

Bruce Fink, *Lacan on Love: An Exploration of Lacan's Seminar VIII, Transference*, Polity Press, 2016, pp. 253

Bruce Fink's *Lacan on Love: An Exploration of Lacan's Seminar VIII, Transference* posits its aim as an exposition of love in Freud's and Lacan's works. Fink states at the beginning of the book that it is impossible to find a singular theory of love in their works, so what he does in the book is to deal with their multiple attempts to discuss this complex human experience. Fink, both as a practising psychoanalyst and as the translator and commentator of some seminal works by Lacan, is aware that it is difficult to arrive at a clear and comprehensive conception of love. Nevertheless, considering Freud's speculative writing and Lacan's obscure style, Fink's expository language appears to be intelligible for many readers, especially for the scholars and students of psychoanalysis, literature and philosophy.

The book is divided into four main chapters, three of which deal with love as theorized by Lacan at three registers: symbolic, imaginary, and real. In these parts, Fink analyzes how Lacan's theories and terminologies pertaining to love have changed over the years, foregrounding different concepts such as desire, narcissism, or drive at different times. The last chapter presents some general perceptions of love in a variety of languages and cultures as expressed in the works of writers and philosophers like Aristotle, Austen, Gide, Kierkegaard, and Stendhal. In this chapter Fink also maps out Lacan's reading of Plato's *Symposium* and covers a wide range of topics from homosexual love to theology, from harmony to immortality.

The first chapter starts with a discussion on Freudian love triangles to illustrate Lacan's theory of love in the symbolic register. Fink focuses on obsessives and hysterics who, according to Freud, often find themselves in love triangles. Departing from the distinction Freud made between love (*Liebe*) as the child's affection for his/her parents and sexual desire, Fink explicates how love relates to desire. Then based on Lacan's analysis of Plato's *Symposium* in *Seminar VIII*, Fink goes over five points to explain Lacan's treatment of love from the symbolic perspective: the connection between speech and love; the relationship between love and ignorance; love as a metaphor; the miracle of love; and love in the psychoanalytic context.

The second chapter entitled *The Imaginary* starts with an examination of Freud's views on narcissism. Fink aims to clarify here the shift from desire to passion. He underlines that while the symbolic is guided by desire, we need to turn to passion in the imaginary which requires an understanding of Lacan's perception of passionate love as determined by the image of the ideal ego. After explaining the role of images in animals' love and aggression in Lacan's writings, Fink directs his attention to the world of human beings taking Lacan's mirror stage as a departure point. This part is particularly striking for its speculations on some prevalent questions regarding love: how do love and hate interrelate? Is love associated with psychosis? Why do people fall in love quickly? Answering these questions, Fink also makes suggestions about the analytic situation which may end up with a love and hate relationship between the analyst and the analysand. Drawing on Lacan's discussions, he suggests that professionalism requires analysts to allow analysands' projections and transferences (89).

In the third chapter Fink explains the appearances of love in the real. Accordingly, repetition compulsion is one of the most important effects of the real in love. Another one is the unsymbolizable that Fink discusses within the context of sexual sensations and *jouissance*. The connections between love and traumatic experiences, the dynamics of love at first sight, and the way love leads to a social interaction are some interesting topics discussed in this chapter. Fink's discussions in these three chapters suggest that desire, narcissism, and drive appear to be the keywords for understanding love in the symbolic, the imaginary and the real respectively.

The last chapter of the book is devoted to some human experiences that are related to love such as dependency, attachment, friendship, agape, hatred, attraction, physical and romantic love (107). Love and attachment, passion and compassion in arranged marriages, Christian love and the doctrine of "love thy neighbour", the overlap of love and hate are some other topics covered by this chapter. Referring to Freud and Lacan, Fink concludes that "[h]e who cannot hate cannot love; and the more he can love, the more he can hate when relations with the other sour. It is, after all, those we love the most who can anger us the most" (125). Furthermore, tracing concepts like beauty, fantasy, death, and courtly love, Fink illustrates the appearance of love in various traditions.

Considering the broad scope of the book, the title might be misleading. Although *Lacan on Love* explores the dynamics of transference discussed in *Seminar VIII*, it engages in many other psychoanalytic concepts owing to the central position of love in psychoanalysis. The book includes, for example, intriguing reflections on hysteria, narcissism, psychosis or *jouissance*. Fink's exploration also enables the reader to trace where Lacan returns to Freud and where he departs from him. All these discussions relate not only to the issues of analytical techniques, but also to educational, social and literary concerns. For instance, discussing the relationship between love and desire in the first chapter, Fink refers to Freud's interpretation of education and civilization as "self-defeating"—especially for women—because of a basic loss, which is "desire" for Freud and "*jouissance*" for Lacan (29). This observation opens onto social issues such as male and female roles in society, social restrictions and prohibitions. Discussing Lacan's reading of Plato's *Symposium*, on the other hand, Fink points to Lacan's unique style of reading texts. Accordingly, he does not try to find the author's intended message, but rather attempts to reveal "a hidden logic within the text" (33). Exemplifying this observation with Lacan's approach to Poe's *The Purloined Letter*, Fink brings forth an implication between literature and Lacanian psychoanalysis.

Lacan on Love accomplishes its basic goal by presenting a clear and rigorous analysis of love in Freud's and Lacan's works. However, it goes beyond this goal by offering helpful summaries and explanations of some significant concepts in their theories. Although the book addresses primarily the readers who are familiar with Freud's and Lacan's writings, both the intriguing nature of such topics as love, hate, friendship, and attraction and the writer's clear language and explicatory style render it accessible to a broader audience.

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