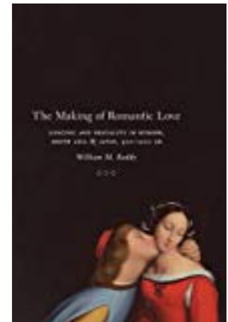
William M. Reddy. ***The Making of Romantic Love: Longing and Sexuality in Europe, South Asia, and Japan, 900-1200 CE.*** Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012. 456 pp. $43.00, paper, ISBN 978-0-226-70627-6.



Reviewed by Tyler Carrington

Published on H-Emotions (June, 2016)

Commissioned by Sara Hidalgo García de Orellán

In novels and newspapers, on stage and screen, the boundary between sex and love is blurry at best: chaste, nonsexual romantic love is uninteresting enough that it is rarely thematized, and characters who attempt to enjoy sex without falling in love usually fail. In the last decade or so, though, Hollywood and premium cable have tried (often successfully) to convince us that untangling sex from love is both possible and compelling, and the success of films and television shows like *Kinsey* and *Masters of Sex* speaks to our willingness to entertain this decoupling. Of course, these are dramas about sexologists, and as interest in the history of sexology has grown, so too has our understanding of what made the scientific endeavors of people like Richard von Krafft-Ebing, Otto Weininger, Havelock Ellis, and Magnus Hirschfeld (and later Sigmund Freud, Alfred Kinsey, William Masters, and Virginia Johnson) so remarkable. Their study of sex and sexuality may not have been without an agenda, but it was unique inasmuch as it was an attempt to examine sexual behavior from a biological, chemical, and psychological--and not *moral*--perspective.

In his recent book, ***The Making of Romantic Love: Longing and Sexuality in Europe, South Asia & Japan, 900-1200 CE***, William Reddy, a historian of France and a pioneer of the study of emotions, returns time and again to these same sexologists, for he sees in their methodological pivot (separating sex from morality and even from complex emotions like love) an important parallel to the eleventh- and twelfth-century world he takes up here. Like the sexologists of (relatively) modern times, Reddy has discovered a set of voices in the medieval world that dissented from the hegemonic (if not terribly popular) church teaching on the inherent sinfulness of any and all sexual activity--even within marriage. This dissent came from aristocrats (chapter 1), troubadours and trobairitz (chapter 2), and romance writers (chapter 3), who, in their quarrels, songs, and verses, posited the existence of a love--an emotion--that was separate from sex; that, in other words, the desire for intimacy (what Reddy rather

cleverly calls "longing for attachment" so as to avoid any problematic anachronisms or discursive strictures) could be separate from the desire for sex, from lust or sexual appetite. He marshals a great many stories, songs, and poems from medieval Europe as evidence to this point, and they all evince an effort to, put simply, elevate sexual partnerships from the lowly (and sinful) status ascribed to them by the Gregorian Reforms. As Reddy puts it, love was, in this way, "a limited form of 'queer performativity' …, a practice that aimed to counter the effects of habitual shame" (p. 37).

Frankly, Reddy could have stopped here and had an important and interesting book to add to his already impressive list of scholarly achievement. But, in the spirit of "global history" and, more importantly, because it amplifies the punch of the whole argument, Reddy then pans the camera lens to Asia--in particular, Bengal and Orissa, India (chapter 4), and Japan (chapter 5)--where, he argues, there was neither an effort to isolate true love (and true-love-sex) from base lust nor, crucially, any such epistemological or discursive (or etc.) differentiation between this "longing for attachment" (i.e., love) and a desire for sex. Indeed, sexual partnerships were usually considered inherently spiritual ("a matter of interest for the gods," p. 291), and there was in this context "no need for a notion of 'true love' capable of taming desire," for desire and release (pleasure) were really only possible, thinkable, *feelable* in the context of "the spiritual" (pp. 5-6). To prove his point, Reddy pulls together an incredibly impressive collection of sources analogous to his European ones: Bhakti (meaning love) troubadours from Bengal and Orissa (representing Hinduism), and Buddhist literature in Heian-era Japan. These voices he dissects and compiles into a chorus that makes clear the artificiality of this Western lust-love dualism and underscores the argument Reddy has, for well over a decade now, been making about sentiment and emotions, to wit, that they are "cultural construct[s] ... with a long and intricate history" (pp. 13-14).

Reddy's theoretical and methodological work here is both meticulous and sophisticated (he, after all, has played no small role in articulating and honing the theoretical foundation of the historical study of emotions), and his case studies are recondite enough that only the true subspecialist might possibly identify any misstep or oversight. Reddy is, in any case, a compelling storyteller, and while scholars of emotions (and graduate students) will benefit greatly from reading just the introduction (which is packed with the latest emotions research and theory--including recent work in neuroscience), those who journey with Reddy into the emotive heart of the medieval world will not regret it.

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Citation: Tyler Carrington. Review of Reddy, William M. ***The Making of Romantic Love: Longing and Sexuality in Europe, South Asia, and Japan, 900-1200 CE.*** H-Emotions, H-Net Reviews. June, 2016.

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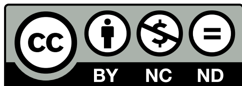
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