

Some day, some day men and women will rise, they will reach the mountain peak, they will meet big and strong and free, ready to receive, to partake, and to bask in the golden rays of love. What fancy, what imagination, what poetic genius can foresee even approximately the potentialities of such a force in the life of men and women. If the world is ever to give birth to true companionship and oneness, not marriage, but love will be the parent.



Emma Goldman is pictured during her deportation in 1919. She was one of 249 radicals deported to the Soviet Union after the 1919 Palmer Raids, under the Sedition Act, which targeted anarchists, communists, and labor organizers. More than 4,000 anarchists were arrested for deportation. The effort was led by Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer and a young J. Edgar Hoover.

Emma Goldman, “Marriage and Love” (1917)

The popular notion about marriage and love is that they are synonymous, that they spring from the same motives, and cover the same human needs. Like most popular notions this also rests not on actual facts, but on superstition.

Marriage and love have nothing in common; they are as far apart as the poles; are, in fact, antagonistic to each other. No doubt some marriages have been the result of love. Not, however, because love could assert itself only in marriage; much rather is it because few people can completely outgrow a convention. There are to-day large numbers of men and women to whom marriage is naught but a farce, but who submit to it for the sake of public opinion. At any rate, while it is true that some marriages are based on love, and while it is equally true that in some cases love continues in married life, I maintain that it does so regardless of marriage, and not because of it.

On the other hand, it is utterly false that love results from marriage. On rare occasions one does hear of a miraculous case of a married couple falling in love after marriage, but on close examination it will be found that it is a mere adjustment to the inevitable. Certainly the growing-used to each other is far away from the spontaneity, the intensity, and beauty of love, without which the intimacy of marriage must prove degrading to both the woman and the man.

Marriage is primarily an economic arrangement, an insurance pact. It differs from the ordinary life insurance agreement only in that it is more binding, more exacting. Its returns are insignificantly small compared with the investments. In taking out an insurance policy one pays for it in dollars and cents, always at liberty to discontinue payments. If, however, woman’s premium is a husband, she pays for it with her name, her privacy, her self-respect, her very life, “until death doth part.” Moreover, the marriage insurance condemns her to lifelong dependency, to parasitism, to complete uselessness,

Henrik Ibsen, the hater of all social shams, was probably the first to realize this great truth. Nora leaves her husband, not—as the stupid critic would have it—because she is tired of her responsibilities or feels the need of woman's rights, but because she has come to know that for eight years she had lived with a stranger and borne him children. Can there be any thing more humiliating, more degrading than a life long proximity between two strangers? No need for the woman to know anything of the man, save his income. As to the knowledge of the woman—what is there to know except that she has a pleasing appearance? We have not yet outgrown the theologic myth that woman has no soul, that she is a mere appendix to man, made out of his rib just for the convenience of the gentleman who was so strong that he was afraid of his own shadow.

Perchance the poor quality of the material whence woman comes is responsible for her inferiority. At any rate, woman has no soul—what is there to know about her? Besides, the less soul a woman has the greater her asset as a wife, the more readily will she absorb herself in her husband. It is this slavish acquiescence to man's superiority that has kept the marriage institution seemingly intact for so long a period. Now that woman is coming into her own, now that she is actually growing aware of herself as a being outside of the master's grace, the sacred institution of marriage is gradually being undermined, and no amount of sentimental lamentation can stay it.

From infancy, almost, the average girl is told that marriage is her ultimate goal; therefore her training and education must be directed towards that end. Like the mute beast fattened for slaughter, she is prepared for that. Yet, strange to say, she is allowed to know much less about her function as wife and mother than the ordinary artisan of his trade. It is indecent and filthy for a respectable girl to know anything of the marital relation. Oh, for the inconsistency of respectability, that needs the marriage vow to turn something which is filthy into the purest and most sacred arrangement that none dare question or criticize. Yet that is exactly the attitude of the average upholder

fought for continue to be vivid and meaningful. The same applies to love. Love is not an incident, not an event. When talking about romantic love for example, love does not mean falling in love once and then resting on this 'event'. Love is not static. Love involves activity, love is flowing energy. Love means being able to meet new situations and challenges, for love gives the strength needed. Truly loving means mutual support and respect, it means being courageous and honest, it means carrying out the love into the world and also nurturing and loving the community at the same time. As the philosopher and psychoanalyst Erich Fromm puts it: "*If I truly love one person I love all persons, I love the world, I love life. If I can say to somebody else, "I love you," I must be able to say, "I love in you everybody, I love through you the world, I love in you also myself."*"

We are far from having said everything there is to say about love. Though to begin with, we should understand that loving requires awareness, morale and the will to change oneself and society. In a society which is characterized by egoism, rivalry and fear, love cannot blossom. The one who fights for love knows no fears anymore and gets the required strength to pave the way for a free, socialist society. Love is a stronger force than anger, fear or hate. Building something might be more difficult, but it is much stronger than destroying something. And this might be one of the most beautiful things we can learn from the Kurdish movement. One slogan of the Kurdish movement says: *If you want to live, live in freedom!* – In the same way we as youth, feminists, philosophers, artists and revolutionaries can say: *If you want to love, love in freedom!*

But although it is a very difficult task to overcome isolation and alienation under capitalism and the 5000 year old mentality of patriarchy it is possible to abandon old habits, behaviours and beliefs, to renew oneself and to completely revolutionize our heart. The youth is, as the imprisoned activist of the Black Panther Movement Mumia Abu-Jamal writes, the natural carrier of revolutionary energy, they are capable of changing themselves in the face of overwhelming forces, using their bodies — seething with revolutionary transformation — to change their environments, and enact social change. If the youth fulfils this radical change, it will carry along the whole world and bear the birth of a new society built upon truly revolutionary love. To realize love between two people, it is not only essential that every one of them undergoes a change. A collective rebellion has to emerge as well. Sometimes this can also mean fighting against each other. Fighting against each other does not imply hating each other but fighting against internalized sexism through (self-)criticism. The conditions which make love almost impossible must not be accepted. Our comrade Mehmet Aksoy (Fîraz Dag) left behind some powerful words: *“Don’t surrender to capitalism, don’t surrender to materialism, ugly relationships, lovelessness, disrespect, degeneration and inequality. Don’t surrender.”* Someone who truly loves must fight against all those mechanisms standing in the way of love. Unlocking these mechanisms and rebelling against them is one of our responsibilities as revolutionary young people. The ideals of a free society have to be sought and realized collectively. Everything else cannot be accepted if we want to give love a meaning.

Love is similar to a revolution. Both are often subject to misconceptions. Just as a revolution must never end at a certain point, love should not end at a certain time as well. Many people think that a revolution is an incident, only one moment where everything changes. But history and also current revolutionary movements teach us that a revolution is more of a process than an incident. A revolution, as we can see in Rojava (North Syria), must be a *permanent* process which includes all parts of life and society, so that the ideals which have been

tears; she dreams of shopping tours and bargain counters. This soul-poverty and sordidness are the elements inherent in the marriage institution. The State and the Church approve of no other ideal, simply because it is the one that necessitates the State and Church control of men and women.

Doubtless there are people who continue to consider love above dollars and cents. Particularly is this true of that class whom economic necessity has forced to become self-supporting. The tremendous change in woman’s position, wrought by that mighty factor, is indeed phenomenal when we reflect that it is but a short time since she has entered the industrial arena. Six million women wage-earners; six million women, who have the equal right with men to be exploited, to be robbed, to go on strike; aye, to starve even. Anything more, my lord? Yes, six million wage-workers in every walk of life, from the highest brain work to the most difficult menial labor in the mines and on the railroad tracks; yes, even detectives and policemen. Surely the emancipation is complete.

Yet with all that, but a very small number of the vast army of women wage-workers look upon work as a permanent issue, in the same light as does man. No matter how decrepit the latter, he has been taught to be independent, self-supporting. Oh, I know that no one is really independent in our economic tread mill; still, the poorest specimen of a man hates to be a parasite; to be known as such, at any rate.

The woman considers her position as worker transitory, to be thrown aside for the first bidder. That is why it is infinitely harder to organize women than men. “Why should I join a union? I am going to get married, to have a home.” Has she not been taught from infancy to look upon that as her ultimate calling? She learns soon enough that the home, though not so large a prison as the factory, has more solid doors and bars. It has a keeper so faithful that naught can escape him. The most tragic part, however, is that the home no longer frees her from wage slavery; it only increases her task.

According to the latest statistics submitted before a Committee “on labor and wages, and congestion of Population,” ten percent of the wage workers in New York City alone are married, yet they must continue to work at the most poorly paid labor in the world. Add to this horrible aspect the drudgery of house work, and what remains of the protection and glory of the home? As a matter of fact, even the middle class girl in marriage can not speak of her home, since it is the man who creates her sphere. It is not important whether the husband is a brute or a darling. What I wish to prove is that marriage guarantees woman a home only by the grace of her husband. There she moves about in *his* home, year after year until her aspect of life and human affairs becomes as flat, narrow, and drab as her surroundings. Small wonder if she becomes a nag, petty, quarrelsome, gossipy, unbearable, thus driving the man from the house. She could not go, if she wanted to; there is no place to go. Besides, a short period of married life, of complete surrender of all faculties, absolutely incapacitates the average woman for the outside world. She becomes reckless in appearance, clumsy in her movements, dependent in her decisions, cowardly in her judgment, a weight and a bore, which most men grow to hate and despise. Wonderfully inspiring atmosphere for the bearing of life, is it not?

But the child, how is it to be protected, if not for marriage? After all, is not that the most important consideration? The sham, the hypocrisy of it! Marriage protecting the child, yet thousands of children destitute and homeless. Marriage protecting the child, yet orphan asylums and reformatories over crowded, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children keeping busy in rescuing the little victims from “loving” parents, to place them under more loving care, the Gerry Society. Oh, the mockery of it!

Marriage may have the power to “bring the horse to water,” but has it ever made him drink? The law will place the father under arrest, and put him in convict’s clothes; but has that ever stilled the hunger of the child? If the parent has no work, or if he hides his identity, what does marriage do then? It invokes the law to

profit, but in love we find life and freedom. That might be the reason why so many people set their hope on dragging another person into their isolation. But it does not matter where or not there are one or two persons involved, isolation will be isolation. Love cannot thrive in isolation. Not being connected to collective life and communities will lead to frustration and dissatisfaction. This can be observed when looking at the relationship between parents and children. When parents keep trying to take possession of their child and keeping it away from society, it is likely that the child will have fears and keep a distance to society while not being able to develop their autonomy. However, a child that grows up in a loving and caring community will learn about the worth of love, collective life and solidarity.

When people love each other, they must not see each other as an escape from their loneliness. They must not consume each other, for love is not consumption. We are used to consumption, whether we admit it or not. Capitalism trains us for calculating everything, that’s why we have also started charging and calculating when it comes to friendships and love. When somebody has disappointed or hurt us, or does not ‘meet our expectations’, we tend to treat this person as a waste. We are angry with ourselves for having ‘invested’ time, trust and love, as if our love had some kind of market value or as if our love was limited. But love does not mean finding a possession to own, makeup up and dress as we like and throw away as soon as it does not please us anymore. Love means fighting, which is not only fighting *against* but fighting *for* something in the first place. Love has to fight to fulfil itself. And that does not only apply to romantic relationships but for all kinds of relations. We tend to flee as soon as something does not work out the way we want it. Anonymity and the option of isolating ourselves give us the comfort to draw back and escape the problems. Doing this we tend to think highly of ourselves, which is why we put ourselves out of the ‘social danger’ of being criticized. Because after all, there is the sole and safe bubble which we can crawl back into. This kind of fears often keep us away from true, deep love.

are not aware enough of the fact that marriage is a tool of patriarchy and capitalism which forces women* to play their role as reproducer of the household, a form of unpaid labour. No matter how alternative and democratic the marriage is being organized, it still remains an institution of the patriarchal system, yet love can never be institutionalized, especially not in the states of capitalist modernity. But also leaving this aside, we can see violence in many relationships and marriages. The sexist socialization of people often leads to men believing that it is normal to be violent and abusive, and on the other side it leads to women* thinking that they have to endure sexualized, physical and verbal violence and abuse. And that is only one of many problems.

Another reality that has been shaping the industrialized society for over a century now is the increasing anonymity and alienation between people. The fascinating poems and artworks of the period of expressionism in Germany at the beginning of the 20th century show us how a whole generation of artists and poets felt threatened by life in big cities, which is shaped by self-disintegration, isolation, fear and the sense that the world is going to end. Today, the anonymous life in big cities is a reality for many of us. Only lately a comrade said to me: 'In the capitalist world you could die in your home and nobody would notice for months'. There is much truth in these words. Often we are comfortable with the experience of isolation and loneliness, because nobody will intervene in your life or stand in your way, nobody will demand anything from you. You can even die in your home and nobody would care. But the emptiness and meaninglessness will sooner or later take over. One loses sight of the meaning of their own existence and life. And the more one moves away from society and social life, the unhappier one gets and the more meaningless life and the existence of everything will appear.

Love, understood as a free and courageous energy of warmth and solidarity, gives meaning. The ones who get to know love, the ones who get in touch with the magic of love, will no longer seek for any higher sense in life. Not in money, wealth and

bring the man to "justice," to put him safely behind closed doors; his labor, however, goes not to the child, but to the State. The child receives but a blighted memory of its father's stripes.

As to the protection of the woman,—therein lies the curse of marriage. Not that it really protects her, but the very idea is so revolting, such an outrage and insult on life, so degrading to human dignity, as to forever condemn this parasitic institution.

It is like that other paternal arrangement—capitalism. It robs man of his birthright, stunts his growth, poisons his body, keeps him in ignorance, in poverty and dependence, and then institutes charities that thrive on the last vestige of man's self-respect.

The institution of marriage makes a parasite of woman, an absolute dependent. It incapacitates her for life's struggle, annihilates her social consciousness, paralyzes her imagination, and then imposes its gracious protection, which is in reality a snare, a travesty on human character.

If motherhood is the highest fulfillment of woman's nature, what other protection does it need save love and freedom? Marriage but defiles, outrages, and corrupts her fulfillment. Does it not say to woman, Only when you follow me shall you bring forth life? Does it not condemn her to the block, does it not degrade and shame her if she refuses to buy her right to motherhood by selling herself? Does not marriage only sanction motherhood, even though conceived in hatred, in compulsion? Yet, if motherhood be of free choice, of love, of ecstasy, of defiant passion, does it not place a crown of thorns upon an innocent head and carve in letters of blood the hideous epithet, Bastard? Were marriage to contain all the virtues claimed for it, its crimes against motherhood would exclude it forever from the realm of love.

Love, the strongest and deepest element in all life, the harbinger of hope, of joy, of ecstasy; love, the defier of all laws, of all conventions; love, the freest, the most powerful moulder of human destiny; how can such an all-compelling force be

synonymous with that poor little State and Church-begotten weed, marriage?

Free love? As if love is anything but free! Man has bought brains, but all the millions in the world have failed to buy love. Man has subdued bodies, but all the power on earth has been unable to subdue love. Man has conquered whole nations, but all his armies could not conquer love. Man has chained and fettered the spirit, but he has been utterly helpless before love. High on a throne, with all the splendor and pomp his gold can command, man is yet poor and desolate, if love passes him by. And if it stays, the poorest hovel is radiant with warmth, with life and color. Thus love has the magic power to make of a beggar a king. Yes, love is free; it can dwell in no other atmosphere. In freedom it gives itself unreservedly, abundantly, completely. All the laws on the statutes, all the courts in the universe, cannot tear it from the soil, once love has taken root. If, however, the soil is sterile, how can marriage make it bear fruit? It is like the last desperate struggle of fleeting life against death.

Love needs no protection; it is its own protection. So long as love begets life no child is deserted, or hungry, or famished for the want of affection. I know this to be true. I know women who became mothers in freedom by the men they loved. Few children in wedlock enjoy the care, the protection, the devotion free motherhood is capable of bestowing.

The defenders of authority dread the advent of a free motherhood, lest it will rob them of their prey. Who would fight wars? Who would create wealth? Who would make the policeman, the jailer, if woman were to refuse the indiscriminate breeding of children? The race, the race! shouts the king, the president, the capitalist, the priest. The race must be preserved, though woman be degraded to a mere machine,—and the marriage institution is our only safety valve against the pernicious sex-awakening of woman. But in vain these frantic efforts to maintain a state of bondage. In vain, too, the edicts of the Church, the mad attacks of rulers, in vain even the arm of

relationships'. Mainstream media and literature often romanticize and idealize stalking, harassment, sexual assaults and gender roles. Therefore love has to be analyzed considering the mechanisms of sexism, which take love away from all of us.

The rivalry and isolation of women* is one of the oldest and strongest tools of the patriarchy. The fight against sexism requires a fight against the culture of shaming women, which stands in the way of a feminist movement built on solidarity amongst women. In this context, social media has been playing an important role in the last few years. Many feminist authors, journalists, bloggers and activists have been able to influence the development of an unfolding feminist awareness. The variety of issues discussed, also including queer, anti-colonial, anti-racist and anti-capitalist perspectives on feminism, have been made more available through social media and have provided us with the big opportunity to connect and organize globally. Instead of intensifying the excessive focus on physical beauty and consumption, the potential of social media can be directed to empowerment and solidarity, in order to make revolutionary love emerge and grow.

But above all it is the patriarchal man who has to relearn love and to experience an inner revolution. The social norms which have been imposed on men must be rejected and fought against. To truly love and respect someone, no matter in which way, the patriarchal man has to be destroyed. Of course, this does not mean that men should die, but it means that sexist, hegemonic masculinity and personality must be combatted. To love in a meaningful way, the desire to control and to be in power has to be abandoned forever. The dominant patriarchal traditions and mentalities must be broken. 'Romantic relationships', which are often far away from love, are in many cases based on gender roles, power fights and violence of all kinds. Marriage is often seen as an event in life which brings safety and love. Yet marriage is one of the most important means of oppression against women*, society and the youth. Due to the romanticization of marriage, many people do not know about the roots and patriarchal nature of this institution. Many of us

Hêlîn Asî, “Finding Revolutionary Love in a World of Profound Alienation” (2018)

Love. How many poems have been written, how many pieces of art have been created, how much ink has been spilt about love? It is for a reason that humankind has ever since tried to figure out the secrets and magic behind love. At the same time, the meaning and substance of love somehow still remain a mystery. Today, we come upon many different definitions of love. Sometimes it is said that love could save us all, sometimes we are told that love is blind. Sometimes love hurts, sometimes love means healing. But what kind of love are we talking about and under what conditions is love meaningful and free?

When talking and thinking about love, we have to consider the social and political conditions of our time. In a society which is shaped by capitalism, egoism, sexism and (self-)alienation, the meaning and substance of love becomes more and more unclear and inscrutable. We can barely grasp and experience love anymore. What does it mean to love, in the overstraining mess where one finds themselves locked between anonymity, excessive consumption, exploitation and war? It's often the case, and perhaps even understandable, that our very concept of love is developed to escape social life and to build a small, safe bubble of love in the midst of a violent, selfish society. But this kind of approach to love will sooner or later lead to frustration and disappointment.

Not only romantic relationships, but also the relationship between parents and children, between humans and nature and between the individual and society have to be analyzed and revolutionized in order to free ourselves from the shackles of the capitalist system and to make true love possible. When mainstream society talks about love, they usually mean a monogamous, heterosexual relationship between a woman and a man. And yet, more often than not, those are the ones which are farthest from love. Subtle sexism and violence, dressed up as love, are part of the reality of many so-called ‘romantic

the law. Woman no longer wants to be a party to the production of a race of sickly, feeble, decrepit, wretched human beings, who have neither the strength nor moral courage to throw off the yoke of poverty and slavery. Instead she desires fewer and better children, begotten and reared in love and through free choice; not by compulsion, as marriage imposes. Our pseudo-moralists have yet to learn the deep sense of responsibility toward the child, that love in freedom has awakened in the breast of woman. Rather would she forego forever the glory of motherhood than bring forth life in an atmosphere that breathes only destruction and death. And if she does become a mother, it is to give to the child the deepest and best her being can yield. To grow with the child is her motto; she knows that in that manner alone can she help build true manhood and womanhood.

Ibsen must have had a vision of a free mother, when, with a master stroke, he portrayed Mrs. Alving. She was the ideal mother because she had outgrown marriage and all its horrors, because she had broken her chains, and set her spirit free to soar until it returned a personality, regenerated and strong. Alas, it was too late to rescue her life's joy, her Oswald; but not too late to realize that love in freedom is the only condition of a beautiful life. Those who, like Mrs. Alving, have paid with blood and tears for their spiritual awakening, repudiate marriage as an imposition, a shallow, empty mockery. They know, whether love last but one brief span of time or for eternity, it is the only creative, inspiring, elevating basis for a new race, a new world.

In our present pygmy state love is indeed a stranger to most people. Misunderstood and shunned, it rarely takes root; or if it does, it soon withers and dies. Its delicate fiber can not endure the stress and strain of the daily grind. Its soul is too complex to adjust itself to the slimy woof of our social fabric. It weeps and moans and suffers with those who have need of it, yet lack the capacity to rise to love's summit.

individual as well as social. Man, too, pays his toll, but as his sphere is wider, marriage does not limit him as much as woman. He feels his chains more in an economic sense.

Thus Dante's motto over *Inferno* applies with equal force to marriage: "Ye who enter here leave all hope behind."

That marriage is a failure none but the very stupid will deny. One has but to glance over the statistics of divorce to realize how bitter a failure marriage really is. Nor will the stereotyped Philistine argument that the laxity of divorce laws and the growing looseness of woman account for the fact that: first, every twelfth marriage ends in divorce; second, that since 1870 divorces have increased from 28 to 73 for every hundred thousand population; third, that adultery, since 1867, as ground for divorce, has increased 270.8 percent; fourth, that desertion increased 369.8 percent.

Added to these startling figures is a vast amount of material, dramatic and literary, further elucidating this subject. Robert Herrick, in *Together*; Pinero, in *Mid-Channel*; Eugene Walter, in *Paid in Full*, and scores of other writers are discussing the barrenness, the monotony, the sordidness, the inadequacy of marriage as a factor for harmony and understanding.

The thoughtful social student will not content himself with the popular superficial excuse for this phenomenon. He will have to dig down deeper into the very life of the sexes to know why marriage proves so disastrous.

Edward Carpenter says that behind every marriage stands the life-long environment of the two sexes; an environment so different from each other that man and woman must remain strangers. Separated by an insurmountable wall of superstition, custom, and habit, marriage has not the potentiality of developing knowledge of, and respect for, each other, without which every union is doomed to failure.

of marriage. The prospective wife and mother is kept in complete ignorance of her only asset in the competitive field—sex. Thus she enters into life-long relations with a man only to find herself shocked, repelled, outraged beyond measure by the most natural and healthy instinct, sex. It is safe to say that a large percentage of the unhappiness, misery, distress, and physical suffering of matrimony is due to the criminal ignorance in sex matters that is being extolled as a great virtue. Nor is it at all an exaggeration when I say that more than one home has been broken up because of this deplorable fact.

If, however, woman is free and big enough to learn the mystery of sex without the sanction of State or Church, she will stand condemned as utterly unfit to become the wife of a "good" man, his goodness consisting of an empty head and plenty of money. Can there be anything more outrageous than the idea that a healthy, grown woman, full of life and passion, must deny nature's demand, must subdue her most intense craving, undermine her health and break her spirit, must stunt her vision, abstain from the depth and glory of sex experience until a "good" man comes along to take her unto himself as a wife? That is precisely what marriage means. How can such an arrangement end except in failure? This is one, though not the least important, factor of marriage, which differentiates it from love.

Ours is a practical age. The time when Romeo and Juliet risked the wrath of their fathers for love when Gretchen exposed herself to the gossip of her neighbors for love, is no more. If, on rare occasions young people allow themselves the luxury of romance they are taken in care by the elders, drilled and pounded until they become "sensible."

The moral lesson instilled in the girl is not whether the man has aroused her love, but rather is it, "How much?" The important and only God of practical American life: Can the man make a living? Can he support a wife? That is the only thing that justifies marriage. Gradually this saturates every thought of the girl; her dreams are not of moonlight and kisses, of laughter and