

I LOVE YOU

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**I LOVE YOU
(A THEORY OF LOVE)**

CHAPTER ONE

LOVE AND THE COUPLE

A science of love

There are many kinds of love, like a mother's, a brother or sister's, or a friend's. But here we will be talking about the passionate, erotic kind of love which exists between lovers, between a husband and wife, i.e. the love binding a couple together - the kind of love that makes us say "I love you". We will be trying to understand how it begins, what forms it takes, how it develops, what problems it may meet, and why it ends or endures. It is the kind of love that can grow slowly out of friendship or explode at first sight. It can be a passing infatuation burning itself out in a few days or months, or it can last for years, even a lifetime. It can be made of torrid sexuality or sweet tenderness, it may never

develop beyond unsatisfied passion or it may bloom into marriage. It can turn into an idyll or a conflict, fade away into routine, or carry along with it all the vibrance and freshness of its early stages.

A person who loves and wishes that love to be returned will ponder over innumerable questions, knowing that passion, jealousy, dreams, ideals, eroticism and love can either make life wonderful or turn it into hell. Gestures that make us happy or words that plunge us into despair come from very few human beings indeed, only those to whom we are intensely and inextricably bound.¹ The greatest triumph can be poisoned by a cruel word or lack of attention from the one we love. What can the answer be to such questions? There is as yet no theory, no science of love, non "*eros-ology*" we can today turn to!

Yet being a couple has acquired great importance in the modern world. Once upon a time there was the extended family, which included a whole circle of relations. Nowadays people marry because "they like each other", because "they are in love". They stay together while they continue to find each other attractive, and feel they are still in love. If "they no longer love each other", however, having children no

longer holds as sufficient reason for staying together - so only the bond of love between man and woman remains to hold the union together. It is a bond that unites two individuals who are consequently far freer, richer and maturer. Each has a personal set of connections, a separate job, and autonomous political and religious ideas. The couple is therefore a dynamic unit, a creative melting pot where two personalities come together, form an alliance, talk things over and complement each other, in order to confront a world which has become more and more complicated. Love is the driving force behind this tension and this union.

But what does being in love mean? What is the meaning of "I love you"?ⁱⁱ Some people say they are always falling in love or never fall out of it. Others hold that falling in love is a fairly rare occurrence in a single lifetime. And then during a moment of confidence a person will happen to confess to having had numerous love affairs but only one great love. Many meanings indeed lie behind the words falling in love, love, caring, affection, tenderness, passion and sexual attraction. Our aim is to put some order into this untidy state of affairs by creating the basis for a real science of love. We intend to set up a survey and to categorize the various forms of love so as

to make it easier for readers to recognize their own experiences, understand what processes gave rise to them, and what possible lines of development there may be. We are offering a map, an explanation, a guide.

The bonds of love

Love bonds can be classified as strong, medium or weak. **Strong bonds** are those that are formed in infancy between a child and its parents, and between brothers and sisters. Strong bonds are exclusive, for nobody can take the place of a mother, a father, or a child. These bonds withstand any alteration in character or appearance. Sons and daughters continue to love their mother even when she is old, ugly or ailing. Mothers and fathers continue to love their children even if they become delinquents, drug addicts, or even if they have been disfigured and marred by illness.

The only force that is capable of establishing a strong bond outside infancy and outside family ties is *falling in love*. Two people with no previous knowledge of each other fall in love and become mutually indispensable, as in a

child/parent relationship. This is indeed a truly fascinating phenomenon!

Medium bonds are those we develop with intimate friends, the people we trust, the people we confide in. Friendship is free and disinterested, without any of the jealousy or envy that can even surface between siblings. Nevertheless, even the closest friendships are vulnerable. If a friend deceives or betrays us something is gone forever, and though we can forgive, the rapport never recovers its former splendour. If we quarrel with mothers, fathers, brothers or sisters, the bond resists the test, and after a while all is forgiven and forgotten. This just does not happen in the case of friendship. A violent argument, insults, threats and affronts leave wounds that are unlikely to heal. We can prefer friends to brothers or sisters, trusting them more than our siblings, but friendship is ultimately a bond in the second category. It is vulnerable to abuse, and when it breaks down it has gone forever.

Lastly there is the category of **weak bonds**. These are set up with colleagues, neighbours and holiday friends. Many forms of sexual attraction, even intense ones, go to form weak bonds. We can like a person or be overcome by a great passionate desire, but it only takes a rude word or

vulgar gesture to make us stop wanting to be with them. Sometimes, once the sex act is over, all we want to do is to get away.

The fact that a bond is weak does not mean that we forget the relationship. On the contrary, we may remember it with pleasure for the rest of our lives. Certain erotic experiences leave an indelible impression and we remember the intense glances, the desire and the frantic contact between bodies. We remember with a touch of nostalgia something which might have developed into something. Between two people who have made love there remains a rarefied bond of confidence and trust, or even of complicity, which comes close to friendship. A weak bond relationship means only that we do not feel the need to remain with that person, that their presence is not missed. The two of us do not make up a compact unit, an “us” united by faith, love, duty or destiny.

Where to start

Where shall we start our research on the love binding two people together? Since a couple forms a stable relationship which lasts in time, we must begin by looking at *strong bonds*. If you ask

people why they got married they will say “Because I was in love”. We must therefore examine first of all the act of falling in love.

Yet looking through magazines and articles dealing with love and the couple, we see no studies or reports on falling in love. Prevalent is the Freud-based idea that love grows slowly out of erotic attraction satisfied.ⁱⁱⁱ It all begins with an exchange of glances. If the other person responds in the same way, bodies start to come into contact: hands touch and then clasp. Then comes the first kiss and the first rendezvous. When all goes well, intercourse may follow, with complete physical fusion. A little later will come tenderness, passion and intimacy. Because according to this way of thinking, the better the understanding and the better the mutual satisfaction, the stronger the love. At last the partner will seem indispensable and we feel lost without him or her. At this point we are in love. In other words, falling in love would seem to be a gradual process, born out of reciprocal satisfaction.

This idea of falling in love is, however, contradicted by what really happens since it usually explodes rapidly after a gradual and uncertain beginning. In English and in French, in fact, the expressions *fall in love* and *tomber*

amoureux are used. It often happens that two people feel love before any sexual encounter, feel desire before getting to know each other well, and the one may go after the other even without there being any reciprocal response.^{iv} Passionate love does not grow gradually because of mutual sexual satisfaction. It explodes unexpectedly between two strangers and draws them irresistibly towards each other. It is not limited to sexual desire alone, nor to tenderness. It is something different. It is a new state of emotions - unknown, unexpected and inebriating. It is at the beginning of a relationship that love is at its most intense and passionate. If anything, it declines with the passing of time, familiarity and intimacy. The process is the exact opposite of what should happen according to the Freud-based idea of gradual reinforcement.

To understand the love process we should not start from low down the scale with sexual attraction and then gradually move up. We should start at the top, from the explosive moment of falling in love. And falling in love cannot be interpreted only as eroticism or pleasure. It is a unique and unmistakable experience, a radical disturbance of the mind, heart and feelings which brings together two completely different people. Falling in love transforms their whole world. It is a sublime experience, an act of folly but at one

and the same moment the revelation of one's own being and one's own destiny. It is hunger, longing, but also verve, heroism and selflessness. "I love you" in our tradition does not only mean that "you please me", "I like you", "I want you", "I am fond of you", "I feel affection for you", but "for me you are the only face among the countless faces in the world, the only dream, the only desire, the only thing I want above everything else and for ever". As it says in the *Song of Songs*: "Let the king have sixty queens, eighty concubines, young women without number! But I love only one, and she is as lovely as a dove".

If we wish to keep strictly to facts, we must study the process of forming a couple from the moment of falling in love. This means from an event which is erratic, explosive and extraordinary. Let it be clear: this study is not trying to claim that all couples are formed in this way - there are couples based on erotic attraction, the pleasure of being together, habit, mutual aid, economic need and other mechanisms that will be examined later on. But the fundamental mechanism bringing about strong bonds of love in adult life is falling in love.

From falling in love

When we are in love, the person we love cannot be compared with or replaced by anybody else. S/he is unique, the only living being capable of giving us joy. No one else we meet, not even our favourite film star, would satisfy us. If our beloved is not there, the world turns arid and empty. A person in love, toying with a daisy and playing at “S/he loves me, s/he loves me not”, knows that nothing will be strong enough to uproot their love. Yet at the same time the fear exists that the loved one may be seduced and carried away by someone else. For this reason the lover keeps on asking: “Do you love me?”, and never tires of hearing the same reply: “Yes, I do”. This is the one and only landmark in the lover’s world. The whole universe has changed its pivot and now revolves exclusively around the loved one. This love is a precondition for any other desire, any other activity.

A person in love is in an extraordinary condition, living on a high, in a state of ecstasy. Plato considered falling in love a delirium inspired by the gods, a divine madness, like artistic inspiration and the gift of prophecy. A person in love sees everything transfigured - nature, the air, rivers, lights, colours are all

brighter and more intense. Lovers feel drawn by a cosmic force towards their goal and destiny, and the contradictions of everyday life lose meaning. They feel like slaves or prisoners, yet happy and free at the same time. They suffer and are tormented, but would never want to stop loving.

Falling in love acts on psyches like heat on metals. It makes them fluid and incandescent so they can mix and flow into each other and take on new shapes which then solidify. Love makes people malleable, it moulds them, modifies them and welds them together. In this way it produces *strong bonds* that can withstand trauma, conflicts and disappointments.

We can fight against love, reject it and make every effort to stay away from the people we love in an attempt to forget them. We can deem them bad, wicked and cruel, and we can even hate them. We can see love as an illness and torment ourselves with doubt and jealousy. Yet love ticks on just the same. It takes us over and masters us. It is something that goes against our better judgment or succeeds in swaying it. Even when we are treated badly by our loved ones, we are always ready to find excuses. We think that, if we were able to touch certain strings in their hearts, changes would take place. When we are in love we are convinced we know our loved ones better

than they know themselves. And we think that they could not fail to love us back if they really knew themselves.

Even if falling in love is a short-lived experience, it makes us think we will be in love forever, come what may. It brings the words of the marriage vows spontaneously to our lips: “I take you... for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part”.

Falling in love makes us love our loved ones for what they are, so that even defects, failings or illnesses are bearable.^v When we fall in love, it is like opening our eyes. We see a wonderful world and our beloved appears to us as marvellous. Every being is perfect, unique, unmistakable. So we are grateful to our loved ones for existing, because their existence enriches not only us but the whole world. Propertius writes: “*Tu mihi sola domus, tu Cynthia solo parentes omnia tu nostrae tempora laetitia*”. He does not merely say “I like you and desire you”, but “You alone are my home, you alone my parents, you are my every moment of happiness”.^{vi}

It is in this way that a mother sees her child and a child its mother. Yet the bond of falling in love is formed suddenly between two people who have never met before. Falling in love makes two

strangers feel a strong affinity, a common essence which goes beyond their conscious selves. For this they can say: "I am you and you are me". In Plato's *Symposium*, Aristophanes explains this kind of experience and says that human beings were once an indivisible unity which Zeus tore apart, and they have been searching for their other half ever since.

Nevertheless, in contrast to a blood bond that "exists" and is "taken for granted", this kind of bond needs to be worked on and strengthened. Lovers feel the fulfilment of their love as a sacred duty, like a summons to the service of their country or their faith. A person in love feels duty bound to make a commitment, establish a pact and take a vow. Love is therefore not only pleasure, desire, feeling and passion, but also commitment, vow and promise. Lovers are not only obliged to think "forever" but also to commit themselves "forever". Love is a *project* for building something that is meant to last in time.

The couple in love

Has the process of falling in love always existed or has it only appeared in the modern

world? The answer is that it has always been there. The Bible tells us about Abraham's love for Sarah, Jacob's for Rachel, Potiphar's wife for Joseph, of David falling in love with Bathsheba, and Samson with Delilah. Plato deals with falling in love in *Phaedo*, *Symposium* and *Lysis*. In the last Hypotolis falls head over heels in love with Lysis and repeats his name over and over again, calling him in his sleep, singing praises to his beauty both in prose and verse. In *Phaedo*, Socrates jokes about it at length before turning serious and saying that he has sinned against the god Eros and must go back on what he has said. Love must never be treated as a profane jest, as it is a gift from the gods. Like soothsaying and artistic creativity, it is *divine madness*. Such madness is a gift, a revelation, a contact with the supreme world of ideas. Those who love are raised out of the ordinary world and glimpse absolute beauty. Lovers reflect the god's eternal perfection. In the *Symposium* Diotima even explains to Socrates that love is a desire for immortality, because its aim is to create and generate good. It is therefore an act of creation soaring high, towards the Absolute.

In the Roman world we find falling in love in the poetry of Catullus and Propertius. We also find it in the Indian *Mahābhārata*, in the Arabic-

Islamic *Thousand and One Nights* and throughout the history of Western literature from Dante's *Vita Nova* to Nabokov's *Lolita*. Everywhere we run into this violent, passionate love which explodes between two people, overwhelming them and sweeping them up to a higher sphere. True, unifying love turns out to be an extraordinary experience, a revelation, a passion.

Anthropological research reinforces this idea. As Helen Fisher writes: "Even peoples who deny having concept of "Love" or "being in love" act otherwise. Mangaians of Polynesia are casual in their sex affairs, but occasionally a desperate young man who is not allowed to marry his girlfriend (...) kills himself. Love stories, myths, legends, poems, songs, instruction manuals, love potions, love charms, lovers' quarrels, trysts, elopements, and suicides are part of life in traditional societies around the world."^{vii} In research conducted on 168 cultures, anthropologists William Jankoviak and Edward Fischer managed to discover direct proof of the existence of romantic love in 87% of extremely diversified peoples.^{viii}

There is only one possible conclusion to be drawn. Falling in love occurs in most societies and has been an especially powerful force in creating couples in Western history. It is one of

the spontaneous roots of monogamy. Its relationship with marriage, however, depends on the historical period. For thousands of years marriages were arranged between families, and love was thought to follow on as a result of the two being together, helping each other and having children. The cult of falling in love develops as a product of bourgeois society, when individuals begin to emerge as characterized by their own personal choices. We see it appearing in 13th century Florence in the poetry of Dante, as well as in troubadour lyrics, in medieval romances, and in the love story of Heloise and Abelard. Despite this, medieval marriage was not yet based on falling in love, for the emerging middle class was still deeply influenced by the cultural models provided by the nobility and the clergy.

The theme of love as a basis of marriage explodes in the popular literature of the 18th century, though it took much longer to enter the intellectual world.^{ix} George Sand saw marriage as an act of prevarication, a limit, a prison, and therefore as something to be rejected. Stendhal delved deeply into various kinds of love but allowed no space for a love marriage or conjugal life.^x It was later, during the 19th century, that marriages based on falling in love became common in all social classes in Western

countries, and they have spread throughout the world in this century, mainly thanks to Hollywood.

Recent youth movements tended to promote promiscuity and communal living, but now with the return of the individual, falling in love, forming a couple and getting married have made a comeback. And today, with longer lifespans, women's lib and falling birth-rates, this type of love is proving the only force capable of uniting and bonding two adult individuals, and turning them into a loving couple.

Other points of view

Most sociologists and psychologists have failed to appreciate the importance of falling in love. Ortega, for example, considers it a moment of imbecility, a kind of psychic angina.^{xi} For De Rougemont it is an obscure survival of a world-rejecting, death-wishing medieval heresy.^{xii} Fromm sees true love as being born out of will power and is amazed that it may sometimes spring from the fiery and irrational territory of falling in love.^{xiii} Bellah considers it a danger.^{xiv} Other American psychologists and sociologists hold it to be a recent cultural product.^{xv} They are

mistaken for, as we have seen, people have always fallen in love.

According to psychoanalysts falling in love is the product of thwarted sexual desire, aim-inhibited, while fusion between lover and loved one is the product of a *regression* back to earliest infancy, where the only object is the mother.^{xvi} The entire behaviour of a couple in love is regressive. See how they talk in baby language, fondle and nuzzle each other's bodies like babies at their mother's breasts. In other words, the loved one simply takes over the mother's role during the first few months of life.

This is another untenable thesis. Falling in love sharpens the mind and imagination, enabling us to tackle problems in an adult way. People in love may certainly tend to bond physically and psychically as they did in infancy, but in no way are they babies. The term *regression* should be used with caution, for Freud introduced it to explain neuroses and psychoses, which are painful, pathological conditions weakening the critical capacity and making the subject live in the past. Falling in love is, on the contrary, pure *joie de vivre*, sweeping us forwards and making us eager to project the future. Unlike the neurotic, enslaving effect of regression, love heals and liberates the mind.

Two young people who have always lived at home and relied on their parents, can use their love to find the strength to leave home, set up on their own and create a new family. Falling in love enables two people belonging to different nations, races or religions to find the energy and courage to break away from their own social group and make up a new entity in which old hatreds and prejudices have been overcome. In this way their love breaks with the past and creates a social and cultural entity which previously did not exist.

This is our launching pad. If we want to understand a phenomenon we must get through to its deepest meaning and its effect on society. The basic mistake made by all traditional studies on falling in love is that they view it in terms of an individual, psychological fact, as a positive or negative change in the heart and mind, as a neurosis or psychosis, as a normal or pathological emotional state. It is as if we were observing an individual taking part in a war, shooting down other humans or blowing up buildings and bridges. In order to understand his action, there is no need for us to rack our brains over his emotions. We need to try and understand the phenomenon of war, its dynamics and how it affects single individuals.

If we observe individuals in love, and try to understand the social significance of their way of being and acting, we then realize that the love and emotions they are experiencing break social bonds and establish new ones. The final result is not the two individuals of before but two new people, in a *new collectivity* formed by the couple. The correct way to analyse this is not by resorting to individual psychology but to sociology, especially *the sociology of collective movements*.^{xvii}

Only in this way can we understand why these particular emotions exist, why individuals experience such a profound transformation in their essence. It is because in this moment they are the creators and protagonists of a new birth, of the sudden emergence, and rise of a new society.

Human beings are born physically from their mothers and they form part of a mother-child couple while the child is completely dependent. In everyday language, we refer to them by saying “I saw a woman *with* a baby in her arms”. That *with* indicates that the baby is an object, not a subject, that it is the extension of the mother, without whom it would not survive. It has been a serious mistake for psychoanalysis to take this relationship as a paradigm for all others. The

mother-child story is the exact opposite of what happens between lovers. With the passing of time and the coming of maturity, the child becomes independent and breaks free from the mother. Not so with falling in love - in this case two independent adult individuals unite and merge to form a new social entity.

This new society is not born in the same way as a child from its mother. It is born through two adult individuals coming together, bringing with them their own backgrounds and traditions, and putting together personal histories and cultural heritages. By fusing these two patrimonies they create something completely new, a *social mutant*.

During the sex act a man and a woman embrace, join genitals and fuse souls for a few moments of orgasmic ecstasy. That is all that is needed to inseminate an egg and produce an embryo. But in falling in love this process of fusion involves the whole personalities and past histories of the two. They emerge from their union transformed, linked by a deep and lasting bond that causes them to change and adapt, clash and come together, as well as restructure all their social relationships. Falling in love is the prototype and paradigm for this social rebirth, this *big bang*, the appearance of a new collective

entity which will go on to create its own ecological niche and its own world.

It is not one single birth or one single infancy that goes to make up a human life, for various births and various infancies are involved . When we break away from the family and move into a group of friends during adolescence, when we fall in love and form a new couple, when we begin a new and exciting job, when we emigrate, when we take part in any social, political or religious transformation, then a rebirth occurs which affects both the individual and the collectivity at the same time. No community can be born if the individuals within it are not in turn reborn. The extraordinary experience which is the divine madness of falling in love cannot be considered a regression or neurosis, for it is an awakening experience, a beginning of a new life, when everything appears possible, as on the first day of creation. Falling in love is the intimate, subjective experience of birth, the creation of a new world.

Falling in love brings about the birth of the smallest possible community, that formed by only two people. But it is, at the same time, the rebirth of the individual, because there can be no individual without a collectivity. It is the birth, emergence, and exuberant affirmation of the new

individual and collective subject, the triumphant cry of a new being that comes into its own by building a new self with its own biography, history and very special, personal life.

New life, birth is central to falling in love - the birth of the individual and his society in the moment in which each, in order to face existence, aims towards joy and perfection. We do not know what a baby feels at birth. Freud imagines that the birth trauma produces anxiety, the paradigm of all later forms of neurotic fears.^{xviii} But can this really be true? We only know for sure what an adult individual feels when renewed and reborn in such experiences as religious conversion, discovery, falling in love or being part of a new social group that is emerging. And this is not anxiety. He breaks out of an imprisoning, constrictive cocoon, a mistaken mode of existence that has been dragging on too long. What he experiences is an awakening, a stupendous vision. And the world ahead looks extraordinarily beautiful and perfect, made especially for him to live and exist in.

Individuation, birth, is not a painful separation from the great silent peace of amniotic happiness. It is no tearing apart, "being thrown into the world", *Geworfen*, as Heidegger writes.^{xix} It is an awakening, liberation, facing something

which is not a wilderness but the promised land. The reborn person takes a look around and recognizes the value and goodness of all that is. Maslow has described this experience of ecstatic joy as *Peak-Experience*, the Experience of Being.^{xx} Being is in itself beautiful, in itself good. And it is in this wonderful universe that the nascent individual feels that a place has been created just for him - a place which is a goal and a destiny.

The birth of an adult individual is not only that of the individual himself but of his collectivity asserting itself in the world. It is not, therefore, an act of regression but of individual and social maturity. The love between Heloise and Abelard, Dante and Beatrice, together with all the love stories told by poets, playwrights and novelists from Shakespeare, to Goethe, to Manzoni, all play their part in the progress of civilization.

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CHAPTER TWO

Falling in love

Why do we fall in love?

Let us begin with a case that would at first sight seem custom-built to demonstrate the psychoanalytic theory that falling in love is the result of repressed sexuality, which at a certain point bursts out, idealizing the object. It is the case of a young student we will call *Freshman*. Before falling in love he had had little sexual experience. He was timid, inhibited, and prone to continuous erotic fantasies. But after having gone through a passionate if unhappy love affair he turned into an enterprising latin lover. Here are all the elements for us to reach the conclusion that falling in love had broken the barrier that had restrained his sexuality, enabling him to give it free expression.

But if we carefully examine the details of what happened to him, we will discover that that is not the case. Our student went to university and sailed through his first exams. Then one day he began to feel attraction for a fellow student, have a burning desire to meet and see her, be with her and speak to her. There were no particular erotic fantasies or erotic dreams, nothing. He was happy when he was near her and thought about her when they were apart. Yet he did not realize he was in love, and did not apply this word to his state. He had actually already had an infantile but intense experience of falling in love, which he could remember very well.

Little by little his desire intensified and grew painful, till he recognized and pinpointed it: he was in love. Feeling the need to tell the girl, he started to hang around below her window every night in the hope of meeting and talking to her. But she avoided him, having understood quite well that the nice young man with the haunted look in his eyes, who kept walking up and down under her window, was in love with her. So as not to encourage him she made sure they never met alone, and for months she got a girl friend or boy friend to keep her company. It took

Freshman ages to work out that this behaviour meant he was being rejected.

Now let us ask ourselves: if falling in love is the symptom of a sexual impulse, why was it that nothing came to the surface? Is it possible for the symptom not to reveal anything of the impulse that generated it? The symptom is a compromise. Well, what was it that attracted him in the woman he fell in love with? Not her body, for he felt no physical desire for her. He was captivated by her way of speaking, her charm, the superior social life she led, which was richer and more interesting than his. *Freshman* was poor, while her family was well off, so she could speak to him about holiday resorts, luxury cars, and travels to foreign parts with her friends. They were things he had never thought much about before, but when described by her they fascinated him, offering a glimpse of a wonderful new world. The woman evoked rich surroundings and a refined way of life that attracted him greatly.

What step was *Freshman* getting ready for when he fell in love? Was it the expression of his sexuality or a superior, more sophisticated kind of social life? What symptom did his falling in love express? Was it the need for a female body or the need to escape from the cramped, closed-in

environment he was used to, so that he might gain access to another kind of life with that woman?

He was longing for this new life. There had been sexuality before and there would be again because, as we have said, he had a strong sexual drive. What interested our young man when he fell in love was something he had never thought about before - a real love relationship with a woman, a spiritual and physical intimacy which could last a lifetime. He felt ready for this new, as yet unknown experience.

This is the essential step forward, the “maturation” which falling in love produces. In this man’s mind a project was coming into being that would take in all his sexuality and go beyond it. It was not the kind of need that a mother’s love and care might provide, but a life-project in which he, an adult, would live with a woman who was also an adult. It was a project to live as part of a couple, to have a couple’s social life with their own home, their own friends, out in the world. It was a life he had never thought about, because before this event he had been a son, a schoolboy, a male wanting a female. He had lived among others without ever being ready to share his existence with another person as husband with

all the duties, obligations and commitments this entails.

A woman would have acted differently. She would have instantly understood the nature of her desire, because all her life she would have been accustomed to imagining herself married, with a husband and children. She would have been brought up to think of herself as part of a couple. But this young man had never had such thoughts. Thus this new desire presented itself as an alien upsurge which he could not even name. A genetic engram was becoming activated but it was not the engram of sexual desire - it was related to a desire for life within a couple, as part of the couple, where he could not do without the other person, because the other was the condition that made his desire itself imaginable. *His falling in love was an "I" becoming a "we"*. It is because of this that he now perceived himself as an individual living in isolation, mutilated and incomplete. First he had been a son, a pupil, a member of a group of friends, and now he was half of a couple yearning to exist.

But this nascent love was not returned. Instant rejection took place without any possible appeal, at the very moment in which his love had become conscious of itself. For almost a year

Freshman suffered abominably, unable to understand why such great love was being ignored. He found the world absurd, and even contemplated suicide.

Faced by this painful failure, he began to separate sex from love. When he realized that his woman did not even want to meet him, he wondered why she was going out with other men, what they had that was different and better than what he had. He decided that his failure depended on his inexperience and timidity. Looking around, he saw that young men the same age as he were more self-assured and knew how to court a girl. He was particularly taken by a member of his group who appeared to him as most mature and uninhibited, a latin lover through and through. For the first time he felt jealous, thinking that this experienced Don Juan would be able to succeed where he had failed. So he got in with him, and when he was sure they were friends, told him all about his secret love. After all, a friend can be asked to refrain from courting the woman we love and can even be asked to give a helping hand. In the meantime *Freshman* observed his friend in action, studied his ways and imitated him.

The level of friendship and identification he had established with this friend allowed him to take his first steps in a completely different direction from the one he had followed before falling in love, and from the one he would have followed had his love been returned. In order to avoid finding himself again in the painful situation of loving a woman inexperienced prevented him from winning, he took his more expert friend as a model. They went to dances together and got to know girls. He went through many sexual experiences but found little pleasure in any of them. In reality he had no interest in sex for its own sake. He did all this because he wanted to learn. And learn he did. He was a perfect student and made incredible progress, acquiring self-confidence, assertiveness and charm. But although he was successful and had many affairs, none of the women he found were a substitute for the one he loved. They only served to help him to get to know a woman's mind, to learn the art of seduction and the art of sexual skirmishing, so as not to make the same mistake he had made before, not to present himself unprepared at a love tryst. He was using sexuality and seduction not as ends in themselves but as means to an end.

What have we learned from this case? That falling in love is not simply an explosion of thwarted sexuality, nor is it a case of regression. It is, instead, a maturing process, the transition towards living life as a couple, an adult community based on eroticism and love. In the case of *Freshman*, one attempt failed so he geared himself up for a possible new appointment with destiny. And so it was. Many years later he would fall deeply in love, and this time his love would be reciprocated. He would live through an extraordinarily happy erotic experience together with the woman of his dreams.

When do we fall in love?

We fall in love when we are ready to change, when we want to discard a past, worn-out experience, and have the energy and strength to begin a new exploration and change our lives. We fall in love when we are ready to use untried abilities, explore new worlds and fulfil dreams and desires we had renounced. We fall in love when we are deeply dissatisfied with the present and possess the inner fire to begin a new stage in our existence.

Some profess to fall in love all the time, every month, every year. This is not possible. They are using the term love to mean a sudden attraction, a sexual urge. They call falling in love nothing more than a crush, an infatuation, one of those sudden attractions which are only *explorations* and do not then develop into a real process of falling in love.

True love is different. Let us begin with the case described by Dino Buzzati in his novel *A love affair*. After a solitary life a middle-aged man called *Antonio* falls madly in love with a young prostitute. Why? He gives the explanation himself at the end of the book when Laide, the prostitute he has been so insanely possessive about, is pregnant. He feels a sense of peace at last and understands that before he fell in love his life had been incomplete, as though he had been suffering from some kind of mutilation. He had always renounced women and love because he had never had the courage to take a risk. His love for Laide is therefore not an act of folly but an act of maturity which should have occurred years before. "What was Laide", he concludes, "if not the concentration in one person of those desires which had expanded and multiplied without ever

being satisfied?”^{xxi} She personified his desire for all the women he had never had the strength or skill to make his own. “The women he met seemed to him untouchable and useless to think about and so, as a result, they ignored him...Let him say a word to them, they seemed bored and annoyed; let him look at them they turned their heads away at once”^{xxii} So throughout his life Antonio had never tried to seduce women or win their love, but had contented himself with relationships with prostitutes. Then, poised on the brink of old age, something inside him had rebelled and broken down his self-created barriers, setting off a mad desire for a woman who would be his all alone. He wanted no purchased favours but a woman who would love him for himself. “But wasn’t it odd, and wasn’t it just a bit funny too, that these ideas should have started buzzing about his head only now at the tender age of fifty?”^{xxiii} he wonders. By no means. Falling in love was his last-ditch attempt to change his way of life, to have what others had had before him, achieve a human completeness and dignity all have a right to aspire to.

Antonio’s case is not so very different from *Freshman’s*, therefore. *Antonio* was past his prime while *Freshman* was young, but both had

progressed from sexual desire to the desire to form a couple. Falling in love is an act of maturity that in *Freshman* occurred at the age of twenty and in *Antonio* when he was much older. In both cases however they fell in love only when they had rejected so much past and had so much desire for life that they were ready to take a new leap forward, and be born again, with all the risks that this entails.

It follows, therefore, that there are periods in which a person is not in a fit state to fall in love, whatever the stimulus, whatever the seduction. One of these is during a state of depression, when we cannot fall in love since we lack any vital drive, sufficient desire to live and hope.^{xxiv} To fall in love we need to have at least a glimmer of hope that our love may be returned.^{xxv} A similar thing happens when we lose a loved one, because when we *mourn* our life forces concentrate on mending the wound,^{xxvi} and the world seems to have lost any attraction.

The other situation in which we cannot fall in love is when we are already in love, because our loved ones are the fount of all our desires. With them we wish to eat, dance and be with our friends. Without them our hearts lose all desire and turn to stone. When we are in love, we find

another person attractive only if we are sure of our loved one's affections. The moment we doubt them, we lose desire and fall into a state of gloomy solitude. The person we love is not just one of many objects to love. S/he is the gateway^{xxvii} to all other objects.

If someone tells us about being in love with one person and suddenly falling in love with another, we should have serious doubts about both of them. Falling in love means electing someone above all others, experiencing that person as unique and irreplaceable, beyond all comparison with anyone else at all. As Roland Barthes writes: "the other whom I love and am fascinated by is *atopos*. I cannot classify the other, for the other is Unique, the singular Image which has miraculously come to correspond to precisely, the speciality of desire".^{xxviii} People who say they are in love with two people, really mean something else, for example, that they are fond of one person, but have fallen in love with the other. Another explanation is that they are *exploring* love. Falling in love, in fact, always begins with *explorations*, or attempts, some of which fail to develop. In these explorations you may find yourself undecided between two poles

of attraction, but this moment cannot yet be classified as that of being in love.

For falling in love to take place, therefore, there must be something amiss with the present, a slow accumulation of tension, a great deal of vital energy and then, finally, a spark to trigger it all off. In sociological terms a crisis must occur in the relationship between the subject and the community, followed by something that carries the subject away towards a new kind of life. Till a *threshold* is reached, a breaking point, and then the moment comes to make that great leap forward towards something new. Falling really in love follows on from a crisis in existing relationships, from an impression of having gone wrong and having got caught up in something unreal and false, while feeling acute nostalgia for a truer, intenser and more real kind of life.

In Edith Wharton's novel, *The Age of Innocence*, young Archer Newland is on the point of getting married to May when the fascinating and mysterious Countess Olenska arrives from Europe. Archer then starts to doubt his own world and feel that his values are conventional, false and phony. He goes ahead and marries May, but

he thinks about himself and what he is doing during the marriage ceremony, and has the impression that everything is unreal. And he repeats to himself that in some part of the earth, “there must be *real* people...to whom *real* things happen...”^{xxxix}.

In *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*,^{xxx} Constance gets married during the war and her husband returns home at the end of it paralyzed and impotent. They go to live on a great estate in a smoky coal-mining area, a place she finds horrible and distressing. The old house seems fossilized, dead. “No warmth of feeling united it organically. The house seemed as dreary as a disused street ... it was non-existence ... the servants ... spectral, not really existing.”^{xxxix} Her husband explains to her that: “...It’s the life-long companionship that matters. It’s the living together from day to day... You and I are married, no matter what happens to us. We have the habit of each other. And habit, to my thinking, is more vital than any occasional excitement... Little by little, living together, two people fall into a sort of unison, they vibrate so intricately to one another. That’s the real secret of marriage”^{xxxii}. But she feels an even greater sense of emptiness

and total uselessness: “everything in her world and life seemed worn out, and her dissatisfaction was older than the hills”.^{xxxiii} It is at this moment that the gamekeeper Mellors appears, and becomes her lover. With him the impression of unreality and death vanishes, and leaving her husband she will create a new life and a new community with the gamekeeper.

The detachment that in this case, as in most, matures inside the individual can sometimes also be due to external forces. It is well known that during long holidays, infatuations and crushes are very frequent and people often fall in love. This is because a holiday is like an island, cut off from the rest of the world. Habitual ties are slackened and natural life forces try to create new ones. For the same reason, young people are more likely to fall in love when they start going to university. It is a new world, new life, and often goes together with love. Some fall in love when they change job or city, especially if they have to spend a lot of time away from their spouse. Here they are, open to new experiences, full of life and energy. Old ties seem weak and far away. Husband or wife has no part in their present problems and can be neither partner nor accomplice. Meanwhile at work there is a colleague - male or female - with

whom the rough and tumble of every day, projects and travels are shared. Little by little they become friends and form an intimate, even sexual relationship, at which point it is easy for them to fall in love. It is something that frequently happens to film stars, who work for many months alongside colleagues of the opposite sex, in foreign countries. They may even be interpreting a love story, and in this case they are in a situation which combines common interests, holiday isolation and intimacy.

What has been said so far leads us to a fundamental conclusion - when people change, are transformed or have profoundly new experiences, they may find themselves in a condition to be able to fall in love again. Thus it is most unlikely that a long, intense life will be characterized by a one and only love. There certainly are couples who go on loving each other all their lives. But even here, at least one of the two is likely at some time or other to have fallen in love with another person, and then renounced this love so as not to jeopardize the main relationship.

Who do we fall in love with?

Psychoanalysts hold that we fall in love with those who remind us of people we loved when we were infants. A man falls in love with a woman who is psychologically or physically modelled on his mother, for example, while a woman goes for someone recalling her father. Both could also fall for another figure, provided it is modelled on someone belonging to their infancy. According to psychoanalysis everything important that happens in adult life is a replica of something that happened during our early childhood, so that everything is remembrance, even falling in love.

To explain this psychoanalysts usually quote Freud's essay *Delirium and Dreams in Wilhelm Jensen's Gradiva*.^{xxxiv} Here is a brief rundown of the story. A young archaeologist, Norbert Hanold, discovers a bas-relief from Pompeii representing a girl walking. He is fascinated by her and gives her a name: "Gradiva", the walker. In a state of delirium he goes to Pompeii, and standing in front of Meleager's house he sees the girl in the bas-relief actually move. At first he thinks it is a vision, then a ghost, and finally discovers that it is a real woman called Zoë, who obviously knows him very well. It is Zoë herself

who then reveals the mystery. The two of them had been childhood friends, had played together and been very close, but had then lost track of each other. When Hanold found the bas-relief he was fascinated by it for the simple fact that Gradiva looked just like Zoë. The story ends with Hanold and Zoë happily in love and about to get married.

For most psychoanalysts whenever we fall in love we are attracted by something that reminds us of our mothers or fathers or someone else we have loved. It is always images and loves from our past that guide our future.^{xxxv} An updated version of this same theory is given to us by John Money, who argues that between the ages of five and eight children make up a kind of love map. Based on past experiences they conjure up a mental picture of their ideal partner, and of situations they find alluring and exciting. In later life, when they meet someone corresponding to these ideal requisites, they fall in love.^{xxxvi}

The concept put forward in the present study moves in the opposite direction. Love may stem from past desires and dreams, but it is the future that calls and evokes it. Great loves are thrusts forward, accelerations of the process of change. Their aim is to replace an old society with a new

one, a tired relationship with a fresh one, thus creating a new couple and a new community. They can fail of course, but their intention and importance lie in their exploring the possibilities for a fuller life.

We fall in love when we meet someone who helps us to grow, fulfil new possibilities and go in a direction responding to our inner needs and the pressures exerted on us by society. The fact that the person we love may resemble our mother, aunt, or any other childhood image is only the means and instrument through which the life force is manifested. If we have dreamt of, loved and admired a famous actor or actress, the person we fall in love with will remind us of them. But we choose this person because s/he turns up at the right moment and seems just the one to solve our existential problems, on a symbolic level at least.

Wilhelm Meister, that famous character created by Goethe^{xxxvii} reads Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered* when he is young and is moved to tears when he reaches the scene where Tancredi mortally wounds Clorinda, the woman he loves, and bends over her in despair. Wilhelm then dreams of a warrior woman like Clorinda. Years later, he sees a young actress, Mariane, at the theatre one day, dressed up as an officer with a

red jacket and feathered cap - an updated version of his warrior, Clorinda. He falls in love with her, follows her and becomes an actor himself.^{xxxviii}

What does this story mean? Does it mean that Wilhelm Meister falls in love because he meets a woman cross-dressing who reminds him of Clorinda? Certainly, but with the added touch that he meets her in the theatre, she is an actress and he, Wilhelm Meister, has already been dreaming of the free life of the theatre, where he could give expression to his fantasy and theatrical vocation. So that red jacket awakens in him his childhood fantasies, his need for love, and his artistic vocation. Mariane not only conjures up a mental image of his ideal woman, Clorinda, but is also the evocation of a possibility, a vocation, a destiny.

Every great change in Wilhelm Meister's life is marked by a new love. When Mariane leaves him, he leads an arid and joyless existence for years until he is eventually lucky enough to come across another theatre company. He eagerly joins it and falls in love with the happy, uncomplicated, and carefree Philine. With her he fulfils his theatrical vocation by becoming the leading comedy actor in his own company. This marks his second stage, which will be followed

by a third when he will make his entry into high society and the world of belles lettres. To do this he will fall in love with Nadine, and here again a childhood memory is activated. As a child he used to stand gazing for hours on end at a picture of his grandfather's, in which the lovesick young Antiochus is lying at the feet of Queen Stratonice. One day Meister is attacked and wounded while walking in the woods. On recovering his senses he sees the young Amazon, Nadine, leaning over him, surrounded by soldiers. In this vision two memories merge: the sick prince in the painting and the dying Clorinda.^{xxxix} So he falls in love with Nadine, who is no longer an actress but the sister of the noble Lothario, his host. Nadine marries him and Meister enters a new, aristocratic society permeated with Masonic and Illuministic values.

So we see that it is possible to fall in love with somebody who evokes a vision from our childhood, a person dreamt about, an ideal, a character from a novel, the cinema, television, a star. What counts is their symbolic meaning at that moment, the door opening onto the future. Erica Jong observes that many feminists and women writers fall madly in love with rogues or rebels. In fact she writes: "Young women dream

of romance and passion as men dream of conquest because those dreams are necessary goals to leaving home and growing up. How else can we make sense of the fact that the fiercest feminists have also been the fiercest lovers?... We make a mistake in thinking they were only victims. They were adventurers first.”^{xl} Not true - they fell in love with what their destiny had prepared for them.

If the subject is ready for radical change, the minimum stimulus is needed for love to be sparked off on the slightest pretext. What then happens is that we just fall in love with the first person to come along at that moment, like those who drank from the fountain of love in the Ardennes forest in *Orlando Furioso*.^{xli} We have an example of this in the case which will be referred to here as *The Man from Turin*.

The Man from Turin had got married without really being in love. He had suffered a bitterly disappointing love affair and a few years later met a kind, maternal woman whose arms he felt safe in. After getting married he threw himself obsessively into his work, giving up all the artistic aspirations he had previously had. He was successful, earned a great deal, and was satisfied with the position he had reached and the social

prestige he had obtained. However, he felt as if he had betrayed his vocation. He had put on a suit of armour which he could not take off and which was suffocating him. As time went by, he found his wife uglier and uglier and less and less stimulating intellectually. Her body repelled him and he had intercourse with her only from a sense of duty, seeking any pleasure from prostitutes. At work he entered into conflict with his boss and felt misunderstood and persecuted. As he started to present serious psychosomatic symptoms, he began psychotherapy treatment. All this happened in a period of political and social unrest, and one evening, feeling more depressed and lonelier than ever, wandering aimlessly around town, he bumped into a friend who took him to an avant-garde cultural club. There he met a lively and vivacious young woman who had fun teasing him. She said she wanted to be a director, and invited him to go with her to the theatre. He accepted and then found himself in a new environment which both attracted and amazed him. They went on talking until morning, about everything - life, love and destiny. She was a rebel who encouraged him to shake off all his inhibitions, be free and do whatever he wanted.

They kissed and made love together, and he realized he had fallen in love.

It was a rebellious love, one that turned the balanced, respectable life he had imposed on himself upside down, like the one described by Buzzati in his novel *A Love Affair*. It was a rebellion against the sort of life he had followed so far, which occurs when tension reaches a *critical threshold*. At such a point the qualities of the person who sparks off the love matter relatively little. They need only represent a way of life that is free, happy and transgressive. It is not necessary for there to be any intellectual affinity or deep emotion.

In the cases examined so far the impetus towards change was so strong that the first stimulus experienced immediately caused the subjects in question to fall in love. Usually, however, the subject is not ready, the person encountered is unsuitable, or other conditions are amiss. The falling-in-love process thus stops short at the initial stage and takes the form of a brief infatuation or crush. After a while it vanishes, and some time later the subject is attracted elsewhere, still looking for someone to solve his problem and provide a suitable answer

to his demands. So new attempts begin and new *explorations* get under way.

This is true of the case we will call *The Woman from Milan*. Provincial born and bred, she had married an ambitious manager who had devoted himself body and soul to his job. She had never been in love with him, but had found him acceptable as he gave her security and a good social position. They had two children, and as time went on the husband threw himself into the financial world and made a great deal of money. She became a rich woman with money to spend, but was lonely and bored. Her husband was always absorbed with his business affairs and when he came back home he devoted any spare time to the children.

One day she met a young colleague of her husband's, who paid her some attention out of courtesy. He made her feel like a woman and she was overcome by desire. Just as she was about to lose her head, the natural course of life drove them apart and nothing happened. But all that would have been needed to make her fall in love was more insistence from the man and the opportunity for them to be alone together. *The Woman from Milan* failed in her first exploration but she was left with a passionate desire to enjoy

life. She lost weight, went to the beauty parlour, spent a fortune on clothes, felt years younger, and started eyeing men up and down. At an at-home party she gave, one of the guests was a good-looking acquaintance of theirs, well known for his womanizing. He knew how to approach women, play the piano and sing. She compared him with her dull husband, who was watching her in silence. She was overcome by a great rage and by the desire to betray him, to punish him and take revenge for his silences and their empty relationship. The womanizer invited her back to his place and they had sex a few times. Thrown off her feet and convinced she was in love, she wrote passionate letters which received no answer. On the contrary, her lover made himself scarcer and scarcer, saying that he had to be away on business. Then one day at a holiday resort she met him with another woman. Realizing that he was betraying her and would go on doing so, she berated him furiously and he told her to get lost. It was the end.

Some time later, she went on a cruise with some friends and met a young German engineer who loved classical music. Once again she was about to fall in love, but the German went back home to Germany and never got in touch with her

again. So she was left feeling emotionally drained, and conscious of the fact that she needed to find the man of her life. Angry about these past frustrations, she took it out on her husband, who represented the cause of her unhappiness. She accused him of being old, ugly and dried up, of having ruined her life. She even asked for a separation. In the meantime she met a brilliant, self-assertive young man at the start of his career. He was struck by this elegant, energetic woman, a possible chance of a lifetime, and she felt strong, free and in love. Having obtained a divorce, she married him.

Falling in love is not always an act of rebellion against a boring and repressed mundane life, however. Sometimes it is the way to discover a new world, as in the case we will call *The Manager in Japan*. He was sent to Japan by a multi-national company on a long-term contract. While his colleagues could not wait for the opportunity to get back to Europe, he was both attracted and repelled at the same time. Fascinated by a country that remained closed and inaccessible to him, he began to study the language, pay frequent visits to the theatre, and even have some brief affairs in which he tasted a different, mysterious kind of eroticism. Yet he

felt sad and lonely. Though full of life, he had a vague sense of longing for something he could not quite make out.

At this point he met a young university don, who was going through a crisis because she was married to a man she did not love. The husband was a stiff traditionalist while she wanted to change and was fascinated by the Western way of life. They started an affair which both thought they could keep at the level of a sexual friendship. Instead, they fell in love. He was conquered by the force of Asiatic eroticism. This woman seemed to him like a geisha, expert in thrilling and mysterious erotic arts. She was able to cover and uncover her body, and move it so as to make it desirable in a way that no Western woman could. At the same time she had a pure guileless passion and determination that reminded him of the samurai. He felt as if he had discovered in her the essence of femininity, of a kind totally unknown in the West. Through this femininity he was able to penetrate the Asiatic world in an immediate act of identification, as if a wall or barrier had been pulled down. He no longer felt only Western but also Japanese, and this gave him an extraordinary sense of enrichment.

A person in love receives an incredible flow of information from the other. A whole new life is poured into one's own, and the world is seen through other eyes. The only comparable experience could be that of parents following their children as they grow, taking part in their games, sharing their tastes and music. After all, we do say that parents stay young through their children. But all this takes place over a period of years, whereas in the case of falling in love another person's life invading our own can take as little as a few months. It is like the opening up of a new universe, because every human being is a universe. Thus loving also means being reborn in this sense, becoming another, doubling up, and having a second life parallel to our own.

Meeting people from different cultures involves a total immersion in something alien that can sweep us off our feet, leaving us astounded and amazed. This is because we stop seeing the culture from the outside and know it from within instead, as if we ourselves had been brought up in it since early childhood. The most reserved gestures become ours, as do nursery rhymes, pet names, family relationships, roads, squares and the colours of the sky. But it is not just things of today that are affected, but also those of the past,

seen through the eyes of our loved ones when they were children. In meeting and falling in love, *The Manager in Japan* and his woman had this experience. He penetrated the Eastern world, she the Western one. Each one helped the other to be complete and attain their goal.

The point of view of the present study, diametrically opposed to that of psychoanalysis, can be succinctly summed up in the affirmation that people do not fall in love with their pasts, but with their futures, and with what they may become.

This will be made clear in another example, which we will call *The Girl who Wanted to Study*. Born very poor in a Southern Italian outback, she had always been very eager to study, go to university and become a writer. But it seemed an impossible dream until she chanced to be able to go to Rome and make contact with that enormous mass of people who live on the fringes of the world of entertainment, cinema and television, where you may make it overnight but where you can also brush up against adventurers living on their wits and illusions. It is a world where a woman has to be ready to sell herself if she wants to get on. Our girl, who was indeed very lovely,

was immediately approached by various men promising her a short-cut to success.

At a certain point she found herself attracted towards a television manager who had started courting her. He was the brooding Byronic type, intelligent and cultivated. Charmed by his sophistication, she saw him as a mentor and thanks to him came to know intellectuals and artists. She was living on a kind of high. But he was married and did not want to upset the apple-cart with his rich and power-wielding wife. The girl gradually discovered that the facade of his culture masked cowardice and corruption. Then one evening she realized that he was seeing another mistress as well and, disappointed and bitter, she decided to give him up.

She moved to Milan, made do with a humble job as a clerk and enrolled at university. There she discovered academic culture, of the serious and profound type, in a thrilling encounter, just what she had been dreaming of. She worked by day and studied by night and although almost everyone, students and professors, courted her, she avoided them and lived for a year like a recluse, in isolation. Then at last she met a great scholar, who was also an exceptional man. She started seeing him and got to think very highly of

him. They worked together without there being anything physical in the relationship. A real spiritual intimacy arose between them with him learning to admire her intelligence, rectitude and courage. They spent a lot of time in conversation and became friends. One evening while they were walking alongside the Milan canals she felt a different light in the air and was overcome by a sense of peace and contentment. When he bent down to kiss her she realized that he would be her great love. "It was just as if I had reached my destination. As if I had come home," she says.

In this case too, the preparatory phase was long, and many explorations were carried out. *The Girl who Wanted to Study* had already given up all easier ways and had learned to recognize things of real value. The man she fell in love with was not the "first to come along". He was the "most suitable" and he was the one who enabled her to become what she was meant to be.

Most of us have only a dim perception of our potential and destiny, while relatively few have a greater awareness. *The Girl who Wanted to Study* had always been extremely aware of hers. Previously she had aimed too high in comparison with the possibilities then available

to her. But today we can say that she had been aiming high because it was her destiny to climb.

Love at first sight

We can fall in love all of a sudden, even within the span of only a few days or hours, with a person we have never met before - an experience which is known as love at first sight. We have already seen an example of this in the case of *The Man from Turin* where everything happened overnight. A study of other cases, however, reveals that this usually happens only after a certain number of explorations, that is after a period of trial and error.

This can be seen clearly in the case we shall call *The Ambitious Man*, a manager who had married a rather plain but very rich wife, and who had worked his way up to the top of a company by latching on to an unscrupulous go-getter. Invested with power, prestige and wealth, he was surrounded by beautiful women who made his wife seem even more nondescript. He started to betray her and she, to get her own back, would make off every so often with their children. Then the mogul's empire cracked up, as did the

ambitious man's marriage. Feeling free, he went to live with a much younger, beautiful woman, but the affair soon burnt out. He had another go, with another dishy young piece, but ended up feeling empty and alone. At this point he met a friend who invited him to become a partner in his advertising firm. He accepted enthusiastically and enjoyed his new activity, started making plans and travelling around. One day at Rome airport he met a stunning German woman. They travelled together to Milan, and it was love at first sight. *The Ambitious Man* was thrown completely off balance on realizing that he had never actually been in love before. He had had no time for anything except making money and his career, and had only seen women as trophies to flaunt. But the feeling he was now experiencing for the first time was actually love, and he was ready to fight to his last breath for it. Regardless of time and money, he followed his love all over Germany and never left her alone, refusing to let up until she eventually got divorced and married him. The marriage was a success, and this case of *The Ambitious Man* shows us that love at first sight is nothing more than the last act in a long search, when one reaches the degree of maturity

necessary for meeting the person who responds to one's deepest needs.

Moments of discontinuity. The expression love at first sight, is, however, also used with another meaning. It marks that magic moment when we are swept off our feet, bowled over. In this second meaning it does not correspond to falling in love, but isolates a single moment in the process. Indeed, in all cases of falling in love, including those which develop gradually between acquaintances and friends, we feel that there is a most particular moment in which the change occurs. It is as if a switch clicked, a light snapped on or a veil dropped. Hence the expressions *tomber amoureux* and *fall in love*.

Where does this impression of *discontinuity* come from? To give an answer, let us reconsider a case that has already been mentioned: *The Man from Turin*. He claimed that he had fallen in love in the split second that the girl who had been leading him round town all night had told him all about her childhood, thrown her arms around his neck and burst into tears. In actual fact, this act would have had no follow-up if he had not seen her again in the next few days, and if they had not gone to live together. The fatal moment is indeed only recognized in retrospect. While our

man was actually living it, he did not realize something irreversible was happening. He felt a particularly intense emotion, but nothing more. Yet it had been her tears that had opened the door to love and broken down the barriers he had erected to protect himself, opening up a breach without which the process could not have continued.

Let us now take another case, which will be called *The Man from Bari*. This involves a man already living apart from his wife. One day he met a young woman and was struck by the way she looked at him. Her glances were ironic, seductive and disturbing, but all the same he lost sight of her for several months. In the meantime his relationship with his wife took a turn for the worse. When he saw the girl again he invited her out to dinner, they hugged and kissed, and he felt her body soft and warm against his. He was electrified, but up to this point we cannot say that *The Man from Bari* was in love. If he had never seen the girl again, he would have been left with no more than a pleasant memory. But just then he came to know something that brought matters to a head with his wife. Beside himself with fury, he met the girl again, and this time he let himself go. They went to a motel, he undressed her and, at

the sight of her lying naked on the bed, he was overcome by the beauty of her breasts. Afterwards he would always identify that moment as the one in which he had fallen in love, whereas we will remember that he had really been struck already, months before, first by her eyes and then by the feel of her body. The moment when he was “overcome by her breasts” came only after the serious break up with his wife had already taken place and, abandoning all his defences, he had let himself go.

These *moments of discontinuity* come when the subject abandons any defence mechanisms and opens up. We always tend to resist love and the impulse to let ourselves go, and we fail to notice the stimuli that urge us on. But then there comes a moment in which we abandon our defences, lay ourselves open and surrender. It is a little like what happens in hypnosis, when the subject comes to lowering his guard and collaborates with the hypnotist, while those who are really unwilling to be hypnotized react by closing up like clams.

What *is love at first sight*, then? It is the product of a decision to let oneself go, body and soul, to the process of fascination. But when the subject sets up a defence against being seduced

and refuses to yield, the process evolves through successive stages, through successive small revelations, successive *moments of discontinuity*.

This is what happened in the case of *The Prudent Man*. He had already gone through two divorces and had always been a very jealous type. He had therefore erected formidable barriers against falling in love again. He got to know a beautiful young woman whom he worked alongside for a year without ever seeing her in physical terms. He was able to appreciate her intellectually and morally, they became friends and spent a lot of time talking things over together. Then at a reception one evening he watched her bending over to serve her guests, and was suddenly struck by the beauty of her back and legs. For the first time he actually “saw” her. A second violent revelation occurred when he saw her looking tanned in a bathing costume, and was stunned by how beautiful she was. Yet it was not till later that he realized he was deeply in love with her. This happened when they were already living together and had just had a slight difference of opinion. He left the house to go to work and was suddenly seized with panic, fearing that in her anger she might not want to see him again. He rushed back home, only to find her

smiling and relaxed. Taking her in his arms, he trembled with emotion - the last barrier had collapsed and he now knew that she was indispensable and he could not live without her.

So love starts deep down and looks to the future. But the subject must want it and accept it. In the conflict between the falling-in-love process and the subject's resisting it, there are moments of abrupt leaps, moments of discontinuity and sudden realizations. *The Man from Turin* knew at once that he was in love, and defined himself as such. *The Man from Bari* only found it out when he received shattering news. *Freshman*, instead, only found out much later, because his love was unrequited. Lastly, *The Prudent Man* resisted, in spite of being loved by his woman.

Love at first sight, then, is not the neurotic phenomenon that many psychoanalysts try to make it out to be. They claim that as we do not know the person we have suddenly fallen in love with, what we see is our own projection of them, whereas when we get to know them well, our love is then based on the principle of reality. On the contrary, the cases described in this study clearly contradict such a theory. The person our love reveals to us always has an enticing touch of the mysterious and the unknown. Even when we

fall in love with a friend, there is always a miraculous moment when we see that friend with new eyes and suddenly discover extraordinary qualities we had never noticed before.

The greatest danger in falling in love at first sight comes from the fact that the two lovers might have completely different projects and be unaware of it. This is what happens to the characters in Visconti's film, *Obsession*. He is a truck driver who wants to travel and get to know the world. She is a beautiful young woman married to a rich old boor. They fall in love, kill the old husband and fake an accident. They are free to love each other but, now that they can do what they like, a divergence rises between them. He only wants her, and is not interested in the house and eating place. He wants to go on travelling, together with the woman he loves. But she has a different project. She has tasted the joys of being mistress of the house and owning things, and she wants to share them with the man she loves. He does not want to stay on the scene of the crime, for he knows it is dangerous, and that sooner or later they will be found out. She is unwilling to move and wants to enjoy the pleasure of living comfortably, for that house is the symbol of her conquest and her vindication.

So he tries going away and having a good time with another girl. To no avail. The lure of love is stronger and he comes back. By now she has also realized that they must get away. But it is too late. As they are being chased by the police, their car plunges off the road and she dies in his arms.

Elective affinities

In Jane Campion's film, *The Piano*, a young English woman is married off to a New Zealand farmer. She has been dumb since the age of six, communicates through sign language and writing, but plays the piano with intense passion. When the ship lands in New Zealand, her piano is unloaded but has to be left on the beach, as there is no way of transporting it into the outback. Since neither her husband nor her sister-in-law bother about her, she asks a neighbour to accompany her to the beach, so that she can play the piano again. The neighbour agrees, and hearing her play is absolutely enthralled. So after buying the instrument from her husband and having it transported to his own home and tuned, he asks the woman to give him piano lessons.

Watching her play, he is seized by an irresistible desire for her, for her music and body. Realizing that the piano means everything to her, he resorts to blackmail, offering to give it to her if she will uncover her shoulders for him, then let him touch her, and then lie down naked beside him. In other words, he asks her to buy the piano with her body, piece by piece, which she agrees to do. At a certain point, however, the man realizes he has really fallen in love with her, and is thrown into a state of confusion. Ashamed of taking advantage of her need and treating her like a prostitute, he gives her the piano and goes off. He loves her and therefore does not want her to do anything against her will. At this point the woman realizes that she is in love with him, too. She loves him because he has been the only one who has understood her and used her language. After a horrifyingly violent scene with her husband, she runs away with her lover and, during the voyage, decides to free herself completely from her past, so she has the piano thrown into the ocean. But she has failed to notice that her ankle has got caught in the rope tying the piano to the ship, and as it falls it drags her down with it. With all her strength and might, however, she manages to free herself from the

rope and swim to the surface. She is now released from her past and will be able to start a new life in Europe together with the man she loves.

In this delightful tale, love starts from the basis of an elective affinity. The man is fascinated by the woman playing, by her body, her face and by the way she expresses the music. It is an unknown art that reveals to him his own soul, together with hers. The music is something they have exclusively in common, and they alone understand it. All the husband thinks about is buying land, and he expects marital love to grow out of living together. Though the other man treats her like a prostitute, he does want all of her - body and spirit. Because her music is her spirit. He is the first man not to separate her body from her music, to fuse sexuality and art. This arouses the woman's erotic potentiality, makes her explode and, at the same time, loosens her tongue. What unites them, therefore, is deep affinity, a mutual respect for their physical and spiritual essences.

Another example of real elective affinity is given by the love story between the composer, Giuseppe Verdi, and Giuseppina Strepponi, the soprano. Verdi was born into a poor family living out in the North of Italy. He had been given the

chance to study by a generous benefactor, whose daughter he had then married, but the difficulties of life and lack of understanding he had suffered in his youth had left him with a reserved, taciturn character. As in the case of the girl in *The Piano*, his way of expressing himself was not with words but with music. Giuseppina Strepponi, who was a beautiful and famous soprano, sensed this in the moody young composer. She penetrated his soul and brought out his finest music. In the same way Verdi sensed that through her his music could achieve fulfilment, together with all the values of loyalty and simplicity he believed in. They were to remain united for the rest of their lives, and he never left her for anyone else.

This kind of affinity should not be mistaken for the kind that everyone feels when in love, and which derives from the properties belonging to the *nascent state*. All those in love, in fact, feel that a deep affinity, or rather a common essence exists between them. It is as though one had always been in search of the other and had finally *recognized* him or her among the thousand faces in the crowd. *Recognition* is a phenomenon that can be explained by bearing in mind that in the early stages of falling in love we undergo a deep emotional and mental transformation. Our

sensibility dilates and we are capable of understanding, appreciating and loving the being-in-itself. It is as if we sensed the real essence of the other, which the other is unaware of. And it is this essence that we recognize. But this *recognition* does not mean that a deep *personal affinity* exists between us, with a sharing of tastes and values. Falling in love can also attract people who discover their differences only later on.

This is what happens in *Madame Bovary*. She does not love her husband and feels misunderstood in the smalltown France where she lives. She reads romantic books, love stories, and dreams of travel and adventure. One day a young law student called Léon comes to live in the house opposite. She begins to talk with him about Paris, the sea, travel, and has the impression that she has found someone endowed with the same sensibility and values as herself. But has she? No. Léon is young, and has the sensibility and dreams of the young. But he has neither character nor a spirit of adventure, and he will in fact end up by letting her keep him. What is more, he will even be incapable of understanding the tragedy of the woman who loves him. There is no real elective affinity, but only a vague coming together of aspirations and dreams.

The same happened in the case of the great symphonic composer, Gustav Mahler, and his wife Alma. Mahler directed the Court Opera in Vienna, was famous as a performer, but his great music was not yet understood. He struggled desperately to have it accepted, and looked to his wife for support. Alma, twenty-two years old, charming, beautiful and intelligent, was herself a composer. She may have appreciated and admired the orchestra conductor, but she neither liked nor understood his music. In spite of being madly in love with her, Mahler wrote her some dramatic letters setting out his artistic design with crystal clearness. In order to put it into practice he would have to make a superhuman effort, perform prodigies, and he needed her help and support. He asked her to give up the music everyone liked and devote herself to the music he was creating.^{xlii} She agreed to do so, and married him. But deep down she was not at all convinced, and after a few short months she was already unhappy, not liking her husband physically and missing her friends and admirers, her own kind of music. There was in fact no elective affinity between the couple. Alma ended up by falling in love with Gropius, and Mahler died soon afterwards.

From friendship to love

There is a kind of love that develops gradually out of friendship. It is a love that does not come in the form of an explosion between two strangers, but where the persons involved first meet on the delicate ground of esteem and confidence. Then sexual desire makes its appearance. And at first the erotic element is only an extra, a desire to know each other better. Only sexual intimacy, in fact, reveals unknown and deep-lying aspects within the individual. The trust produced by friendship enables the two to let themselves go without any qualms. There is no play-acting, no need to seduce or to appear anything other than they are.

In the tremendous shock of love at first sight the couple are perfect strangers, fascinated by affinities and differences, while in actual fact they know absolutely nothing about each other. On the other hand, in the case of love growing out of friendship an *elective affinity* already exists, together with a solid foundation built of confidence, esteem and trust.

Wait a minute, though. Even in the case of friendship, falling in love still retains something unforeseen and unpredictable. It blossoms on its

own, springing from the depths of an interior world. There is always a magic moment when friends we thought we knew so well suddenly appear to us in a marvellous new light. They seem far off and at the same time enveloped in that mystery which only falling in love can reveal in human beings. This kind of love is basically the same in structure as the kind that appears between two strangers. Yet that long, serene friendship endows it with something just as precious as the nascent state of love itself. This is because falling in love is not an act but a process. It is a succession of revelations and questions, pangs of anguish, tests and trials. In order to become true love, the falling-in-love process needs to discover what the other person is really like. We can fall in love with people who then reveal themselves to be completely different from the way we had imagined them to be. We may get disappointed and deluded. Time alone will tell. How can we know whether the other person really loves us and is not just lying? We ask questions, we ask for tests, just as our loved one does with us. It is only in this way that love becomes real knowledge and not just dreams. In order to last, love has to become trust and esteem

as well. In other words, it has to acquire some of the properties of friendship.

Love born out of friendship has already covered one stage in this journey. We know our friends' limits, as we know their virtues, and above all we trust their loyalty. Had this not been the case, they would never have become our friends, for friendship has a moral substance. It is on this knowledge, on these silent moral assurances, that nascent love can rely. Love means disquiet, fear, disturbed emotions, tears, the unspeakable desire to have our loved one in us. But beside these feelings, and interwoven with them, friendship brings with it trust, mutual confidence and respect for each other's freedom. Thus love born out of friendship is a more transparent, more serene process.

xxi	1.2
xxii	2.2
xxiii	3.2
xxiv	4.2
xxv	5.2
xxvi	6.2
xxvii	7.2
xxviii	8.2
xxix	9.2
xxx	10.2
xxxi	11.2
xxxii	12.2
xxxiii	13.2
xxxiv	14.2
xxxv	15.2
xxxvi	16.2
xxxvii	17.2
xxxviii	18.2
xxxix	19.2
xl	20.2
xli	21.2
1. xlii	22.2

CHAPTER THREE

The bonds of love

What are the fundamental mechanisms that love is based on - any kind of love, from the very first moments to the formation of the couple and the follow-up of the story? They are the following mechanisms: the pleasure principle, the loss, the indication and the nascent state.

The pleasure principle

Let us begin with *the pleasure principle*. It is the commonest and most universally accepted starting point, which postulates that we form bonds with people who satisfy our needs and desires. If they give us pleasure we tend to go back to them, spend more time with them and set up closer relationships. Pleasure is seen as strengthening bonds while frustration weakens them, and this mechanism is at the basis of conditioned reflexes and all learning theories. It

is what leads children to love their parents, since parents satisfy all fundamental needs, feed them, keep them alive and give them all the affection they crave. This same mechanism lies at the heart of friendship. We become friends with people we like, who understand and listen to us, who are close to us in moments of joy, tension or suffering. Being with friends gives us pleasure and enjoyment, makes us feel good, and every meeting with a friend helps us to discover something about ourselves and the world we live in.^{xliii} We are enriched by our friends' experiences, strengthened by their support, we trust them and look to them in moments of need, in order to share our problems and secrets. Then, as our requests are answered and needs satisfied, bonds may strengthen with the passing of time, but if a friend disappoints us, lets us down or betrays us, such bonds weaken and may eventually snap.

Every pleasure-giving erotic experience, every moment of achieved ecstasy reinforces our need of the other person. If the pleasure experience is reciprocal, a lasting bond is forged between the two, with each trying to offer pleasure and happiness to the partner. Any disagreeable situations are avoided as each tries

to make meetings mutually pleasure-giving and perfect, so that both the meetings and the relationship continue.

Love blossoms when we meet someone who has the qualities we deem important, those which satisfy desires, dreams and deeply felt ambitions formed in the course of our lives, starting from earliest infancy with relationships with our parents^{xliv} - both real needs and symbolic needs, at times conscious and at times unconscious. For love to be reciprocal, these mutual needs must correspond. But the love life of a couple also calls for intelligence and careful handling. Each must take into account the other's needs, hopes and fears, and understand what gives pleasure to the other. Only in this way can mutual satisfaction peak.

The pleasure principle alone is not enough, however, to explain falling in love because in order to forge strong bonds this mechanism requires time. Bonds gather strength in so far as mutual satisfaction is repeated, as happens in the parent/child relationship, and in friendship. Strong bonds are the result of successful stories. But it is also possible for us to fall headlong in love with strangers, not knowing if they love us, and they may at times cause us atrocious

suffering. Love in the falling-in-love process takes the form of something that overwhelms us, that ties us down against our will, at times like madness, or an illness we long to be free of. In this case we love people we do not trust, who will betray us, and we continue to love them in spite of the extent of our suffering and despair, or even hate. As Madame de la Fayette said of the Princess of Clèves, “She could not help being disturbed at the sight of him, and yet taking pleasure in seeing him ... she came near to believing she hated him, so sharp was the pain this thought gave her”^{xlv}.

Loss

The second mechanism is that of loss. We often realize we need people only when we risk losing them, e.g. when they leave us, or when some negative power, such as illness, violence or death, wrests them from us. Let us take the case of a couple of weary, harassed parents with a rebel son who refuses to do his homework or anything they ask him. Angrily they scold him, and then suddenly one day the boy disappears. At once the parents’ rage and anger all disappear, and they drop everything in order to look for him.

All they want is to find him, for they realize they love him dearly and that nothing else matters. *The-being-that-is-lost* becomes an absolute love object. Finding it becomes the only way anything else can recover any meaning, it becomes our single aim and everything else becomes a means of achieving that aim. In this way it creates a *hierarchy* in all other relationships, separating what is essential from what is not. If the son is found within a few hours, anxiety and desire dissolve like a bad dream. Something remains, however: the parents are now conscious of the fact that their son is all-important for them and that they love him. And if the search goes on for days and days, or months and months, then their everyday life will revolve around the task of getting him back and hugging him in their arms.

This kind of experience reveals to us that the ones we love are so much more important than we ourselves are that we would be willing to sacrifice our own lives to save them. Loss causes discontinuity, separating the essential on one side from the non-essential on the other, and the two planes are quite incomparable. We are in the realm of absolutes, where the law of all or nothing reigns supreme.

The mechanism of loss does not only work for individual objects of love. Loss also reveals to us the value of collective objects. What our country, freedom, and ethnic group mean to us becomes manifest when they are threatened, when an enemy invades or kills some of our people, and then we are ready to fight to the death. At Masada the besieged Jewish zealots killed their families and then committed suicide so as not to become Roman slaves. The Romans themselves chose to die in the fire at Saguntum rather than be taken prisoner by the Carthaginians. In the more recent massacre of the Tutsi in Ruanda, many mothers preferred to kill their own children rather than see them tortured and hacked to pieces with machete.

There are two different situations concerning loss. In the first there is no adversary opposing us, no enemy threatening us, or aiming to take possession of or destroy the object of our love. The loss of a child is a case in question, as is illness, and the kind of anxiety we experience when we feel that the person we love is neglecting us, or no longer loves us. In the second situation the loss depends on an *aggressor*, on an *enemy* that attacks and threatens our love object, as happens in cases of kidnap or invasion.

Jealousy can be caused by either - in fact for jealousy to exist there must be a rival, someone who steals our beloved and takes our place. But in this case there has to be complicity or consensus on the part of the ones we love. When we are jealous we agonize over whether they prefer someone else to us. Our feelings of aggression may then turn either against our loved ones themselves or against whoever is taking them away. To indicate the force that deprives us of them - whatever kind it may be (loss, illness, seducer or enemy) - we shall use the expression: *negative power*.

In the case of loss we realize we love someone that in actual fact we already loved. Loss is a brutal, dramatic kind of confirmation of what we should have known already. For the experience of loss does not only reveal to us a pre-existing love, it adds something, that is it makes us realize the importance of the object even more strongly. It binds us more tightly to the one we love, so that love bonds are strengthened through a succession of experiences of loss. A mother waits anxiously for her baby to be born, protects it from danger and disease, does everything she can to save it and bring it into the world. Then she nurses and watches over it, rocks

it when it cries, tends it when she thinks it is ill. While it is sleeping she stays close at hand, fearing that it might wake and cry. Protecting and defending her baby from all the dangers lying in wait, she saves it from *negative power*. And every time she does so, she re-discovers that this is an ultimate aim, a true value. And this all brings us to the crux of the matter. *Loss does not limit itself to revealing to us a love that already existed, but actually helps to create it.*

When the pleasure mechanism was being discussed earlier on, love bonds were defined as the outcome, the historical precipitate of the positive experiences we have had. It can now be added that our love objects are also the historical precipitate of the struggles we have waged on their behalf against negative powers. We therefore love what has given us pleasure, but *we also love what we have saved from nothingness. What we have given life to and kept alive.*

We love what through our work, efforts and dedication has become an objectification of ourselves, the site where we have put the best of our vital energies. We love the products of our generosity, the gift of our lives which by being objectified in something outside us become more important than ourselves.

Parents love their children because they have fed them, defended them, spent sleepless nights at their bedsides, because whenever there has been any dangerous or threatening situation they have put the children first, because they have made this their ultimate end and considered everything else a means subordinated to this end. Because they have been ready to give their lives for their children. In the same way, we love our country and our political party because we have fought for them and been ready to sacrifice our lives for them.

For this reason children's love for their parents is different from their parents' love for them. Children's love comes from the pleasure principle, that is from needs being satisfied. Just like friendship or erotic bonds. A parent's love, on the contrary, comes from dedication and self-denial, like love for one's country. Of course the two mechanisms often overlap, and strong feelings of love may spring from either. Parents are happy with the sweetness and affection of their children, and children are concerned about their parents and do all they can to prevent them from suffering and make them happy. But it is important to bear in mind that the generating

principles behind the two kinds of love are different.

Unlike the pleasure mechanism, which produces a bond that grows stronger the more it is satisfied, the loss mechanism undergoes a process of **saturation**. The struggle to keep someone we love from dying makes us suffer, and if that struggle is prolonged, if the suffering becomes too great, we rebel against it in order to defend ourselves. It is what happens with the chronically or incurably ill that we assist with patience and devotion. At first our love grows, but when the situation drags on without any improvement, or when the end is clear, pain and suffering begin to take their toll. Little by little, then, detachment creeps in, and we begin to wish for the torment to be over.

The mechanism of loss is essentially a struggle. And when there is no hope of winning, when the struggle seems pointless, the mechanism runs down. There are, however, at least two other situations when love based on loss fades away or even turns sour. The first is when all our efforts are repaid with ingratitude. The second is when we realize that the other person has tricked us, by pretending to be ill, for

example, or by making us jealous in order to keep us.

Where loss is concerned we are bound to what we are trying to hold on to, to what is being taken away from us. It is a defence mechanism against an external force, against *negative power*. But we also tend to try to take possession of what belongs to others, to extend our territory, to subject, dominate, and conquer. An animal defends its own territory from an external aggressor but, at the same time, tries to invade that of others. This is a tendency towards *self-assertion*. Just think of two characters like Don Juan and Casanova. They have a burning desire for a woman, so they set about seducing her. But once she has yielded, “capitulated”, so to speak, they lose interest. *Self-assertion* exhausts its effect in victory, and creates no steady or stable love.

Many women have asserted themselves by means of seduction. When we seduce someone, and that person is in love with us, we acquire enormous power. And some women like this power - they like to feel loved, adored, they like to dominate. It is a trait that Françoise Giroud attributes to Alma Mahler, wife of the great Viennese composer. Klimt fell in love with her

before becoming a famous artist. But Alma kept him dangling, alternately encouraging and rejecting him, while he chased after her in adoration. Then it was the turn of her music master, Zemlinsky. Giroud writes: "She drove him to distraction. She allowed him to kiss her, caress her, indulge in every intimacy, except the ultimate. She talked of getting engaged, then refused to consider marriage, blew hot, then cold, exchanged passionate letters with him. She tortured him for two years".^{xlvi} Another case in question, which will be discussed later on, is that of Lou Salomé. It was her desire to be loved by Rée, Nietzsche and Andreas, keep them all tied to her, adoring her, without ever yielding. And in all the above-mentioned cases the real mechanism that created love and dependence was that of *loss*.

Indication

This mechanism has been analysed in depth by René Girard,^{xlvii} who has made it the cornerstone of his socio-philosophical theory. For Girard all our desires are born because we imitate and appropriate other people's. Take the instance of two little brothers - we give the first an apple the second nothing. It isn't long before the second brother wants an apple as well. Not because he is

hungry, but because the first has one. He had identified with his brother and appropriated his desire. “Man is subject to intense desires” writes Girard “though he may not know precisely for what. The reason is that he desires “being”, something he himself lacks and which some other person seems to possess. The subject thus looks to that other person to inform him of what he should desire in order to acquire that being... It is not through words, therefore, but by the example of this own desire that the model conveys to the subject the supreme desirability of the object.”^{xlvi}
It is other people, with their desires, that *indicate* to us what is desirable.

We want something only because we identify with others who desire the same thing. And precisely because we want exactly the same object, we enter into competition with them. We come up against them as opponents. “Rivalry” writes Girard “does not arise because of the convergence of two desires on a single object; rather, the subject desires the object because the rival desires it. In desiring an object the rival alerts the subject to the desirability of the object”^{xli} and, at the same time, bars the way because he wants it for himself. In this case love is a triangle, built on jealousy and competition.

According to Girard, we always fall in love with someone who is already loved by someone else (the mediator) who through his own love conveys to us the desirability of the person. The beloved appears extraordinary and mysterious because the mediator's desire imposes itself upon us. The subject exalts, transfigures and deifies a loved one the more that person is loved and admired by others.

It is *vanity love*, illustrated by Stendhal. The person in love becomes aware of this illusion only when the goal is reached, when the person loved at last consents and when the opponent, at last defeated, disappears. But at this point desire disappears too. Once the antagonist who occasioned the desire vanishes, so does the idealizing process.

As we shall see, this mechanism is important for explaining certain forms of competitive love or star-worship. Stars are loved and adored by millions of people, and it is this collective indication that makes them appear beautiful, desirable and extraordinary. But it acts in ordinary situations too, and we are all familiar with the proverb that goes: "the grass is always greener on the other side of the fence".

Pleasure principle, loss and indication are three indispensable mechanisms for explaining the love experience. But, on their own, they are not enough to explain how it is possible to fall in love all of a sudden. The pleasure mechanism requires time, in fact, for there to be a large number of positive experiences capable of reinforcing the desire. And the loss mechanism presupposes previous attachment. Finally, the indication mechanism cannot explain why we often fall in love with someone who has not been indicated to us, and without there having been any rivals. We must therefore identify another fundamental mechanism, the most important of them all, and which has not yet been identified: the nascent state.

The nascent state

What is the basic principle of the nascent state? The passing from disorder to order. Finding the solution to a problem.¹ Arthur Koestler, in his book *The Act of Creation*, writes: “When life presents us with a problem, it will be attacked in accordance with the code of rules which enabled us to deal with similar problems in the past... but ... novelty can be carried to a point

... where the situation still resembles complexities which make it impossible to solve the problem by the same rules of the game which were applied to those past situations. When this happens we say that the situation is 'blocked'... A blocked situation increases the stress of the frustrated drive... until either chance or intuition provides a link to a *quite different* matrix".^{li} Then we see and discover something completely new.

But what is the problem resolved by falling in love? It is this: from infancy onwards we human beings need love objects that are absolute and all-inclusive. Our mother, for instance, God, country, or a political party - something more important and greater than we are, something that transcends us.

Concrete love objects, on the contrary, always have their limits and can become oppressive and frustrating. Besides, the more important they are for us, the greater the risk of our being disappointed. If something holds little interest for us, it can do little harm. But if it becomes essential, we will be hurt by even the slightest sign of neglect. This is why we may end up with aggressive feelings towards the people we love - children towards parents, wives towards husbands, and vice versa. Freud has

given this two-way feeling the name of *ambivalence*. *Ambivalence is confusion, disorder and causes us suffering.*^{lii} We therefore try to lessen it by idealizing our love objects, taking the blame on ourselves when things go wrong or transferring it onto external causes.^{liii} A husband feels guilty if his wife is irritable. A wife tries to attribute her husband's bad mood to tiredness, work and worry. All the mechanisms with which we take on ourselves the aggressiveness that we do not address to our love object will from now on be called *depressive*. All those through which we transfer our aggressiveness onto external objects will go by the name of *persecution mechanism*.^{liv}

Our love objects (husband, wife, lover, children, political party, church, anything we identify with and love) are always an ideal construct and are, therefore, the result of elaboration. We create our own personal myths, which we are continually reworking in order to reduce tension, make the objects seem great and good, and lower the level of ambivalence. But it does not always work out, and we sometimes fail in our attempts to rearrange things so as to come to a compromise between the real and the ideal. We change in the course of life, so that what

might have been acceptable to us at one time may cease to be so. New experiences give rise to new needs, and once we have reached one goal all the desires we have had to renounce come to the surface. The people we love may change too, become different, and want other things, incompatible with what pleases us. This is why relationships deteriorate between couples, and why people break with old friends, divorce, or quarrel with their children. Or they may continue to pretend that everything is just as it used to be, while in actual fact everything has gone through a radical change. They go on play-acting, not knowing what is true and what is false, or they do not even know what they want any more.

This is what is meant by ambivalence, disorder, *entropy*, in which both depressive and persecution mechanisms fail, because they are no longer able to idealize our love objects. The problem cannot be solved with traditional mechanisms, which have become *overloaded*. A sense of emptiness, uselessness and failure takes over. Vital impulses lose all sense of direction, and wander aimlessly, searching for new paths. The subject experiences a terrible feeling of wasted energy. It is as though only other people are happy. They are seen laughing and enjoying

themselves, while the suffering individual is being eaten up with envy. It is as if deepest desires can no longer come to the surface, but are only perceived in others. In this wasteland of ambivalence and disorder the sufferer senses desires, happiness and overwhelming passions that are forbidden. This is how adolescents often feel - full of life but unable to give it objects and aims.

The solution to this problem can always be found in a *redefinition of oneself and the world*. It may be through a religious *conversion*. We may suddenly realize that all the things that made us miserable are worth nothing, that we were heading in the wrong direction. In a new sect, or new church, everything becomes clear and simple. Or it may be through a political conversion, where again we discover what is really important and subordinate everything else to that greater value.

Last of all, it may be through *falling in love*. In this case the ultimate goal is a person, because it is through that person that we catch a glimpse of all that is desirable and can perfect our being. The *nascent state* marks the moment when the old world of disorder and ambivalence loses

value, and a splendid new one takes its place. It is the moment of death and rebirth.

At the beginning of the nascent state the first experience is that of amazement. We are amazed because our familiar world has become alien and worthless, and we may be overtaken by a sense of sadness and precariousness. But immediately afterwards, a great joy runs through us, for we feel the earth's vital energies flowing into us, and it is as though everything were blossoming miraculously. In the nascent state of falling in love this rebirth of life passes through contact and relationship with a definite person. This person alone provides entry into the new world.

While we are drawing towards our beloved, we finally feel real and free. At the same time we feel that our freedom can only be achieved by doing what we have been called to do: fulfil our own destiny, unto death. In speaking so much of death, love literature does not play a macabre game or signal to narratorial neurosis but indicates that when we fall in love, the whole meaning of life is questioned. We actually ask ourselves the metaphysical question: "Who are we? Why are we here? What is the true value of life?". Our existence no longer appears something natural, which is like that because that

is the way of the world. Instead, it is like an adventure involving us all, but which we can avoid. It is like a road we have chanced along but are not obliged to follow to the end - we can always change direction. Our past comes back to mind and we analyse and judge it, so the nascent state is also judgment day.

Slowly our consciousness sets up a division between what is and what is not essential, for in everyday life everything, even the most trivial thing, seems essential. But in the nascent state we realize how futile and vain many of our previous worries were, when we compare them with what is in the process of becoming for us the supreme good, the very meaning of life.

Love is like a re-awakening in even the most jaded person. The world looks wonderful, and anyone feeling so euphoric finds it impossible to go back to the inert anonymity of the past. People in love want to love even if it involves suffering and torment, for a loveless life looms arid, dead and unbearable. Our beloved is not only more beautiful and desirable than anyone else. S/he becomes the *gate*, the only *gate* leading to this new world, and more intense life. It is through him, through her, that we find a point of contact with the ultimate source of things, with nature,

the cosmos, the absolute. Now our usual language becomes inadequate for expressing this inner reality. Spontaneously we discover the language of omens, poetry and myth.

The nascent state never functions as a point of arrival, but only offers a glimpse of things to be. As in the case of Moses, the greatest of the prophets, who was only allowed to see the Promised Land from afar, and not to reach it. Our beloved is both infinitely close, and infinitely far from us. Though among all people s/he is the dearest, we still see him or her as an unattainable, unknowable aim. If s/he loves us it is certainly not because we deserve it, but because of a kind of miracle. Our loved one's love is a blessing, and s/he is the bearer of an extraordinary power that fills us with awe and disbelief. Like a dream that might fade away.

The strength of the nascent state is a redeeming power that transfigures everything. We love everything about our beloved, even faults and failings, even internal organs - kidneys, liver, spleen. It is wrong to speak of this as an idealizing process. It is a *transfiguration* mechanism, a redeeming of what is usually considered inferior. What is hidden is brought out

into the open, on the same plane as what is noble and socially admired.

Reciprocal falling in love is the recognition of two people entering into the nascent state, who are reshaping their lives using each other as the starting point. So in order for falling in love to be reciprocal, the other half has to be ready to respond, open up in the same way, and be reborn.

The nascent-state process usually begins in one of the two and is then sparked off in the other, breaking his or her shaky state of equilibrium. It is incredibly contagious and possesses an extraordinary power to seduce, overwhelm and carry away its object. Something that Dante knew all too well. As Francesca da Rimini says: “Love that to no loved heart remits love’s score”.

Reciprocal falling in love is not, therefore, the recognition of two people in normal conditions, with their definite qualities. It is the *recognition* of two people in that extraordinary condition that is the nascent state. Two people who catch a glimpse of the end of the separation of subject from object, and of absolute ecstasy, perfection. On one side they are beings of flesh and blood for each other, with names, surnames, addresses, needs and weaknesses. On the other

they are transcendental powers, through which life passes in its entirety.^{lv}

xl ⁱⁱⁱ	1.3
xl ^{iv}	2.3
xl ^v	3.3
xl ^{vi}	4.3
xl ^{vii}	5.3
xl ^{viii}	6.3
xl ^{ix}	7.3
^l	8.3
^{li}	9.3
^{lii}	10.3
^{liii}	11.3
^{li^v}	12.3
^{lv}	13.3

CHAPTER FOUR

The Community

The couple as a community

Alongside the nascent state a particular kind of social process begins which we shall call the *collective movement*. What happens is that in a surge of faith and emotion the collective movement produces a new *community*.^{lvi} The theory upheld in this study is that *falling in love is the simplest form of collective movement*. Composed of two single persons, it produces neither a church, nor a sect, nor a political party, but a couple. *The couple is therefore the smallest kind of community*.

In the nascent state individuals who were previously different, isolated, separated and in competition, feel they have a deep affinity, with the same goal, dream and destiny. This process begins even before any ideology or explanation

of the world is set up. The individuals *recognize each other* not because they have the same ideas but because they have the same drive and the same hope. They aim to unite, merge and form a compact partnership, supportive *us*.

In their nascent state, movements are unstable and therefore changeable but with the passing of time they tend to become rock-hard social structures, i.e. *institutions*. An *institution* is what has been chosen, desired and defined, but in the movement stage an institution is not based on reason alone but on the dramatic meeting of a utopic hope for the nascent state, with its need to live and assert itself in the world. Examples of collective movements are Christianity, Islam, the Franciscan order, Lutheranism, Calvinism, Methodism, Chartism and Marxism, as well as Nationalist movements. Together they all create communities we call sects, churches, political parties, trade unions and nations.

The couple also begins with the nascent state of falling in love, which can then be stabilized and transformed into an institution. But the nascent state in the falling-in-love process has some very specific properties. First of all eroticism. In all nascent states people love one another, but it is only in the falling-in-love kind

that erotic pleasure occurs, with love play and the physical fusion of body and spirit. Furthermore, falling in love creates an intimate, intense, and joyful bond between two people who are exactly equal. Whereas in the nascent state of a group a charismatic leader emerges, in falling in love there is no hierarchy, since each is the charismatic leader of the other.

Creation and destruction

So far falling in love has been described as a creative, unifying force, but it can also be divisive and destructive. For Tristan and Isolde, Launcelot and Guinevere, Paolo and Francesca, falling in love was creative and unifying, but for King Mark, King Arthur and Francesca da Rimini's husband the same love was betrayal, adultery and ruin. In this case love acts as a revolutionary power, breaking the most sacred bonds of marriage and loyalty to one's king. Launcelot's love for Queen Guinevere, King Arthur's wife, produces violence and ruin involving not only the lovers but society as a whole. It is with that act of adultery that the series of wars and tragedies begins, which will end up destroying the kingdom itself.^{lvii}

The nascent state of love is an attempt to change one's life radically, just as a great collective movement does with a society. It is inspired by irrepressible enthusiasm, and whoever takes part in it has the impression that all ills and injustices can be solved. For this reason the nascent state clashes with existing institutions and tries to create other social relationships. In extreme cases the movement actually overturns the existing one, and ruthlessly does away with the past.^{lviii}

Every case of falling in love is a potential revolution, and its effect is also twofold. What is for some liberation and rebirth, for others is devastation and ruin. Conflicts rise inevitably between those belonging to the new, emerging community and those left with the old, lacerated one. It gives rise to a state of conflict that may be relatively slight, as in the case of a young couple in love who encounter no family opposition and are either able to live together or get married without any trouble. All they revolutionize are their own lives, without severing any links with the past. It is very different if the couple in love are already married to someone else, or if they

are bound by previous pledges and sacred laws like priestly vows.

In falling in love violence is always present, for whatever destroys past ties or interferes with existing relationships is violence. A person in love does not want to do any harm, but to realize dreams, and give life to the new community, this may turn out to be inevitable. People until recently held dear may be harmed - terrible pain may be caused, hearts broken, the kind of suffering which is illustrated in Simone de Beauvoir's novel *A Broken Woman*.

Birth and morality

Under the influence of psychoanalysis the idea has spread through this century that all exciting and exalting experiences, all passionate impulse and the deepest emotions are nothing but residues left over from childhood. But this is not so. The exalting experience we have in the nascent state - when we sense that we are in contact with the absolute, with the essence of things, when we glimpse the harmony existing between nature and cosmos, pleasure and duty - is a fundamental property of the *human mind*.

Human life is not marked by a single birth or single childhood, but is made up of various rebirths and various childhoods. The nascent state is, each time, a kind of death and rebirth, the destruction and restructuring of the subject and his world. This happens when individuals fall in love, giving rise to a new *imprinting*, as when there are scientific discoveries, religious conversions, the emergence of new political, religious, or scientific groups.

The extraordinary experience - this beginning of a new life - is a rejuvenation of the individual and his cosmos, in which everything becomes intense and vibrant again and overflows with vitality. It signals a leap forward, an escape from everyday reality, a glimpse of an extraordinary way of being, which the individual or the group will then try to transfer to the real world. Evolution, perfection and freedom are not the result of renouncing one's dreams to come to terms with reality, but an attempt to bring one's dreams to life. They are attempts to merge reality with the dream or ideal.

Human beings are able to transcend reality and live in a dimension in which everything

aspires to perfection. The idea of an earthly paradise is not only a memory of childhood, something regressive which should be overcome. But for this lofty aspiration, this extraordinary dream, there could be no other dreams, no ideals, and no civilization. The idea of an earthly paradise is the guiding star that leads towards perfection.

Every society grows old, stiff and schlerotic just as every individual does. Then, from its bosom there emerges a regenerating power that overthrows and destroys it in order to create a new entity. This power presents itself as a reawakening, and a glimpsing of a new life. It is this vision which gives societies, nations and history their evolution. Together with their hopes and utopias, movements have been the leaven that has led people to try to bring about - in spite of countless mistakes and failures - better and more just societies. It is with their driving force that the great ideals of humanity have arisen. The regenerating power is revealed in the first moment as a sudden intuition, a ray of light, then as brilliant sunshine shedding its beams over everything and embracing the entire universe. The nascent state is therefore the vision of a new

world, and whoever has seen that world wants to transport it into ours, thus turning it into a concrete, historical project. Something of the ideal is always achieved - even in concrete action - in the form of an *institution*. An institution is partly the guardian and heir of the promise contained in the nascent state.

What is being born is always in counter position to something else. What is being liberated is always being liberated from something. To be born also means to destroy. The regenerating power desiring something new contrasts violently - sometimes even ferociously - with whatever stands in its way. Lovers love the world, the universe, and want every living being to be happy, but they cannot bear being separated and are ready to do anything to fulfil their love.

Those in love discover that the world is a paradise but also a problem. The new world moves to meet them in all its magnificence, laden with promise. But it lays before them Herculean tasks, and they realize that they cannot possibly achieve everything they have caught sight of. They will have to face reality, overpower and crush it so as not to be overpowered in their turn. Either that or they must bend and yield to

compromise, for it is a lover's daydream that they are loved and accepted by everyone. And it comes as a painful revelation to them when they realize it is not true - they move around the old world like innocent babes and are distressed when they see the obstacles that the old world erects and strews in their way to prevent their new world from existing. They will then fight tooth and nail so as not to be thwarted. Yet they are neither grasping nor indifferent - nor are they devoid of moral sense. On the contrary - they are very sensitive to pain and suffering.

For the mere fact that it gives an absolute value to everything we love, the new as well as the old, the nascent state shows us to our horror the choice we are forced to make. It is not a choice between better and worse, good and bad, but between two good things in the splendour of the first day. For this reason choosing comes as a *dilemma*.^{lix} All beings that are reborn, in facing the world find themselves like our ancestors in the Garden of Eden, obliged to make a choice that will drive them out of Paradise. Whatever their choice - whether they obey their group or assert themselves, choose the new love or remain faithful to the old - one of the two alternatives

becomes bad. From now on the world will be divided in two, with duty and pleasure following two different paths. They will have to earn their living with the sweat of their brow, that is being watchful, wary and resolute, but they will be left with the memory of something infinitely higher and more beautiful.

The *morality* that emerges from the nascent state is not one-sided but has two opposing faces.^{lx} The first is the one that anticipates choice and avoids it, desiring to exist without denying, destroying or confronting. It aspires to a different undivided world, a world of harmony and conciliation. It aims to avoid forcing a dividing line between good and bad, and casting judgment. The second face of morality enforces a choice, justifying and legitimizing struggle and resistance. It is the morality that divides friend from enemy, the morality that judges and condemns.

Male and Female

Falling in love is identical in both men and women, young and old, homosexual and

heterosexual. But any sense of guilt and dilemma is deeply influenced by the culture, history and type of morality that has been imbued. In spite of the gradual closing of the gap between the two sexes, differences still exist at the present moment of time.^{lxi} Generally speaking, women consider love something positive and moral. Their traditional morals tell them that if they love someone they should go with that person. For men, on the contrary, love belongs to the realm of pleasure and their traditional moral code tells them to be faithful to the pacts they have made, look after those who depend on them, not hurt those who love them and rely on their support. It is only by falling in love that a man can see love as being partly legitimized, and this comes like an explosion knocking aside present moral rules. He feels deep down that he has the right to follow his love, but even in this case that other moral sense, the sense of moral responsibility continues to hold way.^{lxii} A man in love, therefore, very often continues to be concerned about the person he is leaving, and feels responsible for the suffering he has created. And it is the new love who pressures him to leave the old one, it is usually the woman who explains that he not only has the right to go but also the duty, because if he

remains with the other one without loving her, he is bound to hurt her.

It is wrong to see in this behaviour anything particularly competitive in a woman towards her own sex. A woman merely tends to think that if you love someone that's that, and there are no other ethical principles to respect. Therefore, going with the person she loves means a woman has respected all her moral commitments. But for men it is different. Conditioned for thousands and thousands of years to see their first duty as towards community, families, wives and children, men treated sex differently - as something obtainable from their wives, concubines or slaves, or even through fighting and plunder. But none of this was ever allowed to interfere with their primary duties, which were not based on the erotic.

When women say that men are relatively more hesitant, uncertain and doubtful in love matters, they are quite right. Women are for all or nothing, without any middle-of-the-road positions. When the relationship is over, that is the end of it, and they will have no qualms about having to feel supportive towards those they have

ceased to love. In one of her works, Françoise Giroud has her heroine say of her husband: “Female psychology had nothing to do with him. Did he not know that a woman who has ceased to love simply obliterates and annuls the erstwhile object of her passion?”^{lxiii}

For thousands of years men on the contrary were accustomed to believing that they had responsibilities, duties and rights that continued. It is only recently, with the disappearance of the patriarchal society, with female independence, the falling birth rate and the welfare state, that there has been a weakening of both the weight of responsibility and the traditional privileges associated with the male figure. What remains is a mental attitude, a kind of moral sensitivity, which no longer has any objective justification. The result is that the female model is tending to become more and more prevalent, while men feel their uncertainty and indecision not as virtues but as shameful weakness. Their uncertainty is experienced once again, and paradoxically, as a *sense of guilt*.

Moral issues

The ancient world had strict moral rules in the field of sex and love, which prohibited incest, established marriage commitments, condemned adultery and the breaking of marriage vows, and obliged a man to marry the girl he had made pregnant. These rules have become outdated and their importance diminishes day by day, with sex and love relationships being left more and more to the free expression of the individual, and to preference and pleasure. We see it among teenagers: if a boy falls for a prettier girl, he has no qualms about giving up the previous one, and if a girl meets someone she likes better, she is quick to tell her present boy friend. What does it matter if he still loves her, suffers, or even commits suicide? That is his affair. In the field of love the subject does not feel responsible for what the other feels or does.

This adolescent kind of behaviour is spreading to adult life. The moral code proposed by television serials and soap operas openly proclaims that the only force that keeps a marriage together is love. Love justifies everything. The new moral code has only one

commandment: “go where your heart takes you”.^{lxiv} Anyone who stops loving, or is carried away by rage or hatred, goes off without a backward glance at the pain and devastation left behind. The result is that in real life the world of love and sex is increasingly dominated by the logic of crushes and cravings. Let us take the case of a woman who has helped her husband in his career, given him children and loved him dearly. He falls in love with a younger girl and leaves his wife for the girl, so the older woman starts to drink and eventually dies of cirrhosis of the liver. Her ex-husband does not however consider himself at all morally responsible for this death. Let us take another case: a man of sixty gets into financial difficulties and falls ill, so the woman he lives with leaves him. Though he dies of a heart attack, she does not consider herself in the slightest bit guilty, given that she no longer loves him. Is any of this right?

Obviously there is no contract or moral law that can force us to love someone against our will. But this does not automatically mean that we are not responsible for the consequences of our actions. Refusing responsibility means violating the fundamental moral principles our society is based on - the biblical commandment

telling us not to do to others what we would not like done to ourselves, Kant's teaching that we should act according to the principles we would like everyone to observe, and Max Weber's ethic of responsibility. We are always responsible for the ill we cause others and we must try to reduce it to a minimum. If it is true that we cannot force ourselves to love those we simply do not love, it is just as true that we can treat them kindly, help them in need and respect their dignity and worth.

Many people claim that love cannot be controlled. It depends on what kind of love. Many seemingly great loves are only crushes, whims, or fleeting infatuations. Even real cases of falling in love always begin with an exploration, and in order to develop they need consent and complicity. What can we say then about the subterfuges, selfishness or acts of meanness committed in the name of love? When love is involved, are we to justify any foul deed? It is, however, widely believed nowadays that it is always right and legitimate for us to go where our hearts take us and to dismiss with indignation any mention of duty and responsibility.

lvi	1.4
lvii	2.4
lviii	3.4
lix	4.4
lx	5.4
lxi	6.4
lxii	7.4
lxiii	8.4
lxiv	9.4

CHAPTER FIVE

Falling in love: the real thing^{lxv}

How is it possible to distinguish between really falling in love and a simple, passing infatuation? Is there any experience that is typically and unmistakably an indication that we have fallen in love? There must be, seeing that falling in love is dominated by the mechanism of the *nascent state*, and infatuation is not. If the typical experience of the nascent state is examined carefully, it will offer the key to understanding whether or not we are face to face with a real case of falling in love. It is indeed a somewhat intricate experience, but it is worth knowing about and clearly merits close scrutiny. Only when we have identified all the characteristics listed below will we be able to talk about really falling in love. If any one

characteristic is missing, the case in question cannot be defined as real.

1) ***The feeling of liberation.*** When we are in the nascent state, we feel like prisoners upon release. Having broken the chains, we have come out into the open air, and are savouring our freedom. Previously we had been mentally cribbed and confined, through laziness, passivity of fear. We had been forcing ourselves to do what other people wanted and had followed their rules rather than our own deepest aspirations. No longer ourselves, we had slowly but surely let ourselves be drawn into an invisible prison. But now we have burst its bars apart and have at long last become what we really wanted to be.

2) ***Illumination.*** It is as if a veil that had been covering our eyes was magically whisked away. We now know what we really want, we know our real being, we know what is right and what should be done. Previously we had been blind, asleep, like almost everyone else around us. And now we stare in amazement and find it impossible for them to be satisfied with what they have and what they are. We used to be like that, and we were neither alive nor real. Now we know

what it is like to be really and truly alive, and that it all depends on love. Even if it makes us suffer, love is a wonderful gift. Losing it would mean going back to the land of the blind and living like zombies.

3) *The one and only.* Nobody can brook comparison with our beloved. S/he is the only living being we can possibly love. No other person, not even our favourite film star, will do, and we will never find anyone similar, let alone better. If our love is returned, if we are loved, we are overwhelmed by the thought of how incredibly lucky we are. We feel as if we have been given something we could never have imagined possible. Every woman in love, therefore, really does meet the Prince Charming she thought belonged only to fairy tales, and every man in love meets the film star, the unattainable princess he would never have dared to look at. Since the gift is so incredibly great that we can scarcely believe it, we are seized by the determination to protect it against all adversity and cultivate it.

4) *Reality and contingency.* Now that we are able to see the essence of things, we are

confident that everything is animated by an ascendant force aspiring to happiness, joy, and rendering everything harmonious and perfect. This is the deep truth of the real, as we perceive it. Pain, imperfection, and evil are therefore nothing but appearance, contingencies that one day will vanish, both for us and for everyone else too. And the truth of love and happiness will triumph, so we must be optimistic and wait patiently.

5) *The experience of being.* We feel that everything that exists, all animate and inanimate beings, have a meaning. The power of the absolute breathes over everything, and it is all beautiful when lit up by the light of being. Being is in itself beautiful, logical, necessary, admirable and magnificent. Everything that exists, therefore, be it a hill, tree, leaf, a wall at sunset, or even an insect, stirs up feelings of wonder when we contemplate its beauty.

6) *Liberty and destiny.* When we love, we are as though embraced by the great sweeping breath of the universe. As part of its movement and harmony, caught up in its transcendent power we feel vibrant, like single notes in a great

symphony. Yet we have no sensation of being prisoners - on the contrary we feel free and are supremely happy with this freedom of ours. Going towards our beloved we respond to the call of being, and fulfil both our will and our destiny at one and the same time. To be free is to wish for the greatest good, to wish for one's destiny. No one is a "slave" to love, because it is our truth, our call, and our destiny.

7) *Cosmic love*. When we are in love, we love everything - mountains, trees, rivers, and all living beings. We reach towards the world with open arms, full of understanding and love. We love the people around us even more intensely, and would like to make them all happy. We feel that *duty and pleasure should coincide*. When this is not possible, and we are obliged to choose between the person we are in love with and all the others we love, we feel cut up and torn apart. It is an *ethical dilemma*. Many renounce their love, and when the dilemma seems insurmountable some go so far as to make suicide pacts, preferring to save their love rather than their lives. But anyone with the strength and will to save both makes every effort to find a solution acceptable to all. Those really in love are ready to

make sacrifices, and if they hurt someone they are filled with feelings of guilt and pain.

8) ***Rebirth.*** People in love break the magic circle that bound them to their community and prevented them from having any will of their own. Relationships with others are modified, as the lovers turn into different people. The old being is dead and a new one is being born in its place. Something has changed inside, there has been death and rebirth, or *metanoia*, as Saint Paul puts it. The person in love is born anew, and unless this experience of being reborn occurs, there is no real falling in love.

9) ***Naturalness and purity.*** Because our mean old self is dead, together with all its falseness, we want to be *natural* and *pure*. People in love are driven by an inner need to tell each other the truth. They do not lie even to themselves, as happened in the past. The person truly in love is fresh, light and resilient, without any of the meanness and envy that might have characterized the past. All that matters is love, and the meaning of this experience is given in the religious phrase: “Seek ye first the kingdom of God ... and all these things shall be added unto

you”. Having caught a glimpse of the real meaning of life, the lover fears no obstacle, confident that he will be able to overcome any difficulty, hatred or misunderstanding. This sense of invulnerability does not cloud the reason, however. On the contrary, a lover, remains patiently rational, alert and inventive.

10) What is *essential* is the beloved. The innumerable needs and habits of the past now seem futile. Possessions no longer count for anything, nor does dress or travel. Only the *essential* is necessary, what is needed to please one’s love, make him or her happy, so that the couple can live together. “Love in a hut” seems all that is needed, as the person in love can go without, and is content with very little. Hunger, toil and lack of sleep are borne serenely. If any mean feelings remain and any complaining is done, a person is definitely not in love.

11) *Love communism*. If a man falls in love with a rich woman, he will be happy she is rich and not worry about being poor himself. He will not necessarily want to become rich like her and does not want to become her. If, on the other hand, he happens to be the rich one, he will feel

the need to give and reduce the inequality between them. People really in love do not keep an account of what they give and take. Each gives “according to his ability” and takes “according to his need”.^{lxvi} This is only possible if both of the persons in love limit their material needs. They will inevitably do so because they are happy to be together and need very little else. Gazing into each other’s eyes, they will be content to nibble at a sandwich and consider it a delicious meal. They will be able to stay at a simple bed-and-breakfast and find it as luxurious as the Ritz.

Wherever there is pettiness and greed, there can be no true love. Indeed, when one falls in love all the wishes of the rest of the family, group or party are automatically put aside. We enter the nascent state as individuals. There is therefore an excess of resources over needs - if scarcity occurs, if one of the two asks too much, it means that s/he is not in love.

12) ***Historicizing.*** Being reborn leads us to construct our new identity. We go back over our past to understand everything that has happened to us and judge everything we have achieved, in order to understand what made us stray from the straight and narrow, and how we have found true

love. This is *historicizing*. All our traumas, sorrows and old loves are done away with and deprived of any value. New ones emerge, freed from any bondage or bitterness. The lovers go through this process together by talking over their past lives. They confide in each other about weaknesses and mistakes, and they also discover the early signs and presentiments of the love that now unites them. Listening to the other's tale and seeing the world as the other has lived it, the two fuse together not only their present lives but their past ones as well. They integrate and harmonize them to the point of creating a common history and acquiring a common identity.

13) *Love as a blessing*. Even though we have worked hard to win our love, we still live it as a miracle, a gift and a blessing. No explanations can be given for love - it is a totally free act, so we want the other to love us freely. Even when we would like to tie up and imprison our beloved, so that s/he will stay with us, we then want to hear the spontaneous utterance "I love you", The legendary love potion is something which converts the loved one's soul in our favour and produces the same sea change, the same *metanoia* that we have undergone. It is not

a form of slavery but liberation, and by drinking the magic potion our beloved comes to see us as we really are.

14) **Equality.** When they fall in love, both partners see each other as unique and irreplaceable - the being worth more than anybody else in existence. Both, therefore, feel on the top of the world. In sociological terms each is the other's charismatic leader and cannot be replaced. Thus lovers are *absolutely equal* - no difference of rank or degree is possible between them.

15) **Time.** Our beloved is like dawn, starting off our new life, and is also like sunset, marking off its limits. Therefore s/he is our whole life, like a sun-filled day, and everything begins and ends with him, with her. Time begins and ends right here, and we know that in giving us this love destiny has given us the very best. We therefore expect from the future only to walk side by side together and face all hardships and difficulties as a couple. We can imagine the whole of our life alongside our partner, until that moment when death us do part. How long this is does not matter - for life lived with one's love is anyway

complete and perfect. Love and life are the same thing.

Rather than renounce our love we are ready to die, though at the same time we desperately want to live - but only with the one we love, for the cycle of our new life begins and ends here. We are incapable of imagining time without our partner -the idea of it fills us with terror. Living without our beloved would mean going into decline, plunging into despair, while side by side we will not only survive, but prosper.

16) ***Transfiguration.*** When we fall in love, we transfigure our beloved and by this means we have a *dual experience* taking place in the very same moment. Every existing thing becomes both marvellous and at the same time perfectible, sweeping along an upward curve. This is how a mother looks at her sick child. She knows full well that there is sickness, wishes the child were healthy, that she could cure it. Yet she cannot help seeing that pale little face and tired little body as beautiful and enchanting. The process of transfiguration indeed makes us love what exists in the light of Being. But we must not confuse *transfiguration* with *idealization*. With *idealization* we find recognized values in our

beloved, ignore his or her defects, delete them and only underscore merits, to the point of exaggerating them. When we are in love it is transfiguration which allows us to love our partners as they are and to merge with them. We accept both body and spirit, open up our minds and are ready to change and mould ourselves to their desires. We want to become perfect in their eyes.

17) *Perfection.* We discover within us a force that drives us to surpass ourselves. We see the essence of ourselves and our loved ones, and their essence is not only as it appears at present but is also all the potential hidden in them that they themselves are unaware of.^{lxvii} It is as if it were our task to draw them towards what God might have in mind for them.^{lxviii} I therefore encourage my beloved to change, but this very process acts on me as well, making me want to bring out my innermost self and fulfil my own essence. So I am forced to look for it not only in what my loved one indicates but also in myself, in a spirit of truth.

We all want to be perfect in order to please our loved ones. We listen to them and model ourselves on their desires. However, at the same

time we look for our true vocations, and this search can bring us into conflict with our loved ones' requests. We both, in fact, aim to improve ourselves and each other,^{lxix} but our intentions may coincide or they may clash. A complex process follows which cannot go under the name of reciprocal adjustment because it is much more. It is an act of re-birth, re-invention and re-creation of the self and the other, as well as the relationship itself.

In this process of co-creation many misunderstandings, mistakes, adjustments, corrections and restarts are possible, because our loved ones cannot have all the potential that we have seen in them, nor can we have everything they have attributed to us. Some things that seemed true turn out to be false. The nascent state is an exploration of all possibilities, and as the exploration goes on some of them are reduced and impossibilities emerge - "reality" as opposed to fantasy and hope.

A couple forms and lasts only if this "reality" does not enter into mortal combat with the transfiguration stage and destroy it. The transfiguring process will continue with the successful couple, even though it will not extend to the whole range of possibilities. Areas of

impossibility and limits will have been charted, but within them the vital flux will be continually and constantly renewed.

18) **Fusion.** This is a mystic meeting which is sufficient in itself and is quick to fall back on its own resources. What counts is ecstasy, contact with the absolute. Its time is the present and its desire is to freeze time - the here and now, eternity. When time stops things reveal the perfection of their being and all aspirations cease, since we have moved beyond desire.

Fusion is the coming together of body and spirit. It gives warmth and light, just as miraculous water purifies, and a sacrament makes us invincible and invulnerable. The individual surrenders to something transcendental in which s/he is fulfilled. Before coming together the two bodies become sacred, a sanctuary. Then miraculous contact takes place between earth and heaven, fusion with the universe. Earth and heaven are called upon to bear witness, they look down and give their blessing. This is matrimony, a consecrated union, the celebration of the nuptial couple and nature, no longer distinct from each other. It is the union of the diversities that give birth to everything. It is *transubstantiation* - the

body becomes divine, joins with the other and symbolizes everything that is born and germinates.

19) *The project.* Fusion gives rise to projecting - the miracle of seeing, wishing and sharing everything together. It is as though the two lovers were wandering hand in hand through a beautiful new world. Everything shines, lit up by the radiance of their new being, which is tuned in to receiving nascent life. Previously all was just seed and promise, nothing more. Projecting is a way of defining things, projecting through time and thus constructing time. Time is born, emerges from the here and now - and from the eternal - in the form of a project.

The project germinates and grows, absolutely free, absolutely whimsical, a movement towards the world, a game within the world. It is possible because the world has been transfigured and is ready to accept it. There is no forcing, no pain. Projecting is energizing, it can generate frantic activity like building a house or a family, or it can call for the heart's withdrawal into a tower, hut, or forest (as in the Tristan-Isolde myth). Everything is done in the name of that mystic, life-stirring union. It is the alpha and

the omega, the start-off and the sell-by date. All other options - like building a house or a hiding-place - lead out from it as ways of being in the world, incarnations of that sacred union.

In producing these things culture plays its part, as do accumulated experiences like fears, childhood anxieties or loves, disappointments, dreams and unsatisfied desires. The project is the product of fusion and its desire to become living material - nature, body and structure. It is a form of germination, a mark left by the creative impulse, by the life-force which seeks perfection but becomes objectified in something living and enduring.

20) *The ethic dilemma.* The absolute, glimpsed, must become incarnate. Falling in love is not just an idyll. It is not just dreaming away beyond good and evil. It means bringing about good in this world, and this implies rediscovering morality. Morality is always presented as a choice between things which in the light of being have the same dignity. Lovers would like everybody to be happy, but they are bound to make someone unhappy. And they will therefore be forced to face the dilemma, which is a slow,

wearying search, not for absolute good but for what may at least reduce pain and suffering.

lxv	1.5
lxvi	2.5
lxvii	3.5
lxviii	4.5
lxix	5.5

CHAPTER SIX

Other forms of love

Since side by side with real cases of falling in love there exist others - false cases, like passing infatuations - we must learn to identify them and make clear distinctions between them.

Where the real process of falling in love occurs, *all the other mechanisms are subordinated to the nascent state*, while in other cases it is more usual for *one* mechanism to come into action *on its own*. For example, when the state of love is determined *only* by the mechanism of *indication*, forms of star-worship develop. When it is only the mechanism of *loss* that is involved, we find competitive love, which always needs some kind of threat or difficulty, such as the existence of a rival. In cases where it is only the *pleasure* mechanism that is functioning, erotic infatuations occur.^{lxx} These, as well as other forms of love, where different

factors are at work, will all be examined in the present chapter and the following one.

Star-love

1) **Star-worship.** This is set in motion by the mechanism of *indication*, which focuses on the person known and adored by all and sundry. Ready examples are given by political, social or religious movements, or churches, cults and sects, where the charismatic leader, priest or guru is always surrounded by a host of adoring followers. Just as admired, loved and desired, are millionaires, film stars, top singers, and sports champions - all those classed together as “*divi*” in Italy. With female fans such admiration may well take on erotic connotations.

In every society and group there is an erotic hierarchy which puts at the top the people considered most desirable, and at the bottom those who are deemed least attractive. *Erotic ranking* is the position occupied by people in this scale of preferences. Some can be found at the top of the international “league table”, while others belong to a more limited national grid or only a narrowly local one.

People of the same erotic rank are interchangeable, while those from a higher rank overshadow those lower down the scale. In Woody Allen's film, *The Purple Rose of Cairo*, a humble housewife worships a celluloid character, an explorer. At a certain point he comes out of the screen, courts her, and she immediately falls in love with him. Then the actor arrives in flesh and blood, and turns out to be even more attractive than the screen character. Now it's him she loves. But then both the actor and the character go away and, left with her disappointment, the poor woman returns to the movie-house where the miracle had taken place. There is another film on, with Fred Astaire dancing with Ginger Rogers. She at once falls under his spell and forgets all about the preceding crushes as this new love takes over.

Erotic rank is a social quality, a product of collective opinion, that puts individual preferences in the shade. It is true that all of us have personal ways of reacting to erotic stimuli, and there are always some who are not susceptible to the charisma of stars. But most of us are influenced to a greater or lesser extent by collective tastes.

Research into star-worship conducted so far^{lxxi} shows that girls are more influenced by the erotic ranking of those they choose to love than boys are. When they are aroused, girls tend in fact to aim high. So they are immediately attracted by the people in their circle with the highest erotic ranking, as well as by the international star circuit. A girl might therefore dream both of the local tennis champion and of Tom Cruise. Other men will only be taken into consideration as consolation prizes, out of pure, pragmatic necessity. This mechanism is as old as the hills, for the male has always chased all females, while the female makes herself beautiful and alluring, so as to attract the largest number of males possible, and especially those most sought after. She then chooses the best of the bunch.

In the same way, boys are attracted by beautiful and universally admired film stars. The difference is they do not think that any beautiful, fascinating and famous woman could possibly be interested in them. And even if she were, they would have nothing to offer her and would not know how to hold on to her. Thus one of the kingpins of falling in love collapses - hope. Having abandoned it in this case, they may then give up any further hope of making it with the

prettiest and most popular girls in their community. In this way many males end up by renouncing the universally admired and desired great beauty, leaving her to stars and idols, the rich and the powerful. They get used to looking elsewhere, where they can meet a smile meant just for them. Giving up on beauty means they do not even learn how to analyse it or distinguish it from sex appeal. Thus males tend to react to a limited number of physical stimuli, and rather obvious ones at that. They get excited over a plunging neckline, a great mass of hair, long legs, or even short ones if they are crossed in a come-hither way.^{lxxii}

Girls behave differently and put all they have got into attracting the attention of the local glamour boy, rich businessman's son, sports champion, or anyone who is generally considered good-looking. Having no idea what to do with all the others, they do not even condescend to glance at them. But this courageous decision to set their sights high also has its negative side - as they are often obliged to make do with men who do not correspond to their ideals. Which explains the veil of disappointment that can often be found in the eyes of young married women.^{lxxiii}

2) The extraordinary properties that are seen in a star are not the result of any *personal transfiguration* but of *collective indication*. It is society that indicates the star as such, that points to him or her as an exemplary, divine figure. *Star-worship* is a collective process that leads individuals to love what has already been chosen by the public as a whole. Many girls are actually more attracted by a star than by their flesh-and-blood boyfriend. Yet they cannot be said to be in love with the star, since the process has been set in motion neither by a personal transfiguration of love nor by the presence of any nascent state. All they are doing is taking part in a collective dream, seeing what society has already singled out as the best.

Millions of Russian women have been lovesick for Lenin or Stalin, as have Italians for Mussolini, Germans for Hitler and Americans for F. D. Roosevelt or J. F. Kennedy. All individuals love a leader, but women add that little touch of personal erotic interest, which is similar to what is felt for film stars. In this case it is society as a whole, or the propaganda agency in particular, which takes on the role that the individual performs in the process of love transfiguration.

In *personal love transfiguration*, however, we are able to find values in our loved one, whoever it is and no matter what other people may think. A woman may fall in love with the ugliest of men, with a delinquent or social outcast, while a man may fall in love with a prostitute or drug-addict. Because it is *the being-in-itself* that appears wonderful to the person in love, even if that being is wretched or ill. Just like a mother who continues to love her handicapped child and see him as beautiful - and quite rightly so. Because what happens is that her senses are sharpened and she sees something nobody else does. Love opens a door of knowledge to her which is closed to those who do not love. A man in love discovers what is valuable in his beloved, and shouts it out from the rooftops. Looking at the woman he loves, he prefers her to the most beautiful and famous of film stars. If he had to choose, he would opt for her without a moment's doubt. Falling in love rebels against popular taste and sets up its own order of values. It does not bow to universally recognized charisma but, like a real collective movement, creates its own charismatic figure and raises it aloft. The lover sees the radiance of charisma in the woman he

loves, and this makes her the only person worthy to become his chosen one.

3) **Star-worship and jealousy.** A woman is most unlikely to meet her favourite star and have him fall in love with her. Stars normally stay distant and remain objects to be adored from afar. This worship does not become a true enamouration. Where star-worship is concerned, the worshippers do not suffer because their love is not reciprocated. There may be sparks of jealousy at times, but on the whole *fans* accept the star being married, engaged or even involved in the odd affair. Because he is so remote, he cannot be acted upon and, no matter what his fans do, they will be unable to arouse his love. In star-worship, in fact, the physical and social distance between fan and star confines nascent love to a fantasy dreamworld, where desires are satisfied in an illusionary way.

We can fall in love with someone only when, rightly or wrongly, we think we stand some chance of being loved in return - when we can reasonably expect reciprocity. When we do not expect it, we are involved in a form of star-worship, not in falling in love. And in this case we do not suffer if the other person is not

interested in us. Whereas, if we really fall in love and the other person does not love us in return, we suffer terribly.

Knowing that the road leading to the star or leader is closed off to them, *fans* are usually content to admire and adore at a distance. They are content with a photo, a poster, or when they see their hero on the screen, But if they are able to get close, their desire increases, though they know that it is unlikely to be exchanged. So even a short-lived affair is experienced as a great privilege, and some fans throw themselves into their hero's arms, so as not to let him escape. There are even some who make a veritable collection of celebrities. In such cases it is not only the mechanism of indication that is at work but also a desire to show off one's ability to captivate and control. Only if a *fan* realizes that the star actually loves her in return, will she become jealous and possessive.

4) **Infatuation with stars.** It first appears as a real case of falling in love, even though the transfiguration is only produced by collective indication. If it is cross-checked against the basic tenets of the nascent state, as described in Chapter Five, it soon proves not to be real at all.

In any case pseudo-falling in love always gives itself away in the end because once the social applause dies down, the love itself evaporates. If a woman is really in love she will defy society, whereas if she is only infatuated she will follow its directives and bow to its fancies. If she actually met the star and lived with him on a day-to-day basis, she would realize she did not know him at all, that he was different from the way he had appeared at the cinema or on television, or from how he had been described by others. And she would probably be bitterly disappointed.

This is what happened to a young woman I will call *The Fan*, who had always worshipped a famous Hollywood star, idolizing him and imagining herself in love with him. As she belonged to a gambling, showbiz set, there came a day when she had the good fortune to meet him. She threw herself body and soul into the affair, managed to seduce him and get him into bed. But what a let down it was! The man was not only a rash gambler and heavy drinker, but as soon as they finished making love he would drop off asleep and start snoring. What is more, he had bad skin and suffered from body odour. The girl, who had thought herself in seventh heaven, was really quite relieved to be able to see him off at

the airport after a few days, and to lose sight of him forever.

Star infatuation can also occur with an object of desire outside the world of entertainment. This can be seen in the case of *The Husband Seeker*. At the age of twelve or so, this girl had had a crush on the Italian pop star, Al Bano. Mad about him, she papered her bedroom with his posters, and for ages she just dreamed of meeting him. Then, eventually, she met a local glamour boy admired by all the girls, partly thanks to his flashy sports car. Al Bano was yesterday's news as she threw herself into chasing her new love. She tracked him down, sidled up to him, laid traps for him, pandered to his every whim, made herself into a slave and accepted even the most humiliating situations. Until, at long last, she won. He started to be kind and considerate, fell in love with her and asked her to marry him. After presenting her to his family, he went to live with her. This was when she began to notice his defects and see him as clumsy, dull and uninteresting. Once domesticated, he had ceased to be the unattainable idol all the girls had been fighting over.

And now a new star appeared on the horizon one evening - an airforce pilot. Tall, dark and handsome, with a face like a Hollywood actor, he too was worshipped by women. But what really swept her off her feet was his uniform. She fell madly in love with him and her love for her fiancé turned to loathing and disgust. She broke off their engagement and refused to answer his letters or phone calls.

Though this young woman was indeed burning with passionate desire, her love was incapable of transfiguring any ordinary man. It had to light on a love object that was indicated to her via the admiration shown by other women. And even if she thought she was, she was not really in love. Indeed, as soon as she felt loved in return, as soon as the man she loved stopped being unattainable, her love would vanish and she was ready to throw herself into the arms of the next idol, with or without a uniform.

A similar case is presented to us by the American psychologist, Dorothy Tennov, though she confuses infatuation with real love. Early on in her book *Love and Limerence*, when speaking about a young student who slipped in and out of love with the greatest of ease, she writes: "Terry was always in love with someone. In sixth grade

she had had a terrible crush on Adam Smith, the most popular boy in the school ... Others had followed on in close succession, so much so that the pain of losing one subsided with the appearance of the next one”.^{lxxiv} Tennov takes *infatuation* for *falling in love*. Her concept of *limerence* does not contain within it any element to distinguish between two such different experiences.

5) **Falling in love with stars.** It is also possible for the process of *indication* to be the starting point for the *process of falling in love with the stars*. In this case it is easier for the individual to transfigure the loved one, because society already points him or her out as an extraordinary, extra-special person. It is the case of a rich twenty-two-year-old from South Africa, engaged and due to get married shortly, whom we will call *The Fiancée*. Summertime, and she was on holiday with her parents and her future husband. One evening she went to a night club where a singer was appearing who she had admired since she was little. During the course of the evening she was surprised to notice that he could not keep his eyes off her, and she already felt somewhat disturbed by his songs and his

physical nearness. A friend introduced him and he came to sit at the family table. Then he dedicated a song to her, invited her to a concert of his and started courting her. The girl felt irresistibly attracted, for this man was her dream, her ideal. Her fiancé's image could brook no comparison and faded away. It was a case of love at first sight. She saw him again during the following days, and her parents and friends got worried and tried to dissuade her. Adamant, she broke off her engagement, went to live with the singer, and two months later they got married.

It is obvious that if the star had not paid any attention to her, and above all, if he had not started courting her, it would all have remained in the realm of fancy, and she would have done no more than preserve a romantic memory of her idol. But as things went the star acted in real life as he might have acted in a teenage girl's dream. He went up to her, singled her out, told her that he desired and loved her. How could she possibly resist such stimuli? How is it possible to resist if the ideal person is encountered? *The Fiancée* did meet her ideal and he did not disappoint her. The indication mechanism in this case sparked off the nascent-state process and the process of falling in love.

Yet there remains a subtle distinction between falling in love with stars and falling in love with ordinary people. In the latter case, they are always slightly taken aback to discover that every detail of their face, their every move, their every thought may be seen as wonderful. But being adored in such an unmotivated, gratuitous way gives them a deep sense of security, not unlike the confidence children feel, because of their parents' love. Such unexpected admiration and trust has the effect of encouraging those who feel loved to do more, improve, and prove worthy of that love.

Stars, on the other hand, already up there on a pedestal, are already conscious of their worth. Everyone keeps on telling them. And this can cause problems in the falling-in-love process. Because really falling in love is like being re-born, starting all over again, when we take a critical look at our entire past. Someone who is too high up, too self-confident, may say: "This is what I am like. Take me as I am, with no question asked".

For love to exist, our beloved must bring out hidden or repressed possibilities in our being. S/he must offer us something new. What does the man in the street give a Marilyn Monroe, Claudia

Schiffer or Kim Basinger if he tells her she is beautiful? Nothing whatsoever. She already knows it. What can he say to her that a thousand other men have not already said? What presents can he give her that a thousand other men have not already given her?

Love needs to catch a glimpse of something desired and unattained, something that was waiting to bud - something that promises a dilation of experience, a life worth living. It may be beauty, strength, intelligence, art, amazement, excess, risk or power. In *Orlando Furioso*, for example, Angelica, worshipped by the rich and powerful, chooses a simple soldier, Medoro, because he is the most handsome. In real life Marilyn Monroe opted for sport with Joe Di Maggio, culture with Arthur Miller and finally power with Kennedy. Just like the legendary Cleopatra, who fell in love with Caesar.

6) Charismatic leaders and stars. The relationships between charismatic leaders and followers are different from those between *fans* and stars. In a collective movement the followers are not only in love with their leader but with their own collective being. Catholics, for example, love and admire both the Pope and their

Church, while Muslims are emotionally tied not only to their *Imam*, but also to the *umma*, the community of believers. In fact, it is not only the leader of a movement who is extraordinary and charismatic, but the movement and community as well.^{lxxv}

The love relationship that is set up between stars and their followers differs, in that it is modelled on a stellar format.^{lxxvi} The stars are at the centre, sole focal points of all admiration, adoration and love. *Fans* of Rudolph Valentino, Clark Gable, Paul Newman, Tom Cruise, Frank Sinatra or Luciano Pavarotti are bonded to their star alone - a set of individuals responding to one unique individual.

Freud made a serious mistake in his theory of the masses^{lxxvii} in imagining that the group is formed because all the children are bonded individually to their father, like *fans* to their star. And as they have the same love object and identification mechanism in common, he sees them as being horizontally identified also. Following this logic, the leader is therefore indispensable for the existence of the group. If this is the case how then do brothers, as he himself writes in *Totem and Taboo*,^{lxxviii} rebel and kill the leader? In hating the leader and breaking

away from him, they cease to be a group. How can they organize themselves to kill the leader therefore? Freud can offer no solution to this problem.

But our theory of movements can. Once relations with the father are broken off, a *nascent state* comes into being, moulding a new group out of the old participants. From this “revolutionary group”, or “sworn brotherhood”, a new leader emerges. This kind of change is well represented in Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar* where admiration has turned to hatred and resentment among many of Caesar’s followers. They want his death, but none of them would ever have the courage to raise the dagger alone. They can only succeed when they form a concerted group around a new leader, Brutus, work out an ideology in order to justify their action, and swear loyalty to one another. Then, after killing Caesar in the Senate, they repeat the ritual of the conspiratorial oath, with their knives still dripping blood, and shake bloodstained hands.

People’s attitude to a star is very different from their attitude to a leader. While the leader of a movement is seen as the one who will lead them towards the future, towards *salvation*, admirers of Paul Newman, Madonna, or Richard

Gere may get shivers down the spine if they meet them - they may even worship them - but they have no sense of collective destiny. Where love and eroticism are concerned, however, there is no difference between a charismatic leader and a star. That is why we have used a single expression - *star love* - to indicate all the various types of love interest felt for those who are admired, loved and worshipped by a large number of people - whether they be charismatic leaders or individual stars.

Competitive love

The phenomenon of competitive love exists where passions are aroused only when we come up against an obstacle, only when the other person says no, or if there is a rival - father, husband, wife - who is there to bar the way. When this obstacle disappears and the aim is reached, love vanishes. Thus competitive love comes into play when the *mechanism of loss and self-assertion prevail over other love mechanisms*.

Unlike what happens in the case of star love, a competitive kind of falling in love is very rare. We usually see only forms of pseudo-falling in

love or *competitive erotic infatuation*. They are very widespread forms of infatuation, even if they are not so extreme as in the cases of Don Juan and Casanova. Don Juan is only a legendary figure, but Casanova, who actually existed, has left us his famous *Memoirs*.^{lxxix} Casanova would get a burning passion for a woman and be totally convinced that he was in love with her. He would then use all possible stratagems and flattery in order to win her over. But as soon as he succeeded, the love he felt would vanish into thin air. In the film, *The Return of Casanova* starring Alain Delon, the great Venetian philanderer is seen as having reached middle age. He goes to a villa, where a woman lives who he once loved just for one night, while she has gone on loving him ever since and has been longing for him to return to her. When he appears she fondly thinks he has come back for her, while in actual fact he is in love with her twenty-year-old niece - a non-sense girl, in tune with her times, who will have nothing to do with him, partly because she is in love with a young lieutenant, who she spends passionate nights with. Beside himself with desire, Casanova tries every trick in the book, even attempting to make her feel sorry for him. When all else fails, on the last night before

he is due to leave, he plays cards with the lieutenant and wins a sum of money which the young man does not possess. Casanova asks him to meet the debt by handing over his clothes, so that he can enter the girl's room in the dark. The young man accepts, and by means of this stratagem Casanova is able to fulfil his desire. In the morning, his passion spent, he gets into his carriage and leaves. But the furious young lieutenant is waiting for him outside the villa, and challenges him to a duel. Casanova confronts and kills him.

The example requires little comment. In no way is Casanova in love with the young woman - he only desires her because she has rejected him and because there is a rival involved. No nascent state comes into being, no process of fusion takes place. The whole action is dominated by Casanova's competitive feelings and desire to assert his own seductive powers. And the apparently great love he feels duly dies as soon as he possesses the woman and kills the rival.

Competitive pseudo-falling in love is very common in both men and women, as Carlo Castellaneta's novel, *Le donne di una vita*, shows us.^{lxxx} The hero, Stefano, passionately in love with Ida, a married woman, persuades her to

leave her husband and to go and live with him but, after a time, he realizes that he is no longer in love with her. He will only regain interest in her once she has remarried. His other loves go the same way, like Flora, and Valeria - who leaves her husband and children - but he tires of her as soon as she starts behaving like a jealous wife, waiting up for him when he is out late. Then the very day he is going to buy the house they have planned to live in together, he meets Giorgina. Once again he experiences a period of crazy, ecstatic love, but it only lasts until he feels that his love is returned, and at this point he is ready for a new affair.

No different is the case of a young woman who in the course of conversation confided desperately that she was still looking for a man to marry. We have already met her as *The Husband Seeker*. She could think and talk of nothing else, and even put ads in the newspaper. She kept on "falling in love", but nobody ever wanted to marry her. Listening to the story of her life, however, we get a more complicated picture. In childhood she was infatuated by film stars and singers - her first love was a local glamour boy who she left for a pilot, also a local hero, admired and chased by the girls. She lost her head for him,

made a fool of herself, managed to win him over and then got tired of him. She then went back to her star fantasies and her own form of stargazing. After a short time she fell for a well-known professional man who was both rich and married. As had happened before, she chased him unashamedly, managed to catch him, and the two became lovers. But not satisfied with a simple affair, she wanted something more serious and so he broke it off. In the meantime she met other men who, for looks, culture, intelligence and status were on a par with her. Some of them courted her, and one wanted to marry her, but she was not interested. She kept looking higher, for someone with better erotic ranking. She fell for a lawyer, a gynaecologist, a university professor - always renowned, rich and decidedly married. She threw herself into affairs with gay abandon, and always managed to get her man into bed. Then she would start acting like a wife, not only in private but also in public with friends and acquaintances - until, in the long run, the man of the moment would get fed up and leave her.

In other words, whenever this girl managed to get a man to fall in love with her, and the man was willing to marry her, she would tire of him, draw back and lose all interest in him. Love and

eroticism could only be aroused for her when the partner was rich, powerful and married, that is when she could try out her seductive power, sex appeal and especially when she could get the better of other women.

If, in spite of all the disappointments, *The Husband Seeker* repeated the same scheme, it meant that she enjoyed it. And her pleasure lay in being able to exert her sex appeal over a man, and lure him away from his circle of friends and the woman he was with, for no matter how brief a period of time. All she desired to do was to seduce men. What she described as a series of defeats in love - because none of the men she fell in love with wanted to marry her - were in fact victories.

Another similar case, *Nicolle*, is described to us by Jeanne Cressanger.^{lxxxix} Nicolle fell in love with men so inaccessible that other women would have given up, but she, on the contrary, managed to overcome all obstacles, by dint of her allure and tenacity. As a result of her resolute courting, one man was on the point of divorcing his wife. Another, a Turk, became a naturalized Frenchman so as to marry her, while a third, a criminal, was reformed. But every time victory came within her reach, when she could have got

married, she lost all interest and realized she was no longer in love. Things went on like this until a character called Paul came on the scene. He was even more difficult than the others - fascinating, mysterious, and inaccessible. So much so that it was even rumoured that he was a spy. Nicolle fell madly in love with this elusive mystery man. She chased him unmercifully for two years and eventually married him. She did so because in actual fact he was still eluding her psychologically, because she was still not sure of victory, and marriage was the first tangible sign of success. After a time the enigma was revealed - that mysterious, inaccessible man was in actual fact quite deranged - a paranoid schizophrenic, subject to fits of depression. In fact he eventually committed suicide.

All the cases we have examined have been examples of infatuation. But does a *competitive* kind of *real falling in love* also exist? With people dominated by the mechanism of competition something similar to falling in love is possible only if they keep on being defeated. If the ones they covet never let themselves go completely, but reject them or keep them dangling - if they keep a rival alive, even artificially, then love can last for years and years.

It is what Carlo Castellaneta tells us in his novel *Passione d'amore*.^{lxxxii} Diego falls in love with Leonetta and goes on loving her only because she gives herself to him but eludes him at the same time.

In their love sessions together, Leonetta tells him about her loves, vices, predilections and experiences with other lovers. Diego is stirred and excited, stimulated by the continual challenge. Leonetta is married and does not want to give up her husband - because she is used to wealth and she needs it in order to be herself, a kind of queen who graciously bestows herself. She needs wealth in order to be beautiful, and living with Diego would mean having to get used to a poorer way of life and doing without her expensive clothes, top hairdresser, and personal beautician. But she has another reason as well for staying with her husband, for she knows full well that Diego is only interested in her as a prize to snatch away from a rival. She knows that in spite of all the years it has lasted, Diego's ongoing passion for her would vanish the moment she stopped being his unattainable goddess and became an ordinary possession. At that point she would lose all her allure and seem cheap and insipid.

At this point a distinction must be made. In the case of *Nicolle*, infatuation grows out of a need to show allure and sex appeal. Paul the mystery man, attracts her because he is inaccessible, cold and does not respond to her love. She wants to demonstrate to herself that she can seduce men and therefore her desire reaches feverish heights when she comes up against a schizophrenic who is incapable of loving. *The Husband Seeker*, is a different case, wanting to assert superiority over other women rivals. The Diego and Leonetta story, however, is a real borderline case, for it is a great love lasting over a ten-to-twenty year span and containing many of the features of a real case of falling in love: fusion, desire for a life in common - but all held in check and blocked by the infernal mechanism of competition.

Finally let us see what happens in a book and film that have had a great importance in the history of female emotions: *Gone with the Wind*. At first sight the love of Scarlett O'Hara for Ashley seems to be of the competitive type, because it lasts as long as he is faithful to his wife, and vanishes the moment she dies. In actual fact Scarlett had been in love with Ashley before she knew he was engaged to Melanie and she

goes on hoping to conquer him even afterwards, because he had never really rejected her. The relationship between Rhett and Scarlett is also psychologically correct. Scarlett cannot fall in love with Rhett because she is already in love with Ashley, and will only be able to do so when that love is over. Rhett's love for Scarlett, however, is founded on an awareness that there is a deep affinity between them, and he understands that together they will be capable of extraordinary things. But Scarlett wants to assert her personality and independence, and is afraid it will be crushed by Rhett's overpowering personality. For this reason, if she has to marry someone she does not love, she will choose weak, dependent men.

Economic interest and social status

Wealth and social class, a costly lifestyle with cars and houses, luxury boats and fashionable clothes - all go to make a person more attractive. And they are all factors that contribute towards stimulating falling in love, since dreams, hopes and social aspirations also play their part. In the tale of *Cinderella*, for

example, the prince falls in love with the poor girl only because her fairy godmother helps her to get to the ball in a spectacularly beautiful dress. Had she turned up in her usual rags, he would not have spared her a glance. Likewise, in Shaw's *Pygmalion*, Henry Higgins at first despises the dirty ignorant creature he rescues from the gutter. It is only when she turns into an elegant and refined young lady that he falls in love with her. We have seen, too, how *Freshman* fell in love with a fellow student from a higher social class. There was nothing mercenary or calculating about his choice - the girl just symbolized a world he found fascinating and irresistible.

In literature we find many a love story described as having been set in motion or cushioned along by luxury and wealth. Take Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, for example. Twenty-year-old Jay Gatsby first sets eyes on Daisy at a reception that he attends with some other officers at her home. He is very poor, but his uniform makes him a social equal. At the sight of the sumptuous mansion he is quite bowled over. He has never seen anything so magnificent. He falls deeply in love with the rich and stunningly beautiful Daisy and, not knowing who he is, she falls in love with him in

return.^{lxxxiii} Gatsby then leaves for the battle-front, loses touch with her, and she gets married. But he goes on loving her, and makes a great effort to accumulate a fortune so as to be able to win her hand. There is much that is autobiographical in this story, for Fitzgerald himself had fallen in love with Zelda Sayre, a rich judge's daughter, while he was on military service in Alabama. Belonging to a higher social class, Zelda too was out of his reach, and he only got to marry her after the success of his novel, *This Side of Paradise*.

Wealth, therefore, is associated with really falling in love as one of the components that can trigger off the nascent state - like sexual pleasure, attractive manners, the lure of a uniform, or a display of power. People who have always subconsciously dreamed of a more elevated lifestyle tend to fall in love with someone who symbolizes it, as did the twenty-two year old writer Honoré de Balzac, who fell in love with Laura de Berry, a woman twice his age. Elena Gianini Belotti gives a perfect explanation of what happened: "If the petit bourgeois Honoré fell in love with the aristocratic Laura de Berry, it was because he felt drawn and dazzled by a lifestyle and social circle he was anxious to

belong to. He was craving for attention, encouragement and all the stimuli and loving care that he needed to bring out his as yet somewhat rough talent, so that he could express himself with more refinement. He desperately needed something that would make up for the wrongs inflicted on him by his humble origins. He desperately needed to gain recognition for his natural gifts, the value of which he was perfectly aware of. Such needs could not possibly be met by any closely guarded, naive young girl, who would have been more in need of help herself rather than in a position to help him.^{»lxxxiv}

But wealth and economic interest are very often not the gateway to true love. There are some who marry for coldly mercenary reasons, like the fortune-hunter pretending to be in love with the heiress, or the social climber pretending to be in love with the millionaire. This is just what Scarlett O'Hara does in *Gone with the Wind*, when in order to save her beloved Tara, she coldly and calculatingly ensnares a rich shopkeeper and marries him.

Self-interest on its own, without love, is certainly no condition for creating a stable married relationship, as it is no easy matter to go on pretending for year after year. A man who is

not attracted to his wife will be forced to invent all sorts of excuses so as not to appear impotent, and a woman who is not attracted to her husband will experience a state of irritation and repugnance. In her novel, *Paolo e Francesca*, Rosa Giannetta Alberoni^{lxxxv} describes the efforts made by a woman who has married a rich and famous man. Little by little her body rebels. She is disgusted by the smell of him and the touch of his hands, and any love she may have felt eventually turns to hate.

However, between the situation in which wealth can spark off the nascent state and sheer financial calculation there are many intermediate forms. There are many cases of romantic infatuation in which wealth and its symbols - a sports car, luxury boat, sumptuous house, millionaire life style, sensational presents - produce an attraction similar to that felt for a charismatic leader or film star. It looks like a real case of falling in love but it is not, so once the goal is reached and wealth obtained, love rapidly vanishes, and the ex-lover just desires independence, and longs to have all that money alone. Very rich people are like stars and are always surrounded by admirers ready to throw themselves into their arms and declare their love.

But is it love, infatuation, or pure calculation? For this reason the very rich tend to marry within their own circle, among their equals.

Falsification

Where real falling in love is concerned, we all look for the truth. We look into our hearts so as to express our deepest needs, what we really want, and we do not lie, either to ourselves or the ones we love. We may at times play at being unattainable so as to draw our loved ones on, intrigue them or put them to the test. But then we make up for it, abandon ourselves to the desire to reveal ourselves unreservedly as we are, and offer a genuine confession. There are, however, some people who feel the need to compensate for defects and fears, and instead of showing their real anxieties they conceal them by displaying qualities they do not really possess.

If both do this, and each clings to his or her own lies, the result is something psychologists call *collusion*. Collusion comes from the Latin -*cum-ludere*, meaning a secret intent to deceive each other. So lovers compensate for their own failings by giving a false picture of themselves, and partners accept it at face value, so as to convey the false image they too want to show.

Thus both sides pretend and are unable to stop doing so.

Here again we are confronted by an incomplete or pseudo-kind of falling in love. The nascent state is unable to run its course because it is blocked by lies. The *historicizing* process cannot take place, so the past goes unredeemed, unexpiated and it will eventually return to reproduce the situation the individual has been trying to escape from.

Let us take the case revealed by J. Willi.^{lxxxvi} A young man with a weak, down-trodden father and an overbearing mother was afraid of falling into the same trap, so he tried to become the opposite of his father by pretending to be strong, active and self-confident. His future wife also had a weak father and dominating mother and had reacted by pretending to be delicate, and assuming a fragile, feminine manner. The couple met at a student restaurant, he noticed and liked her, but was too shy at first to approach her. Then he plucked up courage and invited her to have coffee with him. She had considered him a weakling, and was pleasantly surprised by this appearance of manly self-confidence. So they both started to show the other qualities they did not possess - strength in his case, weakness in

hers. Once married they carried the pretence to excess. The woman pretended to be so delicate that she ended up in hospital, at which point he could no longer keep up the pretence of being strong, and had a nervous breakdown. The wife reacted violently, and in this way both of them ended up by revealing their true natures and showing what they had tried to avoid - his passivity and her overbearingness.

It is possible for a love relationship to begin with pretence and falsification, but then develop into a real case of falling in love, which brings out the truth. The question has been explored in brilliant comedies like *Some like it Hot*, with Jack Lemmon, Tony Curtis and Marilyn Monroe. Tony Curtis pretends to be a millionaire so as to catch Marilyn, while Jack Lemmon is accomplice to his friend's disguise. In actual fact they are both small-time musicians, who have unwillingly witnessed a gangland murder. The gang try to get rid of them, and catch up with them at the very point when Tony Curtis has succeeded in winning Marilyn. The young men are forced to flee, and Tony Curtis then reveals his true identity. But Marilyn does not mind, and they both realize they are really and truly in love.

Consolation love

Consolation love is a false kind of falling in love after an unhappy love experience. After the painful phase known as *petrification*, our vital energy is renewed and we look for new love objects. But the wound is too recent and we cannot fall in love again just yet. So we go on looking for someone to show us warmth and affection, to whom we can abandon ourselves without fear. It does not mean that this person must necessarily be dull and boring - on the contrary, we usually look for someone full of life who can stimulate us and take us out of ourselves. But we want that person to be the first to fall seriously in love. We look for someone who will love us, and we allow ourselves to be loved.

We have already spoken about *The Man from Turin*. He had suffered a bitter disappointment that had left an open wound for years. He wanted to fall in love again so as to forget his unhappy experience and, at a certain point, he felt attracted to a lovely young French woman. He thought he loved her, but distance and financial difficulties prevented him from continuing the affair. There followed a brief fling

with a colleague, which soon ended because they both felt duty bound to admit they were not really in love. So he was left with a need for a sure, warm and affectionate relationship - to take the place of the great love he had lost. At this point he met a pleasant, vivacious young woman, and as he transmitted his great need to her, she responded by falling in love with him. She introduced him to her well-to-do- family and he was given a warm welcome. They got engaged and then, quite naturally, they married. The woman took care of the house and he went on contentedly with his work. There was never a moment's disagreement, never a hard word. *The Man from Turin* would have sworn in all honesty that he loved the girl who had become his fiancée and then his wife. As it was, he only felt a warm affection for her, while he still loved the other one. The only way he could free himself from this web would be to fall in love again, for only falling in love has the power to penetrate the past and redeem it. Thus, after his marriage, he realized that he respected his wife and was fond of her, but she did not please him physically or enrich him spiritually. He entered into a confused, tormented period which only ended when he fell madly in love with someone else.

A more dramatic case is *Chiara's Story*. Naples born and bred, Chiara was a beautiful girl whose parents fussed over her. She never had to help in the house, and acted like a queen both at school and in her social life. At the age of eighteen, while staying with an aunt in Milan, she met a twenty-year-old boy and they fell in love. Once she was back in Naples they kept up a correspondence and telephoned each other for months. He went to see her, but not as often as they both would have liked. As the boy had a fairly humble job, he could not afford to join her very often. And Chiara's parents did not approve of him - they wanted someone better for her. Chiara did not have the courage to leave her family, and reacted by crying and moping in her room. Sure that she would forget him, her parents counted on the help of time. The boy from Milan stopped coming to see her. A few years went by and on another visit to her aunt up north Chiara was introduced to a man who passed for a rich Lombard landowner. This time her parents did approve of the match, and encouraged her to marry him. She accepted, because she was desperately in need of love, and this man said he loved her. But there was also the fact that he

lived near Milan, which gave her the feeling that she was getting closer to her lost love.

She married the landowner, but he turned out to be only a fairly well-off peasant farmer with a small-holding, where he raised animals. The house was squalid and smelly because it was close to the cowsheds, and the farmyard was muddy. For a girl used to the city, and being waited on hand and foot, it was terrible to have to cope with manual work. She became pregnant at once, and soon found herself with a babe in arms, badly dressed, unkempt and in that nightmarish place. She could not stop crying, and her father, having realized what a mistake they had made, went to see her often. He took her clothes and kept her company. But one foggy winter night the poor man got run over by a car and killed. Terror-stricken, Chiara picked up the baby and fled to Milan in search of help. She was taken back home raving and delirious, after which she became mute and fell into a catatonic silence. Eventually one day she opened the door, wandered off trance-like into the freezing Lombard plain without even a coat, and was never seen again.

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lxxi	2.6
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CHAPTER SEVEN

Eroticism

Eroticism in falling in love

When we fall in love our eroticism and sexuality are heightened to an extraordinary degree. Our loved one's body has a sacred, divine aura, and we wish to be absorbed in it. People in love can spend day after day, night after night locked in each other's arms making love. And once desire is satisfied it comes back, stronger than ever. We tend to think of desire like eating, drinking and sleeping - in the sense that once satiated, our need subsides and disappears. All psychoanalysts see desire as a form of tension to be released. In the nascent state, however, love and desire are seen as insatiable. We are not looking for happiness in the release of tension but in the increase, in making it grow and grow continually.^{lxxxvii}

When we fall in love, we become infinitely more erotic than we usually are - in fact eroticism takes over our whole lives. The body we love becomes a welcoming world, where we live and find sustenance, considering everything connected with it as marvellous. Psychoanalysts explain this phenomenon by comparing it to the memory of the baby cradled in its mother's arms and nourished at her breast. It is however very possible that the same genetic engram that draws a baby instinctively to its mother draws an adult to the loved one.

Falling in love can start off as overwhelming sexual desire and only at a later stage turn into passionate love. In Woods Kennedy's book, *Un anno d'amore*^{lxxxviii}, a boy falls in love on discovering the beauty and charisma of his woman. His is an excessive, overwhelming sexuality which explodes on first contact with a woman's breast, as he gazes spellbound at her body, ecstatically discovering her nipples, mons veneris, dimples low down her back, the intimate area of the labia minora and majora. A universe of delight - the more possessed, the more loved and desired. And as in the case of *The Man of Bari*, a great love can begin with blinding erotic passion.

A most articulate depiction of sexuality turning to love can be found in Nabokov's *Lolita*. Thanks to his ironic touches, Nabokov manages to convey the idea of mad, uncontrollable sexual desire without even letting us suspect that a great love story is about to begin. Humbert, the protagonist, is excited by the body of a twelve-year-old, his nymphet, as he calls her. He writes: "There my beauty lay down on her stomach, showing me, showing the thousand eyes wide open in my eyed blood, her slightly raised shoulder blades, and the bloom along the incurvation of the spine, and the swellings of her tense narrow nates clothed in black, and the seaside of the schoolgirl thighs".^{lxxxix} One evening, while he is sitting next to Lolita's mother on the veranda, and the child squeezes in between them, he takes his chance: "I...took advantage of those invisible gestures of mine to touch her hand, her shoulder and a ballerina of wool and gauze which she played with and kept sticking into my lap; and finally, when I had completely enmeshed my glowing darling in this weave of ethereal caresses, I dared stroke her bare leg along the gooseberry fuzz of her shin, and I chuckled at my own jokes, and trembled, and concealed my tremors, and once or twice felt

with my rapid lips the warmth of her hair...”^{xc}
Love makes its presence felt as no more than sexual desire ready to exploit any possible situation. At one point, teasing her with a magazine, he entices Lolita over to him. “Next moment, in a sham effort to retrieve it, she was all over me. Caught her by her thin knobby wrist. The magazine escaped to the floor like a flustered fowl. She twisted herself free, recoiled, and lay back in the right-hand corner of the davenport. Then, with perfect simplicity, the impudent child extended her legs across my lap. By this time I was in a state of excitement bordering on insanity; but I also had the cunning of the insane.”^{xc1} There follows a most detailed description of the manoeuvres he performs in order to obtain an orgasm, a real level of erotic ecstasy that will be repeated on other occasions, always stolen, always surreptitious, without the slightest hint of affection or loving thought. Nothing but disturbing, obsessive desire that Humbert lives as forbidden and obscene, but which he is powerless to resist and which he satisfies with all kind of subterfuges, even going so far as to marry the mother in order to be close to the daughter. Then he begins a crazy zigzagging with her across the United States,

driving from one tourist spot to another, from one movie theatre to another, filling her full of ice-cream, preventing her from going to school or meeting any boys of her own age, and negotiating sexual favours with her. “How sweet it was to bring that coffee to her, and then deny it until she had done her morning duty. And I was such a thoughtful friend, such a passionate father, such a good paediatrician, attending to all the wants of my little auburn brunette’s body! My only grudge against nature was that I could not turn my Lolita inside out and apply voracious lips to her young matrix, her unknown heart, her nacreous liver, the seagrapes of her lungs, her comely twin kidneys.”^{xcii} Here we can detect unmistakable signs of enamourment, despite all the irony. The lover loves everything, absolutely everything of the loved one, including internal organs and even guts. Though it is carefully concealed by the writer’s art, we can see that this erotic passion is total love.

On other occasions, however, enamourment begins with a spiritual attraction, languor and desire for proximity, as we have seen in the case of *Freshman*. Or it can come in the guise of friendship, tenderness and esteem, as happened with *The Prudent Man*. For *Freshman* it was at a

stage of his life in which the need for a woman was maturing in him - the need to live with a woman. On the other hand, *The Prudent Man* was used to looking for sexual satisfaction without getting emotionally involved. Falling in love can only occur after friendship, esteem, trust and confidence have beaten down any defences and overcome any fears.

We can now ask ourselves the following question. When a person is really and truly in love, can he or she be sexually attracted to somebody else, and betray the person loved?. Naturally it differs greatly from individual to individual. But put in the terms we have presented, as a simple possibility, the answer is yes. This is true especially for men, and rather less so for women, at least in this day and age, though with the increasing adoption of masculine patterns of behaviour this difference may well disappear. But for the moment it still exists, and a woman prefers first to be courted and desired, and then to choose whether she will accept or not. If she is in love, she will have already made her choice, and will reject any other proposal. A man, on the contrary, following another scheme, seeks and proposes. When he is in love, the whole world appears beautiful, and he sees something of

his beloved shining through all women. Thus, if he gives way to his feelings, a man in love is ready to embrace all women. Paradoxically, therefore, he is ready even for an erotic encounter if another woman makes a fuss of him, builds up his confidence and leads him on. Though he will not take the initiative, he will succumb to seduction - but such readiness for erotic enjoyment ceases the moment he thinks he may lose his loved one's love, for then all erotic desire vanishes.

When a woman senses that the man she loves may have had sex with someone else, she hits the roof. Her fury does not spring only from jealousy and a sense of possession, but also because she knows that it is she herself who has turned him on, she who with her love has supplied him with the vital energy making him vulnerable to the call of Eros. She thus feels robbed of a sacred power - something that he has belittled and cheapened by bandying it around. And she will be raring to punish him. That is why a man describes the fury of a woman he has betrayed by saying she came at him like a savage beast. And as he says it he will be trembling with the fear of losing her, of being abandoned for an act to which he attaches no importance whatever.

Yet he knows that she is capable not only of threatening but also of effectively destroying their love. So in order to protect himself he will get wise and promise to behave himself in future.

For a woman in love a sexual act outside the couple is something profane, for she devotes her whole body to her beloved and is horrified by any idea of contact with a “foreign body”. She sees her loved one’s body as part of her own, transfigured by love. Reborn through love, she wants to be pure - in mind, heart and body. This spiritualized *loving body* belongs exclusively to them both. It has become a *shrine* which must be protected against any blasphemous contact - a shrine which her man must approach with due respect.

Every single gesture of a woman in love is part of a sacred rite and thus she consecrates her own body and the space around - the bed where they make love. No one else can invade it - no one else is permitted to sleep in it, not even parents, brothers or sisters. The only other beings that are allowed to come to a woman in love’s bed are those she and her loved one have produced together: their children.

Other forms of erotic love

A sexual fling is an experience in which the subject is not deeply committed, and has no thought of merging with the other person and changing. What is more, it is of limited duration, with the subject knowing right from the start that it will be a short-lived experience. The very idea that it is no more than a fling already forecasts its end, and its motto is written in the past tense: “It was fun”. It is the kind of thing that happened to the married woman who went on holiday to the Club Méditerranée and met a man she felt attracted to. Her husband was well out of the way, and in any case their marital relationship had become boring for her. She now felt a thrill of pleasure at the idea of a romantic adventure, an act of transgression with a touch of forbidden, erotic ecstasy. But she knew that everything was destined to end when it was time to go home. For the partner, perhaps, everything was easier, since all he wanted was sexual pleasure and he put up with the romantic ribbons just to humour the woman. Had it been up to him, he would have done without them.

A love affair. There are also cases in which the love relationship is very intense. It is a real beginning of falling in love which, however, is unable to go any further, because the subject cannot envisage any kind of future. As no project can be worked out, the process is interrupted. But for that obstacle, it could have turned into a really great love. Such an experience has been well illustrated by Elena Gianini Belotti,^{xciii} who has made a study of women falling in love with men much younger than themselves. In our society this kind of relationship is still considered exceptional or anomalous. As the woman concerned expects the young man she loves to get tired of her sooner or later and fall in love with someone else, she will try to put brakes on falling in love, and prevent it from becoming a lifetime project. Let us hear from a few of these women. *Martha* declares: "When I thought about Mark, I never thought my love story with him could last long, and not only because he was younger, but because all loves come to an end, and I tend very much to be a loner".^{xciv} And *Sandra* says: "I am convinced that a fine love story must necessarily be short-term. Bonds between couples horrify me - and anyway time wears everything out. For me it is more important how intense an affair is

rather than how long it lasts. I find teetering on the edge more exciting than treading the well-beaten path. I have never had any projects where young men are concerned, seeing that I knew they were affairs that were bound to finish before long”. While *Elisabetta* says: “The affair between Riccardo and me was without any projects - we both knew, even without saying it in so many words, that it was doomed to end. I wasn’t counting on it lasting but rather on its intensity as long as it did last. I thought that sooner or later he was bound to fall in love with a younger woman”. And according to *Laura*: “I forced myself never to think about any future with him, but to leave him free to have other relationships. Because of the difference in our ages I felt as if I was tying him down to a dead-end affair”^{xcv}.

Erotic infatuation, on the contrary, is no love affair counting time passing. In this case we are deeply involved and would like to go on with it, for sexual desire and pleasure have become highly important and permeate our whole life. When we think of the other person we desire them, and when we are together we never get tired of making love. However, erotic infatuation is based essentially on the *pleasure principle*,

with no passing through a nascent state. It thus enters into the category of pseudo-falling in love.

Usually, in a case of erotic infatuation, we are attracted sexually to a person who from an intellectual point of view means nothing to us, or we cannot trust, or who has friends and habits we find unacceptable. We have no intention of joining our lives to theirs, nor do we think of building anything marvellous with them. We like and desire them, we desire their bodies and kisses, and we wish to be making love with them. And our desire can be so strong that we may even think that we cannot do without them, and are actually in love. But all that is needed is for a meeting to go wrong, for a misunderstanding or an argument to arise, and then something snaps. This happens because everything is based on the pleasure principle, which calls for constant reinforcement.

In the case of *erotic infatuation*, if one partner decides to create a permanent relationship, a real spiritual intimacy, and starts viewing life as a twosome, love gives way. And the first sign of the break is the disappearance of eroticism. The erotic can only go on existing in an infatuation where it feels free, unattached,

separate from the rest of life. If it is forced to take itself seriously, and be stabilized in the phrase, “I love you”, it fades and vanishes.

It is the case of a man holding a high military rank, who we will call *The Captain*. He had just emerged from a serious disappointment in love. He had fallen in love with a woman who had jeopardized his military career and had almost ruined him. After a period of atrocious suffering he searched out the company of a woman who corresponded to all his most unbridled erotic fantasies - tall, blonde, voluptuous, sensual, with an enormous bosom, like Anita Ekberg in Fellini's *Dolce Vita*. A gentle-natured, somewhat empty-headed woman, who had had countless lovers. The affair lasted for nigh on two years, with the pair meeting every so often and spending whole days in erotic orgies. The woman had a house perched high up on a cliffside, and a circle of rich, transgressive friends - all elements that increased his desire. Their relationship was warm and companionable, full of trust, and the woman liked the man's rank and uniform. One day she suggested they should go and live together and, if he fancied the idea, get married. *The Captain* was not put off by the

suggestion, since his blonde Viking type kept him on a smooth keel as well as satisfying his senses and his vanity. So he went to live with her, they began a life together, and first impressions were positive. She was gentle and the surroundings enjoyable but, to his great surprise, he soon began to realize, after only a few days, that he was losing erotic interest. Within a fortnight it had vanished completely and he was left with empty feelings of futility and boredom. He realized that somewhere along the line he had made a mistake. After a little while longer he understood that he was not at all interested in living with that woman. She had nothing to teach him, nothing to give him - her world was an alien one. To go on living with her would have been an act of crass stupidity. He could not imagine any future in it, and could like her only as an occasional lover. In fact he was not in love.

***Erotic infatuation and restraint in falling
in love***

The falling-in-love process can sometimes come up against insurmountable personal obstacles, and when this happens it does not go on to total fusion but remains on a purely erotic

level. Marguerite Duras gives us an example of this in her novel *The Lover*. A fifteen-year-old girl, from an impoverished family in the throes of breaking up, is at school in Saigon. On a journey she meets a thirty-year-old Chinese, who is rich, handsome, gentle and refined. She goes with him to his bachelor pad, not only to escape from the pain of her tense relationship with her mother, quarrels with her brothers and sisters, poverty, and hard boarding-school life, but also to prove that her body has some value, as well as the fact that she finds the man attractive. He falls madly in love with her, but he is Chinese. His rich businessman father would never permit him to marry a Westerner, all the more so as he has already arranged a marriage for him with a Chinese girl from their home region. And eventually the father obliges his son to give up his European love.

The bachelor flat is the scene of febrilely erotic, exhausting love sessions. The girl is deeply involved: "I tell him to come over to me, tell him he must possess me again... I tell him of this desire... Because he doesn't know for himself, I say it for him, in his stead. Because he doesn't know he carries with him a supreme

elegance, I say it for him... I discover he hasn't the strength to love me in opposition to his father, to possess me, take me away. He often weeps because he can't find the strength to love beyond fear... we couldn't possibly have any future in common, we'd never speak of the future".^{xcvi}

A nascent state of love is not only a process of fusion. It is also a project to change the world and create a collectivity that builds its own kind of ecological niche. If this process is blocked, it regresses, transforms and adapts. In the case under discussion there are three obstacles: one is the girl's family, who do all they can to exploit and humiliate the Chinese man, the second is from the young Chinese himself, who is afraid of being accused of seducing a white minor, and the third is his father. So meetings between the lovers remain secret, limited to their frantic sexual fusion. Yet the man knows he loves her, and begs his father "to let him have his turn at living, just once, this madness, this infatuation with the little white girl...".^{xcvii} But his father is unmoved.

So he tries to break away from her. "Then suddenly it is she who's imploring, she doesn't say what for, and he, he shouts to her to be quiet,

that he doesn't want to have anything more to do with her, doesn't want to have his pleasure of her any more. And now once more they are caught together again, locked together in terror, and now the terror abates again, and now they succumb to it again, amid tears, despair and happiness".^{xcviii} But the sexual ecstasy in question does not go beyond the bedroom walls. The fusion of bodies does not become fusion of spirits, recreation of the world. Even if it is always on the point of doing so, their love exhausts all its subversive energy in sex.

Compromised in the eyes of both communities, the girl has to leave Saigon and return to France. She does not ask herself if she loves the Chinese. It is only on the ship heading home that she falls prey to doubt. One night she breaks down and bursts into tears, she even wants to throw herself into the sea, but it is only a fleeting moment, and once back in Paris she stops thinking about him. Many years later he and his wife visit Paris, and he rings her up. He tells her that their love affair has had a lasting effect on his life - he still loves her, can never stop loving her, and he'll love her until death.^{xcix}

On one side, therefore, a great love beset by obstacles on all sides. For him, as a Chinese, the girl is the West, perdition, rebellion against his father, death - and rebirth. She represents his aspirations for an all-in experience. His love is a desperate beating against the barriers of the impossible. For the girl, on the other hand, the process stops before it can go too far. Falling in love is nipped in the bud because she is not attracted by the Chinese world in the same way as he is by the Western one. But, above all, because she cannot for an instant imagine any future. He hopes but gives up, she does not even begin to hope. So while she lets herself to be carried away by sex, she separates it from the rest. What she experiences is erotic infatuation, which is an aborted case of falling in love.

Let us now see the case of a woman who was content to keep love at a physical level with a man she admired greatly, a star. We will call her *The Fan*. One day, during a journey, the two found themselves side by side in a dark room and their hands touched. Instead of drawing back they clasped each other, it was the signal for mutual sexual attraction to explode, and made passionate love together, and this went on for a couple of years, once a month, in frenzied sessions of love-

making. They chatted, talked about their jobs, embraced, but neither ever said to the other, “I love you”, or “I’m fond of you”. There were no projects, no future. A tacit agreement had been set up between them not to think of it, because if they did, it would destroy the relationship.

But here again the man and woman were in different positions. The man, attracted in a purely sexual way, liked the woman’s body and the way she made love. He liked the way she received him in secret without asking him for anything, without pinning him down or trying to attach any emotional or sentimental strings to the affair. But he did not consider her on a par with him from either a physical or cultural point of view.

It was different for the woman. She was mad about the man, and would willingly have gone to live with him, been proud to be seen at his side - she would have loved to marry him. But she knew it was impossible. So she accepted him as he was, and made herself be as he wanted her, contenting herself with a purely sexual relationship. There were times when she wanted to tell him she loved him, but it would have been the end. So she settled for his body and his

friendship. She modelled her desires on what was possible, and learnt how to get pleasure out of sex. She in fact reduced her infatuation to the level of a trivial affair, knowing that it would come to an end. She was afraid of pushing her luck, so tried to drive all thoughts of love out of her mind - and she did. As she had managed to block it in time, the nascent state never came into being. She was proud of her success - fancy her managing to get such an extraordinary man as lover, a man desired by so many women! A man who desired her, admired her and gave her so much pleasure. She considered herself lucky and privileged, and wanted to avoid losing what she had gained. She even resisted the temptation of boasting about it to her friends. In this way their love trysts went on for a long time, happy and serene. And their trust and friendship for each other were to survive through the years.

Platonic love

This is the kind of love in which the spiritual, emotive encounter is unleashed, but the sexual element is blocked. A well known case, important for those who were involved in it, is

that of Lou Salomé.^c Lou, the daughter of one of the Tsar's generals, was extraordinarily fascinating and intelligent. Growing up surrounded by five brothers and an adoring father, she soon realized that if she got married and had children she would just become like other women, subject to a husband and dependent on him. Since she wanted to keep her independence at all costs, she always looked for a different kind of love relationship, a spiritual communion without sex, children or pledges of fidelity. She soon had a chance to test her formula when, still very young, she fell for the Protestant minister of the community, Gillot, and became his faithful and adoring pupil. She would embrace him, sit on his knee, drink in every word he spoke. In that situation any other girl would have come to the conclusion that she was in love, but not Lou. Falling in love did not enter into her projects. It was, in fact, Gillot who fell in love with her, and asked her to marry him. She refused and actually decided to leave St. Petersburg. In Zurich she met a philosopher, Paul Rée, and the same thing happened again. It was the year 1882, Lou was twenty-one years old, Rée asked her to marry him, but she proposed going to live

together as brother and sister, even perhaps with another person, in a spiritual threesome.

The third person was Friedrich Nietzsche, who was then thirty-eight years old. Nietzsche also fell straight in love with Lou, with a great, overwhelming, single-minded passion that cut into his life like a ray of hot sunshine. Jealous of Rée, Nietzsche worked it so that he could be alone with Lou, and he succeeded on the Sacro Monte above Lake Orta in Northern Italy. He declared his love to her and may have received a chaste kiss. Convinced that his love was returned, he was radiantly happy and expected they would marry and have children. But Lou still had her own projects, and in fact she suggested they should all three go and live together in Vienna. She was sweet and persuasive, and the philosopher reluctantly agreed. But Lou quarrelled with Nietzsche's sister, so she went off to live with Rée in Berlin, where she was welcomed into the intellectual community and made more conquests - but always preserving her chastity. Nietzsche waited in vain, writing painful love letters, which she failed to answer. When he finally realized that Lou did not love him, he was shattered.

The chaste life in common with Rée continued for a long time even though Rée, who was also deeply in love with her, suffered atrociously. Eventually he could bear it no longer, went away and later committed suicide. In 1887 Lou met Friedrich Carl Andreas, a Persian-German scholar, who also fell in love with her and asked for her hand in marriage. Lou refused but, after he had made an attempt at suicide, she agreed, on condition that there should be no sex between them, and that they should just live as good friends. Andreas agreed, hoping to change things, but it was no use. They lived as a married couple for forty years without touching each other.

Can we therefore say that Lou Salomé was really in love with Rée, Nietzsche and Andreas? Not on the basis of the theory of falling in love proposed in this study. She said she loved them but none of them ever became the only one for her, the one she wanted to be with above all others. Nobody became the gateway to happiness and true being. What Lou was doing was carrying out explorations. Nascent state may have started to come into being but Lou would cut them short, turn them in another direction. She refused to love just one person, and looked for many

friends. She wanted to live in the same house, in the same room even, with Rée, Nietzsche, Andreas and others, but all this had nothing to do with falling in love. It was instead the epitome of *friendship*: not a closed shop but an open square. With *friendship* vital energy never stops in one point but runs through a network, lighting up first one node, then another, and then another. And what is more, the network is unending. As soon as Lou had started up one relationship she would be setting up another one as well. She would leave, come back, start off again with one or another without posing herself the least problem. There is no exclusivity in friendship, no jealousy. You can always get to know new people and make new friends. Friendship is like a filigree of precious stones.

When we are in love, however, we want to spend the whole time with our beloved and are unhappy when s/he is away from us. Where falling in love is concerned time is fraught and intense, while in friendship it can scatter like grains of sand. A couple of friends can go their separate ways and maybe not see each other for years, but meeting up again will continue where they left off. As their relationship is not based on

process of fusion and historicization, time does not matter.^{ci} Lou Salomé's platonic love, therefore, was not like the real thing. It was a form of pseudo-falling in love, in fact a de-sexed friendship.

lxxxviii	1.7
lxxxviii	2.7
lxxxix	3.7
xc	4.7
xc	5.7
xc	6.7
xc	7.7
xc	8.7
xc	9.7
xc	10.7
xc	11.7
xc	12.7
xc	13.7
c	14.7
ci	15.7

CHAPTER EIGHT

Passionate love

Love as a passion

What is love when it becomes a passion?^{cii} It is that violent, desperate, convulsive, overwhelming kind of love that knocks the victim sideways. *Passion* comes from the Latin *passio*, meaning suffering or pain, and passionate love is like some kind of madness or disease we want to defend ourselves from. For this reason tradition has it that a love potion could well be the cause of it all. In *Orlando Furioso* Ludovico Ariosto says that there are two fountains in the Forest of Ardennes, called the fountain of love and the fountain of hate. Those who drink at the fountain of love will fall in love with the first person they meet, just as Orlando drinks at the fountain and falls in love with Angelica.

Once again, in the Tristan and Isolde legend falling in love is due to a love potion. The well-

known story tells of Tristan growing up as an orphan at the court of King Mark in Cornwall. He kills the giant Morholt who has been terrorizing the land, but is wounded and ends up in the sea. The waves carry him to Ireland where he is nursed back to health by Princess Isolde the Fair. Some years after his return to Cornwall he is sent on a mission to Ireland - to bring back Isolde to be King Mark's bride. On their way back the couple accidentally drink the love potion that had been prepared for the bride and groom, and fall desperately in love. Tristan takes Isolde to the King all the same, she becomes Queen, but their love story continues. So they take refuge in a forest and stay there until the potion runs out. Back at court, their love breaks out anew. After many adventures Tristan marries another Isolde - Isolde of the White Hands. But as he is still in love with Isolde the Fair he does not consummate the marriage. Mortally wounded in battle he calls for his beloved Queen of Cornwall, who arrives with a white sail raised as a symbol of hope. His jealous wife tells him the sail is black, and Tristan dies in despair. Isolde the Fair also dies, clasping Tristan in her arms.

Tristan's case is one of extreme impediments because his love is opposed by the

inviolability of the marriage vow and the loyalty he owes to the King. Lesser impediments can also exist. In Tolstoy's novel *Anna Karenina* it is society that is hostile to divorce. Anna starts the novel married to a high-ranking official, and with a son. Her love for Vronskij invades her life brutally, throwing her completely off balance. She is fond of her husband, who is a very decent sort, and for a long time she is in the throes of a terrible dilemma. Then, when she realizes she is expecting Vronskij's child she tells her husband and they separate. A baby girl is born, Anna is on the verge of dying, and her husband offers to take her back. Then Vronskij attempts to commit suicide. At this point Anna decides to get a divorce and to go and live with the man she loves. Shunned by St. Petersburg society, they move to the country, where they live like exiles. Anna is content with their love, but Vronskij is not. He misses military life and his comrades, and Anna suffers too, as she misses her son who has stayed with her husband. But above all she is unhappy to see Vronskij so lost in thought, nostalgic for his past life. For him their love in exile has become a sort of prison. Feeling that she is no longer loved, Anna ends by killing herself.

When is it that falling in love turns into a violent passion? When it is thwarted. Passionate love flares up when true love meets with external as well as internal obstacles. An external impediment is not enough by itself. What is needed is an internal conflict, a dilemma.

Medieval love dramas are the expression of a mortal conflict between the individual and the society of the time. Falling in love was the expression of an individual's choice operating against the impositions and rules made by the collectivity. Marriages were arranged by the families for economic and dynastic reasons, while the future man and wife were still babes in arms. Celibacy was the cast-iron rule for the clergy. Falling in love therefore appeared as an infringement of the most sacred social rules and against the very order of marriage itself. But this nascent power could not yet overthrow the existing order. Falling in love was not yet strong enough to become the basis for marriage. Even Heloise refused to marry Abelard as first, because she thought that marriage and love were two different things. She aspired to a union of mind, heart and body, which was unlike anything she could see in the families around her.^{ciii}

The love stories of Tristan and Isolde, and Lancelot and Guinevere illustrate this state of conflict for which the tragedies of Heloise and Abelard, and Paolo and Francesca are examples we find in history. Passion here is the product of a mortal struggle for one's love, and the end-product is death. The coming together of love and death is the result of a social drama, the failure of a revolutionary undertaking.

De Rougemont is mistaken when he starts from these examples to uphold that passionate love is a death wish. He notes that lovers are full of contradictions - they love each other and yet continue to struggle against love, they repent and go on sinning, they lie and declare themselves innocent, they split up and then go back to each other: "In fact", he concludes, "all great lovers feel transported beyond good and ill, to a sort of transcendency that carries them above the common state, into an unspeakable, incompatible absolute, which is for them more real than our world. The fatal power that holds them in its grip, which they sobbingly yield to, suppresses the counterpositioning of good and ill, and leads them even beyond the origin of all moral values, beyond pleasure and suffering, beyond the sphere

where distinguishing is possible, in the heart of which contraries are excluded”^{civ}.

We have learnt that these extraordinary properties are typical of the nascent state, and that the dichotomies of everyday life do not stand up - it effectively goes “beyond good and ill”^{cv}, and duty coincides with pleasure. Yet at the same time the nascent state is always a project, restructuring everyday life, entering the world and becoming an institution. When this project fails, when it is unable to construct a community, a desire to escape from reality takes over, and together with it, almost seductively, a death wish. Death is always an alternative lovers bear in mind, because they feel unable to live without the one they love. Because they know that something exists that is more important than their own personal lives. This does not by any means imply that want to die - on the contrary, they most desperately want to live. But they also have an ideal of life that they cannot possibly renounce.

In the novel *Lolita* passion derives from the fact that Humbert is unable to make the girl love him. He is convinced she cannot love him because she is an adolescent and he is an adult, whereas in actual fact she loves another man, and runs away with him. Humbert finds her again

years later, prematurely aged , pregnant, and he realizes that he still loves her, and always will. But Lolita is burnt out now, destroyed by the great love that has let her down, by the man who has “broken her heart”. So Humbert leaves her the little money he has left and goes off to kill the man who has done her so much harm and destroyed her life. The story, which starts off as squalid sex, turns out to be the portrait of a great passion, an attempt to transform the couple radically. And which, in both cases, fails.

Secret, idyllic love

In order to explore this aspect of love we will use examples from the life and works - published and unpublished - of a writer whose name cannot be revealed. I will call him *The Writer*. They are books written when a love has ended, when spirits are laid low by the pain of loss. Yet they are still books about love, expressing passion - a passion remembered and relived. And the love lies in this remembering and reliving.

The man I am talking about never separated from his wife, never divorced. He kept his loves concealed, so they were never able to blossom in

the shape of a couple or creation of a home, a ménage. His falling in love looked for another route, and found a different way of expressing itself. It produced clandestine affairs, which suited him well enough. Each time it was the woman who got tired first, put an end to the story, and in a couple of cases ended up by marrying someone else.

They were therefore real cases of falling in love in which the individual decided irrevocably that he would not break up his marriage, even if his other woman wanted him to. No projects were made for a social life in common, and each affair was kept secret, surrounded by high walls of silence and pretence. The institution it configured was not living together and matrimony, but clandestine love.

In a case like this the love affair is hidden from the world, protected in its pureness, spirited away from the pressures of everyday life, from people's gossip and social control. So all the duty and trouble stay well outside and all the good, all the spontaneous freedom, all the joy remain inside. It is like Sunday or Saturday, or Friday, the Lord's day, the moment of contact with the divine, and sacred, separated from the profane. This kind of love does not aspire to change the

existing, but to escape from it. It aspires to the perfection of a mystic meeting - its model is not the family but the convent or a mysterious, orgiastic and secret cult that separates the individual from the world. A love tryst is a sacred orgy protected by the secret of initiation. Its model is not the manifest marriage celebration, the house open to friends, but the sect in which the initiated are bound by a sworn allegiance, and even by the obligation to pretend. Like the Dönmeh Jews from the sect of Sabbatai Zevi, who for centuries pretended to be Moslem and celebrated their true faith in secret.

Secret love - clandestine, protected, idyllic. All marital duties have been fulfilled, all professional work terminated. At this point the celebration and honouring of the body and soul can be deservedly allowed. All the rest, all social duties are nothing but ritual acts, ceremonial gestures which are necessary to consecrate the holy place of love, which is the supreme reward and ultimate end, paradise on earth. Like the sailor who subjects himself to unspeakable labours, who faces terrible dangers, only to come back home for a few days to meet his loved one - or like the man on the run who risks death to see his woman in secret.

Another analogy is that of the prostitute who had a child and put him in a boarding school a long way off. In order to be able to keep him she carried on with her humiliating job, regardless of the hardship, shame and sacrifices she had to make. It was all worthwhile in view of her meetings with her son. After all, she was the one who had brought him into the world, fed him, cared for him when he was sick, and who was now protecting him from poverty. She was willing to do anything to prevent him from being contaminated by her way of life, accepting any task and carrying it out scrupulously so as not to endanger what she cared for most. And she did not even want to have her child with her, because her life was not suitable for him. It would have spoilt their relationship, which could only remain perfect while he was far off and ignorant of her condition.

A meeting in this kind of love has its own intrinsic value, and is neither a means nor a stage but an end in itself. It is not projected into the future, is in fact without projects. Every time could be the last, so it can be relished for its own sake, to the full. In this it keeps the characteristics that we have found in the nascent state - the here and now, the present. The lovers hold each other

tight as if this were their last time together. And they are ready to die, because what they are experiencing is the cup of happiness, life's most precious beverage, in comparison with which all else is coldly and inertly functional. However, in the nascent state, this experience is immediately transformed into its opposite - into enthusiasm and future projects, while secret love turns in on itself, as does any mystic experience. Mysticism is not a nascent state but an institution^{cvi} and like every institution it keeps something of the original experience and is its guardian, but loses all the rest. In this case it holds on to the present and loses the future, which means that the meeting must give such absolute, incomparable satisfaction that it quenches all thirst, and a sip of its water would last us right through the desert.

To evoke the distant loved one a symbol may be enough - a patch of blue sky, a faded photo, or a letter. It is enough to warm the heart and call up all the miraculous energies of life. That symbol is a life support, working to keep us alive and give life a meaning. It is with that memory, symbol or talisman that we can go out and face the world. There are people who always carry with them something of their beloved or their children. This patient, dedicated love, this

love from afar, this trueness of heart is a very fine thing.

Occasional, secret meetings also help to keep the erotic alive as something extraordinary. If those meetings were to become everyday events, if the affair were to come out into the open and the lover become husband or wife, perhaps the spell would be broken. Some very intense erotic infatuations are able to last for years precisely because they are infrequent and secret, because they do not have to be transformed into projects on a day-to-day basis. Then they assume certain characteristics of the nascent state and of passion.

It is the case of the novel *Passione d'amore* by Carlo Castellaneta. Diego dreams of enticing Leonetta away from her husband, going to live with her, marrying her and having a house where they can entertain their friends. But Leonetta refuses. She behaves like *The Writer*. She wants Diego to remain the lover she sees only now and then, in ardent, passionate encounters. She loves him, but she knows that if she went and lived with him everything would soon dwindle into the humdrum of everyday. In their love trysts she always appears to him like a beautiful goddess, some priestess of love. This requires wealth,

preparation and care. All things kept hidden and distant. For this reason Leonetta does not want to give up her rich husband - because he offers her the means of preserving her beauty. And she doesn't mind that in order to have these advantages she must sleep with her husband. Because this takes place on another plane, that of marital duty. It is the plane of mundane duties, of the ritual acts that are necessary to consecrate and guarantee the sacred time for their passionate love - protected, secret and sporadic as it is.

cii	1.8
ciii	2.8
civ	3.8
cv	4.8
cvi	5.8

CHAPTER NINE

Jealousy

Jealousy in the nascent state of love

Does jealousy exist in the nascent state, when we are in the process of falling in love? According to some it is always present, because when we are in love we are always alternating between hope and fear, as we mentally pluck the petals off those daisies and repeat the familiar old words: s/he loves me, s/he loves me not. But this is not jealousy at all. When we really are in the grip of jealousy we fear that our loved one prefers someone else, loves someone else, not us. For there to be jealousy at work a rival must exist. If we have no rival in mind, then we are simply afraid our love is not being returned.

Falling in love is accompanied by an unmistakable sensation of anxiety, because all the

immense good that has come our way could easily slip from our grasp and vanish. Since we live our love as a blessing and ourselves as unworthy to receive this gift, we are afraid that our loved one might undergo a change of heart and that things could switch back to the way they were before we met. We are sure of things which can be explained, got under control, over which we can exert power, but we do not know the one we are in love with and can therefore exert no power over him or her. One moment s/he seems closer to us than we are to ourselves, and a second later as remote as the stars in the heavens. So hope and trust, mingled with fear and trepidation are the feelings that surface in the initial stages of love. Falling in love enables us to reach dizzy heights of eroticism, but at the same time glimpses of its passing. Body, beauty, sexual pleasure, kissing, skin contact, embracing - all things that in erotic love-making are ends in themselves - are, in the process of falling in love, only means for going beyond it, towards the essence of the loved one, and therefore towards something indescribably precious. All the physical aspect of love is only a means of reaching something beyond it.

A love story can begin in a light-hearted way, as an intense, exciting erotic experience and can even go on like that for a long time. But if at a certain point, one or even each half of the couple happens to really fall in love, a deep change occurs. Initially we were sure of ourselves, even triumphant, but now sexual desire gives way to trepidation, and tears come easily. The other person, now nearer to us, has become paradoxically both more desirable and more distant. We look at him, we look at her, and feel as if we were seeing them for the first time. Every time is like the first, for we feel as if we only knew them superficially before. We thought we had seen everything, whereas in actual fact we had seen nothing. Our beloved's body, hands, eyes point to something unknown, infinite. As long as we are together, wrapped in each other's arms and making love, we bridge this great gap. But as soon as we are apart - as soon as we, or they, have gone away - we fear we might not get back together. So we need to see, touch, speak, and hear the words: "I love you".

This has nothing to do with jealousy.^{cvi} It is fear of losing ourselves and the meaning of our lives, for love reveals the infinite complexity and infinite richness of another person. Because we

see in them everything they have been, might have been, are now, and what they may become in the future. Love reveals the infinite possibilities which go to form an individual, the uniqueness of the occurrence, and therefore, the miracle of its ever existing and our ever meeting. The stupor and wonder we feel when in love is due to our being aware both of this totally precarious state of being and of our desperate need for an anchor in that other person. Hence our desire to hold, clasp, fuse and melt into each other.

We tend not to pay enough attention to the extraordinary nature of what happens when love is requited. In falling in love we have identified a person who is worth more than any other living being - that is close to the absolute, the divine. And this person, this divine being, among all the countless people in the world has chosen and loves only us. Love allows the humblest, most abject man to be chosen by Venus, the goddess of beauty and love. And the most insignificant and solitary woman receives her annunciation: "Blessed art thou among women". It is for this reason that the failure of love, and desertion, are so terrible. It is why jealousy is so terrible.

Jealousy is not caused by theft. We are not jealous because something we consider our property is stolen from us. We are not jealous either of the person who is taken away from us or of the taker. We are only jealous when it is the very one we love that allows him/herself to be seduced, carried away by another, when someone else is preferred to us. Jealousy always marks the betrayal of an exclusive right.

Many psychologists criticize jealousy and say that we are being absurd if we expect love to be exclusive. What is indeed exclusive about us? None of us imagine we are the tops for looks or intelligence. None of our virtues, measured by world standards, make us preferable to anyone else. Measured up against any criterion of worldly worth we always come out poor and paltry. Yet we love and esteem ourselves because we feel that, deep down, *in us there is a value, an irreplaceable uniqueness*. When we fall in love, this uniqueness, this exclusiveness is acknowledged, approved, and confirmed. In loving us our beloved gives our individuality a reason for existing, a dignity and a value.

We turn jealous if we think, rightly or wrongly, that in the eyes of our partner we are no longer the only one, as our beloved is for us - that

someone else has taken our place, and has acquired in our loved one's eyes qualities that we alone should possess: the ability to make them happy, make them laugh, charm them and touch their hearts. Or that the other person is better-looking, younger, or smarter. Then we feel emptied of all content and value. We feel a nobody, and this because our loved one has taught us that we are everything. Because we have been raised to a height we would never have thought to reach. And now our newly-won primacy has been snatched away from us, paradise is lost, we are ousted - someone else has taken our place.

Jealousy can at times stimulate the will in the nascent love so that where there is hope we fight for our love. But a serious rejection will paralyze us, convincing us that we are worthless and can ask for nothing.

Luckily, where falling in love is reciprocal both partners have the same problems, both need the same reassurance - and both are ready to give it. They only have to whisper: "I love you", to bring reassurance and drive away all the ghosts. In the nascent state of love people are full of hope, speak in a spirit of truth and believe that their partners do the same. For this reason

jealousy counts little in the case of truly reciprocal falling in love, because our partners reassure us immediately and we do the same. If jealousy creeps in at an early stage it means that in actual fact one of the two is not completely in love - that doubt and uncertainty still exist, that too much proof is demanded, that someone is trying to make an escape.

Jealousy restraining love

We have told the story of *Freshman*, the young man whose love for a school companion was not returned. Thinking that his failure was due to inexperience, he devoted his energies to learning the art of seduction, and made a good job of it. He took care to separate sex from love. For the rest of his life now he will only have women who love him and are completely faithful. Whenever he happens to fall for a woman, no matter how stunning she is, if she has another man or he has the inkling she may have, he will always give her up in the end. More than that, he will not even go so far as to fall in love, but will stop short, at the level of erotic infatuation. He will not step over the threshold into the nascent

state. Since he suffered so much on the first occasion, when his love was not returned, he will never let himself go again unless he is perfectly sure that his love is returned exclusively, beyond any shadow of a doubt.

Freshman's behaviour tells us that to spark off the nascent state requires, if not an act of will, at least a lowering of defence barriers, a slackening of vigilance. It is rather like what happens in hypnosis. If the subject resists, and refuses to be hypnotized, all the hypnotist's attempts will be thwarted. For hypnosis to succeed the subject must be acquiescent, offering a potential yes, and then suddenly move from one state to another - from consciousness to hypnotic sleep. The hypnotic state is very different from the nascent state, however, because it is passive, uncreative and extremely short-lived. Yet the analogy helps us to understand the abrupt nature of really falling in love.

For fear of falling victim to jealousy, *Freshman* quite simply refused to fall in love with anyone. Others with the same fear set out to destroy the people they love. It is what happened to a beautiful woman I will call *The Adventure Seeker*. This woman has had an exciting life and many lovers, but only one great love, which

makes her feel nostalgic today, even after twenty years. *The Adventure Seeker* left home very young, went to live in Switzerland and set up business there with a friend. She met the man in question when she was nineteen - he was a doctor, twelve years her senior, and it was love at first sight.

The girl was provocatively beautiful, passionate, rebellious and proud. For the man, still living with his parents and on his way to a good, sound hospital career, she was the symbol of sexual freedom and transgression - rather like what happened in the case of *The Man from Turin* and *Antonio*, the hero of Buzzati's novel *A Love Affair*.

She was still a virgin, but she gave herself to him without second thoughts. Then she told him the truth, but he refused to believe her because she had been so matter-of-fact and uninhibited in her behaviour. Though he wanted her desperately, she was too independent, too unrestrained for him to consider her suitable as a wife. She failed to meet the dictates of middle-class respectability. She was a free spirit, she travelled, she told him everything that crossed her mind. And though she never betrayed him, he was convinced she had lovers all over the place,

and bombarded her with questions. The girl retorted that it was none of his business, that she was free to do as she liked. All the same, whenever she went off on business, to calm him down she would tell him she was going to see an aunt. Then he found out that she had been lying, and there were fireworks. They split up for two or three weeks, and he tried to forget her by going with someone else. But she did not follow suit. She was hurt by his suspicions, but never thought of getting her own back.

Then they made things up, and lived through moments of erotic ecstasy, which the woman cannot help feeling nostalgic about even today. While for the man they were interludes, idyllic moments that were doomed to end. At times he felt tempted to marry her, but would then draw back, convinced deep down that she was a dissolute nymphomaniac. Yet he found the uninhibited, licentious image she had created most enticing. He asked her to tell him about her lovers, her experiences with other men. And as she refused to speak, seeing that she had nothing to tell him, he desired to push her into his friends' arms, to see how she reacted, and at the same time to find an excuse to leave her. Once, on a boat, he begged her to have sexual intercourse

with a mutual friend, explaining that he considered it a test of love. She naively agreed, at which point he became frantically jealous.

He loved her, could not bear to be without her, but at the same time he considered his passion a kind of illness. So he made up his mind to put an end to things, and started seeing a colleague on the quiet. During the Christmas period when *The Adventure Seeker* had to go to Beirut on business, the man asked her to go to the mountains with him instead. It was a kind of call to order, an ultimatum. But for her it was only an absurd demand, seeing that she had made her arrangements long before. Telling him she was absolutely obliged to go, she left. But when she came back, he had disappeared - there was no reply to her phone calls, and their friends had not seen him. He seemed to have vanished into thin air. She was desperate. Months went by, and then one day he called her and announced quite coldly that he had got married and gone to live in another city. She could not believe her ears - it all seemed so absurd and impossible. She made enquiries and managed to get hold of his new telephone number. When she phoned, a woman answered, who said she was his wife.

In this case jealousy grew out of the fact that the man was fascinated by the adventurous life, and by the freedom and anti-conformism of the woman. But he was also afraid of her, and was determined right from the start to defend himself. He lived their love as a passion, but also as an illness, and was unable to see it as a basis for marriage and family life. And in this he was wrong, because in spite of her impetuous temperament the girl really loved him and was always faithful.

Yet there are other people who are perfectly capable of coping with jealousy. In competitive forms of love, jealousy and the presence of a rival are stimulants, or even essential elements. For people like this, love is a form of conquest, seduction, struggle. A whole range of erotic feminine literature, so-called romances or love-stories, exists where there is always a rival lurking around somewhere. The heroine is in love with someone she thinks is already in love with someone else. So she suffers, but never gives up. She manages to create contact with him, attract him and conquer him. But unlike her rival, who uses all sorts of subtle arts of seduction, the heroine is honest and sincere. Thanks to her

beauty and goodness, love eventually finds its way into the man's heart too.

This ability to wait for love to awaken in the other person, this ability to curb jealous feelings so as to prevent them from becoming destructive, seems to be a quality more female than male. Systematically resorting to seduction to win someone over and induce him to fall in love with you is much more widely discussed in women's magazines and books. Then we must also remember that for thousands of years, women have avoided going with any Tom, Dick or Harry. They have always tried to win the best and most attractive man, the one most socially desired. They would never have succeeded if they had not learnt to be patient, hold on and keep their jealousy of rivals well under control.

Jealousy increasing love

Many people think jealousy is a stimulant for love. To win someone we love or keep that person bound to us, we arouse jealousy, which means we stimulate the mechanism of loss in them. In this we can quote Ariosto: "In love the winner is the one that runs away". You win if you

pretend not to love and play hard to get, in order to make the other one jealous.

Let us look at the case of *The Caretaker from Siena*. Though this woman was no longer young she was still attractive. Her husband was a drunkard, and she was eventually able to divorce him. Once on her own, she met a younger man who she fancied and wanted to hold on to at all costs. But on account of her job she was obliged to stay in one place, while he travelled around a lot. And during his travels he might well meet other women, have other affairs, even forget her. To prevent this from happening, *The Caretaker from Siena* used the technique of keeping him on tenterhooks, of not letting herself be found, of making him look for her, and desire her. He would phone to say he loved her, to check that she was around, and instead of answering she would let the phone ring. Then, when he got through to her at last, she would tell him that she had been out with a friend, had met an acquaintance. She was always bright and happy, but vague. She gave him the impression she was surrounded by lots of men, and was courted and desired. In this way she kept him in a continual state of uncertainty. Then she would throw her arms round him, kiss him and tell him she loved

him, as a means of reassurance. Passing from anxiety to joy, doubt to happiness, he went on desiring her more and more intensely. Thanks to this stratagem their affair - which would probably have ended in monotony and betrayal before long - lasted for years and eventually led to marriage.

But, as we have said, there are two radically different types of reaction. If the man in the case of *The Caretaker from Siena* case became even more attached to the woman who was keeping him dangling, in the case of *The Man from Bari* something went wrong. The latter had fallen in love with a younger woman, but he had serious financial and family problems. He wanted to go and live with her, even thought of marrying her, but he had to delay acting for some time. He still had too many obstacles to overcome. So he took his time. At first the girl did not try to pressure him. She had an old affair that was dragging on, so she was willing to keep the new love on a secret, reserved level. But as time went by she decided to get rid of her old lover and devote herself entirely to the ardent new one. The man, on the contrary, was still undecided, and dragged his heels. She tried to force his hand. But instead of saying she loved him and was ready to follow him anywhere, and even face a hard and difficult

life with him, she chose the jealousy-making stratagem. She dropped hints that someone else was courting her, and to make herself even more desirable she started to refuse him sexually. *The Man from Bari* tried to get her to explain things, but she remained wilfully evasive. Almost a year went by, alternating between moments of passionate love and moments of coldness, so for a certain period the woman's stratagem worked. The man became jealous and kept on coming after her, and writing passionate letters. But she overdid it, and her ambiguous behaviour and continual refusal to have sex finally convinced him that she did have another lover. He made up his mind to break with her, so after a few sleepless nights and one last febrile love tryst he left on a long journey for work abroad, and never got in touch with her again. For over a year he lived through a kind of nightmare, but he resisted the temptation to look her up.

Jealousy of the past

Many experts think that jealousy of the past is pathological. Why, in fact, be jealous of someone who is no longer a threat, and cannot do us any harm? What does it matter to us if the person we love has had previous loves and lovers.

Why do we torture ourselves for not being the favourite, the only one even before we knew each other. Is not jealousy of this kind proof of a possessive spirit, a childish, pathological greed?

To reply we must start from the fact that when we fall in love we want to know everything about the other person. People in love spend hours and days on end telling each other details of their past lives. Because they wish they had always known each other, they wish they could have seen their partner as a child or adolescent. They wish they could have been present in every stage of life, always together. It is that aspect of fusion known as *historicizing*. Lovers try to get inside to see the world through the other's eyes, so as to see it together, to have the same vision of the world.

They each talk of their love experiences, and the other often wants to know everything down to the smallest detail in order to identify with the loved one, with past loves, feeling and sensations. This is where jealousy of the past has its roots - in the obsessive search to get to know everything about each other, but above all in the way this process is brought about.

In the normal falling-in-love process, with its *historicizing* each talks about the past not in

order to create a barrier to budding love but to destroy obstacles. In relating them, we remove value from past experiences. In effect we say to our love that such and such a thing happened but is now over and done with. I have become another person, am reborn and from now on only you count for me. With the *historicizing* process lovers destroy old traumas, pains and loves, to emerge pure and free. *Historicization* works on the past in order to redeem it and allow us to go forward into the future without any ties.

Historicizing has the aim of bringing out a new person, a convert, who goes over the past to see where mistakes were made and glimmers of truth appeared. It is what Saint Augustine does in his *Confessions*. A couple in love who tell each other all about their lives before they met do so in order to become new people, be reborn - convey to the other everything from their past that can enrich and intensify their love, not what might destroy it. They select and emphasize those experiences, episodes, feelings that can be integrated into the new love and remove value from anything that might oppose it. So they recall past loves, but only to empty them of meaning. *Historicizing* is neither regression nor remembrance. It is the creation of a common

tradition, a choice of values, the discovery of a destiny. Both therefore choose things that anticipate and indicate, like prophecies, the love they are now living - exactly as Livy does when, in the history of Rome, he chooses edifying legends, or like Virgil when, in Aeneas' escape from Troy to the meeting with Dido, he discovers signs of the future destiny of Augustus Caesar.

Jealousy of the past occurs when this process is aborted or distorted. A famous case of the kind can be seen in Sonia Tolstoy. Sonia was eighteen and madly in love with Tolstoy, who seemed like a god to her. He was the greatest, most celebrated Russian novelist, adored by everyone. It was an obvious case of hero-worship. Tolstoy was in love, too. He was to have married her elder sister but fell for Sonia instead. However, he tried to resist for a long time before giving in, since he considered himself too old at the age of thirty-four for a girl of eighteen. But give in he did, and wrote a letter asking her to marry him. His proposal was accepted, and he surprised everyone by fixing the wedding within a week. He then felt the need to let his future bride know everything about him and his past, including the most unsavoury details. If the love passes this test - he told himself - she must really

be in love with me, and our marriage will have a sound base. So he gave her his diaries where he had noted down absolutely everything he had done up to that moment.

We can understand his gesture. Tolstoy was deeply in love and, after resisting his condition as long as he could, had surrendered to it. At this point he wanted to share his past with Sonia, but instead of telling her about it little by little, analysing it critically, all he did was to give her the diaries to read. There was no patient background work of picking out and playing down. So she read with horror that he had squandered fortunes and had all kinds of love affairs - with gypsies, prostitutes, friends of his mother's, servants and peasant girls living in their house. Sonia was distraught. The diaries revealed a stranger, and she was supposed to accept him as he was, without a murmur. It was as if he was saying to her: "This is what I am like, and you must take me as I am, warts and all".

But when we fall in love with star, the relationship is never an equal one. One is superior and the other is inferior. There is the risk that the former may be tempted to see him - or herself as perfect and may expect to be accepted unconditionally, without there being any give and

take as happens when lovers are on the same footing. And this is precisely what Tolstoy did. In handing his diaries over to young Sonia, he failed to review his life critically. He failed to identify any traces of what might have led to the love he felt now, and he failed to point out his mistakes and repudiate them. He did not become a new man, wholly devoted to his new love and purified of the past. He threw his past at Sonia without disowning any of it. After a night spent reading those diaries Sonia met him next morning, her eyes red from crying. She said nothing except to reassure him and forgive him. But she knew that something irreparable had taken place, and she would carry the marks of that profanation for the rest of her life.^{cviii}

The *historicizing* of the nascent state of love is the means that prevents the past from encroaching on the present. It is the means of sharing it and neutralizing its maleficent power. It is therefore the spontaneous mechanism for neutralizing retrospective jealousy for ever, enabling love to permeate one's entire life, from past through to future. But what delicacy, prudence and imagination it requires in order to carry out this precious task. Some people in love ask no questions, others ask too many. Others

want to know too many details, which will hang like millstones around their love. Others nurse doubts in their hearts that will weigh on them later on. In these cases the *historicizing* process has failed to do its job. The past still encroaches on the present. The aim of real *historicizing* is to *redeem* the past so as to smooth out the way for love and give it firm foundations.

How absurd it is to say that love that wants to take possession of the partner's past is neurotic and pathological! Love breaks into the past but heads for the future. The lovers wish they had known each other all their lives. In *Symposium* Aristophanes says that love rises between the two halves of the same individual separated by Zeus. And they go on searching for each other until they fuse and find their lost unity again. *Historicizing* actually enables this miracle to take place, and there is absolutely nothing pathological about it - on the contrary, it is the very essence of normal love. The pathological arises when there is no *historicizing*. Jealousy of the past is the symptom that the past has not been exorcized, that we have failed to be reborn through love, that love has not delved deep enough for a new person to be created.

Jealous love

There is a kind of love that seems to thrive on jealousy, for which jealousy is second nature, an essential component. But it is not the kind of love that finds sustenance in rivalry, with its desire for conquest and success over a rival. In the latter case jealousy acts as a stimulant, but in the kind of love we are speaking about here, jealousy is genuine suffering and springs from the conviction that there is a gap between the one who loves and the one who is loved - a gap too great to be bridged. It is a difference that is only felt and suffered by the jealous lover, however. Others are seen as having access to the body and soul of the loved one, and they are not one specific person but whole legions.

Let us remember the case of *Freshman*. At a certain point he realized that the girl he loved was studiously avoiding him, by not letting herself be found alone. Anyone would do, so long as it wasn't him alone. The girl was behaving in this way because she had realized that *Freshman* was in love with her, and she wanted to spare him an unpleasant rejection. But the boy took this non-verbal act for total incommunicability. He

thought he knew nothing about her or about any woman. He had no idea what to say or how to say it, how to move, while all he could see was that others were better at it. What Buzzati wrote was suitable for *Freshman*: “He used to see them with other men, on other men’s arms, eating with other men, but if he looked at them they’d turn their heads away annoyed, it’s always been like that. Who were the men they were with? Billionaires, movie stars, apollos? No. They were just any kind of people, nobodies, with big bellies, unable to discuss anything but football, vulgarians, ugly too but apparently with the right kind of look, they knew two or three stupid remarks that women liked.”^{cix}

Freshman was green, he had no idea what to do, and so felt helpless. *Antonio* was a fifty-year-old man who fell in love with Laide, a teenage prostitute. But he did not know what to talk about either, what to offer her except money. He did not know how to make himself interesting and how to entertain her. So he became jealous: not of her customers - with whom she had the same cold kind of relationship as she had with him, mediated by money - but of the people she spent her time with of her own accord, because she liked them. For example there was a boy she

claimed was her cousin, while *Antonio* was convinced they were lovers. His jealousy sprang from his sense of inadequacy, the sense that there was something missing in his make up. A knack everyone else had, but he did not. So he wanted to be like them and he was afraid of them, so he hated them and hated the Laide for preferring them to him.

In Nabokov's *Lolita*, Humbert seduces his little girl with candy, visits to the movies, and tourist spots. All he wants is for her to give him her body and not go away. Unlike *Antonio*, he never hopes that she may love him in return. He cannot imagine Lolita loving him as he loves her. He is convinced that between them there is an abyss - in sensibility, desires, plans: an ontological difference, a difference in their natures that is unbridgeable. He is a fully grown man, while she is a child with the desires and tastes of a child. So he is afraid that boys of her age might take her away from him, and he hates them and avoids them like the plague. Then he fears that she will get tired and bored with the life he is making her lead. He has no long-term projects, but thinks up stratagems to keep her with him day after day, hour after hour - like a

cancer victim struggling to prolong life as best he can, even for a single instant.

As a result he has no adult rival. He is not afraid that another man may turn up and obtain from Lolita the love which he knows he himself is unable to get. When he thinks they are being followed, he feels threatened, hunted and in danger, but never for one moment does he think Lolita could fall in love with their pursuer. He is quite incapable of imagining how different things really are, which accounts for the dramatic follow-up - his need to understand, and his nightmarish investigations that make him appear so paranoid. It is only years later, when it is all over, that he finds out that the child was really in love with a grown-up man, a famous playwright, an idol. And that all that time she had loved him and had been plotting her escape with him. It is only when Humbert learns such things that he has a rival - a rival that has destroyed not only his life, but Lolita's too. It is then that his jealousy turns not only to punishment but to revenge. He seeks him out and kills him.

We find the same kind of all-pervading, obsessive, unsettling jealousy in Proust. Yet in *Swann's* relationship with *Odette* and *Albertine* there should not be any existential difference or

complete incommunicability. They are two refined women, from the same social class. And yet Swann feels that Odette is eluding him, that she has a secret life, and that as soon as he is out of the way she is free to receive another lover. To outside appearances Odette is an elegant lady from Parisian high society, but this normal facade covers an excessive laxitude, a disgusting den of vice, a brothel. Albertine, too, has this elusive dual face, both sunny and dark. Her manners are impeccable, but underneath a secret, dissolute, unspeakable life can be glimpsed. In any case, neither woman seems to be able to love Swann with a reciprocal, open, radiant love. He can only enter marginally into their formal studied ways, cloaking an underlying perversion and abysmal turpitude.

Antonio knows that he cannot leave Laide for an instant. Humbert knows that it would only take a moment for his Lolita to be taken away from him, or for her to go off for the most insignificant reason, perhaps just to see a movie, or because she has found a boy to chat to. Swann, too, needs to stick to Odette all the time, and not let go of her for a moment. And the same is true of Albertine. She is by nature promiscuous. Ambiguous and deceitful. She never for one

moment promises him eternal, unerring love, and even when she seems to love him she might very well go off without a word of farewell.

It all becomes clear when we read in Proust's biography that the female figures of Odette and Albertine are disguises for homosexual loves. Unlike Nabokov and Buzzati, Proust does not tell us how Odette and Albertine are seduced, but judging from the fact that they are homosexual loves, they are more probably seduced with money, just like Humbert's Lolita and Antonio's Laide. Of course, it may be that they are the same kind of homosexuals as he is, but that they do not love him in the same way, are unfaithful to him, and give themselves to others as well. This for Proust/Swann is not enough, because he longs for a true and exclusive love - which he knows he will be unable to attain. An aura of freedom, ambiguity and unfathomable mystery is always preserved by a secret lover.

Homosexual love at the time of Proust was more severely repressed and condemned than it is today. Proust was in love and wanted to create a loving couple, but society would not allow this, and the homosexual world itself thought it impossible. He was in search of the kind of love that customs, habits and the very absence of an

official language prevented from being publicized. It is basically the same difficulty Roland Barthes complains of in *A lover's discourse: fragments*. Love, he says, cannot be theorized or translated into formulas. It can only be named in fragments. This happens not because this is the way love is in general, but because the particular kind of love that he has in mind is not envisaged by custom, is not regulated by ethical norms, laws, official bonds, marriages, and divorces. Because for that kind of love there are not even any officially acceptable words to pronounce - principles, laws and words which do exist where heterosexual love is concerned. It thus remains a secret and forbidden, but also irregular, promiscuous and wild kind of love. It is a love that can make no demands or loud claims for reciprocity and fidelity.

In a fine essay by Paul Robinson, *Dear Paul*,^{cx} a schoolmaster is shown as leading a pupil to recognize his homosexuality. The pupil tells him that he has fallen in love with his room-mate and suffered a terrible disappointment. The master explains to him that he has been mistaken to try and find love immediately. In the gay world, in fact, sex comes before love. The structure of a gay society is such that romantic

feelings must be put aside, particular bars must be patronized, and almost impersonal erotic experiences indulged in. The pupil must therefore first recognize within himself a vocation, a homosexual call, and on entering the gay world must accept its initiation rules, which impose promiscuity. It is only in the long run that he will be able to enjoy individual, romantic love as well.

Many years have passed since Robinson was writing. Homosexuality has become much more accepted, and the AIDS factor has intervened. Nowadays gay couples exist that are the exact models of heterosexual ones.^{cx1} There are more and more cases of gay marriages. What was at first a confused and promiscuous collective jumble is now institutionalized in terms of love in a couple. In order to understand the tormenting mixture of love and jealousy, the need for exclusiveness and dark base of promiscuity that existed in Proust, therefore, it is necessary to go back a hundred years, to the social relationships of that time. In Proust's world homosexual love is unenvisaged, unthinkable, and cannot possibly become the love of a couple. It presents itself as a desire to possess - in every time and every place - something that by its very nature can be neither named nor possessed, something too slippery to

grasp hold of. It is a love you can make no moral appeals or pledges to, and which you will never know how to answer, because basically it cannot even understand the question it has been asked, or it will ridicule it.

In all the cases we have examined, that of *Freshman*, as well as Buzzati, Nabokov and Proust, we see that love gets imbued with jealousy when it is unable to think itself out, define itself and become a project. The nascent state wants to be embodied, become collective, committed - a pledge, an institution. When this drive meets with obstacles on its way it becomes a passion. But when it cannot even imagine its future, when the codes and language to communicate are lacking, then it does not really know who the other person is and what he or she wants. It experiences mad irresistible desire which, however, collapses when confronted by this mystery. The loved object then seems ambiguous, unknown and unattainable. Some writers, like Barthes and Lacan, have described this particular type as if it were the universal form of all love.

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cx	4.9
cxii	5.9

CHAPTER TEN

Renunciation

Love restrained

Within the falling-in-love experience there are always two forces at play, one of them spurring us on and the other holding us back. The interplay between the two is partly conscious and partly unconscious. If, for example, we accept an invitation to dinner from someone we are attracted to, it means that we have an idea of exploration in mind. And if, on the contrary, we have decided to be faithful to the person we love, we will refuse that invitation. Even when we feel strongly attracted to someone, we can always make a conscious effort and draw back. But apart from setting up conscious resistance, we can also be affected by the unconscious kind. Both those process known as *love at first sight* and *moments*

of discontinuity take place when we slacken our defences and lower our guard.

The love process may stop at the *exploration* stage, or it may continue and become an *infatuation*. It may even go on until the nascent state is reached and the process becomes irreversible. But there can also be cases when a moment before crossing *the point of no return*, the forces that slow it down get the upper hand, the nascent state weakens and dies, and love miscarries. The process can be represented by the following diagram:

Let us examine a case which reached the nascent state but failed to make it to the point of no return. We will call it the case of *The Girl from Rome*. This young woman from Rome was engaged to a well-mannered, rich and handsome young man. The relationship between the two was excellent, and the girl harboured no doubts whatsoever about a future married life together. At a certain point, however, her fiancé went abroad with his father. While he was away he came up against many difficulties and was thrown into a crisis. When the girl next saw him a few months later, she felt as though she had never known him. He was weak, whining and petulant and did not seem to know how to face life's difficulties. So she started to have doubts. What sort of life would they have together? Would it be varied and exciting as she had dreamt, or just dull and monotonous?

During that period she had occasion to go to Venice to visit some relatives, and while she was there she met someone who was a bit of a dreamer with an artistic temperament, a drifter who led an irregular kind of life. He was full of

dreams and projects, and through him the girl discovered Venice and was fascinated by its beauty. She fell in love - but with whom? Was it the man or the city? Hard to tell. The man acted as her guide, and was the gateway through which she could catch a glimpse of an enchanted world, a life packed with adventure, dreams and art.

When she was very young, this young woman had been deeply in love with a man who had treated her very cruelly, and her decision to give him up had been made in pain and anger. She had met her fiancé years later, and their coming together had not been of the passionate kind. It had, however, given rise to a calm and reassuring kind of love. He was rich, gentle and considerate, she wanted to have children, and he was just the type to make a suitable husband and father. But Venice brought the past to the surface, re-opened the wound and stirred up her old, frustrated desires.

So began a love full of adventures and dreams. It was the revelation of a wonderful world - unknown and intense, like finding a secret drawer hidden in the depths of her soul, which Venice was the means of unlocking. A romantic meeting in Venice is like passing from prose to poetry, from the profane to the sacred,

from the trivial round of every day to the realm of art and the sublime, where the soul can expand and where dreams and aching desires hold sway.

We are face to face here with the very first sparks of falling in love - a journey back into the past and forward into the future. *The Girl from Rome's* mind teemed with centuries of past history and forests of symbols. She was no longer herself, but had become the heroine from the past.

At a certain point, however, this falling-in-love process slowed down and about-turned. The man lived in Venice, but as he could not find work there his attitude towards the city was ambivalent. His work took him to Rome, where he was thinking of settling. He talked about it more and more often, thinking that through her contacts she might be able to help him. Another problem was that he was poor, or so he seemed. He never gave her a present, not even a bunch of flowers from a street seller, let alone any beautiful Mourn glass. When they went to a restaurant, or even a coffee-bar, he never offered to pay. It was true that he had little money, but the girl knew that if she had been in his place she would have borrowed some. Another problem was that he was a good-for-nothing, never made precise arrangements and his plans were always

hazy. Where work was concerned, he was grumpy, lazy and always quick to give up.

In order to survive, love needs something positive to feed on. Until that moment the man had been the gateway to an unknown, unexplored world, with a glorious past - to an alternative life that was richer, more intense and charged with mythical echoes. Love between people of different nationalities, languages or religious reveals to us the specific strength of love as a gateway to another cultural way of being. But this only occurs on condition that the loved one believes in it, and is active, positive-thinking and full of vitality. As it was, the girl gradually came to realize that the man was no longer interested in Venice. He wanted to go to Rome, and was dreaming of a job in television or something in the civil service. Hoping she would help him, he began to run down Venice, saying that it was no place for people with intelligence and ability to get on. And he ended up by transmitting this sense of ruin and decay to the girl, so that she started to see Venice as a dying city.

At this point she started to see him with other eyes, too, and feel impatient with his continual grumbling, meanness, and attempts to use her to find work. There on one side was

Venice, with its peeling walls and putrid canals, and on the other was the man, with his paltry needs and stingy ways. The girl would have fallen in love with him if he had been able to carry her over the threshold into his world. As it was, he was only trying to drag her back to the place she wanted to leave. She understood quite clearly that if she was going to live in Rome it would be infinitely better to live with her handsome, rich and generous fiancé. She wanted to have children and give them a comfortable life. What had she been thinking of to fall for such a jerk? What mental aberration had grabbed hold of her momentarily? It had been her former love that had surfaced again with the Venetian - the one she had failed to fulfil as a young girl, a teenage dream come back to tempt her and lead her to her ruin. She had freed herself from it and must not yield to its new incarnation. Neither the old nor the new love could give her anything. They were nothing but fatal illusions.

For the simple reason that their plans involve a home and children, many women are more critical and more cautious towards a new love than men are. We have seen that they tend to satisfy their desire for love in the form of daydreams, reading love stories, watching

romantic films, following soap operas or dreaming about a film star.^{cxii} In this way they always have an ideal in mind, and until they fall deeply in love, they compare their suitor with this ideal. They are more demanding and have a stronger practical sense, and it is thanks to this practical sense that *The Girl from Rome* managed to disperse the illusion before it became irreversible.

This example shows us that even when it presents itself as an overwhelming passion, love needs many internal and external conditions in order to germinate and put down roots. It needs to become an acceptable, desirable project - the future. Otherwise it remains at an exploratory level. Or as in this case, it miscarries.

Renunciation

But what happens when the love process crosses *the point of no return*? At this point the person has become half of a developing couple, no longer with a separate identity, but only sharing one with another person. The other one is felt to be one's true self and so *renouncing* that love would mean losing what is most important

in one's empirical self. In this phase the cost of separation is a real catastrophe for the ego, an emptying of all sense and value, what can be termed *petrification*.

Yet life's circumstances, the problems produced by the relationship, may create such a painful predicament, so full of a sense of guilt, so devoid of a future that the person decides to renounce the love after all, and break the bond. We have seen this in the case of *The Man from Bari*. Convinced that his love was not returned, he preferred to break off the relationship rather than be poisoned with jealousy. This kind of renunciation is done in order to avoid pain, and we will call it *egoistic*. But there are other people who renounce their love so as not to make someone they love suffer - if they are married, for example, it will be wife, husband, children. Torn between two equally strong loves, they resolve the *ethical dilemma* by choosing the old world and renouncing the new one. In this case we will call their choice *altruistic*.

In any case, renunciation is always a choice that prefers the old to the new, the institution to the nascent state. Whenever the subject acts in this way, s/he does something that is morally very negative. For the nascent state is a contact with the absolute, and it is in the light of this that previous love objects also acquire their value. Once contact with the love object has been broken, these loves and desires also weaken or disappear.

If it is a case of *egoistic* renunciation, a sense of solitude and total emptiness is generated. But if it is *altruistic* the effect is even more devastating because, once the sacrifice has been made, the subject involved is no longer able to love those it was made for, either. By now unable to understand why it was done, s/he is under the impression of having committed an irreparable crime, of having destroyed the very meaning of life. Everything turns deathly, empty, devoid of value. S/he can only go through the motions of existence, repeating them mechanically and imitating others. S/he ceases to have any genuine emotions and parades them like an actor, feeling like a robot or puppet - and this is *petrification*. The only real, deep feeling is *nostalgia* for something that has been lost.

Egoistic renunciation. The person in love who doubts the quality of the love s/he is receiving must choose whether to go on loving with no hope of affecting a change or whether to try to stop loving and break away, though fully aware s/he is still in love and will have to face the terrible period of loss of the love object - a kind of *psychic suicide*. At first s/he will try to struggle on, using all the charm and powers of persuasion possible in order to captivate and conquer. But when it is clear that their love is not returned, a clear break must be made. Then what strength remains is used to resist going back, as it were, biting the hand that wants to reach out and covering the eyes that want to go on looking for the lost love.

In order to reflect on other cases where the choice to renounce was basically egoistic, we will make use of the work of the well-known psychiatrist Caruso, entitled *La Separazione degli amanti*.^{cxiii} The writer tells us that he intends to deal only with cases where the renunciation was made by both partner. In actual fact, studying all his cases carefully, we can see that the decision to make the break only ever comes from one of the two. Let us begin with the example of Dr. IBN.

We will call him *Caruso IBN*. He was a childless married man who fell in love with a woman identified as MAI. For reasons and doubts that are none too clear, he decided to renounce his love. The woman tried to accept his choice and to understand him, but she was still deeply in love. From afar she wrote him heart-rending letters: “You are the only one for me. You are my first love, my world, my happiness, my life. I love you more than sunshine and light. Without you the sun is cold and the light is dark. You are the great God enthroned over all the world”. And again “My time is happy an my world is beautiful only with you”.^{cxiv} Their separation seemed to have destroyed the woman mentally and physically. The two lovers tried meeting another couple of times. But *Caruso IBN* was uncertain, tormented, and each time he decided to break things off again. In the end he divorced his wife, but instead of running to MAI and throwing himself in her arms, he told her quite coldly over the phone that he was going to disappear. Some time later the young woman killed herself, without leaving any letter of farewell. So there was no mutual agreement at all to separate. *Caruso IBN* was a psychopath who, after tormenting the woman who loved him with his doubts, deserted her. She

fought desperately for her love, but when she realized she had failed, she took her own life. There was certainly no consensual separation but an egoistic, unilateral decision taken by the man.

Another of Caruso's cases, *Signora RIK*,^{cxv} renounced her love because she had not understood the depth of her feelings. She was about to marry a man of standing who was older than she was, and whom she had known and idolized for a long time. Hers was a mixture of family-arranged marriage and star-worship. However, just before the wedding was due to take place, she met a young man and lost her head over him. Thinking that it was infatuation, she did not realize that this was the true love, not what she felt for her fiancé. So she gave the young man up and married the older one, whereupon she realized at once that she had made a terrible mistake. It is a situation that reminds us of Forster's novel *A Room with a View*. A young English girl falls in love with a boy of the same age in Florence. But she is engaged to an extremely boring upper-class individual. Back in England she meets the boy she had known in Florence again, but she tries to hide the love she feels for him in every possible way, including bringing her wedding day forward. Luckily, at a

certain point, she realizes she does not love her fiancé and thus avoids the mistake made by Caruso's *Signora RIK*.

Altruistic renunciation. Here again we will use another of Caruso's cases, that of Dr. CF Chemist, and we will call it *Caruso CD*.^{cxvi} It concerns a married man of 36, with two children, who fell in love with an eighteen-year-old pupil of his. The affair became public knowledge, his wife made terrible scenes and everyone he knew condemned him. After three tormented months he reached the conclusion that their love was impossible, so he persuaded the girl to go away. When she had gone, he suffered atrociously and kept on writing to her. She replied telling him she loved him, but he advised her to forget him and find a new love. At the same time, however, he was painfully jealous. Their correspondence continued for over two years. *Caruso CD* was obviously in love, but his love had entered into mortal combat with the other loves and duties his life hinged on wife, children, colleagues, social standing. Besides, the girl was exceedingly young. It was a typical case of an *ethical dilemma*. He had to choose between seizing the opportunity offered by his new love or standing

by his old ones. In choosing the latter, and renouncing the former, he fell into the state we have called *petrification*. We can see this when he writes: “I had lost something great and happy that my reason was completely unable to explain away. It was as if I had glimpsed another world and been obliged to pay for it dearly. I no longer know exactly what had happened in that world - probably pure joy ... where I did not have to think all the time about what was allowed and what was illicit”^{cxvii}.

It is something we know, because it is the overpowering experience so typical of the nascent state. But the nascent state has a twofold aspect, since the old world and its old loves still go on existing. The person in love wants to enjoy love without hurting anyone. Everyone should be happy in the “new world”. But the opposite happens, and the new love tears apart the old society and creates pain. *Caruso CD* was tortured by his feelings of guilt towards his wife and children, but also towards the girl he was in love with, because everyone, including himself, kept telling him she was too young, that he would ruin her, and that she had a right to her own life. It was not only a choice between the girl and his wife, or the girl and his children. It was the

choice between a faded and worn-out life where nobody suffered, and the new one, where he was happy but where everyone suffered. It was the choice between what he and everyone else considered normal, and what could be judged superficiality, madness. For this reason the choice posed itself as a *dilemma*, because it had to be made between two alternatives which should not have existed. It was like asking a mother of two children who had been kidnapped to choose which of the two should be killed.

In most cases the person in love chooses the loved one and therefore breaks with the other love objects, though taking care to do them as little harm as possible. In the case of *Caruso CD*, however, he chose the old objects and renounced the new, sacrificing the world about to be born for the old one already in existence. By doing so he destroyed the ideal and possible, to keep alive what was already there. It is a process that, through setting in motion the state of *petrification*, more often than not is doomed to failure. After a real case of falling in love, it is most unlikely that new life can be breathed into the old relationship. Anyone who has renounced love will still be in love subconsciously, and will feel as if that love were immured in a stone tomb.

From a practical point of view, however, a conclusion can at least be drawn. When couples intend to save their marriages, they should avoid temptation or squash any symptoms of falling in love early on, during the exploration stage, that is before they reach *the point of no return*.

Frustration and creation

What happens when we fall in love and are not loved in return? Is it petrification? No, it is not, because petrification results from a moral drama, a choice in which we are blameworthy for having destroyed what was more valuable than anything else. But if it is our loved one who leaves us, or wants nothing more to do with us, and we have done all we could to prevent this from happening, then we are no longer in the world of renunciation but purely and simply in the world of loss, as studied by Freud in *Mourning and melancholy*^{cxviii} and analysed in depth by Bowlby^{cxix} - but with a difference that the authors in question could not have taken into consideration. That is, for us a *nascent state*

denotes action, and in the nascent state the subject is starting to undergo a change and extraordinary amounts of energy are at work.

Loss produces appalling pain, *but it does not interrupt the process of transformation* which began long before. The experience, therefore, is not one of simple mourning. It is the collapse of an ordering process that was at work, of establishing aims in the cosmos. It is the intrusion of disorder into the order that was emerging. But the ordering power is still active.

Let us go back to the case of *Freshman*. When he realized his girl did not love him, he suffered atrocious pain and went through the awful experience of seeing the world as governed by unjust and absurd laws. He gave vent to his anguish by saying that God “had created the world when he was drunk”. He even contemplated suicide, and up in the mountains imagined walking across an enormous glacier until he fell down and died of exposure. He did not kill himself, however, but once back home threw himself into his studies and, as we have seen, began a process of self-transformation. Modelling himself on his friend, he enjoyed new experiences and learnt so quickly that before long he underwent a real metamorphosis. The

renewing charge of the nascent state of love, even if it fails to achieve its aim, that is the creation of the couple, is not lost but finds another way and another goal. This process does not cure the subject of love - only falling in love again can do that, but it does make creation, progress and maturation possible.

It is with these concepts in mind that we can study the creative activities that can follow the failure of nascent love. The first case that springs to mind is that of Goethe. In love with Charlotte Buff, he was bitterly disappointed when she married someone else. He, too, went through a period of deep despair and thought of committing suicide. Instead of doing so he wrote the novel *The Sorrows of Young Werther* in which a young man falls in love with a girl called Charlotte, exactly as he had done. And when she marries someone else, he kills himself. Psychologists have pointed out that by imagining and weaving fancies around suicide, Goethe actually avoided having to perform the act itself. It is indeed true that the novel functions as an illusionary satisfaction of a desire, the exorcising of a projected act. But what interests us is something else - that after his terrible disappointment, Goethe was capable of extraordinary creative and

transforming activity. *Werther* is a masterpiece, exerting an overwhelming effect on a whole generation in Europe and starting off a new age not only in Goethe's life, but in the whole of literature. We can therefore say that the creative power of the nascent state of love for Charlotte was not exhausted with the disappearance of its individual love object, but continued in its work of transformation of the individual and the entire world.

But the plasticity of the nascent state permits creative processes that are not mere fantasy substituting real action, as in the case of Goethe. According to our theory the nascent state can also take a totally different creative direction. Let us see a famous example. The year was 1883. The great German philosopher Nietzsche was thirty-eight years old when he fell in love with Lou Salomé. Lou had no intention of getting married. She wanted to set up a spiritual community with two friends - Rée and Nietzsche himself. But both Rée and Nietzsche were in love with her, each wanted her for himself, and each wanted to marry her. Lou played both of them along for ages, and at a certain point Nietzsche was actually convinced that she loved him in return. He experienced a period of joy and hope, was happy,

loved life and wanted a child. But Lou kept her distance, made him wait and in the end went off to Berlin with Rée. After futile attempts to re-establish contact with her, Nietzsche realized that he had lost her forever. Distraught and desperate, he wanted to run away and hide. Suffering from nightmares and insomnia he filled himself full of sedatives. He felt alone, in exile, and lost all self-confidence. What he was writing - his philosophy - crumbled and became meaningless. But it was at this very point - in the most dramatic and painful moment of his existence - that he suddenly found inspiration and in the course of a few days in February, 1884,^{cxv} he threw off an extraordinary, incredible work that was to influence the whole of Western history: *Thus spoke Zarathustra*. It is no mere story of disappointed love, nor the weaving of fantasies around ideas of suicide, but the creation of a new philosophy and a new religion - the heralding of the superman, a new kind of human being, with a different mentality and different moral sense. The creative power of the nascent state of love, re-routed from its original aim of creating a couple, thus explodes into the creation of a new heaven and a new earth.

A practical consequence springs out of these episodes, which is that effective therapy for healing disappointed love lies in continuing the transformation process that has already begun, to the point of actually accelerating the change by exploring new ways, and above all in getting involved in a great task requiring energy and creativeness. Only in this way can forces freed by the nascent state stand a chance of being channelled into a new project. And the pain, anger and desire for vindication or revenge will become constructive powers.

The function of hate

Why does love so easily turn to hate? Why does it often end violently, with furious rows? Why is divorce so full of rage, resentment and revenge? And more generally, what is the function of hate in destroying a frustrated and disappointing relationship, and in causing the pain of desertion?

When they fall in love, two people belonging to different societies break their ties to form a new community. And starting from that moment, they aim to merge and form a compact

unit, a new living organism with its own identity, like a sect, political party or nation. It is under the form of community that they build their home, choose their friends and face life together. They build something that belongs to them both at the same time, to their “us”, something indivisible which each considers his or her own.

This collectivity is broken by frustration, betrayal, jealousy, renunciation or desertion, and both the collective and each individual subject it consists of are consequently torn to pieces. Part of the life of each is cut short and they both wish they could go back, but they cannot. So each is forced to rebuild a new self inside a new collectivity, different from the first. But this time there is no nascent state, no process that, while destroying the old one, creates a joyful new community. To make room for the new, the subject must first actively destroy what exists. And what was created by love can only be destroyed by an equally violent passion - *hate*. It is hate as liberation, subversion, hate that separates, breaks apart and annihilates, hate that destroys the loving community to make room for another kind of life. This is the function of hate - to destroy what the nascent state had created.

But a community does not only exist in the present - it is rooted in the past and reaches out into the future. For this reason the destruction process must bite deep down into the past and project itself into the future. In other words, a *second historicizing* occurs in which the two individuals concerned review their lives in order to destroy within them the value of the relationship that has deteriorated, to wipe out pleasant memories and uncover only unpleasant ones, and thus justify the choice they have made. As happens in war, when the combatants forget the things that united them and only remember the quarrels, wrongs and injustice they have suffered, so as to fuel their desire to fight.

Revenge. One of the ways hate reveals itself is in *revenge*. Like the historicizing of the nascent state, revenge has the power of linking past and future, but it does it in the opposite way. In the nascent state we evoke the past because it supplies us with positive models to solve future problems, and gives us strength. All religious movements, for example, hark back to the divine period of their origins - Islam to the time when Mohammed led his people, Christianity to when Jesus was in the world. Reliving that sacred and

glorious era, followers find the strength to build a splendid future. In cases of *revenge*, on the contrary, we look on the past as something negative, abominable, and we use the future to destroy what has happened in it, and to deal with an unsettled account.

Exactng revenge means postponing to the future an act of destruction that we should have performed immediately but have not been able to. Revenge keeps the past alive, but does so in the form of a pledge to destroy. Revenge gives great pleasure, because it enables us to imagine harming the other person again and again. Powerless to remake the past, hate has to entrust the task to future revenge. Unable to destroy the past here and now, as the nascent state of love does, it confirms and eternalizes it.

Vindication. A distinction must be drawn between *vindication* and revenge. With vindication we postpone the solution of a painful problem relating to the past. But we use the principle of construction rather than destruction to do so. Scott Fitzgerald's *Gatsby* accumulates a fortune because he wants to win back the love of the woman he could not marry when he was poor. He buys a mansion near hers and gives

magnificent parties until she is tempted into going to see him and they fall in love again. In *Wuthering Heights*, Heathcliff is a foundling. Brought up as a member of the Earnshaw household he plays with Catherine and together they build a fantasy world of their own and fall in love. But Catherine is also attracted to a life of luxury and elegant balls. One day she declares that as Heathcliff is socially beneath her, it would degrade her to marry him. Overhearing her words, he is devastated, goes away and only comes back years later, when he has become rich. Stimulated by a desire for revenge, but above all by the desire to win back her love, he buys the farm where Catherine had grown up. The memories that guide him are happy ones, of childhood and adolescence spent together. He has only one negative memory, and that can be annulled by re-tying the bonds of love. Which is what happens - for just before dying, Catherine confesses that she has always loved him.

Alliances. Like love, hate is a collective fact. It separates us from those we have loved and unites us to anyone who can help us to harm our enemy. Hate, even more than love, seeks allies - people and institutions - to be on its side, and

justify and support its war. Hate unites allies and produces between them a kind of convulsive love which continues to exist as long as there is a common enemy. Then, once the enemy has disappeared, so does this love.

When a couple breaks up, both partners seek support from their friends, entreating them to break off relations with the person once loved and now hated. And it gives them pleasure to hear that person spoken badly of. They enlist help for actions of revenge and reprisal. When love ends, therefore, there are changes of alliance and acts of betrayal, as happens during wars. Some who were friends and allies before, now become enemies. Some who were enemies become allies, and history is remade and rewritten to adapt it to the new situation.

Oblivion. To heal disappointed love and assuage for revenge another mechanism must come into play - *oblivion*. Hate seeks to destroy, but must be satisfied with totally repressing and forgetting, so as not to reawaken pain and desire for revenge.

Psychoanalysis has made us think of oblivion as repression, that is as a pathological phenomenon, while it actually has a precious

vital function. If only temporarily, it enables us to cancel part of our lives, leaving us free to build new social relationships and indulge in new projects. To be sure, part of our vital energy remains imprisoned in our unconscious, but the other part can expand. With oblivion we seem to split our personality in half, forgetting a part of the old one and at the same time building a new one. And to do this we make use of wishes, dreams, impulses we had renounced. We put to good use skills we had neglected before. Disappointment in love does not always result in a catastrophic depression therefore, and the subject can make use of it to develop new resources and possibilities, and to start a new life.

Yet oblivion is never able to heal the deep wound left in the soul. There remains a sense of having lost something essential. The wound can only be healed by returning to the past and managing to redeem it - something that not even the deepest psychoanalysis can do. Only a new nascent state can, and this means falling in love again, or undergoing a religious or political conversion. This is the only case in which the *historicizing* process can pierce through the barrier of time and dissolve the pain and hate that are trapped behind it.

exii	1.10
exiii	2.10
exiv	3.10
exv	4.10
exvi	5.10
exvii	6.10
exviii	7.10
exix	8.10
exx	9.10

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Winning and winning back

Seduction

In order to make our dreams come true, our plans must convince others and win them over to our side. If we take the word seduction in its widest meaning, from the Latin *sé-ducere*, that is “draw with us”, “persuade”, we can always be said to be involved in some kind of seductive activity.^{cxxi}

But there is also a more restricted meaning of the word, which indicates the efforts we make and the play-acting we do to make ourselves interesting and attractive at an erotic level. In the mating season, animals also “dress up” in an exhibitionistic way, emit particular odours and perform mating rituals. For human beings these activities are cultural and voluntary, and differ therefore from one society to another, one age to

another and one individual to another. In place of plumage a parade is made of elegant clothes or a car, and in place of secreted hormones perfumes, after-shave and make-up. For as far as courting is concerned, the human race has thought up a thousand and one ways of inventing forms and rituals.

All those who are ardently in love wish to win the loved one, and therefore use all the resources their intelligence and experience suggest to get themselves loved in return. Thus even the clumsiest of boys and shyest of girls throw themselves into the breach, as primordial mechanisms and genetic engrams spring into action. A woman becomes more beautiful, her eyes brighter and softer, her manner warmer and more appealing. A man becomes enterprising and tireless, as in Giuseppe Tornatore's film *Nuovo Cinema Paradiso*, where the 14-year-old boy who has fallen in love spends every night for months on end stationed outside his loved one's home.

However, falling in love makes people shy and respectful as well. We worship our loved ones, and cannot even summon up enough courage to touch them. If they reject us, we freeze up and are unable to break through the

barrier of resistance in order to transform rejection into acceptance. Young boys in particular often do not know how to behave, so that when they fall in love with a classmate they behave so awkwardly that they frighten her away, right into the arms of a more brilliant and skilful rival. At a certain point, however, even the most inept would-be Romeo understands that if he really wants to win the heart of the woman he loves, he must pluck up courage, find the right words to speak to her, invite her out, maybe send her a bunch of flowers, or take her out for a meal. And it would be better for him to arrive by car or motorbike so as not to make her use public transport or have to walk in the rain. In a word, pure, unselfish, sincere and ingenuous love is not enough to arouse a loved one's interest. The art of seduction is needed.

The attitude to this art of a boy in love is contradictory. On one side he would like to be loved for what he is, without having to do anything - for the simple fact that he exists. On the other side he is willing to resort to any means at his disposal to win the person he loves - even a love potion, hypnosis, deceit, if not actual threats. But at the same time he does not want her to answer "I love you" because she is hypnotized or

afraid, but because she really loves him. Real falling in love calls for freedom.

Thus in order to make himself attractive in the eyes of the one he loves, every lover is ready to resort to pretence and exaggerate his own importance. This feigning clashes with his desire to be sincere, lay bare his soul and confess all his faults and failings. The result of this tug-of-war is terrific. People in love do everything possible to show what they consider the best part of themselves, and to live up to this ideal image. Indeed, they try to be what they would like to be, and this results in a remarkable drive towards *self-improvement*.

But that is not all. A lover knows that his loved one has dreams, desires, aspirations and ideals to which he corresponds only in part. He listens carefully and makes a note of all the good and bad things she says about him. From these elements he tries to discover the ideal model she has in mind, and does his best to live up to it. So he ends up by being torn in two directions. On one side he wants to realize *his own* ideal, and on the other he wants to become what his loved one dreams and desires, so as to match *her* ideal. A process of continual rethinking of his own model and image of what he should be, is therefore set

in motion. And as both partners do the same thing, they are caught up in a dual search, seeking through trial and error the miraculous point of contact between their own deep-seated needs and the other's, between their own dreams and those of the person they love, until they reach the point where the same desires and dreams are held by both.

For women the *clash between spontaneity and seduction* is even stronger. They learn how important the art of seduction is when they are mere babes in arms - a coy glance, a smile, or an appealing mannerism can get them more than any amount of tantrums. And they can also see how the strongest and most intelligent of men are disarmed by the wheedling wiles of scheming little charmers. They understand that men can be easily seduced at a purely sexual level, and can be mesmerized by the mere sight of a female breast.

In effect, they realize that in order to win their man, appearance is all-important and they must make themselves attractive in order to be admired and desired. But when they are in love, they find they also want to be sincerely and simply themselves. So a girl who is really in love is also clumsy in the art of seduction. What she

does well is make herself sweet, charming and attractive - but her heart throbs and then she wants to cry and even run away. She is appalled if the man she loves gazes longingly at a friend of hers who is showing off her legs provocatively, or if he turns to eye up a scantily dressed prostitute. She will then pull herself together and put everything into transforming herself into a siren. She throws herself into the fray, but at the same time she wishes it were not necessary, because if she could follow her impulse she would like to wait trustingly for him to open his eyes and love her and her alone.

Deep down in her woman's heart lurks the tormenting fear that sincere and simple true love does not pay off, because men are only sensitive to feminine artifice and manipulation. This dilemma is expressed in literature and mythology by two archetypal characters: *The Sleeping Beauty* and *The Witch*. The former, beautiful and pure, waits for the man of her dreams, while the latter, well-versed and unprincipled, wins the man's heart by casting her spells. A woman in love identifies herself with Sleeping Beauty, and would like to wait with eyes closed for her Prince Charming to ride up on his white charger, kiss her and carry her off. This desire to be sought out

without doing anything herself to bring it about, often leads her to witness with terror the dangerous approach of a rival, while she herself is unable to move, not even to put her loved one on his guard. She knows it is no use saying to him: "Watch out for so-and-so's crafty ways". He would not believe her, and she would seem to be playing the part of the jealous rival, or worse, of a woman envious of another's beauty. During the course of a lifetime, a woman finds herself facing this dilemma again and again. Which path should she follow, the one telling her to be simple and sincere or the other advising guile and subterfuge?

Many popular *love stories* deal with this problem. The heroine loves with a pure heart but finds access cut off by a no-holds-barred rival who is not really in love but quite ready to resort to the arts of seduction. And everything points to the man letting himself be caught, hooked and landed. The story flounders on amid mistakes and misunderstandings, which more than once tempt the heroine to give up because the man is so crassly allowing himself be duped. But she resists, and in the end the generous, sincere feeling of true love triumphs.^{cxxii}

The more intelligently we use the art of seduction, the tighter the hold we keep on our passions, the more successful we are at seducing. Because in this way we are able to overcome rejection, choose just the right moment, make the most nonchalant moves and find the most suitable words. An old legend, taken up in the film *Bell, Book and Candle* with James Stewart and Kim Novak, says that a witch cannot fall in love. If she does, she will lose her powers.

It is true. Great seducers keep their feelings in check. One of the most fascinating works on the importance of keeping an emotional cool in seduction is *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*.^{cxxiii} The protagonists are two “libertines”, the Marquise de Merteuil and Viscount Valmont. They devote all their time to manipulating the feelings of others so as to get them to fall in love and thus to enslave and lead them to their ruin. The two libertines are able to use the most refined psychological games to arouse love: flattery, adulation, appealing to their victims’ compassion and tenderness, and feigning complete and utter devotion. They make use of all kinds of pretences, from false departures and suicides to noble acts of sacrifice and displays of religious feeling. Then, once their aim has been achieved,

they use their power for evil purposes, such as taking revenge. Or they simply want to win a bet, so as to amuse themselves with others, and laugh at the expense of the simpletons who let themselves be duped.

In order to succeed, a seducer must not show any sincere feelings, but always has to pretend. In a letter to Viscount Valmont, The Marquise de Merteuil writes: “My first care was to acquire the reputation of being invincible. To obtain this I always pretended to accept the attentions of those men only who did not please me. I employed them usefully in gaining me the honours of resistance, while I yielded myself fearlessly to the accepted lover. But my feigned timidity never allowed him to accompany me into society; and thus the gaze of the company was always fixed upon the rejected lover”.^{CXXIV} But in order to render them harmless, she also managed to get some secret out of her unlucky lovers, so as to be able to threaten and blackmail them. “Did I experience some grief,” she adds “I studied to show an air of serenity, even one of joy; I carried my zeal so far as to cause myself voluntary pain and to seek for an expression of pleasure at the same time. I worked over myself with the same care and more trouble to repress the symptoms of

an unexpected joy. In this way I acquired that power over my features by which I have sometimes seen you astonished...^{»cxxxv}

We may now ask ourselves why true love is so often returned, if keeping a cool head is so important. And we find the reply in studying the seductive mechanism adopted by the libertine. The seducer *pretends to be in love* and pretends to have all the virtues that the society of the time considers most noble. The nascent state of love, indeed, has an extraordinarily contagious power. Dante's definition, "Love that to no loved heart remits love's score" is true. Falling in love has its own intrinsic power of seduction which casts a spell over the susceptible.

So though the seducer pretends to be in love, s/he takes care not to make any move that could *alarm* the other person and put him or her on the defensive. Falling in love is in fact a dangerous state of letting ourselves go, and we all try to defend ourselves from it. The seducer cunningly gets round all our defences, claiming not to ask for anything, not to want anything, vowing to disappear whenever we like. Remember how the seductress behaves at the beginning of the film *Fatal Attraction*?

A true lover is usually just the opposite - nervous, demanding, oppressive and at the same time uncertain and timid. S/he insists, implores, then stammers, trembles, weeps. Falling in love is never a joke or a game. If there is one thing lovers know nothing about, it is humour. Lovers are in deadly earnest - they put their lives at stake and ask their prospective partners to do the same. Those who are not ready to do so, or are not attracted enough, draw back and defend themselves. And they sometimes get out of the situation so as not to kindle unjustified hopes. This does not happen with seducers, because they are so well-versed in the art of waiting and reassuring they are capable of stopping in time. They never create fears or anxieties, and for this very reason people who have doubts and urges to resist often end up by falling in love more easily with a seducer than with someone who truly loves them.

When we meet someone who is in love with us and we do not want to reciprocate his or her feelings, we often prefer to be with a third party, someone who does not involve us emotionally - someone whose company we enjoy and with whom we could strike up a friendship or even have a fling. After all, we tell ourselves, if the

other person is really in love s/he will wait for me and pass the test. True love is, in fact, tenacious, and does not give up easily. But in the initial stages, when it is only exploratory it is also fragile - especially in those who are jealous and unsure of themselves.

True love must always defend itself from false seduction: The recurrent question “Do you love me?” also implies “Are you serious or just playing around; are you sincere or trying to deceive me?”. And it is not easy to find an answer. For this reason, when we are in love, we defend ourselves by setting tests, waiting and trying to decipher the other one’s behaviour.^{cxxxvi} Love is not only a gift - it is also intelligence, acts carried out to win over the loved one, overcome difficulties, fend off attacks, and defeat the rivals who want to take possession of our beloved. Love is also discovering the other person’s true intentions. It is deciphering and digging deep into the underworld of potential lies. Last of all, love is action on ourselves, metamorphosis, perfection, passing the tests. Every novel and every film about love tell the tale of this inner and outer adventure, this search, this struggle with ourselves and with the world.

Falling in love at a later stage

There is another way of falling in love, that is after we have got to know the other person very well and spent part of our lives together. Usually one of the two has already fallen in love, while the other one is still hesitant and unsure. It is indeed most rare for two people who have spent a long time together to then fall in love at the same time.

So when two people fall in love at a later stage, one of them is already in love and trying to awaken it in the other, who is still resisting and not responding. Then, at a certain point the wooer succeeds. The simplest case is when the second person is also ready to fall in love but has been on the defensive. As in the case of *The Prudent Man*, who wanted to be absolutely sure and was afraid of letting himself go, because the woman he was falling in love with was a real beauty, much admired and courted. But she had fallen deeply in love with him, understood his problems and knew how to smile, reassure him and wait for his fears to vanish.

More complex is the other situation, in which the person in love sets about trying to win over someone who is not ready and willing to fall

in love. We have an example of this in *The Husband-seeker*. After having had a crush on the singer Al Bano, she felt attracted to a local heart-throb who did not even spare her a glance. She therefore studied all his moves, got to know his friends and worked it so that somehow or other she met him every evening - in the street, in shops, or at dances. Every time she went through her preparations carefully, visited the hairdresser, made herself up like a dream and wore her most elegant and sexiest clothes. While dancing with him she used all the techniques of flattery and adulation she could muster, and she managed to seduce him. Having charmed her way into his house and bed, she played at being his slave and geisha, satisfying his every whim and quirk. She kept bringing him presents, acted as his maid, saw to his clothes, did his shopping, cooked his meals, and even brought him flowers every day. He treated her badly, but she still smiled. She stopped looking at other men and told him that in the past she had had loads of suitors but had never loved any of them.

Little by little she worked her way into his life, but always saying that she did not want to disturb him, that she expected nothing and was ready to go away if he asked her to. She acted as

mistress, maid and secretary, even writing down all his dates with other women without ever showing any sign of jealousy.

Yet in order to make someone fall in love with us we must speak not only to the present but also to the past and future of the person concerned. The young man we are speaking about came from a solid conservative family of country folk to whom he was closely tied - a family where a good wife does all the housework, obeys her husband and is always ready to serve and help. With her humble, dutiful behaviour, *The Husband-seeker* acted the part of this paragon of a wife. She asked him about his family and especially about his mother. When she was shown photographs, she went into raptures, enthusing over them and saying she was sure his mother was an extraordinary woman, and she would like to meet her, but did not dare ask. So eventually she was taken to visit the family and she made a big fuss of them, showing what a domesticated and demure potential daughter-in-law she was. Completely won over, the mother began to speak well of her to her son, and he started to see her with different eyes and consider the possibility of marrying her. He had never thought about it before, as he had only looked on

her as a convenient bed-fellow. Now, for the first time, he suddenly “saw” her extraordinary domestic qualities. Even his mother was pointing them out to him, so how could he have any doubts? At this point he fell in love.

Another example of falling in love at a later stage is that of *The Law Graduate*'s husband. He was a great lawyer from the North of Italy a cold, calculating specialist in civil law, while she was young, and fresh up from the South. Arriving in Milan soon after taking her degree, she met the great lawyer and was immediately smitten. He became her ideal, master and hero. It was a real case of star-worship which could have become true love if it had been reciprocated. But the lawyer was by nature close and reserved, and what is more, he had just lost out in a love affair. He needed keeping company and consoling, so the girl set about seducing him systematically, relentlessly. Feeling sorry for himself he talked to her about his previous love, and she listened patiently. He was moody, but she never reacted. He neglected her, rarely bothered to take her out or introduce her to his friends. If they did happen to be out together, he would ignore her. His love-making was hasty and perfunctory, and afterwards he would disappear for weeks. But

cool, calm and collected, she always turned up to their appointments looking elegant and charming, ready to satisfy his every whim and desire. He told her he would never get married and she smiled back at him, answering that she liked things just as they were. She helped him in his work, taking on delicate tasks. So, in this way she gradually won the trust of this difficult and reserved creature of habit.

Two years went by. They were now living together like husband and wife, but he still said nothing of marriage. At length she realized she was expecting a baby, and at this point a complete change came over him. He looked at her with new eyes, not only asking her to marry him but to do so at once. Because it was a child that he wanted. His project included more than a devoted mistress and faithful assistant, it also needed the sacredness of motherhood. His wife gave him two more children, and it was then that he fell in love. His love project and community model was therefore not a woman but a family. So he only fell in love with his wife when she became a mother surrounded by children, that is only when she had become the nucleus of his family. Now happy and secure, he devote himself to his work, body and soul. He never goes on

holiday, he earns mountains of money and gives it all to her to invest “for the family”. He is a happy man.

Winning back

The curious properties of the nascent state enable us to explain another apparently paradoxical phenomenon: it is actually possible to win back someone who is starting to fall in love with a third person. It is quite easy to do when the other two are still in the *exploratory* phase - because the process is reversible. When people say they are always falling in love, or they love two or three people at the same time, it is because they are carrying out explorations. When one of these explorations goes wrong and comes up against some obstacle, some kind of disappointment, the subject then starts off on a different one. Sometimes it is possible to carry on several explorations simultaneously.

There are countless plays, novels and films that describe this situation of courtship, where all the relationships are in a state of instability and reversibility. People choose one another, give one another up, try someone else, then go back to the first partner. The phenomenon remains the same

even if the subject is married. All that is needed is some misunderstanding, some disappointment with the lover, for the betrayed husband or wife to resume their place in their loved one's heart. But all this is not yet falling in love - true love occurs when the *point of no return* is crossed. The die is then cast and there can be no second thoughts.

In an entertaining book Maria Venturi teaches wives strategies for winning back a husband who is threatening to fall in love with someone else. The suggestions she makes are identical to the techniques used by the Marquise de Merteuil in *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*: keep a tight control over your emotions, learn how to pretend, know how to make a show of indifference or passion according to need. The first element of the strategy is to ostentatiously ignore the new relationship and completely change your own behaviour. On one side go back to being a fresh and innocent young girl in love and on the other become new, disconcerting and unpredictable. The second technique is to play on the tormenting sense of guilt, the ethical dilemma, that will be ripping the man apart. Venturi says: "The wife must seem noble, detached, resigned, good and generous to her

husband. To betray a nagging, whining, unlovable wife will seem to him to be almost justifiable self-defence. To realize, on the other hand, that he is making a dignified, understanding and amazingly resourceful companion suffer will make him suffer from a dire sense of guilt”^{cxxvii}. At this point the other woman will start pressuring him to make up his mind, hurry up and leave his wife. This means that little by little the roles will be reversed. The other woman will become the nagger, and will no longer represent a new, alternative freedom. Now it is the wife who gives her husband a sense of lightness and prospects of an easier life. If the nascent state has only just begun and the process is in the *exploratory* stage, this strategy usually succeeds.

What Venturi does not say - and neither do other writers usually - is what happens next. The wife has succeeded in her attempt at seduction - she has won. But now she finds herself in the psychological situation of an athlete who has gone through a long period of training, has concentrated on the goal and won the trophy. All she now wants to do is relax and take a rest. She has made a titanic effort and naturally wants a reward. She thinks that she deserves an apology for the wounds left by the betrayal and

humiliation. And she is tired of the play-acting she has had to indulge in to invent a new identity for herself. She wants to be herself again and put an end to all the lies.

But she cannot. Because her husband expects her to go on being what she seemed to him when she won him back. He expects more joy, freedom and novelty. Besides, he does not want to be subjected to trials and recriminations. He wants the new woman that has been revealed to him. The new identity and the virtues he has discovered appear genuine. He believes in them so completely that he reproaches himself for his blindness and lack of sensitivity for not having discovered them before.

The wife has won but, if she wants to keep her husband's love alive, she will have to stick to the new identity she created to achieve victory. She cannot behave like an actress who goes back to what she is in real life once she has taken off the greasepaint. She must go on acting her part at all times and in all places, make it second nature, or even her true nature. Her old one must yield. But will she be able to maintain an identity constructed for a precise purpose? Will she be able to carry such a weight in the long term, for a trophy she has already won? To justify such an

effort the man she loves must be really special, a sort of god to whom she sacrifices her past identity.

In most cases, therefore, a woman fails to keep up this effort, stops pretending and gives her husband a hard time, demanding excuses and some atonement. In this way their relationship is soon poisoned again.

What happens if the husband is *really in love* with the other woman, and has crossed the point of no return? To get him back, his wife must work on his sense of guilt and create a dilemma for him. Until he *renounces* his love. But, in this case, he will come back in a state of *petrification*, drained of energy, to the point of annihilation. And the woman who has struggled so hard to get him back again will find herself with a drained, hollow-eyed partner, lacking in energy and enthusiasm. It is easy to wreak revenge on such a husband for all the humiliation she has had to endure. And as he does not react, it will be easy for her to go back to being what she was before. At first she will feel relieved but will then gradually discover that her own life is empty too. It is impossible to rekindle love and she senses that another prospect looms ahead: as soon as he has recovered from the pain of loss, as soon as he

has got back his vital energy, he will use it to break loose once more, betray her or even fall in love again.

The whole process has been described in the feminine case. But it is the same thing if it is the woman who falls in love and the husband who tries to win her back. The only difference concerns the sense of guilt. A woman does not usually feel guilty when she leaves a man she no longer loves - her dilemma will only be for the sake of the children.

cxxi	1.11
cxxii	2.11
cxxiii	3.11
cxxiv	4.11
cxxv	5.11
cxxvi	6.11
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CHAPTER TWELVE

Constructing the couple

Fusion and individualization

Lovers are drawn to each other by a force that aims to fuse them together and to create a new entity - the couple. Yet at the same time each remains an individual with his and her own personal story, involving parents, brothers and sisters, love objects, beliefs, dreams and aspiration. An even in the greatest of loves there is always a dialectical clash between the one force aiming at fusion and the other one aiming at individualization. The first is group orientated, while the second aims at keeping the individual distinct. It is for this reason that lovers appear to be extremely altruistic and extremely egoistic at the same time. They each want to enjoy happiness to the full and snatch it from the other, but to reach fulfilment they must also want their

partners, accept them, love them and become one with them.

The extraordinary joy lovers feel enables them to exert powerful pressure on each other. In their game of tug-of-war, with all the pulling forward and back and on-going discoveries of themselves, they arrive at a common vision of the world and a shared life project. Back in the mid-1960's Berger and Kellner^{cxxviii} declared that when two people marry, they commit themselves to restructuring their social relationships. What the two authors did not understand - as they were working without the concepts of nascent state and movement - is that the driving force behind this process is not the institution of marriage but the creative process of falling in love. They equated the nascent couple with a *society* based on the realization of an aim, thus comparing two people who set up house together to business partners who decide to start off a new enterprise, and therefore have to restructure their social relationships.

What characterizes falling in love, however, is no simple restructuring and readjustment of social relationships. The loved one is neither a business partner nor a college friend. S/he is unique, the absolute reference point and gateway

to a new region of being, which is the only one worth living in. S/he is both charismatic leader and follower, prophet and fellow traveller on the road towards the Promised Land. Falling in love is starting out again from the very beginning, and everything - life, family, beliefs - will be remoulded into a new way of seeing life. The creation of the couple is a re-foundation, rebirth in which a new individual and a new collectivity are born together. The new "us" and the new "me" and "you" are constructed not through rational adaptation but develop through intuition and revelation.

The nascent couple is like a whirlwind packed with vibrant energy, emotions, hopes, doubts, dreams, enthusiasms and fears. It is from this incandescent crucible, in which the fusing forces clash with the individuating ones, that the new collectivity is formed and then stabilized. But how are the mainstays of the couple's relationship formed? How do they pass from a fluid state of exaltation mingled with uncertainty, to a solid and secure love relationship - from the state of falling in love to the permanence of love itself.

The tests

Between the moment of falling in love and establishing a deep, lasting love a series of tests takes place. The tests are those we set ourselves and the other person, as well as the ones which are imposed on us by the *external system*, some of which prove crucial. If they are overcome, the process passes into that regime of everyday certainties which we call *love*. If they are not overcome another factor comes into play: renunciation and petrification or falling out of love.

If falling in love becomes *love* itself, the tests seem easy enough, almost like a game. And once the tests are passed, we project in our memory the continuity of the love we are now living. When we fail the tests, we project backwards the sufferings of our present loveless state.

Truth tests. The first among these tests are the ones we set ourselves: *truth tests*. When we are falling in love we always try to resist, we do not want to put ourselves completely in the other person's hands, and are afraid our love is not

being returned. Since the other person's love seems an undeserved blessing, we are afraid that it will not be given to us, just when we want it so fervently and can no longer manage without it. Moreover, we may well be torn by feelings of guilt towards parents, or husband, wife, children - or be afraid that our beloved is different from the way s/he appears.

At the beginning falling in love is not a constant state, but a succession of flashes and visions. The love object appears, it fascinates us and then vanishes, so that we sometimes tell ourselves that perhaps it was only "a passing infatuation". In the nascent stage of love we are uncertain, and both look for our loved ones and want to be able to do without them. In moments of happiness, the fear of losing ourselves surfaces in fanciful thoughts. We tell ourselves: "I have reached the highest point I will ever be able to attain, now I can go back to being as I was, taking only the memory with me. I have got what I wanted, and that is enough for me". Or we may wake up in the morning with the impression that we are no longer loved. "It's all over," we tell ourselves, "it was only an illusion". Then our loved one suddenly comes back to mind and we realize the depths of our feelings. Terrified that

s/he may want nothing more to do with us, we run to the telephone, our hearts in our mouths.

There is only one way of finding out if we really are in love, and that is to go away, try to do without our loved one and see what happens. If we cannot manage it, if we are seized by a genuine feeling of *desperation*, then it means we really are in love - we have passed the *truth test*. To have any meaning the detachment must be genuine and so must the inner drive that forces us back. But our loved one might interpret our detachment as lack of interest, and either look to someone else for consolation or turn bitter and revengeful.

Unlike what many people imagine, falling in love does not make its appearance in a triumphant, radiant fashion. It only asserts itself by treading difficult paths and overcoming or skirting obstacles on its way. In the initial stages the lovers may even take steps backward, for example revert to an old love or try a new affair, before letting themselves go. If the testing period is brief, if the prospective partner has the strength to wait, the process continues. The course of true love progresses gradually amid uncertainty, jealousy and overcoming eternal-triangle situations.

When the course is difficult and obstacle-strewn, and the individual must struggle to keep love, then any form of superficial infatuation or any other false form of love is swept away. Obstacles sift out the strongest forms of love - a love that has had to overcome obstacles is one that has passed the tests. And a test that we set ourselves on purpose along the road to love is an obstacle that serves to sift out true love from false.

Truth tests are always dangerous. If I withdraw so as to put myself to the test, and the other does the same thing, a whole series of misunderstandings will arise. So as not to run this risk, at least one of us must be sure of our feelings, and be able to find suitable words and behaviour to let the other understand whether the feelings shown are true or not. *The Prudent Man* had emerged from a disastrous marriage and was afraid of making another mistake. So before abandoning himself to the new love, he put the strength of mind of the young woman who loved him to a hard test by disappearing for long periods of time. Truly in love, the woman adopted a strategy of patience, so on coming back he would find her looking lovely and full of smiles, as if he had only left the day before.

Realizing what a bad state his nerves were in she set out to reassure him, helping him solve his professional and domestic problems, and showing concern for his health. Little by little her house became the haven where he was able to overcome his anxieties. One day when he fell seriously ill, she asked him to stay with her. He did - and stopped running away.

Reciprocal tests. We have now come to the second class of tests - *reciprocal* ones. If we love, we wish to be loved in exchange, so we go on toying with the daisy and repeating: "s/he loves me, s/he loves me not". Whatever the other person does, whatever moves s/he makes, even the slightest changes in behaviour are subjected to constant scrutiny. A person in love studies, analyses, and interprets. "If this happens it means that ... if that doesn't happen it means that...", from the simplest things, like arriving early or late, or whether or not someone else receives an admiring glance. But, the meaning is never clear, as when the loved one arrives late and out of breath. What can we read into it? That s/he had forgotten about me, or does running like mad and arriving late become a proof of love? Haunted by fear, a person in love turns into a Sherlock

Holmes. But even when the test result seems bad, it only takes an explanation, a look, a caress, to disperse all the anguish and boost reassurance.

But there are also reciprocal tests that are difficult to get through, as in the case of *The Prudent Man*, who kept running away, full of anxieties and feelings of guilt. He may have been putting his own love to the test, but he was being even harder on the woman he loved. The reciprocal test the young woman was subjected to was very tough indeed. To pass it she had to be patient, calm, courageous and faithful. As she was successful, their love was happily consolidated. But another kind of woman could well have destroyed everything just by not being around when he came back, or by going out with someone else.

Then what if the young woman had also needed reassuring - if she had also set a love test, when he was testing himself? That is, if she had said to him: "If you really love me, don't leave. If you leave, you will never see me again!" What would have happened? He would probably not have left, but he would have felt he was being blackmailed or threatened in some way. He would have remained, but with a bitter doubt that would have increased as time went on.

There are some reciprocal tests that are especially dangerous, like those that employ jealousy. In the case of *The Man from Bari* love ended when the woman told him that she was being courted by someone else, and refused to have sex with him. She used lies to force him to choose and, believing that she really was in love with someone else, he failed to understand her hidden motive. Totally demoralized, he decided to renounce his love and went away for good. In other cases the jealousy weapon works, even though there is always the danger of anxious memories, wounds and scars lingering on and having adverse effects on the relationship in future.

Project-tests. Each of the lovers wants to achieve as much as possible of the future that has been glimpsed, and therefore each works out a *project*.^{cxxxix} But the two projects may not coincide. They each want their own to be recognized. The question "Do you love me?" also means: "Do you agree to enter into my project?" And the other, asking "Do you love me?", also asks "Do you agree to enter into mine?" And each time the other replies, "Yes, I do", s/he is actually saying: "I will alter my project and come towards

you, accept your request, give up something I wanted. I want you, and what you want". But at the same time s/he asks: "What are you going to change in yourself. How are you going to meet me?"

The question "Do you love me?" implies the request: "Do you want me with all the weight of both my physical being and my dreams, so that we can fulfil them together?" The individual project they each make for themselves also involves the other, is a life-project for the other. It is the proposal of what they must want together.

Fighting the angel

Falling in love aims at achieving a state of fusion between two different persons who preserve their own freedom and their own unmistakable identity. We want to be loved as unique, extraordinary and irreplaceable beings. Where love is concerned we must not put limits on ourselves but expand, we must not renounce our own being but realize it, we must not clip our wings but soar as high as we can. And the one we love interests us because s/he too is absolutely different and beyond compare. And that is how

s/he must remain - splendidly and supremely free. Fascinated by what they are, by all they reveal of themselves, we are therefore ready to adopt our loved ones' points of view and modify our own.

For falling in love to occur there must be this difference, and yet the phenomenon of love also tends to overcome diversity and fuse the two lovers to make them into a single collective entity with a will of its own. Each lover develops an ideal of self and other, of the two of them and their destiny. And each urges the other to behave as s/he would like, and adapt to the ideal that has been created. Indeed we see concentrated in our loved ones all the people we have ever desired or admired - all the memories and erotic desires, including the most fleeting ones, that we have had in the past. Our loved ones are the embodiment of all the ideals, heroes and heroines of the cinema and literature, all the stars, all the men and women we have ever known. And at moments we seem to recognize them in our loves.

When we fall in love, we not only see our loved ones as perfect beings, but we are also paradoxically convinced that with our help they will become even better and reach an even higher pinnacle of perfection. We therefore apply pressure and urge them to change. But they might

see themselves differently, resist and propose other possible ways. Love is therefore also a struggle, but within love itself. It is *fighting the angel*.

An example of fighting with the angel is afforded by the case we will call *The Woman who Wanted a Baby*. This woman was young, restless, rebellious, and an anti-conformist. She was daring, and capable of fighting to the end for what she wanted and what believed in. She had as yet had only the odd affair with boys of the same age, but no really deep experience of love. She had not yet found what she was looking for, which was a more mature, more intelligent man she could face the world with, as well as realize her own potential - the man of her life, the Knight in shining armour of her dreams. One day she met a man of great standing, older than she was, and well known in his field. Until that moment the man had devoted his life only to his work. He had had no youth, had got married without being in love, and had taken on all the responsibilities of a big Southern Italian family. But by the time he met the young woman his way of life had become unbearable for him. Both of them were in fact ready for a change. At their first dinner date

they fell in love, and threw themselves with abandon into each other's arms.

She told him she had no fears and was ready to follow him anywhere. She asked nothing of him and made no plans. Their encounter could have been the affair of a week or a lifetime. The man was dazzled by her energy and determination, and fascinated by the way she put her life at stake. He had long dreamed of freeing himself of all the commitments that were weighing him down all the demands that were continually being made on him. But he had never let himself go, and so the woman's words charmed and excited him. He failed to realize that she was all his because she was young, without duties or responsibilities. In his eyes she became the symbol of a free and happy way of life.

However, in the early throes of passion, the woman was seized by another desire as well - to have a baby. And she brought up the subject with him: "You needn't stay, if you don't want to", she said, "the important thing is for me to have our baby. I'll look after it, and it will be all mine. You needn't worry about it". But as the man already had children and felt the weight of his family responsibilities, he was perturbed. He was looking for a passionate lover, not a family. He

was looking for a young woman he could be free with in a way that had never been possible, not a mother with a cradle to rock. He knew that if he had another child he would be incapable of neglecting it. He knew what having a family meant, what responsibility meant. He loved the woman, but his life projects were just the opposite of what she was proposing. He asked her to let the matter drop and not bring it up again. It was angel-fighting - the clash between two different projects of persons in love.

In the following period the man, torn between his new love and his family duties, spoke to his wife about it and they made every effort to try and save their marriage. They took a course of family psychotherapy together while he broke off relations with the young woman and made himself scarce. The torment was atrocious but he was determined to put an end to the affair. But the girl was just as determined. She followed him, went to live close to his house and found a job nearby. And again she reassured him - she wanted nothing from him and had no plans for the future. So they started seeing each other again, she took no precautions and ended up pregnant. Her desire to have a child had won through, and another fight with the angel ensued.

Under pressure from him the girl gave in, had an abortion and promised that it had been a slip-up and would not happen again. In the meantime she used all her powers of seduction and logic to persuade him to leave his wife and children, and for them to go and live together. The struggle went on at length, with further recourse to psychotherapy. This, too, was like Jacob's fight with the angel, and this time it was the girl who won. He left his wife, who granted him a divorce. The man and the girl went to live together and she turned out to be an excellent companion, both loving and devoted. At last she was happy.

The unaskable task

There are things that it is impossible for both to want together, things that if betrayed, betray the very values that caused the love to come into being in the first place. We will call them *the unaskable tasks*. If our loved one tries to force us to submit and we accept, it is as if we had renounced our own being. We have already spoken of a few cases of love where someone asked the unaskable. Remember the case of

Mahler. Neither the public nor the critics understood his music, but he struggled on, certain that he would be appreciated in future. Then there came a day when he realized that even Alma, the woman he loved, thought the same as everyone else. So he wrote her a dramatically beautiful letter in which he begged her to change her mind, knowing that any criticism from her would have taken away his strength to fight. However, he was *asking the unaskable*.

Let us now take up again the case of *The Woman who Wanted a Baby*. He left her happy and contented because at last she had the man she loved. But some years later, the desire to have a baby returned, because this had always been part of her life-project, because this was the way she had looked on her love from the very start. Her longing to become a mother became obsessive and tormented. What if she got too old, what if she couldn't have any more children? She tried to suppress her desire because she knew her husband was against it. But she started to keep dogs and cats as child-substitutes, and she kept on changing the furnishings in her house, preparing her "nest". Another silent and painful clash, took place - the *fight with the angel* was continuing.

For her, having a baby was all-important. But for her husband, it was asking the unaskable. He put up a determined act of resistance, until at a certain point, she fell ill. Then the man, at his wits' end and laden with guilt, no longer had the courage to oppose "irrationally" what he considered a legitimate feminine desire. The woman became pregnant, but at the same time she was worried. She tried to play down her pregnancy and after the birth of a daughter did all she could to make sure the child's presence did not cause too much trouble. She heroically took on all the burden of looking after the child. But even if her husband admired her from a moral viewpoint, and respected her deeply, something changed in their love relationship. She was no longer the companion for whom he had defied the world, the woman at the centre of a passionate affair - she had become a mother looking after her daughter. He, too, adored the child, but as his paternal feelings increased, so his sexual desire began to decline. Another bout of psychotherapy showed them both how absurd the situation was: the analyst revealed to the man that he was projecting on to his wife the asexual relationship he had had with his own mother. But the revelation made no difference to reality and his

sexual passion did not return. The flame of his great love had died down. He resumed relations with his ex-wife and previous children, who he wanted to see all united together again, together with the new baby, in one big happy family. If he had to be a father, he would be it in the same way for all his children. If he had to do his duty, he would do it for all of them without discrimination.

This example shows us a great love and the clash between two life-projects whose roots dug deep into the past histories of the two subjects, and into their dreams - two projects that were incompatible. To realize the other's meant, for each of them, asking the unaskable. In spite of their love, their relationship was doomed.

Pacts and the institution of reciprocity

We come up against *an unaskable task* when the other person asks us to renounce something that we find essential - something that has become essential precisely on account of the new love, and without which that love would lose its meaning. The Bible offers us a magnificent example with Abraham, who had longed above

all things for a child from Sarah, and God had miraculously answered his wish. But one day God put him to the test and asked him to sacrifice what he loved best- this very child. Abraham was caught in a terrible dilemma - an impossible choice between two alternatives.

When what is at stake is something unaskable, each of us requires from the other an unconditional surrender, the loss of life's sense of meaning, of love, and everything. Whoever is subjected to the test resists desperately, and if whoever sets it is determined to go through with it, the love in question runs a mortal risk.

In cases of this kind, love can only continue if another solution is found, i.e. that whoever sets the test submits to it in turn. In the Biblical image God tests Abraham but, at the same time, Abraham tests God. What would have happened to God, in fact, if Abraham had killed his son? He would no longer have been a loving God, but a cruel, bloodthirsty one, just like the gods of the past that had required human sacrifices, which He had replaced. Moses, too, is put to the test when God tells him to pass through the Red Sea. And in doing what God tells him, Moses puts God to the test, because He cannot tell the prophet to throw himself into the sea and have his people

drown. A God that behaved like this would be a deceiver and a demon.

The answer to the problem lies here: favour may be asked but not demanded. It is a blank cheque that must never be filled in. Abraham was about to kill his own son but God prevented him. He blocked the deed by having both an angel and a providential ram appear. The angel invited him to sacrifice the animal instead of his son. Abraham was still ready to sacrifice to God what he held most dear, but God only needed the intention. Thus both God and Abraham passed the test. Both of them received a demonstration of love, but both of them performed an essential act of renunciation: they met and recognized an insuperable *limit* in the other. Love can only become reciprocal *when not asking the unaskable is accepted as one's own genuine limit*.

Pacts signal acknowledgement of a *limit* to our claims and of the inalienable rights of the other person. Through them we solemnly confirm our oneness and, at the same time, solemnly pledge respect for our differences. With a *pact* we each know that the other will not ask us anything that should not be asked. This certainty, born from desperation, marks a firm point of mutual trust: *the institution of reciprocity*. I

know I love and that I cannot help loving, I know I have a *limit* I cannot help having, and I accept this. But I accept it unreservedly with all the impulse of my passion and devotion. *The pact* is a form of embrace, an oath.

Love grows around the *institution*, around pacts. The process we have described does not occur only once but many times, and each time the clash ends with a pact, and the new certainties become the starting point for re-organizing our daily existence.

It is thanks to these extraordinary properties present when falling in love that a couple, passing the tests, creates a common vision of the world and a code of behaviour which will ensure that it lasts. The vision corresponds to the ideology of great movements; the code of behaviour to a constitutional card, a statute.^{cxxx} The creative and fluid energy of the nascent state is objectified in a structure and transformed into principles, rules and regulations, pacts and solemn pledges. These pacts have the power to last for the simple reason that they are made in the incandescent heat of passion, in the most crucial moment of union and creative drive.

Marriage

For a couple's love to develop, there must be willing input. Love is consolidated if we want it, accept and help it, and if we commit ourselves to rendering it stable and making it last. When we are in love, we do indeed want to stay with our beloved. But even when we are most deeply in love there is always a force in us that pulls in the opposite direction. And even when truth and reciprocity tests teach us that we love the other person and are loved in return, we can still go on putting up resistance.

There must therefore be a moment of choice, when we exclude all other alternatives. And it is not enough for one of us to decide, the other person must also do so. A couple of lovers may have different projects for their future lives. One thinks of eternal love, with marriage and a home together, while the other does not feel like submitting to such total commitment, even in theory. S/he is in love, but would like to be able to choose what to do from day to day. The outcome is a fight with the angel that, all being well, will end with a mutual decision and pact: *the continuity pact*. *Continuity pact* are therefore essential moments in love life. They are moments

when lovers build the common project of continuing to love each other, putting aside all second thoughts and indecisions.

But whatever, one may ask, is a stable pact made between no more than two people, in the privacy of their own home? The lovers swear: "I love you, I will always love you, I will never leave you". But states of mind change and it sometimes takes no more than a quarrel for that love to turn to hate. And there is no witness, law or court that can enforce respect for the commitment made. Can a purely subjective pact exist, in which we are accountable to no one, but which makes us feel committed all the same?

Yes, there is - on the moral level. Kant shows us the moral rule in this way: "Act on the basis of the maxim that you would like to set up as a universal rule". The moral legislator is the single individual and the moral court is not an external one but inside the individual's own heart and mind. Therefore the pact between two lovers is a *moral act*. Even if it is founded on love and passion, the couple cannot continue unless *morality* is involved. Morality, however, is not only a subjective fact. The principle "act on the basis of the maxim that you would like to set up as a universal rule" implies that we think of

everyone else and commit ourselves in front of them. Lovers are proud to show themselves in public, and consider their love exemplary. And they are ready to make public commitments, until they reach the stage of the one made in front of the State and God: *marriage*.

There are strong, stable couples that feel no need to resort to marriage or legal sanctions - indeed they set themselves up against the law. In Goethe's *Elective Affinities* the Count and the Baroness form an extremely well-knit loving couple. They make no attempt to conceal their love, they travel openly together, but they do not want to feel bound by the external bonds of the laws of matrimony. But marriage is important, even in a society where it can easily be dissolved through divorce. It indicates that the couple intend their union to continue and endure, that they intend to make choices, perform acts and cultivate feelings that will strengthen their love, and avoid any that would weaken it.

With marriage the two lovers voluntarily introduce a third element, an external power, the State, and transfer onto it some of their shared desires. One part of the couple no longer exists only in the minds and hearts of the two individuals, but also outside them, and neither

individual can modify it singly. Marriage is the prototype and symbol of all the activities that acquire autonomous existence - *objectifications* of the couple.

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CHAPTER THIRTEEN

The institution: spiritual and material objectifications

The institution

If something has been instituted it means that it has been selected, set up and stabilized. An institution serves to confirm choices that have been made, avoiding the need to go back on decisions or force the other's will. Institutions actually fix the will and objectify it, and they can be turned into *spiritual or material objectifications*.

What are the *spiritual objectifications* of love? We have already met some of them: *truth tests*, through which I find out if I really love a particular person, *reciprocal tests*, with which I convince myself that my love is returned, and *continuity pacts* that lovers establish in order to

make their love last and defend it from external threats.

The process of fusion and the building of a new identity is by no means harmonious, gradual and continuous. Like all vital processes it proceeds by trial and error. It meets moments of crisis and stagnation and then goes through phases of abrupt accelerations. The most important mutual adaptations are in fact those that emerge from crises. They are creative acts and solutions carefully thought out and accepted by both lovers.

Then there are *material objectifications*. The couple form a living entity that acts in the world. They produce and buy things, perform actions, with both of them working inside the home and out. They build a home and furnish it according to their tastes and needs. They have children, bring them up and educate them, they take part in political activity, belong to clubs and profess religious beliefs. They travel and go on holiday. They form relationships with friends, colleagues and neighbours. They have an effect on their material and social surroundings, and so create their own ecological niche. And again in this constructive activity the two individuals are

dynamically involved, converging, diverging and expressing their personal identities as well as their collective one. Measuring up to each other, they objectify will and action, carve out a path for themselves and leave a mark of existing together in the world.

The rules of life

The simplest *spiritual objectifications* are the rules of life that are established within the couple. Usually, when two people are deeply in love, neither tries to impose rigid rules on the other. Both are willing to change, modify their habits and explore new set-ups. Yet living together day by day produces a set of rules that are gradually worked out through a process of trial and error. Some of them result from slow, reciprocal adaptation - *from custom*, without any discussion being needed. One of the partners gets up first, for example, and brings the coffee to bed for the other, who finds it more difficult to wake up. Both choose their favourite places in front of the television and go on using them year in, year out. If one of them does not drink wine and the other has a glass only occasionally, the bottle

eventually disappears from the table and is only brought out again when there are guests to dinner.

Then there are rules, kinds of behaviour patterns that one *teaches* and the other *learns*. And in their life as a couple it is especially the woman who takes on the role of teaching the man. She tends to have a far clearer idea than he has of what their life together should be like. She knows quite well how he should behave, and how she wants things done. So, little by little, she gets him to do what she wants by using a subtle diplomatic art of suggestions and appropriate moves. As in the case of *Anna and Maurice*, who have not known each other long, but have fallen in love. He goes to see her towards evening, and as he likes running and does not have much time for training he arrives at her house track-suited, sweaty and breathless. Once over the doorstep he kisses her, picks her up, starts undressing her in the hall and they end up in a heap on the carpet, bed or settee, whatever. She enjoys making love with him, but is a bit uneasy - she would like to ask him to shower down first and get himself clean. But how can she dampen his ardour by saying to him "Look, darling, you smell - please wash yourself and use some after-shave". So

Anna says nothing, but vows to herself that she will make him change his habits once they get married. She will use all her feminine skill to teach him how to behave, and it will be real re-training. Anna hates being a mother to him, she wants to be his lover and partner, as all young women do. But she has to accept reality - she loves him and does not want to give him up, so she will have to act as mother as well.

There are times when this subtle kind of "educating" diplomacy is unsuccessful. Then the process can proceed only through a *crisis and a conscious decision*. For example, a man is used to dropping his things all over the house because his adoring mother was always there to pick them up for him, and so he goes on in the same way. His wife patiently tries to teach him, and picks everything up, so that he finds his belongings all tidily put away. She shows him what is what in drawers and cupboards, and where she has put his shoes. But he goes on in the same old way, if not worse, getting more and more untidy. Tension mounts until the woman blurts out, "I'm not your mother, or your servant". From that moment on he has to make a conscientious effort to mend his ways.

Sexual relations are even more delicate. A woman likes to make love when she is relaxed and unrushed, and she needs to be petted and coaxed before giving herself. After the sexual act she likes to lie and talk in the half-light, in her lover's arms. A man has a completely different approach - he wants to take her all of a sudden, rip her clothes off and perform the sex act violently even if she objects and says she is tired. He is convinced she likes this kind of game and is just as excited by it as he is. Insisting, he thinks her refusal is just something left over from her girlish modesty. She tries to make him understand what she wants subtly and allusively, but he fails to understand. In this way there may come a point when the problem reaches crisis level. Then it is only through talking things out and making a pact that the couple will be able to put a limit to the confusion about what each wants, and find a solution that pleases both of them. It is only through a pact that the process of fusion can continue without one overriding the other.^{cxxxix}

The same thing happens with the couple as happens with political and religious movements. At first the charismatic leader is acclaimed spontaneously by all, but with time this

unanimity produces a dictatorship and turns oppressive. At this point the word must be given back to the people, and divergences and conflicts be allowed to come out with a democratic process. Only in this way is it possible for a consensus about basic values to be re-established.

In the life of the couple there are many moments like this, because nobody ever remains the same always, and new needs arise together with new desires. Living together always creates new problems and therefore the process of constructing rules for it is no different from the way a State alters its laws, introduces new ones, and re-interprets past ones. There is nothing static about the stability of the couple - it is dynamic through and through.

Habit, teaching, crisis and *pact-making* are processes that produce the rules for living together in a state of love. And precisely because they are produced by love, such rules do not mean losing, yielding or being annulled, but signify conquests and enhancements - the way to make the fusion process proceed.

In the process we have described, the rules emerge from the experience of love and from

living together. There are cases, however, when they are defined in advance in a *marriage contract*, where the rights and duties of each spouse are meticulously listed, such as ownership of the property in common, and how each partner can use it, what religion the children are to be brought up in, and even more intimate details like whether they should sleep in the same bed or separate beds, whether smoking is allowed in the living room, whether pets can be kept, or what kinds of friends are to be invited. A marriage contract presupposes personalities that know exactly what they want and are not willing to give an inch. This kind of contract was widely used among aristocratic families, where marriage served to cement a political relationship, or between people of different religions, so as to regulate any possible conflicts. Today it is drawn up when there are strong economic interests at stake or when the spouses neither love nor trust each other.

The gift

The simplest *individual material objectification* in love is the gift. Every man in love wants to express that love with gifts, as does

every woman. During the falling-in-love process, gifts are always a giving of oneself, symbols of one's own being presented to the loved one. For this reason a gift is given with trepidation, and we look to see how it is received, to make sure it is welcome. If the other person appreciates it, thanks us and kisses us, then we are happy because it means we are loved and have deserved this love. If, on the contrary, s/he glances at it and puts it aside, we feel we are being put aside as well. So people who are really in love always say a gift is beautiful, even when it does not correspond to their tastes. And it is no difficult task - that gift is a symbol of the loved one, and s/he always seems beautiful to us. If we receive a strange gift or one in bad taste we try to discover some symbolic meaning in it.

At first lovers choose gifts that may not correspond exactly to their partner's tastes, partly because they do not know them, but above all because they each give what in their eyes ought to make their loved one even more attractive and desirable. They buy gifts guided by their dreams and erotic fantasies. A man may therefore present his loved one with a showy fur coat, which she would never dream of wearing in public. She will try it on for his benefit alone, and afterwards it

will be used as a soft rug for making love on. With that gift he has wanted to bring a youthful dream to life. That luxury coat is the symbol of the film stars whose charm and beauty disturbed his nights when he was a boy. Women in love can be just as excessive and bizarre, especially young ones. When they fall in love with an older man they may well give him clothes suitable for a teenager, that make him look ridiculous. But for them he looks fantastic.

Little by little, the need to change our beloved's image to suit our canons diminishes, for we get to know and respect their tastes. So, with the passing of time, people who love each other end up liking the same things and building a common aesthetic.

Gifts belong to the area of the extraordinary.^{cxxxii} They must stand apart from the everyday world, like a break, a holiday. Consequently they must be wrapped and tied with ribbons and bows in a special way. They must mark a difference from the everyday world and set the ritual of expectation in motion. "What is it?" We ask the giver. And while we undo knots and tear off paper, our curiosity grows. This enjoyment in anticipation is an important

part of gift-receiving. While the giver wonders "will s/he like it or not?" and waits anxiously for the other's astonished joy. The ritual of present-giving, therefore, always requires the giver to play down the gift: "Just a little something, a token", to prevent the receiver from being disappointed.

In all relationships presents are given to the other, not as part of the couple, but as an individual, and aim at showing personal worth. A present from a loved one is directed towards the receiver as someone who is an erotic being, erotically appreciated. When a husband gives his wife something for the house for her birthday - a pan, set of plates, or tablecloth, he is refusing the woman as a lover. He might as well be giving her a broom to sweep the floor with.

Some presents, such as rings, are personal ones only on the surface, while they actually symbolize the couple and their union. When a lover gives his loved one a necklace, he may present it to her as a "pretty little thing" when it is actually a symbol of himself he wants to see resting on her breast. And it is the same if a woman gives a man a watch or wallet, because they are things he will keep with him all the time.

Most obvious, of course, is the ring given as a present. It is a binding proposal - one is saying "Will you join your life to mine?" and in accepting it the other is saying: "Yes, I will".

Sometimes this symbol rouses fear and a desire to run away. This happens above all with people who have had unpleasant experiences. A friend had always worn a wedding ring, but after getting divorced he had thankfully taken it off. "I'm free!" he exclaimed, showing his ringless hand. A few years later he met a woman he liked very much, and fell in love with her. One evening she presented him with a beautiful old ring that she had bought in an antique shop. He admired it and put it on his finger with pleasure. But the next day, when he went to the office, a colleague teased him, asking if it was an engagement ring. He was dumbfounded. Mumbling something about it belonging to an uncle who had died, he slipped it into his pocket. The word "engaged" was branded on his mind because it reminded him of his broken marriage. Only later, when he was sure of the depth of his love, did he agree to wear it, and then he did so with pride.

From nomads to settlers

When we fall in love it matters little at first where we are. All we are interested in are the ones we love, their faces, eyes, bodies and caresses, and everything else is immaterial. People in love meet where and when possible - at railway stations, cinemas or restaurants, kiss at street corners, and no matter how squalid the place may be, it is transfigured by our love. Looking back on it years later, we will remember it as the most perfect of places.

The couple will then be spontaneously drawn by the beauty of nature, and will respond to it sensitively, since this beauty is reflected in their own inner selves. An endless plain, a rocky cliff, moonlit landscape, blazing red sunset over the sea. Love does not only create poetic metaphors in our minds, or sharpen our aesthetic taste and perceptive capacity. Lovers can also see things they will never see again, colours they will never be able to distinguish in the future. And those sensations are indelible. Even when a love story ends badly, there will be no repressing this transfiguration of the world.

Yet it is some time before lovers feel affection for the places that will later become sanctuaries to their love. For their vital energy is so great that they are sure they will find others ad infinitum. They leave all the beauty they discover without regret, as they are sure there will be more lying in wait for them. The world is their oyster, home is any crack or cranny. Lovers are like primitives at the dawn of civilization - gathers and nomads.

Then at a certain point they feel the need for a more suitable environment that is exclusively theirs. For a man it presents itself as a desire to go back to their first meeting places, which gradually become laden with meaning and consecrated to their love. For a woman it comes as a desire to have a home of their own, something pretty, some kind of nest. This is probably because in our civilization it is woman who has thought more about love as living together, and ever since childhood has given more thought to how her home should be. Home is her own body - objectified and welcoming.

Doing things together, building and objectifying things means making sure that love lasts. The couple actually wanted their love to last even before, but thought of it lasting in their

hearts. What does this passing to a home mean? It is like passing from a nomadic state to building a city or town.^{cxxxiii} Unlike a camp, a city does not move. With the coming of cities human beings stopped accepting the environment and climatic changes passively. They changed and channelled the course of rivers, irrigated the land, procured the products they needed through trade and navigation. They transformed the world irreversibly to adapt it to their needs. This means that they no longer face problems as they crop up but predict them and prepare a repertory of solutions in advance.

To accomplish this passage from nomadism to a settlement stage the couple need to spend part of their lives together and carefully study what is necessary. This involves a change of mentality, for lovers let themselves drift along with the current, while the settled couple not only build a ship but plan a route and think ahead of ports of call for provisions. Both of them, therefore, must develop a practical, pragmatic sense of direction. They must learn how to reflect, use their minds and memories, make calculations.

In this second stage the couple search for what they need and like, in order to have at their disposal anything they may need to make life together more comfortable and secure. They also modify social surroundings, establish relationships with neighbours and acquaintances, and select special friendships to cultivate and people to do business with.

The third stage of civilization is the building of monumental cities with palaces, temples, baths and luxury. For the couple this stage corresponds to rediscovering the beautiful. We must remember that initially the couple finds everything beautiful, because everything is transfigured by love. The first stage is indeed contemplative while the second one is active and practical, dominated by functional needs and a search for comfort. With the third stage there is a return of desire for the beautiful, together with a contemplative spirit. The couple, however, do have their own aesthetic taste and actively construct what is beautiful around them - and this beauty, which in the first stage was a gift, has now become something conquered and spiritually objectified.

Some people - those unable to renew themselves and be reborn - may then enter a stage of decline, because the transfiguring, magical flame of nascent love has flickered and died, and they can no longer see beauty in the world around them. Unable to create or even look for the beautiful any more, they cling to habit and are suspicious of any novelty. No changes in the home are made, no form or renewal is carried out. And they have an excuse for this stagnation - every object must stay the same because it is laden with happy memories. So they live between old walls, with yellowing, peeling wallpaper and sunken armchairs they do not even notice. Only a rebirth, a re-awakening can shake them out of this torpor and give them back the strength to start living again.

Woman and Home

For a woman in love creating a home and furnishing it is an act of love. More often than not, it is she who chooses the single items of furniture and the countless things the couple will need in their future life together. She chooses them so that the house will please her man, make

him feel comfortable in it and enjoy every moment with her. In her mind's eye she can already see where they will sit to watch T.V. together. She imagines the living room where they will receive their friends - where she and her husband will sit. Then she imagines the bedroom and the bed with its soft sheets like spring fields, its rich covers, warm blankets and winter eiderdowns. Then she imagines the children's room with its brightly coloured wallpaper and soft carpeting to stop them from hurting themselves. Then comes the bathroom where she reserves a bit of space for her own toilette and make-up, and the space for his razor and after-shave. Then there are places like the kitchen, where she will do most of the work, so it will be spacious and convenient, with everything she may need. She will think of the food she will be able to cook. Then, if her husband is a highbrow, she will make sure he has his own study, or if he is a hunting-shooting-fishing type she will find space in the wardrobe or drawers for his gear.

In furnishing her home a woman expresses her vision of the world, her ideal or private life and the type of social life she wants to establish. But above all *her body* permeates it. Every object

is part of herself. The wallpaper and the curtains are her skin. For this reason it is she who usually looks after the house, and she does so as if it were her own body. For this reason she does not want strangers to come in if it is not tidy and presentable, just as she would not let strangers see her in dressing-gown and slippers. And just as she perfumes her body for herself and her husband, so she is horrified at the idea of any odours impregnating the curtains, sofas or kitchen. And she makes sure they do not, declaring war on them and fearing dirt as if it brought in the plague. So she gets in a bad mood if the house is not in spick and span order, if ornaments are moved or carpets ruined, or something which has a particular meaning for her is broken by cleaning staff. She finds it difficult to forget the careless, off-handed manner of professional cleaners, just as she cannot forgive a clumsy guest who damages her carpet. Any act that disfigures her home is seen as an attack on her own body, and if the house is burgled, she feels as she herself has been raped. After a burglary many women do not want to go on living in the same place, and disinfect it or maybe change the furnishings.^{cxxxiv}

For a woman building and running a home is also a form of eroticism. She communicates her love not only by changing her hairstyle, make-up or putting on a freshly ironed blouse, but also by changing the sheets on the bed, putting fresh flowers in a vase, spraying perfume round the house, or preparing a dish her husband particularly likes.

Often a man fails to appreciate the refined work that goes into making their home welcoming and attractive. He does not realize that it is a work of art that is being renewed all the time, and that it involves a woman's whole mind and soul. And if he comes home and absent-mindedly throws his things around, she will take it as a lack of interest in herself and scorn for her creative work, and she may well feel bitter and offended.

If a man falls in love with a woman who already has a house, he moves in without giving it too much thought. He makes no attempt to leave his imprint, as he feels no need to do so. He just relaxes, feeling as if she was opening her arms to him, welcoming him in her bed and her body. But if a woman goes to live with a man, she feels the need to put her own mark on the

place. If she cannot change it according to her own personal taste, if she is unable to give it a made-to-measure touch, she feels ill at ease, retreats self-effacingly into herself, and there will be neither harmony nor concord in the couple's life together. Even the most ardent love is doomed, as in the case with *Marina and Alberto*. They met when they were both adult and each had a past to forget. He was a widower, she a divorcée. They started seeing each other and enjoying each other's company. She fell in love, certain she had found the man she had always dreamt of. He was affectionate and showered presents and attention on her. At a certain point it was he who invited her to go and live with him in his country mansion. She accepted, but as soon as she got there she felt cold all over. Everywhere his first wife was present. First of all, there were her photos, possessions and furniture, all speaking volumes. When Marina timidly asked him if the house could be refurbished, he told her they would get round to it later, and in the meantime persuaded her to sell her old apartment. He did not want her to go back there at all or even mention her ex-husband's name. Marina gradually realized that he wanted to destroy her past so as to inveigle her into accepting his. The

home he had brought her to belonged to his first wife and would never be hers. It was the body, even the grave of his first wife, and he wanted to force her to enter it and become that wife. In other words, he did not love her for herself, and never would. She had no other choice than to run away.

Jarring Notes

Different ways of thinking between husband and wife come to the surface in contradictions in the household style. You can tell whether two people are compatible or not by examining their home, as in the case of the two professionals who were very much in love but were also very different from each other, he rational and orderly, she anti-conformist and gypsy-like. In their home one room was clean and tidy, the next dirty and chaotic. One only contained things that were essential and functional, the other was like a junk dealer's attic. Although they loved each other, they had completely incompatible ways of looking at life, and eventually split up, in fact. But being different does not always spell disaster - there is also the case of a couple of designers who disagreed over everything. She was cautious

and reserved, he adventurous and daring. Yet their home had an extremely rigorous air of artistic unity about it. In spite of their clashes their personalities complemented and balanced each other. They are still together.

The home reveals when one partner dominates, imposing his or her tastes overwhelmingly on the other. We realize it because there is only one dominant style, marking everything on show and allowing no exceptions. But if you take a careful look at the details - for example in the woman's bathroom or the man's study - you will find survivals of a different style, something that looks pathetically out of place, such as artificial flowers and an old-fashioned picture in a house that is otherwise all modern and geometric. Or else a super-modern computer tucked in the corner, almost hidden by antiques.

The home also tells if a man is in love with another woman, for in this case he treats it like a hotel. He is always out travelling, and comes back very late. He shows no interest in anything and says magnanimously to his wife: "You take care of things, dear. You're so good at it". When he is in, he reduces the space he occupies to a

minimum, sitting on the edge of his chair at dinner, curling up in a corner of the bed, and cramming his clothes into the smallest possible space in the wardrobe. He leaves no trace of his presence around any more, and even removes photos of himself. Little by little all that is left in the house is the presence of his wife and children - he might never have been there.

This is not the case when the husband has a job that keeps him away from home for long periods. In this case his loving wife keeps a symbolic presence of him all over the place - photos, ornaments, sports gear, pipes. It is obvious she is expecting him back and all his things are ready for his return.

When a woman has a lover, she does not neglect the house but makes it even more attractive. Seeing her husband as a repugnant, alien presence with his clumsy body and belongings, she tries to drive him out like a thief who has profaned her intimate life. So she does everything she can to make life unpleasant for him. She gets up early in the morning and makes a tremendous amount of noise. If he comes home late at night, he finds their bedroom door closed. She forgets to prepare dinner or lets it go cold. Or

she impatiently removes the dishes while he is still there at the table, even if he has not yet finished eating. She forgets to collect his clothes from the cleaner's or scorches them when ironing. She tells him he stinks, and grumbles at him for leaving his smelly shoes around. Little by little, the house becomes hers alone, and she sets her own mark on it as if she were already separated.

cxxxi	1.13
cxxxii	2.13
cxxxiii	3.13
cxxxiv	4.13

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Shared life styles

Everyday life together

There are some people who spend all their time together, living in the same house, sleeping in the same bed, getting up at the same time in the morning. They read the same newspaper, work in the same places, and have lunch and dinner side by side. They go to bed at the same time, have the same friends and when one has to travel, the other goes along as well. They discuss all their experiences, and go over the behaviour of the people they meet. They go to buy their clothes together, and he advises her and she advises him. Together they choose where to live, how to furnish their home, where and how to spend their holidays. They are mutually faithful and it comes as no hardship at all, because they

love each other and feel a strong reciprocal sexual attraction.

This intimacy is not the simple product of the state of fusion in love. It is the result of a progressive, gradual coming together that has led them little by little to discover that when they are together, things go better - togetherness means they can strengthen their energies and intellectual and vital capacities. When one is tired, the other helps, when one is in a bad mood the other is calm and cheerful. Each has learnt to trust the other's judgment - it has been put to the test and found trustworthy. If they cannot go somewhere personally, they send their partners in their place, confident in their ability to do what is best. After all, the two are able to compare viewpoints and reach common results, and if one is male and the other female their sensibilities are complementary. Each sees aspects that would escape the other and, when they discuss an issue, they can go deeper into it than would be possible alone. With time they have even got used to tolerating each other's minor failings and correcting the more damaging ones. They have learnt to joke together, avoid irritating topics, forgive each other and remedy mistakes.

Indeed they live in the same way as lovers imagine they should live - always hand in hand. Yet they remain two separate, distinct and unmistakable individual personalities. As Murray S. Davis has observed, the mere fact that they have so many things in common enables them to focus and distinguish their personal traits better. Human beings, he observes, are able to split up into countless parts and feel each of them as parts of themselves. Thanks to this psychic act of *synecdoche*, people can give themselves completely and, at the same time, remain themselves, by just keeping back their characteristic features.^{CXXXV}

It is therefore utterly wrong to talk of symbiotic union in these cases, as some psychoanalysts do. While being closely united, each member of the couple still remains free and different. They each preserve their own tastes in food, their own biological rhythms, even if they have learnt how to blend them with those of their loved ones. They have their own favourite films and authors, their own philosophical, political and religious opinions. Naturally they are very open to their partner's ideas, understand the whys and wherefores, and when they talk things through they show patience and respect.

Basically they see the world through their own eyes, but are also capable of seeing it through their partner's at the same time. Their relationship is not based on continuous, uninterrupted agreement but on continuous, uninterrupted dialogue and comparison of ideas, characterized not only by countless points of contact, but divergences as well. Thus their discussions are enriching for them both.

Separate lives

In the film *Out of Africa* the director, Sidney Pollack, tells about the life of the Danish writer Karen Blixen. As a young girl Karen falls desperately in love with her cousin, Hans von Blixen-Finecke. Her love is not returned, so in order to keep on to at least the shadow of it, she marries his twin brother, Bror. In Africa their marriage fails, and the cynical and fickle Bror spends all his time chasing women - black or white, no matter what skin colour - and ends up with syphilis. One day Karen meet Denys Finch Hatton, an English aristocrat, and falls in love with him. But they do not live together as husband and wife, or build a home together. The house is actually Karen's, and for him - not her

husband - she makes it beautiful and welcoming. Finch Hatton is a big-game hunter and trader, who goes off for days or months on safari and business trips. When he comes back, he finds refuge and serenity with Karen, and she is happy. "If Denys arrives, death is nothing... I am happy, perfectly happy, so happy that to live this week is worth having experienced pain and illness... I am bound to Denys for all eternity, and love the ground he treads on".^{cxxxvi} Denys's continual disappearances make Karen suffer - she would prefer him to stay with her - but she accepts his way of loving by feeling that Denys, with his free, airy nature, is Ariel-like. Their love thus continues until his death, always consisting of brief encounters, with nothing permanent or day-to-day about it.

Erica Jong, too, remembers a love experience in which she and her lover live separate lives. It is recorded in the case of Piero, who appears in her novel *Fear of Fifty*. The structure that characterizes her novels and personal experience is always the same. The woman falls in love and has an extraordinary erotic experience before getting married. When her husband starts being unfaithful to her, she refuses to stand for it, bitter quarrels follow and

she leaves him. There follows a phase of sexual promiscuity in which she tries everything, goes with all kinds of men, hoping to have a purely sexual relationship without any emotional involvement - what she calls a "zipless fuck". But she is left feeling bitter and let down. At this point she falls in love again, goes back to monogamy, gets married and sets up house with the new man. After which the cycle begins all over again.

But Piero is the one she does not marry. He is already married and she will not ask him to get a divorce. They do not even go and live together but remain lovers in "the European way". He just comes and goes, "...when he left," she writes "I did not trust him to return. There is no end to this story. If he appeared here today and touched me I would be drawn back into that forest, that lagoon, that whirling sabbath dance".^{cxxxvii} "Could I have lived with the god of the woods? Only part-time. He was not willing to be there *except* part-time. And I accepted his conditions and went on with my life".^{cxxxviii}

Jong longs for a stable relationship but after all the disappointments, which she blames on the men, she gives up and accepts her lot. It is a situation similar to Blixen's. In *Fear of Fifty*,

Jong speculates on it in the same way as we have described as *love idylls*: "Passion has to stay untangled from ordinary life to stay passion. And ordinary life tends to take over and banish passion. Ordinary life is the toughest weed of all."^{xxxix}

Life with children

The birth and presence of children has a different effect on a couple's life together according to the projects they had had in the first place. In the past marriage and often love itself did not make sense without children - because both man and woman wanted them. They both considered children the most telling expression and objectification of their bond. For example, in spite of his love for Sarah, Abraham was tormented by the fact that she was childless, and therefore agreed to have a child with Agar. Today the desire to have children has diminished to a great extent, and in Europe in particular few men fall in love thinking they want children. One noteworthy case is that of a Southern Italian artist who we will call *The Sculptor*, for whom children were absolutely essential. He had once lost his head over a ravingly beautiful girl who would

have made him a perfect wife. The only trouble was that she had grown up in a poor family and had had to bring up four little brothers and sisters on her own. She was therefore dead against having children herself. When the sculptor realized that she was determined not to have any he began to lose interest in her and his love gradually weakened and died.

If, on the contrary, a man explicitly excludes children from his love projects, their presence might actually kill his desire. This happens above all in forms of love-rebellion as in the case of *The Man from Turin* and Buzzati's *Antonio*, because such a man is looking for unrestrained sexual passion in his loves, the kind that brooks no discipline or restraint. If there were children around he would have to control himself, keep out of the way, stick to timetables and keep quiet. He could no longer let himself go within his own four walls and give full rein to Dionysian excesses and rapturous joys in total, blissful union with a woman, without anything coming between them. For many men the routine of child-rearing - the training, sticking to timetables, teaching them to be civilized human beings - not to mention their indiscreet eyes, gradually wears down eroticism and destroys it as a separate area

of freedom and transgression. Indeed, it destroys what, for a man, makes eroticism erotic for its own sake, and not for something else.

For a woman this need to separate and specify eroticism is not usually so strong, as she feels that she was born to have children. For her, affection, tenderness, emotion and sex are all mixed up together, and she feels that there is no opposition between the various areas, but that they all strengthen one another in turn. For many a woman pregnancy is a way of expressing her love for her husband. She expects him to admire her expectant-mother beauty and is disappointed and upset if he fails to do so. The birth of a baby often rounds off love for a woman, and some women do not feel as though they are totally in love until they have become mothers as well.^{cx1} Everything is a kind of build-up. To show her husband greater love, a mother finds it natural to bring the baby to bed and place it between them, cuddling it and holding it to her breast. Then she still expects her husband to court her next day, maybe buy her a bunch of flowers. She fails to realize that her husband would like a different kind of eroticism than their threesome, and wishes to have her all to himself. A man can also have tender feelings for the delicate little bundle

in his wife's arms, but this emotion has absolutely nothing to do with the desire he feels for her roused female body, her smell, her abdomen and pelvis rising and falling. Instead, the sight of the mother and child rouses another kind of love in him - one that is mingled with duty and responsibility, something that the male of the species learnt in the course of the long humanizing process when, as hunter and warrior, he had to defend his territory, and with it his woman and helpless offspring.

It is a love that is similar to the maternal kind but without its sensory, tactile, kinaesthetic and above all erotic valences. It is a love consisting of unseen care and attention, a love that is demonstrated in deeds rather than caresses. It is the love that reveals itself in defence from external dangers, which is most aptly symbolized in the image of the sentry guarding the camp at night. It is a love, therefore, that has no need of physical proximity or contact. This kind of love grows with the passing of the years, the birth of children and life in common. It is a love cemented by shared memories, forged by having fought together against adversities. It is a mingling of intellectual and spiritual intimacy,

and habit of dialogue. In this way a wife becomes a man's "other half", as the expression goes.

Yet this true, deep love may actually have nothing erotic about it whatsoever. A man may thus find himself loving someone deeply who is indispensable to him, but who does not attract him sexually at all. He might even feel repugnance. So he would rather make love with all the women in the world except her, or if he does make love to her it is through a sense of duty, because he has to. When he is out and about, or travelling, he cannot help looking at other women. And even if he finds his wife better, even more beautiful than any compared to her, he cannot resist desiring other bodies, other contacts. It is not a question of esteem, recognition and affection. He goes on appreciating her extraordinary intellectual and moral qualities, her refinement and good taste, and he may well consider her advice precious. But above all, he would not like to hurt her, is upset by his own indifference, and feels guilty about it.

This mixture of feeling certainly belongs to the love area. A man may say he loves a woman, but she is alien to him as far as sex goes, and is unable to satisfy his erotic need - a need that

remains insatiated like hunger and thirst, and that tears him apart.

This kind of suffering is less frequent in women, for whom eroticism and love are twin experiences. If they lose all sexual interest for their husband, it is usually because they do not love him any more, and do not even wish to see him. If, on the contrary, they still love him, they go on expecting a romantic gesture - be it a caress, a kiss, some small token of affection, to which they attribute erotic value. It is very different for a man, who does not live as erotic experiences gallantry, flowers, acts of kindness or that odd caress. For a man, eroticism stands alone - splendid and tormenting, always desired and always slipping out of grasp, appearing and disappearing like a will o' the wisp.

A specific male drama has always been to love one person and desire another, and consequently to feel *guilty*. It is an unexpiable guilt, original sin, and he tries to make up for it by increasing his responsibilities, cares and duties, which is all useless, because this is not what is asked of him. He is asked to unite two things that obstinately refuse to come together. This conflict is the cause of the self-discipline that males have always subjected themselves to

since time immemorial,^{cxli} that self-control and sexual repression which have always been considered meritworthy. So we have seen it before and now find it again - in woman eroticism and morality go together, in man they do not.

Lovers

Among the many ways of building a couple there is also the option of not dissolving the former relationship, not separating or divorcing, but carrying on a clandestine affair. There are a thousand reasons for acting this way - because the marriage is satisfactory on the whole, it is better to avoid hurting husband or wife, there would be problems with children, and divorce expenses are costly. And why not hold on to a nice house or comfortable lifestyle? Or we may well not be sure whether we are really in love with the new person, or that our love is returned or perhaps we want something different, a bit of excitement. The new relationship is not an alternative, then, but something adding icing to the cake.

Eroticism is stimulated by diversity and novelty.^{cxlii} In most cases the erotic element loses momentum after a few years of married life, and can only be re-aroused by contact with new people. This is how flirtations, infatuations and love affairs may occur, aimed at adding a bit of sparkle to the humdrum of ordinary life instead of leading to separation and divorce. Lovers offer the passionate desire, thrill of anticipation and total, unrestrained abandon and rapturous pleasure that we feel is a birthright, and which partners are no longer able to provide.

If a love affair does not involve falling in love, it only affects an individual in part. The two lovers do not attempt to join their whole lives together, including all their past. They do not aspire to an all-in communion of spirit, to sharing the same tastes and principles. They do not tell each other the tiny details of their existence or compare their opinions of other people belonging to their circle, they do not read the same books or confide their secret thoughts to each other. There is no need to build up a life or a world in common. There is intimacy between them but no fusion, and their intimacy mostly concerns the body and sex. They do not alter their physical and social surroundings, and may meet at either

home, or at a hotel - the place is immaterial. All that matters is their relationship, not their objectifications.

Their intimacy is limited in time, too. They meet on certain days and at certain times, and only want to give each other pleasure and enjoy sex together. Lovers anticipate the pleasure of their meetings and get themselves ready with great care. The woman goes to the hairdresser's and makes herself elegant, while the man shaves, and uses after-shave, and buys flowers or a gift. Every encounter has its courting ritual, leading up to blind erotic passion, with clothes flung about the room and naked bodies intertwined - exactly as happens in the first flush of love, with all its freshness and surprise. Part of the pleasure of love affairs is making secret dates, in out-of-the-way apartments, or far-off hotels - the thrill of a weekend, a journey incognito, a sort of honeymoon made more exciting by the secret, and the idea that pleasure is being stolen from others.

Part of married life is made up of petty grumbling and spiteful little acts of tit for tat. There are some people who in having affairs with lovers mentally punish their spouses for their flaws and failings. At times this can be balm for

their own guilty consciences, but in other cases it is the mere pleasure of betrayal. When things are tense at home the two lovers laugh at betrayed spouses, indeed at the whole world, and hoist their pleasure against marital and family duties, their unbridled freedom against social obligations. It is not a subversive act like falling in love so much as a *deconsecration* of the official relationship or institution. And there are some who get pleasure out of taking their lovers into the matrimonial bed, and lovers who ask to make love there, just to profane it, to offend and symbolically jeer at the other person by taking his or her place.

But then in other cases of love affairs we find the kind of love described as *idyllic*. It is an affair that is outside the world and is protected in its purity, where all duty, stress and toil are kept outside - where only joy exists. This is a love that is not modelled on the family or transgression but on a mysterious cult with sacred orgies protected by the secret of initiation. It is love whose model is not the wedding celebrated in public, the house open to friends, but a sect in which the members are bound by an oath or fraternity, by an obligation to dissimulate. It is a secret, clandestine, protected love, love as a prize when

marital duties have been performed and professional work finished. Then the body and soul are granted pleasure and festivity.

A love affair can go on for a long time, even years. And if in some cases it weakens and dies away, in others it is strengthened. Little by little intimacy becomes deeper, mutual trust grows, and a real friendship is formed. And the meeting place becomes a real, second home which is added to the first - a home for a second wife or a second husband. There may even be children out of these affairs, and thus two families are created, kept secret from each other - even when both live in the same city.

xxxxv	1.14
xxxxvi	2.14
xxxxvii	3.14
xxxxviii	4.14
xxxix	5.14
cxl	6.14
cxli	7.14
cxlii	8.14

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Fidelity and infidelity

Fidelity and exclusiveness

In love fidelity means *exclusiveness*: love and sexual relations involving just one person, as in a monotheistic religion proclaiming: "Thou shall have no other Gods but me". Polytheistic religions, like friendship, are different and allow us to be faithful to more than one god. Fidelity to a friend means keeping our love, loyalty and help intact through time. It does not mean not having other friends.^{cxliii}

In our tradition, fidelity has a two-fold origin. It derives firstly from the concept of exclusive possession, as in a patriarchal society where a woman belongs to a man, and if she

betrays him, she must be put to death. Then it also goes back to the right to exclusive loyalty exacted by tribe, country, religious faith or leader. This kind of fidelity is required by political and religious movements as well as by lovers. Individual love and love for a deified charismatic leader are made of the same stuff.

Through fidelity we tell our loved one that s/he is worth more than anyone else, our only good and our only desire. When a lover spends all night long in front of his loved one's house, he is telling her that she is the only thing in the world that really counts, that in no way can he do without her.

But what if the other person does not know that we are faithful? What is the point of being faithful to someone who is ignorant of the fact? Fidelity, in this case, becomes a relationship with ourselves. It is an act we perform within ourselves. We drive out every other presence, every other desire from our thoughts, in order to make room for that person alone, who will become the absolute and privileged one-and-only. We open wide our hearts and souls, excluding anything that might disturb, damage or drive away our love. We eliminate any possible

seduction or temptation and erect a protective barrier around our hearts.

But how long can a lover go on spending every night outside his loved one's house? And does it mean that the moment he stops his love is over? No, we must work, eat, sleep, indulge in social relations, produce and create, and we can still be faithful and exclusive even while doing all these things. But up to what point? A scientist's wife maintained that her husband betrayed her with his research. "Who do you love more?" she asked him, "me or your guinea pigs"? And she was probably right to ask him, as he was so absorbed in his work. He had no love affairs, no lapses, but came home late at night, and often stayed in his laboratory all weekend, as well.

Fidelity always implies devoting ourselves to the one we love, giving of our thought, time and attention. Even for our friends, who certainly do not expect anything exclusive from us, fidelity requires a minimum of thoughtfulness and consideration, just as faithful worshippers give offerings, prayers and thanks to their god for gifts received.

Then there are relations with the other sex. When does infidelity break out? At what point can a relationship with another be considered to

be taking away from us something that is due to us and us alone? In our society dancing with other people is not considered an act of infidelity, nor is kissing them on the cheek when we greet or say goodbye. It is not an act of infidelity to go on a business trip with a colleague of the other sex. But is it if we go every evening to their home for private conversation, even if there is nothing sexual in the relationship? When is it that a friendship and spiritual relationship between a man and a woman oversteps the dividing line and draws close to infidelity? If the relationship between spouses is rich and the dialogue between them intense and continuous, a platonic friendship with someone else creates no problems. But if their dialogue is poor, all that is needed to rouse jealousy is an intense conversation with someone else, as happened to a woman we will call *The Writer*. A few years after getting married, and having two children, she began to write. Convinced that her husband, too, was pleased, she started inviting other artists to their home, to talk about their activities. But instead of feeling involved, as she expected, her business-man husband felt left out and reacted very badly. The marriage collapsed and ended up in the divorce court.

Finally, there is sex itself. For thousands of years, sexual relations which a husband had outside wedlock, with serving-maids and prostitutes, were not considered acts of infidelity, while a wife's were. Though nowadays both sexes are equal, attitudes vary very much. For some, as long as there is no emotional involvement, the odd bit of sex on the side counts for little, while for others a simple kiss on the mouth is tantamount to betrayal.

Fidelity can be seen from the point of view of the suffering we inflict on others. Those who are being unfaithful do not suffer, those betrayed do, especially if they themselves are of the faithful kind. But they only suffer if they know they are being betrayed, so what if they don't find out? What if we go on lying so well that they never get to know that they are not the only love in our lives? What is morally more important - telling the truth or sparing pain?

Infidelity may be a way of getting our own back. Some people are unfaithful when they feel neglected or badly treated. Whenever *The Man from Turin* quarrelled with his wife he sought out a prostitute. *The Captain* would go to see one of the many women he had liaisons with. Then there are others who are unfaithful as a simple case of

tit for tat - I am going to be unfaithful to you because you have been unfaithful to me. And to make my revenge even more callous and wounding, I am going to do it right before your eyes.

Sexual restlessness

Falling in love means that two individuals choose each other, preferring each other to everyone else and promising to be true. But this force is always contrasted by an opposing one - by the sexual desire for novelty and excitement. Exclusive love always has its counterpart in the *tendency to explore* that is present in us all, whether male or female.

In the present inquiry into love we took as our starting point the exclusive act of falling in love, which implies monogamy. But we could have started from the human tendency to explore, and considered falling in love the interruption of a tendency that is a natural part of our biological heritage. In almost all species of animals, particularly mammals, the male produces and scatters billions of sperm, and his sexual behaviour is based on the principle that he should impregnate as many females as possible. The

female is different, in that she goes looking for a male endowed with the best genetic make-up, so as to make sure of strong, successful offspring.

Erotic wanderlust can be roused in the most faithful of husbands and most virtuous of wives. This kind of eroticism is kindled precisely because it is transgressive, treacherous and seeks adventure and disorder. It can appear as a sudden attraction for someone who otherwise would never have stirred our interest at all. It can surface as a burning desire to have contact with an unknown, forbidden body, and get pleasure out of seducing, being seduced, playing erotic games and indulging in the thrills of transgression.

What has always driven married men - with children and family responsibilities - to go in search of dangerous and possibly catastrophic erotic experiences? What has driven many married women to chance being put to death on a charge of adultery? And what makes so many people risk a mortal infection like AIDS today? We could imagine that there was some serious reason at the root of it all - e.g. dissatisfaction with marriage or overwhelming passion. But that is not the case. It is not usually love or despair that triggers the mechanism but a more trivial,

whimsical pleasure, a taste for novelty, diversity and a primordial, irrational drive. It is this waywardness that fascinated Freud and caused him to consider sex the root of all human activity, because he recognized how ungovernable it is, and how it refuses to be repressed, trammelled or inhibited.

The term “sexuality” gives the idea of a basic need like hunger, thirst or sleep, of a tension that needs to be relaxed, so that once this happens, the need disappears. But the fire of human sexuality is kindled by imagination and fuelled by passion and emotion - by love, hate, loathing, by hopes, joys, anxieties, dreams and projects. Becoming eroticism, sexuality turns into a disturbing, wayward, risk-defying power that knows no bounds, nourished as it is by an inexhaustible imagination. All of us want to live more intensely, e.g. see new countries and make new acquaintances. And we want to live not only longer, but also faster. What brands us is our restless search, our quest, our longing for what is beyond us. Eroticism is born when this divine, demoniacal tendency in us overflows into our sexuality and opens our eyes to something that is wonderful, extraordinary, stunningly new. Bataille correctly offers eroticism as a synonym

for transgression and the breaking of taboo,^{cxliv} and therefore claims that it cannot possibly be channelled into what is normal and institutional.

While falling in love makes no distinction between sex, age or country, the *tendency to explore* continues to be somewhat different where the two sexes are concerned. Men are more turned on by variety, women by quality. A man is fascinated for example by the body of a woman - she only has to cover or uncover her breasts, let him glimpse them, wear a mini-skirt that reveals her bottom when she bends over, or a skirt with a slit opening as she moves. Indeed, men go in search of sex as pure sensual pleasure, as we learn from those Hollywood stars who avoid the ready market of their fans and seek the services of prostitutes.

On the contrary, a woman may admire the sculpted beauty of a male body, but she is not satisfied with it alone. In order to become erotic and light up her desire, that sexy body must be associated with ideas of courting, and a promise of an intimate rapport. What excites a woman is the desire a man has for her. And a real Don Juan with his infectious desire makes every woman feel she is unique and extraordinary. The female

Eros is always a love fantasy in which the actual sexual act is only a moment. Let us not get things wrong. A woman is potentially just as promiscuous as a man, and needs just as much variety. She would make love with different men all the time. So what stops her? The fact of not finding the right one - for she is far more demanding. She is only attracted by men who are bursting with vigour and full of desire and passion for her. A woman therefore tries to excite a man. She shows herself off, by dancing, for example. Erotic dancing - the dance of the seven veils, the belly dance, wild disco-dancing - is indeed a very female phenomenon. At times a woman gets more pleasure from seeing the effect of her seductive power on a man than from the sex act itself, which is something a man fails to understand.

Yet in both cases it is precisely this *tendency to explore* - wayward, destructive and disorderly as it is - that at a certain point is transformed into a creative, unifying power. Suddenly, out of disorder, comes order. The transgressive, erotic explosion of falling in love produces fusion and exclusivity in the couple. Falling in love, the "I love you" phenomenon, interrupts the search for novelty and generates in its place a stable

structure, a permanent entity, a faithful couple. For men - more attracted by diversity as such - falling in love is therefore a more amazing, more overwhelming event than it is for a woman.

Today a great many people - for a more or less broad span of their lives - live *promiscuously*, having sexual relations with many others at the same time. And there have always been political and religious movements that have tried to encourage free love among their members, by opposing exclusive bonds between couples and regarding the process of falling in love with suspicion. Promiscuous ideologies of this kind can be found among the Free Spirit brethren of the late Middle Ages, among Frankists, a Jewish sect springing from the Messianic movement of Shabbetai Tzevi. Last century, the Nashoba and Oneida communities were founded in the United States. Another flourishing of promiscuous communities took place in the youth movements of the sixties and seventies. But the maximum level of *promiscuity* probably belongs to gay communities, where for a certain period of time sex without love was a pre-requisite for joining. A similar process took

place in the *singles* communities that flourished in the seventies and early eighties.^{cxlv}

At present *erotic friendship networks* are very frequent. Each individual has regular or occasional sex with a certain number of friends of the other sex, and they, in their turn, have sex with others. In this way a vast network is created, in which more than one friend has sexual relations with the same person, sometimes knowingly, sometimes not. These erotic-friendly networks are more frequent among young people, among *singles*. But they also exist among married couples. When two people belonging to this kind of network fall in love, they stop having sex with the others. But the couple only has to run up against an obstacle for the old habits to come back. If a couple want to remain faithful to each other they must get out of erotic friendship networks and only mix with people not involved with them.

While it transgresses and breaks rules, eroticism also explores with a view to finding other possible ties, relationships and loves. Every erotic meeting, even a simple glance, a desire stirred, a chat-up, a fleeting contact with the hand, arm, body of the other person is potentially

the start of something different - as if there was the seed of a possible love, possible affair, therefore possible new life.

For this reason people in love are usually jealous and cannot bear their loved one looking at, flirting or having sexual contact with anyone else. Because that relationship is never - can never possibly be - purely physical, even if it is no more than a one-off with a prostitute. It is always a meeting of souls, an amorous opening up to another made possible indeed by the sexual relationship itself, the maximum intimacy between the bodies, by their fusion. Because the sex act, even when it takes place between two strangers, burns up all other stages in social convention. There comes a moment when the man and woman - who until then had been involved in the social ritual that regulates dress, speech, gestures and distances - suddenly get rid of it all. They throw off their clothes and in doing so throw off all the rules. So they can kiss, enter each other's bodies in every possible way, roll about, cry out, utter obscenities, suck, allow contact between body fluids, do all those things that in ordinary social life are not only prohibited but considered disgusting. And in this kind of intimacy confessions are possible that are

normally kept secret. Even the simplest advances and mildest flirtations, establish an intimacy, a relationship, a sharing of memories.

In most faithful couples sexual restlessness is expressed at a fantasy level. Even people who love each other dearly can feel attracted to someone else, and fantasize about starting up an affair. In this case the fantasy is a substitute for action, takes its place and enables us to remain faithful to our loved one. Many men devour pornographic magazines and films, many women experience erotic adventure via films and soap operas. They often betray each other during the sex act itself, some women imagining they are making love with a cinema star or a previous lover. Some actually fantasize about being raped, while men dwell on details of past experiences. All these fantasies are like reconnaissance acts and usually disappear as orgasm approaches. Then the memories, dreams, fantasies of the past converge and concentrate on the loved one, bringing with them all the energy they have evoked. Thus even partners in the most faithful couple are capable of betraying each other in their imaginations. They can keep their monogamous relationship only so long as they

are careful to keep their private fantasy world secret from each other.

The situation is very different where people do not love each other. In this case erotic fantasies do not converge on the person being loved - on the contrary, they shoot off in all directions. And to achieve orgasm they each have to imagine they are with someone else - a situation which sooner or later produces impotence or rejection.

The fidelity pact

Two tendencies clash against each other in human beings, one sexual wanderlust and search for novelty and promiscuity, the other falling in love, which establishes an exclusive and lasting bond. But the nascent state of love must become a project, an institution, and there are countless projects and institutions possible. A pair of lovers may decide not to live together, or not to sleep together. They may decide to leave each other totally free to have sex and love relationships with whoever they like, though this is a somewhat rare occurrence when we are in love,

as we usually want the other person for us alone. But it can happen.

The writer George Sand met Alfred de Musset in 1833, when she was thirty and he was twenty-two. Though they fell in love and left for Italy together, they each considered themselves free, unbound by any fidelity pact. Once in Genoa, George Sand fell ill and Alfred left her to consort with prostitutes down at the port. The same thing happened again in Florence, and even worse in Venice, where she stayed alone in their room while Alfred went off with actresses and ballerinas. At this point the Italian doctor, Pagello, intervened, cured George and, taking advantage of de Musset's indifference, started an affair with her. The tables were then turned. Alfred fell ill and George, now completely cured, became Pagello's mistress. Alfred was obliged to return to France, George Sand and Pagello went on an Alpine tour and joined him in Paris much later. There the affair between George and Alfred creaked into being again, and at the same time the one with Pagello ended.

Were George Sand and Alfred de Musset really in love? Probably. It is true, all the same, that neither made the slightest effort to be faithful to the other, or give a monogamous character to

their affair. As soon as George fell ill, Alfred got bored, and amused himself with other women, and she, to show him she was on the same level, behaved likewise with the doctor who attended her. Thus their affair deteriorated rapidly.

If love is to be exclusive and faithful both partners must desire it. In comparison with the nascent state of love, established love is an institution and therefore something chosen and desired - the product of a pact. If no explicit *fidelity pact* is established, the nascent state may give rise to other kinds of relationships.

A couple's fidelity or lack of it is deeply influenced by custom. The couple remain faithful to each other if society indicates fidelity and constancy as a model to follow. If on the contrary society criticizes it, if it proposes polygamy as a model, together with promiscuity, free love or singleness, then couples start to waver. External cultural supports are absolutely necessary for the couple. Falling in love is a plastic process - if custom does not indicate that a couple, home and family should be formed, the lovers will not form them. They will search each other out but not know what to do. Heloise did not want to marry Abelard, because she thought that marriage had nothing to do with love and could only corrupt it

- an idea that survived for a long time, even into the Romantic age. Another culture-conditioned idea is that eroticism must disappear with marriage, since the function of marriage is to have offspring.

Recently an ideology has spread which goes against the couple and marital fidelity. It was an ideology that spread like wildfire in the seventies with the sexual revolution and feminism, and countless similar cases from that period can be quoted. One concerns two young couples who were deeply and tenderly in love. We will call them *Bruno and Bruna*, and *Carlo and Carla*. With the advent of feminism *Bruna* got involved with a group of feminist militants and learnt to see sexual fidelity as reactionary. She dragged *Carla* with her and together they started to have sex with other men in their own homes. Their respective husbands had to wait outside the door till they had finished. The love-making couples gradually increased, till the floor was strewn with coupling bodies at night. After a few months *Carla* began to be sick and suffer from anorexia, while her husband withdrew into himself, changed jobs and went to live in another town. Two years later he fell in love with another

woman, and *Carla* came out of the experience completely shattered.

Bruno on the other hand resisted the test. He stayed outside the door all night so as not to disturb his wife during her erotic antics with the man of the moment. When a baby was born, he looked after it like a mother. Afterwards he and *Bruna* separated, but neither fell in love again. They remained friends, though sadder and wiser. When *Bruno* died, *Bruna* was heartbroken, for he had been her only true love.

The spontaneous leaning towards exclusiveness and fidelity when people fall in love is effectively transformed into fidelity only if it is desired, requested and *incorporated into a pact as not asking the unaskable*. This is crucially important. A *fidelity pact* is formed when the fusion process is taking place and emotions and promises are like burning lava, liquid metal that is poured into a mould so as to take on a definitive shape. It is the equivalent of a democratic constitution written in the first heady moments of freedom, to remain deeply imprinted in heart and mind.

Commitment to fidelity, like all a couple's commitments, has to be renewed with the passing

of time. The institution is the product of this reconfirmation of the pact. If this happens, if the pact is respected over a long period, a deep change takes place in the erotic relationship. Little by little the two both stop indulging in betrayal fantasies and exposing themselves to temptation, and learn to seek beauty and pleasure in their partner's body. Let us make a comparison. There are some people who love travelling and are continually on the lookout for new scenery. They quickly get tired and bored if they are obliged to stay in the same place. Others, on the contrary "fall in love" with a certain landscape, even if it is their own back garden. They discover its infinite complexities, admiring the changing colours of the seasons and rejoicing in the flowers as they come into bud. And there is no gainsaying that their aesthetic emotion is just as intense as that of the globetrotter contemplating the Iguazu falls or Alpine peaks.

More than one love

There are some circles where infidelity is not considered sufficient motive for divorce, even if it causes suffering. It often happens in the aristocratic world and upper middle-class Europe,

where title and immense fortunes are at stake. The marriages are not open - the couple are not obliged to tell each other anything. And so each feigns ignorance, so long as the other continues to perform family duties and keeps up appearances. It is in this kind of society that we find the case of *The Princess*. Coming from a simple country background, she was extraordinarily intelligent, beautiful, and endowed with irresistible vitality. At sixteen she won a beauty contest and became a model, and during a fashion show she met a fabulously wealthy aristocrat who fell in love with her, a real Prince Charming. She was fascinated, and fell in love with him. He introduced her to his father, a genial old industrialist who, impressed by the girl's personality, gave the marriage his blessing, despite the objections of family and relations. So began a wonderful life full of receptions, travels, yachts, in the company of magnates, artists and royalty. She was a perfect hostess and in the course of the next ten years produced several children. The family was proud of her.

She became an outstanding figure in the society life of her country, much admired and much courted. But one day she realized that her husband was betraying her with one of her best

friends. If she had acted on her first impulse she would have pushed him down the stairs and asked for a divorce. But she held back, as she knew that in those circles marriages are not broken for so little. It would not do to put at risk family, children, title and business empire. But something was broken. She travelled more and more on her own and led an increasingly intense social life. It was thus that she met a great painter, one of the most outstanding personalities of the age. He was twenty years older than her, married and feeling old age creeping on. Fans would arrive and throw themselves in his arms, but he kept his distance from them, living a secluded life among his paintings. She, however, filled him with an overwhelming *joie de vivre* and he fell in love with her.

She, too, was ready to fall in love, but she resisted. It was important for her to be a good wife and mother, and she wanted to deserve the high position she had won. But falling in love produced a real rebirth in the artist. Abandoning the old political and ideological world he belonged to, he became utterly wrapped up in the woman he loved and was ravished by her beauty, so that he re-constructed his whole artistic world around her. For twenty years all he painted was

her, and the portraits were prodigious. *The Princess* was swept off her feet by this adoration and creative surge. Discreetly, without letting anyone know, she became his mistress. The painter's wife knew nothing of the affair, and *The Princess's* husband neither knew nor cared. And she went on loving both men, if in different ways. What she felt for her husband was ordinary affection, while her love for the painter was all dream and mystic ecstasy.

Was she in love? The answer is that she was, even if she kept her feelings under control. Rather than love, she let herself be loved. She and the artist never had any projects to live together. Their love took place within the four walls of the studio. She travelled, came and went, stayed for a few hours, then went on with her life. He was content with their ecstatic meetings - for she fed and nourished his creativity. When she was absent, he would recreate her. But for her it was not enough, she wanted to draw him into the whirl of her social life, bind their lives together, perhaps have a child with him.

In this way a dark sense of dissatisfaction crept back into her life. It was then that she met a

great womanizer, the most handsome man in the country, and fell in love with him. This time it was an erotic explosion. But this affair did not lead to their living together, either. She kept on visiting the painter, who she loved dearly. He was jealously possessive, but as he never went out it was easy to keep everything hidden from him. But even if he had known, he would probably have done nothing, and gone on loving her, because he was married and did not want a divorce. He would have been reluctant to give so much pain to a wife who had grown old at his side. Besides, wrapped up in his art, what he really wanted was to go on recreating *The Princess* continually through it. His love was of the *idyllic* type, where what counted was what was happening there and then, where the outside world was driven away and kept at a distance. It was the kind of love that could even be stimulated by the thought that the person loved was having an affair with someone else. Because he was able to take possession of her through his own creation, and snatch her away from the world, eternalize her and thus make her exclusively his own.

Things went on like this for about ten years, till the great painter died. Then, suddenly, *The*

Princess realized that she had lost the most important person in her life, because all her youth and beauty were in his paintings. Because he - now immortal - had made her immortal. In a short space of time her other loves vanished. Now she was really in love with him. She left both husband and lover, and remained alone.

Open marriages

Instead of speaking about open marriages in the abstract, we will begin with a real example: the case of *Giovanna and Donato*. He is American, she is Italian. They met in the United States in the late sixties when for young people the ideology of communal living was all the rage, and monogamy and jealousy were condemned as bourgeois nonsense. When they got married, they established a pact - they were each free to have romantic and sexual relations with anyone they liked provided that they respected three conditions. The first was to tell their partner all about their experiences, down to the smallest detail. The second was to go on having sex together and to remain friends. The third was to help each other, look after their children and

never to ask for a separation or divorce. It was in effect a permissive monogamy at an erotic level but extremely strict where family commitments were concerned.

For twenty years this scheme worked, with each partner having numerous affairs with other people. The woman fell in love several times, but she always told her lover straightaway that she would never go and live with him, and would never be faithful to him. At first he would accept the conditions, then he would try to persuade her to break her promise to her husband. In the end he would start betraying her in his turn and eventually leave her.

The promise to tell each other all their thoughts, feelings, projects, and to introduce their lovers to each other, always prevented husband and wife from making any alternative love project. It also made it impossible for them to create escapist, *idyllic* loves outside reality. Giovanna's love affairs, therefore, never got any further than the explorative stage and never threatened her marriage.

On the negative side, their open, free-love marriage caused their friends many problems, because they tended to try to "export" their way

of living. They would each try to seduce friends' husbands and wives as if it were the most natural thing in the world. And then, if they succeeded in their design, they would immediately describe it in detail to their partner, with obvious results.

Love cycles

Some people are erotic wanderers, born promiscuous, while others tend to establish firm, lasting bonds. In the course of our lives, however, more or less all of us pass through periods when one or the other tendency stands out - periods of erotic and emotional wanderlust, exploration and promiscuity, and periods of strong, faithful, monogamous love.^{cxlvi}

Given the enormous differences that exist from individual to individual, this scheme can vary greatly. Promiscuity is the stronger force with some men and women, monogamy with others. There are some people for whom the separation between monogamous *phase* and promiscuous *phase* is clear-cut. For others it is blurred. We have therefore singled out a series of typical cases.

1) *Absolute promiscuity*. Cases of absolute promiscuity can only be found easily in couples who got married very young and formed an open marriage which they have kept up. We have seen an example of this in the case of *Giovanna and Donato*. At times the promiscuity can be interrupted by brief intervals of monogamy, as happened in the case of Hugh Hefner, the founder of the "Playboy Club". Hefner married very young, and went through a short spell of monogamy, which was then followed by a long polygamous phase when he was building up "Playboy". He created a real harem in Chicago, from which he would take his favourite of the month to present nude to his magazine public. Twice, however, he felt a stronger attachment - first for Barbara Benton from Los Angeles and then for Karen Christy from Chicago. They represented two short intervals of monogamy, until bitter rivalry between the two women made Hefner revert quickly back to his usual promiscuity.^{cxlvii}

The most typical cases of absolute promiscuousness can be found with some film stars who reached the top when they were very young - Elvis Presley, for example, who after his

great triumph, always led a totally promiscuous existence, even during his marriage to Priscilla. The last phase of his life was characterized by a continually succession of orgies and drugs, right up to his death.^{cxlviii}

2) *Serial monogamy*. Erotic or passionate experiences follow one another like links in a chain, and an example of this can be found in the life of George Sand. Having contracted a loveless marriage with Casimir Dudevant, she obliged him to accept an open marriage, and had her first affair with Jules Sandeau. This ended when Prosper Mérimé came onto the scene, and he was then replaced by Alfred de Musset and Pagello in Italy. Back in Paris, George fell in love with the politician Michel de Bourges, followed by Leroux and Chopin - all this in an eight-year span, from 1830 to 1838.^{cxlix}

Another example is offered by the life of the Italian poet Gabriele D'Annunzio. After a teenage love for Giselda Zucconi, D'Annunzio fell in love with Marquise Marie Hardouin di Gallese, attracted by the girl's high social rank. He soon tired of married life and fell in love again, this time quite deeply, with Barbara Leoni.

The year was 1887. Until then D'Annunzio had only written poems, but this new love marked a vital new stage and creative phase in his life, inspiring him to write novels - *Il trionfo della morte*, *Il piacere* e *L'innocente*. Having finished his love story with Barbara Leoni, he married Maria Gravina, who gave him two more children. Then came his meeting with Eleonora Duse. It was for her that he wrote his theatrical works; *La città morta*, *Il sogno di un mattino di primavera*, *La Gioconda*, *Francesca da Rimini*. In the last phase of his life D'Annunzio did not fall in love again, but devoted his energies to war, politics and a completely promiscuous existence.^{cl}

3) *Simultaneous loves*. This is quite a widespread phenomenon, and we have seen examples of it with *The Princess*. After a monogamous phase the individual falls in love a second time, or simply sets up a new erotic relationship without interrupting the previous one. And so it goes on. In this way there is a main relationship and at the same time one or more lasting love affairs. Among the wealthy classes in Mexico it used to be the custom among males to buy each new mistress a house, but at the same

time enlarging and enhancing those of their wives and previous mistresses, so as to preserve the hierarchy - an informal kind of polygamy, in fact.^{cli}

4) ***Long-lasting loves.*** The typical example is Goethe, who in his youth experienced several cases of unrequited love, especially for Charlotte Buff, first fiancée and then wife of his friend Kestner. Goethe's novel, *The Young Werther* was the fruit of these experiences. Having then become famous, he met Prince Charles Augustus at Frankfurt, and was invited to Weimar, where he was to become the Prince's right-hand man in governing the little state. There he met Charlotte von Stein, a learned and refined woman who was older than he was. He fell in love with her and their affair lasted a long time. It was with her that he matured and became a statesman. At the age of thirty-seven, however, he rebelled and set off secretly on a journey to Italy that lasted nearly two years. When he returned to Weimar his affair with Charlotte von Stein wound down. He fell in love with Christian Vulpius who, unlike Charlotte, was vivacious and more worldly, with a fondness for bright clothes, flashy jewellery and

good food. Goethe thus entered into a third phase in which he did not travel, led a domestic life and studied botany, physics and the natural sciences.^{clii}

5) ***Quest promiscuous, destination monogamous.*** It is a fairly common experience among talented people coming up from a very low social position. At first they are slighted, suffer various frustrations in love and end up making do with second best. Then, with the headiness of success, they lose control, zap through marriages, divorces and a string of lovers. Only when they reach maturity do they find the person with whom they have real elective affinities, and at this point they become monogamous.^{cliii}

6) ***One great love.*** There are also people who have one great love in their lives and remain true to it. Giuseppe Verdi is a case in question. After a loveless marriage to his benefactor's daughter he fell in love with the soprano Giuseppina Strepponi, who had faith in him and helped him at the start of his career. They were to

live together till Giuseppina died, the only upset to this monogamous state being Verdi's sudden, probably platonic love for the soprano Teresa Stolz. And Freud's case was not very different.^{cliv}

exliii	1.15
exliv	2.15
exlv	3.15
exlvi	4.15
exlvii	5.15
exlviii	6.15
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cliii	11.15
cliv	12.15

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

The early crisis

Why does it happen?

Research conducted into matrimonial life shows that in all cultures and societies crises and break-ups occur especially in the early years.^{clv} Why is this so? Many experts explain it by saying that love processes are the product of emotional factors, infantile dreams, and therefore lead to impulsive, irrational choices. We disagree with this, feeling that in the majority of cases *early crises* occur because the couple have not established a strong enough bond, i.e. they are not really in love. Naturally there are also cases when a crisis occurs even if they are, but this

happens when the divergences between the couple's projects are too great.

No real falling in love

Many couples split up very simply because the two people who came together were not really in love. We will examine four examples of this kind.

1) *Exploratory love*. Falling in love always begins in the form of exploration, characterized by a first flush of interest, a moment's crush, and a pang of strong desire. We who are involved try to please each other. Far from asking for help, we try to give it. There is no grumbling, no nagging, just compliments. No orders, no demands. During the phase of courtship we devote ourselves entirely to the other person. We do not work or save - on the contrary, we are prodigal. It is like being on holiday. We behave like great lords and are only interested in things of the body, beauty, eroticism and love.

But if the couple start to meet regularly, or if they go and live together, back come the problems of everyday life. Back come work,

stress and worry. And those two people, who at first had all the time in the world to devote to the game of love, now have to face practical problems. They must ask things of each other, criticize, reproach - recall duties and responsibilities. Characters emerge, as do different habits. And nowadays many young people spend a long time at home, looked after by their parents. They are not used to facing the mundane chores of life - cleaning, washing, cooking, bedmaking, working and watching the pennies. If they are not really in love, the poetry will soon disappear and their love will fade away.

In her study entitled *Quando l'amore finisce*, Donata Francescato presents us with many cases of this kind. For example *Teresa* says: "Seeing that I enjoyed myself with him at the weekend ... I thought that if I could be with him all week, or all my life ... it would have been even better and I would have become a better person".^{clvi} And *Valeria* says: "I married my husband on an impulse. I enjoyed making love with him so much, he was so handsome, charming and unpredictable [... But] neither of us could bear the fact of being tied down when we were so young, and all our friends were free, while we were not. We had been used to being looked after by our

mothers at home ... in fact, growing up I realized that it was all just a farce, an empty bubble”^{clvii}.

2) *Romantic fantasies on marriage.*

Teenage girls have extremely high expectations of love. Many of them fantasize about showbiz stars and quite a few end up getting engaged and married to men they consider way below their ideal. And they often get married without really being in love, even if they refuse to admit it. They long for a great love, but since it does not materialize, since the real man comes a very poor second to their ideal, they convince themselves they feel a passion that actually is not there. Some of them think of the white dress, sumptuous reception, admiring friends, and entrance into the world of married women, i.e. they think of the wedding ceremony, and *the institution, in terms of what it should produce* - a great flowering of love. Of course, come marriage - and the magic transformation does not take place. There is no increase in passion, and their husbands do not turn into irresistible heart-throbs. Living together the two have no more to say to each other than they had before. When they are alone together time drags and they get bored in each other's company. Each finds the

other unchanged, with the same habits, prejudices and shortcoming as before. Disappointment sets in, quickly followed by anger, spite, bitter quarrels and recriminations. Within less than twelve months divorce proceedings are under way.^{clviii}

The case of *The Banker's Daughter* springs to mind. Quite good-looking, self-possessed and sure of herself, she had never been in love, though she had had several crushes and flirtations - phenomena classified under the heading of explorations in this study. She felt that there was something missing in her life, and she had always dreamed of a great love and grand Wedding - white dress, hundreds of guests, the whole works. She had dreamed of her married status, with house, husband and a grown-up lifestyle. From a physical point of view she liked the boy she was going out with, and they made love perfectly together, but they each lived at home with their own parents, who waited on them hand and foot. They had been on some good holidays together, holding hands romantically, and saying they were engaged, so that everyone regarded them with affection. The girl was convinced that their love would grow even greater when they got married.

She wanted to be in love and imagined that she was - but a careful examination of her behaviour reveals no sign of the nascent state. What had not begun was that radical transformation of the self that enables the individual to become one with the other, so that they merge to form a new community, capable of holding its own in the world through struggle and sacrifice, each aware of being half of the same destiny and goal. She had remained herself - a spoilt girl accustomed to an easy life. In her imagination it was marriage that should spark off, set in motion and bring forth love. Marriage - an institution - was supposed to be able to produce the miracle of the nascent state. It was an incredible mistake, but of quite frequent occurrence, especially among young girls.

3) In other cases there is no falling in love because the individual decides **to rationalize the choice of the most suitable person**. Dalma Heyn gives us the case of *June*, who decided to get married because she wanted a baby. So she chose a nice respectable husband who was helpful, well-balanced, and highly eligible. As a result, she realized as soon as they were married that she could not abide him, and divorce ensued. Even

more interesting is the case of *Connie*, a teenager who treated sex as a conquest and a duty. In order to feel modern and emancipated, she had sex with scores of different men. Eventually she decided it was time for her to take a hold of herself, grow up and get married. So she started looking out for a suitable husband. In order to avoid making a mistake or allowing herself to be influenced by sexual feeling, she chose a man who seemed to be serious-minded and settled, but who did not arouse any emotion or erotic attraction in her. The result, of course, was catastrophic.^{clix}

Those who have been disappointed in love often adopt this coldly rational way of choosing a partner, as we saw in the chapter dealing with *consolation love*, where we met the case of *The Man from Turin*. He had started off leading an irregular, disreputable kind of life, and then, as years went by, he had felt a need for the sincere affection and devotion of one woman's love. So he started spending time with a gentle, pleasant-mannered old school friend who treated him well and was most helpful to him. Though not in love with her, he was full of appreciation for her human qualities. She was generous, sincere, faithful and always in a good mood - indeed the perfect wife. Sexually he was not attracted, and

found other women far better-looking and more desirable, but he realized that you cannot have everything in life. Besides, he told himself that love would grow the more they got to know each other. In any case, he felt a comfortable sense of safety and protection with this woman's love. So he married her and they had children, but as we know, a few years later he was to fall in love with someone else. In conclusion, we will recall the dramatic story of *Chiara*. After being let down in love she accepted a husband from the Milan area because he reminded her of the love she had lost. But after her father's death she simply walked out of the house one winter night and was never seen again.

4) *When only one partner is in love.* For the formation of a couple there must be reciprocity. Without it the process of fusion is incomplete, there is no historicizing process and the pact does not have the dramatic importance it has when made by two people who are really in love with each other. An old folk tradition with a touch of wisdom to it says that with the passing of time the love of one will waken love in the other. This may have happened in the past among country folk, but nowadays both men and women remain

erotically energetic till they are at least in their sixties, and with all the sexual stimuli around they have many possibilities for making encounters. So those who do not love feel left out of it all. And while affection, or gratitude are possible options, such feelings are highly unlikely to turn into love.

Let us take a case that will be called *The Doctor's Wife*. She was a fatherless girl with a bossy mother. Shapely and good-looking, she had always been attractive to men. Considering her beauty an important asset to invest in, her mother had always discouraged her from marrying anyone who was not very rich. So the years went by and the girl reached her thirties, still beautiful but now worried that she might start losing her attractiveness.

One evening she met a doctor at a discothèque. He had always had luxury sports cars, and even now spent much of his salary on expensive cars. He gave everyone the impression he was very rich. When he met the girl in question he was passing through a period of sexual chopping and changing, in search of the right woman. He kept going to discos and never got home before three in the morning. Attracted to all kinds of women, he had one crush after

another, while in actual fact he was ready for a radical change, and a new love.

The girl was attracted to him - not from a physical point of view, but because she was fascinated by his fabulous cars and rich man's life. Her mother made inquiries and found out that he was about to inherit a large sum of money, and that, in short, he was loaded. This had an exciting effect on our girl, who could at last see her long-cherished dream of marrying a millionaire coming true.

On their first meeting, when the doctor saw her tall shapely body, mass of red hair and enormous bosom, he was stunned, He invited her to get in his luxury car, and people turned their heads to look at them. He had never had a woman like this before - a star, a goddess, who accepted him, made love with him and was ready to go and live with him. He had never felt so proud, so powerful. Having this beauty, that everyone admired and stared at, that everyone wanted and he alone possessed, made him euphoric. He was like Paris with Helen, the most beautiful woman in the world. His desire fed on the desires of all the other men who wanted her the moment they saw her. The situation can be compared with that of the girl who met the great star, was chosen by

him, and walked proudly at his side, followed by the envious glances of all the other women. But the doctor's star-worship turned to true love, a desire for fusion and devotion. "This woman", he thought, "is the woman I have always been looking for, and I'll love her for ever".

But she was not in love. She was not attracted to him physically and he did not "turn her head". She was attracted by his luxurious life, his gorgeous cars, his exuberance. She enjoyed herself with him, and above all saw in him a wealthy future for herself, family and future children. The girl had reached an age when she had to make some choices if she wanted to become a mother. And she did. She became pregnant and they got married.

Then came the disappointment. Living on a daily basis with her husband she realized that in actual fact he was not as rich as she had thought. He had a good income, beautiful cars, and gave her generous presents because he was madly in love with her - but he was no millionaire. Backing all his flamboyant gestures, there was only his doctor's profession and what he earned day by day with his work. This discovery came as a great shock, and she reacted by getting very

angry and rejecting him, his body and their sex life. When the baby was born, she poured all her attention on it and did not deign to look at her husband. She accused him of being mean and selfish and even berated him in public. The marriage was almost on the rocks, when the man reacted. He told her he had never pretended to be rich or tried to deceive her, that she would have to choose whether she wanted a father for their child, or to live alone. He loved her and would be a good father. She had to choose - but it would have to be a straight choice and she could have no second thoughts. Faced by such clear alternatives, the woman decided to remain, but as she did not love him their marriage was doomed.

Pseudo-falling in love

Couples often rush headlong into a crisis because both of them thought they were in love when they were not. These are cases of pseudo-falling in love. It is only with a careful examination that it is possible to see that not all the elements of the nascent state are present. The most frequent forms of pseudo-falling in love are

competitive love, star-worship and erotic infatuation.

1) *Competitive love.* In this kind of love the underlying feeling is competitive. The person desired is someone who resists, someone who belongs to someone else. Desire increases because of the obstacle, and because of the struggle.

Competitive love comes in three forms. The first is a *desire for conquest* in the form of seduction, as we have seen in the characters of Diego and Stefano in *Castellaneta's* novels and of the Duke of Nemours in *The Princess of Clèves*. Competitive-type love is fatal for the formation of the couple, because it disappears as soon as it is exchanged.

The second type of competitive love is nourished by a desire to assert one's *superiority over a rival*, as happens with *Casanova* in Alain Delon's film, as well as in the case of *The Husband Seeker*. Here again, this kind of love vanishes the moment the rival is overcome.

The third type of competitive love is when a couple join forces *against an opponent or enemy*.

We find it with a certain frequency among young people who want to break loose from family control, and become free and independent. An example of this kind is given by Jurg Willi. The son of a rich Jewish businessman wanted to marry a German catholic.^{clx} His parents had used all kinds of threats and promises to put him off marrying her, but all in vain. The couple got married in secret and lived together for many years in perfect harmony, strengthened by the struggle waged against his parents - against their pressure and hostility. Eventually there came the day when the parents resigned themselves to the marriage and welcomed the wife affectionately. At this point the husband had a violent nervous breakdown and his relationship with his wife suddenly deteriorated.

2) *Star-worship*. We have spoken at length of star-worship among teenage girls. The fragility of this kind of love stems from the fact that attachment to the star depends on society's prompting or *indication*. Such a love tends to be fickle and goes with the crowd, so that when collective worship of the star disappears, so does the love. But it also disappears when familiarity and life in common make the loved one appear

just as s/he is, with all the good and bad points of an ordinary man or woman. The extraordinary qualities of a star are not the product of our personal transfiguration, that is the ability we acquire in the nascent state to appreciate and love the essence of our loved one, the being-in-itself, and to grasp its extraordinary and unique beauty. In star-worship we do not see the being itself, but what society has projected on to it. Therefore, when we find ourselves alone with the star we may be bitterly disappointed. We imagined he was strong, generous and fearless while he turns out to be mean, timid and false. We thought she was sweet and gentle, and we find her tough and arrogant. Remember, too, that a relationship with a star is not an even one, because he - or she - feels superior and expects more rights.

Finally, people who marry famous stars often begin to desire the same fame or notoriety. At receptions they are irritated by lack of attention while everyone mills round the star. Women can usually bear this lack of equality better than men, accustomed as they are to being called *so-and-so's wife*. But it is different for men, as we shall see in the case of *The Singer's Man*. She was one of the greatest singers in the

country - beautiful, intelligent and mysterious - while he was a brilliant architect. He met her one evening during a performance of hers and fell headlong in love with her. He courted her passionately and, as she was entering a new phase in her life, she not only returned his love, but was ready to go and live with him at once, even marry him. But the man had a crisis. Why did everyone just look at her when they were out together? Why did everyone ask for her at receptions? Why were the spotlights always on her, while he was forgotten in a corner? He could not take it, could not bear to be described as "...’s man", "...’s husband". So he refused to live with her and went on behaving like a bachelor, obliging her to meet him every now and then, like secret lovers.

3) *Erotic infatuation.* We have studied several cases of erotic infatuation, seeing that in the male it is characterized by unbridled sexual pleasure which does not enter the nascent state or become a shared life project. In a woman it is often nourished by hero-worship, as in the case of *Carmen* in Bizet’s opera. Passionate Carmen wants to love and be loved, and she is attracted to Don José because he is handsome and wears a

uniform - and also because he helps her to escape. It is obvious that she is not in love with him, as she shows when he has just been released from prison, where he had ended up because of her. He now wants to return to his barracks so as not to be arrested again, but she taunts him and uses her seductive charms to persuade him to desert the army and follow her to the smugglers' hide-out. She gives up nothing, he everything. Having become a deserter he is a broken man, and Carmen soon gets tired of him. She already has a new love in mind - Escamillo the bull-fighter.

A typical case of erotic infatuation is that of an Italian businessman who went to the Rio carnival and was quite bewitched by the charms of a teenage mulatto. We will call him *The Man who went to Rio*. Fully convinced that he was really in love with this young girl, after knowing her only for a week, he persuaded her to return to Italy with him. Unbeknown to his wife he set her up in an apartment in Milan, and gave her a large sum of money every month, which she regularly sent back to her family in Brazil. The girl led a retired life, could hardly speak any Italian and suffered from loneliness. Missing her family, and friends, she became sad, and lost all the

exuberant joie de vivre and carefree eroticism she had shown during the carnival. The man became aware of how slight his Brazilian girl was, how childlike her body, with its tiny breasts. Now, instead of the sexual fervour he had felt before, he started to feel a fatherly tenderness. When a couple of months later the girl tearfully begged him to send her back home to Brazil, he was relieved. He gave her a large sum of money and took her to the airport. They remained on friendly terms, and even met again in Brazil. But of the great love they had shared, not a trace was left.

Incompatible projects

A couple can find themselves in a crisis even when they are really in love - that is even when the essential ingredients of a nascent state, fusion, historicizing and pact are all there. For although the nascent state makes us flexible and adaptable, we are still distinct personalities, with distinct and different dreams, aspirations, feelings, and life projects. Having already spoken of *fighting with the angel* and the divisions and dramas it can provoke, and examined various cases, we now only want to recall that of Tolstoy and his wife

Sonia. After their wedding they went to live on their estate at Jasnaja Poljana, Tolstoy's native hunting ground, a place where utter chaos reigned, with dirt everywhere, peasants sleeping in the corridors and a drunken chef to boot. Sonia had been attracted by Tolstoy's capricious genius, but she wanted to turn him into a normal husband. Taking charge of the house, she attempted to transform it into an elegant residence. Tolstoy interpreted her demands as affectation. So neither of them succeeded in carrying out the life-project they had in mind. She wanted a light-hearted social life, he a simple country one. She wanted a man to have spiritual contact with, he a woman to have sex with, who would dress simply, give up her social life, have no intellectual pretensions and only occupy herself with the house and children. Yet when Tolstoy had fallen in love with her, it was her vivacious spirit, elegance and pleasure-loving nature that had attracted him. Now he wanted to stamp it all out - her gaiety, spontaneity and joie de vivre. And since the two showed each other their diaries where they described their doubts and bitterness, there were violent clashes right from the earliest days of their marriage.

External factors

When we fall in love, we take charge of our own destinies, and free ourselves from family and social influences. We look for our own way - but at times social forces take us over again and oblige us to go back to the way we were, and then love itself may vanish. Woods Kennedy's novel *Un anno d'amore* tells the love story of two eighteen-year-old Americans in Paris. The setting is the disorderly one of the diaspora of American intellectuals led by Scott Fitzgerald, Ezra Pound, Henry Miller and Ernest Hemingway. The boy is from a rich family and has had no sexual experience. Sarah, the girl, on the contrary, is from the avant-garde world of show business in New York, has already had an affair with a director and, having contracted a venereal disease, is unable to have children. But she is beautiful and gentle. She introduces him to the female body, teaches him what eroticism is, and thanks to it a deep love is born between them. The girl gets to know his circle, they do art courses together and live in complete intimacy. In that chaotic and transgressive world they form an inseparable and faithful couple.

Then comes the moment when the boy's mother obliges him to return to Boston. He takes Sarah with him - but it is another way of life, rich, haughty and puritanical, with different values and different rules. Sarah is shocked. She feels rejected and suffocated. The person she loves is the free boy in Paris, not the dutiful son who is a slave to family conventions. She realizes she will never be accepted, never be able to make her dreams of love come true. And so rebellion rises in her heart, and hatred for that cold, hostile and ruthless world, which she had seen from a distance when she was a child. She goes back to see her mother in the squalid district of New York where she recovers within her the aggressive, rebellious strength that had enabled her to fight and survive. She decides to return to the world of show business, uninhibitedly exploiting her beauty and sexuality. So their love ends, because neither of them are able to overcome the differences which, octopus-like, rise out of their past worlds, and suffocate them. Because they are unable to invent an alternative way of life, they are each sucked back into their original backgrounds and split up.

This kind of struggle - between the new couple and their social backgrounds - has always

existed even if it has not always been so destructive. Many of the quarrels that take place in the early years of marriage are due to interference on the part of the husband or wife's parents.^{clxi}

Undermining the partner

There are people who fall in love with someone more gifted and talented than themselves. Then when they are sure their love is returned, they try to destroy in their partner the very qualities that had fascinated them in the first place. It is the case of the rich, married, middle-class man who falls for a dancer or actress because he is attracted by her freedom and sees her as a symbol of something outrageous and licentiously erotic. Through her he wants to shake off the manacles of mediocrity, but he is scared of her beauty and the charm she exerts over himself and others. He knows that if he wants to hold on to her, he will have to keep alive the hopes he has raised in her. And he is not sure if he is up to it. He is perfectly aware of the erotic power she is capable of wielding when she is herself - a star - and he is afraid someone else

might snatch her away from him. He is even afraid of his own love. So he locks her up in the house, removes her from her natural setting, asks her to give up her work, makes her have children and forces her to dress in a plain and dowdy way. He transforms her into a traditional, harmless housewife, bereft of all her erotic charm. Once he has thus neutralized and destroyed her, he then stops loving and desiring her. He gets rid of his love.

Have we not said that if we are really in love we wish to intensify that love? Yes, indeed. But we have also seen that in every human being there are forces working in favour of the love and forces working against it. In this human type the opposing forces are stronger. And *fear* prevails over love. He had fallen in love with a magnificent wild animal running freely through the world. Then fear sets in and he is afraid of being enslaved by it. He does not want to renounce his love, but he does not want to suffer either. So he uses a more devious method of killing it. He tries to tame it, to transform it into something familiar and harmless. He clips its wings and in the end, when it is reduced to the condition of a broody hen, he destroys it. It is

what we have seen in the case of Tolstoy and his wife Sonia.

Observing this kind of love more carefully, we will discover that it falls into the broad category of competitive love, of the kinds of love set in motion by the desire to win a competition, take possession of a trophy, excel and dominate - a kind of love in which the subject asserts himself but is not ready to give of himself. It is egoistic love, the kind that rather than raise the partner higher, tries in every possible way to bring him or her down to the same level - a love threatened by envious competition. When an ordinary man manages to win a great star and everyone looks on in admiration, he feels proud at first, then belittled, and *envy* sets in. So he tries to destroy her beauty and turn her into a nonentity like himself. Only in this way can he feel comfortable, and not feel the need to make any effort to improve himself and climb to her level.

We are reminded of the case of Sandra Milo, an actress made famous by the director Federico Fellini, who gave up stardom for love. She married a doctor, went off to live with him in a small village and had a baby. In marrying her he had asked her to give up her acting career to

become a wife and mother, all for him. Indeed, he had asked her to change from being a star to being an ordinary woman. Yet he had fallen in love with her when she was beyond ordinary reach, at the dazzling height of her career. But once her image was destroyed so was their love. Sandra Milo then went back to her own world in Rome, but there were no more crowds of fans waiting for her, no more directors competing for her favours. Her days of glory were over.

Something similar happened to Ingrid Bergman when she married Rossellini, the Italian director famous for having invented a new cinema technique - neo-realism. Ingrid Bergman was a great Hollywood star thanks to films like *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, *Notorious*, and *Casablanca*. Both of them thought that they would be able to work wonders together. But Rossellini could not adapt - he made her take parts of ordinary women in neo-realistic films which did not suit her, and the result was a failure. So Bergman devoted herself to her home and children, cut off from the world of Hollywood, from her world and friends, till one day she rebelled and walked out on him. But she would never be the same again.

Falling in love is based on equality and mutual enhancement. If one tries to pull the other down, love is destroyed. Neither partner should allow him - or herself to be walked over, dominated or cramped, because love means equality and freedom, and if I fail to keep my own dignity and value, if I fail to defend my personality, I betray not only myself but also my partner, who chose me for what I am.

Exacting the unaskable

Each of us has some essential love objects and essential values that make up our personalities and which cannot be destroyed even when we fall in love. On the contrary, falling in love makes us rediscover them and confirms our interest in them, putting them at the heart of our love project. We have seen the case of *The Woman who Wanted a Baby*, who rediscovered her maternal desire when she fell in love. Likewise, there are men who have a similar need to become fathers. We may recall the case of *The Sculptor* who, as we have seen, fell in love with a beautiful girl and would not leave her alone. When she finally accepted him, he began to talk

about his marriage projects. He was rich and had a big house on the lake where he wanted to live with her and have lots of children. But the girl had a totally different life-project for herself. She wanted to finish university and then go in for television directing, a job she was already doing on an occasional basis. One day she might want a child, but for now she had no intention whatsoever of burying herself alive in a lakeside pad. She wanted to stay in the big city where she lived, because it was only there that she could achieve her artistic and professional vocation. *The Sculptor* did not give up. He tried to charm her into submission, but the girl felt he was trying to hem her in. Her desire to see him changed to a desire to get away, to escape. So she left him. Years later the sculptor found a woman who shared his desire for a large family. He married her even though he was not in love with her, and they had a houseful of children. The sculptor's dream had come true and he became a kind of patriarch, resigned to not being in love.

At times asking the unaskable depends on a previously taken decision, as in the case we shall call *The Director's Girl*. A television-serial director had married a refined Englishwoman who was a literary scholar and cinema buff. They

were a well-knit couple, with her following him in his work, encouraging and helping him. They looked over the subjects, choice of actors, musical score and screenplay together. Then, one day, the producer invited the director to take on a young female graduate who was ambitious to become a director. He agreed and his wife approved, even helping him to teach his young pupil the fundamentals of directing. Little by little, however, the director and the girl started discussing the various aspects of the serial they were shooting as if they were alone. The wife felt humiliated. She watched the complicity that had developed between them in silence, realizing that there was no room for her. She left her husband, the set, and the home they had built up together, and took refuge in a furnished apartment, where she tried to get involved in some literary research.

Meanwhile the girl went to live with the director, telling him that she loved him and wanted to be with him. Everyone thought they were lovers, especially the wife, who had used all her English self-control and left them alone. Then one day the husband went to see her, not to say he was sorry or ask to be forgiven for the

suffering he had caused her, but to ask her for help. He told her that the girl he was in love with was willing to live with him, help him in his work and look after the house, but refused to have sex with him. She could be his assistant, friend, sister, but not his lover. Why not? Because years before, she had been in love with a boy the same age as herself whom she had known since nursery school days. When this boy died in a car accident, she had made a vow of chastity and had no intention of breaking it for any reason on earth. The director tried to fight her determination by speaking to her parents and even getting a priest to intervene - but all to no avail. She was unyielding. His life turned into a nightmare, he could not sleep or work. He was beside himself with frustration, but he did not have the courage to break away. The mere idea of losing her drove him mad. What was to be done?

His wife heard him out then, opening the door said, "I'm going to stay around to enjoy watching your romantic fling come to an end, then I'm going back to England for good". Returning home, the director found not the girl, but a note waiting for him with a few lines: "My place is in a convent. A director's life is fraught

with all kinds of passions. If I were to go on, it would be impossible for me to keep the vow I have made. Staying in the outside world I could only cause pain, as I have done to you. Don't look for me". He didn't. Nor did he go in search of his wife when she went back to England. He said goodbye to love and work, withdrew into himself and took to drink.

clv	1.16
clvi	2.16
clvii	3.16
clviii	4.16
clix	5.16
clx	6.16
clxi	9.16

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

The lasting couple

Co-evolution^{clxii}

Life is a never-ending process of change. And even if the changes occur in countless tiny movements, they usually come to the surface in an abrupt irregular way, as moments of discontinuity. Just as a wire thread strained by a constant weight is changed at a molecular level and at a certain point breaks. No warning is given, either, with illnesses. For a long time our organism controls the action of the pathogenic agents until defences give way and then the symptoms appear. The same happens in the field of human decisions. Our dissatisfaction grows with the job we are doing. We begin to look

around, discover other possibilities, and get in touch with friends or specialized agencies. But then there comes the moment when we have to take the irrevocable decision, at which point our lives undergo an abrupt transformation. Collective movements and falling in love follow the same law - many little changes mount up, many little tensions, and many new paths are explored in the imagination until suddenly there is an explosion, a revolution.

If changes occurred continuously or in a series of minute steps, that we were aware of, we could easily adapt to them and steer clear of crises. But this is structurally impossible. And the tensions, misunderstandings and problems that mature within the couple follow the same law. That is why psychologists are always advising couples to speak out and examine their problems before they grow too big and cross a critical threshold. But since all existing forces, all life's vicissitudes act on us in a discontinuous way, the couple is inevitably obliged to face abrupt changes and unexpected problems, anyhow. Some are the consequences of old desires we have been unable to satisfy, like having children, a nice house or the chance to travel to distant

places. Others arise as we mature and evolve. Having reached one goal we set ourselves a higher one, and we want the recognition we think we deserve. Other agents also act on us from the outside, such as illness, whether it concerns ourselves, our spouse, or a parent, brother or sister.

All these things may strike either member of the couple separately and have very different effects on one or the other. Every change is therefore potentially an occasion for a crisis, because it forces both halves of the couple to remake their plans. On all these occasions the two subjects may converge and find a common path, rediscovering their love. Or, on the contrary, they may diverge and take paths that drive them apart. All sudden happenings in life, all moments of discontinuity, are in fact occasions for convergent or divergent change.

Love is therefore no firm, rocklike state that just exists there fair and square, but something that is always being challenged, shaken, and put to the test. So it can keep on being renewed and reborn, or else it can dwindle, deteriorate and disappear. There can be no study on the lasting quality of the love of a couple without a study of

the challenges it must face and overcome. Love indeed lies in a couple's ability to overcome these crisis and be renewed by them. *Co-evolution* is not a continuous process, but the result of the converging effect of solving tensions, conflicts and crises together.

Let us take the case of a couple we shall call *The Two Intellectuals*. He was a scientist, she a writer. Childless, deeply in love and part-lovers, part-husband and wife, they gave each other pleasure at an erotic level and had always faced the world with a united front. They travelled and worked together, talked over all their problems and usually reached the same conclusions. Seen from the outside, they seemed problem-free, and always in agreement, whereas in actual fact their love relationship was the result of their continually moving apart in exploration and continually coming back to each other.

At a certain point the husband met with a great unexpected triumph. The woman, who loved him dearly, was overjoyed and felt more strongly attracted to him than ever. But although she was just as talented as he was, everyone turned to the husband, he got all the media interest and her intellectual qualities were

ignored. Often it was she who tackled their problems and found solutions, but it was only when her illustrious husband voiced them that people took them seriously. Women envied her because she was “the wife of ...” and ostentatiously ignored her at public gatherings. Her husband’s rivals attacked her so as to offend him. She suffered on account of all this injustice and was at times a prey to moments of crisis that could well have turned to envy and resentment towards her husband. Envy can in fact spring up between two people who think themselves equal until one rises above the other.^{clxiii} As it was, the crisis, which could have become destructive, was overcome by the couple’s determined effort to put up a united front in public. They kept on travelling and giving talks together, facing the external world side by side. In this way their eroticism was also renewed. It was a spontaneous gesture on both their parts but at the same time an intelligent solution to a dangerous problem.

A few years later the woman became keenly interested in politics and got more and more involved. Out of love for her, the husband let himself get drawn in as well. It was a basic rule of co-evolution that each should take a lively interest in what the other was doing, but in this

case the woman's interest in politics became all-consuming. They never stopped discussing political matters, and in the end the husband got tired of it and wanted to turn his attention to other things. The wife spent all her time at party meetings and accepted some public duties. She was invited to stand for parliament. The husband did not hold her back, so she started travelling alone and spending time with other men. He realized he was jealous and told her so. The woman knew that if she agreed to stand as a candidate and take up a political career, their life in common would have to undergo a profound change. They examined the possibility of both devoting themselves to public affairs, going to live in the capital so as to stay united and continue working together. Then the woman realized that her husband was not cut out for it, and that the cost would be too high for him. So they worked out a schedule whereby she would be away four days a week and they would be together for the other three.

Then, at a certain point, the woman realized that politics is not only a question of struggling for ideals, but of nerve-wearing waits, endless petty chatter, and continual compromise. She started to miss her home and books, her time for

peaceful reflection and the in-depth discussions she used to have with her husband. She realized that her real vocation was that of a writer, with the result that the couple once again found a common aim. They kept up their interest in politics but only from an intellectual standpoint, without any direct participation, and this new phase in their lives was marked by the drafting of a great historical novel.

Friendship

Friendship and being in love (enamouration) are two different things.^{clxiv} While we fall in love abruptly, through the mechanism of the nascent state, friendship is built up gradually, meeting after meeting, through the pleasure of being together and the building up of trust. Then being in love is a passion, and we love even if we are not loved in return, whereas friendship can only exist if it is reciprocal. There is nothing fair about love - we can be in love with someone bad, who makes us suffer. Friendship, instead, is based on a moral sentiment. We cannot be friends with someone who treats us badly, deceives us or lets us down. When I see the person I am in love with, my hearts throbs. When I see a friend, I feel

happy and relaxed. Lovers aim at fusion, exerting pressure on each other, while friends treat each other with the utmost respect, showing regard for the other's personal and social world. When I am in love, I cannot bear to be separated from my beloved, and time spent apart seems never-ending. With friends it is possible to spend long periods away from each another, and when we meet, things go on where they left off months before. Love is jealous and exclusive. If the person I love claims to be in love with someone else, I will be beside myself with anguish. But if a friend tells me s/he is in love with someone and they are going on a trip round the world together, I will share their joy.

Yet in order to last, a love relationship needs the moral sentiments associated with friendship - trust, confidence, mutual respect, loyalty, moderation, prudence and sincerity. It needs the delicacy and freedom of friendship, which makes no demands because it does not expect to have any rights over the other, but respects the other's diversity. In love rising from enamouration friendship gains ground when the frenzied drive towards fusion relaxes and the other need inherent in every human being comes to the fore -

respect for one's individuality. The institutionalizing process of love can partly be described as a transition from fusion to friendship. With all its bounds and limits, and its moral relationship based on pacts and commitments.

We may then ask if, with the passing of passionate love and erotic interest, the couple will be able to survive as a stable unit, based only on friendship. We think not - which is the same conclusion reached by Sternberg. According to Sternberg^{clxv} the love of a couple consists of three ingredients: passion, intimacy or friendship, and commitment. If there is no passion then we cannot even begin to talk in terms of a couple.^{clxvi}

Friendship is therefore just one important ingredient in the love of a couple. The development of the moral relations associated with friendship then goes towards strengthening it, but on its own it is not enough, because friendship is based on the pleasure principle and a friend who causes us displeasure ceases to be our friend. When friends treat us badly, tell us lies, or are just nuisances or troublesome, we avoid them. The love associated with being in love possesses a force that overcomes such problems. Friendship does not.

Then there is the theme of erotic seduction. A pair of friends are not expected to please each other from an erotic point of view. Neither tries to seduce the other. If they did, we could not even talk of friendship. Friends show themselves as they are, free from artifice, and perfectly natural and spontaneous. But a couple in which neither takes the trouble to please the other, or tries to arouse any interest, has come to a pretty poor pass. Mutual respect and habit may be all right for an old couple who have ceased to expect anything from life, but how can they suffice two young people still full of desires? Lastly, friendship is not exclusive. Our friends can have as many friends as they like. They can marry, divorce, have lovers, and leave them without being obliged to tell us about it.

Intimacy

A great deal of importance has been attached to intimacy in recent times,^{clxvii} especially by some feminist psychologists, who have observed how women friends, and teenagers in particular, touch, kiss and study one another's bodies, comparing even the most intimate areas with no hint of shame. And they talk quite uninhibitedly

about their experiences in love and sex as well as how they feel about them. They tell one another everything. They have the same unreserved, limitless curiosity for one another that their mother has towards them, almost as if they were still part of her body and extensions of her soul.

Males, instead, find it hard to communicate their feelings and worries about love. They are ashamed of them as if they were a weakness, and are afraid of showing the vulnerable side of themselves. In the collective imagination, a real man does not indulge in sighs and laments or let himself go to unleash uncontrolled emotion. He does not shed tears, or sigh or gossip because these are womanish things. He is strong, tough and silent, and faces any adversity without flinching.

This difference between the sexes is the product of a long cultural tradition, and as it still exists it can create problems for the couple when the woman feels a deep need to give and receive emotion while the man shies away from it. We have seen it in many of our cases. The man finishes work, arrives home tired in the evening and fails to notice the many little touches that show the woman's love for him - flowers in a

vase, a clean cloth on the table, bright cushion on the settee. Sometimes he does not want to speak and in some cases even if he did, he would not know what to say. So she finds emotional nourishment in a soap opera while he watches sport.

Yet when he falls in love, even a man, in spite of himself, is obliged to experience vibrations, feelings and passions, and he feels the need to express them and tell his loved one about them. When he falls in love even the toughest man is affected, sighs, weeps and wishes to be one with his love, tell her all about himself and find out all about her. But this phase of opening and fusion only lasts a short time. When a man is sure he is loved in exchange, his old suspicion of shows of affection surfaces again and he retreats into the suit of armour he has learnt to face life in

The life of the couple depends on their ability to keep, albeit in part, the intimacy brought about by the nascent state of love. The institution must be the guardian and heir of the promise made by the nascent state, and must give something of what it has afforded a glimpse of and promised. But it would be a mistake to think that a couple's stability in love is to be measured

by the degree of fusion and identification between the two lovers. This would mean their becoming almost indistinguishable, almost the same person. Intimacy like this can be found in identical or homozygous twins, who see their own image, thoughts, feelings and gestures in the other, and thus get to know the other in depth, without any barriers or defences being put up. Indeed they each know themselves through being mirrored in the other. The intimacy created by love is different, always involving difference, distance and discovery. It is not a given fact but a conquest or a gift.

Some say that husbands and wives should tell one another everything, never hide anything and never lie. If they feel an aggressive impulse they should express it, yell it out if necessary. If they feel a desire for someone else they should show it, because whatever is out in the open does no harm, whereas whatever is concealed sinks into the unconscious and causes damage. All this is quite wrong. The stream of consciousness is a chaotic jumble of thoughts, reasoning, ideas, emotions, doubts, fears, dreams as well as amorous and aggressive impulses.^{clxviii} It is a river made up of a thousand tributaries, which splits up into a thousand branches, flows into one again

and then re-divides. If we let ourselves be guided by it, contrasting forces would keep on erupting and we would be continually finding ourselves in a state of chaotic change or contradiction .

The life of the couple requires truth and sincerity, but it also requires coherence and projects. It also requires us to silence thoughts and emotions that might disturb or hurt the one we love. Cruel words, angry accusations, vulgarity and insults leave wounds that little by little dig love's grave.

Each of us is actually made up of many different individuals. In the course of our lives we have started out along many roads and have begun to build personalities that we have then cast off. And each time we have changed our existence and started out along a new road, we have used some of the fragments of those *preceding egos* that we have discarded. In any case even if all our *preceding egos* or suppressed selves are subjected to our new identity, they remain a part of us and form the kernel of our being, which we can tap in emergencies or when we want to strike out for ourselves again.

During the historicizing process of falling in love, we tell our love what we have been and how we came to be what we are. In thus going

over the past we find our past selves again and reawaken them. They are like chained, sleeping demons that can give us extraordinary strength, but which we dare not set free and leave to their own devices. In intimate conversation we can call them up, let them speak and act, but always within the magic circle of exorcism. To let these demons out of their Pandora's box would mean shattering our own personality and falling a helpless victim to disorder. And this would destroy love, because the nascent state is itself the transition from disorder to order. *Intimacy* is therefore also a chance to reveal our own impossible dreams, to free our own forbidden personalities, but always compatibly with our new love, the new personal and collective identity - as a creative expedient in the process of *co-evolution*.

These *preceding egos* are also an extraordinary resource for facing new, unforeseen situations, In a famous story by Rabindrānāth Tagore, a great statesman makes up his mind in old age to withdraw to the mountains in meditation. And so he does. For years and years he lives in absolute solitude without even uttering a word, till he almost turns into a plant or rock. The people of the place consider him a saint, but

dare not approach him. But one day the area is struck by a hurricane of the most indescribable violence. Torrents of rain wash away entire villages and the people rush around mad with fear. Then, as if waking from a dream, the old man re-acquires his former stature. He gives orders, organizes the distressed people, has embankments and defences built, and saves the population. Then he goes back silently to the mountain to resume his ascetic immobility.

In the process of co-evolution it is sometimes necessary to appeal to these hidden resources, in order to face new situations that require different schemes of action. And it becomes easier if there is confidentiality between the lovers, so that they can reveal, without fear, even those hidden and dangerous aspects of their personalities and life history.

Complicity

The term “accomplice” has a negative meaning in English, referring to the support, trust and mutual help two people show each other outside the law. An accomplice is someone who helps a thief to steal, to escape justice, no matter

why it is done - for money, friendship or love. From the legal viewpoint, it is all the same. The act is deplorable whatever the circumstances.

In French, on the contrary, the term is also used in a positive sense to mean confidentiality, secret agreement, supportiveness between two people who love each other. In this way an engaged couple or a pair of newly-weds can be said to be accomplices. Complicity is one of the intimate aspects reserved for love. It indicates that two people in love are on the same side, and make a common front against their opponents, i.e. anyone that tries to put obstacles in their way or endanger their union. It is an important meaning, because merely to say that the two get on well together, help and support each other, is not enough. In the relationship between a couple there is something extra - defence against the outside world. A couple in love is a social entity that needs to survive in a hostile world. It must therefore be a fortress and a bastion as well, both to repel attacks and go on the offensive. As in a military headquarters the two “accomplices” have to work out strategies, make plans, carry them out patiently, without saying a word to anyone.

As they know the other’s strong and weak points they lean on the first and make up for the

second. In social life they stress the virtues and conceal the flaws. When one is under attack, the other uses every means available to run to the rescue - with money, subterfuge, and with violence if need be.

There is a pleasure in complicity. Warriors in ancient tribes felt it when they went out raiding in small groups - alone in enemy territory where every bush or shadow could be hiding an ambush. Yet they were not alone, because each had the other, vigilant at his side, ready to back him up. This ancient pleasure survives where two friends, lovers or spouses face an obstacle or a challenge together. We see it appear in all kinds of couples - even, for example, between a husband and wife running a shop together. It may seem to be a union cemented by economic interest alone, but it is really a hunting or war adventure, a contest, a continual performance where a glance or tone of voice is enough to convey a message, as if between two consummate cardsharps. I have seen couples managing businesses, apparently in disagreement, but in actual fact wholly in accord, quite complementary and indispensable to each other. Complicity in marriage is a bond that can be stronger than eroticism, or provide a substitute for that quality when it declines.

Complicity figures in love but not in very strong passions. It usually increases with life in common, with mutual knowledge and with the habit of fighting together. It is nourished by ethical virtues like sincerity, confidence and intimacy. But it needs really cool rational resources to help us tackle and solve problems, judge people and plan strategies. It is disturbed by passion and destroyed by jealousy, because jealousy is suspicious and leads the two lovers to eye each other up as potential enemies. It is also destroyed by anger or fear, because they are feelings that are too heated, too unstable. It needs complementary qualities in a couple - woe betide us if we both succumb to the same emotion and work each other up. If I am afraid, you must keep your self-control and a cool head. If I go too fast, you must be able to apply the brakes. If I lose my head, you must hold on to yours.

clxii	1.17
clxiii	2.17
clxiv	3.17
clxv	4.17
clxvi	5.17
clxvii	6.17
clxviii	7.17

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

The late crisis

Why does it happen?

Many researches demonstrate that living together, repeating gestures and sharing knowledge strengthen trust and stabilize affection, but diminish sexual interest and the excitement of novelty.^{clxix} Thus, little by little, a passionless love is set up, free from problems but without any sense of adventure. What Fromm writes in *The Art of Loving* refers to this second type of conjugal love, based on the serene sureness of being able to count on the other, but without an urgent need for that person's physical presence at every moment, without feeling a frisson of pleasure at the mere sight of them walking, sleeping, breathing - no more erotic

thrills or heart in the mouth, no more moments of blissful ecstasy.

Our team researches have shown that for both males and females passion is at its highest in the first three years of marriage. It then starts to calm down, and ten years later it has diminished more in women, who however are more upset by this.^{clxx} Men adapt more easily to the monotony of married life, and are more at ease with it. A woman accepts it less, because it is she who deals with the home management and household chores, while the man reaps the benefits. And she gives more importance to feeling, dialogue and intimacy. In an interview the divorce lawyer Laura Remiddi said: "I have never known a husband ask for a separation or divorce because his wife wouldn't talk to him, whereas many women do".^{clxxi} The unhappiness caused by a stale relationship often makes women go and live alone rather than share their existence with husbands who seem like lodgers. They remember with nostalgia the glow of their early love when their men were passionate and attentive, knights in shining armour that made their hearts leap. Then one day - they cannot quite remember when - they started to look back nostalgically on those times, and with the passing of nostalgia a sense of

alienation set in, and then a dull anger - an anger that men fail to understand, which makes them even madder, and in the end they decide to live on their own. Besides, often after a few short years of marriage their husbands had begun to look at their wives with eyes lacking in desire, and seemed to be attracted only by other women.

But what lies behind these phenomena - a gradual wind-down of erotic interest and acceptance of the humdrum routine of everyday life, or an acceleration of countless badly managed, unresolved crises? Both these things together.

1) *Day by day living*. At the beginning lovers think that "love in a hut" is all they want. Then they discover the hardship of getting up early every morning, work stress, howling babies. They had dreamed of an easy, radiant future, and now the obstacles they meet tend to weaken their verve and deprive the world of its poetry. Optimists, full of life and love, face the world with enthusiasm, fight and overcome frustration, rejoicing even in small successes. Others are more fragile and feel they have failed.

We will repeat what we have already said. The crucial factor is the strength of the process of

falling in love, the store of energy, enthusiasm, determination and confidence in ourselves and our love, and therefore our pleasure in striving to win through, succeed and make our loved one happy at all costs. In addition, there is the process of *transfiguration* which makes us find value and beauty in everything. Yet it is true that for all of us, no matter how deeply in love we are, life in common is made up of numerous little duties and chores. We each need the other to do certain jobs and grumble if we cannot get our own way.

If this process is not held in check, eroticism suffers. A mixture of fancy, fun and flirtation, eroticism always makes a welcome break from ordinary everyday life.^{clxxii} This is often how betrayal begins, as a revolt against the monotonous duties and slavery of routine. Because of the need to go back to feeling alive, fresh and new, without anyone telling you to do this, do that - without obligations. With a stranger you can forget who you are, what frustrations and duties you have got. An erotic encounter is like a holiday, interrupting the routine of normal life with its burden of work, hassle and stress. Lovers do not nag you, criticize you or grumble at you. They are kind and always make you feel good, interesting, desirable. You feel you are young

again breathing fresh air and free to go in search of pleasure.

2) *The crisis*. But this process alone does not explain everything. A couple is a living society with a life and a history. It changes, and undergoes tensions and crises. And these crises can be divided into three categories. The first is due to a *return of the past*, the second to a *divergent evolution*, where each half of the couple reacts differently to life's circumstances, while the third results from the development of *envious competition* and mutual hate, with vendettas and reprisals.

The return of the past

We have already met cases of women wanting children or wanting to devote themselves to creative activities, while their husbands stood in the way of their future drive. Other times it can be the call of the past that is blocked. This is the case of *The Woman from the South*, who married a northern businessman. He was her ideal, so she was willing to let him mould her, and become as he wanted her. But the man was extremely

attached to his family and habits, and he was fanatically against southerners. He refused to visit her parents and ordered her to break off relations with her birthplace, relatives and traditions. He criticized her accent and she went to drama school so as to change it. In other words, he forced a kind of naturalization on her. She adapted to these demands even though she considered them excessive and at times humiliating. But after a few years she felt a strong need to go back to her roots and spend some time with her parents, hear the sound of her native dialect again. And since her husband was always taking her elsewhere, she felt as if she were in exile. When her mother fell ill, she asked if she could go and see her. He put up some objections because he was used to leaving the running of the house in her hands. But she insisted. They had an argument and she packed her bags and left. Once at the airport she felt as if she had finally won back her freedom. Her husband kept phoning, asking her to go back home to him. He could not understand her problem, and he did not care at all about her mother. So, for the first, time, the woman felt a rush of rejection and hatred. She rebelled, telling him outright that she was fed up of his

threatening ways. She wanted to stay with her family and would return only when she felt like it. The man felt abandoned and betrayed, suspecting a family plot. Thus began a crisis that was to have dire consequences.

It was the return of the past - a past that seemed unimportant, and which was, instead, part and parcel of the person. In the love process we give up many aspects of ourselves, and are transformed. But we go on nursing in our hearts desires and needs that can surface again even after a long interval. This happened with *The Engineer*, a man who came from a humble background but who had had a successful career and married a rich woman. After a few years of marriage, they decided to build themselves a big villa, and the wife suggested building it on a large estate belonging to her father. This is what they did. *The Engineer* put all his savings into the venture and the woman, whose good taste he recognized, did all the choosing of plan, architect and decor. When the house was finished, the engineer asked his father-in-law if he would sell them the land around it, as he wanted to fulfil his lifelong dream of owning a house and large estate. But his father-in-law refused, telling him it would be wrong to break up the property, which

should go to all his children. The wife backed her father up, and *The Engineer* was upset but refused to give in. He then discovered that all his wife's family were offended by his request, and his wife criticized him for daring to make it. As a result he felt as if he was living with a stranger bound only to her family and traditions. It was a case of the return of two pasts - the engineer's and his wife's - his youthful dreams and her family pride.

Divergent evolution

We react in different ways to the challenges life puts before us and the various occasions it presents us with. Two people who start off remarkably united, day after day can draw apart and take different paths. It can happen when the division of the roles between the sexes is very marked - the man out at the office all day, the woman at home looking after the house and the children. He develops interests, tastes and friendships separate from his wife's and so the common ground of dialogue between them dwindles, till one or the other of them takes a

lover and they are left with even less to say to each other.

Nowadays it is more frequent for couples to grow apart because the woman wants to fulfil a vocation of her own and make the most of some ability she has. It is the case of *The Writer* that we have already spoken about. The meeting between her and the man who was to become her husband occurred in a fairytale way - a glance exchanged, a smile, shining eyes that had already said, "Yes, I like you," before the words said it. When they married she was eighteen and he was twenty-seven. He owned an electronics firm and was rich, good, kind and deeply in love. He showered her with presents and put everything he bought in her name - houses in the country, up in the mountains and down at the sea. He introduced her to all his clients and could never bear to have her out of his sight. He took her everywhere with him, but after a few months his young wife enrolled at university. He was unenthusiastic about the idea and even tried to get her to change her mind, partly due to the fact that he had just found out she was expecting a baby. But the woman was adamant - she attended university, looked after the baby lovingly when it was born, and also managed to get a degree. She then felt

the desire to write and, even when she had a second child she worked at it enthusiastically, making new friends and inviting them home. The gatherings turned into intellectual evenings, which the husband enjoyed less and less, as he felt out of place and ill at ease. What bothered him most was the fact that his wife was always the centre of attention. Little by little he retreated into himself and sulked. The situation worsened when the woman's novel was successful. Critics and journalists came onto the scene, and he got jealous, watching her closely and grumbling if she opened her blouse a little too wide. "You showed off your bosom all evening," he would say. But at the same time he was excited, and when everyone had left he would want to make love, several times over in a rush, without any tenderness. It was an act of possession, as if he was marking out his territory, his property. Then he turned obsessively jealous, interrogating her about whom she had been with and what she had been doing. Yet when she asked him to go to some literary talk or other with her, he would explode into fits of rage. He even went so far as to make her stop writing and consorting with those "stupid intellectuals". The woman started to suffer from claustrophobia and became so

overwrought that she even contemplated suicide. After a few years she left him, taking the children with her, and applied for a divorce.

When the lovers are very young, and still do not know their own potential, they can each quickly develop different talents, different abilities. And if they are not deeply enough in love, and are too inflexible, they will not accept change - as in the case of *Renato and Gianna* described by Donata Francescato. Renato says: "We got married because we were very much in love and physically attracted to each other. As far as I was concerned, marriage was sacred and inviolable, and I hoped to spend the rest of my life with her. But ... she changed and turned out to be different from the woman I had fallen in love with. To put it briefly, she wanted an exciting life as a manager, while I wanted someone who was above all a wife and a mother. This was the worst point of conflict... We had developed two different visions of our lives and futures." The wife substantially confirmed what he said: "I couldn't go on being how he wanted me - I love my family, my son, but I don't particularly like staying at home - for me what is important is not so much how much time I spend with someone as the quality of that time. I really

enjoyed travelling, meeting people, bringing up my son even outside the home. My husband is the exact opposite, and in the end he told me he didn't even like my going out to work"^{clxxiii}.

Divergent evolution may result from setback and failures, that sap the life force out of one of the couple. But it can also come from wealth and success. Many a couple enter into a crisis when one of them achieves unexpected success. As a young man Christian Barnard married a nurse who helped him in his difficult career as a surgeon. But with the first heart transplant he achieved worldwide fame and became a star surrounded by rich and beautiful young women. He then fell in love with one of them and married her.

Envy and competition

Some people think that a certain degree of competition is good for a couple. Our empirical investigations show just the opposite.^{clxxiv} We must not confuse a desire to succeed in life so as to show our partners we are worthy of their love, with a desire to seem better than they are and assert our superiority.

All human beings want to be worth something. And they not only want to feel loved but also have their merits recognized. They want to be appreciated for their virtues and abilities. Even in the closest knit, most united and loving couple each partner wants to be admired by the other - feel that in the other's eyes they are worth something and know that what they do is appreciated. If a woman looks after the house and children while her husband is a great surgeon, love is only possible between them if he manages to make her feel that her role is just as noble, important and meaningful as his own. This is possible because falling in love (enamouration) creates its own inner values and disregards social ones.

But when the process of falling in love starts to fade, society and its values come back into the life of the couple. The woman who has always had to take a back seat, and watch her husband continually being admired and adored, will feel a sense of emptiness. While once she was happy for him, now she feels bitter. It is indeed the drama of star love. Star-worship, the happiness caused by finding oneself beside such a famous person, basking in reflected glory, quite naturally gives way to a desire to have one's own limelight

and be appreciated for oneself. But woe betide the couple if competitiveness breaks out, because it is society that judges. A spirit of competition will undoubtedly lead to defeat, and with defeat will come envy.

Envy is the feeling we get when someone we consider no better than we are overtakes us and obtains the admiration of others. We then have the impression that the world is treating us most unjustly. We try to convince ourselves that this person does not deserve such success, and we do all we can to bring him down to our level, to belittle him. We speak badly about him and criticize him. But if society goes on raising him up we eat our hearts out with rage while being assailed by doubt at the same time. Because we are not sure we are right, and for this reason we are ashamed of our envy, but above all for being stigmatized as envious.

The threat of competition and envy is particularly strong in couples where both are involved in the same activity and consider themselves of equal worth. Because society - rightly or wrongly - only has to offer one of them greater recognition for the other one to be assailed by doubt and chagrin. Aurore Sand (later to take on the name of George Sand) and Jules

Sandeau were deeply in love and had written a novel together, *Rose et Blanche*, signing it jointly as Jules (for *Jules Sandeau*) and Sand (for *Aurore Sand*). Then, however, Aurore began to be independent. She withdrew to her country house at Nohant and dashed off a new novel all on her own: *Indiana*. She did not sign it with her name, Aurore, but limited herself to abbreviating the former pseudonym: Jules Sand became G. Sand. The book was a triumphant success and Sandeau was taken aback and embarrassed, perhaps beginning to be a little envious. The catastrophe came when Aurore wrote another novel on her own: *Valentina*, and signed it George Sand. She now became the famous George Sand, worshipped by everyone, while he was almost forgotten. Their love died.

It takes a really great love to overcome envy. One of the couple must be able to rejoice in the other's success. This happens more easily if we play an active role in building it up, for example acting as manager. In this way we are able to experience it as our own, but this contribution must also be publicly recognized and rewarded with fidelity.

Spite and provocation

When love declines, the frustrations that the two partners feel about each other are no longer minimized and forgotten. They produce anger and resentment, and thus, day after day, grudges accumulate and break out in acts of spite and provocation.

Spite is an aggressive act in which the doer masks the act so that the other one is unable to complain. The spiteful person will seem astonished and will retort: "How dare you accuse me of such meanness?" If someone insults us openly we can return the threat, but faced with spite, we must either give up or play the same game and pay them back in kind. As the psychologist Eric Berne^{clxxv} has shown, once the game has begun it becomes a vicious circle, a mental barrier that we will never be able to break through. Seeing the latest mean trick that has been played on us, we will be gripped by blind rage and will only think of getting our own back with adequate retaliation.

Bitter games of spite can come into play where couples are concerned. They each keep a perverse kind of account-book listing all the wrongs that need to be repaid. There are women

who play mean tricks on their husbands by denying them what they most desire. If the man likes to dine at a certain hour, the woman will insist on arriving late. But she will find hundreds of excuses for it and always seem innocent. There are husbands who, when their wives have been to the hairdresser or bought a new dress and are finally ready to show themselves off in public, will make a point of telling them that they have put on weight, have cellulitis, that the dress does not suit them, or the hairstyle makes them look older.

Provocation is similar to spite, but it is more serious, more systematic and its aim is to spark off anger in our partners, drive them to breaking point and poison their existence. We will recall two cases discussed by Mara Palazzoli Selvini.^{clxxvi} A pretty young woman married a workaholic businessman. He had bought a beautiful villa where she had precious little to do. But she was always late with everything, dinner was late, when they were going out with friends she was late, and in the morning she could never wake up. When they had to travel the packing was never done in time. Her husband was irritated and lost his temper. With the passing of time he started insulting her and calling her an

idiot in public. What did the woman get out of provoking her husband so much? She proved to herself, her husband and her friends that he was not the well-balanced, wise and impartial person he pretended to be, much less the perfect organizer. Provocation in general attacks a quality the individual gives a great deal of importance to. The second case is that of a man who had married a beautiful, refined artist who charmed everyone who heard her speak, but whenever she spoke in front of him he would start yawning. The woman would lose complete control of the situation and feel like an idiot.

When we see a couple arguing, wife in tears and husband losing his temper, it is nearly always because they are each trying to drive the other into a corner. Provokers often begin the battle from early morning. She cannot wake up unless she has her coffee in bed. He wants to have his coffee at the bar because, as he yells at her, he has a right to drink a decent cup of coffee. She replies that it is only an excuse to get out of the house as quickly as possible. And so the game goes on.

The provocation game is aggressive and aims at making the partner mad - and in really serious cases can even go so far as to cause death.

I remember a shocking episode of a middle-aged couple with children. He was stout, coarse and sullen, while she was slight, serene and with a delicate Venetian accent. I could only hear his voice when he came home in the evening, not hers, because she hardly spoke above a whisper. He would start by complaining about something concerning the children. Either they had not done their homework or they had not washed themselves properly, or had got bad marks at school. She would defend them and then go on muttering away in her monotonous voice. He would raise his tone and she would doggedly answer him back while getting on with the housework. Little by little the volume would increase in the man's voice until he would lose his temper completely and end up yelling his head off. He never did anything physically violent, but just yelled and yelled.

One evening, at the height of the umpteenth crisis, he had a heart attack and died within a few hours. I found out from the doctors that he had already suffered heart attacks before and that they had all been warned - wife, children and the man himself - that a violent fit of rage could kill him. After his death, his wife took on a new lease of life.

Changes in vital cycles

At one time it was the man who would reach forty, fall in love with a younger girl and start a new life with her. Nowadays it is becoming more and more usual for a woman to leave her husband, take a lover or fall in love with someone else. This is because it used to be the man who went out, had social activities, practised sport and politics, widened his horizons. So, reaching a certain point, he felt ready to start a new vital cycle, to begin again. The woman, absorbed in the monotony of domestic life, worn out with child-bearing and drudgery, aged prematurely.

Now a woman studies, works outside the home and has a career. At forty she is like a young girl, younger and more vivacious than her husband. She has half her life still before her, because she can expect to live till she is over eighty. Her children are finishing school. She can talk to them and travel with them. Now her reproductive duty is over, she is ready to start another vital phase.

When a phase in our lives has finished, the duties of the past become unbearable to us - even the lightest ones. A woman still bearing the responsibility of running the home, children and

husband gets tired of the routine. She finds tidying the house, cooking and all those thankless humdrum activities irksome. And at a certain point she feels that she has devoted all her life to her husband and children and nothing to herself. She feels let down by life, betrayed and exploited. She used to be optimistic, full of hopes and dreams, looking for a great love and excitement. What has she had? She feels like rebelling and howling out aloud.

Then, little by little, out of that resentment emerge desire and hope. She wants to make up for lost time, live the life she has not had, and fulfil possibilities she has neglected. She wants to be a beautiful young girl again and manage her time as she likes - go out with friends, travel, be courted again and desired. She feels a tremendous vital energy inside her and a desire for action and eroticism. What about her husband? She may quite easily still love him, but it is an habitual love, devoid of verve, passion or excitement. He is complacent and self-satisfied, and at times seems to her like a lodger who comes home and finds everything done for him.

If at this phase in life the husband does not change, fall in love with his wife again, court her and if they do not invent a new life together, the

woman's tension can reach breaking point. She is ready for a change, a metamorphosis, a death-rebirth. She is ready for a nascent state. Some women in this phase of life go back to university, others devote themselves to their own body, often begin a new professional or business activity, others again write novels or poems. Some find a lover and finally there are some who fall in love.

We fall in love when we are deeply dissatisfied with the present and at the same time animated by great vital energy - when we are ready to let go of an experience that is completed and worn out and have the energy to carry out a new exploration, put to good use capacities we had not yet tried out, and fulfil dreams and projects that have been maturing in our hearts. Then all that is needed is for someone to symbolize another, freer, younger life and we throw ourselves into the novelty and adventure. The vital cycles of men and women change, and with them our loves.

Falling out of love through a nascent state

Love usually ends through a slow wearing down caused by the gradual accumulation of

disappointments, jealousy and resentment. What is left in the end is a sense of indifference and bitter emptiness. However, there are also cases in which love finishes abruptly through a phenomenon of nascent state which is not falling in love. The subject experiences a joyful feeling of freedom, rebirth, discovery of the real self. But no one else can take the place of the person previously loved.

An example of nascent state marking the end of a love that had become oppressive is Goethe's journey to Italy. For many years Goethe had been the minister of Duke Charles Augustus at Weimar and had been in love with Charlotte von Stein. But little by little he found his administrative work and Charlotte's possessive love stifling. He was ready to embark on new ventures, so without telling anyone he left for Italy, heading towards something he had always glimpsed from afar, a spiritual world for which he felt a deep attraction. As soon as he crossed the Alps, at Trent, he wrote: "Belief in God returns. It is as if I had been born and raised in this country and was now coming home again... I am like a child that must learn to live again".^{clxxvii} It was an explosion of joy, liberation, a nascent state. He made straight for Rome with "the impatience of a man

approaching the fulfilment of a dream of love, sure of victory; and who in the hours leading up to the dream, derives pleasure from anticipating and intensifying through doubt the joy that is awaiting him”.^{clxxviii} He himself interpreted his experience as a spiritual transformation, a rebirth similar to a conversion, similar to what every sinner knows when he is reborn in Christ: “I count as a second birthday, a real rebirth the moment I set foot in Rome”.^{clxxix}

We can distinguish two distinct periods in Gabriele D’Annunzio’s life. The first goes up to 1915, when his interests always revolved around love. Having ended one love affair he would move on to another, and each experience found expression in poems, novels and romantic dramas. But with the outbreak of the First World War, D’Annunzio stopped falling in and writing about love. No more novels, dramas or poems issued from his pen, but only speeches, proclamations, reminiscences and memoirs, poetry inspired no longer by women but by his Homeland.^{clxxx} Instead of a romantic nascent state a political conversion had been brought about.

There are those who feel freed, who discover themselves and their destiny by throwing themselves into a religious movement or

undergoing a religious conversion. Others may find a solution in a political movement, and fanatical, ardent militancy. The advent of a new political or religious movement almost always leads to divergent evolution in the couple. And the effects can be devastating when the project set out by the movement is in marked contrast with the couple's love life. In this case individual evolution no longer counts, nor does the growth of individual dissatisfaction in the couple. The movement sweeps in like a whirlwind and snatches the individuals from their comfortable old relationship. For large numbers of women, the advent of feminism brought divergent evolution from their menfolk, as we have seen in the dramatic cases of Bruno and Bruna, Carlo and Carla.

We have already remarked that today it tends to be women who question married life. After a certain number of years of marriage, around the forty mark and with grown-up children, a woman starts to think how she has devoted all her life and energy to work, husband and children, and nothing to herself. The first wrinkles are starting to appear, she feels her youth slipping away from her, and she suddenly has an urgent, frantic desire to make up for lost

time. She wishes she were a girl again, could live on her own and manage her time as she thinks fit - get up late, eat when she wants to, stay up all night if she feels like it, go out with whoever takes her fancy and find herself again, the woman she used to be, who has forgotten what she wanted out of life. In this life-project there is often no room for her husband, or even another marriage - maybe for a manfriend to go dancing or to the cinema with, to be reborn to a life rich in emotion and eroticism, though not to see every day, not a fixed lover. Someone to have a light-hearted relationship with, free from obligations, duties and routine, just as it was when she was a teenager. This liberation sometimes comes about through a real explosion, a nascent state.

The longing for liberation and desire to break the chains of family duties is represented in the novel *Paolo e Francesca* by Rosa Giannetta Alberoni. Francesca, who has left the husband she married for ambition and convenience exclaims: "I felt free, my body felt alive, no longer sacrificed. I was bursting with energy, young, light-hearted - I felt like another person. I felt like a woman. From then on it was impossible for me to bear Paolo's hands on my body. And one day, as if by miracle, I found the

courage to yell out how sickening he was for me ... After all, it is easy to say “You-make-me-sick”. And I have no remorse, I want to go on and on repeating it - You make me sick, you make me sick. Every time I think about it, every time I can yell it out at him it is like an explosion, a liberation, an unknown joy. My body exults, vibrates, enjoys inexpressible euphoria. It is like being purified”^{clxxxix}.

The film *Thelma and Louise* also symbolizes this female rebellion against the traditional role. The two women leave home just for fun, but are attacked by a rapist. They kill him, and after this they throw off all inhibitions. They rob a supermarket, get rid of a cop, blow up the truck of a man who has insulted them. They turn into guerrilla fighters, taking revenge on behalf of their sex, and they face death with smiles on their faces, like two ancient warriors.

Almost two centuries before, on leaving her husband and discovering her artistic vocation, George Sand wrote: “To be alive! How lovely, how wonderful! In spite of husbands, worries, debts, relatives, gossip; in spite of violent fits of despair and tiresome pricks from the pin. To be alive is inebriating; to love and be loved is sheer

bliss, paradise! Glorious heaven! To live the life
on an artist, whose flag is freedom”^{clxxxii}.

clxix	1.18
clxx	2.18
clxxi	3.18
clxxii	4.18
clxxiii	5.18
clxxiv	6.18
clxxv	7.18
clxxvi	8.18
clxxvii	9.18
clxxviii	10.18
clxxix	11.18
clxxx	12.18
clxxxi	13.18
clxxxii	14.18

CHAPTER NINETEEN

What is love?

What is love? It is a question begging an answer within the confines of our theory. And to supply that answer let us take as our starting point the key experiences of reciprocal falling in love. At a certain point in their lives two people embark on a change, showing themselves ready to detach themselves from their previous love objects and ties, in order to set up a new community. They then enter into the nascent state - a fluid, creative state they recognize in each other, and they aim at fusion. In this way they make up an “*us*”, a highly supportive collectivity functioning at the highest level of eroticism. It is within this “*us*” that the single individuals fulfil their erotic and non-erotic dreams, aspirations, and unexpressed possibilities. The high level of solidarity and immense erotic pleasure they share

enable them both to accept enormous pressure and to exert it in turn - a pressure that leads to the forming of a common project for a shared vision of the world. The new nascent couple are animated by inexhaustible energy and overflowing enthusiasm. The world looks wonderful to them and the possibilities of action unlimited. They work out a new conception of life, restructure all their inner and outer relationships and build a new ecological niche for themselves.

The creative, fluid energy of the nascent state is thus transformed into a structure, a norm. Principles, rules, conventions, habits are constructed with verve and enthusiasm, because they occur in the moment of maximum drive towards fusion. Sworn pacts safeguard the hope and promise of the nascent state, where the absolute always shines through. With the transition from institution to nascent state the existing structure - family, home, children, friends, consolidated ideas - had been converted into energy. Now the reverse happens. The energy created will be expressed in a new structure: a new home, new friends, new conception of the world.

Now let us ask ourselves: what is love as an emotion, feeling, subjective experience, state of mind, in this perspective? Love is the inner emotional consequence of the birth of a new collectivity and new “me”. And my beloved is the pivot, the hub around which the reconstruction revolves. It is the experience of fusion with my love, forming a new entity which remoulds and recreates me, and recreates the world I live in. It is the experience of discovering myself part of a new world, a new heaven and a new earth. And the one I love is the gateway leading to all this.

Love as an emotion, transport, languor, love as pain, desire and dream, is therefore creative energy being manifested - creative energy which, filtered through me, uses my body as a substance to build a new world and a new me. We therefore love what is being created and what we ourselves are creating, of which we are both offspring and parents at the same time.

This happens in falling in love. But can we also apply the same definition to the other forms of love we know? Let us begin this test starting from *a mother's love* for her child. What have we said? We love what we are creating and what is re-creating us. First when expecting her baby,

and then nursing and bringing it up, a mother experiences the creation of a being through which she herself is re-created. She creates a new community with a new world in which both components will be changed. It is the co-creation of a world. The child is not passive. It responds to her stimuli and causes her to keep on re-defining it, herself and their world. This process will go on for the rest of their lives. And this accounts for the fact that a mother's love for her child and a child's for its mother is of a lasting nature. It lasts because it is being continually renewed.

Why, we may now wonder, does this type of love not run the risk of disappearing as it does where the couple is concerned? Why does it resist the most bitter frustrations and disappointments? Because the couple involves two already formed individuals that are involved, both with their own individual and collective love ties, and their own conceptions of the world. In falling in love they de-structure their previous self and previous world. But only in part. The process of co-creating the couple comes about through clashes, tests and compromise. They each renounce certain things but hold on to other values. With the passing of time the two personalities may develop in different directions. The universe

shared between parents and children is far vaster, and the process of mutual adjustment happens when the child is at a malleable stage. And it continues, day after day, under the guidance of the parent, who manages the changes and prevents any unresolvable divergences from arising. These can only appear in adolescence and adult life.

Let us now see the love relationship that is set up with *friendship*, which is based on the pleasure principle. It is not there on the spur of the moment, in the process of nascent state, and there is no burning, risky, passionate fusion at the beginning. Friendship takes shape slowly: meeting after meeting, with each one functioning as a bridge between the previous one and the next. It is the historical precipitate of successful, gratifying, reassuring and enjoyable relations. The two friends also aim at achieving partial fusion and working out a common vision of the world. They too make up an “us”, but without the violent, radical destruction of the preceding world. If divergences exist between them right from the start in political or religious beliefs, differences in tastes, habits and opinions, there is no fusion process in which all are blended together as if in a melting-pot. They remain and

pose an underlying threat to the relationship. Friends stick together because they gradually discover they have elective affinities, and because they willingly try to adjust to each other, looking for what unites, not what divides them. But if ideological differences appear, conflicts of interest, or if one of the two behaves in a way that is ethically incorrect, the friendship will break up, and the split is usually irreparable. A friend can forgive being lied to or let down, but things will never be the same as they were before. Friendship is the ethical form of Eros. The love that is felt in it also depends on a common construction of the world and one's own identity. It is intensified in moments of change and crisis, when we confide in our friends and ask them for support and advice. It is intensified through exchanging experiences, tackling problems together, fighting side by side against an opponent or a threat, like two hunters or warriors.

Let us now look at admiration, *star-worship*, at the basis of which we have put the mechanism of indication. When this interest is very strong, the character concerned becomes an important component in the definition processes of oneself and the world. Let us think what sports champions, stage and screen stars, and pop

singers represent for teenagers. They become models of identification, and young women can get emotionally involved in their favourite star's love life, sometimes imagining themselves engaged or married to him.

Even deeper is the process that occurs in the relationship with the charismatic leader of a political or religious movement. A charismatic leader is someone who interprets the historical situation, gives a meaning to the world and establishes a goal and direction. Love for a charismatic leader resembles the love we feel for the person we are in love with. And if the leader remains for a long time, love for him finds a place beside love for a mother or father, and represents a point of reference for all life's problems.

This definition of love is also valid for the mechanism of *loss*. With loss our consolidated familiar world, our stable objects of reference, our aims are overturned and threatened with destruction. We suddenly find ourselves facing a void. Then we are obliged to re-examine the value of everything we have, rethink ourselves, our lives and our future, re-define what is of value and what is not. The struggle to save our individual or collective love object from loss is

therefore a re-construction of our world. It is not the appearance of a new world, not a march towards the Promised Land, but it is all the same a march towards the lost land whose value and beauty we have rediscovered - of the country that we must re-conquer with the knowledge that it is the utmost good, and that it is even worth dying for.

We have thus seen that all forms of love, whether they rise from the nascent state or from other mechanisms such as pleasure principle, indication or loss, always involve the creation and re-creation of a collectivity to which we belong and which moulds us. *We can therefore conclude by saying that love is the subjective and emotional aspect of the process in which we generate, while being in turn generated by, something that transcends us.*

From all we have said a vitally important consequence derives. That is, if love lasts, if it resists the test of time, it means that so do the processes and mechanisms that acted at the initial moment of revelation, discovering and falling in love. Love, if it exists and because it exists, is always “nascent”. It is always discovery, revelation, admiration, adoration, desire for union with something that transcends us and gives order

and meaning to the world. Our beloved is always, in the moment of our love, what is being revealed to us as the hub of the world. In him, in her, the essence of the world, the ordainer of the world, shines through. Love is therefore always a thrill of the absolute in the contingent, something mysterious, marvellous and divine. And when it is returned, it is a gift, a blessing that calls for gratitude and praise.

CHAPTER TWENTY

The Couple in love

The couple in love

Some couple are still lovers, each very much in love with the other, even after years of being together. We are not concerned here to know whether this can last a lifetime or just a long period, nor are we concerned whether there are many or few of these cases, or if they are likely to increase or decrease in the future. What matters is that they do exist. In these couples the extraordinary properties of the nascent state are capable of regeneration. The movement turns into an institution, but the latter preserves all the freshness and energy of the former. Falling in love becomes love itself, and the love involved preserves all the thrilling emotion and eroticism of its beginnings. Husband looks at wife and wife at husband with the same wonder-filled eyes and

gratitude with which all lovers gaze on their loved ones. Waking up in the morning, they are amazed to see the beauty that is there beside them. Now and then they feel a thrill of emotion and a sense of longing. And they are conscious of the extraordinary nature of the privilege and gift they have been granted. Then they can legitimately say, “I am in love my wife”, “I am in love my with my husband”.

How is this possible? To give an answer we must remember what we have discovered in answering the question “What is love?”. Love is not a way of being but a way of becoming. It is the inner echo of a process in which lovers each generate what is in turn generated in them. It is opening their wonder-filled eyes on the beauty of being. A couple remain in love if they both change and, grow, let themselves be transformed and re-discovered, see each other again with the shining eyes of the nascent state.

A couple may remain together out of habit and affection, mutual help and the fact of having built things up together. But they only remain in love if they succeed in satisfying within them the creative impulse of change. All research shows that repeated exposure to a single stimulus at a certain point produces negative reactions. It also

shows that repeated exposure to the same erotic stimuli produces boredom and indifference. Only the introduction of new stimuli creates excitement and pleasure.^{clxxxiii} A couple will go on being in love if they respond to this need for novelty - if stimuli keep on pulsating. Like a series of jets of fresh water. For this reason a loving couple are not inert or incapable of affecting change within and around them, but are continually being renewed and continually renewing their world. Far from staying the same, in order to survive as a couple they must go on changing, just as an organism only survives if its cells are continually renewed, and thought is only sharpened if it goes on embracing new subjects. Thinking means creating problems and solving them, and living means renewal, search, ascent. The couple remain in love if the energy of change and energy of exploration go on operating, revitalizing them.

This means that the couple remain in love if they preserve in their make-up an element of surprise, risk, uncertainty, discovery and revelation. The love life of a couple takes place between *two opposing, but equally indispensable poles*. The first is security, fidelity, mutual reassurance, the development of a common

pattern of behaviour with which to tackle problems and dangers. The second pole is mystery, magic, adventure. It is necessary for the relationship between the two lovers to preserve a margin of uncertainty, insecurity and risk. Absolute predictability of behaviour is typical of the inanimate world, of the robot and the machine. Life is by definition unpredictable. The spirit is free. Therefore even where a loving couple are concerned neither can be absolutely sure of the other's response and love. The other person is independent, free, always new. The alliance is not a *raison d'être* in itself, as if it were an inanimate object, a rock. It exists because it is being continually renewed. And to be renewed it must be questioned, challenged by dangers and threatened by seduction. Each partner in the couple in love must search the face of the loved one to see if s/he is happy or not, and receive a response, a smile. There must always be a hint of uncertainty, fear, jealousy and anxiety lying in wait behind the scenes. Each one must approach the other with care, respect, even awe, because none of us can be absolutely sure our love is returned. But this search, this doubting, this scrutiny of the loved one's face in expectation of

a positive answer, will always end well. The story will have a happy ending.

But it remains a story. And we cannot take it for granted that it will end happily ever after, because a happy ending must be sought and deserved. All the same, it still appears as a gift, a blessing. The loved one's "yes" always seems like a miracle. A recurrent miracle. In the *Jozer* 'or of the *Shemah* we thank God because he makes night and day follow each other eternally, because he daily renews the work of the creation.^{clxxxiv}

In love we experience loss and recovery, exile and arrival at The Promised Land again and again. I desired you and met you. I went away and came back. I lost you and found you again. Love is a continual search, a continual losing of oneself, and a continual finding oneself again. Being is only discovering, something that comes towards you and reveals itself to you. Because in the world everything is fragile and precarious, everything vanishes. But in love it comes back and is found again. It comes towards us more than we deserve. In fact, more than we could ever dream of. Our lives may have been unfulfilled in other fields, but not where love is concerned.

Here it has known perfection. It has become worthy, because it has been blessed.

The ever-new

The love state lasts as long as the mechanisms we have seen at work in falling in love go on functioning: pleasure, loss, indication, the nascent state. But they no longer function in an explosive way, as in a supernova or thermonuclear explosion, but controlled, as happens with the sun or a nuclear power station. The processes are the same, as is the nature of the energy. But instead of a single violent explosion, we have a succession of fireworks. Deep down, love is discontinuous. In all the storms, errors and anxieties of life, the loved one keep returning as the axis of the world. In the loving couple, therefore, we find the same experience as we find in falling in love, but like waves, tremors, fresh, renewing jets of water.

Let us begin with the *uniqueness* of our loved one. The miracle of love lies in granting every human being, no matter how poor or ugly, the divine experience of possessing what is more important than anything else, what is most

valuable in the world. This experience, which is fiercely intense at the moment of falling in love, disappears in many couples. After some time they each start making comparisons and feel that someone exists who is preferable to their own wives or husbands. In the loving couple, on the contrary, there is always a moment, perhaps during a party or a trip, in which the husband looks at his wife and is “ravished” by her. He realizes that he prefers her to all others, could not have found anyone better and that in bestowing her or him life has given him infinitely more than he could ever have dreamed of, or ever have imagined. And he is grateful, satisfied and happy.

When we fall in love, our loved ones start off a new life for us and are its crowning glory. It is like a sunny day, beginning and ending with them. They are alpha and omega, dawn and sunset. This is the experience of *beginning and completion* that accompanies and marks out the lives of a couple in love - not continuously, but discontinuously, through igniting and starting again. Every so often, in reviewing our lives, we see them in their entirety and realize that love has made them wonderful. We understand that we have had what is essential and are satisfied with it. Of course, we could go on living for much

longer and we have an infinite number of things to do, but whatever happens we know that we have already received a great deal, and it may suffice. In any case we are ready to face our destiny. Beside our beloved we are able to look fearlessly into the jaws of death. A complete life is perfect and includes death itself.

All lovers *court each other* at first. They each want to make themselves attractive, interesting and fascinating in order to please the other. A man becomes gentle, solicitous and finds poetic expressions rising spontaneously to his lips. A woman becomes softer, sweeter and more attractive. They want to please each other, making themselves desirable and irresistible, while at the same time promising love and devotion. Courting behaviour is a commitment, a promise: "Look", it says, "how I will behave with you when we are married". But this kind of behaviour usually disappears with everyday routine, as if once secure possession of the loved ones has been assured, there were no need to win them again, seduce them. With a couple in love, on the contrary, seduction continues. The woman gets ready to meet her husband as if she were going to a party, as if she wanted to be courted by a stranger. We have an absolute need for novelty,

and this is why a social life with parties and dancing, nude bodies sunbathing on the beach, separations and games are all useful - in order to be able to look at one's wife or husband through others' eyes. With couples in love they each want to please the partner, seduce him or her as if they were strangers. They take nothing for granted, always ready to think that the partner might not like them, that they must be worthy. So every meeting preserves a hint of the throbbing heart associated with falling in love.

In the couple in love they each want to demonstrate their own social *value*. All societies have tests, rituals in which the man shows off what is considered important - his good looks, strength, dexterity, courage, wealth, fighting ability, strength of character. And a woman shows off her beauty, elegance, grace, faithfulness and intelligence. After marriage, and in life in common, this process is often interrupted. But this does not happen with a couple in love. They each want to go on showing their partners that they are precious, that others appreciate them for their qualities, virtues and great value. And for this reason they deserve their esteem and love. In the couple in love they each

know that they must deserve love, earn it even socially.

With the loving couple the search for their own truth, *their own essence*, also continues. Loving means rising and helping the other to rise up the scale of being. Therefore they are each committed to continual self-improvement - in their own eyes, their loved one's and in the eyes of others. At the same time, while we look at our loved ones as prodigies of being, we also know that they can go further - flowers, blossom. We feel that it is our aim to help them to bring out the best in themselves. In the couple in love this improvement of oneself and one's partner goes on with due prudence and patience. They each change in order to fit their own ideal and the ideal their partner has of them. In this way both become better than they would have been had they remained separate. Their will-power inspires them both, their intelligence interacts, their abilities complement each other. It is the opposite of competition and envy, where each tries to dominate and undermine the other. In the couple in love they each desire perfection in their loved ones and want that perfection to be recognized. Therefore they help them to rise socially as well.

Those who are really in love feel an inner need to tell each other the *truth*. They are not weighed down by the fear of lying. Intimacy has been defined as the possibility to communicate deep, risky feelings to each other. It means putting yourself at stake, with the fear that your partner may not understand or respond to you. When you realize that the other understands you and is on your side, you will be filled with a violent emotion and a great joy.^{clxxxv}

People in love are always fresh and light-hearted. They do not let themselves get encrusted with habit. They do not drag infinite needs along with them. They are able to renounce them. An unmistakable sign of a loving couple is their *flexibility*, their ability to modify and adapt. Because they preserve the plasticity of their origins. We are able to learn and correct ourselves. Like every living thing, love survives thanks to invention, flexibility and intelligence.

Another characteristic of lasting love is *love communism*. People who go on loving do not take stock of giving and taking. Even a couple who have decided to have separate bank accounts in actual fact end up by acting on the communist principle. They each give according to their ability and take according to their need. And

because love is sincere and looks at the essential, it gives measure and moderation to both.

Together with love communism the sense of equal value is very strong. Lovers feel *absolutely equal* because they each think their partner is worth more than them. Love ends the moment one partner feels entitled to more rights and to be considered of greater value than the other.

For love to continue it is always necessary for the loved one to be partly transfigured, that is to appear “in the light of being” in which we see the splendour of things as they are. It is something to do with humility, a feeling close to the *religious*. And there is also something religious in the respect and awe with which we approach our loved ones. Because they are infinitely close but, at the same time, infinitely far away and infinitely desirable. And we know that if they did not love us, we would be lost. So now we see, as if in a flash of light, how our lives might have been if we had not met, if they had not loved us, if they did not love us. And we experience a shudder of fear. Feelings of wonder, amazement, awe, of being blessed - they are all emotions that draw love towards religious experience.

When we fall in love, we wish to be loved for what we are, for good or ill. But with the passing of time and consolidating of the relationship this is no longer enough. It is not enough for the other person to say to us, “I love you, I love you, whatever you do I will love you. You’re a fool, but I love you, I don’t respect you, but I love you”. We all want to assert ourselves and be recognized for what we are objectively worth. It is not enough for us to be loved, we want to be respected and appreciated as well. We want to be able to say: “I deserved it”. The more the other person says: “I love you, I love you”, the more the objection rises within us: “I don’t want you to tell me you love me, I want to hear you say you respect me because I am really worth something. If you love me always, whatever I do, you treat me like a child, not like an adult. If you shower me with beautiful things, but do not give me the opportunity to deserve them, if you grandly bestow them on me as gracious gifts, I see you as a despot, a big boss I will never have the right to ask anything of. It is not only love I want, but recognition and rights”.

A living community

The couple is a living community in which a continuous process of differentiation and creation takes place. But at the same time it has an activity that puts together these breaks, reconstitutes unity and, in this way, keeps it alive and preserves its identity.

Great civilizations are animated by violent, creative processes, conflicts and confrontations, but these forces do not lead to disintegration, because their members are aware of the importance of what they are constructing, and love it. They want to modify, but not destroy the civilization. A living community make use of all its individuals, all their energies, conflicts and creations in order to prosper and progress. Created by them, at the same time it creates, moulds and indicates the aims and values they must reach for. Its members, therefore, would not dream of leaving it. As Romeo says in Shakespeare's tragedy: "There is no world without Verona walls". That society, church, political party is their value horizon, and what gives value to actions. It is what gives meaning even to clashes and conflicts. The various parties struggle to improve their country, theological

schools struggle to consolidate their religion. Exiles, therefore, go on loving their country even if it has banished them, heretics go on loving their religion even if it has condemned them.

We do not have only individual love objects. We also love collective ones - our country, political party, church or family. And these collective entities are all the stronger, the prouder we are to belong to them and the more we devote our lives to them. The same goes for the couple. A couple's love is not made only of the love each feels for the other, but also what we as a couple feel towards the collectivity formed by both. And the couple lasts only if this kind of love and pride exists. It lasts if we give importance to our love, to being a couple and to what we are doing together - if we fully accept our love vocation. What makes love fragile is not only individual disagreement, but above all lack of faith in our union and mission.

Lovers are proud of their love and proud of themselves. They are convinced they have a value and a duty, they think that their every action must be a model and example to all. In the nascent state the collective entity that emerges is more important than the single members it is composed of, because it is through it that they

recognize, renew and improve themselves. Even afterwards love continues only if this kind of experience and faith goes on renewing itself. When the two members of the couple begin to keep an account of gains and losses, when they go back to being important as single individuals, when the individuals fall back on themselves, their own egoism and meanness, love vanishes. Love exists only if it is capable of giving more than it receives, only if it succeeds in fusing the subjects in an entity more important than they are themselves, transcending and enriching them.

The couple is a living entity that wants to exist and assert itself in the world. It must be seen as a social, cultural, ideological and political power, as an organizing centre with an ideology. It is conscious of its value, justifies its own actions and gives itself laws. It expands, organizing its territory like a State, Political Party or Church. And it survives if it is capable of controlling its own inner tensions and those forced on it from without, if it is able to defend itself against the countless attacks that will be made upon it, and victoriously repel the threats that aim to weaken and disintegrate it.

History and destiny

Any social formation proudly remembers its past in order to project its future. Even the smallest tribe commemorates the deeds of its ancestors and heroes, handing them down in its tales. And in making them relive, it glorifies and ennobles the present. Religious ritual is the reactivation of the divine time of the origins, when the gods inhabited the earth. According to Eliade, every religion is animated by a perennial nostalgia for its origins. Jewish laws and rites reactivate what was performed in the age of the patriarchs: Abraham, Jacob and Moses. Christianity remembers and relives what Christ accomplished on earth, Islam the life of Medina and the divine word dictated to Mohammed. Even Marxism has its founding fathers and sacred texts. Every community draws vital nourishment from the memory and activation of its heroic and creative moments. It finds the strength to look to the future by drawing on memories of its happy times, glories, heroes, great men and women.

But we know that every community springs from the nascent state. We know that *the divine time of the origins* is nothing less than the nascent state from which it is born. The divine time of the

origins is the time of creation, when all was possible.

Every civilization therefore grows and evolves preserving its identity only if, periodically, it rediscovers its past and draws from it strength and the freshness of renewal. In this way it manages to remain young and recreate itself. In order to come into being all the great movements in Christianity, such as those of Saint Benedict, Saint Francis, Luther and Calvin, went back to the origins, to the life and teaching of Christ. And those that followed based themselves on these great religious figures, thus constituting an unbroken tradition. The same happened with the Jewish religion and Islam. And it is the same in lay spheres too, in politics. Think of the American nation, which has always recalled the spirit of the founding fathers, the declaration of independence, and its great figures from the past, like Abraham Lincoln.

Well, the couple is nothing other but the smallest community in existence. And the same laws hold for it as for larger communities. The couple also has its origin in a nascent state - falling in love - and is revitalized through new episodes of rebirth. It therefore endures and is strengthened if these processes are based on the

initial stage of falling in love, if they rediscover it and draw fresh, creative energies from it. The couple go on being in love if they go back to their origins every so often, finding again their spirit, plasticity and enthusiasm, and being regenerated through them. We could say, if each one falls in love again with the same person.

When all this happens, the memories and exalting experiences that the lovers have shared, the struggles they have fought together, their love experiences, are remembered and reactivated. And they constitute a living ferment, an energy that nourishes the present. The man no longer sees his wife as she is today, but how she once was, in all the most beautiful moments of their lives, and he feels again the tenderness, pride and joy he felt then. And the woman, looking at the man of today, sees again in him what he once was - the face, the gestures she admired and adored. She feels again the sweetness of past kisses and embraces. No individual is restricted to what s/he is at this present moment, but acquires depth and richness on the basis of everything s/he has been.

To understand this process better, we must remember that falling in love is a collective movement. And in collective moments the

charismatic leaders are not normal people, but extraordinary ones, radiant with divine light. With the passing of time a legend forms around them. People remember their difficult beginnings, struggles and triumphs, and all these moments are carved in the collective memory and in the hearts of the faithful. Every moment of the leaders' lives are remembered and become models to follow. In falling in love, each partner is the charismatic leader of the other, with each seeing the other as something high up, admirable and sublime. And when love lasts, its life-like a leader's - becomes a biography to be admired, in which all the moments are important, and when evoked give strength, joy and emotion. Lovers are moved when they look at photos of their loved ones when they were children, and when they cast their minds back, when they see photos or films of past moments together, they feel again the joy, tenderness and energy they had felt at the time. Such emotions warm and enrich the present.

But in the couple there is not only my history and my partner's. There is also *our* history, the history of the collectivity we have created together. There is the memory of what we did together - our difficulties, struggles, efforts and victories. Then there are the objectifications

of our work in common. Love lasts as long as this past and its objectifications are experienced as a single, positive, forward-looking movement. For past and future are produced together, and neither exists without the other. When the past is damaged, so is the future, and vice versa. For this reason a couple must always preserve pleasant memories and must shy away from memories of conflicts and the wounds the two have caused each other.

Eroticism

But a community of lovers must also have an *erotic* history and an erotic future. Eroticism is an essential component in the history of the couple, and if it loses importance, giving way to other values, if there is no memory of past eroticism, then it dies out even in the present. The same goes for the future, for if the couple give no importance to eroticism, if they put it after other things, it gradually wanes. And it is replaced by affection, tenderness, trust, mutual help and friendship, which are all forms of love, but are not the same as being in love. There are many couples like this, where spouses have ceased to desire each other, and do not even touch each

other any more, living as if they were brother and sister separated by the taboo of incest. Some people are even satisfied with this, but we cannot consider them couples in love. The nascent state of love is distinguished from the nascent state of all the other movements precisely because it is inflamed by eroticism, because it produces the pressing desire for communion and fusion of bodies. The loving community is cemented by the pleasure the bodies give each other. Eroticism constitutes the specific, irreplaceable language of falling in love. Without eroticism it is aphasic, unable to speak or resist. An erotically mute couple are different entities, not a couple in love.

Nor does the kind of love suffice that is turned to the community itself, to its affirmation and objectifications in home and children. You must absolutely find pleasure in the other individual, physically and erotically. You must like his eyes, hair, nose, her breasts, shoulders, the way she walks. You must want to touch, kiss and be kissed, hug and be hugged, lie down naked with him, with her, make love. And since that body has not satisfied you, desire rises again, returns and is renewed. The couple in love do not go to bed to sleep but to make love, even if they then fall asleep at once, hand in hand.

Erotic desire is not present all the time, at every instant, for life in common is not always uniformly erotic. It is made of many other things as well, like waking up, going to sleep, eating, working, conversing, travelling. But in the couple in love eroticism is always round the corner, ready to burst out - when he is washing, shaving, putting on a vest, showing his naked body. Or when she, perfectly made up, raises her eyes provocatively. Eroticism is always re-awakening, opening astonished eyes burning with desire. It is passing to another dimension,^{clxxxvi} like opening a door.

The couple in love is also one where each partner - when he sees her in the company of other people, when she meets him in the streets, when he watches her unobserved at a dinner or party - has a curious impression of being split in two. He knows that that person is his wife. She knows that person is her husband. Yet she gazes at him enchanted as if he were a stranger she had never seen before. Or he gazes at her seeing her as the most beautiful, fascinating and desirable woman he has ever set eyes on. And he is filled with wonder because that person who gives him so much pleasure is actually the one who shares

his days and nights. He can hardly believe it, and he finds himself thinking that if he did not know her he would want to meet her, talk to her. And he wonders whether he would have the courage to do so, because she appears so distant to him, so high up. He would be timid and hesitant.

Is this not the experience of love at first sight, those moments of revelation and discontinuity typical of falling in love? We know that these experiences appear when we let our defences drop, when we abandon ourselves to the other's charm and seductive power. In the loving couple everyday life gradually creates grey areas and resistance. The stresses caused by overwork, quarrels and tiredness are like so many bricks put in front of our loved one's face. They are veils, blindfolds, brakes, resistance, fears that imprison our enthusiasm and restrain our desire for an extraordinary life. Everyday life has trapped and exhausted us. But suddenly our vital energy fights back, breaking that grey barrier and showing us the object of our desire once more - which has always been there, even in the moments when we were drowsy and lulled to sleep. Our eyes are opened. Eroticism is a re-awakening.

Complexity

The loving couple is a complex entity in which each individual assumes countless roles in the other's eyes, as if they were not just two people but many who perform different activities, interact, discuss, create and modify the world. The loving couple is not constructed like a dialogue, *but like a symphony*.

It is founded on the co-existence of two apparently opposing principles. The first is that of complementing, the second of substituting.

Let us begin with the first. In every couple the abilities of the two members must be *complementary*. The abilities and qualities of the one must complete and correct those of the other. If one is enthusiastic, the other will be reflective and prudent. If the first is an optimist who does not foresee danger, the other should be more of a pessimist, and vigilant. If one is violent, the other should be diplomatic. If one is a spendthrift, it is better for the other one to watch the pennies. If the first is rigid, the other should be tolerant.

The activities should complement each other too, with different duties. It is pointless for both partners to do everything. The furnishing of the home will be done by the one with more taste,

business matters by the more practically-minded. And the other should be humble enough to recognize this and leave it to the partner. There are some people who can see things as a whole, others who can take care of the details. Some people are endowed with imagination, others are more realistic. So the former should make up stories and games for the kids, while the latter should look after the house and living arrangements. To put it in a nutshell, they should each put their best qualities and creativity to good use.

Let us now see the *principle of substitution*. The partners in a couple in love and in accord must also have a great elective affinity. They must each understand and appreciate the other's work, and be in a condition to co-operate. If the husband has no aesthetic taste for furnishing he really should appreciate what his wife has done. If he is absent-minded, he should at least agree that it is better to be tidy, and be able to carry out instructions carefully. In actual fact, even if they each have their specific role, doing what they do best, they are also identified with the other's. They understand each other perfectly, sharing goals, appreciating each other and knowing how to think along the same lines. A couple in love

understand each other without exchanging a word. A gesture will do, a glance, or at times nothing at all. So they react in the same way without even consulting each other. Even if they do different jobs, they each follow the other and can help, advise and give that partner useful suggestions - until they end up by being able to act as substitutes and take decisions when the other is not around.

I remember the case of a couple that got on perfectly together. He had created a world-famous electronic instrument company, while his wife had never worked for the company. In their division of duties it was her husband who looked after the business, but he told her everything that happened. She would listen attentively, taking an intense interest. In this way, over the years, they had discussed all the problems together, as well as the most important financial and organizational decisions. She knew all her husband's team and had at times given her own opinion and suggestions, but always from the outside, without any formal role. When her husband died, everyone expected her to sell the company, but to their amazement she called the directors and told them she was going to direct it personally herself. They would just have to be

patient in explaining the technical matters to her that she was unfamiliar with, because she would learn. And she did. She took over her husband's office and it was not long before she was in complete control. She revealed herself an excellent business woman and today her company is richer and more important than it ever was.

In the couple in love each one does not see just one single person in the other but many different ones - always new and always wonderful. One evening, conversing with a friend who after fifteen years of marriage still gazed at his wife with the eyes of a lover, I said to him: "You see, your wife is not just one woman for you, but different women. Slight as a blade of grass, she sits on your knee, so she is your daughter. At the same time she looks after you, so she is your mother. She is beautiful and you admire her, so she is a star. But she is also your lover and your geisha. She looks after your house, so she is your housekeeper. She helps you in your work, so she is your secretary. At the same time she directs you, so she is your manager. She learns from you, so she is your pupil. She instructs you how to act, so she is your teacher. As you are neurotic she is your

psychiatrist. She backs you up, so she is your accomplice. She tells you off, so she is your moral conscience. And finally, she is your most faithful ally in life's struggle. You see, you two are in fact many different people. And you have so much to do, discuss and talk about that you will never get tired of each other".

NOTE

CHAPTER ONE

1. It is curious how they are ignored by experts working on the family. See, for example, Pierpaolo Donati, *Famiglia e politiche sociali*, Franco Angeli, Milan, 1981; William Goode, *World Revolution and Family Patterns*, Collier-Macmillan, New York, 1963; Chiara Saraceno, *Sociologia della famiglia*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 1988; Antonio Golini, *Vite di coppie e di figli*, la Nuova Italia, Florence, 1987; Marzio Barbagli, *Provando e riprovando*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 1990.
2. It is astonishing to see how little research has been carried out on the subject and how much imprecision there is. There are of course exceptions, and among these in particular the work of Murray S. Davis, *Intimate Relations*, The Free Press, Macmillan, New York, 1973; Dorothy Tennov, *Love and Limerence*, Stein and Day, New York, 1979; C. S. Lewis, *The*

Four Loves, (1960) Fount Paperbacks, HarperCollins, London, 1970; R. J. Sternberg, "A Triangular Theory of Love", in *Psychological Review*, 1986, 93, pp. 119-135. Among more recent publications there are: Willy Pasini, *Intimità*, Mondadori, Milan, 1991; Jurg Willi, *Dynamics of Couples Theory*, J. Aronson, New York, 1984; Gilbert Tordjman, *Le Couple*, Hachette, Paris, 1992; George Abraham, *Un amore tutto nuovo*, Mondadori, Milan, 1995; Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim, *The Normal Chaos of Love*, Padstow, Policy Press, 1995.

3. Sigmund Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, Bantam Books, New York, 1960.
4. In order to explain this phenomenon, Freud too had to modify the explanation he had previously offered. He tells us that falling in love does not spring from a succession of pleasing sexual experiences, but rather from an aim-inhibited sexual impulse. Unable to get satisfaction, the sexual libido explodes and generates an overvaluation of the love object. Sigmund Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, op cit.

5. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, (1949), trans. Pan, London, 1953.
6. Sextus Propertius, *Elegies*, (trans.) Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press, Cambridge Mass & London, 1990, p.78.
7. Helen E. Fisher, *Anatomy of Love*, Touchstone, N.Y., London, 1992, p.50. The writer also says, “The Bem-Bem of the New Guinea highlands do not admit that they feel this passion either, but a girl sometimes refuses to marry the man whom her father has chosen for her, and runs away with her «true love». The Tiv of Africa, who have no formal concept of romance, call this passion *madness*”. *Ibidem*, p.50
8. See William Jankoviak and Edward Fischer, “A Cross Cultural Perspective on Romantic Love”, in *Ethnology*, 31 (n. 2) 1992, pp. 149-155.
9. Two well-known sociologists have worked on the appearance of love in this historical period, Niklas Luhmann in his book, *Love as Passion*, Polity, Cambridge, 1986 and Anthony Giddens with *The Transformation of Intimacy*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1992, but neither is able to offer any explanation. The phenomenon is however perfectly

comprehensible in the light of a theory which considers falling in love (whether it be called passion or romantic love) a collective process giving rise to the formation of a couple. Previously, marriages were arranged or dominated by family ties, at least as long as the latter proved very strong. But at a certain point in time economic changes and the redistribution of work weakened traditional ties, allowing couples to start forming via the same mechanisms which give rise to other communities - the nascent state and the processes of institutionalization. An increasing importance was then given to passionate love and a large number of cases of people falling in love were then registered.

10. It was Shakespeare who was ahead of the times, presenting falling in love as a basis for marriage in all his works, from *Romeo and Juliet*, through *Much Ado About Nothing* up to *The Tempest*. In later periods Goethe and Manzoni also gave voice to this reflection of popular feeling. In Goethe's *Werther*, for example, the protagonist desires to marry Lotte, recalling in this way the episode in Goethe's own life when he had fallen in love with Charlotte Buff. Then *Elective Affinity*

begins with a dialogue between Edward and Charlotte, who have both had previous marriages arranged by their families, and only now have fulfilled their love by marrying each other. In Manzoni's *The Betrothed*, Renzo e Lucia are two peasants in love desiring to get married, helped by the Church but hindered by the arrogant noble Don Rodrigo, who wants to prevent their marriage.

11. José Ortega y Gasset, *On Love* (1939), trans. Meridian Books, Cleveland, 1957.
12. Denis de Rougemont, *Love in the Western World* (1939), trans. Pantheon, New York, 1956.
13. Eric Fromm, *The Art of Loving*, Allen and Unwin, London, 1957.
14. Robert Bellah and others, *Habits of the Heart*, Berkeley, Berkeley University of California Press, 1985.
15. I think this depends on the fact that the English language has no single word for "falling in love" and when a word is missing, so very often is the concept. Anglo-Saxon scholars have in fact fixed their attention on the historic forms in which falling in love is presented, with the concept of *passionate love* coming from Stendhal and the concept of

romantic love from literary sources. Proof of this can be found in the kind of analysis offered by Anthony Giddens (in *The Transformations of Intimacy*, op.cit. pp. 51-57,) and Steven Seidman in *Romantic Longings*, Routledge, New York, 1991. Scales have also been constructed for measuring this “romantic ideology”, as in the case of I.M. Rubin, *The Social Psychology of Romantic Love*, University of Michigan, Ph. D. Thesis. Many have gradually finished by identifying *romantic love* with falling in love. To avoid this ambiguity Dorothy Tennov has created the somewhat unhappy neologism *limerence*.

16. This thesis is held by all psychoanalysts. See for example among the various sources that could be quoted Jole Baldaro Verde & Gian Franco Pallanca, *Illusioni d'amore*, Raffaello Cortina, Milan, 1984. Even the theory of love as attachment only develops the same idea, suggesting that people fall in love and attach themselves to parent substitutes and establish within the couple relationships of reciprocal protection like those bonding mother to child. The reader will find an exhaustive bibliography in Lucia Carli, *Attaccamento e rapporto di coppia*, Raffaello Cortina, Milan,

1995. The presence of this scheme also within Jungian psychoanalysis is visible in the commendable works of Aldo Carotenuto, *Eros and Pathos* (1987), trans. Inner Books, Canada, 1987; *Amare tradire*, Bompiani, Milan, 1991; *Riti e miti della seduzione*, Bompiani, Milan, 1994.
17. It is the thesis I uphold in my book *Falling in Love*, (1979), trans. Random House, New York, 1993.
18. Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, Hogarth Press, London, 1962. See also his *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, Pelican Freud Library, volume I, 1973.
19. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1962.
20. Abraham Maslow, *Religions, Values and Peak Experience*, Penguin, London, 1976.

CHAPTER TWO

1. Dino Buzzati, *A Love Affair*, Deutsch, London, 1965, p.294.
2. Ibidem, p. 295.

3. Ibidem, p. 296.
4. Ludwig G. Biswanger, *Drei Formen missgluckten Daseins: Verstiegtheit, Verschrobenheit, Manierheit*, Niemeyer, Tübingen, 1956.
5. It is the thesis put forward by Stendhal in *Love* (1822), trans. Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1975. According to our theory falling in love arises through numerous explorations. In each exploration the subject values the possibility of love being returned, and if he or she is not sure, the falling in love process does not go on. Mistakes can be made, however, for friendly, kind attitudes or erotic reactions can be interpreted as signalling an availability for reciprocal love.
6. Sigmund Freud, *Mourning and Melancholy*, (1917) Pelican Freud Library, op.cit.
7. The term *gate* also appears in religious language. In litanies for example the Mary Virgin is called *Janua coeli*, gate to heaven, and in the Islamic world *bab* is the gate leading to the divinity. The Sultan-califf is called *The Sublime Gate*.
8. Roland Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*, (1977), trans. Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1978, p. 34.

9. Edith Wharton, *The Age of Innocence*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1974, p. 153-4.
10. D. H Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1960.
11. *Ibidem*, p.18-19.
12. *Ibidem*, p. 47.
13. *Ibidem*, p. 51
14. Sigmund Freud, *Delusion and Dream in Jensen's "Gradiva"*, in The Pelican Freud Library, vol. 10.
15. We have already referred to the other current of thought that considers the love bond a development and elaboration of maternal attachment as studied by John Bowlby. Studies dealing with this point of view are John Bowlby vol. I, *Attachment*, (1969), Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1982; vol. II, *Separation, Anxiety and Anger*, (1973), Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1975 and John Bowlby, *The Making and Breaking of Affectional Bonds*, Tavistock, London, 1979.
16. John Money, *Lovemaps: Clinical Concepts of Sexual/Erotic Health and Pathology, Paraphilia and Gender Transposition in Childhood, Adolescence and Maturity*, Irving Publishers, New York, 1986; *Love and Love Sickness. The Science of Sex, Gender*

Difference and Pair-bonding, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore & London, 1981.

17. Wolfgang Goethe wrote three books with this character: *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* (1777), *Wilhelm Meister's Theatrical Mission* (1797) and *Wilhelm Meister's Travels* (which he was working until 1828).
18. Pietro Citati, *Goethe*, Adelphi, Milan, p.73.
19. *Ibidem*, pp. 62-3
20. Erica Jong, *Fear of Fifty*, Vintage, London, 1994, pp. 265-267
21. Two magic fountains are the cause of this
They rise in the Ardennes, not far away
One from the other. Who drinks from one is
Filled with amorous longing, those who essay
The second one to all love's joy and bliss
Rendered immune, and cold as ice are they.
Ludovico Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, canto I,
78, trans. Penguin, London, 1975, p.136.
22. Françoise Giroud, *Alma Mahler, or The Art of Being Loved*, (1988), trans. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1991.

CHAPTER THREE

1. Francesco Alberoni, *L'amicizia*, Garzanti, Milan, 1984.
2. It is John Money's above quoted theory, to be found in *Lovemaps: Clinical Concepts of Sexual/Erotic Health and Pathology, Paraphilia and Gender Transposition in Childhood, Adolescence and Maturity*, op. cit.
3. Madame de la Fayette, *The Princesse de Clèves*, (1725), trans. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1994, p. 39.
4. Françoise Giroud, *Alma Mahler, or The Art of Being Loved*, op. cit.
5. Of this author's works see in particular René Girard, *Mensonge romantique et vérité romanesque*, Bernard Grasset, Paris, 1961; *Violence and the Sacred* (1972), trans. Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore & London, 1977.
6. René Girard, op. cit. p.146.
7. *Ibidem*, p. 145.
8. In elaborating the concept of nascent state I have used in particular Max Wertheimer's research on problem-solving. More generally on the psychology of form see Kurt Koffka, *Principles of Gestalt Psychology* (1932),

Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1962; Wolfgang Kohler, *Gestalt Psychology*, Bell, London, 1930; Gaetano Kanizsa, *Grammatica del vedere*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 1980; and finally Max Wertheimer, *Productive Thinking*, Harper, New York & London, 1945.

9. Arthur Koestler, *The Act of Creation* (1967), Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1989, p. 118-119.
10. I have had to introduce this principle in order to explain the explosive process present in collective movements and in falling in love. The complete theory of the three principles of the dynamic is contained in Francesco Alberoni, *Genesi*, Garzanti, Milano, 1989.
11. According to this theory, in order to combat ambiguity idealization is produced by defense mechanisms which can be typologically either depressive or persecutory. For a complete treatment of the subject see Francesco Alberoni, *Genesi*, op. cit. pp. 134-166.
12. They are an elaboration of the depressive and schizoparanoïd position held by Melanie Klein. On this subject see Franco Fornari's research in *La vita affettiva originaria del bambino*, Feltrinelli, Milano, 1963, as well as Francesco Alberoni, *Genesi*, op. cit.

13. Lou Salomé writes “Deep down a lover does not want to know what the love object is really like (...) it’s enough to know that the other makes him/her marvellously happy. How is not known and the two remain mysteries for each other.” Lou Andreas-Salomé, *Die Erotik*, (1910), Matthes und Seitz, Munich, 1979. on the unknowability of the loved person see Roland Barthes, *A Lover’s Discours: Fragments*, op. cit., and Alain Finkielkraut, *La sagesse de l’amour*, Gallimard, Paris, 1984.

CHAPTER FOUR

1. Three types of social formations exist - *society, community and movement*. The first two have been described by the German sociologist Tonnies (Ferdinand Tonnies, *Community and Association*, trans., Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1955). The *community* exists before the individual and is founded on tradition. The individual is born there and is tied to other members by feelings, emotions and ideas held in common. The family, state, city-state and church are

communities, while a *society* is something like a company or a sports association that individuals construct by will and reason, by means of a pact or contract.

Tonnies did not know the third type of social formation which is a *collective movement*. A *collective movement* is similar in part to a community because its members share the same feelings and values. It is not however founded on tradition, but is born like a society, but not in the same cold way, not resorting to reason or pacts and agreements. It bursts forth from emotions, faith and passion. In its early stages those who join it live an experience of liberation, rebirth, revelation. It is this conversion, this internal change that we have described as *nascent state*. And those who are in this state *recognize* one another and tend to merge and produce a community characterized by a very high level of solidarity. The institution is at one and the same time a community because of the emotive ties among its members and a society because of the pacts and contracts which regulate it.

2. See the essay on adultery in Tony Tanner, *Adultery in the Novel: Contract and*

Transgression, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore & London, 1979.

3. Christianity is seen by Christians as the flowering of Judaism, but for the Jews it is a terrible heresy, a fracture in the community which has caused great harm to the Jewish people. The Protestant Reformation can be seen as the creation of a new Christianity, the emergence of a plurality of religious communities - Lutherans, Calvinists, Anabaptists and so on up to the Methodists and the Reformed Baptists. It can also be considered the disintegration of the Medieval Catholic Church, the irreparable loss of its unity. Bolshevism gained ground via the destruction of the Social Revolutionaries, the Peasants' Party and the Bund. The youth movements of the Sixties - for example the hippies - turned the universities upside down, threw the old associations into disarray and modified relationship within the family. Feminism has done the same thing, unifying women but altering and even breaking down the relationship between the sexes.
4. The birth of morality from the ethical dilemma is shown by Francesco Alberoni in *Falling in Love*, op. cit. and especially in *Le ragioni del*

bene e del male, Garzanti, Milan, 1981. Dorothy Tennov's description of the falling-in-love process in *Love and Limerence*, op. cit., is incomplete because it ignores this conflictual nature. Tennov describes an *idyllic* state of love, not a concrete reality.

5. See Francesco Alberoni, *Valori*, Rizzoli, Milan, 1992, p. 90.
6. See the Chapter *Sexual Difference* in James Q. Wilson, *The Moral Sense*, Free Press, New York, 1993.
7. In Maria Venturi's amusing book, *L'amore s'impara: come conquistare e tenersi un uomo*, Rizzoli, Milan, 1989, all the strategies for keeping a husband and defeating a rival are based on the man's sense of guilt. They activate it, increase it and bring it to breaking point. The same mechanisms can not be applied to a woman, unless she is being forced to give up her children.
8. Françoise Giroud, *Mon très cher amour ...*, B. Grasset, Paris, 1994.
9. As in Susanna Tamaro's novel, *Va dove ti porta il cuore*, Baldini & Castoldi, Milan, 1994.

CHAPTER FIVE

1. In English and French there is no noun corresponding to the Italian *innamoramento*, whereas one exists in other languages, such as Spanish (enamoramiento), Greek (ἐπιπόθησις), Swedish (Förälskelse), etc. In all these cases the term refers to a process. The expressions *fall in love* and *tomber amoureux*, on the contrary, suggest a brief and sudden action. This is why the French have coined the expression *amour passion* and the Anglo-Saxons *Romantic Love*, creating a great deal of ambiguity. Actually in French there is the verb *s'énamourer* et the noun *enamoración*, and in English *to be enamoured of* and *enamoration*, but they are not generally used to indicate the development of passionate love. Recently the French scholars Roland Barthes, Edgar Morin and Michel Maffesoli have started to use them again, for reasons of scientific precision. I fervently hope that the same thing will happen in the Anglo-Saxon world.
2. It is the same definition which Karl Marx uses in Karl Marx & Frederick Engels, *The*

German Ideology, (1933), trans. Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1970.

3. See Jurg Willi, *Couples in Collusion*, Hunter House, Claremont, Ca, 1983.
4. Verena Kast, *Paare, Beziehungsphantasien oder: Wie Götter sich in Menschen Spiegeln*, Krenz, Stuttgart, 1984.
5. On the search for aesthetic perfection in the self and the other see Sasha Weitman, *On the Elementary Forms of Socioerotic Life*, Pro manuscripto, University of Tel Aviv, 1995.

CHAPTER SIX

1. The process is illustrated as follows:

True Love

Nascent State

Pleasure Principle	Loss
Indication	

Pseudo erotic Love
Pseudo-
starworship

Competitive Love

2. Edgar Morin, *The Stars*, trans. Grove Press, New York, 1962; Francesco Alberoni, *L'élite senza potere*, Vita e Pensiero, Milan, 1963; new edition Bompiani, Milan, 1973; Francesco Alberoni, *Il volo nuziale*, Garzanti, Milan, 1992; Lisa A. Lewis, *The Adoring Audience*, Routledge, London, 1992.
3. It is a theme developed in Francesco Alberoni, *L'erotismo*, Garzanti, Milan, 1986.
4. See Francesco Alberoni, *Il volo nuziale*, Garzanti, Milan, 1992.
5. Dorothy Tennov, *Love and Limerence*, op. cit., p. 47.
6. In a diagram illustrating the love bonds existing within a movement we do not find only the star formation binding leader and followers, but also a bond unifying each follower with the rest of the community. Indeed, the love created between the individual members is not, truly speaking, love between individuals, but is mediated via the collectivity. See the diagram:

7. See the diagram.
8. Sigmund Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, op. cit.
9. Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, Standard Edition, vol. 13, 1912-13.
10. Giacomo Casanova, *Memoirs*.
11. Carlo Castellaneta, *Le donne di una vita*, Mondadori, Milan, 1993.
12. Jeanne Cressanges, *Ce que les femmes n'avaient jamais dit*, B. Grasset, Paris, 1952.
13. Carlo Castellaneta, *Passione d'amore*, Mondadori, Milan, 1987.
14. Francis Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, (1925), Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1950.
15. Elena Gianini Belotti, *Amore e pregiudizio*, Mondadori, Milan, 1992, p. 92
16. Rosa Giannetta Alberoni, *Paolo e Francesca*, Rizzoli, Milan, 1994.
17. Jurg Willi, *Couples in Collusion*, Hunter House, Claremont, Ca., 1982.

CHAPTER SEVEN

1. A valuable description of erotic love has been given us by Sasha Weitman, *On the Elementary Forms of the Socioerotic Life*, op. cit. It is characterized by pleasure, naturalness, playfulness, generosity, pleasure in giving, desire for beauty for the self and the other.
2. Robert Woods Kennedy, trans., *Un anno d'amore*, Rizzoli, Milan, 1973
3. Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita*, Crest, New York, 1955, p. 41.
4. *Ibidem*, p. 44.
5. *Ibidem*, p. 56.
6. *Ibidem*, p. 151.
7. Elena Gianini Belotti, *Amore e pregiudizio*, op. cit.
8. *Ibidem*, p. 223.
9. *Ibidem*, p. 224
10. Marguerite Duras, *The Lover*, (1984), trans. Collins, London, 1985, p. 46
11. *Ibidem*, p. 53.
12. *Ibidem*, p. 107.
13. *Ibidem*, p. 123.
14. H.F. Peters, *My Sister, my Spouse: a Biography of Lou Andreas Salomé*, Norton, New York, 1962.

15. See Francesco Alberoni, *L'amicizia*, *op. cit.*

CHAPTER EIGHT

1. The concept of passionate love was introduced by Stendhal and coincides with our concept of falling in love. See Stendhal, *Love*, *op. cit.* We must always remember that the expression “falling in love” does not exist in one word in French.
2. Etienne Gilson, *Heloise and Abelard*, Hollis and Carter, London, 1953; Maria Teresa Fumagalli Beonio Brocchieri, *Eloisa e Abelardo*, Mondadori, Milan, 1984.
3. Denis de Rougemont, *Love in the Western World*, *op. cit.*, pp. pp. 83-84.
4. See the chapter *Zarathustra* in Francesco Alberoni, *Genesi*, *op. cit.*
5. See the chapter *Il misticismo* in Francesco Alberoni, *Genesi*, *op. cit.*

CHAPTER NINE

1. On the subject of jealousy see Peter Van Sommers, *Jealousy*, Wiley, Sidney & London, 1972.
2. Henri Troyat, *Tolstoy*, (1965), Eng. trans. Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1970.
3. Dino Buzzati, *A Love Affair*, op. cit. p. 296.
4. Paul Robinson, "Dear Paul" in AA.VV. *Omosessualità*, trad. ita. Feltrinelli, Milano, 1981.
5. See Letitia Anna Peplau's excellent piece of research comparing male and female homosexual couples with heterosexual in "What Homosexuals Want", in *Psychology Today*, March 1981. See also the chapter "Between Pleasure and Community" in Steven Seidman, *Romantic Longings*, Routledge, New York, 1991.

CHAPTER TEN

1. Francesco Alberoni, *Il volo nuziale*, op. cit.
2. Igor A. Caruso, *Die Trennung der Leibenden*, H. Huber, Bern & Stuttgart, 1968.

3. *Ibidem.*
4. *Ibidem.*
5. *Ibidem.*
6. *Ibidem.*
7. Sigmund Freud, *Mourning and Melancholy*, op. cit.
8. John Bowlby, *Separation, Anxiety and Anger*, op. cit. and *The Making and Breaking of Affectional Bonds*, op. cit.
9. H. F. Peters, *My Sister, my Spouse*, op. cit.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

1. Aldo Carotenuto, *Riti e miti della seduzione*, op. cit.
2. Francesco Alberoni, *L'erotismo*, Garzanti, Milan, 1982, pp. 212-213.
3. Pierre-Antoine Choderlos de Laclos, *Les liaisons dangereuses*, trans. Routledge, London, 1924.
4. *Ibidem*, p. 227.
5. *Ibidem*, p. 223.
6. See Roland Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*, op. cit.

7. Maria Venturi, *L'amore si impara*, Rizzoli, Milan, 1988.

CHAPTER TWELVE

1. Peter Berges, M. Keller, "Marriage and the Construction of Reality", in *Diogenes*, 46, 1964.
2. The concept of project has many points of contacts with that of story, recently developed by Robert J. Sternberg, which promises interesting developments.
See Robert J. Sternberg, "Love is a Story", *The general psychologist*, Spring 1994.
In fact the project does not concern only our personal life, but our relation, and the role that both partners have in it.
3. The love pact corresponds to the constitution of the great collective moments. The constitution sets insuperable limits to the sovereignty of the group and its totalitarian violence, to which the sovereign too submits.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

1. On the meaning of quarrelling see Murray S. Davis, “Il litigio: meccanismo integrativo di un’intimità in pericolo”, in “Rassegna Italiana di Sociologia”, anno XIII, 2, aprile-giugno 1972, pp. 327-339.
2. Marcel Mauss, *The Gift. The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, (1923), trans. Routledge, London, 1990.
3. The three stages described here are the same as those first described by Giambattista Vico in *The New Science* at the beginning of the Eighteenth Century, (1744), trans. Cornell University Press, Ithaca & London, 1984. See also Rosa Giannetta Alberoni, *Gli esploratori del tempo*, Rizzoli, Milan, 1994. According to Vico, society passes cyclically through three phases. The first is that of the gods, the second of the heroes and the third that of men. The first stages corresponds to need, the second to comfort and the third to luxury.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

1. Murray S. Davis, *Intimate Relations*, op. cit. pp. 170-171.
2. From the letters of Karen Blixen quoted in Pietro Citati, *Ritratti di donne*, Rizzoli, Milan, p. 248.
3. Erica Jong, *Fear of Fifty*, op. cit. p. 138.
4. *Ibidem*, p. 139
5. *Ibidem*.
6. There is an amusing story by Patricia Highsmith entitled "The Farmer's Wife" in *Little Tales of Misogyny*, Heinemann, London, 1977, in which the wife expresses all her femininity having children until her husband goes mad.
7. Michel Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, (1984), trans. Penguin, London, 1987.
8. In the animal world it is a widespread phenomenon. See Lynn Margulis Dorion Sagan, *La danza misteriosa*, Mondadori, Milano, 1992.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

1. There are also love traditions in which fidelity does not imply exclusive rights. For example, in the polygamic society of the Sémoufo Nafata along the Ivory Coast marriage does not exist. What happens is that at night the men go to visit “girlfriends”. In this case fidelity means the same thing as friendship, for those who do not forget, and who come back and help are considered faithful. See Andreas Zempleni, *L’ami et l’étranger* in Cécile Wajsbrot, *La fidélité*, Ed. Autrement, Paris, 1990, p. 57.
2. George Bataille, *Eroticism*, (1957) Boyers, London, 1987.
3. See Gay Talese, *Thy Neighbor’s Wife*, Collins, London, 1980. Also Francesco Alberoni, *L’erotismo*, Garzanti, Milan, p. 107 ff.
4. The general outline of love cycles is therefore the following:
5. Gay Talese, *Thy Neighbor’s Wife*, op. cit.
6. Albert Goldman, *Elvis: The Last 24 Hours*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1981. The course of absolute promiscuity can be visualized from the following graph:

7. George Barry, *Infamous Woman: The Life of George Sand*, Anchor Books, New York, 1978.
8. The scheme of serial monogamy can be represented as follows:
9. We can use this movement with the following figure:
10. In this case the form is represented by the following figure:
11. The form can be outlined as follows:
12. Ernest Jones, *The Life and Works of Freud*, Penguin, London, 1961.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

1. See Helen Fisher, *Anatomy of Love*, op.cit.
2. Donata Francescato, *Quando l'amore finisce*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 1992, p. 73
3. *Ibidem*, p. 70
4. See Francesco Alberoni, *Il volo nuziale*, op. cit. p. 93.
5. Dalma Heyn, *The Erotic Silence of the Married Woman*, Bloomsbury, London, 1991.
6. Jurg Willi, *Couples in Collusion*, op. cit.

7. Henri Troyat, *Tolstoj*, op.cit.
8. Robert Woods Kennedy, *Un anno d'amore*, op. cit.
9. Rosa Giannetta Alberoni, Guido di Fraia, *Complicità e competizione*, Harlequin Mondadori, Milan, 1992.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

1. As far as I know this concept was first introduced by Jurg Willi, who has studied it in depth. See his *Dynamics of Couples Theory*, op. cit.
2. On the subject of envy see Francesco Alberoni, *L'amicizia*, op. cit.
3. On the subject of the relationship between friendship and falling in love, see Francesco Alberoni, *L'amicizia*, op. cit.
4. Robert J. Sternberg, "The Love Triangle" in Robert J. Sternberg & Michael L. Barnes (eds.), *The Psychology of Love*, Yale University Press, New Haven & London, 1988. These three dimensions can be measured with special scales and represented as triangles. When a couple is balanced they

are of equal intensity and the triangle is equilateral. If one of the three dimensions dominates the others, the triangle will be pointed or flattened on one or the other side.

5. Indeed, the triangle disappears. See the figure drawn by Guido di Fraia, *La passione amorosa*, Harlequin Mondadori, Milan, 1991, p. 59.
6. In the studies on intimate relationships, we remember the pathfinding work carried out by Murray S. Davis, *Intimate Relations*, op. cit. And for its application to couples see Willy Pasini, *Intimità*, op. cit.
7. The writer who attempted to give voice to this “stream of consciousness ” was James Joyce in *Ulysses*.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

1. Studies carried out in Kibbutz show that only 13 out of 2769 marriages took place between those growing up together. Living together during childhood and adolescence tends to develop feelings of tenderness and friendship and weaken erotic attraction.

2. Guido di Fraia, *La passione amorosa*, Harlequin Mondadori, Milan, 1991, pp. 82-83. The differences are illustrated in the figure below:
3. Interview carried out in the research then published in Francesco Alberoni, *Il volo nuziale*, op. cit.
4. It is the thesis held by Sasha Weitman in the study, *On the Elementary Forms of Socioerotic life*, op. cit.
See also Murray S. Davis, *Smut*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1983
5. Donata Francescato, *Quando l'amore finisce*, op. cit., pp 88-90.
6. Rosa Giannetta Alberoni & Guido di Fraia, *Complicità e competizione*, op. cit.
7. Eric Berne, *Games People Play*, (1964) Penguin, London, 1968.
8. AA.VV. *I giochi psicotici nella famiglia*, Raffaello Cortina, Milan, 1988.
9. Emil Ludwig, *Goethe*, (1922) P. Zsolnay, Berlin, 1931.
10. *Ibidem*.
11. Pietro Citati, *Goethe*, op. cit., p. 30.
12. Guglielmo Gatti, *Le donne nella vita e nell'arte di Gabriele D'Annunzio*, Guanda, Milan, 1951, p. 281.

13. Rosa Giannetta Alberoni, *Paolo e Francesca*, op. cit., p. 152.
14. George Sand-Alfred de Musset, *Lettres d'amour*, Hermann, Paris, 1985.

CHAPTER TWENTY

1. See K. Kelly, D. Musialkowsky, "Repeated Exposure to Sexually Explicit Stimuli: Novelty, Sex and Sexual Attitudes" in *Archives of Sexual Behaviour*, 1986, 15, pp. 487-489.
2. Joseph Heineman, *La preghiera ebraica*, Edizioni Qiqajon, Vicenza, 1992, pp. 115-116
3. See R. H. Steven, E. Beach, Abraham Tasset, "Love in Marriage" in Robert J. Sternberg & Michael Barnes, *The Psychology of Love*, op. cit. pp. 359-360.
4. Mircea Eliade, *The History of Religions: Essays in Methodology*, (1949), trans. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1959.
5. See Sasha Weitman, *On the Elementary Forms of Socioerotic Life*, op. cit.

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