

Kärlekens språk

Adel, kärlek och äktenskap 1750-1900

with an English summary

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Abstract

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This thesis examines the attitudes towards marriage for love among the Swedish aristocracy from 1750 to 1900. It also explores how the expression and experience of love transformed during the same period. According to previous research, the ideal of marrying for love emerged in the 18th century and resulted in fundamental changes in how romantic love was perceived. These changes are generally credited to the middle class, due to their foundation of wealth on a monetary economy rather than on landed estates. The aristocracy was considered to have held onto a more pragmatic system, which viewed birth and estate as more important than the feelings of individuals.

This thesis is comprised of two main surveys. The first is a macro-historical analysis of how love and marriage were understood by the Swedish aristocracy. The source materials consist primarily of printed diaries, memoirs and autobiographies. The purpose of this study is to analyze the relationship between family and the individual, and to explore how factors such as money, titles and love were ranked when choosing a spouse. In conclusion, though nobility often had to take factors such as wealth and titles into account, marrying for love was the ideal state throughout the entire period studied.

The second survey is a micro-historical analysis of the correspondence between aristocratic lovers, one set dates from 1756 and the other from 1858/59. The purpose of this study is to analyze how and why the expression and experience of love transformed. The method assumes that the intent of love letters was twofold: first, to develop and deepen the feeling of love between the writer and the recipient and, second, to develop and deepen the relationship between the writer and the recipient. The study shows that while emotions were the focus of the letters from 1756, the relationship was at the fore in the letters from 1858/59. This sheds new light on the importance of sentimentalism in the development of romantic love.

Keywords: aristocracy, elite, love, marriage, cultural history, history of emotions, the eighteenth century, the nineteenth century, letters, auto/biography, Sweden