

The Comic, the Serious and the Middle: Desire and Space in Contemporary Film Romantic Comedy

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Abstract: The most interesting things in romantic comedies happen in the middle. It is there that the characteristic tensions between melodramatic intensity and comedic cool, between laughter and frustration, between the social and the psychosexual take place. In this article I want to move away from traditional theories of romcom which privilege the happy ending as the repository of all the meanings and ideology of the genre and theorize the magic space of romantic comedy and its relation with the social world and sexual discourses at the beginning of the 21st century. In order to explore the ways in which this magic space works I focus on two romantic comedies from 2009: *The Ugly Truth* and *(500) Days of Summer*.

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Romantic comedy is a genre that promotes and celebrates romantic love. This commonsense description may be more problematic than it seems at first sight. Indeed, the equivalence between romantic love and romantic comedy is not historically tenable. Romantic love as a specific Western concept consolidated itself in the eighteenth century

and only became a dominant discourse in the nineteenth century (Giddens 39). By then, romantic comedy had already been in existence for several centuries, since its beginnings in sixteenth-century Italy and its artistic consolidation in Shakespeare's plays. Even though the two concepts share the adjective "romantic" it is unclear that such an adjective means exactly the same in both cases. In the sixteenth century this new type of comedy incorporated a then radical view of love as a spiritual force, a beneficial feeling capable of making people happy and of becoming the engine of a new social organization. At the same time, however, the new genre partly retained love's medieval associations with physical passion and its destructive potential (for men). In Shakespeare's plays, for example, love is both an ideal union of minds *and* physical desire, except that now desire becomes more positive, something to celebrate rather than fear. But there is as much sexual energy as there is spiritual well-being and social integration in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Much Ado about Nothing* and *Twelfth Night*. Since then, however, love in the Western world has undergone a process of desexualization that reached its peak in Victorian times (Seidman 7). Even though the twentieth century brought about a resexualization of love and, later, an elevation of sex parallel to the one that occurred in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century literature (65-66), the popular discourse that separated romantic love from sex, and defined them as predominantly female and male experiences respectively, has remained very much at the center of our ways of thinking about intimate matters. This discourse has survived two waves of feminism, a sexual revolution, the relative normalization of homosexuality and various other vicissitudes during a century that brought about drastic changes in people's attitude towards love and sex. It has also affected the evolution of romantic comedy and both popular and critical attitudes towards the genre to the extent that romcom has become both in popular and critical discourse a privileged example of a non-sexual attitude towards romantic love.

This discursive separation between love and sex is based on a simplification of the concept of romantic love and a generalized disregard of the complexities and potential of romantic comedy. In an influential study of the genre in the cinema, Tamar Jeffers McDonald rightly places sex at the centre of the history and the conceptualization of romcom and decries those periods and specific movies in which sex is downplayed in favor of a vague spiritual intensity (97). Sexual desire and erotic pleasure were indeed the engine of the structure of Shakespearean comedy and have remained very much at the heart of the meanings articulated by the genre. For Stephen Greenblatt, Shakespeare created these plays in order to convey some of the excitement and beauty of sexual attraction. Since he could not represent sexual intercourse directly on the Elizabethan stage he replaced it by verbal friction: "Dallying with words is the principal Shakespearean representation of erotic heat" (90). For Greenblatt, the heated arguments between apparent rivals were a transposition onto the stage of what could not be directly shown. The strategy of showing lovers quarrelling has remained a staple of the genre to this day and some of the most memorable moments in its history are constituted by such scenes. In them it is not so much that initial incompatibility leads to final compatibility. Rather, the friction itself represents sexual compatibility: it is a metaphor for it, not a prelude to it. These comic fights are not interesting because they show moments of crisis, dysfunctions and contradictions in interpersonal relationships but because they produce sparks of electricity between those who, in the fictional worlds of the genre, are destined for each other. Fights in romcom are happy occasions, moments to savor and celebrate, experiences to envy. What is important

for my argument here, however, is the notion that in romantic comedy, although censorship has not always been an issue, desire, sexual attraction, and sexual heat tend to appear in a displaced manner and hardly ever directly. Explicit sex may be seen occasionally but it is far from a staple of the genre, and obvious eroticism and display of the sexual body finds a more natural home in other generic contexts. In many contemporary instances sex, when it does appear, is more often than not an object of ridicule, something to be laughed or giggled at. Yet, at the same time, the films are very much about the central place occupied by desire in our lives. Since Shakespeare's times, other strategies have been added to the charged dialogues that have shaped the genre as a prime producer of erotic energy and have allowed it to play a prominent role in cinema's endless production of desire.

For these reasons, I would like to suggest that romantic comedy is not, as earlier critics have asserted, primarily a genre that celebrates marriage, monogamy and compulsory heterosexuality (for example, Krutnik 138). Rather, what is most characteristic and unique about it is that it offers, through its specific generic configurations, love and sexual desire as endless sources of pleasure and as the most powerful dimension of human experience. The view of romantic love to which it is committed is openly sexual, as much nowadays as it was at the beginning of its history. Like all other genres, romantic comedy exists in history and, as the very old genre that it is, it has experienced important changes. Within the history of cinema, it has not only reflected but also contributed to shaping interpersonal relationships, intimate matters, and sexual protocols in the course of a packed century. More recently, since its commercial boom in the mid-1980s, it has consolidated itself as one of the most industrially viable and successful genres, and, at the same time, as one of the most universally despised by the critics. One of the reasons for this has been excessive attention to the convention of the happy ending (Neale and Krutnik 12-13). According to this dominant view, since all romantic comedies have a happy ending, they all have the same conservative ideology and they are all very similar to one another. There is no denying the importance of romcom's endings, although it could be argued that these endings are often considerably more complex and more interesting than they are given credit for. More importantly, however, there is much more to romantic comedy than the happy ending: in narrative terms, the middle of the comic narrative is just as important. It is often in the middle that we find variety, contradiction and complexity. It is also in the middle that we are most likely to encounter cultural nuance and historically relevant discourses on intimate matters. Finally, it is also in this middle section that the energy and exhilaration produced by sexual desire is displayed with greatest power and complexity.

All genres and all films employ their own mechanisms to convert experience into fictional worlds. I would like to propose the concept of the comic space as a way of understanding what is special about this genre and, more specifically, how the lovers are encouraged to fulfill their desires. This is not a new concept: it comes close to Northrop Frye's "green world," the forest or foreign city to which Shakespearean lovers escape in their quest for a new identity and more mature sexuality. Frye, for whom "green world" comedy and romantic comedy are synonyms, finds this trope central for an understanding of Shakespeare's and later comedies (1957 and 1965). More recently, Deborah Thomas starts her discussion of the filmic categories of the comedic and the melodramatic with a discussion of space and argues that, unlike melodrama, comedic films present a single space, the social space, which, in the course of the narrative, is transformed into something

better. This space is benevolent and sheltering for the couple (14). Thomas is referring to something larger than romantic comedy—a filmic mode that she calls the comedic, although at certain points of her discussion she seems to slip into the more specific territory of romcom. In any case, this sheltering space acquires particular resonance in the case of this genre.

I have described elsewhere the particular details of this comic space, and a brief summary of that longer argument may be useful here. As I argue in *The Secret Life of Romantic Comedy*, romantic comedy's fictional worlds are very close to the real world of intimate protocols and therefore immediately recognizable by the spectator. Yet, unlike in our real lives, here lovers are protected in their amatory pursuits and encouraged to shed their inhibitions and oppose the social and psychological obstacles that we all tend to fall prey to in our daily experience. Because we recognize the comic space as very close to our own, we are attracted to a genre that allows us to believe in the unstoppable power of desire, and makes us confident that an alternative regime of feelings, not governed by social law, personal inhibition and constant frustration, is possible (30-38).

A great deal of the creative energy of the filmmakers goes towards the construction of this comic space. In films, we find not only the verbal sparring theorized by Greenblatt but also formal elements related to *mise en scène*, actor performance, use of the soundtrack and more. Among the most important of these formal elements is humor. Humor may have a variety of functions in romantic comedy but it is very often part of the displaced manner in which sexual desire is transferred onto the screen. This is another striking fact about the genre: in its verbal confrontations, in its frequent gags and jokes, in its apparently frivolous attitudes to intimate matters, it seems to court attacks of superficiality and irrelevance, of failure to tackle important matters very seriously. Yet romantic comedy, like all comedy in general, is deceptive in this respect, too. Intimate matters constitute, for the genre, the core of our humanity and the genre is very earnest in its defense of those privileged human beings who put love and desire before anything else. The fact that it deals with its subject matter through jokes, gags, ridicule, irony, and often general hilarity should not make us forget its seriousness. In this sense, it is a very demanding genre: it requires us to laugh and to take it seriously at the same time—to take laughter and humor seriously (Palmer 1). This paradox is partly the essence of the magic space that romantic comedies deploy in their middle section. In the rest of this article, I would like to explore the workings of this comic space and its displaced representation of sexual desire in two films from the year 2009, *The Ugly Truth* and *(500) Days of Summer*.

These two films, while clearly remaining within the realm of romantic comedy, have very different registers. In *(500) Days* a balance is struck between subdued comic moments and more melodramatic ones in order to depict the ups and downs of a relationship which is ultimately not blessed with the stylistic display of energy that the genre usually reserves for the couples it protects. Humor, whenever it is present, tends to be reserved for secondary characters or to all-too-brief moments of the action. *The Ugly Truth* integrates its comedy much more thoroughly within the dynamic established from the beginning between the two protagonists. A magic space is constructed around the humor of their exchanges and interactions. This space transmits to the spectator the sexual energy that cements their relationship, and this relationship, in turn, is protected by the comic space. What is instructive about these two instances is how their different uses of the comic space produce different degrees of sexual energy and different approaches to the genre.

Visually and structurally, *(500) Days of Summer* is a very distinctive film which uses some of the strategies of so-called independent cinema to tell the story of the relationship between Tom Hansen (Joseph Gordon-Levitt) and Summer Finn (Zoëy Deschanel). He falls head over heels in love with her but she is not looking for a meaningful relationship and, although they have a few months together, their affair soon fizzles out. In the course of the film Tom voices a more or less conventional attitude towards love and relationships whereas Summer has a more cynical outlook. When the external narrator says in the prologue that this is not a love story, he is partly equivocating. It may be an imperfect love story, but Tom's belief in "the one" person, in spite of his disappointment in Summer, remains part of the film's intimate discourse: as Summer tells him when they meet again at the end of the film, it is not that she did not believe in the special person—rather, Tom wasn't *her* special person. However, since the bulk of the film focuses on their relationship, the emphasis is less on the power of desire when it exists than on the frustrations it causes when it is unrequited.

The film's most distinctive formal characteristic is its scrambled narrative structure. Although the manipulation of chronological linearity is not as radical as it may seem at first sight, the overall effect is a feeling of loss and disenchantment: even the moments of happiness from the early days of the relationship are immediately followed in the film's timeline by moments of frustration, and awareness of the outcome from the beginning prevents the spectators' trained hope that they might still end together. Narrative structure, therefore, constantly denies compatibility while conveying a feeling of fragmentation and loneliness. The soundtrack is peppered with numerous pop songs that comment on the various stages of the relationship, but the central theme is a low-key whistled rendition of "Moon River", which evokes the melancholy atmosphere of *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (1961) and its elusive protagonist Holly Golightly (Audrey Hepburn). Music and narrative structure construct a playful mode in the narration, which is complemented by home-movies footage, faux-documentary black and white sequences, and parodies of European films from the 1950s and 60s. Tom's job, as a greeting card writer, also explains the frequent drawings that sometimes replace the action, including the main motif, a "naïf" rendition of Angelus Plaza, the protagonist's favorite spot in downtown Los Angeles.

All of these devices contribute to the construction of the film's fictional and affective space but none of them help to transform it into a magic space where desire may reign supreme. In fact, they are there to constantly reject such a transformation. As a consequence of this, the strong sense of place we get throughout *(500) Days of Summer* does not turn downtown LA into a space of romantic comedy. Rather, the city tends to expressionistically reproduce here the wistfulness and longing of the frustrated lover. The one exception to this mood is the musical scene when, after a happy night with Summer, Tom goes back to work the next morning. This musical number is the most exuberant moment in the film, with all the passers-by turning into participants in the communal dance that conveys his momentary but deep exultation. But even this musical fantasy is not a shared moment, as we would expect it to be in the comic space. There is no sign of Summer amongst the dancers, no indication that she might be enjoying a similar fantasy at the same time. When Tom finally gets to the office, not only does the fantasy disappear but the film cuts from a shot of him going into the lift to a similar one, many days later, when Summer has already left him and he feels desperately lonely. Not only is the musical

fantasy incomplete but the energy it promises is cut short by the text before we begin to harbor any serious hope.

(500) *Days of Summer* is not lacking in moments of humor or a comic outlook on human experience. Through its comic perspective the text asks us to accept disappointments in love with humor and equanimity, and also with a certain cool detachment, as pertains to the world of independent cinema in which the movie inscribes itself. However, the film's very inventive gags and comic moments never contribute to the formation of a comic space; in fact, they tend to undermine it. Consider, for example, the use of split screen at a crucial point in the narrative. Sometime after their break-up, Summer invites Tom to a party at her new apartment. When he arrives, the screen splits in two and two simultaneous actions start to take place, one defined by the title "expectations" on the left and the other by "reality" on the right. As the scene develops, the two actions drift further and further apart, Tom's dream of a romantic reconciliation contrasting bitterly with the reality of Summer's polite but offhand attitude towards him, topped by the moment when, with Tom as an unnoticed witness, she shows her engagement ring to another friend. The scene is funny in its visual inventiveness, but its humor, rather than contributing to the protection and liberation of the lovers, revels in the gaping distance between them and underscores the male protagonist's misery and frustration. Once the split screen disappears, as Tom runs away from the party and finds himself walking alone in the middle of the street, the live action is turned into one of the greeting-card drawings that the film has used before, which, in this case emphasizes the unbearable loneliness of those whose desire is not returned.

(500) *Days of Summer* proves that for the lovers to be protected by the comic space they must be ready and willing to let themselves be driven by their desire, even if, as happens often, at the beginning of the story they may not yet be aware that they are. In this movie, it is not so much that the text fails to provide the generic context for the fulfillment of desire. Rather, the incompatibility between the two protagonists prevents the comic space from materializing. The text itself, on the other hand, shows obvious potential for the construction of such a space. The sunny appearance of downtown Los Angeles, a place hitherto little exploited by romantic comedy (another recent exception being *In Search of a Midnight Kiss*, 2007), and, particularly, the two scenes in Angelus Plaza suggest the familiar presence of desire in the Californian air. However, this desire, like the narrative itself, is excessively one-sided: both scenes are central to the romantic structure of the film but they are both equally dominated by Tom's dreams and hopes, with Summer little more than a reluctant appendage. This diminutive park in the middle of the old and new skyscrapers of the financial district has always been his magic space, but as we learn in the film's final turn, he has been looking in the wrong direction, missing the woman who is, in fact, his romantic destiny. Within this logic, the film's final turn is not a gratuitous bid for an undeserved happy ending but the confirmation that the text shares the ethos of the genre and that its magic space only needed to be activated.

Having decided to quit his job and to pursue his initial vocation as an architect, Tom meets another woman, Autumn (Minka Kelly) in the final scene while both of them are interviewing for a position at an architectural firm. She recognizes him because she has seen him before at Angelus Plaza, also her favorite spot in town. Absorbed as he was with Summer all those past months, he never noticed her. Now, however, things may be different and the film ends on a hopeful note. There is some light positive humor in their

brief dialogue but what most decisively suggests that something has changed is the distinctiveness of the physical space in which the action takes place: the Bradbury Building, one of the most famous sites in downtown LA and certainly one of the most familiar presences in earlier movies. Best known as the most recognizable location in *Blade Runner* (1982), it had also featured prominently in many others, including classical films noirs *Double Indemnity* (1944) and *D.O.A.* (1950), and the more modern horror *Wolf* (1994). Because of these and other films, the beautiful late nineteenth-century building has mostly been associated with genres related to the thriller but *(500) Days of Summer* effortlessly reverses the connotations and immediately turns it into the central element of the protective atmosphere that now envelops these two potential lovers. The scene shows the power of romantic comedy to transform both real places and locations from earlier movies into a distinctive space where desire can flourish.

In *(500) Days* the comic space only materializes in the final scene, making it coincide with a wary happy ending. In most romantic comedies, however, this comic space is, as has been argued before, firmly in place much earlier and it becomes not only the environment for the lovers to prosper but also the site in which the various intimate discourses and the film's sexual ideology are articulated. Romantic comedy has always employed the compatibility of the lovers and the obstacles to their union to put forward certain attitudes towards gender relationships, sexual politics, and intimate matters. Both the vicissitudes of desire and the textual ideology are most forcefully displayed in the middle section. This is as much the case of *(500) Days* as of *The Ugly Truth*, the second film that I want to explore in this essay. If in the former, downtown LA is the unusual location of a very imperfect love story, in the latter Sacramento is an equally unexploited town for a more successful relationship, although another film of the same year, *All About Steve*, also takes place in this city.

There are frequent disagreements between the lovers in *(500) Days* but little friction, which should alert the romcom-savvy spectator that things can never go well between these two. In *The Ugly Truth* Mike Chadway's (Gerard Butler) ultra-sexist attitude towards gender relationships, apart from fitting in with the intensification of female objectification and openly anti-feminist diatribes to be found in other contemporary romcoms—especially of the grossout and hommecom variety (see Jeffers McDonald 108-12)—guarantees abundant friction with professionally successful but personally lovelorn Abby (Katherine Heigl). The starting situation, with a “liberated” man who has taken to the wild side and a woman whose dedication to her career has taken its toll on her “femininity,” is almost textbook 1980s New Men-inspired backlash. Much more than in *(500) Days*, as corresponds to a mainstream Hollywood vehicle, star personae are crucial to the sexual dynamic established between the protagonists. Butler's ruggedness and gruff demeanor are put at the service of his ridiculously macho showman. Heigl, through the parts played in *Knocked Up* (2007), *27 Dresses* (2008) and this film, has successfully followed up on her popularity in *Grey's Anatomy* (2005-) to become a considerable romcom presence. In this film she combines her image of healthy and strong girl-next-dooriness with a readiness to submit to post-Cameron Díaz gross-out situations, here most notoriously illustrated by the vibrating underwear episode. She has succeeded in making the combination of post-feminist sophistication, romantic aspirations, and embarrassing physicality that has become a regular convention of twenty-first century romcoms seem natural. It is to the

credit of this apparently conventional narrative and of the two actors' performances that the sparks are almost visible when these two unlikely lovers come together.

A great deal of the humor in the film revolves around their charged exchanges, and while the comic rallies between them generally tend to ridicule Abby's uptightness and obsession with control and celebrate Mike's relaxed and confident masculinity, they simultaneously convey the growing attraction between the two, an attraction that will also make him more vulnerable. To these comic dialogues, which gradually begin to reveal the growing affinity between the future lovers, is added the powerful presence of a setting equally made up of real and constructed spaces. This setting comprises the television station where Abby and Mike work, assorted places in Sacramento and a hotel in Los Angeles where they spend an evening and the following night. All of these are part, to a greater or lesser extent, of the comic space, with the LA hotel, and particularly the elevator when they go up to their bedrooms, as the most openly protective corner of this space. But an apparently less relevant but very recurrent setting is equally important for our understanding of the workings of this convention: the garden area in the middle of the block of apartments where both Abby and Colin (Eric Winter), her doctor boyfriend, live. Shots of this space punctuate the narrative and chart the evolution of Abby's character toward sexual maturity, but at least two important scenes take place here.

In the first of these scenes, the magic quality of the garden, an echo of the Shakespearean "green world," is emphasized. Always suffused in an artificial yellow light, always seen in the evenings, this space defines the female protagonist as somebody looking for love and amenable to change in her attitude towards intimate matters. As the scene gathers pace, the comic space becomes more prominent, both in terms of the delineation of the nature of desire and of the specific textual attitude towards sex. The cat that is responsible for starting the comic action is a symbol of the animal nature that on the one hand is so lacking in Abby's life and on the other can be glimpsed, lurking just underneath the surface and waiting to be tapped by the right person. The incident starts with the cat smashing a vase and upsetting the immaculate order in the lifeless apartment as Abby is getting ready for bed. The cat leads Abby to her first, if displaced, confrontation with her own sexuality at the top of the tree where she has followed it. Once there, and while wondering how to get down again, she sees through a conveniently open window her extremely good-looking new neighbor coming out of the shower, surrounded by steam, like an apparition. His beautiful body makes Abby gasp with admiration, not so much because of its sexual attraction as because it complies with her ideas of physical perfection in a man. What really excites her, though, is the fact that he flosses, again in accordance with her very demanding code of personal hygiene. In the meantime, the magic space is in full swing and it is now her turn to display her body, but in a more embarrassing pose, as a branch breaks under the weight of her floss-related excitement, and she ends up hanging upside down from the tree, with her slip round her upper body and her comfortable knickers in full display. Her upturned position suggests that her values and desires are soon going to change drastically, but also the long shot of her body in this ridiculous position anticipates, in comic terms, that she is ready for this change, and that she will eventually become a worthy comic lover, no matter what type of underwear she is donning right now. In this respect, of course, the trajectory from the ample knickers to the black vibrating panties openly reflects the evolution of Abby's attention to the centrality of sexual desire in her life.

Dutifully reacting to Abby's screams, Colin comes to the rescue, still only wrapped in his bath towel, and Abby, looking for something to hold on to, pulls the towel off and is suddenly faced with an upside down close-up of his genitals while the spectators have to make do with a brief glance of his bare buttocks. Although, after a second or two, both automatically use their hands to recuperate a minimum of decorum, it is interesting that after the cut an ellipsis takes us to the inside of Colin's apartment where, in the next shot, Abby is still apparently looking in the direction of his crotch with an expression of girlish excitement but also lack of inhibition. Although a reverse shot discloses that what she is actually looking at is her own foot, as he expertly bandages her ankle, Abby is obviously impressed with what she has previously seen. When telling the story to her friend Joy (Bree Turner) the next morning, the highest compliment she can pay him is that he is "symmetrical" ("you have no idea" [how symmetrical he is]), but the brief comic scene has shown Abby's romcom potential and also the transitory nature of her present inhibitions. That these inhibitions are closely connected with her post-feminist identity are part of the ideological work of the text but in any case what the committed spectator wants is to see her shed those inhibitions as soon as possible. The impression we get from this scene is that the stage is set for such a change and that the comic space is fully in place to help her through her discovery. The unobtrusive tracking shot with which the scene started almost invisibly has transported us to this magic space in which those values that are incompatible with "true" desire are given a comic bent in order to reveal her adaptability. Colin, who will become the traditional wrong partner (Neale 288-90), is here mostly part of the magic space, as are the colors, the camera movements and certainly Abby's underwear. As with Tom in the previous film, she still has not learned to look in the right direction but her unconscious readiness to submit to the dictates of desire is both emphasized and protected by the comic space.

The same comic space is in full force in her constant arguments with retrograde, less than symmetrical and most likely no-flossing Mike. Its constant presence and influence on the narrative development allows the spectators to understand that both Abby and Mike, in spite of appearances to the contrary, will become ideal subjects for the genre (unlike Colin, whose professional status, political correctness and physical symmetry are coded as boring and deadly). As usual, the lovers are the last to realize that they are attracted to one another but in this film this comes as a revelation to both of them, as a shock that, as in Shakespeare's best comedies, will forever change their lives and, gregariously, reinforces the willing spectators' belief in the supremacy of desire over all earthly things. Conversely, the happy ending is, in this as in many other films, rather deflating. Abby and Mike's literal reconciliation and final clinch takes place in a hot air balloon, a space more openly magic and "special" than the more realistic locations of the rest of the movie, but the clumsy and too-obvious rear projection employed in this last scene may work, with many spectators, to break the illusion and distance us from the powerful magic atmosphere of the middle section.

The magic space of romantic comedy and its presence in the middle section of many examples of the genre is so powerful and spectators have internalized it to such an extent that it can sometimes produce unexpected effects. In another movie from 2009 also set in Los Angeles, *I Love You Man*, the magic space is firmly in place even though sexual desire often becomes a secondary part of the action and is generally subservient to male friendships and what Eve Sedgwick calls male homosocial desire. The strong articulation of

a magic space in a film which is very much about the relationship between two heterosexual male friends energizes that friendship and gives it an uncanny intensity to which we are unaccustomed in our culture. The conventions conjured up by the film in order to construct this space are the usual ones in romantic comedies, but the relationship that this magic space protects and celebrates is openly not sexual. A text like *I Love You Man* that celebrates friendship through the same mechanisms that romcom has used for centuries to celebrate desire is still so unusual that it puzzles even as it fascinates. What it proves, in any case, is the lingering power of the comic space in the genre and its endless potential to guarantee the continuing evolution and the unacknowledged variety and complexity of romantic comedy.[\[1\]](#)

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