AN INFORMAL HISTORY OF LOVE U.S.A.

By ARTHUR SCHLESINGER JR.

The Founding Fathers dedicated this republic to the agreeable proposition that all men, and all Americans especially, were endowed by their Creator with unalienable rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Their descendants have been trying to claim these rights for themselves ever since. We have, on the whole, caught up with life and liberty. But, so far as the third item is concerned, we appear to have had a good deal more pursuit than happiness.

"This people is one of the happiest in the world," wrote Alexis de Tocqueville a century and a quarter ago. Would anyone say this so confidently today? The pursuit of happiness has never ceased, but we seem to be falling farther and farther behind our goal. George and Martha were once the father and mother of their country. Now they revile each other in a thousand movie houses in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* The passion for happiness carries us everywhere—to the neighborhood saloon and the psychoanalyst's couch, to the marriage counselor and the divorce lawyer, to promiscuity, homosexuality and impotence, to mom or to marijuana and amphetamines—everywhere, evidently, except to happiness itself.

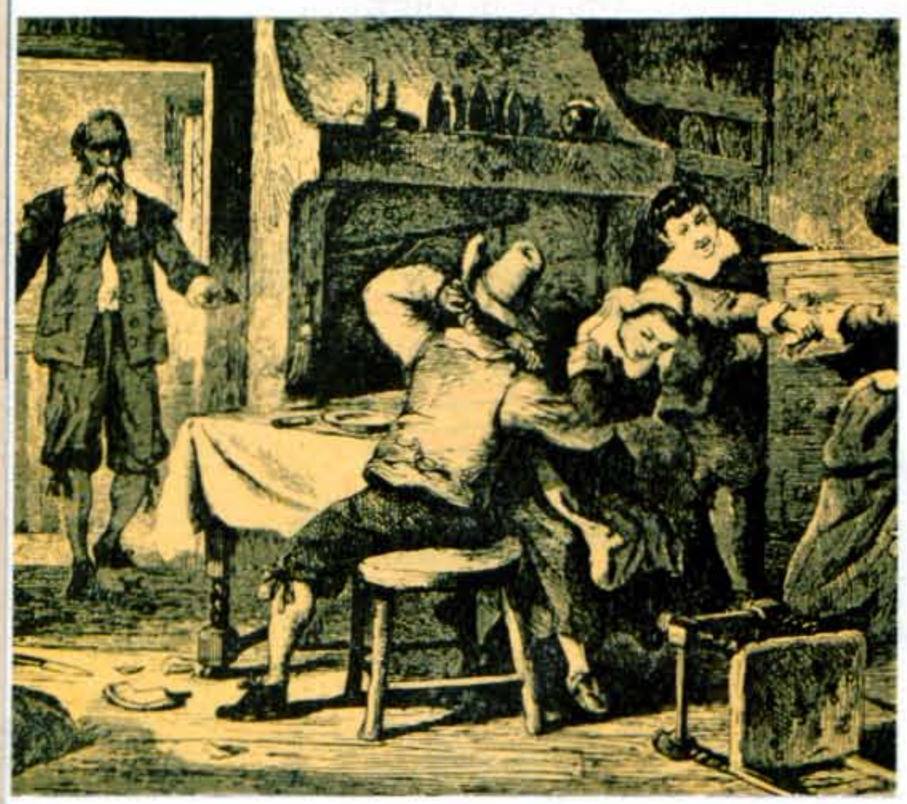
What has happened to the American theory of happiness? We have always construed that theory in private terms—in terms of individual success and individual fulfillment. And if, for some, such success and fulfillment can come from acquiring power or money, for very many Americans it comes ultimately from the triumphs and consolations of personal relations—above all, the relation of love. As a nation we have inherited the dream of love brought to our shores by the earliest colonists, a dream nourished by our fantasies but often negated by facts.

So fundamental is the romantic dream to our lives that we do not realize how small a part of mankind through history has shared it. All ages and cultures, of course, have known marriage and family. Some peoples, like the old Romans or the Indians of the *Kamasutra*, have thought deeply and ingeniously about sex. But the idea of romantic love as cherished by Americans—the belief in passion and desire as the key to happy marriage and the good life—is relatively new and still largely confined to the Christian world. "In China," Francis L. K. Hsu has reminded us, "the term 'love,' as it is used by Americans, has never been respectable. Up to modern times the term was scarcely used in Chinese literature." (If the Red Guards have their way, it will not be used again.) And even on the continent of Europe, except as the young in recent years have succumbed to the processes of Americanization, passion has been generally kept distinct from marriage and family. There romantic love, that ennobling emotional experience, has remained an improbable hope, to be pursued outside the normal conventions of life and doomed to tragedy. Only the Americans have assumed that passion is destined to fulfillment. Only the Americans have attempted on a large scale the singular experiment of trying to incorporate romantic love into the staid and stolid framework of marriage and the family.

This was true from the start—in spite of misconceptions we still have about the 17th-century Puritans. Stern and God-fearing, the first settlers no doubt rejected the licentiousness of the Old World for the austerity of the New. Yet, for all their condemnation of playing cards, the theater, fancy clothes and other lures of the devil, for all the repression wrought by their dogmatic Calvinism, the Puritans were surprisingly open and frank about sex. Hawthorne's prim moralistic Puritans were characters more of the 19th than of the 17th century. In extreme cases the elders issued their scarlet letters; they insisted on confessions of fornication in open church (and these became so common that they were almost routine); and they rebuked outspoken hussies, like Abigail Bush of Westfield who said in 1697 that her new stepmother was "hot as a bitch." But, if one might expect John Rolfe to go off with Pocahontas in hot-blooded Virginia, one must not forget that Priscilla Mullens and John Alden lived and loved in rockbound Plymouth. Gov. William Bradford in his *History of Plymouth Plantation*, after roundly deploring the sexual excesses of his flock, concluded philosophically:

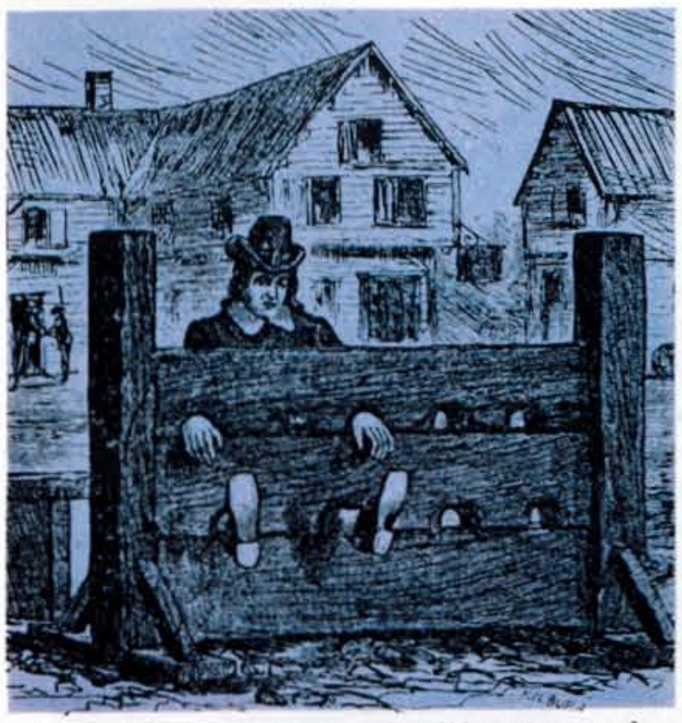
> *It may be in this case as it is with waters when their streams are stopped or dammed up; when they get passage they flow with more violence, and make more noise and disturbance, than when they are suffered to run quietly in their own channels.*

The elders expelled James Mattock from the First Church of Boston for declining to sleep with his wife; and town records show that Puritan ministers cheerfully married an as-



A Puritan patriarch intrudes upon a frolic in his home.

We have the wrong idea about our Puritan forebears. For all their austerity, they saw sex as natural and joyous.



The Puritans punished excesses but did not frown on love.

tonishing number of New England maidens already well along with their first babies.

After all, if the Puritans put people into stocks, they also bundled. No doubt this was because houses were small and winters cold, and young men and women could find privacy and warmth only in bed. "Why it should be thought incredible," wrote the Rev. Samuel Peters, "for a young man and young woman innocently and virtuously to lie down together in a bed with a great part of their clothes on, I cannot conceive." If the Reverend Peters could not conceive, some of the young bundlers evidently did. One thing sometimes led to another, then as now; and still the practice continued in Puritan New England for nearly two centuries.

The Puritans thus in their way saw sex as a natural and joyous part of marriage, to be plainly discussed and freely accepted. A Marylander visiting Boston in 1744 could report: "This place abounds with pretty women who appear rather more abroad than they do at [New] York and dress elegantly. They are, for the most part, free and affable as well as pretty. I saw not one prude while I was there." He would not have been so fortunate a century later. For, though passion and marriage continued together in the romantic dream, circumstances were conspiring to separate them in American reality.

For one thing the very proclamation of independence and the formation of the new democratic republic contained a deep and subtle challenge to the ideals of romantic love. Romance, after all, had sprung up in the feudalism of medieval Europe, as the pastime of the nobility. The American colonies had no nobility, no feudal institutions, and the new republic pledged itself to liberty, equality and rationality. The bright, clear light of the young nation was hard on passion. "No author, without a trial," observed Hawthorne, "can conceive of the difficulty of writing a romance about a country where there is no shadow, no antiquity, no mystery, no picturesque and gloomy wrong, nor anything but a commonplace prosperity, in broad and simple daylight, as is happily the case with my dear native land."

The French writer Stendhal, reflecting on romantic love half a century after the Declaration of Independence, predicted sorrowfully that it has no future in America. "They have such a *habit of reason* in the United States," he wrote, "that 'crystallization' [by which he meant the moment of abandonment to love] has become impossible. . . . Of the pleasure that passion gives I see nothing." In Europe, "desire is sharpened by restraint; in America it is blunted by liberty."

In America desire was blunted too by the role of marriage in a new country. For the incessant demand for population and labor was transforming marriage into a service institution, and this utilitarian motive was fundamentally at conflict with the old ideals of romantic love. Benjamin Franklin, an instinctive anti-romantic, made the point with characteristic pungency in 1745: "A single man has not nearly the value he would have in [a] state of union. He is an incomplete animal. He resembles the odd half of a pair of scissors." When a good colonist met and married a girl right off the boat, it was probably less a case of love at first sight than of an overweening practical need for a wife—if only to escape the bachelors' tax. And when a man instructed his wife to dress only in a shift at the wedding ceremony, it was less because of concupiscence than of computation; for a widow, by thus symbolizing her poverty, could spare her new husband responsibility for the debts of his predecessor. So South Kingstown, R.I., February, 1720:

> *Thomas Calverwell was joyned in marriage to Abigail Calverwell his wife. . . . He took her in marriage after she had gone four times across the highway in only her shift and hair-lace and no other clothing. Joyned together in marriage by me* GEORGE HAZARD, *Justice*

Men absorbed in building a new land in the wilderness had little time or energy left for the cultivation of romantic passions. And, as the new nation grew, they seemed to have even less time. By the early part of the 19th century the making of money was becoming

an obsessive masculine goal. Tocqueville, visiting the United States in 1831-32, noted that American men had contracted "the ways of thinking of the manufacturing and trading classes." This constituted another blow to romance. Few American men, Tocqueville said, were "ever known to give way to those idle and solitary meditations which commonly precede and produce the great emotions of the heart."

If American men were becoming too preoccupied for passion, American women were becoming too rational. Scarcity gave women in the early colonies and, later, on the ever-receding frontier a measure of bargaining power they could never have expected in the homeland, and they happily seized every opportunity for self-assertion. One finds even George Washington commenting ruefully on female independence. He wrote in 1783:

> *I never did, nor do I believe I ever shall, give advice to a woman who is setting out on a matrimonial voyage; first, because I never could advise one to marry without her consent; and, secondly, because I know it is to no purpose to advise her to refrain when she has obtained it. A woman very rarely asks an opinion or requires advice on such an occasion, till her resolution is formed; and then it is with the hope and expectation of obtaining a sanction, not that she means to be governed by your disapprobation.*

This is one of the first descriptions of the clear-eyed, rational American girl who would grow in glory through the 19th century and have her final triumph as the heroine of the novels of Henry James and in the drawings of Charles Dana Gibson. From the start she was a source of wonder to foreigners. Young

In the 19th century,

American men became too interested in making money

to bother with love—

and women too prudish.

A valentine shows the Victorian ideal: spiritual love.

Tocqueville, encountering her wherever he went, confessed himself "almost frightened at [her] singular address and happy boldness." She rarely displayed, he said, "that virginal bloom in the midst of young desires or that innocent and ingenuous grace" characteristic of the girls he knew in Europe; but she was far more formidable, thinking for herself, speaking with freedom, acting on her own impulse, surveying the world with "firm and calm gaze," viewing the vices of society "without illusion" and braving them "without fear." Above all there was her remarkable, her terrible self-control: "She indulges in all permitted pleasures without yielding herself up to any of them, and her reason never allows the reins of self-guidance to drop." The result, the young Frenchman decided, was "to make cold and virtuous women instead of affectionate wives and agreeable companions to men. Society may be more tranquil and better regulated, but domestic life has often fewer charms."

So as America entered the 19th century, love was lost between the preoccupied male and the cool female. The memory of passion lingered, the haunting hope of romantic fulfillment. "Give all to love," sang Emerson:

> *Obey thy heart;*
> *Friendship, kindred, days,*
> *Estate, good fame,*
> *Plans, credit, and the Muse—*
> *Nothing refuse.*

The sentimental popular novel dilated endlessly on romance. The new middle class reveled in the fantasy of love. But in practice not many (not Emerson himself) gave all to love—and least of all estate, fame, plans or credit. When Alexander Hamilton as Secretary of the Treasury was accused of having connived with a minor official in crooked financial dealings, he triumphantly proved that his payments to Mr. Reynolds involved no corruption at all; they were simply in exchange for the favors of Mrs. Reynolds. This was the pattern of priority in the new republic.

The growing conflict between romantic dream and bourgeois circumstance set the pursuit of happiness on its path of frustration. Passion and marriage, which the American experiment in love had tried to bring together, were now in the 19th century thrust asunder. Sex once again became a matter of physical gratification, which man warily pursued on his own. "If ye touch at the islands, Mr. Flask," shouted Captain Bildad in his farewell to the *Pequod* in *Moby Dick*, "beware of fornication. Good-bye, good-bye!" Marriage was to be a higher union of souls, with sexual emotion strictly confined to its procreative goal. Such was the accepted view. But the strain between the theory and reality now introduced a deep and disabling confusion into the American attitude toward love.

Tocqueville commented on "the great change which takes place in all the habits of women in the United States as soon as they are married." He attributed this to their "cold and stern reasoning power" which taught them that "the amusements of the girl cannot become the recreations of the wife," banished their "spirit of levity and independence" and dedicated them to the notion that "the sources of a married woman's happiness are in the home of her husband." For his part the 19th-century American husband placed his wife on a pedestal as one above the temptations of physical passion. So the cool girl tended to become the frigid wife, sentimentality replaced sexuality, and the 19th-century marriage lost the sense of easy companionship between man and woman. "In America," wrote Mrs. Frances Trollope, a traveler from England, "with the exception of dancing, which is almost wholly confined to the unmarried of both sexes, all the enjoyments of the men are found in the absence of the women. They dine, they play cards, they have musical meetings, they have suppers, all in large parties, but all without women. . . . The two sexes can hardly mix for the greater part of a day without great restraint and ennui."

Soon, the 19th-century marriage, as it divorced itself from passion, began to acquire an appalling gentility. The plain speaking of the early Puritans was long since forgotten. Soon the shadow of Queen Victoria was to fall almost more heavily on America than on her native land. Mrs. Trollope was exasperated to discover, for example, that men and women could visit the art gallery in Philadelphia only in separate groups, lest exposure to classical statues cause embarrassment in mixed company. Often statues were draped to spare the female sensibility. Captain Marryat, the sturdy British novelist, asked a young American lady who had fallen off a rock whether she had hurt her leg. To his total bafflement, she appeared deeply offended. Finally she instructed him that the word "leg" was never used before ladies; in mixed company, she said, the word was "limb." Later, visiting a ladies' seminary, Marryat was stunned to see a square piano with four limbs, each of which, to protect the pupils, had been dressed in little trousers with frills at the bottom.

The sickness of prudery grew in the course of the century. By the '80's the public library of Concord, Mass., was banning *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* as a dirty book. By the '90's tracts like *From the Ball-Room to Hell* explained how the waltz led young ladies to ruin. According to Thomas Beer in *The Mauve Decade*, ladies of gentle breeding were specifying in the premarital contracts with their well-bred fiancés that

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the terminology of the wedding ceremony did not imply the right of consummation.

As marriage expelled passion, it was tacitly agreed that men were entitled to an outlet for the base drives of their lower natures, and sex acquired its own separate and accepted domain. This was the heyday of flamboyant prostitution and the "double standard." When Gov. Grover Cleveland of New York, running as the Democratic candidate for President in 1884, was accused of having fathered an illegitimate child 10 years before, it was readily admitted that he had had an affair with Maria Halpin and had assumed responsibility for her child. The Republicans chanted sarcastically in the streets:

Ma! Ma! Where's my pa?
Gone to the White House,
Ha! Ha! Ha!

But the voters elected Cleveland, and on Election Night the Democrats sang:

Hurrah for Maria,
Hurrah for the kid.
We voted for Grover,
And we're damned glad we did.

Cleveland thus benefited from the separation between passion and marriage in the public mind. Eighty years later, when the two had been once again brought together, the electorate snuffed out the presidential ambitions of another governor of New York who had committed the offense, not of illicit romance, but of behaving with splendid legality in divorcing one wife and marrying another.

An even more notorious Victorian case involved the most popular preacher of the day. Here too the separation between passion and marriage enabled the Rev. Henry Ward Beecher to ride out a scandal that would very possibly have destroyed his career in a presumably more sophisticated age. A man of magnetic charm and robust appetite, Beecher seduced pretty Elizabeth Tilton, who taught Sunday school at his church. In time the story reached Victoria Woodhull, a leading feminist of the day, who published it in her weekly magazine, rejoicing in this ministerial recognition of the power of sex: "The immense physical potency of Mr. Beecher, and the indomitable urgency of his great nature for the intimacy and embraces of the noble and cultured women about him, instead of being a bad thing, as the world thinks, . . . is one of the noblest and grandest endowments of this truly great and representative man."

Elizabeth Tilton, who had earlier confessed her relations with Beecher to her husband, now rushed to Beecher's defense and denied the charge. Theodore Tilton sued Beecher for the alienation of his wife's affections. While the whole nation watched with palpitant and prurient curiosity, the case ended with a hung jury. Three years later Elizabeth Tilton said, "The charge, brought by my husband, of adultery between myself and the Reverend Henry Ward Beecher was true. . . . The lie I had lived so well the last four years had become intolerable to me." But none of this perceptibly lessened the size of Beecher's congregation or his popularity and moral influence with it.

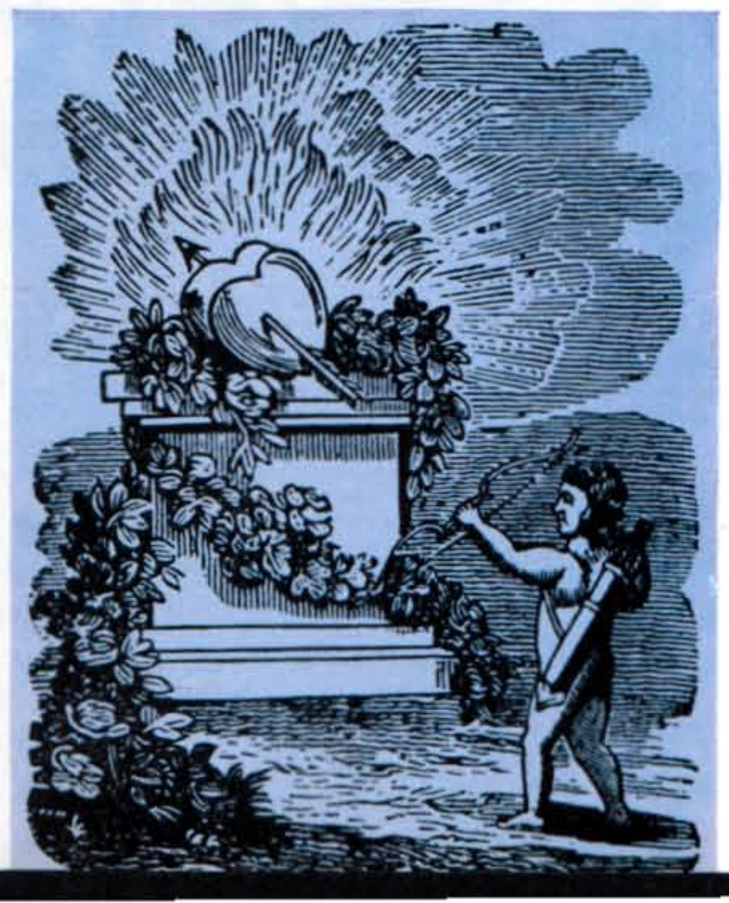
For most Americans, of course, life went on. Young men and women met, flirted, skated together or went on hayrides, kissed, married, made love, had children and placidly completed the cycle of life. When they thought about love at all, they thought about it with the sentimentality they found in the saccharine popular fiction of the day, or else with overpowering moral gravity. "I lose my respect," said Thoreau, "for the man who can make the mystery of sex the subject of a coarse jest, yet, when you speak earnestly and seriously on the subject, is silent."

Still the schism between passion and marriage, between sacred and profane love, created a pervasive tension in the American consciousness. The expulsion of sex from Victorian marriage led to much agony beneath the respectable surface: sick headaches, neurasthenia, nervous breakdowns, addiction to patent medicines (often containing large admixtures of alcohol or morphine), frigidity, impotence, homosexuality. The more extreme feminists raged at the proposition that women were not expected to find pleasure in the sexual act.

"Yes, I am a free lover!" cried Victoria Woodhull in a public lecture. "I have an inalienable, constitutional, and natural right to love whom I may, to love as long or as short a period as I can, to change that love every day if I please!" Sensitive individuals, unable to join the conspiracy to sweep passion under the rug, grew deeply concerned about sex, fearful of its power, anxious to bring it under control.

Sex became, for example, a central issue in many of the communities founded in mid-century by men and women abandoning contemporary society in search of a more perfect way of living together. Thus one of the older utopian groups, the Shakers, solved the problem of sex by abolishing it. Sworn to celibacy, they kept their communities going by recruitment. Yet as old Governor Bradford had said, water dammed up flows with the greater violence. Visitors noted that, while the Shakers abstained from sexual relations, they indulged instead in ecstatic dances, carried on at increasing tempo till they dropped in dazed exhaustion.

At the other extreme was the sexual experimentation of John Humphrey Noyes at the Oneida Community. Theologically, Noyes was a Perfectionist; he believed that Christ had long since returned to earth and that men of faith were now sinless. His community avowed the principles of complex marriage



Ironically, the pursuit of love is now leading to the breakdown of marriage.

and male continence. Normal marriage seemed to him a selfish limitation on the biblical commandment to love. At Oneida, therefore, couples could have sexual relations as they wished. But having children was another matter. Here Noyes proposed an early form of eugenics—of selective mating—which he called "stirpiculture." To assure the separation of intercourse and breeding, Noyes advised methods of sexual restraint. Noyes was himself a man of considerable presence and ability. The community prospered far longer than other similar communities, eventually disbanding without having made a permanent contribution to the solving of mankind's ancient riddles of love and sex.

The tension about sex was also reflected in American literature. For the striking fact about the American novel in the 19th century was its avoidance of love—that is, of heterosexual love between consenting adults. Among major writers only Hawthorne hinted at the subject toward the middle of the century, and James and Howells toward the end, and all so cryptically that a great part of their audience hardly understood what they were saying. While European novels described mature passion between men and women—*Wuthering Heights* or *Madame Bovary* or *Anna Karenina*—American novelists wrote about men by themselves in the forest or on a whaling ship, or boys lazily drifting down the river on a raft. When women appeared, they generally represented a contrast between symbolic abstractions: the ethereal fair girl and the passionate, and therefore dangerous, dark girl. The women in Cooper were waxworks; there were no women in *Moby Dick;* in Poe they were generally symbols of death; Whitman's invocation of women was of men in disguise; Mark Twain fled from adult love like the plague. Unable to deal with the fact of heterosexual love, American literature in the 19th century suppressed it.

In the 19th century American society thus twisted itself into a torment of contradiction and uncertainty in its attitudes toward love. I do not mean that most Americans did not achieve a tolerable happiness with their wives; of course they did; and they conserved the family—at least in the middle classes—as the basic social unit. Yet the pursuit of happiness through a passionless marriage was generating a lurking, nagging frustration. By barring the joy of sex from wedlock, the Victorian code at once degraded the sexual impulse and weakened the marital tie. By transferring romantic love to the fantasy world of the sentimental novel and emptying serious literature of adult sexual content, it misled the national imagination and impoverished the national sensibility. The Victorians' unsatisfactory pursuit of happiness thus ended half on Main Street and half on Back Street, with marriage denied passion and passion denied legitimacy.

But the Victorian code corresponded neither to the emotional nor the physical realities of an increasingly urban and cosmopolitan society. Its collapse was inevitable. How shocking at the time were the first intimations of sexual liberation just before the First World War; how innocent they seem in retrospect! War itself hastened the disappearance of the old inhibitions, bringing back from France a new generation determined to live life to the full. The success of the feminist movement increased the pressure against the double standard. The psychology of Sigmund Freud gave the role of sex in life a fresh legitimacy. Then the prosperity of the '20's began to free the American people for the first time on a large scale from the acquisitive compulsions which Tocqueville had noted a century earlier. And, as the new psychology and the new leisure encouraged romantic love, so the new technology simplified life for romantic lovers. The automobile offered lovers mobility and privacy at just the time that contraceptives, now cheap and available, offered them security. Advertising and popular songs incessantly celebrated the cult of sex. Above all, the invention of the movies gave romantic love its troubadours and its temples of worship.

Living life to the full was still relatively innocuous in the '20's. "None of the Victorian mothers—and most of the mothers were Victorian—had any idea how casually their daughters were accustomed to be kissed," Scott Fitzgerald wrote in *This Side of Paradise* at the start of the decade.

> *. . . Amory saw girls doing things that even in his memory would have been impossible: eating three-o'clock, afternoon suppers in impossible cafés, talking of every side of life with an air half of earnestness, half of mockery, yet with a furtive excitement.*

Skirts grew shorter; women bobbed their hair and smoked cigarettes; men packed hip flasks in their raccoon coats; and together they danced the Charleston, saxophones wailing in the background, or waded fully clothed into the fountain at the Plaza. Skeptics scorned the romantic dream. "Love," said H. L. Mencken, "is the delusion that one woman differs from another." But the contagion was irresistible.

Thus the Victorian schism was repaired and passion came back into marriage. "All societies recognize that there are occasional violent attachments between persons of opposite sex," Ralph Linton, the anthropologist, observed in 1936, "but our present American culture is practically the only one which has attempted to capitalize these and make them the basis for marriage." The American experiment was at last in full tide. "No other known civilization, in the 7,000 years that one civilization has been succeeding another," wrote the historian Denis de Rougemont, "has bestowed on the love known as *romance* anything like the same amount of daily publicity. . . . No other civilization has embarked

with anything like the same ingenuous assurance upon the perilous enterprise of making marriage coincide with love thus understood, and of making the first depend upon the second." The Age of Love, in Morton Hunt's phrase, had begun—and it is still going strong.

But the Age of Love has hardly turned out to be an age of fulfillment. If sexual repression failed to produce happiness in the 19th century, sexual liberation appears to have done little better in the 20th. More than that, while repression at least preserved the family, if at times by main force, the pursuit of happiness through love is now evidently weakening the family structure itself. Divorce, of course, is an expression of the determination to make romance legal at any cost; so, if one marriage fails, another must be promptly started; and the steady increase in divorce in these years—the rate trebled from 1900 to 1960—suggests how the pursuit of love is paradoxically leading to the breakdown of marriage. Freedom, instead of resolving the dilemmas of love, is only heightening anxiety. Another of those observant Frenchmen, Raoul de Roussy de Sales, noted in 1938: "America appears to be the only country in the world where love is a national problem."

It remains a national problem today. The Second World War and its aftermath swept away whatever remained of the Victorian code; and the postwar years have seen the pursuit grow ever more complex. Most young Americans have adapted themselves to the new folkways. Like their ancestors, they meet and marry and live out their lives in quiet content. But in the margins of American society the search for love, having broken out of the old channels, is being driven more and more by frustration to sensation. Amory Blaine, the hero of *This Side of Paradise*, was dismayed by the '20's. He would have been appalled by the '60's. Among the seekers of sensation, drink has given way to drugs, fraternity hops to Sexual Freedom Leagues, petting to orgies, experiment to perversion. For some, sensation leads on to violence.

Denis de Rougemont has argued that the whole idea of romantic love manifested a repressed longing for suffering and tragedy. No doubt this is an exaggeration. But poets have long sensed a kinship between love and death. "Come lovely and soothing death," wrote Walt Whitman:

Undulate round the world, serenely
arriving, arriving,
In the day, in the night, to all, to each,
Sooner or later delicate death.

If the suppression of sex in our 19th-century literature resulted in the Gothic obsessions of American fiction—the tormented allegories of Hawthorne, the necrophilia of Poe, the hallucinated terror of the later Mark Twain—the age of sexual liberation has produced the dark violence of Faulkner and the erotomegalomania of Mailer. Gershon Legman has underlined the irony that sexual congress is legal, but describing it (at least until very recently) is not; while murder is illegal but describing it has long been acceptable.

Is our literary violence in some sense a surrogate for sex? Is novelist and critic Leslie Fiedler right in suggesting that "the death of love left a vacuum at the affective heart of the American novel into which there rushed the love of death"? Our literature at least raises the possibility that the compulsive pursuit of love reinforces destructive tendencies already deep in our national character. The Measuring Man, entering girls' apartments under the pretense of inspecting them for a model agency, is revealed to be the Boston Strangler.

The American experiment in love has not yet proved itself. The national attempt to unite passion and marriage led many Americans into hypocrisy in the 19th century and into hysteria in the 20th. Must the conclusion be that we have essayed a human impossibility?—that the attempt to combine the tumult of romance with the permanence of marriage places a greater burden on marriage than it can bear? Some sociologists have even speculated that we may be moving toward a society of "progressive polygamy," as more and more Americans marry several spouses in the course of life.

No doubt Americans ask a great deal of marriage. Yet the probability is that the attempt to combine romance and monogamy will continue. When this works, it is the highest felicity. "The happiness of the domestic fireside," wrote Jefferson, "is the first boon of heaven." As for the less blessed in American society, they would perhaps do better to concentrate on the deflation of undue expectations, the recovery of discipline and the recognition that romantic love, while the most beautiful of human experiences, is not a divinely guaranteed way of life. □

THE SATURDAY EVENING POST

"Then may I give you as a reference?"