

Research Master Thesis

The Love Caught in Between: On Intimacy and Romance in Dutch Love Relationships

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Date: 13 July, 2012

Word Count: 10,568 (excl Appendix)

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Abstract

In the understanding of love relationships, social scientists have proposed mainly two divergent arguments. Some sociologists claimed that contemporary love has reached the phase of 'pure relationships' in which the continuity of relationships relies on reflexive self-monitoring and management. However, numerous media studies indicate that the mass media have continuously formulated individuals' idealistic and romanticized view of relationships and marriage. Without acknowledging one and another, a blind spot in the theoretical discussion is noticed. This paper empirically examines these two opposing theoretical claims. Based on 20 in-depth interviews with Dutch individuals, this study analyzes how two seemingly incompatible discourses interact with each other in Dutch love relationships. Results show that both the intimacy discourse and the romance discourse are actively practiced by the Dutch. Consequently, Dutch love relationships turn out to be characterized by an ongoing struggle and negotiation in between the two discourses. Meanwhile, these two discourses are also mutually reinforcing one and another. The

discourses are strategically utilized by the Dutch in order to build the most ideal relationship environment according to one's personal adoption of a combination of these discourses.

Key words:

Love, Romantic Relationship, Intimacy, Discourse, Dutch

Possible Submissions:

Theory, Culture & Society; Sociology; Sociology Perspective

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'The habits and modes of thought that govern intimate relationships are thus one of the central place where we may come to understand the cultural legacy with which we face the challenge of contemporary social life. Yet in spite its great importance, love is also, increasingly, a source of insecurity, confusion, and uncertainty.' (Bellah et al., 2008:108)

INTRODUCTION: the pervasiveness of love

The story starts with a confession. A young woman was sitting in front of me. Her tears were dropping like never before while she yelled out: 'What is love anyway? Why people talk love as if it's the most magical and greatest thing that ever happens to you? And then, when you're in a relationship, everything is different! Love is not even in love. But I need love. I need to love! I am so tired, tired of this endless circle of finding or having love!' The woman was confused and frustrated. She was confused because of the multiple facets of love; facets that depict different understanding of how it should be and how it works. She was frustrated; frustrated by the mismatch between her expectation of love and the experience of her relationship.

The confession of this woman gives many hints about contemporary love relationships, of how love is more needed than ever before; of how there is a discrepancy between its idealized image and reality in everyday life. And as much as private and personal love seems to be, we are nowadays surrounded by a ubiquitous public culture of love constituted by numerous representations, symbols, and narratives (Jackson, 1993). The pervasiveness of love in the public sphere and our hopes to find everlasting love, a love that provides the transcendent and spiritual bliss that the prescribed life patterns of the material world fails to give; these phenomena, sociologists Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) argued, are very close to

a form of religion in our detraditionalized, secularized and individualized world (Illouz, 1997).

In understanding the landscape of contemporary love relationships, although differing in their approaches, sociological theories converge around an image of late modern love as detraditional, reflexive and equalitarian (Gross, 2005; Santore, 2008). Instead of traditional marital intimacy based on companionate and idealistic love, sociologists, most notably Giddens (1991; 1992), assert that under the transformation of modernity, contemporary love relationships have evolved into a relatively free form of intimacy- the 'pure relationships' in which 'the relationship exists solely for whatever rewards that relationship as such can deliver (Giddens, 1991:6). The pure relationships replace the traditional narrative of romantic love. In the relatively new intimacy culture, love is demystified and deinstitutionalized that it is neither naturally lifelong, nor intrinsically associated with marriage.

However, as much prominent and influential the theories of modern intimacy are; they are problematic in the ways that various empirical studies are suggesting opposite view on the issue of contemporary love. Numerous media studies have found out that the romanticized view of relationships and marriages is continuously cultivated by the mass media and consumer culture that have influential impacts on individual's perception of love (e.g. Segrin&Nabi, 2002; Eggermont, 2004). From romance novels, romantic comedies, to popular love songs; the mass media conveys an image of relationships that emphasizes a great deal of passionate romance, physical intimacy, love in destiny etc. These narratives constitute an idealistic perspective on relationships and marriage in which one true love is considered as the ultimate goal of the quest; and it will overcome all the obstacles and promise a lifetime of happiness in an expected marriage.

Without a mutually discussion with one and another, the very different theoretical arguments suggest two contrasting outlooks of contemporary relationships, resulting a blind spot in the theoretical debate, overlooking the possible co-existence and interplay between two conflicting comprehensions of love in everyday life. The two parallel discourses, as acknowledged by Shumway(2003), generate a series of tensions taking place in contemporary culture. In an attempt to

access the plausibility on the issue of contemporary love relationships, this paper analyses if and how two pivotal but incompatible narratives relate to one another in shaping individual's love life. In which ways are contemporary love relationships situated at the cross-fire of the two contrasting love discourses? Before actually tapping into these questions, I will first discuss the history and features of two romantic discourses.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To start framing the relationship between contemporary romantic relationship and the relatively vague notions of 'the intimacy culture' and 'idealistic perspective of love', I draw on the concepts of *the discourse of intimacy* and *the discourse of romance*¹ from the work of Shumway(2003). Relying on a variety of historical and literary analysis, Shumway conceptualizes intimacy culture as the *discourse of intimacy*. The discourse of intimacy coincides with another traditionally prominent love narrative – *the discourse of romance* in contemporary society providing two sets of references to formulate our thoughts about love while competing and excluding the other.

I. The Discourse of Intimacy

i. Anthony Giddens: the Pure Relationship

Compared to the discourse of romance which stresses the emotional sensitivity of love, the discourse of intimacy deals with the issue of relationships in a rational manner. According to Giddens (1992), the development of modernity means a series of emancipations. By employing the method of reasoning and sedulous

¹ In this paper, the term *the discourse of romance* or *the romance discourse* is specifically used to indicate the traditional narrative of romantic love which emphasizes the experience of romance, courtship, infatuation, romanticism and the connection between love and marriage. *Both the discourse of romance* and *the discourse of intimacy* are embodied in a broader narrative of romantic love. Therefore, the term *romantic love* or *romantic narrative* does not mean but includes *the romance discourse*.

investigations, not only in the field of natural science, but also in the social life world, individuals are set off from traditional doctrines as well as emotions. Because of the difficulty to justify emotional sentiment and the social relations stimulated by it based on empirical or rational arguments; emotions- love and passion- no longer serve as a legitimate conviction responsible for human behavior in a highly modern society. In other words, along the way to modernity, the “compelling and mysterious” force of passion and love lost their positions to rationality which succeeds in providing a sense of security and reasoning in the so called intimate relationships.

The discourse of intimacy rises under such conditions. On the one hand, the emergence of the intimacy discourses is embodied in the context of therapeutic culture which started to make its appearance in the early half of the 20th century as a response to the marriage crisis in the Western societies at the time. On the other hand, the rationality inherited in the discourse of intimacy is operationalized in terms of ‘the democraticising of personal life’ (*ibid.*, 1992:188).

Manifesting its presence through a numerous body of instructional manuals on domestic issues in the 1960s, the therapeutic culture views love as a social bond that can only be affirmed if it rests on the free self as well as the freedom to choose one’s partner (Bellah et al., 2008). “Before one can love others, one must learn to love one’s self,” as a very familiar saying in the discourse of intimacy goes, love is a process of self-realization which is based on self-acknowledgement. Love is also individualistic in the sense that it allows one to express the ‘true’, authentic, inner self in the relationships. This individualistic mode of love assimilates what Giddens recognizes as “the pure relationship” (1992:2).

For Giddens, in the individualized societies life turns into a personal project and love becomes a realm which is created, managed, and played out by the volunteer participations. Love is founded in the intimacy between the couple, not in any specific institutionalized forms (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Giddens, 1991, 1993). In other words, relationships are internally driven and sustained. It can only exist as far as ‘the sentiments of closeness are reciprocated for their own sake’ (Giddens, 1991:90). Therefore, either marriage or lifelong togetherness is no longer the ultimate goal. In the world of the pure relationships, the continuance of love does

not rely on traditional or institutional justification; but is within the ‘democratically ordered interactions’ in which equality characterize the rights and obligations of intimacy (*ibid.*, 1992:190).

Unlike the romance discourse in which true love conceived as lifetime, in the intimacy discourse, the existence of a relationship solely depends on the possibility of intimacy which is built upon the democratization of daily life. Both partners are expected to be fully involved in determining the conditions of their association and future development in a democratic manner. It requires analytical and reflexive attitudes towards one’s relationship along with the necessities of respect for the other’s freedom, of an equality of emotional give and take, of self-autonomy in order to accomplish personal life project etc.

Moreover, mutual communication in the relationships is perceived as the medium to express personal needs and concerns. In the intimacy discourse, the concept of ‘talking cure’ is very much addressed. It is considered as the major model to build the connection as well as the main solution to solve the conflicts between two parties. In addition, intimacy is expected as a condition of friendship in which two persons can discuss everything from everyday details of life, to similar interest, to the most private feelings that one would not share with anybody else (Shumway, 2003). Unlike the romance discourse, the emphasis of friendships is commonly presented in the intimacy discourse encouraging people to search a partner who can also be “the best friend” or “soul mate.”

ii. The Manifestation of the Intimacy Discourse in Contemporary Society

Throughout the development of modernity, family and marriage have become far more important as the ‘heaven in heartless world’ in which individuals can retreat from the growing alienation in a capitalist society (Bellah et al., 2008:87). However, while the expectations of personal satisfaction in marriage grew, so did the divorce rate. In the decades follow by World War I, western societies observed a sudden rising divorce rate due to the dissatisfaction of the partner or the marriage life (Gross, 2005; Shumway, 2003). In response to the marriage crisis, couples went to

relationship therapy, and sought for professional opinions from the advice literature to prevent or fix the problems. In this context, relationships, love and intimacy have become the objects of analysis. In turn, these marriage and family therapy has contributed to the rise of the intimacy discourse.

Using the language of therapy, in the intimacy discourse, couples should self-consciously scrutinize one's relationship. The advocated reflexive attitude is also shown in a wide variety of popular cultural products. For example, Shumway noted that 'at the beginning in the 1970s a new film genre emerged dealing with relationships rather than the inevitable paring of love and marriage (2003:157). This relatively "new" film genre is characterized with the 'relationship stories', in the contrast to the 'courtship stories' which were largely shown in early screwball comedies or nowadays romantic comedies. In the relationship stories, such as Woody Allen's works *Husbands and Wives* and *When Harry met Sally...*, romance and desire are not longer the focus in the films but merely an aspect of relationship, subordinated to the philosophical discussion on the nature of relationships in the films.

In addition to the manifestation of the intimacy discourse in films, the popularization of the intimacy discourse is also largely found in radio therapy program, various television talk shows such as *Opera* or *Dr. Phil*, reality shows and an enormous body of self-help books or domestic magazines (e.g. Aslama and Pantti, 2006; Illouz, 1991; Shumway, 2003). In the media, personal matters become openly discussed issues. The relationship advice given by the experts teaches individual how to reveal the mechanism of a relationship and how to manage their relationships in a reflexive and communicating ways.

Yet, in the advice literature, the manual instructions are not as homogenous as they seem to be. In her study on women magazines, Illouz (1991) recognizes two conflicting models of love relationships are portrayed in the magazines. The first one, resembling the discourse of romance, advocates the organic passion and emotional intensity within love; while the other, in line with the intimacy discourse, suggests that the long-lasting relationship should be build in a strategically real world, in which "effort replaces the magic start, commitment the overwhelming force of

passion, relativity the absoluteness of love, and conscious monitoring the spontaneous outburst of passion” (ibid., 1991:236). Both the discourses of intimacy and romance are simultaneously presented in the advice literature, and lead individuals in contradicting directions.

II. Discourse of Romance

i. Idealistic Love and Romantic Marriage

General speaking, there are two most prevailing characteristics featured in the romance discourse: the idealistic view of love and the inevitable association between love and marriage (e.g. Shumway, 2003; Wexman, 1993). In the romance discourse, the happening of love is phenomenal and unpredictable. Disregard one’s own will, the power of love exerts an overflow of emotional sentiments uproots individual from the reality as if one’s dream has come true. Moreover, in the romance discourse, love is absolute. There can only be one-and-only true love, ‘that true love lasts forever, and that love can overcome all the obstacles’ (Sprecher and Metts, 1999:835, cited in Gross, 2005:302).

Therefore, in the romance discourse, the centrality of love lays in the dense inner emotional fabric of intimacy. The intensive, impulsive and exceptional feelings constitute a sensibility in which the idealistic love projects an imaginative identification towards the love relationship and the participants (Gross, 2005). Through the participation in an idealized relationship, a promising future appears. In historical romances and many other novels, ‘the connection [between romantic love and marriage] was natural and did not need to be explained or justified. A marriage based on true love would, as the narrative pattern repeatedly insisted, produce wedded bliss’ (Shumway, 2003:63). In the romance discourse, the idealistic love projects a course of future development as a propitious lifetime happiness.

As noted by Giddens (1992), coinciding with the emergence of the cultural form of novel, in the 19th century and onwards, marriage is progressively less

motivated by interest, property and alliance. Rather than an outlaw passion hiding outside of marriage, romance became the gatekeeper of marriages (Spurlock, 2005; Coontz, 2005). Thus, marriage provided an opportunity for that the individual to departure from traditional constrains and to develop oneself. The affinity between romantic love and marriage was perceived at two levels: that the genetically imaginative nature in idealistic love projects a course of future development for the couple- a lifelong of togetherness; that it provides a potential avenue for self-independency and self-fulfillment in the promising marriage which was regarded as the ideal path leading to freedom, personal happiness and enjoyment, especially for women in the early phase of modernization (Giddens, 1992).

ii. The Manifestation of Romance Discourse in Contemporary Society

In history, the romance discourse has been primarily expressed in narrative form, and its most important expression has always been fictional. From the 19th century romance novels, the storytelling nature of fictions enables the works to position their audiences not only as observers of a love affair but also as emotional participants who identify themselves with the romantic subjects in the fictional works (Goode, 1959). Nowadays, the discourse of romance is widely visualized and displayed in a proliferation of media products. From popular fictional novels, popular songs and to particularly television soap opera, these love themed media products have contributed to the spread of the discourse of romance (Shumway, 2003). In television soap operas, the discourse of romance provides a bone-structure for the 'never-ending game of romantic musical chairs', as Liebes and Livingstone(1994:725, cited in Shumway, 2005:216) describe the formula of soap opera.

Films are also a significant medium for the romance discourse. In their analysis on romantic comedies and dramas produced in Hollywood from 1930 until 2000, Dowd and Pallotta(2000) observe a romantic-comedy boom since the 1990s. Romantic-comedy film genre verifies what Shumway(2003) sees as the courtship stories that feature with passionate romance, absolute love, and a happy reunion ending. However, the findings by Dowd and Pallotta oddly contrast to what

Shumway(2003) asserts that the prevalence of relationships stories has subsumed the typical romantic courtship stories in films. The incompatible claims made by the scholars reveal the conflicting perspectives on the issue of dominant love narratives. Although the answer remains unclearly, the contradictory empirical findings indicate the existence of both the romance and intimacy discourse in our popular culture.

Nevertheless, various studies have demonstrated the influential roles of these love themed media products on articulating people's idealistic expectations and practices of romantic love. In Bachen and Illouz's study (1996), they show how American teenagers incorporate the representations of love showing on various media such as TV, movies and advertisement into their imaginations and descriptions of an ideal relationship. In addition, in both Eggermont(2004) and Segrin and Nabi's (2002) researches, the authors all found out that there was a significant positive relation between romantically themed television content viewing and idealistic conception of marriage.

Overall, numerous media studies have demonstrated how influential the romance discourse is on popular culture. These empirical findings are in contrary to what Giddens and others have claimed that contemporary relationships have reached a status where love and passion are demystified; and intimate bonds are evolving from choice, reason, and the knowledge of self and others in its pure abstract form of mutual disclosure. For Giddens, the discourse of romance, along with the prototypes of "amour passion" as well as "romantic love", inevitably has been replaced by the pure relationships in the development of modernity. Disregard the prominence and influence of the romance discourse, Giddens's theory becomes one-sidedness, and detaches from the reality world.

On the other hand, although researches have shown the active role of the romance discourse in formulating people's fantasized perception of romantic relationships, most the studies left out the discourse of intimacy in their analyses and discussions. Without reciprocal and polemical debates between the theories and studies, the two contrary romantic discourses are individually emphasized and supported by different scholars, resulting in a blind spot in both theoretical claims for the prominence and mutual influence of both discourses.

In only few studies, the distinctive narratives about love in popular culture are recognized, for example in the work of Shumway(2003) and Illouz (1998). Also, in Illouz and Bachen's (1996) study, the authors notice that in the case of elder teenagers, their perception of romantic relationship is mingled with two models: the idealistic love and the partnership love. The former emphasizes on the exceptional affections, altruism, and "visual cues" containing luxury or leisure consumption; and the latter stresses the actual comfortable romantic experiences and the development of a relationship.

However, in these studies, different authors acknowledges here and there a tension between the discourses of intimacy and romance, the answer to how this tension is played out in contemporary love relationships in real life remains unclear. In this case, the following empirical analysis is required. How individuals' perceptions and practices of love are informed by these narratives; and what their particular meanings are in individual's relationships? How are the potential tensions between the two discourses experienced by the individuals? And how do they incorporate and negotiate two diverse discourse of love in everyday setting? By asking these questions, this paper is allowed to understand the ways in which the two incompatible love discourses interact in everyday life and shape our private life

METHOD

The study is conducted through a series of semi-structured in-depth interviews with 10 Dutch men and 10 Dutch women². The respondents were recruited from the Randstad of the Netherlands. Except one respondent was interviewed via internet video phone call, all the others were interviewed in person. All of them were in a relationship during the time of the interview. Within twenty respondents, thirteen of them are currently living together. One respondent has been recently married. And three respondents have registered as partnership for from 0.5 to 3 years.

² There was no partnership among the respondents.

Averagely, the respondents were in a 3.9 years relationship, ranging from 1 year to 8 years. The interviewees are in the age in between 22 to 35. The selection of this age group is based on a general assumption that within this range, interviewees would have experienced serious relationships. The experiences allow them, to a certain extent, to be reflective on the relationship matters. At the same time, the respondents are also facing a transitional phase in which the issues of commitment and future developments rises in a relationship. In general, the respondents are high educated. Thirteen of them are either studying at university, or have a university or higher educational degree³.

In the interview, the respondents were asked several open questions concerning their general attitudes towards love and relationship, and about their own relationship life and romantic practices. The interview questions⁴ were derived from the sensitizing concepts of *the discourse of intimacy* and *the discourse of romance* in both Shumway and Giddens' theories. All the interviews were conducted in English⁵. The average time of interviews was 80 minutes. The interviews were all recorded and transcribed for the following up analysis.

ANALYSIS

I. Prototypes: Romance Oriented vs. Intimacy Oriented

i. The Romance Discourse: Magic, Passion, and Lifetime Togetherness

Among the 20 respondents, some of them heavily embraced the discourse of romance in their understandings and practices of love. Three notions were particularly emphasized: the enchanted love, the necessity of passion and sexual

³ Out of all the potential respondents which were approached for this study, larger share of the people who were willing to participate in this research were relatively highly educated. This could relate to the notion that people with higher education in the Netherlands find more comfortable to express their feelings and opinions in English.

⁴ See Appendix 1.

⁵ Although all interviews were conducted in English, when the respondents found themselves having difficulties to express in English, they were encouraged to say the Dutch words or phrases. Later, the Dutch words or phrases were translated back to English in the analysis.

intensity, and the importance of lifetime togetherness. These three emphases made by interviewees empirically substantiated the concepts of idealistic and imaginative perceptions of love within the romance discourse.

ENCHANTED LOVE

Regarding to the nature of love, the romance-approach sees love as something beyond one's capacity to control. Love, as if it is its own free agent, acts on its own will to determine whether one would fall in or fall out of love. Love, in this sense, turns into an enchanted entity and an unstoppable force that makes decisions sometimes even detached from individual's own choice (Illouz, 1991). For example, one respondent recalled that in the beginning, she did not intend to have a serious relationship. However, during the confrontation with her boyfriend, love took over and she was unable to refuse the power of love:

'I went to a holiday. I decided that when I come back, I'm going to tell him that we should stop seeing each other anymore that it will be over. But then when I was back, he kissed me. He was there. I just wasn't able to say it. My mind had made up my decision but when you were there, the heart said something else. Or the magical love said something else.' (female, 25, 8-year relationship)

In her description, an important cultural implication is acknowledged: the distinction between the reasoning mind and the emotional heart. The former one is cognitive analysis based on a rational view of love. The other one is that empowered by love, the intensive emotions and impulsive feelings take initial charge for one's love life. The narrative of 'the magic of love' here underlines the religious characteristic in the fervor of love, in the perceptions of the romance-oriented respondents.

According to Giddens (1992), the quality of enchantment generates overwhelming sentiments and devotions that produce a sense of preparedness for individuals for the possibly radical changes in the future. Moreover, such enchanted

view of love corresponds to the belief in fated destiny that the romantic respondents tend to see in their relationships. They consider the fact that we, as ignorant as human beings, are limited in understanding the “unknown master plan”- fate. Within the same narratological structure, the respondents ascribed the unexplained force of love to a greater unexplained destiny. The experiences of suddenly falling out of love also justify the power of love and fate. For them, the decision is neither in their hand nor in the rational mind of any individual.

The beliefs in fate are exemplified by the narratives of ‘meant-to-be-together’, ‘perfect-love’, or ‘fairytale-like relationship’ mentioned by the respondents. The idealistic view they project on the romantic relationship and the perspective partner renders a feeling of “wholeness” that legitimates the argument of perfect matches. The feelings of ‘being completed by the other’, ‘complementing each other’ or ‘have a better life together’ are the ones praised in the romance discourse. In this case, as Gross(2005:302) argued, these narratives center on individuals objectifying love as the quest that ‘involves temporary and utopian dissolving of individuality- a dissolving that is highly charged with affectivity and elevates the narrative into the realm of the sacred.’

In addition to the sense of completeness, in order to further support the beliefs in destiny, several respondents talk about ‘strange’ or ‘funny’ happenings in their relationship as the evidence to tell the magic of love and fate:

Do you think you and your boyfriend are meant to be together?

Sometimes yes. We sometimes even make jokes about that. Because his mother lived in Delft. [...] And his dad came from Amersfoort. It was a similar situation what my boyfriend and I are dealing with now. And his mother’s name also starts with a B. So we are B&M; and his parents are also B&M. That’s funny. And also we met on 25th of August. And that’s the number in whole family that people have relationship. His sister is getting married on 25th. And yeah, so based on those things, then I say yeah, maybe we are kind of meant to be together. (Female, 24, 1 year 9 months relationship)

These “unexplained” serendipities serve as affirmations for the respondents to legitimate the mysterious power of fate and love. Although the doubts they showed in answering the question of the existence of ‘the-one-and-only’ true love, the romantic-oriented respondents convince that the relationship with their partner is meant to be in terms of a perfect love or a perfect match.

PASSION & SEXUAL INTENSITY

The intensive and affectionate sentiments in the discourse of romance constitute a sense of ‘romanticism’ which is usually practiced by the romance-oriented respondents. For them, the elements of passion and sexual intensity are seen as the necessities in a romantic relationship. This sense of “romanticism” is operationalized in terms of daily subscription to a set of practices which continues the extraordinary feelings in a relationship. In the romance-model, the time and routine are the enemies of romance. Without the passion and sexual intensity in the relationship, the relationship is no longer a romantic one, but turns into undesirable ‘friendship’, ‘brother-sister relationship’, ‘friends with benefits’.

How would you describe your relationship?

Definitely passionate love [laughter]. Without passion it wouldn’t work. Yeah for sure! It’s not like we only see each other at home. There must be some sexual tension as well. Otherwise I wouldn’t enjoy that. That’s for sure. If you don’t have that I think it gets more like a friendship instead of relationship. (Male, 25, 2.5-year relationship)

With a clear contrast to the intimacy-oriented respondents, in the eyes of romance-oriented individuals, routine steadiness means the death of romantic sentiments and the end of togetherness, meaning it is ‘just having a separate life in one space’, according to one of the romance-oriented respondents. To avoid such unwelcomed conditions, the respondents address the importance of not only to be

aware of the “threat”, but also to have exceptional and extraordinary mutual experiences.

‘I would really dislike a relationship that involved into this brother-and-sister relationship in which there’s no romance anymore. So I think why we can be together for such a long time is that we find these moments in which you feel like 'oh right, this is how it feels like the first year in the relationship. You need once a while the spark that making things nice.’ (Female, 25, 8-year relationship)

‘These moments’ are the practices of romanticism to reactivate the intrinsic sentiments underlying everyday relationship life. Therefore, on the one hand, by sharing ‘unusual’ experiences and exceptional moments, such as traveling aboard, taking tango lesson together, or sexual explorations, the couple is able to cut off the entanglements and the continuities of everyday life. On the other hand, not only these exceptional occasions are required to maintain the sentiments. Romanticism is also practiced in everyday life setting. Thus, writing love notes, or taking a candlelight bath together, those are the regular receipts to sustain sexual tension, and rejuvenate passion in a daily basis. And as a result, the romance actively continues in one’s relationship, preventing it from falling into a ‘fellow-relationship’.

LOVE & LIFETIME TOGETHERNESS

As one of the most salient characters in the discourse of romance, the idealistic love is genetically associated with marriage (Giddens, 1992; Gross, 2005). Such perception is found in the narrative of all the romance-oriented respondents that they viewed their current partner as a lifelong companion, and the father/mother of their children. However, considering the divorce rate in contemporary society, for the romance respondents, marriage has failed in its role to guarantee everlasting love. Rather than, they tended to refer to ‘together for the rest of life’, ‘building a family’,

'having children', and 'having a dream house' as the 'real' goals in a relationship, instead of 'just an institutional contract of marriage'.

It is very interesting to see that in the romance-model, although the favor in marriage is declining, the belief in everlasting love remains. Such belief falls into the cultural ideal framework of lifelong-togetherness in the discourse of romance, in which an imaginary projection of oneself forward in time through participation in an idealized experience of love. The future becomes visualizable in a 'perfect' relationship.

This finding in part exemplifies what Gross(2005) suggested that although regulative traditions of a lifelong internal stratified marriage have been declined in contemporary relationship landscape; the culturally idealized lifelong togetherness is still very dominant, and guides the imagination towards relationship and marriage nowadays in Western societies. It advocates the notion of "ethic of sensitivity" that cultivation of emotionality is sanctified as a legitimate life project. From the mysterious power of love and fate to an ideal life trajectory, the narrative provided by the romance respondents pursuant to the romance discourse supported the view that 'the teleological power of mythically validated past origins and future destinations precludes reflexivity and the interrogation either of present or of future destinations' (Jacobs& Smith, 1997:69, cited in: Gross, 2005:303).

ii. Intimacy Discourse: Everyday life, Therapeutic and an Unforeseen Future

In contrast to the idealistic view of love in the discourse of romance, the discourse of intimacy promotes a realistic view of love, and accentuates on the issue of relationship management (Illouz, 1998). In the model of intimacy, love roots in social relationship instead of emotional sentiments. A steady intimacy replaces the overwhelming force of emotions, in which a model of equality in emotional give-and-take is presumed. Moreover, relationship is a self monitoring work. In the intimacy-model, the formation of a relationship is no longer due to external social obligation. Hence, the continuity of relationships heavily relies on personal

reflexivity and communication as well as trust, honesty and respect. 'Love only develops to the degree to which intimacy does' (Giddens, 1992:62) and in the principle of each partner gains sufficient benefit from the relation to make it continuance worthwhile.

STEADY AND RATIONAL LOVE

In the intimacy model, respondents substitute the model of passionate and fantasy-like love for a realistic and rational view of love. The differentiation is consciously drawn by the respondents. They are aware that the relationship they pursue is different from the Hollywood romance stories:

How would you describe the relationship between you and your girlfriend?

It's not the very romantic. I mean, it's very nice but it's not like we are heavily in love and everything was about...It's not like I couldn't do anything else but thinking about her. [...] It just feels kind of normal to be in a relationship with her. Since the beginning, we are very close and steady. (Male, 24, 4.5-year relationship)

'We are not really romantic. We are not all the time saying 'I love you', throwing romantic dinner, candles and wine and everything like that. It's not about that. It's more...We're glad that we can talk so much to each other. Or we have so many interests together. I really like the steadiness of our relationship' (Female, 23, 4.5-year relationship)

Rather than seeing relationships as composed by moments of bliss, intimacy-oriented respondents preferred to appreciate the emotional sentiment that blends into "comfortable" and "normal" in the daily life. The casualty of everyday interactions that evolved with time along with mutual knowledge lay down the firm basis for a relationship. With a clear distinction, the features of normality and steady love are the ones romance-oriented respondents tend to avoid. A relationship, in the

eyes of intimacy respondents, is a volunteer project demanding enormous emotional efforts and skillful management. By referring to love as 'work', the management of a relationship is not solely a matter of continuance of romance and passion. In the discourse of intimacy, aesthetic and intensive emotions are considered as momentary and that cannot grand a long-term successful relationship. It is through the work and the efforts individuals put out that the intimacy can "grow" to "make the relationship work out". This orientation of seeing the relationship is in the hands of both partners, consequently refusing the idea of 'meant to be' or the fated love:

'I don't believe in soul mates in the manner that you are born apart; and then you find each other. No. Relationships are works. They are fun too, but they're also works. What I mean it that it is not because you were meant to be together that after thirty years it is still perfect. No. There are still problems that can come up, like getting old or fat [laughs]. And you have to work it out too. You make yourself to be meant to be together.'

(Female, 22, 2-year relationship)

For intimacy-oriented respondents, what romance respondents addressed as 'the magic of love' is nothing but sexual attractiveness resulted from 'biological nature'. They refused the existence of sacred love. Rather, love is something that can be controlled in terms of 'the ways people handle it'. For instance, although both types of respondents mentioned the incidence of suddenly falling out of love, contrasted to the romance respondents who saw the case as a proof of how uncontrollable love was, the intimacy respondent addressed the practical 'solutions' to deal with the issue. It is because they believe the success or failure of a relationship is in one's responsible decision, not in destiny.

THERAPEUTIC ATTITUDE

According to the intimacy-oriented respondents, the management of love and relationship relies on 'openness', 'honesty', 'respect', 'trust', 'understanding', and

'having independency'. Such evaluations and emphases resemble, in a broader sense, the concept of 'egalitarian therapeutic love' as Bellah's and his colleagues (2008) suggests. Such love begins with the self, rather than with social obligations or the "compelling force" of emotions. The individual must find his or her true self as the genuine base to build a relationship. 'It is important that when you love yourself, you can love the others.' One of the respondents shares her "Buddhist view" of love saying that she notices once she does not pay enough attention to herself, the relationship would go 'unbalanced'. Thus, the therapeutic love is based on self-acknowledgement and self-assertion, in contrast to self-devotion in the romance model.

Both self-revelation and communication are the premium that the intimacy-model places on. The lovers are encouraged to express authentic feelings in order to build the 'connection'. Thus, the similarity in terms of 'fundamental aspects of life', 'lifestyle', 'interests' between two partners are the ones that ground the couple together for the possible development and interaction. Different from the romance-oriented respondents who see a clear difference between lover and friend, the intimacy respondents stress the importance of friendship in a relationship, and many of them consider their partner as one's best friend. For them, the friendship allows them to be able to confront the other with one's truest, both positive and negative, emotions.

As Giddens(1991) explains the inner mechanism of pure relationship, comparing to the intimacy in traditional society where trust is geared by established positions, in the contemporary pure relationships, trust is built on the balance between self-autonomy and mutual disclosure. It depends on the premises of authenticity of being oneself and on open communication. The trust found in a relationship secures intimacy; and provides the possibility of further commitment to the relationship. For example, one respondent told the incidence that she wanted to have a drink with another guy. Instead of jealousy, her boyfriend encouraged her to do so.

‘It makes me more sure about our relationship together that he doesn’t feel threatened by anyone. I think it is really beautiful that you also want the other to have fun. You don’t want to restrict, to keep each other too tight. And you don’t worry about too much because you know the base of the relationship, and have the trust in each other.’ (Female, 23, 4.5-year relationship)

In her talk, the notions of trust, communication as well as personal freedom are intertwined. Through the means of communication and trust, the relationship is binding aspiration of ‘democratically ordered interaction by both respect and opening out to the person’ (Giddens, 1992:190). In such love, intimacy is neither absorbed by the other, nor individual becomes a ‘claimed property’ of the other. With clear boundaries and self-autonomy, they permit a circumstance where individuals can develop personal potentialities. Those ‘me time’, ‘personal friends’, ‘separate rooms/houses’, ‘financially independency’ or ‘personal career development’ are the criteria and necessities to have a successful relationship in the intimacy-model.

“FUTURE? NOBODY KNOWS THE FUTURE!”

In the intimacy discourse, a relationship only exists as long as sentiments of closeness are reciprocated for their own sake. Without external social forces concerning the consecutive time being, there is no conceived ‘ultimate goal’ in a relationship. The emphasis on lifelong-togetherness is instead replaced by the importance of mutual development within the relationship. In this sense, the relationship maintains as a ‘rolling-contract’ (Giddens, 1992:192) in which individuals commit to a concrete affiliation with the other, not the “invisible future”.

Do you consider that relationship is a lifetime commitment?

Yes and no. Yes is because of the fact that you consciously choose to be with the other person, and to feel alive. Like, we bought this home and

being together for 8 years now. We do have some plans for the future. But I do also always be conscious about that everything can *go away*. It's like 'vergankelijk' (not lasting forever). Everything can go away or change. It makes me think that you do make a commitment, because in the time it is right. But it can also *change*. So in that way, it is not a lifetime commitment.
(Female, 23, 8-year relationship)

Since the nature of relationships is internally driven, they can only be sustained by both partners continuously committing to the relationship. As suggested by Giddens (1992:93), 'commitment [in pure relationships] is recognized by participants to provide emotional support which is guaranteed to persist through at least some of the perturbation which the relationship might undergo.' The period of time given by love is no longer promised. The idea of lifetime commitment is 'naïve' and 'over-optimistic' for the intimacy-oriented respondents. For them, relationships are a ceaseless negotiation and exploration towards the "unforeseen" future. Until further notice, then 'we will see'.

So far, I have demonstrated that both the discourses of intimacy and romance are operative in the contemporary Dutch romantic relationships. Ideal-typically, the distinction between the models is clearly marked. The narratives of love among the respondents contrast to each other in various respects, from the interpretation of love, to the necessities in a relationship, to the future perspectives. The next question is then: how does the coexistence between two theoretically incompatible discourses impact Dutch romantic relationships in everyday life?

II. The Tension between Romance and Intimacy in Everyday Life

i. The Issue of Lifetime Commitment

Although the respondents hold basic orientations, either romance or intimacy, the presence of the other contradictory discourse in popular culture sometimes challenges their beliefs, and consequently, resulting in a series of conflicts and

struggles. The romance-oriented respondents experience the friction given by the perspectives of intimacy discourse as the “little voice in the head”, and vice versa: the intimacy-oriented respondents are haunted by the doubts derived from the narrative of the romance model. Therefore, although the respondents might experience conflicts due to the clash of contradictory views on a similar issue, the reasons that cause the difficulties can be varying. For example, on the issue of lifetime commitment, for the intimacy-oriented respondents, the difficulty is raised by the skepticism towards the possibility to make such a commitment in a relationship:

‘This commitment sometimes is hard. Or, to get too dependent on him, this also scares me. [...] I think for me, I find it scary if you just put all your hope, future, life on one person. If with only one person and it doesn’t go the ways you want, then you are screwed. [...] I do think he is the one. But I cannot 100 % sure. Because you don’t know how things... I would be very lucky to stay with him forever. But I cannot make the promise. That’s why I’m very scared of getting married. I can’t really make this promise.’
(Female, 23, 3.5-year relationship)

In the model of romance, it is the inherent nature that love promises a foreseen life-trajectory, with the ideal perspective partner. In contrast, in the discourse of intimacy, lifelong togetherness is not genetically given by the relationship. The relationships can only be sustained, not guaranteed. The clash between two incompatible perspectives on the issue of commitment renders the struggle as this intimacy-oriented respondent fears to make a lifetime commitment.

In Giddens’ work, he also notices the difficulty of making commitment in the form of pure relationship. However, instead of recognizing the conflict as derived from two colliding discourses, Giddens sees it as an intrinsic vulnerability of pure relationship. As he argues, in the high modernity, individuals face a wide range of lifestyle-choices and that with an increasing awareness of the consequentiality of their own actions and of the intrinsic limitations on their ability to predict what those consequences will be. In the cases of this respondent and for many others, the

anxiety does not raised by the unforeseen future in a relationship. The uncertainty is already embedded in their perception of how a relationship works. Instead, the anxiety was caused by the requirements and the expectations to make a statement of certainty which conflicts to what they believed.

‘There’s this expectation that when you have dated for so long, commitment becomes important. It’s like you need to be sure he is the one. Or otherwise it’s like you’re wasting of your time. But that is the part I would never be sure of. I find it very hard when I need to say or think those things.’ (Female, 22, 3.5-year relationship)

‘This expectation’ is constructed by the narrative of romance that once love is defined, the idealistic projection towards the other and the future course would also take place. Such narrative conflicts to the fundamental view of relationships’ nature. And, consequently, the struggle begins.

On the other hand, for the romance respondents, the gaps between the contrary views of commitment in the two discourses also result in a level of struggling. However, it is in a different manner than the ones for intimacy respondents. The skepticism in the discourse of intimacy has influenced and challenged the idea that a life course is genetically embedded in a relationship as the romance discourse asserts. In the romance mode, love is never a matter of will, but precisely as something one “fall” into (Shumway, 2003). For some romance respondents, despite their fundamental beliefs in fate and that lifelong togetherness is promised by love, they found it was ‘stupid’, ‘silly’, or ‘old and cheesy’ to declare their beliefs out loud:

‘Maybe I think my boyfriend and I are meant to be together. And I hope so. And everything says yes. But still there’s this *little voice* in my head saying ‘no! maybe not!’ I have this worry about that I just say this things too early. And if things don’t turn well then you feel just *stupid* or something.
[...]Then I start doubting, doubting like, okay... is this really it? And what

do you suppose to feel if this is it? Yeah, that's stupid.' (Female, 24, 2-year relationship)

Although her fundamental beliefs in fated love, the discourse of intimacy as a 'little voice' that inhabited her mind leads to a sense of insecurity concerning her convictions. The doubts are generated by the coexistence of two incompatible perceptions of love in the discourses. In order to solve the 'stupid' skepticism which was derived from the narrative of intimacy, the respondents tend to borrow the concept of "work on love" to ease the anxiety. In other words, while their idealistic attitude towards of love is questioned by the realistic view of relationship; the respondents referred to the importance of putting efforts in a relationship, which is also the narrative of the intimacy to gain a sense of security. Thus, the conflict resulted from the opposite view of love in the other discourse is also solved by the statement from the other discourse. In this case, in the process of collision, the two discourses not only result in conflicting struggles, but also intertwined negotiations.

ii. **Dilemma: Passionate Romanticism or Steady Realism?**

In the model of romance, the extraordinary power that love exerts over individuals is the force that constitutes the intimacy. However, it also leads the lovers to the dilemma in which such spiritual transcending sentiments need to find their places in the mundane routine of ordinary life (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). The difficulties to incorporate affection into daily life are further enhanced by the realistic narrative in which the intimacy model asserts that love should be managed through 'delayed gratification rather than through play and instant pleasure' (Illouz, 1998:169). Such perspective in the discourse of intimacy contests the concept of ideal love in the romance model.

'I know it's ridiculous to have all the passion or be exciting every day. I know. But I still think those things are very important to have in a relationship. Or otherwise it's like... only ritual, the daily routine. When

you don't make time for each other, the love is just...It becomes boring and steady. But on the other hand, steady shouldn't be that bad. Right? I don't know. Sometimes it's confusing to see how it should be.' (Male, 25, 3.5-year relationship)

As Illouz suggests, the contemporary narrative models of love split into two kinds: the 'fantasy-like' and 'real life' love. The former addresses the ways of experiencing love as on the mode of 'rebellion' that, according to Beck, is 'a way of getting in touch with forces to counteract the intangible and unintelligible existence we find ourselves in' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002:178, cited in Illouz, 1998:170). In contrast to that, the second mode which is highly utilized in the discourse of intimacy is to incorporate love in 'phenomenological and semantic categories of everyday life' (Illouz, 1998:169). However, Illouz suggests that throughout the transformation of love in recent history, contemporary definition of love has transformed into the second mode. Without further speculation, Illouz overlooks the active influence of the romance discourse and the conflicts between the two models of narrative happening in everyday relationship life settings.

For example, from the quote above, although the respondent acknowledges the realistic proposition of the intimacy discourse, the idea of steady routine as an ideal outlook of a relationship is in principle opposite to how the romance model sees the genuine nature of romantic love: it is composed by intensive and exceptional feelings. For him, without those essential elements, love would be wearing by the dullness of everyday routine. The intimacy discourse challenges his perspective concerning love; and consequently, brings confusion in choosing the rightful way to perceive his relationship.

Yet, while the romance-oriented respondents fear the power of mundane routine; for some intimacy respondents, the practices of romanticism in pursuing 'unimaginable sexual tension' and extraordinary sentiments could be reversely 'endless troubles'. In the intimacy discourse, romance and passion are merely a fraction in a relationship in order to achieve emotional satisfaction. However, the emphasis on ideally romantic moments in the romance discourse, hand in hand with

consumer culture, turns into a 'stressful' social expectation for some intimacy-oriented respondents.

'It is also for Valentine's Day. Because there's this enormously commercial pressure to be romantic, which I totally hate. But I feel if you cannot... If you just say "it's commercial and I don't want it"; and then your girlfriend will be angry because she expects something to happen. I'm always like in this big trouble that I have to do something which I have no clue and don't find necessary.' (Male, 28, 2-year relationship)

For the intimacy-oriented respondents, having romantic bliss is never considered as a necessity to run a relationship. For them, the outburst of passion is always emotionally temporary; and does not qualify for a solid basis for a successful relationship. Rather than unrealistic romanticism, intimacy and love is built upon everyday life interactions, by the means of communication, responsibility, trust and respect each other. Hence, the requirement from the society or the partner to express one's love throughout 'a staged performance of how romantic I am' is fundamentally contradict to their perceptions of love and relationships, and beyond their understanding. As a result, like what the male respondent experienced, the struggle took place.

iii. 'Talking about Love' or 'Experiencing Love'?

In the intimacy model of love, a relationship is founded on the basis of expressive authentic self, and bounded by the means of communication. Without external societal rules, the relationship continuity can only be achieved by following intrinsic ethics such as being open and honest. Through communication, two reflexive individuals are allowed to openly discuss the essence and outlook of a relationship in a democratic manner. In contrast, the romance model sees love as an entity that holds the transcend power exercising its will above the participants' control. An

ideal relationship is guarded by the power of love. Thus, in the romance discourse, the necessity to communicate “in a deeper level” is not considered.

The diversified perceptions on the issue of communication in the two discourses, consequently, lead individuals to a confusing circumstance regarding the essentiality of reflexive discussion about love and relationships. Although all the respondents admitted the importance of communication, some of them, particularly the romance-oriented ones found difficulties to be completely open with their concerns:

‘In beginning actually I find it’s really hard to talk about it, to talk about the difficult parts in the relationship. I mean, it’s easy to talk about what is all fun and what is all good. But when it gets a bit more about the negative things, or the things that could be improved, then it gets a little bit hard for me. Because I see our relationship is good. And I try to defend myself.’
(Male, 25, 2.5-year relationship)

‘It’s like some kind of assumption that if you talk about it, then it means you have a problem. If you don’t talk about it, then it’s okay.[...] I didn’t tell him enough about the relationship because I more or less just want it to just be good, and not do anything for it. Some ideas that love shouldn’t be complicated. And should work out by itself.’ (Female, 25, 8-year relationship)

The idealistic view of love is shared by both the respondents here, in which love should not be a matter of strife and an issue that needs to be talked about; but should be enjoyable moments to be experienced. The language benefits noting but only disturbs the experiences. The underlying assumption is that love is so powerful so that there is no need for ‘human interference’ to intrude the arrangements of the fate. However, as nowadays communication is highly valued in sustaining a relationship under the influence of intimacy discourse, some respondents are requested by their partner to be reflexive or to fully ‘open up’. They found it is sometimes “annoying” at

the moments when their partner asks them to express their opinions and concerns. Sometimes they had to “force” themselves to do so. Yet, the respondents acknowledged the benefits they have harvested in a long-term perspective that is ‘helpful in improving the qualities in the relationship’ by having those reflexive conversations.

The situation, on the other way around, could also be frustrated for the intimacy-oriented respondents when they find a missing mutual communication with their partner or when their partner does not see the necessary to voluntarily share their feelings:

‘In the beginning, she didn’t say anything. And then that bothers me a lot. Because I don’t know what do you think about it. Please tell me. If you don’t like something, please just tell me. I can change something. We can talk about it and find the way how to deal with this. But if you don’t say anything, I don’t know what happened; and what to do.’ (Male, 25, 2-year relationship)

In the intimacy approach, a relationship is a binding aspiration of democratically ordered interaction by both respect and opening out to the person. In the process of democratization, the possible conflicts and debates are considered inevitable since the two parties possess individual authentic personalities. Here, the distinction is clearly marked. In the romance model, rather than ‘healthy stimulation’ to the relationships, the conflicts could be a ‘sign’ for illegitimate love that should be averted.

Furthermore, for the intimacy-oriented respondents, the managements of a relationship involve a series of analytical evaluation. It can only be possible by the means of communication. Without open discussions, the mutual connection stops, and becomes a ‘guessing game’ which is neither efficient nor rational.

Interestingly, the respondents tend to ascribe the divergent views on the necessity of having mutual communication to the personal, cultural, regional, or gender differences between the couple. For example, some respondents consider it’s a common problem for a man to talk about relationship issues; some explain the

preference for talking as traits of “directness” in Dutch or Rotterdam culture. To a certain extent, those factors could play a role in the issue of communication indeed. However, in a broader context, the experiences of difficulties of, either opening up with concerns, or having the other open up, lies in the experience of an inherently contradictory emphasis between the two love discourses.

III. Mutual Reinforcement Between the Discourses of Romance and Intimacy

The collision between two romantic love discourses does not only bring the conflicts but also integrations. The respondents implement some of aspects from the other discourse strategically to create an ideal environment for their relationships. For some intimacy-oriented respondents, moments of excitement or romance can also be beneficial to relationships in a practical way, because they create stimulation to balance the fixed daily routine. Although in the intimacy model, love should be organized in the realm of everyday life which is then expected to flow in a continuum of taken-for-granted actions and daily arrangements, the idea that by practicing romanticism, the sexual intensity could once again be “recalled” is also adopted by the intimacy-oriented respondents. Therefore, to a certain level, regular and once-a-while romantic or adventurous moments are consciously used to motivate the steady relationship:

‘Every Valentine’s Day we go to another place in Belgium or Paris. Now we’ve done it for 5 years. Every time in different place, that’s what we do. We go somewhere far away, for a weekend, a romantic trip. I think that’s good for your relationship. Because you work every day and when you’re at home, you’re tired and you want to watch TV and do nothing. I’m fine with it in normal days. But I think it’s also nice that once a while you do something together in a special occasion.’ (Female, 22, 8-year relationship)

In her case, the basis of a relationship is the commonsensical daily routine. However, the occasional and regular romantic moments provides another layer in the relationship. Instead of pursuing extraordinary emotional outbursts in these moments, the practice of romanticism is appreciated in terms of providing the possibility to increase the level of intimacy.

Nevertheless, employing romance as a strategy in the model of intimacy could also be used in a different manner. For example, some respondents found it was practical to use romance as a “signifier” of truce to ease the conflicts. They considered that since romance does not play a crucial role in their relationship, ‘once in a while’ it could be efficient to soft the tension or the rational discussions in relationships. For instance, preparing a dinner for the other, or buying some unique gifts; by doing so, one is allowed to show their appreciation to the relationship in a special way.

Not only the model of romance is used to intensify the level of intimacy, the model of intimacy is also used to create romance. Having personal freedom and autonomy is considered as a necessity in the discourse of intimacy in order to develop one’s potential. However, personal freedom and space are utilized in the romance model in a different fashion. It is operated as a strategy to increase the sexual tension.

‘It happens sometimes that if one of us goes to bed alone, then next morning me or her will crawl next to each other. Because you miss each other. Sometimes maybe just a half day you're separated, but then you appreciate more. I think sometimes that you see each other all day, it’s nice. But it’s also nice if you miss each other a bit. It makes you appreciate each other more.’ (Male, 25, 1 year relationship)

Here, the separation brought by personal freedom and space is appreciated. However, the amount is crucial. Although all-time togetherness is considered ideal, to a certain extent it can become a routine which undermines the extraordinary emotional sentiments. Therefore, by having some moments of separations and allowing for

some personal freedom once in a while, it revitalizes the sexual tension. A Chinese common saying “having a little separation in love is better than having a new love” (小別勝新歡; Xiao Bie Sun Shine Huan) illustrates such an idea wisely. The moment when two individuals are reunited from the separation, the transcendent, intensive and exceptional feelings are once again experienced. Moreover, such impulsive passion is accompanied by the sense of belonging, familiarity which ties the bonds even more. However, the separation should be exceptional instead of regular to have the effect of rejuvenating the passion.

CONCLUSION

In the last two decades, the topic of modern romantic relationships has received much attention in both popular narratives and scholarly works. Sociological theories, most notable Giddens' concept of the 'pure relationship', depict an image that nowadays romantic love increasingly takes place in the context of a new intimacy culture: deinstitutionalized, equalitarian and reflexive (Gross, 2005; Santore, 2008). Giddens(1991) argues that under the conditions of high modernity, personal life as well as social relationships have turned into a reflexive self-referential project. Under the transformations of modernity, he believes that contemporary intimacy culture has replaced traditional romantic love narrative- the mystic, idealistic, passionate love with a promising life trajectory.

The arguments of Giddens are historically vague and empirically ungrounded. He considers that in the detraditional society where individuals are striving for a sense of security, there is no room for passion. Passion as well as the traditional romantic love narrative have dissolved somewhere in the rise of the intimacy culture. 'Most emotional dispositions can be passions, but in modern society passion is narrowed down to the sexual realm and once there becomes more and more muted in its expression' (*ibid.*, 1992:201).

The negligence of the prominent romance discourse in contemporary society makes his view one-sidedness and detached from the reality. After all, various media

studies have shown that nowadays the traditional romance narrative still plays an influential role in formulating individuals' perceptions of relationships. From romance novels, to romantic comedies, to popular love songs; a high proportion of mass culture products thematically center on the pursuit of love and constitute a discourse of romance which is assumed to dominate our ideas about love and marriage.

Notwithstanding this blind spot in the academic debate, the possible co-existence of both love discourses in everyday life is hardly considered. By using the case of the Dutch individuals, this study reveals however that both the romance and the intimacy discourse are operative in relationships in the Netherlands. The analysis shows, moreover, that contemporary relationships are located exactly at the crossroad of romance and intimacy which apparently motivates different tensions, confusions and negotiations. Indeed, the attachments between romantic partners are mingled between idealistic and realistic visions of love, struggled between the most fantasized dream of ultimate happiness and the down-to-earth reflexive life projects. The results thus demonstrate that contemporary relationships are not as "purely" based on intimacy as Giddens advocates.

Ideal-typically, the distinction between the two love orientations is prominent among the respondents. However, instead of seeing it as a dichotomy of "romance versus intimacy", the distinction should be understood in favor of a continuum between two polar types, a continuance from romanticism to rationality, from overwhelming desire and love to reasoning reflexivity, from extraordinary passion to everyday-life steadiness. Within this continuum, romance and intimacy are interfaced, following by a series of tensions, negotiations as well as mutual reinforcements. On the one hand, the emotion of desiring a dream-like relationship motivates individuals and sends them on the way of questing for the most idealistic love. However, along the way, without knowing where the destiny will lead them to, the lovers implement the rational "relationship management" to gain a sense of security meanwhile to be able to comprehend the mysterious nature of love. This is very close to Weber's concept of 'cognitive rationalization' that he saw the early industrialization was energized by religious convictions (Benhabib, 1986, cited in

Illouz, 1991:232). On the other hand, for some people, incorporating romanticism in the relationships is the decisions based on a practical rationality, in which it maximizes the ultimate profits in the relationships- the increased intimacy between two lovers. In the two cases, the contradictions between romance and intimacy, between romanticism and rationality, are transformed into dynamics and various possibilities for individuals to play out subjectively.

A quote from Colin Campbell would help me illustrate such fluctuation in the contemporary love relationships, and conclude this study. “The cultural logic of modernity is not merely that of rationality [...] it is also that of passion, and the creative dreaming born of longing. Yet, more crucial than either is the tension generated between them, for it is upon this that the dynamism of the West ultimately depends” (Campbell, 1987:227). Rationality and romanticism are, he argues poetically, the “twin cultural traditions [...] dance their cultural tango” in modern life. And indeed: as demonstrated in this study they are both drawn upon to contribute the formulation of contemporary love relationships.

Acknowledgments

I wish to thank Nicky van Es, Juliana Brunello, Cheng-Hua Bai and Ying Chen for many useful comments and 'lovely' inspirations. Dr. Stef Aupers, my supervisor has provided enlightening suggestions for which I truly thank him.

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APPENDIX. - Interview Questions

Personal Information

Date:

Place:

Gender:

Age:

Are you current married? YES/NO

... Yes: How long?

Do you have registered partnership? YES/NO

... Yes: How long?

Resident city:

Current Profession:

Highest Educational level:

How long you've been in the current relationship?

Do you live with your partner? YES/NO

... Yes: How long?

Interview

- How did you meet your boyfriend/girlfriend?
- When do you realize that this relationship is turning into a "relationship"?
- How would you describe the relationship and love between you and your boyfriend/girlfriend?
- What does your boyfriend/girlfriend and this relationship mean to you?
- How important it is to you to be in a relationship? Why is that?
- Do you believe in 'true love'? Why?
- Do you consider relationship is a lifetime commitment?
- What elements you consider that they are very important in your relationship?
- In the beginning of your relationship, have you thought about that he/she might be the one that you want to spend your life with this girl? Would you think about it now?
- Do you consider yourself as a romantic person? Do you like to do romantic things with your boyfriend/girlfriend?
- What kind of things you think it is romantic? Why?
- Do you and your girl friend celebrate Valentine's Day or anniversary?
...YES: How? Do you feel stressful to have those romantic moments?

- ...NO: Why? Do you feel disappointed? Do you celebrate anything? In which way?
- Do you think it is stressful or annoyed to be romantic?
 - Do you think being romantic is very important in your relationship with your boyfriend/girlfriend? Why is that?
 - What was your most romantic experience so far?
 - In general, what kind of things do you like to do with your boyfriend/girlfriend? Do you go to restaurants, movies, theater? How often? Do you take weekend trips, vacations together? How often?
 - How is your sex life? Do you do something special or?
 - Do you think it is very important that to have a relationship with someone who shares similar lifestyle choices?
 - Do you consider your girl friend is your best friend? Why?
 - Do you think about your relationship a lot yourself? How often?
 - Do you like talking with each other? What do you usually talk about?
 - Do you and your boyfriend/girlfriend talk about your relationship? How often? Do you think it is necessary? Does talking about your relationship with your boyfriend/girlfriend bother you?
 - What are the problems that you personally have encountered in your relationships?
 - Do you feel you in the relationship you spend too much time on the other instead of yourself?
 - Do you feel you have enough personal space in the relationship?
 - Have you and your boyfriend/girlfriend talks about future plan already?
 - How do you deal with conflicts and problems? Do you and your boyfriend/girlfriend talk about it?
 - Do you search advice from friends or internet or any other kinds of resource for your relationship?
 - Do you watch romantic comedies or romantic novels? Are there any scenes from a movie or book you have read that you remember as being romantic?
 - Where do you think that your ideas of love come from? (Movies? Family? Friends? Novels? TV series?)