

## TRAPPING THE BIRD OF LOVE

"IT'S LOVE that makes the world go round," sings Papageno in *The Magic Flute*, and even if Mozart and his librettist were concerned mainly with masonic esoterica relating to the ultimate cause of being, the phrase describes the conclusion one is tempted to reach, speaking in the narrower sense of love between human beings, if one spends a great part of time in the world of literature. Love has been the mainstay of most of our fiction and drama, of much of our poetry, of a great deal of our biography. It has dominated the stage, the cinema screen, television; it provides the emotional force behind most opera; it is the eternal standby of popular song. Anthologies of any period would be notably thinner without the love lyrics; so would the profits of record companies.

The reason is simple enough. It is hard to imagine any human relationship that does not contain some element of love (or inverted love called hate), even though the sexual element may be disguised. The psychoanalysts long ago demonstrated that parental and filial love project incestuous overtones. In its emotional content the most humdrum friendship is the poor relation of the most passionate love affair, or it is no friendship. And unfortunate is the man or woman who has not experienced that passionate sharing of work with some member of the opposite or at times of the same sex, in which unspoken feelings and desires build to a fine edge of peril that by sublimation becomes a summit of creativity. We need love as a fish needs water, and desiccate without it.

All this means that there is, among readers and writers and all who speculate on the endless ambiguities of human relationships, an apparently insatiable curiosity about the nature of love as distinct from merely physical or neurological

sexuality. Why was Helen's "the face that launched a thousand ships"? What generated Petrarch's morbid but creative obsession with Laura or Dante's with Beatrice? What made Turgenev the slave of a woman like Pauline Viardot? And how did these exalted and presumably unfulfilled passions differ from the manic urges that drove Rochester and Byron from bed to hated bed? And where, among high romance and low libertinism, fit the average loves of most mankind? Or are there average loves?

Certainly writers over the ages have been fascinated by these problems and often led to treat them outside their imaginative writings, in treatises or essays, as Lawrence did, and Ovid, and Ortega y Gasset, and Denis de Rougement, and Hazlitt (an ill-starred lover if ever there was one) in the *Liber Amoris*, and Stendhal in *De l'amour*. All these writers tended to mingle literature and experience, some of them using their essays on love to work out — or to explain — amorous themes in their fiction or poetry.

It was time, given the tendency of Canadian poets and novelists during the past decade to write with an unaccustomed zest and frankness on love, its varieties and aberrations, that a treatise on love as seen in our time and place should find its way into print among us. It now appears as *Colours of Love: An Exploration of the Ways of Loving*, by John Alan Lee (new press, \$9.95).

Lee is not a poet or a novelist; he is not even a psychologist. He is a sociologist, formerly employed as a trade union official, now teaching at Scarborough College, and author of books on faith healing and the educational use of television. Cythera, of course, is every man's country if he chooses to make it so, but I mention Mr. Lee's background for its suggestion that he is not the kind of man to go on high romantic levitations. And, indeed, his treatise is conducted with exemplary restraint, its only real flutter being the business about the "colours" of love, which reduces itself to the fact that in order to illustrate to his students his typology of ways of loving he made a colour chart based on the colours of the prism; but that adds nothing to his argument, though it provides a good title, and it need trouble us no further.

*Colours of Love* is based on interviews and questionnaires by which Lee gathered information from lovers of both sexes, heterosexual and homosexual, and covering as wide a span of approach as he could discover. The samples of actual statements he presents suggest that many of his subjects were not especially articulate or self-analytical, and often he must have had to rely on what seemed to be implied rather than what was said. I have the impression that he deliberately avoided especially articulate people, writers and artists, and in general those

inclined to live largely in the world of the imagination, for it is precisely in the loves of such people that his samples seem to be lacking. He is presenting, one feels, *l'homme moyen* if not necessarily *sensuel*.

Thus his typology has its limitations. His manic love, for example, might well include Stendhal; it would certainly not include Petrarch. Indeed, I find no place at all in his typology for that obsessive and usually unfulfilled passion for *la princesse lointaine* ("I did but see her passing by,/And yet I love her till I die . . .") which may be morbid but which has shaped so much of our literature and has existed so often in real life. Does this mean that love is, as Mr. Lee suggests, a largely cultural matter, liable to change its forms as society changes, and to vary according to class and background even within a single time and culture? To a great extent, I think, this is true. But cultural matters are not merely the products of man's life in any given spot in social history; they have deep roots in the psyche, and here I suggest lies the major limitations in Lee's approach. He is dealing with love in terms of behaviour principally. His attempt to create a typology without even mentioning the most important of all psychological typologists, C. G. Jung, is evidence of his failure to penetrate far below the surface of statement and action. A typology of love cannot be complete if it fails to take into account the great psychoanalytical discoveries.

Still, as an attempt to assess what loving means in our age, *Colours of Love* is a good preliminary study, and a fascinating book to read for what it does say, even if it does not say enough. Any reader with love in his thoughts is likely to study Mr. Lee's types in a frame of mind rather like that of Jerome K. Jerome's character who consults a medical dictionary in an attempt at self-diagnosis and ends up finding he suffers from every sickness in the book but housemaid's knee. Are you manic, erotic, ludic, storgic, pragmatic or agapic? None, I suspect, in any pure form; and this Mr. Lee seems willing to admit. He is talking of inclinations rather than absolutes, and taken in this pragmatic way his typology is useful.

What — one hopes — it will lead to is a thorough study of ways of loving, by Mr. Lee or someone else, as portrayed in Canadian writing, which might tell us as much about the authors as about their characters, and perhaps more about Canadian mores than about either. Mr. Lee actually stayed far from home in his chapter on "Love in the Arts". And wisely perhaps. For the writer must be prepared for pitfalls who attempts — say — a comparative study of ways of loving in Richler, Cohen and Atwood. Or a thesis on Manic Passion in MacLennan! Or Grove on Love!! I doubt if Mr. Lee's simple typology would be adequate there.

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