

From Cherry Blossoms to Broken Hearts: Life and Love in Japanese Films Released in Thailand

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Abstract

Love is still a cornerstone of storytelling in films worldwide. Likewise, Japanese films contain their charismas and reflect the images of Japanese society from various perspectives, particularly about life, love, and delicate as well as meaningful relationships. A number of these films have been screened in Thailand, and have attracted Thai viewers. Thus, this study focuses on the analysis of 9 Japanese films that have been released in Thailand i.e., *Tomorrow I Will Date With Yesterday's You* (Miki, 2016), *I Want to Eat Your Pancreas* (Tsukikawa, 2017), *Last Letter* (Iwai, 2020), *The Last 10 Years* (Fujii, 2022), *Insomniacs After School* (Mamoru, 2023), *April Come, She Will* (Yamada, 2024), *52-Hertz Whales* (Narushima, 2024), *Worlds Apart* (Seta, 2024), and *At the Bench* (Okayama, 2024). The analysis is grounded in Semiotics, *A Lover's Discourse* by Roland Barthes (Barthes, 1978), and Japanese philosophical perspectives on life. The findings revealed that Japanese films give the meanings of life and love through stepping over changes, love coming with pain, separation, loss, loneliness, and solitude. These refer to the storytelling of love and sadness with insights into the beauty of love. The stories are narrated through symbols, e.g., letters, flowers, stars, sea, whales, camera, parallel universe, etc. Love presented through Japanese films does not show pictures of fighting over love or hurting someone to possess their loved ones. In contrast, the films often depict characters facing uncontrollable external circumstances and inner emotional landscapes. The feeling of love mixed with loneliness, simplicity, tenderness, and broken hearts so as to grow further for living their valuable life again.

Keywords: meaning of life, meaning of love, film, Japanese film

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Introduction

Narration of life and love can be found in films worldwide, as love is a key element in life stories. The presented meanings of love in films are connected to philosophy, psychology, and society (Kieliszek, 2025). Familiar love stories in films are essentially full of happiness. However, they can actually be presented in multiple perspectives.

The presentation of life and love in Thai and Japanese films contain both similar and different perspectives. However, due to cultural, social, and economic differences, as well as other factors, Thai love stories usually present stories and meanings filled with hope and morale that have a happy ending. Piamkaroon (2017) found that films constructed with love images can be classified into four types. Romance remains the most popular theme, followed by youthful love filled with lightheartedness, various expressions of love, and depictions of familial affection. It can be said that most films present stories of beautiful love through romantic films.

According to the research of SereyLyfa and Chaiprasert (2022) on “Analysis of the Presentation Techniques and Ideas in Love Movies of GDH 559, Ltd.,” it was found that Thai films made by GDH 599, a top film production company of Thailand, present the various concepts of love, i.e., romance (care, respect, forgiveness, and honesty), family love (concern and encouragement), and love of friends (warning, standing side by side, and support), through films. Subsequently, this study explores the concept of positive love, which conveys the meanings of romance and happiness.

Nonetheless, there are several dimensions of love. Love films in each country also contain various characteristics of narration. Social, economic, and cultural conditions, including ways of life, create the different perspectives of Japanese love films. The backgrounds of love and life are combined in the narration until they finally become a unique identity of these films, with a huge attraction when they are released overseas.

Umland and Umland (2001), in their study “All for Love: The Myth of Romantic Passion in Japanese Cinema,” analyzed Japanese films by comparing them with romance in European literature of the Middle Ages, e.g., the legend of Tristan and Iseult, a tragedy with a heartbreaking ending of forbidden love that comes with death.

The forms of love found in narration, e.g., forbidden love, romantic passion, love suicides, and Liebestod (Love-Death), imply that strong love and love connected with death are common forms of love in Japanese films, particularly the obstacles that result in forlorn love, and death as the only way that shows adherence to love. It can be noted that the presentations of love that are connected to loss should contain the perspectives that bring a meaningful life, learning, growth, and the desire to continue living after painful experiences (Umland & Umland, 2001).

Poon (2014) studied Japanese films that present “first love” and found that there has been more production of this type of film. To clarify, from the year 2004 (Trends in Japan, 2004) onward, Japanese films of teenage love, young men and young women falling in love, and trying to make their love survive over external obstacles, particularly health problems such as “incurable diseases,” and deep and impressive stories about fighting against obstacles were produced. These films are called “pure love” or “jun'ai” by critics. Notably, this kind of film is well-known and widely released in Thailand as it is popular among Thai viewers.

Back in 2004, (McCurry, 2004) Japan was impacted by a natural disaster, namely a 6.8 magnitude earthquake that killed a large number of people at that time in Niigata prefecture, approx. 150 miles north of Tokyo. The death toll was around 21, and 1,800 people were injured (McCurry, 2004). When considering that the society, economy, history, and location of Japan are all affected by disasters such as earthquakes and tsunamis, it is clear that the Japanese live with an awareness of uncertainty and ever-present environmental changes. Consequently, melancholic emotions and sentiments are often expressed through diverse forms of Japanese art, including films. Teenage love films that portray young people striving to live despite facing death may inspire audiences to persevere.

Death, loss, and parting are the essential elements in narration and presentation through films. The study of Poon (2014) on “Love and Death in Recent Japanese Cinema” further suggested that Japanese films present love stories with the visualized past and that missing someone may affect the perception of love among the Japanese, which influences the construction of love ideologies that finally leads to building a family and having children as the image of family and the love that people crave. In this regard, being aware of death all of the time makes them try to live their life with the greatest value while they are still alive.

Therefore, love and death appear repeatedly in many Japanese films. In the research of Chen (2022) on “Death Aesthetics in Japanese Love Movies,” love and death may be opposite, but both the Japanese media and culture present strong aesthetics of death. To illustrate, death is both beautiful and sad, death is the beginning of love stories and the end simultaneously, and death creates an eternity of love.

Likewise, Wang (2024) studied the aesthetics of death in the Japanese film “Love Letter,” and found that there is an overlap between love and death, which are inseparable. Love always comes with parting. Despite loss or death, love still remains. Exploring love through death makes the characters learn and grow. Even so, it is noticeable that films may idealize too much sadness or create too many iconic images of love and loss. Nevertheless, films present death as a means for learning about and improving the perceived value of life.

Based on the observed Japanese films shown in Thai cinemas, most of them are romantic films portraying life and beautiful love, often ending with loss.

Research Questions

The research question is: Why does Japanese cinema frequently depict life and love that ends in loss or remains unfulfilled? This study seeks to interpret how such cinematic representations express the intertwined meanings of life and love.

To address this question, the study is guided by the following objectives.

Objectives

The objectives were 1) to analyze the meanings of life and love as conveyed through the narration in Japanese films released in Thailand, 2) to study the semiotics in the conveyed meanings of life and love in Japanese films, and 3) to connect the meanings of life and love with the elements of Japanese philosophy that are associated with the Buddhist concepts found in Thailand.

Therefore, this study analyzed the meanings of life and love based on textual analysis from nine Japanese romantic films released in Thailand, obtained by purposive sampling, i.e., *Tomorrow I Will Date With Yesterday's You* (Miki, 2016), *I Want to Eat Your Pancreas* (Tsukikawa, 2017), *Last Letter* (Iwai, 2020), *The Last 10 Years* (Fujii, 2022), *Insomniacs After School* (Mamoru, 2023), *April Come, She Will* (Yamada, 2024), *52-Hertz Whales* (Narushima, 2024), *Worlds Apart* (Seta, 2024), and *At the Bench* (Okayama, 2024).

Conceptual Framework

The concepts and theories utilized in this research included Semiotics, *A Lover's Discourse* by Roland Barthes (Barthes, 1978), and the Japanese philosophy of life. These philosophical ideas are also aligned with Buddhist perspectives, particularly in the acknowledgement of impermanence, suffering, and the transient nature of human existence.

Semiotics is an interdisciplinary field describing the meaning of a cultural object, which can be a “sign,” depending on the given meaning. Generally, that meaning is more than the object itself, and is connected to social as well as cultural contexts. The given meaning contains a “signifier,” referring to the physical attributes that show the existence of that certain thing and can be perceived by our five sensory receptors. As for “signified,” it refers to the given meaning of that thing. Moreover, when a meaning is given beyond the denotative meaning, i.e., a connotative meaning, it is called a “sign.” For example, the denotative meaning of red roses is a kind of flowers with red-colored petals. For the connotative meaning, it refers to what people give to one another in order to show love. Undoubtedly, red roses are a sign of showing love (Griffin, 2012).

A Lover's Discourse: Fragments is a philosophical work describing love with pieces of text (fragments of discourse) from people who fall in love, as if love were a wonderful magic that made them continuously express their language, thoughts, and gestures full of anxiety, the cycle of love, and obsession. Each fragment is like an emotional state that love-struck people are undergoing, e.g., waiting, silence, jealousy, absence, tenderness, etc. (Barthes, 1978). The Japanese philosophy of life refers to the concepts of living the Japanese way, which usually values meanings, aesthetics and beauty, reasons for living, imperfection, and changes (Basil Raj & Suganya, 2023).

When connected to love, showing love in the Japanese style through films conveys attractive meanings. Japanese films with narration about love are different from Thai love films as they can create a deep impression on viewers in terms of touching plots but also reflect the philosophy of life and numerous meanings of love ranging from simple happiness to the deep sadness caused by parting. Thus, the interpretation of cinematic love in this study is both aesthetic and embedded in culturally grounded belief systems that view love and loss as inseparable parts of life. The findings were revealed as follows.

Key Findings

According to the categorization of narrative structures in the nine Japanese love films analyzed in this study, the findings indicate that five were romantic dramas, two were teenage love stories, and the remaining two involved diverse forms of love (i.e., family, brotherhood-sisterhood, and friendship). All of these films present the images of beautiful, warm-hearted, sad, and lonely love; parallel to the obstacles on the way, such as loss, illnesses, and parting;

and finally ending with the lessons learned. These all imply the meanings of living a valuable life.

Table 1

Type of Love Film

Film Title	Type of Love Film
<i>Tomorrow, I Will Date With Yesterday's You</i> (Miki, 2016)	Romantic Drama
<i>I Want to Eat Your Pancreas</i> (Tsukikawa, 2017)	Coming-of-Age Romance
<i>Last Letter</i> (Iwai, 2020)	Romantic Drama
<i>The Last 10 Years</i> (Fujii, 2022)	Romantic Drama
<i>Insomniacs After School</i> (Mamoru, 2023)	Coming-of-Age Romance
<i>April Come, She Will</i> (Yamada, 2024)	Romantic Drama
<i>52-Hertz Whales</i> (Narushima, 2024)	Romantic Drama/Family Love
<i>Worlds Apart</i> (Seta, 2024)	Family Love
<i>At the Bench</i> (Okayama, 2024)	Slice of Life

Regarding the meanings of life and love, the semiotic symbols that communicate love, and the philosophy of life presented through films, these findings can be summarized into eight themes as follows.

Life and Love Do Not Last Forever

The meanings of life and love given through these films indicate the temporary existence of life and love during a certain period of time. For example, *Tomorrow I Will Date With Yesterday's You* (Miki, 2016) is a film narrating the love between a young woman and a young man from the different times. They have fallen in love for only a period of time, and must be parted due to the difference in time. Despite the overlapping time, it is still only a short period for them to live together.

Life With Illnesses, Love With Disappointment

Illnesses are a common thing that we have to experience. Unfortunately, serious illnesses during youth take away one's living time at every single moment. *I Want to Eat Your Pancreas* (Tsukikawa, 2017) narrates the story in the memory of a high school teacher with burnout syndrome. In the old days, he was a high school student. He was introverted, loved reading, and barely had any friends. He discovered a secret of a female classmate from her diary, written about the story of her illness resulting from liver cancer. Then, he accidentally built a close relationship with her until the day she died. Now, he works as a teacher at the same school, and finds a letter she wrote to him. This letter brings him the motivation to keep on living and to do his best as a teacher.

If we realize that we are undergoing an incurable disease and that we can only continue to live for 10 years, what shall we do? *The Last 10 Years* (Fujii, 2022) narrates the story of a young woman with a serious illness, confusion, and intense pain at the beginning. It turns the cheerful and lively woman into the quiet one until she learns how to spend her time in a worthwhile manner during the last 10 years of her life. That is to say, she works on writing with full

determination as a job that she loves. In the meantime, she falls in love with someone who makes her life filled with value. Although she does not have much time left, these are the meaningful final moments of her life.

Life and Love as a Beautiful Memory

The past and the memories of humans contain the beauty of living. Our past can provide us with either wounds or growth. *Last Letter* (Iwai, 2020) narrates the story of a previous love and a relationship that are finally resolved as time goes by. The plot is about two sisters who both had an attachment with the same young man. It is an imperfect relationship and an untold feeling. The narration is presented through the switching roles of the younger sister and the dead elder sister. At a class reunion party, the younger one is mistaken as her sister. This becomes an open door to bring back the letters, memories, and relationship of the past. Regardless of her sister's death, the story is still told and conveyed with missing someone, along with the explored relationship and feelings through the letters between the younger sister and the young man who actually falls in love with the other one. Both of them talk about their own past loves in order to move on with an increased perceived value of life.

Life is to Follow Our Dreams and to Share Them With Someone We Love

Life in high school is often shown repeatedly in Japanese films. It is the age range of growth, learning, self-searching, and exploring for preferences. Friendship and love also usually occur during this time. *Insomniacs After School* (Mamoru, 2023) is the story about the insomnia of the two high school students, a boy and a girl. Because of this symptom, they spend their time on nightlife. Stargazing becomes an exciting activity, and thus they try to restart the Astronomy Club at school. An unemptied life makes us feel valuable. This film presents that doing something enjoyable makes a meaningful life. The love between the two people is not only a romance but is also combined with friendship and the sharing of their common interest.

Life Is to Understand Changes and to Live With the Present

April Come, She Will (Yamada, 2024) narrates that when receiving a letter from his ex-girlfriend, a young psychiatrist who is going to get married with his new lover starts to hesitate. The letter was received in April, the season of spring that is full of joy and blooming cherry blossoms. He takes time to review the past love as he tries to understand the present. Eventually, he decides to keep his new love that he is having although he is wistful for the past love. The meaning of life and love is shown as the acceptance of change and confronting the past in order to choose our own true future.

Life is the Process of Learning From Pain to Better Understand Ourselves and Others

The perceived value of life, self-love, and never letting ourselves get hurt is a way to live a meaningful life. *52-Hertz Whales* (Narushima, 2024) narrates the story of a girl abused by her family. More specifically, she has been assaulted by her parents since childhood. Despite her cries for help, nobody hears them, until she finally meets the man who gives her a hand, and she can live on her own. The story of her life can be compared to *52-Hertz Whales*, of which the frequency is different from other kinds of whales. For this reason, she had to live her lonely life with pain and without understanding from anyone until she received his help. However, he lives with pain too, for he cannot be what he wants to be indeed. He is not accepted by his own family, and thus he decides to commit suicide. As for the female character, she learns how to

live after recovery from the pain. This film makes us learn and perceive the value of life and how to live without pain, including independence and being ourselves. Love here refers to self-love, self-understanding, and passing the love forward by understanding others.

Life and Love Involve Adaptation and Understanding Each Other

Worlds Apart (Seta, 2024) is the story about a young aunt and a young niece living together. Both of them come from different worlds. The aunt is a working-age woman who is an introverted and unmarried writer, whereas her niece is a high school girl who has just lost her parents from an accident. The aunt is the only relative left. Although she does not like her teenage niece at first, she decides to patronize her and accepts her to live at home. The film presents the differences of age, thoughts, and experiences. The girl learns to deal with her emotions and feelings after the loss of her parents while the introverted and isolated aunt opens her heart more. Both adapt and live together better. The meaning of life that is shown is to get ready for adaptation and to change ourselves according to the situations or changing conditions in our life. Similarly, the meaning of love is to understand and learn about the differences of each other.

Life and Love As Sharing and Listening to Each Other

At the Bench (Okayama, 2024) explores the relationships of many people through the narration while sitting on a bench in a park and listening to one another. The relationships of friends, lovers, siblings, and family in different situations only occur at the bench in this park. But surprisingly, sitting there to listen to the stories and conversations can keep these people listening to one another attentively. In the middle of a speedy routine and the chaos in the daily life, this film makes us feel a slow life as well as the practice of listening and sharing. Therefore, the meanings of life and love revealed through this film may refer to taking a rest, sharing a little time, and listening to one another.

Therefore, it is clear that Japanese love films communicate the meanings of life and love in a way that indicates the truth of life with an emphasis on beautiful moments of love through sweet and lonely love at the same time, including pain, disappointment, loss, and the tragedies or unhappy endings of lovers. Most films depict a serene ending that shows the growth, acceptance, and understanding of life among the characters. The primary perspective toward life and love in these films is to learn about them through loss.

According to *A Lover's Discourse* of Japanese love films, the characters usually prefer silence, write instead of speaking, communicate their love through actions, do not say "I love you" directly, listen to their loved ones, care and stand side by side, let their loved ones be themselves, do not ask for anything, wait rather than possess, and accept the uncertainty of love rather than expecting eternal love.

Table 2*The Meaning of Life and Love in Japanese Films Released in Thailand*

Film Title	Meaning of Life and Love	A Lover's Discourse
<i>Tomorrow, I Will Date With Yesterday's You</i> (Miki, 2016)	Life and love do not last forever.	Love is beautiful yet short-lived; separation is inevitable.
<i>I Want to Eat Your Pancreas</i> (Tsukikawa, 2017), <i>The Last 10 Years</i> (Fujii, 2022)	Life with illnesses, love with disappointment.	Love often comes with disappointment and pain.
<i>Last Letter</i> (Iwai, 2020)	Life and love as a beautiful memory.	Longing and recalling the past become part of healing and moving on.
<i>Insomniacs After School</i> (Mamoru, 2023)	Life is to follow our dreams and to share them with someone we love.	Love is the devotion to doing what you love without giving up.
<i>April Come, She Will</i> (Yamada, 2024)	Life is to understand changes and to live with the present.	Revisiting past love in order to love more deeply in the present.
<i>52-Hertz Whales</i> (Narushima, 2024)	Life is the process of learning from pain in order to better understand ourselves and others.	To love is to understand and accept the other as they truly are.
<i>Worlds Apart</i> (Seta, 2024)	Life and love involve adaptation and understanding each other.	Love is the beauty of differences living in harmony.
<i>At the Bench</i> (Okayama, 2024)	Life and love as sharing and listening to each other.	Listening with the heart to the one you love.

Semiotics to Signify Life and Love

The subject films convey the meanings of life and love through meaningful constructed semiotics. The denotative meanings are presented as follows.

Parallel World and Time

For communication about love and life through living in different worlds, the characters will never be together forever due to the limitations of the different worlds and time. *Tomorrow I Will Date With Yesterday's You* (Miki, 2016) presents the mismatch of timing, resulting in a disappointment in love. The film conveys the meaning of living in the present and making the best use of one's time.

Cherry Blossoms and Seasons

Cherry blossoms and seasons appear in *The Last 10 Years* (Fujii, 2022) and in *April Come, She Will* (Yamada, 2024). The word "April," in the name of the film, is an important month with the meaning of change as it is the time of growing trees and flowers blooming. *The Last 10 Years* (Fujii, 2022) contains the scenes of cherry blossoms blooming and withering in accordance with the changing seasons, signifying temporary beauty and its changes.

Incurable Diseases

Physical and mental illnesses are the obstacles that cause an unhappy ending of love. *I Want to Eat Your Pancreas* (Tsukikawa, 2017) and *The Last 10 Years* (Fujii, 2022) present heartbroken love that is due to deadly diseases and death later on. Such parting makes us perceive the value of time more while we are still living, along with an understanding of illnesses as a common thing that all of us must suffer from.

Writing Books and Letters

Writing is a semiotics of pain relief. It involves storytelling and noting thoughts as well as memories, and it becomes a symbol of communication between lovers. In the films *I Want to Eat Your Pancreas* (Tsukikawa, 2017), *The Last 10 Years* (Fujii, 2022), *Last Letter* (Iwai, 2020), and *Worlds Apart* (Seta, 2024), the characters write a diary, a book, or a letter as a way to communicate their thoughts, emotions, and feelings. Writing symbolizes the communication of love and the healing of the heart from pain.

Stars and Stargazing

The study of stars is an activity of the teens in *Insomniacs After School* (Mamoru, 2023). They suffer from insomnia, and thus they spend their nights stargazing. Stars symbolize hope, dreams, morale, shining, and missing someone. Therefore, the word “stars” represents lovers and romance. Legends and fairy tales also use stars as symbols of positivity and beauty.

Sea and Whales

Silence, calm, vastness, the occasional turbulence of the sea, and lonely whales frequently appear in Japanese films. *52-Hertz Whales* (Narushima, 2024) use whales and the ocean to communicate love, loneliness, and the desolation of humans. Love filled with the deep sadness of the characters can be compared to the sea, while whales represent calm, the need to blend with people, the lack of a need to be alone or different, and the need for someone to listen.

Cameras and Taking Photos:

The purpose of taking photos is to record memories, thoughts, feelings, and the beauty of what is discovered. The character in *April Come, She Will* (Yamada, 2024) uses a camera to take photos so as to stop time in order to preserve the memories of his time spent with his loved one and for recording the beauty of nature. The camera symbolizes the time of love.

Bench

The bench in the park from *At the Bench* (Okayama, 2024) conveys the meaning of listening to one another in the relationships of lovers, friends, and family. The factors that allow the relationships to continue include listening, having time to talk, and spending time together because time can be compared to the showing of love to one another.

Table 3
Symbols Representing the Meanings of Life and Love

Film Title	Symbols	Meaning
<i>Tomorrow, I Will Date With Yesterday's You</i> (Miki, 2016)	Parallel world and time The parallel world represents a love that cannot coexist in reality, while time symbolizes impermanence.	Being fully present in the moment.
<i>The Last 10 Years</i> (Fujii, 2022), <i>April Come, She Will</i> (Yamada, 2024)	Cherry blossoms and seasons Cherry blossoms symbolize life and love that bloom and fade with the changing seasons.	Beautiful love exists only for a brief moment before fading with time.
<i>I Want to Eat Your Pancreas</i> (Tsukikawa, 2017) <i>The Last 10 Years</i> (Fujii, 2022)	Incurable diseases A terminal illness reveals the fragility of existence and awakens an awareness of life's transience.	Loss is an inevitable part of the human experience.
<i>I Want to Eat Your Pancreas</i> (Tsukikawa, 2017) <i>The Last 10 Years</i> (Fujii, 2022) <i>Last Letter</i> (Iwai, 2020) and <i>Worlds Apart</i> (Seta, 2024)	Writing books and letters Writing is the bridge between life and memory, a quiet act of recording love.	Preserving love as memory is an act of reflection on the essence of living. Though love may pass, it lingers as a beautiful memory that gives life meaning.
<i>Insomniacs After School</i> (Mamoru, 2023)	Stars and stargazing Stars symbolize dreams and hope, while stargazing together represents the sharing of loneliness.	Hope, inspiration, and the pursuit of a meaningful existence.
<i>52-Hertz Whales</i> (Narushima, 2024)	Sea and whales The ocean mirrors the human subconscious, while the <i>52-Hertz Whales</i> becomes the voice of loneliness echoing in silence.	Loneliness, peace, and a sense of harmony with life.
<i>April Come, She Will</i> (Yamada, 2024)	Cameras and taking photos Freezing time to preserve the beauty of a fleeting moment.	Preserving a beautiful moment is an act of remembrance.
<i>At the Bench</i> (Okayama, 2024)	Bench A space for listening and peaceful coexistence.	Simply being aware of the presence of the one you love, sitting together in silence, and sharing time is already a beautiful form of love.

Thus, it can be seen that love in Japanese films relies on communication through simple semiotics and symbols in the daily life of the characters. Only a few use direct dialogue stating "I love you" straightforwardly. It is considered preferable to communicate through symbolization with connotative meanings and the value of life and love.

The Meanings of Life and Love Connected to the Japanese Philosophy of Life

The subject Japanese love films narrate love in several different ways by adapting attractive connotative meanings from the Japanese philosophy of life as follows.

Mono No Aware

This concept explains that the beautiful and blooming time of all entities in this world is temporary. Therefore, we should live in the present moment and absorb beauty while also getting ready to deal with uncertainty and changes. The films that make us realize the uncertainty of life and love, such as *Tomorrow I Will Date With Yesterday's You* (Miki, 2016), *I Want to Eat Your Pancreas* (Tsukikawa, 2017), and *Last Letter* (Iwai, 2020) present that although life is beautiful, time and deadly diseases bring about temporary beauty. Nevertheless, humans must learn how to deal with sadness and live with the truth of life.

Kintsugi and Wabi-sabi

This Japanese philosophy describes the wounds, pains, and disappointment as what is to be learned and that which creates a more meaningful life. We should embrace those pains, heal the wounds, and move on (The Present Move, 2024). *52-Hertz Whales* (Narushima, 2024) and *Worlds Apart* (Seta, 2024) are love films associated with families. The first character is abused by her own family while the other one loses her parents. Both characters heal their wounds and can finally move on.

Ikigai

It refers to the reasons for and the value of living (Gaines, 2020), including visualized beauty and a simple life. This is the highlighted characteristic of the Japanese love films *At the Bench* (Okayama, 2024), *Worlds Apart* (Seta, 2024), and *Insomniacs After School* (Mamoru, 2023). They simply narrate the stories, with a visualized simple way of living. The characters live their lives with perceived beauty in their daily routines, devoting their best to what they love to do, having goals to achieve, and accepting the changes in life.

It can be said that Japanese films provide the opportunity to learn to accept uncertainty and imperfection and to value living in the present. These viewpoints are similar to “The Four Noble Truths,” the Buddhist concept consisting of Dukkha (Suffering), Samudaya (the origin of suffering), Nirodha (the cessation of suffering), and Magga (the path to the cessation of suffering). To elucidate, Dukkha refers to the uncontrollable problems of life, Samudaya refers to the causes of those problems, Nirodha refers to getting out of all problems, and Magga refers to the solutions (Oakes, 2018).

Therefore, Japanese love films depict the beauty of love and present the uncertainty of both life and love that can change with time. The important thing is to live with the present and to perceive the beauty of a simple life.

Conclusion

Japanese love films are different from the love films that Thais are familiar with. Those from Japan mostly give precedence to the meanings of life and love through the beautiful images they present with perspectives toward the world based on reality and simplicity. Love is simply a part of life and is available in various types of relationships, i.e., lovers, friends, and families. Beautiful love occurs but does not last forever. Love is confronted with parting, loss, accidents, deadly diseases, and death; however, these obstacles in love help to create the perceived value of living, just like the semiotics of cherry blossoms that present their beautiful blooming at a

certain time of the year and then wither with the season. Thus, love represents the changes and uncertainty of life that continually occur throughout our lives all of the time.

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