Introduction

Helene Grøn, Lene Østermark-Johansen and Viktoria de Rijke

Some decades ago, Jean-Luc Nancy asked, 'has not everything been said on the subject of love? … Could we perhaps be exhausted?' The question is a pertinent one; nothing may seem more clichéd or trivial than love, so why devote yet another book to the subject? In Pierre Bourdieu's seminal work of the 1970s from which social practice theory developed,[1] he examines how rituals and rites, like matrimony, like love, are co- and recreated between explicit systems and relational (inter)actions. In 1991, Nancy argued that we still needed to address the subject of love in the specifics of 'the life of a community, of a time and space of humanity'.[2] Love is what makes us human, what lies at the heart of most human relationships and what cuts to the very essence of being. Hence, it is a subject difficult to exhaust; indeed, more recently, Aukje van Rooden's reading of Nancy concluded that 'to speak of philosophy is to speak of its relation to love, or rather a philosophy *as* a relation of love, a love relation'.[3] Thinking about human existence is to think about love and the relational. Alain Badiou's *In Praise of Love* spells out four conditions of philosophy (the roles of the savant, the artist, the activist and the lover) where a philosopher must 'be an accomplished scientist, an amateur poet and a political activist, but also has to accept that the realm of thought is never sealed off from the violent onslaughts of love'.[4] These 'violent onslaughts of love' may indeed exhaust us, but they also testify to the overruling powers of love which cannot be controlled, not even by systematic thinking, art or activism. It is this uncontrollable force which this collection of essays acknowledges and celebrates through a series of highly interdisciplinary texts which cross literary and aesthetic, activist and affective domains.

In doing so, the collection embraces the ubiquity and the omnipresence of love by attempting the ambitious task of asking new questions – rather than offering answers – about love within the framework of Europe in the long nineteenth

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1 Pierre Bourdieu, *Outlining of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

2 Jean-Luc Nancy *Shattered Love in The Inoperative Community*, trans. Peter Conner, Lisa Garbus, Michael Holland and Simona Sawhney (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 82–3.

3 Aukje van Rooden, 'Jean-Luc Nancy, a Romantic Philosopher? On Romance, Love and Literature', *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities*, 26:3–4 (2021), 113–25, 114.

4 Alain Badiou and Nicholas Truong, *In Praise of Love*, trans. Peter Bush (London: Serpent's Tail, 2012), 1–2.

century. Love implies all cognitive domains including emotion, aesthetics, creativity and innovation, recognising the tensions across them, as well as those of time and place. A tension across the volume between love as something historically specific (taking cultural form) and the use of cultural theories that may suggest a universalism of human experience, come together to create an interesting slippage between categories – a slippage also observed in many of the contributions. A lively intellectual openness can be a methodological tool for thinking and working across disciplines, seeking chance encounters and unintended discoveries across concordant and discordant threads of research. We might look at the essays in the volume as a European exchange project, a prismatic study of the spreading of ideas, texts, images, objects, emotions, and practices as the commodification of love expanded across these relatively easy Euroborders. For readers in the digital age, it may, indeed, prove surprising how easily and effortlessly objects and ideas spread and circulated across Europe at the time. Prismatically too, Theodore Schatzski and Anders Buch remark how the field of social practices, and its related disciplines of anthropology and ethnography, are uniquely positioned to view the 'epistomological, normative and moral relations between the practices of social science and the practices that compose the social phenomena it studies'.[5] Schatzski and Buch highlight how the normative is at the risk of being taken as structural and political status quo, but also how a practice prism is uniquely positioned to understand the creation of such taken-for-granted doings.

Dimitri Ginev's connection of the hermeneutical framework of social practice theory with that of literary studies supports the methodological overlap of this book's interdisciplinary approaches.[6] However, where social practice theory might take a bird's eye view on love, our approach asks *where love happens*, not only as a topographical question, but as a serious, concrete premise. By making space for love's crooked expression in both content and form, the essays view and interpret unique aspects of social and individual expressions of love, often yielding surprising conclusions, like Kirstie Blair's insight that 'Loving a piece of furniture is risky' in her essay on the poetry of factory-workers to their beloved objects. The title of this book connects time and space: the interrogative pronoun 'where' with the elastic concept of 'the long nineteenth century', and, like Nancy, it suggests that there is a connection between the two. The major claim suggested

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[5] Anders Buch and Theodore R. Schatzki, 'Introduction', in *Questions of Practice: Related Perspectives from Pragmatism and Practice Theory* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), 1–10, 3.

[6] Ginev makes this connection through the structuralism of Michel Foucault, as well as Giorgio Agamben's reading of Foucault. Dimitri Ginev, *Toward a Hermeneutic Theory of Social Practices Between Existential Analytic and Social Theory* (Abingdon: Routledge 2018), 4–8.

in the title might be condensed into the argument that changing social practices, evolving in the course of the long nineteenth century, determined new spaces and places for love to happen, to unfold, develop – and break up.

The book springs from a Danish research project generously funded by the Velux Foundation, housed in the Department of English, Germanic and Romance Studies at the University of Copenhagen: 'Where Love Happens: Topographies of Emotions in Nineteenth-Century European Literature'.[7] The papers presented at a conference in September 2023 in the University Medical Museion on 'Dissecting Love in the Nineteenth Century and Beyond' form the core of the volume; some of them now appear in oral form as podcasts on the university podcast platform.[8] Several new and commissioned essays have been added to the collection in the attempt to approach the subject from as many different angles as possible within the framework of an edited volume. Many of the essays in this volume revolve around making spaces or places for love to happen – not merely as topographical locations but also imaginatively locating a possibility for different kinds of love. Some essays will be asking where love happens in the age of conspicuous consumption, in a world of trinkets, furniture, printing, collecting, communication, new technologies and commercial developments that transfer love from the abstract to the concrete. Does love happen in a corner, in a kitchen, in an intimate letter, a mourning locket, in a poem addressed to a sewing machine or in a spiritist séance? Other essays deal with the imagining of new kinds of love, on the margins of established society, across conventional binary gender definitions, across nations and national identities, across generations, the living and the dead, in constructed spaces that make room for love to happen. Finding a space for love – emotionally, physically, topographically, materially – requires that we engage critically with the practices that condition our place in the world and the intimate relations that we form with those closest to us.

Such intimate relations may be enhanced by our physical surroundings, by the ways in which our minds and bodies perceive space as frameworks for our existence and interactions with loved ones, and in turn give shape to emotion and produce emotional spaces. The dialectics between inside and outside, of the human body itself, of the architectural structures that surround it, determine our affective behaviour. An example might be 'love as a roundness of being'. In his chapter on 'The Phenomenology of roundness' Gaston Bachelard, examining shells, snails' houses and domestic interiors, alerted our attention to the roundness of being, to

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7 <https://engerom.ku.dk/english/research/centres_projects/where-love-happens/>, accessed on 21 August 2024.

8 <https://nyheder.ku.dk/podcasts/dissecting-love/>, accessed on 21 August 2024.

the human need for emotional and physical integrity which wraps us into a state of fulfilment: 'Images of full roundness help us to collect ourselves, permit us to confer on ourselves an initial constitution and to conform our being intimately, inside. For when it is experienced from the inside, devoid of all exterior features, being cannot be otherwise than round'.[9] The image chosen for the cover of this book, Clare Atwood's *The Dining Room at Smallhythe* (ca. 1920), addresses this human desire for roundness. The spectator is drawn into the innermost depths of the interior by means of a series of round shapes: the rugs, the hat on the chair, the plates on the rack, until we reach the round copper kettle and the tin plates above the fireplace. As Michael Hatt so perceptively points out in his essay, Atwood's depiction of the domestic interior which formed the Smallhythe framework of the ménage-à-trois between Edy Craig, 'Christopher St John' (Christabel Marshall) and Atwood herself may seem to be characterised by the absence of the human figure, but at a closer look the painting denotes all sorts of human activity and intimacy in a lived-in space constituting the all-embracing home – and implied love – of the three women: the flowers in the vase, the walking stick left on the chair, the polished kettle and the bench in front of the fireplace waiting for the inhabitants to come and fill it. The implied presence of love and affection in an interior glowing with warmth and traces of human activity might, Hatt argues, be seen as a rare example of the representation of love in painting, where the visual arts are far more often concerned with the representation of eroticism.

By contrast, the round shapes in Vilhelm Hammershøi's *Interior* (1899) (see Figure 4.14), discussed as one of the final images in James Hall's exploration of corners of love, block space and prevent the flow of circulation and movement in a claustrophobic interior where doors are closed and the female figure with her back turned towards us seems trapped in space. Together with the polished round table, with the equally polished stove in the corner, the woman herself appears enigmatic and inaccessible. Rigid as a mannikin she is yet another object in a jumble of items drawn towards the corner; the nape of her neck and the roundness of her hairbun may invite the caress of the gaze but, although physically present, the female figure appears mentally and emotionally absent, in spite of being modelled on the painter's wife Ida to whom he was affectionately attached. As Hall argues, unlike the women depicted lovingly in Vermeer's interiors, with which Hammershøi's domestic scenes are so often compared, the cold and stark modernity of the Danish painter's claustrophobic corners suggest a much more problematic emotional framework for human relationships. The love that may happen in Hammershøi's corners is rooted in a disturbing objectification in

[9] Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), 234.

which the triad of woman, table and stove are almost treated equally as surfaces providing an occasion for the painter's study of the effect of the play of light upon different textures. Put a little provocatively, one might ask if the artist's affective interests apply equally to items of furniture and wife as prop, a fossilised late-nineteenth-century angel in the house, trapped with her white apron by the white doors which seem hermetically sealed.

The twenty years which separate Hammershøi's painting from Atwood's take us into a freer world of open spaces with open doors. The contrast between Hammershøi's monochromatic urban interior and the warm embracing female space created in the countryside by women for women in Atwood's painting is striking. The first section of our book, which deals with relationships at the margins, addresses various kinds of marginal love: same-sex love or inter-racial love where the controversial relationship established in Wales in the late eighteenth century by the Ladies of Llangollen in Helene Grøn's essay may seem a precursor of the Atwood/Craig/Marshall relationship discussed in Hatt's essay some 140 years apart. Viktoria de Rijke's exploration of the forbidden aspects of fairy tale love, the (single male) adult love of the child in representations of Little Red Ridinghood in painting and photography take us into the problematic eroticisation of the nineteenth-century female child in spaces where it is often cornered by wolves or desiring painters or photographers. Happily ever after does not apply to the relationship between wolf and child or adult and child in this essay, and the romantic child, whose innocent questioning always has a deeper and less innocent meaning, is caught in a dangerous tension between the cute and the cheeky, between being the desirable morsel and the (too)-knowing child. The dangerous love that goes on in corners, from the Age of Enlightenment to Hammershøi, goes on in intersections in James Hall's essay and invites us to contemplate the hidden, the illicit, the cosy and the quaint, situated in spaces from which we cannot escape. Although at first sight alluring and attractive, the love that happens in corners may not be entirely desirable.

Many of the essays in the volume challenge the myth of 'happily ever after'. Denis de Rougemont's announcement in his classic monograph *Love in the Western World* that 'Happy love has no history. Romance only comes into existence when love is fatal, frowned upon and doomed by life itself',[10] connects love and death as a popular trope that is examined from several different angles in this volume. In the second section of the book, 'Reconnecting Love: Thresholds of Communication', Kirstie Blair connects life with a love of dead objects as she

[10] Denis de Rougemont, *Love in the Western World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 15.

explores the commodification of love though the surprising relationship which working-class Victorian factory poets attributed to objects associated with life and livelihood, such as armchairs, grandfather clocks and sewing machines. The transferral of emotions onto dead objects, which sometimes even become animated in the process, makes for a new relationship between the living and the dead which challenges conventional ideas of romantic love.

Emily Vincent's essay explores the boundaries between life and death in relationships where the living are not left alone by their departed loved ones. The nineteenth-century interest in the paranormal, in communication between the living and the dead, expanded the spaces where love – between friends, relatives, lovers – could find expression after death. Helped by the fraudulent genre of spirit photography, the departed gained new material form, as the absent became disturbingly present in images and séances.[11] In the spiritist communications across generations, between lost sons and daughters and their still living parents, love interferes and comments across the grave in a non-romantic context which nevertheless rests on doom and fatality, as the natural order of the generations is reversed. Conventional hierarchies and power relations are upset with the spirits of the departed now setting the communicative and affective agenda. Lene Østermark-Johansen's essay on the English afterlife of Lotte, the unobtainable love object of Goethe's Werther (1774), transposes the relations between the dead and the living into a material cult of mourning which reaches far into the nineteenth century. The transferral of the role of the romantic lover from male protagonist to female mourner, in a cultural context which goes beyond the ending of the novel, invites us to turn our attention to women's right to love, even if their love object is confined by memory and by the past. Although hardly to be conceived as a budding feminist, eighteenth-century Lotte in love nevertheless paves the way for twentieth-century feminist thinkers such as Julia Kristeva and Luce Irigaray who have explored the possibilities for a newly liberating language for greater equality between the sexes.[12]

In later centuries, thinkers such as Hannah Arendt, Simone Weil, Martha Nussbaum and bell hooks have reflected critically on the political life of love holding its tensions and contradictions, such as both the complications of and

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[11] See Falcon Kyle, *Haunted Britain: Spiritualism, Physical Research and the Great War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2024); Simone Natale, *Supernatural Entertainments: Victorian Spiritualism and the Rise of Modern Media Culture* (University Park PA: Penn State University Press, 2016).

[12] Julie Kristeva, *Tales of Love* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987); Luce Irigaray, *I love to you: a sketch of a possible felicity in history*, trans. Alison Martin (London: Routledge, 1996).

potential for love to produce more equal worlds.[13] From a historical and philosophical perspective, Elizabeth Brake makes clear these social and political conditions of love by examining marriage as its regulator. How, for example, she inquires, can law even regulate relations of love, when romantic love 'is essentially lawless, and law essentially impartial'? 'Love and law cannot coexist', she continues (ironically, rather than romantically), because to 'legally codify, regulate, or obligate love is to initiate its extinction, at least in its passionate, romantic form'.[14] Yet, as far back as 1791, Olympe de Gouges answered the French Assembly's 1789 *Declaration of the Rights of Man* with her own declaration of women's rights, addressing the remaining inequality for women and those enslaved, despite the *Declaration*'s universalist claims. As a playwright and social reformer, de Gouges was well aware of the stakes of love, understanding there to be little separation of the public and the private spheres when 'the publicly protected rights of women reach into the household and the bedroom'.[15] In this first 'European women's right manifesto',[16] she proposes that marriage would remain 'the tomb of trust and love' until it could be entered into by two equal parties.[17] At the far end of the long nineteenth century, marriage was a concern also for Anne Lister when her diary pages from 31 March 1840 record 'the first ever known marriage to another woman'.[18] In coded writing, Lister tells of taking the sacrament with Ann Walker in Holy Trinity Church in York as a symbolic marriage ceremony between the two. Bridging stories reflecting the tension and need for diverse forms of love to find their space, the essays in this book highlight different versions of home, happiness and family, like the

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13 Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998); bell hooks, *All About Love: New Visions* (New York: Harper Collins, 2018); Martha Nussbaum, *Political Emotions: Why Love Matters for Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013); Simone Weil, *Gravity and Grace*, trans. Emma Crawford and Mario van der Ruhr (London: Routledge Classics, 1952). See also Shin Chiba's discussion on Arendt in: 'Hannah Arendt on Love and the Political: Love, Friendship, and Citizenship', *The Review of Politics* 57: 3 (Summer, 1995), 505–35.

14 Elizabeth Brake, 'Love and the Law', in Christopher Grau and Aaron Smuts, eds, *The Oxford Handbook of the Philosophy of Love* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 453–470, 453.

15 John Cole, *Between the Queen and the Cabby: Olympe de Gouge's Rights of Woman* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011), 141.

16 Lisa Gålmark, 'Olympe de Gouges', Arimneste Anima Museum. 2021. <https://www.astre-animamuseum.org/2021/01/03/amnesia-and-progression-olympe-de-gouges/>, accessed on 27 August 2024.

17 Olympe de Gouges, 'Forty-Four: Olympe de Gouges (1748–1793)', in Lisa L. Moore, Joanna Brooks, and Caroline Wigginton, eds, *Transatlantic Feminism in the Age of Revolutions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 245–56.

18 Anne Choma, *Gentleman Jack: The Real Anne Lister* (London: Penguin Books, 2019).

Ladies of Llangollen who set up an entire house, garden and library as material model for the ultimate love-life.

In love studies, it is often suggested that we live out our love-lives according to the narratives represented in films and romance novels. By shifting the attention solely from the plot of the text to the social activity of reading, Janice Radway's seminal study *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, Popular Literature* challenges the reductive perception that reading about love is merely a leisurely unfeminist practice. Rather, she claims, it allows readers to engage with the version of love represented imaginatively as applicable or desirable in one's own life, thereby ultimately becoming a way of rethinking the world.[19] The English afterlife of Goethe's Lotte in poetry, painting, embroidery and ceramics, is exactly that: a series of individual recreations of romantic love as women were engaging imaginatively and creatively with their reading of Goethe's text, situating themselves as modern Lottes. Yet reading and writing about love could also be taken into other intimate spheres than romantic love, as we learn from Alexander Knopf's essay on the German Romantic poet Bettina Brentano von Arnim's semi-fictitious 'letter books'. In her intimate correspondence with her brother, the poet Clemens Brentano and with her friend, the poet Karoline von Günderrode, Brentano von Arnim was engaging with two other writers and their works while clothing her dialogue with them in partly invented letters, published separately. How do codes of intimacy differ between lovers, family, friends, and literary colleagues, and what does an exploration of the slippage between them reveal about our intimate relations? Love also happens between friends and relatives, and if everyone involved is of a literary inclination, the likelihood of blurred lines between the fictitious and the real increases significantly. The epistolary genre, the love letter extended into the realm of friendship, provides a fascinating space for intimacies to play themselves out, inviting us to consider the ways in which the 'I' addresses the 'you', even if part of the communicative situation is entirely fictitious.

As at once a 'relational institution'[20] and 'a communal institution that involves the entire society to which each pair of spouses belongs',[21] marriage is, as Bourdieu hinted, one of the places where the prism of social practices and this book's study on love perhaps most easily converge. This 'fundamentally social character' of

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[19] Janice Radway, *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, Popular Literature* (London: University of North Carolina Press, 1984).

[20] Jan Fuhse, 'Love and Gender', *Social Networks of Meaning and Communication* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021), 164–200, 168.

[21] Irving Singer, *Meaning in Life: The Pursuit of Love* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009), 73.

love has been recognised by, among others, Lauren Berlant, who points out the narrative life of love which on the one hand produces coherent social stories (of marriage, reproduction, family, etc),[22] but paradoxically also functions as a destabilising world-making impulse (think of Badiou's 'violent onslaughts of love').[23] Although Berlant perhaps speaks more readily to contemporary lovers, the conflict between the 'ideal of romantic choice'[24] and the social, familial and political factors that might limit it, was often staged in the long nineteenth century. Claudia Nelson argues that queering marriage and the family is 'a project begun by the Victorians themselves'.[25] On the one hand, the period invented 'romantic love' through tropes like the wife as the angel in a happy home with silent and invisible servants and subservient children 'owned' by a patriarch; while narratives of bigamy, incest, prostitution and homelessness also proliferated in the period, for very good reasons. Where marriage might then seem the keeper of a normative status quo, confirming Singer's suggestion that 'love cannot create a new society by itself',[26] Nelson simultaneously notes how the period 'dramatize[s] the gaps […] between convention and possibility'.[27] Indeed, these more coherent social stories, some of which tie in with the myth of 'happily ever after', pave the way for some of the many clichés about romantic love which still govern our expectations and find expression in Valentine's day cards and other romanticised commodities, whose over-use rely on stock phrases such as 'love is blind', 'love at first sight', 'love conquers all', 'love unto death', etc. We have to acknowledge this tendency – in spite of modern divorce rates – to live under narrative conditions of love that at times might variously challenge or perpetuate myths of romantic love. Our collection of essays recognises the modern need to resist love as a cliché as we encourage readers to look at an old subject through new eyes. We might proudly claim our vanguard position as the first anthology to include love poems addressed to sewing machines together with an extensive discussion of the corner cult of love, while also aiming to stretch the study of the history of emotions into the realm of technological advances by looking at the fin-de-siècle electric fairy as a completely new take on conventional ideas of the connection between love and light.

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22 See, for instance, Talia Schaffer, *Romance's Rival: Familiar Marriage in Victorian Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

23 Lauren Berlant, *Desire/Love* (Brooklyn New York: Punctum Books, 2012).

24 Jan Fuhse, 'Love and Gender', 171.

25 Claudia Nelson, 'Foreword' in Duc Dau and Shale Preston, eds, *Queer Victorian Familes: Curious Relations in Literature* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), vii–ix, viii.

26 Irving Singer, *Meaning in Life: The Pursuit of Love*, 73.

27 Nelson, 'Foreword', viii.

In the last section of the volume, 'Love Illuminated: Transforming Cold Philosophy', Joanna Beaufoy revisits the nineteenth-century love of the child already addressed in the essays by de Rijke and Vincent in her study of the ways in which children under the age of fourteen went from being objects of 'utility' to becoming objects of 'sentiment', as Simon May has pointed out.[28] With the invention of electricity the mythological fairy, protector of children's sleep, was given new magical power. The parental love expressed by means of night lights – stand-ins for absent adults, not present in the nursery after dark – reflect the new sentimental value applied to children, Beaufoy argues. The figure of Tinkerbell in J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* sparkles seductively and mischievously as a sign of the complexities of love and magic in the world of modern technology, proving that there is more between Heaven and Earth than is dreamed of in most people's philosophy. James Dowthwaite's essay on love and fate in the poetry of John Keats invites us to consider the clichéd connection between the two from the point of view of Romantic myth. The term 'cold philosophy' is Keats' own and for him the representation of love in poetry functions as an alternative kind of philosophy. In 'Lamia' and 'Endymion', Keats sets up love as an earthly counter-force, often defeated by the great metaphysical caprices of fate, but frequently immortalised by poets. With his idea of love as a concrete passionate relation to another (or others), Keats has the courage to address an alternative philosophy of love, frequently with a tragic outcome, as fate is not always benevolent. Jerome Wynter turns our attention to the Victorian love of a country not one's own in his discussion of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's passionate involvement with the Italian Risorgimento in the 1850s and 1860s. Celebrated both in her own time and by posterity for her literary love affair and marriage to Robert Browning, the expatriate poetess living in Florence was ardently engaged in the advocacy of Italian unification. This is a new kind of love conditioned by mid-nineteenth-century political and social practices, Wynter argues. The political subtext of her long poem 'Casa Guidi Windows' relates contemporary political affairs to Italian Renaissance art and politics and transfers affections from person to place. Employing the conventional tropes of love and the heart, Robert Browning in his poem 'De Gustibus' (and we know that when it comes to taste, 'non est disputandum') juxtaposed England and Italy with the latter as the conqueror of his heart's affections: 'Open my heart and you will see / Graved inside of it, "Italy"' ('De Gustibus', *Men and Women* 1855). Elizabeth clearly had a rival in her husband's affection.

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[28] Simon May, *Love: A New Understanding of an Ancient Emotion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 199.

As the author of one of the most frequently anthologised love poems, Sonnet 43 from her *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, Elizabeth Barrett Browning has, more than anyone, contributed towards the clichéd codification of love. With its opening line 'How do I love thee? Let me count the ways', the poem measures love by 'depth and breadth and height', perhaps suggestive of a certain capitalist commodification:

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of Being and ideal Grace.
I love thee to the level of everyday's
Most quiet need, by sun and candlelight.
I love thee freely, as men strive for Right,
I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise.
I love thee with the passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith;
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints, – I love thee with the breath,
Smiles, tears, of all my life! – and if God choose,
I shall but love thee better after death.

A favourite poem of the Danish Queen Mary (of Tasmanian birth), exchanged, she confessed in an interview, in her private correspondence with her future husband at the beginning of the twenty-first century, Barrett Browning's sonnet has joined the pages even of the Danish tabloid press as a love poem which reaches across the Victorian age into the modern world, from London via Tasmania to Copenhagen. The poem's enumeration and itemisation of the elements of love culminate in the reaching into the world of the beyond, the realm of eternity which, for obvious reasons, goes beyond definition and listing (and we must not forget Elizabeth Barrett Browning's spititualist leanings – nor her husband's scepticism, for that matter). Barrett Browning draws the definitive concluding word of the sonnet, 'death', into the inconclusivity of the future, thus stretching the ritual of the marriage service, 'till death you doth part', into the unknown. The cliché of love's constancy, on which the poem rests, is the one also celebrated in the poem most frequently quoted at weddings, Shakespeare's Sonnet 116:

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds
Or bends with the remover to remove.
O, no, it is an ever-fixèd mark

That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wand'ring bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come;
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
If this be error, and upon me proved,
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

Though in actual fact far less unequivocal than the 'Sonnet from the Portuguese', Shakespeare's Sonnet 116 has conventionally been read as celebrating a view of love as fixed and never changing. Yet Christina Rossetti's argument that 'weights and measures do us both a wrong' from *Monna Innominata* 'I loved you first but afterwards your love' (1881) as epigraph to this volume is the nineteenth-century riposte. As with this volume's collection, Rossetti is arguing this 'ever-fixèd' view of love *is* Shakespeare's error, and such metaphors run the risk of becoming similarly fixed, to die in cliché. If we share Nancy's sense that the subject of love might seem to be exhausted, it is in part because of the codification of romantic love which the circulation of poems like the two before have brought about. While we have to acknowledge that in their sonnets Barrett Browning and Shakespeare clearly hit central aspects of the complex emotion of romantic love, this volume seeks out other ways of approaching and expanding the subject at a time when the history of emotions has been enriching the complexity of the field for quite a few decades.[29]

By looking at the changing social practices of the nineteenth century and the changing conditions for love provided by them, we will inevitably turn away from the courtship and wedding clichés as we try to embed love in technological and material advances and transformations, in new modes of reading and consuming, new social constructions and ways of cohabiting, or new ways of approaching family structures and relations between intimate friends. The much-debated claim that romantic love is an invention of European Romanticism needs questioning and contextualising by some of the many other manifestations of love in the long nineteenth century, and we may indeed end up finding romantic love less romantic and other kinds of love far more romantic than at first imagined.[30]

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[29] See for instance Katie Barclay and Peter Stern, eds., *The Routledge History of Emotions in the Modern World* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2023).

[30] Niklas Luhmann, *Love as Passion: The Codification of Intimacy*, trans. Jeremy Gaines and Dorothy L. Jones (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1986).

It is significant that such a new and ambitious work as the six-volume *Bloomsbury Cultural History of Love* (2024), which spans the period from Antiquity to the present, deals with 'romantic love' in each of its six volumes from Antiquity till the twenty-first century and organises each volume under the headings 'Romantic Love', 'Love in Families', 'Friendship', 'Love in Communities', 'Love and the Divine', 'Love in Politics', 'Physiologies of Love' and 'Love in Art and Material Culture'.[31] Similarly, the new *Oxford Handbook on the Philosophy of Love* (2024) has sections on varieties of love and the intersections of love with the law, sex, infidelity, literature, knowledge, religion and freedom which resemble the prismatic methodology of our book.[32] On an obviously much smaller scale, the multi-facetted approaches of our volume tie in with this perception of the manifold and diverse manifestations of love across time, intersecting and interacting with one another, adding to that *where* love happens, with a focus on topographies and relationships as situated in and out of place, with things in and out of place.

For most people, love is what gives meaning to life. Defining that meaning and its manifestation in the concrete is the work of a lifetime. The ways in which love finds expression in the world are as diverse as the human population, yet love ties the world together in meaningful ways, across genders, generations, oceans, boundaries, nations, race and class. This volume does not focus on fixed boundaries or categories of love but – in its scope, slippage and tensions – demonstrates that love is movement and love is always on the move, transforming itself, transforming us, if we allow it to. The transformative powers of love may lead us in and out of relationships and disguises, may reveal us to ourselves and to each other, may lead to break-ups and new ventures in search for new meanings. Love may indeed exhaust us but there is every good reason why love studies still make it into the catalogues of publishers and onto the shelves of bookshops: read, think, be moved and love!

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[31] Katie Barclay, ed., *Bloomsbury Cultural History of Love*, 6 vols (London: Bloomsbury, 2024).

[32] See Christopher Grau and Aaron Smuts, eds, *The Oxford Handbook of the Philosophy of Love* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2024).

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