

Dating App' Love

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Numerous dating apps continually appear in various forms, becoming ever increasingly specialised. What gap does this new technological gadget aim to fill? One can search for love, or sex on some, while other apps, in a feminist spirit, permit only women to send the first request or sign of interest. This variety promises... pretty much everything! Love has become a market wherein access to anything is promised, thereby disturbing, shrinking, or even abolishing the function of fantasy.

In Freud's Victorian era, repressed sexuality was considered the reason for the production of symptoms. What happens today, when not only has this cultural condition been lifted, but sexuality is now at the forefront? Access to sex and pornography is not just unimpeded but almost imposed. As Jacques-Alain Miller emphasises, "[i]n the technological age, copulation is no longer confined to the private domain, feeding the fantasies of each of us, now it has been integrated into the field of representation and has passed onto a mass scale."¹

Dating apps come to settle this by providing ready-made, unrefined scenarios for mass consumption, adapted as they are to contemporary cultural discourse. These gadgets facilitate access not only to sex, but also to almost any kind of perversion or perverse desire (whether derived from lack or not), even to the prospect of love, marriage, and family. The love market, as such, makes the object present rather than lost, and for some, this means that they have indeed found some sort of partner.

The object's presence though, can also cause perplexity, or loss of interest in others, and the failure of investment in the other, as any lover is now accessible in this bizarre market, in which lack is not afforded a place.

¹Miller, J.-A., "The unconscious and the speaking body", *The Lacanian Review* 12, 2015, p.4.

Ostensibly, no one needs to remain at the mercy of a chance encounter. Filters permit the choice of lovers “to order”: Various sorts of criteria serve for the selection or exclusion of partners. Filters that operate as an attempt to restrict contingency and control the encounter with the Other.

Yet, this practice still does not manage to abolish the random, incidental, and contingent regime of an encounter. As much as dating apps seem like a well considered matchmaking attempt, the contingency of encounter will always be present every time we fail to approach the being of the other. Since this encounter falls under the regime of the real, one can only reach the other’s being through fantasy, as Lacan points out.² This contingency remains, no matter how many filters are applied.

The fundamental fantasy was one means by which to cope with the absence of sexual relation but it has now been replaced with another fantasy. Since love can now seem redeemable, castration and lack may no longer be its mainspring.

² Lacan, J., *The seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book VIII: Transference*, ed. J.-A. Miller, trans. B. Fink, Polity, 2011, pp.36-37.