reveal the internal picture of love: the feelings, thoughts, and how they affect behavior in love relationships. They also study the love attitudes, but go deeper into the mechanisms and processes. Researchers and practitioners in psychology have proposed several theories of love and use observations, surveys, and experiments to collect empirical evidence in their support (e.g., Bercheid 1985, 2010; Berscheid and Walster 1969/1978, 1974; Hatfield 1988; Hatfield and Rapson 1993; Liebowitz 1983; Sternberg 1998; Tennov 1979).

In recent decades, neurophysiology, psychophysiology, neuropsychology, and clinical and behavioral research have revealed the role of biology in passionate love (Hatfield and Rapson 2009). The studies of biochemistry, hormones, and neuroimaging are especially on the rise.

Evolutionary psychologists contend that passionate love is innate in human nature and is based on biological processes that are universal, applying to people of all cultures (Fisher 1992, 2004). According to evolutionary psychology, the cultural universals exist in what qualities in a mate attract men and women. Men tended to care more about the physical appearance and youth of their partners than did women; women tended to be more interested that their mates possess high status and the resources necessary to protect themselves and their children than did men (Buss 1990, 1994, 1996). In another study, Buss and Schmitt (1993) showed that tendencies of men to be more random and women's tendencies to be more selective have been observed to be universal across human societies. Besides these cultural and gender universals, Buss (1994) found a big influence of culture on mate preferences. Additional analyses of overall data allowed Wallen (1989) to conclude that, in general, the cultural perspective may well be even more powerful than evolutionary heritage in understanding mate selection.

Does culture still matter? Biology and culture interact generating a complex nature of love. Passion is universal and based on biological principles of sexual selection, while romance is culturally specific and based on historical and cultural traditions.

All these disciplines described above study different, sometimes overlapping, areas of love feelings, processes, mechanisms, manifestations, prevalence, etc., and they are important to complement each other bringing a comprehensive picture of what romantic love is. Some of them—anthropology, history, literature—employ more qualitative methods, while others—psychology, sociology—more quantitative methods. Literature, art, and music explore the possibilities of romantic love and create their ideal images. They answer the question: Is romantic love possible? Anthropology, psychology, and communication science explore the realities of people's feelings and behaviors. They answer the question: Can people live according to romantic feelings and behave romantically? Sociology explores the incidence and prevalence of romantic love in certain societies, and they investigate statistics. How many romantic lovers live in different societies and cultures?

Quantitative and qualitative methods can complement each other in the study of romantic love. The quantitative methods allow reducing the bias of sample selection and present relatively representative cultural samples. On the other hand, the qualitative methods permit to pursue the research aims that cannot be represented in numbers. There are research questions that resist rigorous scientific methodology, whereas other questions can be tested with precise formulations.

In the following chapters, we will see how philosophy, history, literary studies, and anthropology contributed to the study of romantic love. The size of this volume will not let us review in detail the modern sociological, psychological, and biological studies of love.



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