

EDITORIAL

Why is there love? Lacan's answer to this eternal question is: *because there is no sexual relationship* – love is a mirage that fills out the void of the impossibility of the relationship between the two sexes. This, however, in no way means that love can be reduced to an imaginary phenomenon: beyond the fascination with the image of its object, true love aims at the kernel of the real, at what is in the object more than the object itself, at *objet petit a*. Love – as well as hate – is supported by what remains of the object when all its imaginary and symbolic features are annihilated.

As such, love is an inherently *historical* phenomenon: its concrete configurations are so many (ultimately failed) attempts to gentrify, tame, symbolize, the 'unhistorical' traumatic kernel of *jouissance* that makes the object unbearable. On this account, love is never 'just love' but always the screen, the field, on which the battles for power and domination are fought.

The current issue of *new formations* endeavours to articulate the strategies of coping with the impossibility of sexual relationship in the modern age, from Descartes onwards. The main co-ordinates of these strategies are: the radical *asymmetry* of the relationship between the lover and the beloved – love returned is never the same as the love given; the gap that separates the *effect* of love from the (bodily) mechanisms that engender it; the enigmatic link that connects love forever with what it allegedly subverts or suspends, namely the (social, symbolic) *institution*; the elevation of woman into the sublime object and/or her denigration into a mere machine as the two complementary attempts to neutralize the traumatic impact of the feminine *jouissance*.

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