



The English in Love: The Intimate Story of an Emotional Revolution

Claire Langhamer

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Love has a history. It has meant different things to different people at different moments and has served different purposes.


This book tells the story of love at a crucial point, a moment when the emotional landscape changed dramatically for large numbers of people. It is a story based in England, but informed by America, and covers the period from the end of the First World War until the break-up of The Beatles.

To the casual observer, this era was a golden age of marriage. More people married than ever before. They did so at increasingly younger ages. And there was a revolution in our idea of what marriage meant. Pragmatic notions of marriage as institution were superseded by the more romantic ideal of a relationship based upon individual emotional commitment, love, sex, and personal fulfilment.

And yet, this new idea of marriage, based on a belief in the transformative power of love and emotion, carried within it the seeds of its own destruction. Romantic love, particularly when tied to sexual satisfaction, ultimately proved an unreliable foundation upon which to build marriages: fatally, it had the potential to evaporate over time and under pressure.

Scratching beneath the surface of the apparent 'golden age' of marriage, Claire Langhamer uncovers the real story of love in the twentieth century, via the recollections of ordinary people who lived through the period. It is a tale of quiet emotional instability, persistent subversion, and unsettling change. At its end, the idea of life-long marriage was in serious decline. And, as Langhamer shows, this was a decline directly rooted in the contradictions and tensions that lay at the heart of the emotional revolution itself.

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