

Relationship and marriage: public discourse and individual experience

- In the paper love is perceived as a cultural phenomenon the significance of which – for the individual – is the result of different discourses on love. One of them is the discourse on *romantic love* and its follow-up, marriage and family (Giddens 1992; Illouz 2012). On the other hand, the discourse on *democratic and fluid love* covers “departures” from such a sequence (Giddens 1992; Bauman 2003). After due consideration of different (scientific and colloquial) narratives, the paper problematises the development of ideas about future love relationships and marriage.

Key words: relationship, marriage, private sphere

INTRODUCTION

I observe love as a culturally coded phenomenon through the surrounding norms, language, stereotypes, metaphors and symbols (Illouz 1997; 3, acc. to Škokić 2004: 147). Since communication about love is made possible precisely by cultural codes, “secret systems of words, symbols and behaviour” (Hyatt and Simons 1999: 28), in this paper¹ I have attempted to deal with *what* is meant when speaking about love. I observed love in terms of what connects us, of what has the function of creating togetherness (Jambrešić Kirin 2003: 117). The forms of togetherness discussed in my paper are partner relationships and marriage, socio-cultural categories within which individuals are connected in a *couple*. These categories are important at the private and at the public level. This is suggested by the many ambiguous and controversial reactions caused by the referendum on marriage and the constitutional definition of marriage held on 1 December 2013 in the Republic of Croatia. The referendum

1 This paper is based on my degree thesis entitled „Cultural Analysis of Love and Family Relationships on the Example of Lovers’ (Valentine’s) Day in Post-Socialism”, defended at the Faculty of Arts and Letters of the University of Zagreb on 14 February 2014. My mentor was Tihana Rubić, Ph.D. The theme was presented on two occasions: at the Annual Meeting of the Croatian Ethnological Society in June 2014 in Zagreb, and at the Meeting of Graduate Ethnologists and Cultural Anthropologists “Carry On!” in October 2014 in Zadar.

question was the following: “Are you in favour of the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia being amended with a provision stating that marriage is a union between a woman and a man?” Out of the total 37.90% eligible voters, participating in the referendum, 65.87% voted “yes”.²

One of the public reactions after the referendum was a discussion of marriage in the thematic scientific TV show *The Third Round*,³ broadcast on 10 December 2013, with the participation of Željka Jelavić, ethnologist and museum pedagogue, and Jasna Čapo, ethnologist and cultural anthropologist. They highlighted the socio-cultural dimensions of marriage in the Republic of Croatia such as the social legitimisation of sexual contact, reproduction and children’s education (cf. Čapo 1998), and thereby drew attention to some aspects of its importance at the individual level.

This referendum example introduces the basic problem discussed in my paper, i.e., the issue of freedom of love life and freedom of planning future love. Indeed, the referendum suggests the influence of the institutional definition of marriage within the possible scope of choosing life in a union, while the authors of the show highlighted the following points with regard to the free choice of future love. According to Čapo (cf. Čapo 1998), personal freedom in the choice of the spouse and love in marriage are a *recent* phenomenon (of the past two centuries) because marriage was treated before that as a contract or a transaction the parties to which were not exclusively individuals but also families. *Today*, stresses Jelavić, *hidden factors* such as income status, employment status or the credit burden are important factors influencing the choice of the spouse. The choice is also influenced by the desirability of establishing a marital union in the Republic of Croatia, as suggested by ethnologist Carolin Leutloff-Grandits (2012:73) in her study *Kinship, Community and Care: Rural-Urban Contrasts in Croatia*. She points out that entering into marriage is a certain phase in the life of most people in rural and urban environments. This is confirmed by statistical data on the number of marital unions in the Republic of Croatia published by the Government Statistical Office: the results of the 2011 census demonstrate that most men and women are united in marriage.⁴

Hereinafter I have singled out the ethnological and sociological references dealing with the socio-cultural understanding of the love relationship and future love, and engaged in the study of the public sphere and individual experiences. In my paper I have used sociological references because they are more exhaustive considering the theme at hand, while some sociologists have presented their interpretations and analyses of the topic through qualitative research (Stein Erlich, Kaufmann, Leccardi). By using the qualitative method in my research I was able to collect individual experiences, stories and attitudes, as well as public narrations on relationships and marriage. I approached my research through a qualitative analysis of discourse, i.e., I explored the language in

2 The turnout figure is considerable considering the number of voters at other referendums held in the Republic of Croatia. Thus, the turnout at the referendum on Croatia’s accession to the European Union was 43.51% (<http://www.izbori.hr/2012Referendum/rezultati/rezultati.html>, 20.09.2015.).

3 [http://www.hrt.hr/index.php?id=en&tx_ttnews\[cat\]=771&cHash=92ca0dbd8b](http://www.hrt.hr/index.php?id=en&tx_ttnews[cat]=771&cHash=92ca0dbd8b) (15.02.2015.).

4 http://www.dzs.hr/Hrv/censuses/census2011/results/htm/h01_01_15/H01_01_15_RH.html (11.07.2015).

use by looking for relations between the narrative and the cultural context (Wetherell, Taylor, Yates 2001: 6, 8). I collected material by using the method of *observation with participation* and the semi-structured interview. In the public sphere, the public urban and virtual space, I explored the cultural phenomena approaching them as visual and written information on relationships and marriage. Some of these phenomena include Valentine's Day and a series of public lectures on the theme of love life. I conducted semi-structured interviews with two generations of narrators (informants): those born in the late nineteen-eighties, and those born in the late nineteen-fifties and early nineteen-sixties. I included the older narrator generation while attempting to create a contextual interview framework for the narrator generation born in the late nineteen-eighties. The broad interview themes were designed in advance and covered questions related to the understanding and experience of love relationships and plans for the future, or reflections on their own life plans in youth.⁵

DIFFERENT PERCEPTIONS OF LOVE RELATIONSHIP AND MARRIAGE

While love can be regarded as a phenomenon having the function of cohesion and affiliation in a community (Jambrešić Kirin 2003: 117), it can also be regarded as a phenomenon in continuous conflict with culture (Škokić 2011: 15). In her research of the Yugoslav family between the two world wars sociologist Vera Stein Erlich distinguished three relations of the culture of *the period* to love life and marital life. One of them is a "hostile disinclination" to the love sentiment because, as Stein Erlich explains, marriage is the consequence of duty and convention; the second considers the tragic and fatal nature of romantic love as a Hollywood artefact "controlling the life of illiterate peasants; finally, inclination to love life with a more serene and more realistic attitude (1964: 265-266). In the first two cases the *wish* of the individual apparently leads to a "departure" in the sequence of entering into the categories of relationship and marriage. Thus, in her mentioned study Stein Erlich (1964: 108) touches upon conflicts in the selection of the spouse, occurring, as Erlich says, because of the difference between the wishes of the family and the youth's pursuit of "freedom" in the choice of the partner. Such conflicts, just as the already mentioned marriage referendum, indicate the importance of the relationship and marriage as reference points for the prospective (love) future of individuals.

Two concepts of love deriving from mainly sociological circles (Giddens 1992; Illouz 1997, 2012; Bauman 2003) are important for research. These concepts are *romantic love* and *democratic and fluid love*. The paper highlights the distinction in terms of the following elements. Romantic love is attained in a relationship with a person perceived as "the one and only", irreplaceable, with whom we plan a long-term future together (Giddens, 1992; Illouz, 1997, 2012; Škokić 2004). According to sociologist Eva Illouz (2012: 196) the culture of the *West* uses this concept of love in order to direct individuals and shape them in line with existing routes. They include, for instance, the

5 The themes were divided into the imaginative, comparative, descriptive and value levels of love modelled after the research of Valentina Gulin Zrnić (2006) "Native, one's own and personal: auto-cultural defamiliarisation".

attainment of a long-term relationship, entering into marriage and founding a family. Indeed, the author (Ibid.) points out that the role of romantic love is to guarantee the union of the couple and promote the wish for reproduction.

According to Gidens (1992) and Illouz (1997, 2012), the route of *traditional* romantic love leads from a love relationship to marital life. Unlike partnership, marriage is determined institutionally, and in the Republic of Croatia individuals of different sex undertake, by entering into marriage, to establish a severable monogamous union involving specific mutual rights and obligations.⁶ Although family life is not conditioned by marriage, according to the research by Leutfloff-Grandits (2013: 73) the motives for entering into marriage in the Republic of Croatia are precisely the founding of a family, family support in the attainment of joint life, and acquiring the social status of maturity. At the symbolical level, marriage appears to be the entrance ticket to family life which is attributed meanings like happiness, sense, harmony, intimacy, love. In other words, it signifies the transition to new family life which is characterised, according to pedagogue Maja Ljubetić (1992: 137), by raising children and relationships based on mutual support, and emotions of love and respect.

The concept of democratic and fluid love was conceived by the sociologists Giddens (1992: 139) and Bauman (2003: viiii) within the scope of the theory of *reflexive modernisation*. As Jana Bačević (2007: 283) points out in her paper *Love in the Period of Transition*, according to this theory, developed in the late 20th century, individuals still live within the framework of categories born in modernism, but reflexively refer to them. This would mean that individuals also reflexively refer both to the socio-cultural category of the relationship and marriage and to the relations within these categories. In other words, democratic and fluid love is attained in a relationship characterised by emotional satisfaction, partner equality, but also fragility, indeterminacy, short duration or long duration bearing in mind the possibility of breakup. In a love relationship individuals experience themselves primarily as free individuals and that, along with reflexivity, suggests *individualisation*, a process whereby persons become separated and different, and acquire independence of rights and responsibilities (Čačić-Kumpes, Kumpes 2008: 133). This also facilitates the breakup of the relationship or marriage if it becomes unsatisfactory or unfulfilling.

Habitual experiences of relationships are discussed by the French sociologist Jean-Claude Kaufmann in his book *Dirty Linen: Couples as Seen Through Their Laundry*⁷ In his book Kaufmann presents his micro-sociological research of couples in modern France (2004: 60, 61). By studying the habits of couples living together through the joint performance of domestic chores the author points out that signifiers such as the start of living together or entering into marriage need not necessarily mean a transition to a couple sharing everyday chores, and that the independence of the individual(s) in the couple is given due attention in the integration of the chores.

6 Information available on: <http://www.pravokutnik.net/sites/default/files/skripte/obiteljskomiroslov.doc> (14.02.2015.).

7 *La trame conjugale: analyse du couple par son linge.*

In terms of their temporal indeterminacy democratic and fluid love are a follow-up of the concept of so-called “do it yourself” biographies. These are biographies determined by an uncertain future and possibility of choice in the creation of individual lives (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002: 3). Sociologist Carmen Leccardi (2006: 16) claims that unpredictability, the impossibility of controlling one’s age, the demand of continuous flexibility are often drafted into the biographies of young people and refers to the unstable borders of the transition from youth to adulthood. Leccardi (2006: 217-20) and Kaufmann (2006: 60) both appear to suggest that the normative signifiers of transition to adulthood – such as leaving the parental home, employment, sharing the living space with the partner and entrance into marriage – are de-standardised and de-fragmented, and so is, therefore, the linear sequence: romantic love relationship, marriage and the founding of the family.

LOVE RELATIONSHIPS AND MARRIAGE IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE:

THE DESIRABILITY OF A ROMANTIC LOVE RELATIONSHIP AND ATTEMPTS FOCUSED ON ITS RATIONALISATION

In the public sphere I have studied the public urban and the virtual space. I have analysed the discourses through narratives derived from cultural phenomena such as Valentine’s Day and a series of public lectures entitled “Love from Another Angle”. I have found interpreting two dominant discourses regarding the perception of the love relationship and the attainment of a future in love. One of them is the imperative of the romantic love couple and the other a call for critical consideration and analysis of the couple, marriage and future in two.

Valentine’s Day is an international feast observed every year on the 14th of February, celebrated by decorating public spaces and shop windows with a red heart, by presenting flowers, congratulation cards, chocolate boxes, cosmetic and like products, and by couples dining together, going to the cinema or theatre, or on a romantic trip. Narratives in the media space invite people to celebrate the day and enjoy it with the “special” person, and buy presents bearing a “romantic aura” (cf. Illouz 1997). While the many decorations and events promoted by the motive of being in love suggest the symbolic value of the love relationship, visual narratives help us to recognise that the case involves assertion of the young couple (Fig. 1/p. 187).

The assertion of the couple/partnership is recognised in the love padlocks in front of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Zagreb. They are the result of the art project *Love Padlocks in Zagreb* realised through cooperation between the Museum of Contemporary Art in Zagreb and the *Pipilota* NGO in 2013.⁸ Citizens affixed (and can still do it) padlocks on the fence in front of the Museum. The action originates from the positive initial experiences with “love padlocks” in other countries, and spread this standardised behaviour to many sites in cities throughout the world (Paris, New York, Seoul,

8 <http://www.msu.hr/#/hr/19882/> (20.09.2015.).

Ljubljana). People lock the padlock to a fence/bridge and throw the key away. The act of “locking love” was interpreted in the media as an oxymoronic *new tradition* of declaring love which, unlike past manifestations such as presenting roses or confectionery on Valentine’s Day, “*guarantees long love*”.⁹ This leads to the question of our tendency to petrify the love relationship, make it eternal and, by habitually marking it, give it the meaning of duration, security and romance. We do it by *standardised* ways of declaring love, e.g., as already mentioned, by presenting roses, sweets, perfumes and by the *new* padlock tradition. The only difference is to be found in the fact that, as we shall see later, being in love does not necessarily “guarantee” duration. Duration and security are also linked with the desirability of entering into marriage in – according to Illouz (2012: 196) – the well-known, well-established way.

During my research I *participated and observed* in the audience at one of the series of public lectures on the topic *Love from Another Angle*. The lecture I attended as a researcher, entitled *Fallacies About Love*, was held on 19 November 2013 in the Kaptol Centar Cinema in Zagreb. The thematic titles of the other lectures in the series were *The Nature of Love and of Being in Love*, *How to Catch Love/Choose or Be Chosen*, and *Marriages, Divorces, Adulteries*. The very title of the series suggests *another* angle of looking at love, and the reason for it appears to be the creation of a counterbalance to the discourse glorifying and idealising the love relationship in terms of being in love and duration. This can also be recognised in the thematic blocks which examine the fallacies about love, the nature of love and of being in love, the very discovery of the partner, love outside marriage and, finally, breakup. The lecturers were sociologist Bruno Šimleša and psychotherapist Zoran Milivojević, and the series was developed out of their popular bestsellers on self-help and popular psychology.¹⁰ The lecture which I attended thematised a number of “fallacies” about love such as those about “soul mates” or “true” love. Considering the subject of the lecture and the narrations of young people bearing witness to their insecurity about the future of love, the most memorable part was perhaps the appeal of psychotherapist Zoran Milivojević *not to seek* the meaning of life in love and “true” love as the reference point for one’s own future.

This appeal opens up the neuralgic spot not mentioned by the “dominant” discourse – the breakup. Thus, the “Anti-Valentine” of the Zagreb Youth Theatre in 2013 critically reviewed the habitual actions on Valentine’s Day emphasising that presenting roses and sweets and shop-window decoration had reached the point of saturation, and called for the joint consideration of love during the performance of *Love’s End*.¹¹ The performance thematises and problematises the emotional weight of being in a relationship and of its breakup, i.e., the separation of the couple. A important part of the public discourse on breakup is held by the Museum of Broken Relationships in Zagreb. The concept of the Museum is based on providing an opportunity for recovery after a failed

9 <http://www.ziher.hr/2013/03/22/lokoti-simboli-bezuvjetne-ljubavi-i-u-zagrebu/> (20. 09.2015.).

10 The lectures were organised by the publishers, *Mozaik Knjiga* and *Ljevak*, of Zoran Milivojević’s books *Catching Love* and *Love Formulas*, and Bruno Šimleša’s *Loveology* and *I Am Too Hot Anyway in Gloves*.

11 (*Clôture de l’amour*) <http://www.ziher.hr/2013/03/22/lokoti-simboli-bezuvjetne-ljubavi-i-u-zagrebu/> (20. 09.2015.).

relationship by donating a personal object symbolising the legacy of the relationship and the love story connected with the object.¹² It includes, for example, an important moment in the the relationship or the underlying reason of the breakup. In this way, through donations and stories individuals are offered a therapeutic effect, and visitors are given an insight into different narratives on the end of the relationship.

THE ETHNOGRAPHY OF LOVE RELATIONSHIPS AND MARRIAGE

In my paper I have used narratives as the basic source of data on the ideas and experiences of individuals, and in the selection of narrators I applied the chain method facilitating the study of the *private, personal and intimate* sphere. The result was the collection of narratives and personal data from the broader circle of my friends and relatives, which is at the same time a weakness of the mentioned method of linear choice based on a chain of interlocutors – it produces a group of like-minded persons, i.e., a group with similar characteristics and attitudes. Some of the narrators were young students or fresh graduates 23 to 26 years old.¹³ Almost all the narrators were from Croatia and lived dislocated from the family home in which they had grown together with both parents in long-standing marriage; they were also single. Jan (26) was from Barcelona, and Magali (26) from Paris. Anja (23) from Zagreb and Matija (24) lived in the family home at the time of the study. In addition to being single at the time of the study, they had never been, according to their narratives, in a “serious” or “long” relationship. The interviews were conducted in an informal setting and covered themes such as the perception of love, description of the love relationship, personal love experiences and future plans. In my study I also included narrators 50 and 60 years old in a long-standing marriage with the person with whom they had founded their family.

Several narrative elements/categories appeared in the narratives of all younger narrators: surprise at the question regarding the description of the relationship, “absence” of a love plan or spontaneity, doubt/insecurity concerning the liberal and traditional concept of love, and pursuit of “prolonged youth”.

I noted the first element in the narrator’s difficult verbalisation and description of love and the love relationship. When speaking about love, the narrators would stop, pause for a longer time while answering or before that, and leave the impression that they had never thought about certain issues in a focused way but just “lived” them. The narrators were surprised by questions asking them to think about love relationships. Thus, some of the answers were often along the following lines: “... how does a relationship look... uh-oh...” (Matija, 24 years old); “I don’t know, it’s more like something you see in everyday life” (Jan, 26); “I can’t describe that eloquently” (Dora, 24). Thereby the narrators indicated the lack of a conscious and focused consideration of a love relationship and, therefore, possible creation of a love plan. Apparently, the narrators attempt to keep love in the irrational and spontaneous sphere. On first sight, this is indicated

12 For more information on the Museum see http://brokenships.com/hr/o_muzeju (20. 09. 2015.).

13 Pseudonyms were used in order to protect the identity of the narrators.

by the absence of love plans connected with such considerations, formulations, narrations and phrases: "... Love is something I don't want to control... it's an area where I can be, say, more relaxed, I don't know how to explain that"(Magali, 26), or "... sometimes some things just happen..." (Matija, 24). They also show little knowledge about current discourses on love and, thus, some of them consider for the first time the idea of democratic love. The moment in the narratives when the traditional and the liberal concept of loved are confronted reveals the not so visible but still present love plan of some individuals. In other words, after my implications about democratic and fluid love, some individuals had doubts about the existence or discovery of a "right" person with whom to spend their life or discovery of several "right" persons in their life cycle. Thus, one narrator explained: "Yes, I believe there is [such a person]... but whether this person will be just for once or forever... I think you can... okay, I think that there is a person for every period" (Matija, 24). In another narrative doubt is related to one's positioning within the world of love relationships and breakups considering the fact that the "right" person or one of the "right" persons not yet found:

"I can accept that this is reality... but for me... I cannot even be part of it until I find the right person... I dream about [a person]... someone with whom you want to spend all your life and with whom you want to have a family and all that. Maybe such a person does not exist, I don't know (...), maybe it's only a question of getting to know each other, and then one day you realise, ok, yes, you're the one, let's go..." (Jan 26).

I also noted by feeling of "unavoidability" of renouncing and even losing "freedom" because of the love relationship. The duration of a relationship appears to be affected by the individualised pursuit of one's own *personal happiness* and freedom of choice. Thus, one of the narrators said that he would not keep up a relationship that does not satisfy him because "he would not risk his happiness" (Jan, 26). Another female narrator argues: "Today, I think, it is more difficult to enter into a relationship because people are sort of specific individuals and have to find somebody" (Sonja, 24). The liberal concept of love is recognised by the confrontation with the idea of togetherness as the condition of harmonious, traditional functioning of the family. In other words the vision of a future in love includes the existence of freedom at the level of the relationship with one person as opposed to the perpetuation of joint actions along the lines of Kaufmann's research (2004):

"Love does not exist for me, such as *traditional love*, always being together, going to a restaurant when we go out, that does not exist (...)... For example, my granny and my grandpa, they spent all their time together, did everything together, even when they went shopping or over a weekend, celebrated and danced together, everything together... and I, eh (...) I believe more in love involving our own life, loving each other but also having our freedom, in the sense that we all need time to breathe..." (Magali, 26).

The signifier of future love is its "seriousness". That is, seriousness is the element of distinction in the categorisation of relationships into short and long ones in the time sequence, whereby seriousness indicates duration, future and the certainty of the relationship. This again opens up the dispute between the traditional and liberal concept of the relationship, in which the traditional relationship is attributed the meaning of

duration and, thereby, “seriousness”. A female narrator in the older group indicated the importance of distinguishing relationships in terms of expectations rather than in terms of duration. In her youth there were dynamic and variable, “short” and “long” relationships; more serious relationships, however, were associated with *more concrete* expectations from the other person:

“Many relationships were more serious, perhaps more tolerant, maybe established such contacts more seriously and may have involved greater expectations (...) For example, I can go to the seaside with my boyfriend, but that is a serious relationship, not just like that, I don’t know whether I am going steady him now, and I don’t know whether he’s my boyfriend or just my friend” (Vlasta, 53).

Along with momentary uncertainty and spontaneity in the attainment of partner relationships, there are also ideas on the future which can be recognised in the self-positioning of the narrator in the space between a child and an adult. By deferring plans for the future and relying on the “open opportunity”, related to the desire for “prolonged youth”, they plan, but with no temporal firmness and certainty:

“I think I still have time. I know I am 26, but I know that I still have the opportunity to travel, to study, still learn a little...” (Magali, 26).

All the younger generation narrators want marriage “some time” in the future and connect the marital community with the moment of the future creation of their own family; in this connection they consider divorce a deviation. The value attitudes of individuals with respect to the marital community are focused on concepts such as “weight”, “beauty” and “normalcy” of a relationship and of marriage; therefore, dedication on the one hand and meaning on the other. This is a frequent ambivalent image of a long and durable relationship observed by the narrators in their parents, with whom they had grown up and which had lived together even up to 30 years. Nevertheless, regardless of the family “example” and experience, all the narrators believed that they could not influence on their own when their marriage would be realised in the future or guarantee its duration.

CONCLUSION

Part of the public sphere tries to channel love towards a desirable form of togetherness: a romantic and durable love relationship. On the other hand, the “opposition” attempts to rationalise and demystify love, even to the point of inviting citizens not to seek the meaning of life in love. The glorification of love in a couple is suggested by cultural phenomena attempting to mark the love relationship with a *celebration*, through one-day joint enjoyment on Valentine’s Day, or by *perpetuating* it locking “love padlocks” and throwing away the key (Fig. 2/p. 187). The “opposition” includes phenomena such a series of public lectures on love, the “Anti-Valentine” programme and the Museum of Broken Relationships which attempt to rationalise love and, for example, refer to the problem of the breakup of the relationship or offer a prospect after the breakup. In spite of these endeavours to channel young people towards love togetherness, and

warnings related to the related problems, the research, accidentally, included narrators – single persons – apparently bypassed by the mentioned public sphere. My single interlocutors at the time of the interview sought no love relationships and, accordingly, did not even think of any possible future breakup or marriage.

The narratives of the single young persons indicate their spontaneity in love, incognizant love plans and doubt with regard to the perception of the love relationship and their own (love) future. Some of the narrators rejected the planning of love life because it perceived it as something “beyond” control and reflection (categorisation), or as something characterised by unpredictability, spontaneity, inconclusiveness, something that “simply happens” (Matija, 24). The narrators displayed difficulties in presenting their narratives and they appeared to be caught off-guard in describing and defining love relationships, and that also suggested incognizance of their own life and, at first sight, the absence of a love plan. The narrators described the current period in their life as a transition between a *child* and an *adult person*, they were in a “waiting” phase, and did not plan the future “impatiently” because they felt that they had no particular control over it. The “lack of planning” future love and leaving several opportunities open in one’s life is related to the individual’s pursuit of “prolonged” youth, freedom and self-actualisation.

The attitudes of the young are marked by positive values about marriage and family life, certainty of contracting marriage and motivation regarding the founding of one’s own family. On the other hand, the attitudes are marked by what is provided by liberal ideology, i.e., desire for freedom which appears to be in opposition to the desire for “having someone”, i.e., by what is provided by the ideology of love.

Although there were at the moment no opportunities for careful planning of the future (housing, employment, founding a relationship and marriage, and family), the desire to attain a love relationship and entering into marriage in some undetermined future is certainly present, although vaguely. Freedom in the choice of the individual’s love remains questionable considering the lack of self-reflection, the positioning of the existing love life on a broader context and, therefore, the possible institutional constraints. On the other hand, freedom in the choice of one’s love is present because the narrators are after individual development and independence, and recognise that they *have time* for considering future love.

While a love relationship is related to long and short duration, being in love and seriousness, the creation of a concrete love plan is marked in young narrators first and foremost by doubts initiated by such meaning, which opens up room for *fluidity, flexibility and spontaneity* in the attainment of the love relationship. Such an insecure relation of the narrator to a relationship and marriage places greater emphasis on the influence of everyday life (*hidden factors*, e.g., income status or professional life) on the creation of a love plan with regard to the possible choice and individual pursuit.

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