

JENNIFER GUERRA



IL CAPITALE AMOROSO

MANIFESTO PER UN ERUS POLITICO
E RIVOLUZIONARIO

BOMPIANI
MUNIZIONI

COLLANA DIRETTA DA
ROBERTO SAVIANO





JENNIFER GUERRA
LOVE CAPITAL
A Manifesto for a Political
and Revolutionary Eros

translated from the Italian
by Alice Kilgariff

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1. THE SIX IDEALOGIES OF LOVE

The search for love continues even
in the face of great odds
bell hooks, *All About Love*

I fell in love with Ernest Hemingway one afternoon when I was sixteen years old, sitting on the floor of my small-town library. In a nook at the end of the shelf was a pile of available books by the author, far too many for a provincial library. At sixteen you love without reserve, and that day I fell in love with an old American colonel with a heart about to burst, who spends the last three days of his life with an Italian girl, Renata, walking through the streets of Venice. I clearly remember that moment, like you remember the first moments of a great love. I picked up *Across the River and Into the Trees*, I read a few pages at random and held close to me that book describing a love so pure that it seemed unimaginable. Despite

the book's protagonist being a fifty-year old man, I had the impression that the feelings being narrated belonged to those extreme emotions that are only felt in adolescence, like a precious gift that you are given to take care of for a few years. So much, too much, has been written about Hemingway, to the point that he has become one of those writers considered somewhat banal, outdated, referred to by intellectuals with indifference and arrogance. He was too late to be a modernist and too early to be postmodern. He wrote in a dry, stark style, often imitated, sometimes badly. His life was the object of speculation: his boxing, his divorces, the running of the bulls, hunting, Cuba, suicide. And in his books, we find important themes: man against nature, war, the absence of God. Exactly what it is that drives his characters to behave the way they do has long been discussed, with the debate often focussing on motive without considering the adversity they faced. Some talk about nihilism and others of the sublime, of courage and an acceptance of death, but almost no one suggests that Hemingway's protagonists do what they do for the most simple and most important reason there is: love. From Robert Jordan who embraces the Spanish resistance, to Santiago who struggles with the marlin, there is a strength that guides them, unavoidably dragging them towards it, and that

is a deep love for someone, something, a person, the sea, life, an ideal. I immediately found something in common with Hemingway's characters. I also believe that love can be the driver behind an idea of the world and, why not, a political force. Just like ideology, love continually forces us to question our lives, to support certain values, to cultivate change. The decision to adhere to love is a long and difficult journey that few have the courage to embark upon. Almost everyone experiences it at some point or another, but making it a praxis requires an extra effort that not everyone is ready to make. The first obstacle to overcome is the recognition that love is something different to what we are told it is. Roland Barthes said that words of love are "of an extreme solitude"¹. Everyone talks of love, but no one supports it. Its discourse ends up "in a backwater of the "unreal", exiled from all gregariness"², something rendered even more complex by the fact society has been as if split by two different discourses on love. The first is the romantic, saccharine version, fuelled by novels, films and marketing campaigns, that we have already introjected into our value system. This version sets the bar for our expectations extremely high, especially for women, the primary targets of this message. The media tends to idealise love as a state

1 Roland Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments* [1977], Vintage, London 2002, p. 1

2 *ibid*

of permanent happiness, of abnegation in the face of the other, as a sense of fulfilment and finalisation. Its formula often functions much like a fairy tale: an unwary and hopeless woman, following a series of hard knocks, moves from a state of disgrace (due to her being single) to one of grace through the romantic realisation of the monogamous couple or the nuclear family. *Pretty Woman*, the famous 1990 film by Garry Marshall starring Richard Gere and Julia Roberts, is perhaps the most interesting case study for this particular version. It shows total respect to the canon of fairy tale, and is essentially a postmodern reworking of Cinderella, a poor woman whose noble spirit is confirmed by the love of a Prince Charming. At university, a literature professor once asked us to describe the film's final scene. We all remembered the intrepid Edward who, defying his fear of heights and accompanied by the sounds of *La Traviata* (uncoincidentally another story about prostitution), climbs the stairs of the fire escape leading to his beloved's squalid apartment shouting, "Princess Vivian!" No one, however, could actually remember how it ended. As the camera tracks away from the apartment window, we hear a voice off screen saying: "Welcome to Hollywood! What's your dream? Everyone comes here, this is Hollywood, land of dreams. Some come true, some don't, but keep on

dreaming! This is Hollywood. Always time to dream, so keep on dreaming!”

Despite the brutal rupture in our suspension of belief thanks to the meta-textual expedient informing us what we have just seen over 119 minutes of film was a joke, *Pretty Woman* remains one of the best romantic films ever, to the point that many people, just like my classmates and me, forget this small yet fundamental closing detail. This is perhaps a banal example of the extent to which we have introjected the topos of romantic love. We all know that it is a lie: no human relationship can be made up exclusively of happy moments. And yet, something continually pushes us to ignore the voice off-screen warning us that the idea of love packaged up and sold by Hollywood does not correspond to reality.

Almost as a response to this saccharine version, increasing numbers of people find solace and understanding in seeing love in cynical terms, viewing it with repulsion if not downright hate. Like the other, this version is also supported and propagated by the mass media. There are many reasons for showing cynicism towards love, far more profound and complex than the immediate attractiveness of the clichés of romantic love. On the one hand, we have

the widespread stigmatisation of solitude. A single person over a certain age is viewed with suspicion, as if their condition clearly indicates that there is something wrong with them. Despite the fact many cultural products are aimed at singles, particularly single women, the objective of overcoming singledom in order to be fully realised by love prevails. Speaking of products aimed at a female audience, the series *Sex & the City* is the most emblematic of this paradox. The carefree, single lives enjoyed by Carrie, Miranda, Charlotte and Samantha are celebrated in every single episode of the many series, which, however, reach their happy ending when all four women end up in monogamous relationships (even Samantha!). So, the objective difficulty in finding a partner, combined with the condemnation of solitude, leads many people to feel anger and frustration when it comes to love. In this context, another, highly important cause enters into play that will be examined in much more depth in the pages that follow: that disappointment in love is actually disappointment with society.

At times, it seems as if there were a kind of silent war waging between the two factions, which each consider the other stupid or naïve: sooner or later love will either triumph or completely finish you off. Such polarised views on love disregard the person's

experience. There are incurable romantics who have never had a relationship, and professional cynics with decades-long marriages behind them. Actually, in some way, cases like this demonstrate precisely how our view on love does not only affect our private lives. Love is a public affair about which we believe it is worth taking a side, and, crucially, a radical and often far more intransigent position than that taken in the ballot box. And it does not stop here. We like to construct an image of ourselves using this position, an image we use to present ourselves to society, despite repeating that the personal must be separated from the political. But this is an illusion: no matter how comforting it might be, it is naïve to think that an intimate, inalienable nucleus still exists of our life, and even more so to believe that our choices in love are entirely separate from what happens outside of that nucleus.

To love is not, indeed, something that happens to us if we are lucky, nor is it a simple accident along the way. It is, first and foremost, a choice, and it is a choice we make every day. As the feminist bell hooks writes in her book, *All About Love*:

To begin by always thinking of love as an action rather than a feeling is one way in which anyone using the word in this manner automatically assumes accountability and

responsibility. We are often taught we have no control over our “feelings”. Yet most of us accept that we choose our actions, that intention and will inform what we do. We also accept that our actions have consequences.³

We tend to see love as something irrational and uncontrollable, and maybe this is what confuses us. It seems to be something outside of our control, and that of society, when instead it places great importance on discipline. But love is not just a feeling, it is an action. This is what Erich Fromm says in his classic book, *The Art of Loving*,⁴ that we are used to thinking of love as something we can possess, rather than something that is given. We try, therefore, to be loveable, to make ourselves be loved, rather than focusing on what we are doing to love our neighbour. Our society encourages this kind of mentality, deploring solitude and blaming us if we are not considered worthy of love. Rather than encouraging us to reflect on what we can do to find a partner, it points the finger at our personal characteristics, our physical appearance or our lifestyle. According to the dominant culture, we must change if we want to be worthy of attention and, therefore, love. It goes without saying that it is the marginalised groups

³ bell hooks, *All About Love: New Visions*, HarperCollins Publishers, New York 2000, p. 13

⁴ Erich Fromm, *The Art of Loving* [1959], HarperCollins Publishers, London 1995

that suffer most from this prejudice. At the same time, however, that same culture is silent about our readiness to love, as if the loving relationship were unilateral. This is a belief that affects us enormously, because it gives us the impression we are dominated by something that does not depend on our free will, rendering us impotent. But as bell hooks points out, feelings cannot be controlled, whilst actions can. And actions have consequences, or rather, they carry responsibility. Obviously, this does not mean that we can love on command, but that we can (for example) invest time and energy in order to help someone understand that even if we do not love them, it is neither their fault nor ours; to show them they are worthy of love; that we are here for them if they would still like to spend some time with us. This would be enough to show that love is a social force, but it is of course more complicated than that. Because it is complicated to define love, and that is not this book's aim. Rather, this book talks of love, not so much about what it is but rather what it is capable of. Its basic premise is that love is capable of profoundly changing not only each of our lives, but society in its entirety.

Sometimes, when intellectuals or scientists do not know how to give a precise definition of something,

they classify it, a tool that remains highly useful for understanding a phenomenon. The Canadian sociologist John Alan Lee, for example, in his 1973 book *Colours of Love: An Exploration of the Ways of Loving* identified six typologies, or rather “ideologies” of love. Beyond his contributions to sociology, Lee is known for having been an icon of LGBTQ+ activism. The first public personality to come out live on TV on February 14th 1974, and a founding member of the historic scientific journal, *Journal of Homosexuality*, he dealt at length with the themes of love, sexuality and sado-masochism. He was one of the first people to use the expression “gay community” at a time (the 1970s) when gay, lesbian and trans people were not only invisible to society but, most importantly, did not view themselves as a cohesive group, believing themselves to have nothing in common.⁵ The classification Lee uses in *Colours of Love* is based on an empirical analysis of the populations of the UK, Canada and United States carried out for his doctorate in sociology. Lee wasn’t particularly interested in identifying psychological types, but rather investigating the economic and social causes that lead people to embrace a certain ideology of love. Lee was the first to attempt to understand whether factors such as gender, age and, in particular,

⁵ Stephen O. Murray, “Dr. John Alan Lee: In Memoriam”, in *Journal of Homosexuality*, 62, 1, 2015, pp. 1-3

social class influenced the way in which we conceive of love. Before his, other studies had been carried out on the romantic behaviour of certain social groups, but no one had ever considered bringing together people of different classes, ages and even sexual orientation. The stigma surrounding this, even in the most progressive and liberal countries, was something that we struggle to imagine today. Lee, by making love the object of his research and including homosexual love within that, did something extraordinary: for the first time he gave importance and the dignity of study to a subject that was barely tolerated by public opinion. Furthermore, by placing homosexual and heterosexual love on the same level, he managed to rescue homosexuality from the idea that it was a perversion, as the prejudices of the time suggested, giving it legitimacy as one of many possible sexual and romantic orientations.

According to Lee's theory, three of the six ideologies of love derived from Greek tradition (*eros*, *ludos*, *storge*) whilst the others are generated by combinations of these (*agape*, which is *eros* plus *storge*; *pragma*, which is *ludos* plus *storge*; *mania*, which is *eros* plus *ludos*). These categories should not be understood as absolute, but as inter-dependent. Each of us can, at any time, adopt any of them, with some predominantly choosing one, and others only experiencing one for a

certain period of time. Let's look at these categories in more detail.

The first typology is eros. This is the classic “love at first sight”, based primarily on the exaltation of physical beauty, attraction and on a person's correlation with an aesthetic ideal. Those who practice this ideology of love place great importance on their own physical appearance and that of their partner, and desire an immediate satisfaction of the senses. This does not mean that eros is resolved through the sexual act, it can also be resolved through a lasting relationship, just one in which the other's beauty is a lynchpin for the relationship's sustainability.

Eros is the object of Plato's Symposium, where every character gives a speech praising the god of love. The most important of these is that given by Socrates, which, however, includes the words of the mysterious priestess Diotima. According to Diotima, Eros was neither God nor mortal, but an intermediary between humans and the gods. He is the son of Poros the expedient, and Penia, poverty, and was conceived during the banquet held in honour of the birth of Aphrodite, goddess of beauty. It follows that Eros is a lover of that which is beautiful. He sits halfway between the human and the divine, and the characteristics bestowed on him by his descendance make him unstable and contradictory,

just as we all are when we are in love. They place him halfway between knowledge and ignorance: eros aspires to knowledge, which is one of the most beautiful things, and is therefore a philosopher (indeed, the word “philosophy” derives from the combination of *philo*, love, and *Sophos*, knowledge). It would therefore be unfair to interpret eros, even the way in which John Alan Lee understood it, as love lacking any real basis or as inferior to the other kinds, because Eros, as Diotima observes, not only simply desires beauty, but wants to generate it in a beautiful way, bringing new life from beauty.⁶ Moving on through the classification from *Colours of Love*, close to eros we find ludos, where the relationship is a game, and therefore has a competitive component. Those who practice ludic love looks to the other for a playmate, sexual or otherwise. They are usually little inclined to stable bonds, but they are nevertheless ready to respect the rules of the game, the strategies used to conquer the other’s love. These include, for example, the various seduction techniques, the routine of dating or using dating apps such as Tinder or Grindr (though Lee could never have imagined those).

The ludic ideology leads people to change their partners regularly, fearful of the boredom that comes

⁶ Plato, *Symposium*, 209a-212c.

from stability. This does not mean that ludic love is motivated by passion, in fact the fulfilment of the relationship is transposed onto a recreational, playful level and not one where eroticism is an end in itself. Lee notes how those practicing this kind of love, which is particularly widespread throughout Western society and almost entirely absent from the Eastern ones, are mostly young and male, and often gay.

The third basic ideology of love, as classified by Lee, is storge. Storge is love as friendship and, like ludos, it is characterised by the absence of passion. The relationships based on this ideology often come from very profound sentiments that emerge and mature in contexts where there is particular closeness, such as belonging to the same community, the same class at school, or the same church. Storge is based on empathy towards the other, a feeling that grows over time, creating stability. It is a typical form of love in rural areas, and is practiced by women and, according to Lee, lesbians in particular.

Almost diametrically opposed to storge is mania, the union between eros and ludos. Maniacal love is based on obsession and control. Those who practice mania think only of the one they love and see themselves as “the Other” in the relationship, almost as if they were not good enough for the perfect object of their love.

In this ideology we can see unhappy people who need continual reassurance. Relationships based on mania are often very brief, because they are built on fragile foundations. It is not unusual for obsessive love to transform into hate.

The last two ideologies analysed by Lee – pragma and agape – are those that interest us most and we will return to them regularly throughout this book, because they are subject to the influence of socio-economic conditions. Pragma, the combination of ludos and storge, is love based on calculation, compatibility and convenience. Those who practice pragmatic love are in search of a partner who meets an expectation that is not so much aesthetic but qualitative, perhaps a certain standard of living, of education, or of social status. Pragma focuses on what is possible rather than on the impossible, or on desire. As its name would suggest, it is characterised by a good dose of realism and therefore the absence of passion. From ludos comes the idea that love is a kind of prize or trophy, from storge comes the security inherent in a partner who hails from your own social circle. It is, however, the sense of realism (and materialism) embodied by the calculation of a relationship's convenience (social or economic) that best characterises pragma, a relationship seen as an investment with the lowest possible margin of risk.

Pragma is the dominant ideology of love in modern society, which sees the institutions of marriage and family as fundamental.

In his 1884 book *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and The State*, Friedrich Engels talks about how the institution of the monogamous family was born to ensure the transmission of wealth to an heir whose bloodline is certain. We mustn't let the adjective monogamous fool us: the monogamous bond was only for the woman. In fact, whilst the wife had to ensure absolute fidelity to her husband (precisely so that there were no illegitimate children or consequent risk of the patrimony being dispersed), the men could indulge in other kinds of pleasure, if not love.

Slaves, prostitutes, lovers: male infidelity has historically been accepted as an almost necessary extension of the nuclear family, to the extent that in many places (including Italy until the Merlin law of 1958), prostitution was regulated and encouraged by the state. Engels defines the monogamous family as “the cellular form of civilised society”,⁷ where the dynamics and contradictions that apply to the whole of society are played out on a smaller scale. In particular, it defines “the first division of labour”⁸ as that between a man

7 Friedrich Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* [1884], Resistance Books, Chippendale, Australia 2008, p. 73

8 Ibid.

and a woman. So, marriage comes about as a matter of convenience, contracted by the spouses' parents, whose primary aim is to keep their family wealth intact and has nothing to do with love. The philosopher also notes how the first form of sexual love as passion to be "institutionalised" is courtly love, which had nothing to do with conjugal love but was actually a privilege of the dominant class. Indeed, peasants, labourers and factory workers had no time to waste on the courtly love practised by their masters. In this sense, when viewed from a historical perspective, love is a form of privilege - not just of class, but also of gender.

Forms of extra-marital love, such as sex work and the demi-monde, were perhaps the only occasions when a man could have authentic sentimental relationships. Obviously, it cannot be said that this love was reciprocated by the women involved, who received money or other favours for their attention. The relationship, therefore, could never be an equal one. It was acceptable, if not laudable for a man to turn to prostitutes, while the prostitute or the mistress (no matter her social position) had to pay the high price of marginalisation. The bourgeois family and marriage were forms of "ideals" for pragmatic love. Even when marriages were contracted without a total disregard for

the desires of the two parties, the belief was that love would arrive “sooner or later”, as Jane Austen states in *Pride and Prejudice* (1813). This reasoning was highly practical: priority was given to the transmission of capital through the offspring, with authentic sentiments coming a firm second.

Another reminder that the main objective of marriage is economic exchange comes from Amy March in Greta Gerwig’s recent film adaptation of *Little Women*, in an extraordinary conversation with Laurie:

Amy: I have always known I would marry rich, why should I be ashamed of that?

Laurie: It’s nothing to be ashamed of as long as you love him.

Amy: Well, I believe we have some power over who we love, it isn’t just something that happens to a person.

Laurie: I think the poets might disagree...

Amy: Well, I’m not a poet, I’m just a woman. And as a woman, there’s no way for me to make my own money. Not enough to earn a living or to support my family. And if I had my own money, which I don’t, that money would belong to my husband the moment we got married. And if we had children, they would be his, not mine. They would be his property. So don’t

sit there and tell me that marriage isn't an economic proposition, because it is. It might not be for you but it most certainly is for me.

Much has changed since the times of Engels and Louisa May Alcott, who wrote *Little Women* in 1868, some fifteen years before *The Origin of the Family*, and despite not being a communist in any way, she was already reflecting on the relationship between economics and the institution of marriage. But Amy's speech, which does not feature in the book as it was written by Gerwig for the film in 2019, strikes a very modern chord.

Though the practice of arranged marriages is now extinct in Western society, the same cannot be said for the practical and sometimes economic aspect of romantic relationships. We might think that the pragmatic ideology of love has decreased in step with the progressive decline of the monogamous couple and the traditional family as the only possible models. In reality, pragma has been strengthened by this social change.

Deprived of the predictability of bourgeois marriage, people feel disorientated, if not terrified when faced with love. Logic would suggest that abandoning the tradition of marriage has opened life up to new lifestyles based on greater freedom. And on one hand, this is true. Many couples today live together without getting

married, they have open or polyamorous relationships, or they divorce without too many problems, things which were not viewed positively until fairly recently.

However, the unpredictability, rather than making us feel more like free masters of our own lives, has ended up making us more timid. Many prefer the security of a stable, conventional yet profoundly unhappy relationship to being alone. What scares us is not just solitude in itself, but the social stigma that comes from being on our own.

Pragma obviously does not simply affect those who choose to be with someone they do not love, but also those who, anxious to respond to a particular relationship expectation, loving or sexual, desperately try to show that they have an interesting personal life, perhaps by constantly changing partners. As we have said, the ideologies of love are never incompatible with one another, instead they overlap in very complex patterns. As such, someone who has numerous relationships (a typical trait of ludos) not because it's what they really want, but because it's what they feel they should do and how they should appear to society, is combining ludos and pragma.

Phillip Anthony O'Hara, director of the Global Political Economy Research Unit (GPERU) at Curtin University in Perth, Australia, attempted to study these

patterns, calculating the “love capital” of people who live in neo-liberal economies, reaching the conclusion that cultivating love is very difficult in a system that discourages care, compassion and intimacy. O’Hara used Lee’s study and the six ideologies as a starting point, combining it with economic research. The paper’s conclusion is fairly gloomy:

Love should be a core part of people’s lives, but under neoliberal conditions holistic love is unable to develop sufficiently, resulting in stunted personalities and psycho-cultural malaise.⁹

According to O’Hara, holistic love is the most complete form of love, uniting five different factors: passion, intimacy, commitment, freedom and social extension. It is very close to the idea of agape, Lee’s sixth ideology of love.

Agape is unconditional love, based on altruism and compassion. It does not consider any kind of gain or personal advantage, and its object can be a single person, or a group or community.¹⁰ Agape is Jesus’ love in Christian theology, founded on the golden

9 Phillip Anthony O’Hara, “Political Economy of Love: Nurturance Gap, Disembedded Economy and Freedom Constraints within Neoliberal Capitalism”, in *Panoeconomicus*, 2, 2014, p. 188.

10 The word agape is a Greek neologism, coined due to its assonance with the Hebrew word *ababab*, a term used to indicate love in the Song of Songs.

rule laid out in Leviticus: “love your neighbour as yourself”,¹¹ taken from the gospels of Matthew and Luke and developed in the Gospel according to John: “My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.”¹² According to this rule, as every human being is created in the image and likeness of God, all are worthy of being loved like humans love God, and vice versa. Agape is therefore characterised by self-sacrifice. According to Lee, it is close to eros and storge, taking the platonic concept of love as a virtue from the first, and empathy and sense of community from the second.

The concept of agape has been long studied by theologians, protestants in particular, but also by feminists. You might think that no two fields of study could be more different. In reality, feminist interest in agape comes from the fact that its Christian understanding places an emphasis on self-sacrifice and care for others, virtues that have always been associated with the female gender. In his 2005 encyclical titled *Deus Caritas Est*, which has at its centre the juxtaposition of eros and agape and the attempt to provide a kind of reconciliation between the two, Joseph Ratzinger cites

11 Leviticus 19: 18

12 John 15,12-13

Mary, “a woman who loves”¹³, as its greatest example: the first to welcome the archangel Gabriel’s offer to conceive Jesus, then agreeing to be left to one side during the evangelisation of her son, and finally accepting his death. Feminism has been concerned from the outset with identifying and giving importance to those roles that have always been entrusted to women, who were excluded for centuries from productive and salaried work, her primary role being that of caring for the family in all possible ways. Within that vast category known as “reproductive work”, we find reproduction, feeding, educating children, the domestic tasks, sexual company, care for the elderly, and providing affection and comfort. As Engels called it, “the first division of labour” within society. At certain times in history, such as in the Victorian era, the dominant ideology fed on the conviction that women were destined to carry out reproductive work for obvious biological reasons: not only their ability to procreate and their reduced physical strength, which made them unsuited to heavy salaried work (particularly in an economy based on heavy industry),¹⁴ but also because of their

13 Catholic Church, & Benedict, *Encyclical letter Deus caritas est of the Supreme Pontiff Benedict XVI to the bishops, priests and deacons, men and women religious and all the lay faithful on Christian love. Ottawa, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops*, 2005, 41.

14 As is often the case, the prejudice does not concur with reality: whilst middle class women were excused from salaried work, working class women were involved in numerous sectors of vital importance for the economy, the textile industry in particular. See Edward Higgs, Amanda Wilkinson, “Women, Occupations and Work in the Victorian Censuses Revisited”, in *History Workshop Journal*, 81, 2016, pp. 17-38

innate predisposition for self-sacrifice and charity, a theological virtue women were presumed to possess.

So, it is not so strange that feminists took an interest in the issue and its repercussions on the lives of many women, particularly in the United States where the protestant faiths (which have always been attentive to the idea of agape and the similar concept of grace) are much more widespread than in Europe. It was the Marxist and Socialist currents that studied it most, and the reason is fairly obvious: without the incessant and fundamental reproductive work carried out by women within monogamous families, capitalist society as we know it would never have been born, let alone prospered. Many feminist philosophers and historians have passionately criticised Marx for not taking gender into consideration in his studies into the birth of capital. “Gender,” writes sociologist Silvia Federici, “cannot be considered a mere cultural reality, but must be treated as a specific determiner in class relations.”¹⁵

But there is another aspect of the feminist analysis of agape that interests us. For many feminist theorists, starting with bell hooks, agape love is the only alternative and the only form of resistance to the capitalist system and the ideals of subjugation,

¹⁵ Silvia Federici, *Calibano e la strega. Le donne, il corpo e l'accumulazione originaria*, Milan-Udine, Mimesis, 2015, pos. 220.

individualism and competition that sustain it. Out of all the forms of love identified by Lee, agape is the one with the revolutionary potential we mentioned earlier. Recognising the role of love in one's own life, making it a political praxis, knowing that with all probability we will have to fight cynicism, disappointment and the objective difficulty of cultivating love in our frenetic and complicated lives, means creating a space for personal resistance that is capable of radiating out through the rest of society.

Faced with the ugliness of the world, there are those who take refuge in sex, those who prefer solitude, others friendship. There are those who prefer to take no risk and simply follow convention. But there are also those who make a radical choice to place love at the centre of their own lives and let it reverberate out into the community. This is the love that guides Hemingway's characters, that makes us place our egos to one side for the greater good. The love that leads us to struggle with a marlin for three days and three nights.

INDEX

1. The Six Ideologies of Love
2. Love in the Time of Neoliberalism
3. The Symbolic Supremacy of Love
4. Love as Community
5. Make Way for Winged Eros!

Jennifer Guerra

Love Capital

IL CAPITALE AMOROSO

One of the most interesting voices of contemporary feminism tells us why we must rebuild the political and radical meaning of love.

Our imagination is filled with love, a false, romantic one, while society looks like a heartbroken lover: cynical and careless of love, considered a boring, stupid feeling, a teen fantasy, a luxury for few. Jennifer Guerra dismantles all that as a dangerous product of capitalistic individualism, a system that wants us more and more apart and in competition with each other.

JENNIFER GUERRA (Brescia, 1995) is a writer and a journalist. She works as a copy editor for *The Vision*, for which she curated the feminist podcast *AntiCorpi*. She published *Il corpo elettrico* (Edizioni Tlon) in 2020.

“Love is a transformative force: applying love to our political conscience can lead to a change.”

“Love is something that simply happens to you. You choose it, you take care of it, and you respect it, just as you would a political ideal.”

Jennifer Guerra, interview with “D laRepubblica”



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