

LOVE, RELATIONSHIP, AND THEIR REPRESENTATION IN

“ETERNAL SUNSHINE OF THE SPOTLESS MIND”

by

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## **Introduction**

In the media, and especially in Hollywood romantic dramas, love and relationships are generally portrayed in a flawless, idealistic, perfect type of way, where the only issue that the loving couple has is an external obstacle that they have to overcome. A typical external challenge would be, for example, that the parents of the main characters don't agree with their relationship, or a tragic happening, such as the sinking of the Titanic, etc.

Let's not forget about most of the Disney cartoons of princesses where there is some evil creature that stops the loving couple who met once in their life, but is madly in love to be with each other. For example, in "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs," Disney's first animated feature, the prince and Snow-White meet only one time, sing to each other, fall in love immediately, and then the second time they meet, Snow White is almost dead because of the poisoned apple, and the prince rescues her with a kiss and they live happily ever after. Or in "Sleeping Beauty," where we see the prince three times, one is when they meet and again sing together, second time is when he kisses Aurora to make her wake up, and the third time we see them getting married. Even if we've seen so few meetings together, we are so sure that they are soulmates. These programs don't show us the natural, realistic, imperfect love, which needs to be built, and which has ups and downs. These programs don't show characters who are real humans with inner issues and problems.

Media does not usually portray a real-life relationship, which sometimes doesn't have a happy ending, and sometimes it does. That is why I've chosen to analyze a film that mainly represents love in its chaotic, natural, realistic way. Film is one of the powerful

mediums of communicating certain information. It is crucial to be able to analyze how a certain meaning is portrayed in movies and what tools are used to make this meaning accessible to the audience. The film that I have chosen to explore is about two characters who fall in love with each other. Throughout the movie we see what difficulties and misunderstandings they encounter, how they try to solve their internal issues, and in the end, we do see a happy end, however not the one we've seen in the most films, where we know that everything will be okay. "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind" shows us an ending which is both promising and not promising, as life itself is.

The film was released in 2004, it is Romance/sci-fi, with hints of comedy. The main characters are played by Jim Carrey (Joel) and Kate Winslet (Clementine). It was directed by Michel Gondry, who is also known for his music videos, and was written by Mark Cauffman. It has won nine awards, such as award for best editing, award for best original screenplay, award for writing, etc. I've chosen this topic because this portrayal of love in an idealistic way, negatively affects viewers' perception of it. People start to have expectations of love that are not met in real life. That is why I find it essential to make an analysis of a film that parts from this ideology and show how it portrays love and what visual and technical tools are used to reach the representation.

### **Literature Review**

As I already mentioned my capstone is mainly about the film "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind." I am going to discuss the way this film represents love and relationships. Not only will I talk about how they are represented, but how this representation is reached by the character choice, plot, camera movement, visuals, mise-en-scène, etc. My literature review

consists of theoretical studies concerning filmmaking, psychology of relationships, and film/media studies.

### *Love and Relationship Portrayed in Films and Their Effect on People*

Media portrays love and relationships in a way that gives false expectations and perceptions of love. Even starting from childhood, by watching cartoons, children get a false understanding of love. They grow up, but the destructive representation stays, and now they observe it through the means of films. Garlen and Sanlin(2017) argue that the idea of love that we see in Disney cartoons creates a type of border, a clear definition of what is acceptable and unacceptable in love relationships, which then shapes an understanding of love that is there to support supremacy and maintain social order (p. 967). Authors state that Disney cartoons teach young children what love should be and what it shouldn't, what is good and what is bad; it gives a black and white overview of relationships, which in real life is not as simple as that. In the Disney films, the Disney Princesses have hopes and desires for true love, which is expected to bring a magical meaning to their lives (p.958).

From an early childhood and throughout our lives, we learn that true love is a source of happiness and perfection. Green (2013) states that "romantic comedies give an unrealistic view and immoral code associated with relationships and romance for both adolescents and women"(p. 399). Those films don't portray issues or problems that relationships might have; we only see external obstacles that couples try to overcome to reach their perfect love. Green (2013) states that we see what films want us to see; because for the film to be successful, it is supposed to give us something to look up to, to wish for.

After viewing the films that portray ideal love, we, viewers, automatically desire a love similar to what we've just observed in the film. Green (2013) states that this is problematic because "women and adolescents begin to expect similar qualities they've seen in the films to be in their own love life, many of which are improbable or even unobtainable in reality( p.400)." This then causes women to have "unrealistic, idealistic, and romanticized notions about marriage" (Segrin and Nabi, 2002, p.247).

Segrin and Nabi (2002) examine how love beliefs and expectations are born and how they can result in divorce. Beliefs such as the mind-reading ability of the partner, sexual perfectionism, and destructive disagreement are the beliefs that romantic films usually portray (Segrin and Nabi, 2002). The Study examines how these beliefs get in our heads and how they affect marriage and divorce. Since we have these beliefs about romantic relationships, something which parts from those beliefs is considered flawed.

### *Filmmaking Tools That Build the Narrative.*

Since I am going to analyze "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind," it is important to be able to analyze the message and meaning of the film; this can be done through analyzing the several components of the film such as editing style, character choice, language, plot, camera movement, mise-en-scène, etc. These tools create the film, its narrative, and make it possible for us, the viewers, to understand the message and context.

In the study "Art Cinema and New Hollywood," the author argues that cinematic techniques guide the viewer's attention to films' specific details. Two of these tools are editing and framing (Stewart, 2020). Participants of the experiment conducted by Stewart, viewed three

different types of scenes containing several techniques in order to understand which one is more useful in grabbing attention. Editing and framing were found to be critical, especially in films with complex scenes, plots, and shots, as right editing can help the viewer understand what is going on in the movie.

There are simple rules for editing. You should shoot the same scene several times, and then while editing it, you should cut on the action so that there will be no jump cuts; you can give emotions through editing, make it easier for the viewer to understand what is going on in a film, you can change the intention of the character simply by editing the order of the scenes such as done in a Kuleshov Experiment. It is an experiment where a close-up of a man's face is put next to the shot of a plate full of food, then this close-up of a face is placed next to a woman's coffin, and then the face is positioned next to a girl playing with a doll, and each time it seems like the character shows utterly different emotion, but he doesn't (Hensley, 1992). The Kuleshov effect proves that you can create a new meaning of the characters' emotions and the overall film's meaning by different editing styles and shot orders.

Another essential part of building the narrative is the linguistics of the film. Androutsopoulos states that cinematic discourse shapes the film's characters, their heterogeneity, differences, and varieties (Androutsopoulos, 2012). He says that linguistics is essential to examine the relationships between characters; it creates their personalities and differences (p. 147). Language can shape the viewer's perception of the character and a film. It is done by the character's choice of words, by what he/she says or doesn't say; we make assumptions of the character and understand their contribution to the context and narrative of the film.

The literature provided above is essential. The studies on romantic films and their unrealistic love portrayal, show us the damage of that representation and how they affect people's expectations and understanding of relationships.

The psychological and media studies mentioned above analyze films and cartoons that represent perfect love ideology; however, these studies have not analyzed a film which portrays love realistically, thus, by analyzing a film that represents love in an imperfect way, we can further eliminate the unrealistic pattern of love representation in the upcoming films in order to create a more genuine understanding of relationships. This capstone will help to have a better perspective on how movies can and should portray love in a more honest way, even if sometimes the reality may be ugly.

The literature concerning the filmmaking tools and their contribution in building a narrative is also essential. They examine different tools, such as editing, character building, language, plot, framing, and explore their importance. These are vital for analyzing a film; by using this literature, it will be easier to understand how films reach their conceptual meaning and how the viewer gets the message unconsciously. However, there is a weakness in the literature connected to camera movement. There is literature talking about imperfect camera movement and editing which is used in documentaries; however, it doesn't talk about how fictional films use imperfect framing in order to create a meaningful discourse. For example, in "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind," we can see a significant difference in a camera style compared to a usual Hollywood film, it is more messy, shaky, thus by analyzing intentional imperfect camera movement in "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind," we can get more assured that it does convey a message and builds a narrative. The paper will fill the gaps and will enrich the existing literature.

## **Research Questions**

The primary question this research seeks to answer is: How love and relationship are represented in "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind," the secondary question tries to answer what tools are used to achieve this representation, e.g., editing, semiotics, narrative, visual?

The third question that needs to be answered is: Why is this type of ideology essential to portray in films? "

## **Methodology**

I have used qualitative research as my methodology. It is built on a film analysis (editing, camera movement, Mise-en-scène, plot, character choice, narrative), which will help determine how they construct meaning.

Mise-en-scène is analyzed, specifically in one of the scenes, where the couple is lying on the frozen lake, which also became the poster of the film. I've explored its symbolism by looking at the scene's visuals and finding out how those visuals add up to the narrative, and the ideology of love and relationship presented in the film. Mise-en-scène is the stage design or the shot design present in the theatre or film. Anything that the viewer sees in the film is a deliberate thought process of the filmmakers. Every object, color, lighting, actor placement in the scene is arranged in a certain way to create meaning and symbolism.

Discourse analysis is used, too, analyzing certain dialogues between characters. It helped me explore the two main characters, their inner world, their internal issues, their differences, and their incompatibility with each other.



I've also analyzed the plot to determine the cause and effect of the characters' actions, what happens during the film, the conflict, resolution, etc. How does the film evolve? What obstacles do the characters meet? How do they overcome those challenges?

There is also a comparison analysis in the paper. Certain aspects of the "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind," such as character choice, plot, poster, certain similar scenes, are compared with traditional Hollywood romantic films that portray more unrealistic relationships. Those films are "Titanic" and "The Notebook," the reason I've chosen these films is because they are both very famous and popular as romantic dramas, the classics of romantic dramas. They also share a common structural ground with many romantic films that came after them.

A small section analyzes the ending of the film in order to understand whether it is a happy end, a tragic end, or a realistic end. What does the film's ending say about relationships, what is behind this type of an open ending? For this reason, the ending is compared to "Titanic," "The Notebook" and "Pretty Woman" in order to find out the differences, and meaning behind that alteration.

## **Plot**

Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind is about two people (Joel and Clementine) being in a relationship and then erasing all the memories about each other. In Hollywood, it rarely happens that the couple so unexpectedly give up on each other. After seeing Clementine and Joel's encounter and their several dates, we suddenly see that Clementine erased all her memories of Joel, and they are no longer together. It is so unexpected that we viewers are as much shocked as Joel is; we don't understand why she chose to erase her memories while it was still the start of their relationship and everything was great.

Then Joel decides to erase his memories, too, because he no longer could handle the pain of the heartbreak. During the memory removal, we see the ugly parts of their relationship, where they were misunderstood by each other, where there were times, they were bored and hurt by each other. We can see all of these flashbacks, each memory connected to Clementine is now visible to us, and with the help of those flashbacks we now see their relationship. We are being exposed to the more realistic type of relationship where miscommunication is real, where not understanding each other by mind-reading is also possible. The viewer may start feeling that the relationship was most likely not working out; that's why we begin to accept their breakup.

This acceptance comes from the fact that we are not that adapted to see unpleasant details of relationships; they are not acceptable in many romantic films; thus, we are learned to see a love that is "flawless." Throughout the erasing process, the pleasant and beautiful parts of the relationships become apparent to the viewer too. We now see that relationships are not black and white, perfect or imperfect, compatible or not. We see the spectrum of flaws and the spectrum of perfections. The viewer is given a chance to start to accept the multidimensionality of an actual relationship.

### **Narrative - Chronology and Flashbacks**

The film is in the form of flashbacks and memories. The order of the shots that appear on the screen conveys an idea to the viewer; that order can change our perception of the film. As Alfred Hitchcock says, order changes the meaning; for example, if we see a closeup of a man, and then a shot of a woman with a baby, and then back to his reaction where he is smiling, we understand that he is a polite, kind gentleman. However, when we replace the shot of a woman

with a baby with a woman in a bikini, the man now seems to be superficial, unrespectful, and weird. The sequence of the shots makes us feel a certain way about characters, their personalities, and relationships. In *Eternal Sunshine*, when Joel starts to erase his memories, we get to see memories of their relationship. However, what is worth mentioning is that the order of the memories is somewhat changed.

The first memories are from the end of their relationship, where everything is problematic; they do not understand each other and hurt each other. We see that they are bored and unhappy, they do not communicate well. And then the end of the memories are very warm and romantic, which is the start of their relationship, the way they meet on the beach, they enter an unknown house, where they are happy with each other. Moreover, this is the trick of the film; the viewer becomes invested in their relationship, we start to root for them, we want them to be together, yet in the beginning, we would most likely think that they are better to break up. And by this, we start to realize that relationships are not black and white; they have a large spectrum of emotions, ups, and downs; relationships are not perfect or awful; they can be both.

While at first, we saw the unpleasant parts of their relationship, we thought that this couple is very unfitting and are not meant to be together, because most of the films showed us that a good couple that will be together, do not go through what Clementine and Joel go through. However, then we see the cute and romantic moments, where everything seems like a romantic film that we are so used to seeing. We start to think that their relationship is improving and they are a perfect match, meant for each other. While it is not the case, and everything was still bad at the end of their relationship, we start to sympathize with their couple.

However, we; the viewers may get this dissonance and confusion and do not understand why we root for them even though we saw the ugly aspects of their relationship. And this brings

us closer to the realization of actual relationships. We saw a good and a bad relationship, romantic and unpleasant, full of love and arguments. This disorientation makes us rethink relationships and realize that perfect relationships and love are only in films; in real life, people need to work to build a relationship rather than meet one time, win over an obstacle, and live happily ever after, in real life people can go through both romantic moments and misunderstandings.

### **Plot Differences**

The plot is probably the most crucial part of the film; it gives us a sense of what is going on, it gives us the ability to obtain the meaning of the film and have a purpose for watching it. The plot structure of conventional romantic films is as follows; a guy meets a girl, they fall in love instantly, they are perfect for each other. However, some challenges happen, and they no longer can be together, and the time arrives for them to overcome those challenges in order to be with each other.

In "The Notebook," The couple falls in love instantly; even if the narrator mentions that they fight a lot, it shows it in a very light and romantic manner, very cheesy, and without much detail. The narrator said *"They didn't agree on much. In fact, they rarely agreed on anything. They fought all the time. And they challenged each other every day. But despite their differences they had one important thing in common: they were crazy about each other."* Their disagreements and fights were shown as something very romantic and cute, part of their passion and true love. We don't even see the reason for their fights, rather we only see them fighting and then kissing each other the next second.

Throughout the beginning we see amazing moments they are sharing with each other, they go to movies, have fun in a lake, learn to drive. Noah takes Allie to his house where they are having an Irish dance party, and Allie becomes integrated with these people, dances with them and has fun. They are having a fantastic time, but then Allie's parents find out and disapprove of their relationship because the social class differences are inadmissible. Noah goes to World War 1, and Allie goes to another state, where her parents match her with a financially successful man, whom she doesn't love. Noah comes back and understands that their relationship is over. Years pass; however, their love still exists, they remember each other, and once they meet again the old feelings spark and now Allie needs to finally get rid of others' wants and needs and start living for herself. They unite and have a happy ending. Except for the fact that the viewer sees them old, and Allie has Alzheimer's and does not remember her husband and the beautiful love they had back when they were younger, they both die in the same bed at the same time. However, it is still a happy ending because they overcame their challenges and had a wonderful life together.

In "Titanic," Rose and Jack meet on the boat, where Rose is a high-status lady, and Jack is a low class. They meet, fall in love; they are having a wonderful time in the boat, Rose poses for Jack for a painting, they travel in the boat, and find adventure. They take part in each other's worlds, such as Jack meets her parents and relatives, and Rose sees Jack's life, looking at his paintings, going to the Irish party(again). However, Rose's parents are very strict, and she is already engaged to a high-status man she doesn't love. And then a tragedy happens; the boat hits the iceberg and starts to sink. Now the loving couple should do everything to survive and be together. However, Jack dies while giving Rose a chance to live. She gets old but never forgets the love of her life, and they unite in heaven in the end.

In both films, we see a perfect couple, which is romantic and passionate, it seems like they are born for each other, and nothing can ever set them apart. To put some interest and conflict in the story, the couple is exposed to external challenges such as strict parents and a sinking boat to prove the power of their love to the viewer and be finally together. The person who watches these films doesn't get to see the realistic version of what is love and what is a challenge. They see a superficially created version of love and a version of a problem, and when they meet an actual relationship problem, they get confused and angry as a study by Segrin, C. and Nabi, R prove. In which one of the divorce reasons were found to be the high and unrealistic expectations of the relationship absorbed from television.

However, in "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind," the couple does not meet an external issue (erasing memories can be considered as an external issue, however that was by choice of the female character.) The viewer sees a woman and a man, who from the start reveal drastic differences in their characters. However, they become a couple, no matter the differences. While the external issue is not present, there are internal issues. For example, the couple doesn't communicate well; in one of the instances, Clementine asks Joel to talk with her and not write in that journal; however, he is not able to communicate his emotions and feelings. Clementine, on the other hand, talks a lot; she wants to go out, party, have fun, and for her, Joel becomes boring. In the initial draft of the script, there is a part when Clementine goes to the doctor in order to erase her memories; she says-

*"Anyway, it's been rough with him... whatever the fuck he is. Hehe. My significant other... heh heh. And I guess on a certain level, I want to break it off, but I feel... y'know... it's like this constant questioning and re questioning. Do I end it? Should I give it more time? I'm not happy, but what do I expect? Relationships require work. You know the drill. The thing that I keep*

*coming back to is, I'm not getting any younger, I want to have a baby... at some point... maybe... right? So then I think I should settle -- which is not necessarily the best word -- I mean, he's a good guy. It's not really settling. Then I think maybe I'm just a victim of movies, y'know? **That I have some completely unrealistic notion of what a relationship can be. But then I think, no, this is what I really want, so I should allow myself the freedom to go out and fucking find it. You know? Agreed? But then I think he is a good guy and... It's complicated. Y'know?***"

This part did not make it into the final film, we don't get Clementine to explain why she erased her memories, but we get to see the reason for her action without any additional explanation. The reason we don't see the part where she says maybe she's the victim of the utterly unrealistic notion of what a relationship can be is because that would make the film very obvious. We all know the rule in writing, which is that without explaining the story's moral and leaving it to the reader to make connections, we create more impact and give more space to think. That is why this monologue didn't get to the final film, not to make it obvious, and to give the viewer time and space to digest the film's meaning. In those quotes, one understands the purpose of the film, which is to get rid of the unrealistic type of love and show something more genuine and honest, to be true to the audience. As an English poet John Keats (1795-1821) says in Ode on a Grecian Urn, "*Beauty is truth, truth beauty, —that is all ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.*" Showing something authentic is beautiful, it is aesthetic, it gives us a wider lens of perception, and *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* gives us that broader lens to which we can look at reality.

## Characters

One of the crucial entities of filmmaking is the choice of the characters. Not only are they the ones that will keep the narrative going, but their characteristics and traits convey as much meaning as other structures of the film, such as visuals, sounds, editing, etc.

As I argue, *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* represents a realistic love that has flaws, ups, and downs. This representation of flaw and imperfectness is present in the characters too.

When we see Joel at the very beginning of the film, we immediately understand his essence. He is a shy guy, always in his mind, lonely, who is afraid to make eye contact with women. As Joel states himself, he is a guy who falls in love with any girl who notices him, which shows us that he is an unnoticeable guy to whom not many girls are attracted, and when there is tiny attention towards him, he immediately falls in love. Joel likes to live in his comfort zone; he does not want to be lonely. Instead of thinking about getting new acquaintances, he thinks of going back to his ex-girlfriend; Naomi, by saying, "Maybe I should go back to Naomi, she was nice, nice is good." In this sentence, we can see he is talking about something which is average, stable, and he likes stability.

Clementine, on the other hand, is very loud, impulsive; she gets angry very quickly, starts to argue; she is the one who starts the conversation and makes the first move. Clementine gets bored very quickly; she loves change and doesn't like to stay in comfort. That is why she constantly changes her hair color to blue, red, orange, etc. And as soon as she remembers that she is already working in the bookstore for five years, she tells Joel that she will leave her job



immediately. Clementine does not want to stay in the same place; she is a party girl, outgoing, and sometimes this trait goes to the extreme, and it is hard for her to collect herself back.

These traits become the reason for further conflicts and arguments and the reason why the breakup happens. Since Joel can never say what he thinks, there are many unsaid words and a lack of communication in the relationship. In one instance we see Joel and Clementine lying together, when Clementine says *"I'm tired of this all Joel, I'm an open book, I tell you everything, every damn embarrassing thing, you don't trust me."* To which Joel replies *"Constantly talking isn't necessarily communicating."* Clementine gets angry and says that people have to share things, and that is what intimacy is. And then we see them in a restaurant, where this issue is shown as an actual example of Joel not communicating what he thinks. He thinks to himself that they are like those boring couples, *"the dining dead"*, and then she's watching Clementine drinking, and thinks to himself, *"She's gonna be drunk and stupid now."* And Clementine is the vice versa, she says what she thinks, she can get very angry instantly, and during one of those angry instances, she got the impulsive idea to erase her memories. However, in the end of the film, we can see that even though she doesn't remember anything, she is still suffering, she is not able to find herself, she is confused and cries all the time, even if her brain doesn't remember Joel, her heart does. From the very start, we see the drastic differences between the two main characters. They are different puzzle pieces, and we do not know if they are part of the same picture or are entirely from different collections, which will never fit in anyway.

The Characters of the Eternal Sunshine of the spotless mind are different from the characters of traditional Hollywood romances. For example, in "The Notebook" and "Titanic," the characters are very conventional. We do not see shy guys there; rather than we see outgoing

guys, risk-taking, making the first move, they portray what society expects "the man" to be. Both of the main male protagonists of "Titanic" and "The Notebook" try to attract the girl. In "The Notebook," Noah even threatens her to throw himself from the Ferris wheel if she does not agree to go on a date with him. In the Titanic, even though Jack has a low social status and even if Rose has a fiancé, he still believes in himself and knows he can win her heart. He takes her to the Irish party, not even overthinking whether she will like it or not. The party is a very packed place, full of smoke and sweat, which would theoretically "not fit" to a high-class lady. However, Rose enjoys it a lot and they have an amazing date. This again shows the confidence of Jack.

The film's female protagonists are calm, still outgoing, but not as impulsive as Clementine is. Rose from the Titanic is a freedom-lover; she wants to be independent; however, her family limits her freedom. Jack is bringing out the more adventurous and risk-taking characteristics of Rose. Allie from "The Notebook" is a romantic girl who cannot decide for herself, and her family makes all decisions for her, yet again Noah helps her to overcome that codependency. In "The Notebook" and "Titanic" characters don't have flaws in their personalities. Women listen to society, and are unable to live the way they want, which we can't say is a personality flaw, rather it is a trait which is romanticized and became a feminine trait throughout the film industry.

Male protagonists have characteristics that are plausible such as risk-taking and confidence. The only issues they have about their persona are their social status; they are lower or middle class. In contrast, their beloved women have higher social status. That is how their differences are emphasized, only through social status, an external detail, which is not even a characteristic or a trait. However, it is impossible not to have flaws in real life, not have traits

that make us imperfect. Humans are made to be imperfect, and the media and films made us believe that it is not the norm. We were made to believe that a shy character cannot be a male protagonist, and an easily bored and hotheaded woman is crazy. *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* not only represents a natural, realistic love and relationship but also natural, realistic characters, so that the viewer will finally be able to break the limits of understanding human nature.

### **Reverse roles and Trust**

In order to see these differences of characters, we can compare two scenes, one from “*Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*” and one from “*The Notebook*” The scene from the *Eternal Sunshine* that I will talk more in the next section is the lake scene, where Clementine persuades Joel to lay on the ice, while Joel is indecisive, uncomfortable and is not sure whether to lie or not, because the ice can break, and he is afraid.

In “*The Notebook*” we can see a very similar scene, where Noah and Allie walk by the empty street, and Noah persuades her to lay on the open street and look at the sky, and here the girl is indecisive, and the guy is confident and risky, Allie decides to trust Noah and they lie on the street, where a car can come at any moment.



Both Joel and Allie ask the questions what if the ice breaks, and what if the car comes, to which both get a similar answer about the unimportance of “what ifs.” I don’t think that *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* purposefully wanted to alternate the characteristics of the genders, but what they did purposefully, is to break the expected standards of a Hollywood romance, to do it vice versa, to give the characters more space to be, get over the drawn borders and be real, because in real life guys can be shy and indecisive and girls can be courageous and risk taking.

Another scene very similar to these two is in “*Titanic*,” the famous boat scene, where Jack accompanies Rose to the edge of the boat. Rose’s eyes are closed, she’s a little afraid and hesitant but she trusts Jack without knowing what will happen. She follows his instructions blindly without even thinking that something bad can happen to her.



We can see that *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* doesn’t entirely lose the track of the traditional romantic films, and it shows us something familiar, however it mixes the roles, it mixes the traits, creates new personality traits which are more internal, plays with the “dough” in order to create something new and unforgettable. These scenes not only show us the reverse

roles of the characters, but also show us how trust is portrayed in these three films. In “Titanic” Rose blindly trusts Jack. Here the word blindly is not even a metaphor, her eyes are closed, yet she trusts him with her life. Even if they are in a boat which is not safe, she follows the instructions of Jack, who says what to do, such “come closer, don’t open your eyes, take a step.” The scene is accompanied with intimate closeups, beautiful view, bright colors and smooth camera movement, which gives a magazine-like effect, a shot from an advertisement.

In “The Notebook” even though we see frustration in Allie, she still trusts Noah and lays in the middle of the street, stating that she trusts him, here we again see closeups, intimacy, their bodies are very close to each other, as if they are not separate individuals, but already became one unity.

In “Eternal Sunshine” we can also say that Joel trusts Clementine blindly and lies on the ice. Because we can see that they are lying next to a huge ice crack, while Clementine promised Joel that the ice will not break, as if it is something impossible. This tells us a lot about Clementine’s personality, such as living in the present moment, not thinking about consequences, and being impulsive. While Joel does not have these characteristics, his trust in her words and promise, are as if he signs an imaginary document, that now he will be a part of her life, and she will be a part of his, trying to accept the differences. Yet even though Joel blindly trusts her, we don’t get close ups as in the previous movies, they are not intimate, showing the real first stages of a relationship, where you are still detached from the other person, their bodies are not very close, and we get middle and long shots of them rather than closeups. This gives them space to get closer and closer to each other as the film continues, imitating a relationship that happens in real life.

## The Ice Lake scene

One of the most iconic scenes of *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* is the iced lake scene, which has become the film's ultimate poster.



Every single shot of a film has a certain meaning. Every detail such as lighting, character, composition, etc. are the part of the set design which is called *mise-en-scène*, which means everything that we see on the stage. Not only characters and their dialogues communicate meaning, but the visual representation surrounding them also conveys enormous meaning, if not more. Every shot we see in motion pictures are thoroughly thought out, in order to understand what is the best way to reach the audience's unconsciousness and consciousness.

The scene with the iced lake is very deliberate with its meaning. It clearly represents what the film is about, a growing relationship that doesn't guarantee success or failure. The scene represents what a relationship truly is, behind those cheesy and perfect representations of love. It's about giving a chance to love even if it is possible to break. When Joel and Clementine come to the lake, Joel is afraid to lay on the ice by saying, "What if it breaks?" To which Clementine

responds, "What if? You really care right now?" Joel is the one who is rational, and Clementine is more emotional, acting on impulses and desires.

The way they view the ice is the way they look at relationships. The way Joel is afraid of it breaking and being hurt by it, and the way Clementine is not thinking about what-ifs and enjoys sliding on it. When Joel is convinced to lay on the ice, we see them from above.

In cinema, this shot is called bird's eye view or God's view. By placing the camera directly above the scene and the characters and looking down on them from a height, we can create a sense of detachment from the event happening on screen, observe them as if God would observe; this shot gives the ability to see the bigger and deeper picture of the scene rather than a simple act of laying on the ice.

The couple, close to each other, lies on the big ice lake, looking at the sky, and talking about stars. The essential detail that grabs the viewer's attention is the big crack on the ice embracing the couple. This is not coincidental. The crack is in the center of the frame made to attract attention. If the viewers look closer, they'll see that the couple and the ice crack become one body, they are both positioned in a way to make room for each other, thus they become one entity, their symbolism becomes one with their physical bodies, making a place in the unconscious mind of the viewer.

The symbolism behind this scene is that relationships and love are fragile, they can break at any moment, but people choose to be in it and trust the process. Relationships are not perfect the way the ice is not; it is flawed, it is cracked, but that is what its beauty is, the beauty and excitement of the ice is in its ability to break, and the viewer understands that instantly while looking from above. This scene became the film's poster because it fully represents what the

film's message is about; its symbolism is immaculate. The fragile is beautiful, imperfect and flawed is beautiful, and we are left to see how the couple fights with that imperfection and finally comes to terms with it, accepting it rather than trying to erase it.

### **The Difference Between the Poster and the Scene from the Film.**



Even in the difference between the film's poster and the actual scene of the movie, we can understand that the film is about the difference between the realistic and unrealistic portrayal of love. In her study "The Effects of Romantic Comedies on Women and Female Adolescents," Cassidy Green states, "In Hollywood, in order to entertain viewers, realistic plots and characters can be sacrificed." This is done because the viewer wants to see a perfect love, magical and entertaining. Not many people are very excited to see "the real life" A tiny percentage of people would want to see the couple's internal conflicts and their hardships, their real love story. Unrealistic and perfect love "sells" because the media has taught people to love it; the media adjusted the viewer's preferences to seek romance and unconditional true love in the films.

The media intentionally creates a piece which the viewer will like and prefer. That's why the poster of Eternal Sunshine is like a hook for the viewer. And even if it gives false expectations to the viewer, the creators of that film are not afraid to have that expectation vs



reality clash in the mind of the viewer, because that is what the film is about, to break the expectations, and to have something real.

For this reason, we see a drastic difference between the *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*'s poster and the scene from the movie. As can be seen in the actual scene, the shot is more depressive and less romantic. We see a dark color palette, putting weight on black and dark blue. As the film color theory suggests, colors in the film bring out the emotions of the audience. By viewing the film's colors, we can understand the filmmaker's intentions; color is used to create a message directly with the brain of the viewer. For example, by looking at this lake scene, the viewer can instantly feel a little depressed and unsettled. Joel is wearing all black. It represents his melancholic and closed nature, while Clementine has not that bright but still colorful clothes corresponding to her impulsive nature. They both are surrounded by dark and light blue. "Blue is as cold as red is hot. In the film, blue is the color of coldness, isolation, cerebral, melancholy, passivity, calm, harmony, faith, peace. ...." (Rothstein, A., 2020). By looking at the scene, we get the author's idea, we get the melancholy and depression of the characters, both the unsettlement and harmony between the two. We know that the film is not cheesy and sweet; it is real.

However, when we look at the film's poster, all the sadness goes away; we now see bright colors. Joel finally is not in black, but he is wearing green and brown, which makes him less of a loner. Clementine is wearing bright orange and has bright blue hair color, emphasizing her outgoing and extraordinary character. Moreover, the ice is no more as scary as it seemed; it is like a scratch that does not have a significance, which does not give the adrenaline rush because of the thought that it will break soon. It is no longer dark blue; white is now the primary color with a tint of baby blue. It gives a feeling of peace and harmony to the viewer. By looking at the poster, the viewer sees a beautiful couple in love, having a romantic date on the ice and talking to

each other, everything seems happy and cheerful, this is what the audience wants to see, something magical and entertaining, and the poster perfectly represents the desire of the viewer.

Another difference between the film's shot and the poster is the camera angle. In the original scene, the characters are shot in a canted angle. Canted shots are created with a camera tilted on one side. This can create disorientation which can convey dramatic tension, psychological instability, confusion, and madness. The degree to which the frame is canted is normally interpreted as reflecting the level of abnormality, disorientation, or uneasiness being conveyed.



(Inception)

In the film's scene, the couple is very tilted; it is disorientating and gives unease and discomfort as if the characters are in that emotional state. Since the scene does not include a fight scene or there is no negative emotion on the character's face, the viewer may feel uncanny because she does not know the reason for the emotional disbalance.

However, in the poster, the couple is positioned more with the frontal angle; they are not as tilted as in the actual shot, giving the poster a more emotionally stable feeling and comfort. This difference is deliberate. The poster attracts the viewers because we are adapted to see sweet romances; we are very eager to watch the movie. While watching the film, they then get the

authors' true message. They get a more authentic perspective on love and relationships. The clash is more challenging for their mentality because they have come to watch the film with a whole different expectation.

Furthermore, as this clash is more shocking because of the poster's positivity and the film's unexpected melancholy, the viewers' interpretation of the film and the further understanding of the reality roots more profoundly in the viewer's mind. Even if the marketing of the film tries to give high expectation of the film, it still would bring more of a pleasant shock to the viewer, they have come to see something familiar, but they see a film which is different, but different doesn't mean bad, it means a new way of seeing life, accepting life as it is and this makes the viewer to relate to the film, and have a close emotional connection to it.

### **The Poster of “Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind” in Comparison with “The Notebook’s” and “Titanic’s” posters**



The differences of the films are also trackable in the posters. Even though they have similarities, three of them show us a couple, three of them use a text which is the same colors as in the palette of the poster. For example, In Titanic the main color is yellowish brown, thus the text is also the same color. In “the Notebook, the main color is blue, and a part of the text is also

blue. In “Eternal Sunshine” the pallet is blue and red, and the text is the same color as the picture. This gives posters a coherent look, being one entity with the picture and the text, completing each other.

However, the difference lies in the couples and their level of closeness. "The Notebook" and "Titanic" posters are very intimate, they show us romantic couples, passionately in love. Even if in “Titanic,” Kate is turned with her back and has a sad emotion on her face, Jack is hugging her, touching his jaw to her neck. It shows us that they love each other, but something tragic is happening and they are suffering. However, the text in the headline says “*Nothing on earth could come between us*” which gives an impression, that even though worlds may come apart, still their love will be untouchable.

In "The Notebook's" poster the couple is about to kiss under the rain, the iconic moment of the film which has become one of the best screen kisses of all times. The viewer can tell that they ran towards each other, are enormously in love, and nothing can stop them either. The headline says “Behind every great love there is a great story.” Now this statement itself can give an impression to the viewer that what we are about to see is a great love, and their life is a great story. We then construct this opinion towards love and relationships, aiming to have a great love like they do, and then crushing to the ground experiencing love that is not what we’ve seen in the films. In "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind" we don't quite understand, are they lovers, or friends, we don't know what will happen to them in the film, are they going to be passionately in love, or not being together at all. The headline says “You can erase someone from your mind, getting them out of your heart is another story.” This gives us an overall understanding of the film, we may already understand that the couple would want to forget each other, but whether everything will be great afterwards is a question the film will answer. The difference of the

posters once again emphasize the differences of the plot and concept, while in *Eternal Sunshine* we have questions that need to be answered, in *“The Notebook”* and *“Titanic,”* their true love is almost guaranteed to the viewer.

## **Camera**

In the *“Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind,”* even the camera placement and movement have a meaning and gives us feeling and emotion. First of all, the camera is very shaky in the film; it is always movable; for example, in the train scene when they first talk to each other, the camera is shaking all the time, accompanying the movement of the train. This gives the viewer a feeling of presence as if we are sitting there with them and feeling the train's motion. The camera also moves when the characters move. Each time someone walks or does something, the camera moves with them, giving a sense of 3D, a virtual reality. As if it is a documentary and the camera should capture everything, it moves with the human in the frame to catch something essential and not miss anything.

The other interesting thing with the camera placement is shots behind something. In the frontal view there is either a bookshelf, or a train seat, or a car seat, and only then, in the middle view the characters appear. For example, when they are talking in the car, we see it all from the back seat, as if we are sitting there and watching them. In the scene where Joel and Clementine meet in the library, and where she states that she is not a concept and is not perfect, we see both the camera shakiness, and shots behind shelves and books. These shots are put between the closeups and two shots, so that the couple will not be seen too intimate, and we, the viewers, will be able to have our place as the observer. We see them from the far talking to each other, and want to see more, to hear more, to observe secretly. This gives us a sense that we are there, observing the characters, getting to know something hidden and secret. It gives the viewer a

feeling that we hear conversations that we should not hear and we see what we should not see. It awakens in us a cinematic voyeurism, spying on others' personal moments while knowing that he/she does not know we are there, which replaces the camera with a two-way mirror.



While watching the film, one can notice that there are many zooms during the film. They are like the close-ups, but the lens is zooming in rather than the camera itself. This again gives the film a feeling of a documentary. Tracking is also very common in the film; it is when the camera moves horizontally from side to side to capture one character and then the other character, usually when they talk or just look at each other. This tracking is used instead of editing the separate shots to each other. Rather than cutting to one's face and then right to the

other's face, the camera becomes "the editor" and already does the job of continuity. It is as if we are not watching a film, but we, ourselves, are tracking the characters. In real life, when two people talk and listen, we look at the talker, and then at the other, by having this constant movement of our head and eyes. The camera tries to imitate what we naturally do in our daily lives when we observe something.

In contrast, if we take the example of Titanic, we can see perfect camera movement, very smooth, no shakiness is allowed in the film, even when the boat is sinking, everything is in chaos, and people are in panic, the only stable detail that remains is the camera itself. Even though the film is based on real events, we see it as a drama, very beautifully and perfectly done. When the boat sinks, and everyone cries, we see the beautiful sky of stars, making everything seem romantic and dramatic. We also can see a lot of closeups in Titanic, they portray emotion and closeness with characters. However, in Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless mind, we are yet detached from the characters. The closeups, I already mentioned, are mostly zoom-ins, which makes us focus on the characters yet be far from them physically. This again gives us a sense of documentary, because in documentaries we know that there is a camera which shoots all of that, and no cameraman will go very close to the person in the real-life action, rather than will try to shoot in zoom.

This style that reminds the viewer of the documentary gives authenticity to the film. In contrast, the film itself is science fiction, very dreamlike, especially in the moments of memory-erasing. Even though reality mixes up with the dream and memory, we still get this sense of personal and private, we get the sense of reality, we get to watch two people fall in love, have difficulties, try to break up, reunite, and all this is soaked with authenticity. We do not get to feel that we are watching something made up and created, but something that is going on at the given

time and space. The camera techniques do not only emphasize the physical truthfulness of the film but also contextual. As I already argued, *Eternal Sunshine of The Spotless Mind* tries to represent love and relationship which is realistic and closer to real life. We can say that camera movement, shakiness, zooming, and tracking embrace that concept and representation and help us better digest the meaning and message of the film.

### **Memories and Editing**

Memory concept is one of the film's central themes; the whole movie is based on the erasure of Joel's memories of their relationship, his urge to have a spotless mind, which will bring eternal joy and happiness. Yet this erasure brings more confusion and stress to him, a realization that he does not want to forget.

This memory loss and forgetting concept are prevalent in our life. I've done research and found out that people search on Google, what they can do in order to forget their exes and good

#### People also ask

How do you get rid of memories after a break up? ^

Should I delete Snapchat memories of my ex? v

How do you clear your ex's memory? v

Why do we only remember the good times when we break up? v

How can I forget about my ex I still love? v

How do you completely erase someone from your mind? v

How do I remove love memories? v

Can you have PTSD from a breakup? v

Can you completely forget an ex? v

Feedback

memories connected to them.



This is something people go through in their lives; even Michel Gondry himself said that he found very cheesy and cliché the part where Joel needed to collect every object that is connected to Clementine and get rid of them. But then Gondry himself broke up with his girlfriend in the end stage of the film, and wanted to collect every object and throw it away. In one of his interviews, he said *“I lived it! I had to put all my stuff in a cardboard box and send it back to Los Angeles, and I thought, “OK, now I understand what the movie was saying.”* (Stern M. 2014) And that is when he realized that it is not cliché but a real experience. The film shows us a relationship, a breakup, and a reunion, which is very similar to real life. Unfortunately, or gladly, in real life, we cannot have a procedure that will erase all the memories we don't want to have. However, the film reaches an astonishing point where we, the viewer, become part of Joel's mind and feel his confusion, sadness, regret, excitement, and love. We also easily keep track of memory and reality. This is all done with the help of editing techniques and montage that come with continuity, creative geography, match-on-action and sound editing.

Even though we see many memories that are being erased, and the surrealism of it is very obvious in the film, we still are somehow able to differentiate between memory and reality. We can keep track of the film and see it as one entity rather than a combination of separate segments. This is done with the help of continuity editing, creative geography, and sound bridges, which connect one visual scene to another through sound.

Continuity editing is an illusion of temporal and spatial continuity; it is an illusion of "wholeness," created by the invisible editing. Creative geography is done with the help of continuity editing; it binds together shots that are location-wise and time-wise unrelated. But with the use of this type of editing, we get to see one action throughout the different locations, which helps us to connect those non related sequences.

We can see creative geography in instances where Joel jumps from one memory to another; for example, in one memory he would sit in a chair, and in the next memory, he would be on the sofa, as if the same action and pose is done in different memories, and that is how they become connected. Or in one memory, he lies in bed with the machine on his head, and then when another memory starts, he lies in bed in his room, which seems to be another location. This is how it helps the viewer to be able to understand what is going on in the film and to be able to differentiate between memories and connect them to each other.

Continuity editing is also helpful when everything in the memories is being erased, such as the cars, the buildings. However, Joel is still holding Clementine's head, running through one memory to another, trying to hide her, so that the doctor would not be able to find her. These scenes are very notable in a match-on-action and juxtaposition of scenes. When Joel and Clementine decide to hide her in a place where she doesn't belong (Joel's Childhood), it starts to rain in the room. Joel is juxtaposed with the young boy, whose hand gestures are matched with Joel's hand gestures. While the little boy is outside, putting his hand under the rain, Joel is in his room, where the rain still pours, and he does the same action, putting his hand under the rain to feel it. This is done to make us understand that the young child is the young Joel, and it is the memory of childhood where Clementine should be hidden.



Match-on-action not only juxtaposes two shots and two realities, but it also shows us how Clementine is disappearing from every memory. They would walk together, lie in the snow, or run, and the next shot is followed by Joel continuing the same action, but now without Clementine. This helps us to see the erasure of Clementine from the memories.





The other technique, which is also a part of the editing, is done through sound bridges. When Stan and Patrick are at Joel's home, erasing his memories, we both see his memories and hear the conversation of Patrick and Stan behind our ears, making it understandable that the scene is a memory and that it is happening in the brain of Joel. We are in Joel's shoes, and the sound of the conversation becomes blurry when we are watching the memory and becomes very clear when we are in the room, seeing Joel sleeping with the erasing machine on his head.

These sound bridges help us to connect the scenes, understand that the scene with Clementine and Joel is a memory, and in reality, Joel lies in his bed, surrounded by the doctors. This gives us a chance to go through different memories with a linear scheme rather than chaotic, and that line is achieved by sound bridges, since the sound states, but the scenes change from a memory to reality. This linear perception is as well achieved by continuity editing, creative geography and match-on-action, giving us a real-life experience, to how it would feel like to have our memories erased, but at the same time understand what is going on in the film, and to be able to judge from a step further where we more or less see the entire picture.

This observation of memory erasure may give us a second thought, whether we would like to have the same procedure or not, since we see Joel's confusion and desire to keep the

memories, and not erase them throughout the film. For example, when Joel tells his friends how he went to the library to meet Clementine, who now forgot Joel and has a new boyfriend, we see that description happening in an actual scene with the help of flashback. We also see how it completely crushes Joel; while he starts to walk towards the exit, the lights of the library begin to shut, one following the other, and in the end, Joel enters back to the room, where he was talking to his friends. This is a scene that uses a great skill of connecting memory to reality in the spatial form. We see how two spaces, such as the library and room, are being connected, as if they are next to each other, and they become separated by the use of lights and their shutting down. This scene shows us his confusion; everything in his mind and heart was as if put into shut down mode; every good feeling is now replaced by mess and tragedy.

Since some, if not many people at some point in their life, have a desire to forget and erase memories of their exes, the film shows us the realization of that desire, thus being very intimate and personal to the viewer, being very relatable and close to real life.

### **Happy Ending**

In romantic films, we are very used to a happy ending or very tragic ending; usually, there is no in-between. Either the couple is together in the end and is very happy, or they are not together because one of them dies or something tragic happens. For example, in "Titanic," Jack dies, and Rose continues living; however, when she dies in her late 80's, the viewer sees her entering heaven, which looks like the Titanic boat, where Rose and Jack reunite and are at peace and love.

In the Notebook, we see a happy ending, where Allie and Noah are together, no matter the challenges. They live a happy life with their children and grandchildren. However, the tragedy of the film is that when we see them old, we understand that Allie has Alzheimer (again an external issue) and does not remember her husband and children, this is Noah's tragedy; their beautiful love and relationship is nonexistent in the mind of Allie, which is very heartbreaking for him. At the end of the film, we see them both in the hospital bed, both dead. This is a very usual romantic idea that people have. When the couple has loved each other truly and are true soulmates, they want to die simultaneously so that even death would not separate them. This idea is both happy and tragic at the same time, which we can see in "The Notebook."

However, in this type of romantic films, whether the ending is happy or tragic, they do not usually show us what is after the reunion, what happens after the couple says "I love you, "hugs and kisses, or what their lives are like. We expect them to be happy and have a wonderful life as if all the difficulties are now in the past, and everything from this point will go perfect. We do not see Allie and Noah during their adult life; we don't get to see their relationship during their life together; we see two endings, one happy when they are young and reunite and one semi-happy and tragic, where they are old and die together. In the "Titanic" we do not see Rose's entire life, we see the pictures of her life near her bed, but we get the sense that everything that happened after the end of their relationship don't matter anymore, and all she waits for is to be reunited with him again. The whole meaning is put in that reunion of the couple and being together, and expecting them to have a perfect life, which we don't even need to see because all of the difficulties are now behind.

I want to talk about a film that does not have this mixed ending like "Titanic" and "The Notebook " have. "Pretty Woman" is an excellent example to compare with "Eternal Sunshine of

the Spotless Mind” because they both represent a mismatched couple who do not fit each other. As Joel and Clementine do not fit with their temperaments. Vivian and Edward don't fit either because Edward is a wealthy entrepreneur who hires Vivian, a prostitute, and they fall in love with each other. However, the ending of the film can be for sure called a happy ending. The business and love are mixed in the film; while Edward supports her financially, she wants more, by which she means romance and his time. As Vivian says, she wants the *"fairy tale."* She wants to be like Cinderella, being saved from her past life by a man who will love her and accept her the way she is. Edward climbs the exit stairs of her apartment with flowers, calls her "Princess Vivian," who waits for him with a welcoming smile. Like a Disney cartoon about the princesses, she is rescued by the prince, and they lived happily ever after.

We are very used to this ideology of happiness, that everything will be perfect in the end, that after the point where characters will be together, they will live happily. "While the Walt Disney Company cannot lay claim to the "Happily Ever After" theme, which has characterized fairy tale romances for hundreds of years, Disney has arguably been the most influential and successful producer of the genre since the twentieth century. In Disney Princess films, in particular, the resolution of the story is the promise of a Happily Ever After, which is achieved through the acquisition of love, so that "true" happiness becomes a function of romantic love” (A. Julie C. Garlen & Jennifer A. Sandlin, 2017).

Not only are we made to believe that everything will be perfect after their reunion and no trouble would ever disturb them, but we also see that love is the most ultimate goal of these films, meaning that one can only be happy if he/she finds true love and happiness. These types of romantic films are like advertisements of love, showing everything so smooth and wonderful as if it encourages the viewer to” buy” it too so that they can be happy like the characters are. Like

Coca-Cola's advertisements are based on happiness that can be required through their drink, in conventional romantic films, we are taught that we acquire happiness once we are united with someone and we have a beautiful and ideal life together afterwards.

However, in "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind," the reader sees a so-called "open ending" where we do not quite understand whether they will end up together or not. "The open ending often leaves us with an ambiguous or missing plot resolution. The story may not offer any clue to the whereabouts and future of the main characters. An open ending often; Opens to fulfill the viewer's emotional expectations by not offering climax or other emotional relief; an open ending does not confirm or reassure existing ideology; it questions ideology and demystifies it. "Open ending suggests dissatisfaction with an existing ideology and the seeming lack of alternatives" (Preis, E. 1990). We can understand from this statement that an open ending is usually like a declaration that tries to break the usual ideology that we are so used to. We do not get to be reassured that the couple will be happy after we see the end, nor do we see that they are unhappy; it leaves us and our own understanding of love to realize what will happen to them afterward.

"Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind" ends with Joel and Clementine finding out each other's recordings from the hospital, where they confess the reasons, they want to erase their memories. Joel talks about Clementine's wild personality that at first everything is exciting, but then it turns out to be something crazy, and Clementine talks about how boring Joel is and her relationship with him. In the end, Clementine wants to walk away, but Joel stops her saying to wait for a while; Clementine says that she is not the perfect girl, and he will eventually find things that he doesn't like about her, and she will get bored of him at some point, to which Joel says "okay." Clementine answers okay with a smile and excitement, they start to laugh with



relief, and then we see them running in the snow and dissolving in the white. They didn't solve themselves; they did not change themselves, Clementine stayed impulsive, and Joel stayed stable, shy and closed; however, they said OKAY to the imperfectness, they said OKAY to the flaws of their relationship and chose to try, see and live through the bad and the good. It's not like they solved everything, and now the bad is behind, and only good is left for them to live. The audience knows what happened to them, the audience knows their ups and downs, and even if they try, we, the audience know that their relationship is 50/50; we know that they will either grow out of those difficulties and start to accept them, or they will still break up because the same circle will go on. But we still root for them; we still hope for the best. In other romantic films, we don't hope for; we are already made to know that everything is great with the couple and they will never break up. Here we are not sure whether to be happy for them or sad, we are not sure what will happen to them one or five years later, but that is what life is about; guarantees are only trapped in the endings of romances that we see on the screen, but life has no guarantees, so as Joel and Clementine, so as none of us.

## **Conclusion**

The paper was not written in order to say that one film is better than the other. All of them have huge effort and talent behind them, and all of them are loved by the audience.

The aim of this research paper was to analyze a film, which goes beyond the usual and familiar. Films are powerful mediums of communicating a message; they show us particles of life, in which we can find ourselves, and the important element in all of this is to make films that are truthful and genuine to the audience, films that don't try to show a reality which happens in

one in a million, but a life which is familiar and common. Otherwise, the audience can leave the cinema with an understanding and belief in the reality that simply doesn't exist, always aim for and hope for what they see on the screen, and disvalue the imperfectness and simplicity of life. We have looked through the film by analyzing its plot, characters, message, moral, camera movements, and ending, compared them to "Titanic," "The Notebook," and "Pretty Woman" in order to have more robust fundamentals to state arguments. All of these parts have one joint base to them, the sense of realism. They are like the film's signature, guaranteeing that what the viewer sees is true to life and true to the viewer itself. We need more films that are genuine; as Martin Scorsese says, "The most personal is the most creative," and only in that personal can we find truth and beauty.

### **Limitations and Avenues for Future Research**

While I analyzed *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* as a film which tries to show love and relationships from the truer perspective, this analysis can be further continued with other films that have the realism of love relationships, to find out more about what makes them different from conventional romances. "*Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*" could also be compared with a romantic comedy since they are the ones that more or less try to portray real life. Furthermore, a questionnaire and interviews can be conducted to understand people's understanding of love and relationship and determine how the media affects their perception. A study can be conducted, where viewers watch "*Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*" and then share their thoughts about what makes the film different or similar to the films they have seen and what they understood from it. This would help to understand better the effect of films on people and their role in our lives.

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