

## Abstracts

### **Benno Gammerl, Queer Romance? Romantic Love in Biographical Narratives of West-German Lesbians and Gays**

How do homosexuals deal with the concept of romantic love? Do they dismiss or appropriate it? The analysis starts by focusing on the diverse aspects of high culture romanticism as well as mundane romance that surface in the narratives of lesbians and gays. The next section then scrutinises the ways in which interview partners integrate into their life stories the heterosexual encounters they experienced before they came out. These love episodes are incorporated either by separation, devaluation, revaluation or by amalgamation. Thereby the older narrators stick to romantic notions of exclusivity and highlight their one and only true i.e. their first same-sex love. The younger ones emphasise the equality and comparability of different intimate experiences instead. Is the power of romantic concepts therefore waning? The concluding remarks about alinear temporalities rather suggest that romantic love might simultaneously disappear and undergo a renaissance.

### **Claire Langhamer, Everyday Advice on Everyday Love. Romantic Expertise in Mid-twentieth Century Britain**

This essay explores the dynamics of problem page emotion-dialogue by looking at the letters that mid-century magazine readers wrote about heterosexual love, and the advice that they were offered. It focuses in particular on the advice columns of one of Britain's most popular women's magazines, "Woman's Own", analysing a sample of problem pages drawn from the period 1940 to 1960. Whilst there has been significant historiographical interest in the provision of modern sexual education, historians have paid less attention to the mechanisms through which emotional advice circulated and, crucially, the ways in which it was received. The focus here is upon what we might call 'everyday' forms of advice. The article uses a case study of relationships between agony aunts and their readers to map broader shifts in emotional authority. It presents advice columns as a cultural space where authentic personal feeling was in conflict with prescribed stand-

ards; where the authority of family could conflict with that of the expert; where the therapeutic state might be set up as a counterpoint to community norms. The article suggests that romantic love lay at the heart of the twentieth century battle between prescription and practice, ideas and experience, and, crucially, between duty and self-expression.

### **Barbara Asen, From "divine sparks of love" to "the Pope's holy blessing". Rhetorics of Romantic Love and the Catholic Context of Couple Correspondences from Austria**

This contribution takes a close look at a topic which has only been partly analysed until now: the impact of religious beliefs, catholic moral theology and a sacralised language on the negotiation of gender arrangements in letters exchanged by Austrian couples. The case study focuses on two unpublished personal correspondences, one of them written in 1874/75, the other one in the late 1950s/early 1960s. Both of them were inspired by a religious as well as romantic terminology, and are closely examined against the background of a dynamic and versatile model of romantic love on the one hand, and the gender-specific roles, responsibilities and hierarchies of a bourgeois gender model on the other. The men and women who created these sources were not only extensively affected or even limited by the moral guidelines set by the predominant Catholic Church. The study shows that these norms could in fact offer possibilities for individual action (e.g. serve as support for refusing sexual intercourse and persuading a fiancé of the necessity of lawful marriage).

### **Ute Gerhard, Feminist Perspectives in Sociology. Disremembered Traditions and Critical Interventions**

Since the nineteenth century, from the very beginning of sociology as a scientific discipline, there has been a critical feminist counter-discourse that, until now, has not been part of the history of science. Sociology was conceptualised in response to 'the social question' and the processes of modernisation. It invented 'the social' as a subject of scientific research. Core questions referred to the social order, the family, the relationship between society and community and the division of labour. The gender order played a central role in the diagnosis of societal crises by classical sociologists, who thereby legitimized the traditional gender order. Although women were excluded from university studies until the beginning of the twentieth century, this contribution presents exemplary critical interventions of women starting with Jenny P. d'Héricourt, who dared to engage in a public dispute with Auguste Comte (1860). Other interventions came from forgotten pioneers of empirical social research around 1900, and from

Viola Klein (1946). In her *Sociology of Knowledge* she gave an explanation of why women as experts of 'the social' would be well prepared for sociological analysis. Building upon these foundations, sociological gender studies still can profit from these insights.

### **Heike I. Schmidt, No Romantic Love in Africa? Men, Mission, Monogamy**

The sparse historical and anthropological research on romantic love in Africa south of the Sahara gives the impression that the phenomenon may merely be of marginal importance. Instead, the reasons for the apparent impossibility to write about love in Africa are largely rooted in its epistemology: Western stereotypes of a continent inhabited by tribal, atavistic people, barely modernised by colonialism or touched by globalisation which introduced romantic love to the world region have been in part responsible for this dearth of academic knowledge, as have recent identity politics and practical concerns that focused research in the area on sexuality. Here, the main argument is that the almost complete silence about love in Africa may be addressed by applying a more inclusive concept of love that embraces ideologies and practices hitherto neglected, such as polygyny, and that expands the one which has been developed by historians of the medieval and early modern periods. This, in turn, enriches the research on the history of love in Western societies.

