Philosophy and Love introduces historical and contemporary philosophical reflections on love.

It brings together philosophy with cultural analysis to provide an accessible and engaging account of conventional theories of love as well as the controversial reformulations evident in same-sex desire, cross-cultural love and internet romance.

Starting with Plato, but focusing especially on contemporary European philosophy, this book introduces figures such as Nietzsche, Beauvoir, Irigaray, Derrida and Fanon. Explaining these philosophical approaches in clear and accessible terms, Philosophy and Love also engages with cultural productions – ranging from Sappho to Frankenstein, and from Hiroshima, Mon Amour to Desperate Housewives – enabling an exchange between philosophical and cultural theories.

Love stories are also central to this interdisciplinary book, revealing the ethical and the political as well as the personal implications of lovers’ discourses. Embracing both the sentimental and the political, this deconstructive reading discloses the paradoxes, conflicts and intensities of the love relation.

Linnell Secomb is a lecturer at the University of Sydney, where she teaches social philosophy and political theory in the Department of Gender and Cultural Studies and the Department of Philosophy.
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From Plato to Popular Culture

Linnell Secomb

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A montage of disparate excerpts from commercial and independent films, Tracey Moffatt and Gary Hillberg’s video collaboration, *Love*, tells the iconic story of love gone wrong. From its initial enraptured obsession, depicted through recurring scenes of passionate embrace and tender caress, love quickly degenerates into argument, accusation, hatred and finally into violence. Editing together similar scenes from diverse films, the video represents men berating their partners, shouting degrading and insulting abuse. The women then retaliate with ineffectual slaps, slamming doors, throwing objects, and pounding the chests of their impassive lovers before falling, broken, at their feet. In the following sequence of filmic pastiche this cycle of violence escalates causing, now, not just psychological pain but also physical injury as the men punch, throw, cut and beat the women. This violence can only conclude in death – the women set aside futile protestations, resorting to more effective means, using guns to slay their male companions.

The irony of the title now becomes evident. The video, which is intended for screening on a continuous loop – ends with an embracing couple and their final exchange. She asks ‘is this the end’ and he responds ‘it’s only the beginning’ signalling the return to the first scenes of love as the video loops back to the start. The video depicts the cycle of interpersonal violence in which love is used to justify and explain the violence itself as well as the repentance and forgiveness that are all too often a precursor to the renewal of violence.

Yet, if this suggests an unremittingly bleak portrayal of love this belies the complexity of Moffatt and Hillberg’s video. The video opens with a voice-over conversation as the black screen merges into the opening title and then the first embracing couple. He says: ‘You take my breath away . . . When I’m close to you like this there’s a sound in the air like the beating of wings. You know what it is? . . . My heart – beating like a schoolboy’s.’ She responds: ‘Is it? I thought it was mine.’ This filmic collage flashes from one film clip to another but each replicates the corny, clichéd, feel of this first scene. Nevertheless, these scenes of love also