



International conference

“LOVE FOR LOVE’S SAKE”: CODE OF ROMANTIC LOVE IN SOUTH SLAVIC LITERATURES

CONSIDERING THE CODE OF ROMANTIC LOVE

In his study *Love as passion* (1982) Luhmann expounds that new semantics of intimacy is mirrored in the structural characteristics of modern society. He points out that the first signs of the new code of love are to be found at the beginning of the seventeenth century already, however, it is only in the romantic period that its outlines are completed, and love, only then freed from “external” factors, begins to be based on its own facticity. However, Luhmann stresses that romantic love, free from restrictions of the social order, is only seemingly rooted in the free will of the partners. Namely, romantic lovers are bound in a new way: chance and passion happen against their will and control, it is something they “suffer” and cannot “change” or “be held accountable for”. Double instance and uncontrolled passion breed “hope and fear”, “alternative to true and false love”, while the choice of partners is transferred into symbols of a communication medium. As this is supremely non-pragmatic communication which does not rest on any verifiable guarantee of success, but, paradoxically, on the “principle of the improbable”, on expressing “the sense which cannot be communicated”, doubt and fear never subside completely.

Transferred into the sphere of the discursive, always balancing between expression and sense, hope and fear, freedom and discipline, each romantic love lives its own *story*, has a clear beginning and end, as well as the most diverse ups and downs. Therefore critical literature often sees it as a narrative form *par excellence*, closely connected with the emergence of the middle class novel, first in English, and in time in German literature, as well (Richardson's, Schlegel's and Goethe's novels are often taken as relevant standard). The unity of mutual physical passion and emotional affection, requited love, equality between lovers (androgynous love), exclusivity, love as a phenomenon which transcends the experiential world, love which lasts forever, (*amor meus aeternus*) and conquers all (*amor vincit omnia*), and non-pragmatic communication are highlighted topoi mediated through romantic narratives, “ideals”, which stand before the lovers' eyes, before love itself (Luhmann 1982; Tyrell 1987; Lenz 1998; Burkart 1998; Illouz 1997, 2008).

One of the central issues of contemporary criticism is the issue of diachronic transformations of the given “basic structure” of the paradigm of romantic love (Tyrell 1987). Thus Luhmann talks about “variations” which the Romantic tradition employs to “adapt to the new condition” (1982), stressing that the central formula of the code, the *uncontrolled amour passion*, is in post-Romantic period transformed in the “institutional understanding of ecstatic passion.” Even though this is still, just as in the initial phase, non-verbal practice which denounces any objective message, communication of lovers is not focused on non-pragmatic expression of uncontrolled feelings anymore, but on the “exchange” and the “affirmation of differences” between lovers, or unique individuals. Therefore the goal of communication between lovers is not to regulate the external “world” (surroundings) through a verbal act, but to jointly choose concepts and activities which are on offer in Western, highly-developed, “functionally differentiated” societies, and to reconcile and evaluate them, attribute a shared meaning to them, based on the criterion of personality/impersonality. Starting from the same positions, Illouz (2003/1997), contrary to Luhmann, claims that the uncontrolled passion in high modernism is structured according to market principles, thus itself becoming a factor in the consumption of commercial rituals. In line with the function of literature in the Romantic period, contemporary cultural landscape created through industry, advertising and the mass media which surround modern lovers, becomes a cultural pattern which enables their recognition, interpretation and evaluation of feelings, their understanding as love. On the other hand, some critics believe that “love is today more romantic than ever” (Lenz 1998), since the ideals of romantic love put forward in the nineteenth-century literature could not take root prior to the emergence of high modernism, because its basic prerequisite – the understanding of a person as a unique and free individual – has not been met yet. It is interesting that Giddens (1992), starting from the same positions, concluded the opposite, namely, that the contemporary emancipation, that is general individual freedom and independence, contributed to the break-up of the ideal of romantic love. He points out that in late Modernism a new ideal type is created, *the pure relationship*, which is not based on the romantic *for-ever* and *one-and-only*, but instead on the open, equal and rationally based relationship of lovers. Other authors (Adorno 1951; Marcuse 1955) believe that the concept of romantic love could not have been established in modern societies because its basic elements (spontaneity and coincidence) stand in opposition to the principles of the economic order (exchange of goods, services and people).

Contrary to those, other discussions point out that some of the main codes of the medium of romantic love emerge significantly before the modernist turmoil, namely, already in the medieval concepts of desire (Wailes 2001; Hellgardt 2002; Seeber 2014), while others yet interpret romantic love as a universal phenome-

non, primarily characterised by specific biochemical processes in the brain (Fisher 2004; Lewis/Amini/Lannon 2009). There is also a whole series of theories of love which do not directly invoke codes of romantic love, but often use them in their argumentation (Hegel 1807; Freud 1905; 1920; Lacan 1973; Foucault 1976; Barthes 1977; Kristeva 1985).

The below given interpretations of the concept of romantic love open space for numerous explorations:

DEFINITION OF THE TERM. Is romantic love a cultural or a biological phenomenon? What are its specificities in comparison with other matrices of love, such as, for example, ancient *philia* and *eros*, Christian *agape* and *caritas*, medieval mysticism, Petrarchan love or *scientia sexualis* (Foucault 1976), *the pure relationship* (Giddens 1992) and *partnership love* (Beck/Beck-Gernsheim 1990)?

ISSUES OF LOVE AND POWER. Freed from the privileges of social class, available to the widest masses, is romantic love free and if so to what extent? How is it conditioned by power structures of a society? Can it be observed and explained in the categories of oppressor and the oppressed (Hegel 1807), *habitus* (Bourdieu 1979; 1998), *discursive production* (Foucault 1976) or *market laws* (Sombart 1902; Illouz 1997; Hahn 2008)?

ECONOMISATION OF LOVE. Does the capitalist order define romantic love relationships and if so to what extent? Is market development resulting in “social pathologies” (Adorno 1951; Marcuse 1955) or in “romantic simulation and stimulation” (Illouz 1997)?

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE. How does the new configuration of intimate and public space prompted by technologisation influence experience and expression of romantic emotions? To what extent do commercial rituals (Illouz 1997) channel and condition lovers’ emotions?

GENDER. Is romantic love androgynous, feminine or masculine? Is Western concept of romantic love but one of many ways to establish patriarchal surveillance over women (Illouz 1997), or does it contribute to the liberation of women (Giddens 1992)? Do men understand romantic love differently from women (De Beauvoir 1949)? To what extent does the representation of homosexual romantic love differs from the homosexual one (De Lauretis 1994)?

THE LOVING OTHER. In a world of mass production does romantic relationship lend itself as the sole possibility of constituting identity (Luhmann 1982; Beck/Beck-Gernsheim 1990; Hahn 2008)? How much does the romantic Other differ from significant Others which are considered in other theories of love/theories of identity?

LOVE NARRATIVE. Is there a recognizable structure of narration of romantic love? Is it universal or does it branch into different diachronic and national variants?

Is there a specific romantic love narrative in South Slavic literatures (Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian)?

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