Article

The Cinematic Meanings of Love

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to investigate the evolution of the representation of romantic relationships in cinema and the peculiarities of their semantic content through the systematization of existing theoretical approaches and taxonomies. The primary focus was on cinematic techniques, cultural and philosophical concepts that determine the representation of romance in contemporary cinema. The methodological foundation included an analysis of the triangular theory of love, philosophical concepts, visual and auditory techniques, and a comparative study of audience perceptions of romance. The research established that modern love narratives deviate from classical models, demonstrating a dynamic transformation of love's components. Passion tends to dominate in the early stages, while intimacy and commitment emerge during the climax or resolution. It was revealed that the philosophical interpretation of romance in cinema is increasingly presented not as idealized harmony but as a space of psychological conflict, incorporating loss, identity crisis, and contradictions between characters. Technological advancements have contributed to visual solutions that enhance the expressiveness of romantic scenes while potentially distorting perceptions of real relationships. Differences in the interpretation of love stories between academic criticism and the general audience are influenced by cultural and social contexts, necessitating further analysis. The practical significance of the study lies in identifying the mechanisms through which digital technologies influence the perception of romance in cinema. This can be used for analyzing audience reactions to evolving forms of love story representation and predicting trends in the development of the romantic genre amid technological progress.

Keywords: evolution of cinematic plots, gender and cultural transformations in on-screen relationships, impact of digital technologies on character emotions, philosophical concepts of emotions, psychology of audience perception, romantic narrative structures, visual and auditory techniques of emotions

Introduction

Love in cinema is a key theme reflecting socio-cultural transformations. Contemporary research examines it as a philosophical category, highlighting its multifaceted and contradictory nature. The cinematic influence on the perception of love is analyzed with a focus on its connection to societal shifts. In films, love functions as a narrative element and a tool for exploring philosophical, psychological, and social phenomena, moving beyond romanticized clichés in favor of multidimensional interpretations. It shapes cultural constructs of love and sexuality, integrating with social and political dynamics.

The relevance of this research is driven by globalization and social changes, where cinema deconstructs traditional approaches, emphasizing gender, sexuality, and cultural identities. By early 2025, scholarly literature already contains numerous works examining love in cinema; however, many focus on classical representations of love, neglecting new social and cultural contexts. The study by Rifeser & Herrschner (2024), which explored the impact of gender identity choices on the perception of femininity, raised important questions about how contemporary cinema portrays various forms of love, including those beyond traditional relationships. The work of Chao et al. (2025) analyzed queer representations in Thai soap operas, further underscoring the significance of depicting love in the broader context of shifting societal perceptions of sexuality.

One of the most pressing aspects of studying love in cinema is the interrelationship between film and cultural and philosophical approaches. The research by Gamez (2024), which examined artificial intelligence and the philosophy of machine consciousness, opened new horizons for understanding love in cinema through the lens of technology philosophy, where questions of consciousness and perception gain significance in the context of artificial intelligence.

The problem of mythical love in contemporary society also plays a crucial role in cinema, as highlighted by Dong (2024), who examined the structure of romantic love in the context of cultural changes. These approaches provide new perspectives on how mythological elements of love persist in modern cinema and can thus be used to understand better how films reflect contemporary cultural and social transformations. The studies by Bhaskar & Allen (2022) and Chang (2024) explored the depiction of love and its representation in Indian cinema, which is essential for a comprehensive understanding of love's portrayal within cultural diversity.

Equally significant is the study of sexuality and female desire, as reflected in research by Gilchrist (2024), which analyzed female desire in the context of popular culture in the US and the UK. These studies deepen understanding of how cinema

represents love and shapes discourses on female sexuality and its ambivalence. Furthermore, the analysis of female love and its representation in contemporary cinema helps explore issues of queer representation. For example, a study by Schwanck (2024) focused on transforming love narratives in the context of migration and social status. Thus, despite the substantial body of existing research, gaps remain in scholarly literature, particularly around interrelations between philosophy, cinema, and love. Further study must examine how love is represented and perceived through cinematic works in various cultural contexts and how these representations influence contemporary perceptions of sexuality and intimate relationships.

The objective of this study was to analyze existing theoretical approaches and taxonomies of love in cinema, with an emphasis on key cinematic techniques and cultural and philosophical concepts that define love in the context of modern cinema. The primary task was to deepen the understanding of how various cultural, social, and political mechanisms influence the depiction of love in film.

Methodology

The study was conducted from September 2024 to February 2025 and focused on analyzing the transformation of ways in which romantic relationships are depicted in contemporary cinema and examining their substantive meaning, considering the influence of philosophical, cultural, and technological aspects. The work was based on systematically analyzing materials published in peer-reviewed academic journals.

The search for materials was done through peer-reviewed publications in databases (Scopus, Springer, Film-Philosophy, Transnational Screens). The primary focus was the comparative analysis of various approaches to the representation of love in cinematography, as presented in international studies (Fan, 2022; Karpińska, 2024; Zeng, 2025). Additionally, studies on the impact of technological and cultural factors on romantic imagery in cinema were examined (Eleftheriotis, 2022; Hainge, 2023; Martínez i Cuadras, 2023), as well as conceptual research addressing issues of gender transformations and audience perception of romance (Augustin, 2024; Culié et al., 2022).

A critical analysis and synthesis of data were subsequently conducted. The analysis covered six areas of transformation in romantic imagery: queer cinema, postmodernism, gender changes, digital aesthetics, the ecological context, and the phenomenon of post-love. The study considered global and regional trends, including the impact of globalization on cinematic narratives (Eleftheriotis, 2023) and the specificity of Asian media, such as the boys' love genres (Feng, 2022). The influence of technology (digitalization, artificial intelligence) on visual aesthetics and the deconstruction of traditional models of love was analyzed through audience responses, which made it possible to identify socio-cultural differences in the perception of romance.

The content analysis method was applied, allowing for the classification of key cinematographic strategies and their connection to philosophical and cultural concepts. The comparative analysis of literature helped identify the main patterns in the transformation of romantic imagery and determine the limitations of existing research. EndNote was used to process sources, enabling the structuring of publications, the classification of theoretical approaches, and the accuracy of citations.

Results

Love as an Object of Cinematic Analysis: Theory, Visual Techniques, and Sound Aesthetics

Applying Sternberg's Triangular Theory of Love to cinematic narratives reveals the dynamic structure of romantic relationships, where passion, intimacy, and commitment do not function as static categories but as evolving components (Sternberg, 1986). Passion often dominates the initial stages of a plot, especially in expositions built around immediate attraction, while intimacy and commitment tend to emerge during climactic or resolving phases.

However, Sternberg's theory does not sufficiently account for the role of social context and cultural codes. It is evident in films with crisis-driven narratives, where commitment does not necessarily follow intimacy. This gap necessitates supplementing the model with socio-philosophical aspects of love related to identity and resistance. Feng (2022) interpreted love in cinema as an unconscious dynamic that exposes imperfection and loss in characters' relationships, emphasizing their internal tension. Karpińska (2024) expanded on this perspective by exploring its mythological depth, where romantic narratives gain symbolic significance by reflecting archetypal structures of human experience.

Cinema actively employs mythological models of love, portraying it not only as a personal experience but also as part of the collective unconscious (Ostapenko, 2018; Grajo, 2024; Efremov, 2025a). Mythological love in films is constructed through archetypes, symbolism, and recurring motifs. Unlike the psychoanalytic approach, which focuses on individual perception, mythological love offers universal plots, such as *"love as a trial"* or *"love as self-sacrifice"* (Karpińska, 2024). However, this approach is criticized for its universalism, as contemporary cinema increasingly deconstructs mythological love narratives, particularly in postmodernist films. Thus, mythological and psychoanalytic models of love in cinema complement each other; the former explains symbolism, while the latter addresses internal psychological dynamics.

Love in cinema does not exist independently of social structures (Shershova & Chaika, 2024). Research by Delaney & Meyer (2025) demonstrated how the idealization and realism of romantic plots depend on the social context. Black cinema and films about marginalized groups use love as a tool of resistance and political expression. Brown (2023) analyzed the "poetics of love" in the context of social and racial identity, emphasizing that in cinema, love can function as an emotion and a political act that dismantles stereotypes and boundaries. This approach is especially significant for

analyzing independent films, where romantic relationships become a means of reinterpreting normativity (e.g., queer cinema).

Phenomenological and existential approaches view love as an experience that shapes personal existence (Zeng, 2025). The phenomenology of love is tied to how the subject in film experiences it: close-ups, attention to gestures, and the sound environment create intimacy, allowing the viewer to empathize with the characters' emotions. In contrast, the existential approach presents love as a paradox: on one hand, it represents the highest form of meaning; on the other, it is a source of fear, loneliness, and anxiety. This perspective broadens psychological and cultural models by emphasizing subjective perception.

Queer theory in cinema not only reinterprets traditional notions of love by moving away from heteronormative and patriarchal models but also generates new narrative and visual expressions of love (Ruban, 2022; Matiash et al., 2025). It highlights that love is not a universal concept but is shaped by cultural context, subjective perception, and historical dynamics. Unlike traditional romantic models that assume fixed gender roles and a linear progression of relationships, queer cinema experiments with non-linear narrative structures, blurring the boundaries between friendship, passion, and familial attachment. A key aspect of queer theoretical analysis is not just the representation of homosexual or bisexual relationships but also the critique of normative love models. This analysis allows cinema to be seen as a space where traditional perceptions of sexuality are deconstructed and reconfigured.

Chao et al. (2025) examined how romantic relationships in Asian soap operas and the boys' love media genre challenge traditional perceptions of sexuality. Their research demonstrated that the queer perspective in cinema not only reshapes the perception of love but also creates new methods of representation through aestheticization, stylistic techniques, and media conventions. However, Asian media genres do not always transcend binary categories; in some cases, they merely "soften" traditional heteronormative models while maintaining familiar patterns for audiences.

The queer-theoretical approach expands cinematic perceptions of love by overcoming genre constraints. In traditional romantic narratives, love is depicted as a linear process with an expected culmination (marriage, separation, reunion). In queer cinema, romantic relationships do not necessarily follow this script; they may remain open-ended, illogical, or contradictory (Zeng, 2025). It stems from the fundamental queer-theoretical rejection of fixed identities and rigid social roles.

Queer cinema not only tells stories of non-normative relationships but also offers a radical re-examination of love as a social institution (Augustin, 2024). Love is often portrayed as a private, personal experience in traditional romantic films. In queer cinema, love becomes a social and political act that facilitates liberation from cultural constraints and power structures. Thus, queer theory in cinema expands the boundaries of romantic narratives, transforming them into philosophical and political spaces where relationship dynamics can take any form, and rigid normative rules do not bind love.

Love in cinema transcends personal emotions, encompassing ethical, metaphysical, and social dimensions (Barbagallo et al., 2025; Spytska, 2023). Philosophical analysis reveals love as an ethical choice (existentialism), a myth and symbol (mythological approach), a cultural code (hermeneutics), and a social phenomenon (anthropology, political philosophy). Cinema does not merely depict romantic relationships but also shapes their philosophical perception.

Existentialism views love not merely as an emotion but a conscious choice requiring freedom, sacrifice, and inner transformation. In this context, love is not just a feeling but an act of responsibility for another person, as explored in the study by Karpińska (2024). This aspect is particularly significant in cinema, as many romantic narratives are built around conflicts between freedom and attachment, choice and fate. For example, in existential narratives, characters often face a moral dilemma: whether to remain in a comfortable but predictable love or take a risk and change their lives. However, the existentialist concept of love is criticized for its individualism. In mainstream cinema, love is often depicted as an inevitable fate rather than a conscious decision. This gap between philosophy and cinematic practice highlights the need to reconsider the existential approach in the context of visual art.

Love is often represented not as a real experience but as a mythological archetype. This aspect is particularly significant in cinema, as visual and narrative techniques enable the reproduction of mythological images of love. For example, traditional romantic film plots employ myths of *"fateful love"*, *"salvation through love"*, or *"love as a trial"*. However, contemporary films increasingly deconstruct these mythological structures, offering more complex and ambivalent forms of love. Changes influence this shift in cultural perceptions of love as well as the impact of feminist and queer theory.

The hermeneutic approach views love not as a universal experience but as a phenomenon requiring interpretation. This perspective is particularly relevant to cinema, as visual depictions of love conform to evolving cultural codes (Eleftheriotis, 2023). For instance, what is perceived as a romantic gesture (sacrifice, passion) in one culture may be interpreted as dependence or social pressure in another. Thus, a hermeneutic analysis of love in cinema reveals how romantic images can be "read" differently across various cultures and historical contexts.

Love in cinema is not merely a personal feeling but reflects social norms and historical transformations (Fan, 2022). In this context, love can be considered an instrument of social control (e.g., through the institution of marriage) or a form of resistance (e.g., in queer cinema or films about intercultural romances). Films that use romantic narratives in a political or social framework emphasize that love is not "natural" but is always shaped by societal structures.

This approach is also subject to criticism, if love is reduced entirely to a social construct, its subjective and existential nature is overlooked. Thus, anthropology and existentialism can complement each other, providing a more comprehensive understanding of love in cinema. Therefore, cinema does not merely depict love but

also creates new philosophical models for interpreting it, influencing the perception of romantic relationships in society.

As a central cinema theme, love requires detailed analysis from a philosophical and socio-cultural perspective and through the specific cinematic techniques used to convey the characters' emotional states. As a visual art, cinema does not merely reproduce romantic relationships but constructs their perception through editing, color, cinematography, and sound. These techniques shape the emotional depth of romantic scenes and influence the interpretation of characters' emotions and experiences.

Color plays a crucial role in the representation of love in cinema, creating associative links between emotions and visual imagery. Mythological narratives influence the depiction of romantic plots, demonstrating that color schemes not merely accompany the storyline but guide audience interpretation (red symbolizes passion and impulsiveness, blue emphasizes melancholy and loss, white highlights purity, transitional moments, or the illusion of ideal love). In this context, color enhances emotions and can also contrast with dialogue and action, creating a dramatic effect. However, color symbolism is not universal, its interpretation depends on cultural context and directorial style (Eleftheriotis, 2023).

Editing is vital in creating emotional tension or relief in romantic scenes (Dovzhenko et al., 2021). Research by Martínez i Cuadras (2023) highlights the plasticity of cinematic imagery, demonstrating how editing techniques alter perceptions of romantic relationships. Rapid cuts can heighten the sense of dynamism and passion, creating an effect of spontaneity. Smooth transitions and long takes emphasize intimacy and the slow development of emotions. Jump cuts can symbolize instability in relationships and the internal contradictions of the characters. Thus, editing in romantic scenes can visually convey emotional states, serving as a tool for the narrative analysis of love.

Cinematography determines the audience's perception of love, creating a sense of closeness or distance (Hainge, 2023). Close-ups capture physicality and emotional connection, enhancing intimacy. Panoramic shots can symbolize loneliness or alienation, particularly in scenes of separation. Handheld camera techniques create a sense of realism and spontaneity, which is often utilized in independent cinema. Cinematic love is frequently constructed through proximity and distance, where camera movements become metaphors for the characters' emotional states.

Music and sound design intensify the perception of love in cinema, adding a layer of meaning (Krypchuk et al., 2025; Obukhova, 2019). The contrastive use of silence can heighten emotional tension. Melodies associated with characters can be used to establish recurring romantic motifs. Distancing between sound and image (e.g., joyful music in a tragic scene) can enhance irony or dramatic effect. This aspect is particularly significant in postmodern and arthouse cinema, where sound is often used not literally but conceptually to alter the meaning of a scene (Zeng, 2025). Thus, cinema does not merely portray love but actively constructs it through visual and

auditory instruments, shaping audience interpretations of romantic relationships. Love in cinema takes various forms depending on genre, historical context, and cultural specificity. The typology of romantic imagery allows for an analysis of how cinema employs romantic relationships to explore broader social and philosophical issues.

Genre significantly influences the representation of romantic relationships (Kryvda & Storozhuk, 2020). In romantic films, love is idealized, whereas in thrillers and dramas, it can become a source of destruction and conflict. Romantic films emphasize the idealized or dramatized nature of love. Melodramas focus on emotional depth and sacrifice. Crime films and thrillers use love as a factor of destruction or manipulation (e.g., the femme fatale in film noir). Science fiction films depict love as a metaphysical or transcendent experience. However, genre typology has limitations: many contemporary films blur the boundaries between genres, creating hybrid forms of love in cinema.

Romantic narratives evolve according to historical and social conditions. Eleftheriotis (2023) states that cosmopolitan love illustrates how contemporary globalized love stories transcend national and cultural boundaries. In retro films, love is often depicted within traditional social norms. In postmodern cinema, romantic relationships become fragmented, ambivalent, and parodic. In contemporary independent cinema, love is often presented as an open-ended process without a clear resolution (Obidjon Oglu, 2024). This evolution reflects changes in cinematic language and more profound cultural transformations. Culture influences how love is represented in cinema. In Western cinema, love is often depicted as a journey towards self-realization (individualism). In Asian cinema, love may be portrayed through the themes of social harmony and duty. In African and Latin American cinema, the collective nature of love, rooted in cultural traditions, is often emphasized. Thus, love in cinema is not merely an emotion but also a cultural code that defines how society understands romantic relationships.

Modern cinema actively uses love to rethink gender roles (Edilova, 2022; Abdymomunova, 2024). Augustin (2024) explored love as a transgressive phenomenon, illustrating how cinema deconstructs traditional romantic imagery and creates new models of romantic interaction. Feminist cinema portrays love not as dependence but as an act of self-identification. Queer cinema dismantles binary representations of love, offering fluid and non-linear relationships. These changes indicate that love in cinema is not merely an emotional phenomenon but also a mechanism of cultural transformation. Love in cinema is often used as a tool for character transformation, their adaptation to the world, or, conversely, as a factor that destroys familiar social structures. A study by Zeng (2025) showed that in film, love is a means of self-discovery through an emotional connection with a partner.

In classic films, love stabilizes social order. In contemporary films, love can be a source of internal crisis and identity change. These processes demonstrate that love

in cinema is an experience and a mechanism for reflection. Thus, love in cinema is an emotion and a tool for philosophical and social contemplation of human nature.

From Classicism to Posthumanism: The Transformation of Love Stories in Digital Cinema

Modern films are increasingly departing from traditional notions of romantic relationships, which are linked to changes in the social, gender, and philosophical perspectives in cinema. Queer cinema breaks down traditional boundaries of love, making it fluid and dynamic. In traditional cinema, love is often depicted as a universal experience, whereas queer theory asserts that love does not have a fixed form. Love narratives become a space for exploring marginalized identities and the intersection of sexuality, gender, and social politics. Queer cinema has revealed the breakdown of binary relationships (hetero/homo) and the emergence of polyamorous, bisexual, and asexual representations. Love here lacks a clear goal (marriage or separation), becoming a process of identity exploration through the other. The queer perspective broadens love, transforming it into a space of self-discovery and resistance to social stereotypes.

Cinema is increasingly moving away from binary gender understandings and traditional roles in love (Culié et al., 2022). In earlier romantic films, gender roles were clearly defined (active hero, passive heroine). Modern films blur these boundaries, depicting men as vulnerable, reflective characters and women as active agents of action. Heroines become the initiators of romance, not objects of desire, while male characters move away from hypermasculinity, exposing vulnerability. It complicates love plots, replacing traditional roles with individual characters and conflicts.

Zeng (2025) demonstrated that contemporary films increasingly reject traditional linear narratives, where love develops in the pattern of *"introduction, development, crisis, resolution."* In traditional films, love develops linearly, repeating the classical dramatic structure. In modern cinema, love stories may be fragmented, reconstructed, or presented as chaotic memories.

Love is shown through breaks in time (flashbacks instead of chronology), metanarratives (where the film explores its nature), and the intersection of fantasy and reality, blurring the boundaries between genuine and fictional emotions. This approach is particularly relevant for the philosophical analysis of love, as it allows it to be shown not as a fixed feeling but as a fluctuating and subjective process, extending beyond standard narratives. Thus, modern cinema offers a new philosophy of love: not as a fixed state but as a process of searching for identity, freedom, and interaction with social and cultural norms. The contemporary cinematic portrayal of love is inseparable from global environmental and social changes. Love in cinema has ceased to be solely a personal experience; it now often exists within the context of broader humanitarian and ecological issues.

The ecological context shapes love in cinema through climate change and the ecological crisis, while social changes and migration intertwine it with global crises and the struggle for human rights. In the context of climate change, love in cinema is

increasingly viewed as part of the global existential choice (Hainge, 2023). In eco-cinema, love is no longer isolated from the environment; it becomes an element of human survival. Films depict how human connections help overcome disasters and how love changes in the face of environmental destruction. However, critics point out that eco-cinema often uses love to humanize global problems while avoiding an analysis of the systemic causes of the crisis.

Emigration and forced displacement have become new contexts for love stories. Love in such films is a personal feeling and a struggle for recognition. Migrant stories often show love as a force that helps overcome alienation and the search for a new home. This aspect is crucial in film studies, as love becomes a metaphor for social instability, identity, and the search for safety. Thus, love in cinema is no longer a private emotion; it becomes a way of understanding global processes, linking the intimate and the political. The phenomenon of *"post-love"* has become an important trend in modern cinema. This term describes the transition from traditional romantic narratives to new models of relationships, which emphasize the instability, ambiguity, and changeability of love.

"Post-love" rejects idealization, excluding *"eternal love"* and happy endings, blurring the line between love and attachment, not focusing on marriage, and ironically playing with romantic clichés, showing love as a cultural construct. In post-love, love is no longer a universal and final process; it is presented as a series of intermediate states. In traditional films, love always has an ending (happy or tragic). In post-love films, love remains an open process. This approach is related to the postmodern critique of love, which views it as a process of constant searching rather than a stable feeling.

Modern cinema actively plays with romantic clichés, depicting love as an unstable and multifaceted phenomenon. In post-love films, romantic clichés are deconstructed; for example, the idea of *"one true love"* is parodied. Other emotional states, such as friendship, attachment, or habit, may replace love. Post-love narratives abandon clear endings, offering more fluid and adaptive models of relationships. This shift is linked to the philosophical ideas of post-structuralism and the critique of romantic myths, where love is no longer seen as a given but as a socially constructed phenomenon. Thus, post-love cinema not only changes love narratives but also transforms the philosophy of love, making it more complex, fragmented, and changeable. Contemporary cinema does not simply depict love; it actively rethinks it through philosophical, cultural, and social lenses.

The queer perspective views love as fluid, beyond binary oppositions; postmodernism treats it as an ironic game without stability; the existential and phenomenological approach reveals it as a profound experience related to being and time. These approaches complement each other and expand the representations of love in cinema, offering new ways of portraying it.

Queer theoretical approaches view love as a dynamic, changing phenomenon that does not adhere to traditional binary categories (Zeng, 2025). Unlike traditional

romantic cinema, which entrenches heteronormative models, queer cinema shows love as a process of constant searching and redefinition. Love narratives in queer cinema are often non-linear, as fragmentation and disruption correspond to the logic of unstable identity.

Queer theory in cinema manifests itself in fragmented narratives, shifting sexualities and gender identities of characters, and a critique of romantic clichés, liberating love from standard expectations. Martínez i Cuadras (2023) interpreted love in queer cinema as a dynamic process, where it constantly changes rather than remaining a fixed category. Thus, queer cinema blurs the boundaries between identities, creating new forms of romantic relationships where there are no stable rules or norms.

Postmodernist love theory in cinema is based on breaking down the boundaries between reality and its representation. Love is not "truth" but a cultural construct subject to irony and deconstruction. Postmodern cinema plays with genre clichés; for instance, it might parody the classic romantic plot, showing its absurdity. Love stories are fragmented; they may start from the end, loop, or lack a logical conclusion.

Some artistic practices experiment with the perception of love, intertwining different versions of the same story, where the same scene acquires new meaning depending on the participants' perspective. Others break the "fourth wall", allowing the audience to recognize the love narrative as part of a broader media and social discourse. In this context, love appears not as a universal emotion but as a complex, multi-layered construction, subject to interpretation and influenced by socio-cultural factors.

Existential and phenomenological philosophy views love as an integral aspect of human existence, linked to loneliness, death, choice, and authenticity. Love in existential cinema is not just romantic attachment; it is a way of finding meaning in life. Unlike queer theory and postmodernism, existentialism does not play with love but explores its more profound experiences. Phenomenology focuses on the perception of love – how the audience feels characters' emotions through the camera, light, and editing.

Some films depict love as overcoming existential anxiety, where the search for authenticity is carried out through profound emotional experiences. It is expressed in long, meditative scenes that make the viewer feel the characters' inner world and in minimalist cinematography that focuses on details, touches, glances, and silences. Love in cinema is a dynamic phenomenon, evolving under the influence of globalization, gender studies, and technological progress (Oliinyk & Kryzhanivskyi, 2017). Transnational trends shape new love narratives, feminist perspectives reassess gender roles, and the digital age transforms the perception of intimacy. These processes impact the aesthetics of cinema and expand the concept of love, moving beyond traditional representations.

Globalization contributes to developing new models of love stories, affecting themes, stylistic approaches, and narrative structures (Doszhan, 2023). Cinema

becomes international, with national borders no longer determining romantic narratives. Love turns into a cosmopolitan experience, transcending local contexts. Cross-cultural love stories become the new norm, breaking down national identities. However, globalization does not always diversify cinematic love; it universalizes romantic clichés, with Western models of relationships dominating even in non-Western industries. Cultural differences are often erased to standardize love plots, turning the *"boy meets girl"* scheme into a universal narrative. Thus, globalization expands the boundaries of cinematic love and makes it more uniform and focused on mass audiences.

Feminist film criticism shows how gender structures define the representation of romantic relationships. Early cinema established binary roles: the man as the active subject and the woman as the object of desire. Modern cinema reimagines these images: women become active initiators of romantic relationships. Feminist studies critique the *"male gaze"*, offering alternative female and queer narratives. Feminist analysis of love in cinema has limitations: it often focuses on critiquing stereotypes but does not always offer new narrative models. Some films support feminist rhetoric but reproduce outdated images where the *"strong woman"* merely replaces the traditional hero without dismantling the existing structures. Thus, feminist studies help reveal mechanisms of love representation, but the question of new models of romantic relationships remains open.

Modern cinema reflects the influence of the economy and technology on love, commercialization emphasizes consumption in romantic plots, online dating shapes new models of intimacy, and posthumanism explores relationships with artificial intelligence and virtual entities. Augustin (2024) noted that digitalization blurs the lines between human and non-human love. As a result, technology makes romance both more accessible and fragmented. As Zeng (2025) notes, classic love narratives are characterized by a linear trajectory of relationship development, following a structure that includes sequential stages: establishing contact, conflict arising, overcoming obstacles, and concluding with a happy or tragic ending. On the other hand, modern cinema departs from this model, offering non-linear, polysemic, and open narrative constructions, reflecting the complexity of traditional representations of romantic relationships.

Some films depict love as an open process, where relationships can change, break down, or transform without a mandatory conclusion. The deconstruction of the genre is seen in romantic comedies that move away from the traditional *"happy ending,"* presenting love as a complex and continuous dialogue between characters. Consequently, cinema evolves from traditional *"love stories"* to a more intricate *"exploration of love,"* portraying it as a dynamic, multifaceted, and unpredictable process, highlighting the shift from static plot forms to an exploration of its changing nature.

Auteur cinema offers alternative models of depicting love, going beyond mass clichés. Love is portrayed not as an ideal but as a process of reflection, doubt, and

existential searching. Visual and dramaturgical decisions become more experimental, rejecting classical editing and subjective viewpoints. The viewer does not understand the characters' feelings clearly, making the perception of love more complex. Thus, auteur cinema presents new models of love representation, where emotions are explored not through dialogue but through visual aesthetics. Cinematic love becomes not a static category but a living process that changes alongside social, political, and philosophical trends.

The study of cinematic representation of love encounters several limitations, stemming from aesthetic and genre frameworks and deeper philosophical, social, and technological aspects. One key issue is the ambiguity and subjectivity of interpreting love stories. Love as a phenomenon has no universal definition, and its perception by viewers depends on their personal experience, cultural context, and socio-political environment. Culié et al. (2022) noted that audience perception analysis emphasizes the complexity of interpreting romantic relationships in cinema, determined by the subjective experience of the audience.

Cultural differences also significantly impact the perception of love narratives. What is interpreted as an act of romantic attachment in one tradition may be seen as a social obligation or friendly interaction in another. Karpińska (2024) examined the influence of mythologization on the perception of love plots, emphasizing that cultural traditions set specific codes for interpreting love, complicating the analysis of cinematic images on a global scale. In this context, the researcher faces the challenge of considering local representations of love and their impact on romantic narratives in cinema.

Social norms and political contexts also shape the boundaries of acceptable cinematic portrayals of love (Efremov, 2025b; Rochnyak, 2025; Messina et al., 2024). In different historical periods and parts of the world, certain forms of love have been censored or, conversely, actively promoted as ideologically significant. Eleftheriotis (2023) analyzed global trends in the film industry. They emphasized that love in mainstream cinema is most often presented within the framework of dominant social norms. At the same time, marginalized forms of romantic relationships remain in the background or are portrayed as deviations. It is reflected in genre limitations: traditional romantic comedies and melodramas, being commercially successful, reproducing established models of relationships, avoiding unconventional narratives.

The influence of market mechanisms on the representation of love in cinema is another significant barrier. The modern film industry is focused on commercial success, leading to standardizing love stories, simplifying dramaturgy, and the dominance of stereotypical images of romantic relationships. Hainge (2023) analysed post-cinematic ontologies and noted that mainstream cinema uses love stories not as subjects of philosophical or socio-cultural analysis but as tools for emotional engagement with the viewer, leading to predictable narrative structures. Delaney & Meyer (2025) pointed out that repetitive patterns in the depiction of love shape the viewer's expectations, making it difficult to perceive alternative love stories presented

in independent and auteur cinema. This results in complex or ambivalent forms of love being pushed out of the mainstream and perceived as niche. In contrast, mainstream cinema continues to broadcast universal models of love adapted to market demands.

Technological transformations also impose limitations on the representation of love in cinema. Contemporary romantic relationships are increasingly mediated by digital communication, but the film industry struggles to adapt to these changes. Digital romance, online dating, relationships in virtual reality, or interaction with artificial intelligence either remain on the periphery of cinema or are presented in caricatured or utopian ways. Augustin (2024) explored posthuman aspects of love in cinema, showing that technological changes transform the ways romantic interaction occur and require a rethinking of cinematic strategies for its representation. However, traditional visual storytelling techniques cannot always convey the complex aspects of digital love, making these forms of relationships less developed in the cinematic language.

Finally, the viewer's cognitive bias is a significant barrier to studying cinematic love. Love in cinema is perceived through the lens of individual beliefs, cultural background, and personal experience. Culié et al. (2022) noted that the effect of subjective identification largely determines the interpretation of love stories: the viewer tends to see in the cinematic depiction of love confirmation of their own expectations, while alternative forms of romantic relationships may be perceived as *"incorrect"* or *"alien"*. It complicates the study of atypical love plots, as the viewer's emotional involvement heavily influences their perception. As a result, experimental forms of cinematic love, based on non-classical attachment models, often become marginalized in the industry and the viewer's perception.

Contemporary changes in the film industry, social transformations, and technological progress expand the boundaries of cinematic love. Research has confirmed (Zeng, 2025) that theoretical analysis of love in cinema continues to evolve, offering new perspectives. However, cultural, market, technological, and cognitive barriers still limit the diversity of its representation, making this phenomenon the subject of multi-layered research. Thus, cinema not only reflects love but also shapes the ways it is philosophically and socio-culturally understood.

Discussions

The study aimed to analyze the transformation of love narratives in cinema influenced by philosophical, cultural, and social factors. The conducted analysis identified key trends in the representation of romantic relationships and examined how their visual, dramaturgical, and ideological characteristics are changing. It was shown that modern films are moving away from classical love tropes, offering more complex, open, and non-linear structures that align with evolving cultural norms and technological realities.

One of the key aspects is the influence of philosophical concepts on the depiction of love in cinema. Velardez Fresia (2023) emphasized the interconnection

between cinematic imagery and Heidegger's existential ideas, where love is viewed as a search for authenticity in a world of alienation. The findings support the research of Staehler (2024), who noted that in postmodern cinema, love is often portrayed not as a stable state but as an ongoing process of self-exploration and reflection. The study's results also align with feminist film criticism. Fuke (2023) pointed out that traditional love plots in cinema historically reinforced patriarchal roles, where the man acts as an active subject and the woman as the object of his desire. However, contemporary films are increasingly reinterpreting this dynamic, portraying female characters as independent participants in romantic relationships.

Another important aspect is the influence of digital technologies on the representation of love in cinema. Fan (2022) explored the relationship between cinematic and animatic styles in depicting romantic relationships, emphasizing that the digital era is transforming traditional modes of visual storytelling. It is particularly evident in contemporary animated films and CGI-based cinema, where the boundaries between the real and the virtual are blurred, creating new visual and aesthetic approaches to depicting love.

Moreover, research shows that love narratives in different cultural contexts follow distinct models. The work of Fisher (2019), who studied ecological poetics, demonstrates how romantic relationships can be embedded within a broader context of human interaction with nature. In Western cinema, love is often depicted through the pursuit of self-realization, whereas in Asian cinema, it may be represented through themes of social harmony and duty. Nevertheless, despite these evolving trends, traditional love narratives remain relevant. Rossouw (2024) argued that mainstream cinema continues to utilize conventional romantic structures even amid the postmodern deconstruction of classic plots, as they remain the most accessible to a broad audience.

Existing theoretical approaches to analyzing love narratives in cinema demonstrate several limitations. For instance, Abhijith (2021) noted that modern films are moving from traditional romantic plots to more complex structures, but this process is not universal across all cinematic traditions. The analysis of love narratives revealed that their evolution is shaped not only by cultural but also by political, technological, and economic factors, necessitating an interdisciplinary approach to studying these changes.

The necessity of a comprehensive analysis of love narratives becomes evident when considering their philosophical foundations. Hamilton (2016) examined the philosophy of love, demonstrating that the cinematic portrayal of romantic relationships is not merely a plot element but a means of philosophical inquiry into temporality, identity, and transcendence. The findings highlight several important directions for further research into the evolution of love narratives in cinema. First, a more detailed analysis of the impact of digital technologies and artificial intelligence on the formation of romantic storylines is needed. As studies by Caballero et al. (2024) have shown, artificial intelligence is actively transforming narrative and visual

paradigms in filmmaking, opening new opportunities for experimenting with aesthetics and storytelling. These changes also affect romantic cinema, as automated content generation and image enhancement technologies influence how romantic relationships are represented on screen.

Second, a promising area of research is how different audiences perceive love stories. Ince (2021) noted that academic criticism and mainstream audiences often interpret love narratives differently, creating a gap between cinematic theory and actual film consumption. Future research should consider cultural, gender, and social factors that influence the perception of romance in cinema. A third crucial aspect is the interdisciplinary analysis of the interaction between philosophical and socio-economic factors in the representation of love. Hayati et al. (2024) demonstrated that a phenomenological analysis of cinema allows for a deeper understanding of the cinematic experience, with particular attention to the viewer's perception of emotions, time, and space. In this context, romantic relationships in film can be viewed not merely as a plot element but as a form of resistance to social predestination, enhancing the audience's emotional engagement. The phenomenological approach helps explore how romantic imagery on screen shapes subjective perceptions of love, identity, and gender roles. Thus, the need to rethink traditional gender norms becomes evident not only within sociological and feminist frameworks but also through a deeper analysis of audience experience.

Finally, the impact of globalization on love narratives deserves special attention. Contemporary romantic narratives are shaped by cross-cultural influences, blending Western individualistic concepts with Eastern philosophies of harmony. Markotić (2019) analyzed film perception's cognitive and emotional mechanisms, explaining how new storytelling forms inspired by Eastern philosophy become comprehensible to Western audiences. Viewers perceive hybrid love stories through metacognitive processes, facilitating the adaptation of unconventional romantic structures in mainstream cinema. Personal memories and emotional reactions also play a key role in how audiences perceive love narratives. It explains why viewers can accept new, more complex romantic story forms beyond classical structures. Thus, cinema's internationalization unites different traditions and creates new ways of emotionally engaging viewers.

Future research should consider traditional approaches to studying love in cinema and the influence of new technologies, cultural transformations, and global trends on the development of romantic narratives. Love in cinema is not static but continuously evolves in response to social and cultural contexts. Although traditional models of love persist, their interpretation and visual representation are undergoing significant changes. Further analysis should encompass both philosophical and aesthetic aspects and audience perception to develop a comprehensive understanding of the evolution of love narratives in cinema.

Conclusions

The analysis demonstrated that a combination of technological, cultural, and social factors drives the evolution of love narratives in cinema. It was revealed that modern romantic storylines are characterized by transforming traditional models of love representation, reflecting changes in cinematic language and shifting audience expectations.

Analyzing love narratives through the triangular theory of love showed that romantic films' key components (passion, intimacy, and commitment) are not static but dynamically evolve throughout the storyline. In the early stages, passion dominates, while commitment and intimacy develop closer to the climax or conclusion. However, traditional theoretical models do not fully capture contemporary changes in the depiction of love in cinema. Social and philosophical aspects of relationships and cultural differences play a significant role in the development of love plots, necessitating a more detailed analysis. The philosophical interpretation of love in cinema revealed that romantic relationships are often depicted not as harmony but as a form of psychological conflict. Unlike the classical, idealized image of love, modern films portray complex, multi-layered emotions, including loss, inner contradictions, and identity crises.

The influence of digital technologies on cinematic portrayals of romance is evident in the changing visual aesthetics of films. Digitalization and animation allow for more expressive scenes of intimacy and emotional experiences; however, this also leads to the idealization of love images, potentially distorting the perception of genuine relationships. Artificial intelligence is used to model romantic scenes, affecting how viewers interact with films. Differences in the perception of love stories between academic critics and mass audiences confirm that the interpretation of romance depends on cultural, gender, and social contexts. The same films can be perceived differently depending on the viewer's region, historical background, and personal experiences.

The study's practical significance lies in its potential application to adapt romantic films to evolving audience expectations in the film industry. Analyzing the impact of digital technologies on love narratives helps script developers and filmmakers consider the balance between innovation and maintaining emotional authenticity. However, the study had several limitations, particularly the lack of long-term empirical data on the impact of artificial intelligence on the perception of romance in cinema. In addition, it focused predominantly on Western film traditions, necessitating further exploration of Eastern, Latin American, and other regional film schools.

Directions for further research include analyzing how artificial intelligence transforms romantic narratives and changes how love images are created. Also important is the comparative analysis of different cultural models of romantic cinema and their adaptation to the digital age. Additionally, a promising direction is

investigating new methods for assessing the perception of love narratives, including neuropsychological and cognitive approaches.

Thus, the research systematized key trends in the transformation of love narratives under the influence of digital technologies, identified the main factors affecting the cinematic representation of romance, and outlined prospects for further study of this topic.

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